

# Romans 1:24-32

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me to Romans chapter 1. Romans 1 and we're going to look at verses 24 to 32.!

You homophobic bigot. Church was wrong on slavery. It was wrong on women. It's wrong on gays. The Bible's view of homosexuality is pure hate speech and so damaging. The views you hold are untenable and you should be locked up. Those are various things that have been said to me over the past few years as I've given talks and explained the Bible position on sexuality. I don't think I need to give you much more of an introduction really than to say this is dynamite this morning. And what I'm going to say to you there will be some repetition and the reason there's going to be repetition is because I think the text is repetitive. And so my first point is this. God is righteous and he sometimes abandons us into our sin. God is righteous and he sometimes abandons us into our sin.

So in Romans chapter 1 do you remember where we are? God is speaking to men and women, boys and girls, who've not come to faith in Jesus Christ. That's the people he's addressing here. So he's not talking about the struggles of a Christian in regards to sin that you and I battle with. He is talking about sinners who've not put their faith in Jesus Christ. And he is saying God is righteous. And he says to those sinners, those who are in that condition, that there are times when people are abandoned to their own sin.

[ 2 : 14 ] That's repeated three times in the text. I want you to see that. It's in many ways the big theme. In verse 24, therefore God gave them up. That's all I'm drawing your attention to at the minute.

God gave them up. It's stated again in verse 26. Can you see it? For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Stated again in verse 28, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to do what ought not to be done.

So three times he states it. There's clear structure in that text, and we'll come back and see that in a moment. God is righteous, and he sometimes abandons sinners into their sin.

So at this stage, I just want to draw two conclusions from that. The first thing of all that you need to see is that the text says it's our own choice. Can you get that? We choose to sin.

Second thing you need to see is that it's God's righteous judgment. Both these things are true. They are both true at the same time. They are two side by side with each other, parallel statements of truth.

[ 3 : 19 ] We all know that there's a God. Do you remember that? We all know that God is powerful. We all know that he is there. His invisible attributes are plain for you to see. We push that down.

We suppress the truth. And so Paul, writing here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reminds us that as we suppress that truth about God, we choose not to glorify him. We live in his world.

We take his breath. We eat his food. And we say we want nothing to do with you. We choose not to glorify God, even though what we know about God is plain to us, and God has shown it.

His invisible attributes, his eternal power, his divine nature are clearly seen. And yet we say clear off. And so we are without excuse. They knew God, but they did not honor him as God, or give thanks to him as God.

They claimed to be wise, but they became fools. And they deliberately exchanged. They exchanged, do you remember, the glory of a mortal God for images resembling mortal man, and birds, and animals, and reptiles.

[ 4 : 27 ] They worship things. And God is saying, look what you choose. That's what's true of sinners in the state of sin.

Sinners in that state of sin choose. Do you remember that's what happened in the Garden of Eden? Do you remember they chose? It's so evocative, isn't it?

She saw that it was pleasing to the eye, and she reached out, and she took, she chose. She took it. And that's what happens to sinners in the state of sin who've not come to faith in Jesus Christ. And so do not forget what he's saying here. It's what you choose. And in each of those verses, verses 24, and 26, and 28, he states that again. He reminds them, therefore God gave them up in the lust of their own heart.

They'd already chosen to go down that road. They'd already chosen to have lust in their own heart. And he says it again, because they changed the truth about God. Then again in verse 26, why?

[ 5 : 34 ] Verse 26. Because their women have exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

It's their own choice. Verse 28. Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, they refused to do it, God gave them up to a debased mind.

And so God is righteous. We've learned that. And sometimes he abandons us to our sin. So first of all, it was our own choice to sin.

But then secondly, we see that God is active in abandoning us to sin. And to the misery of sin. It's not simply that God turns his back or turns away and leaves us.

It is a deliberate will. It's an act of deliberate will on God's part. It's an act. It's not something that he just permits something to happen.

[ 6 : 41 ] He actively hands sinners over to sin. Understand that the words are active. It's not saying like it's taught sometimes that God just stood back and said, well, there you have it.

It's saying sinners made this choice and God in his righteousness took them up and handed them further down in his righteousness. It's an act of judgment on sinners for that choice.

He hands us over to sin. He hands us over to misery. And so God is not merely a spectator. As hard as this is to accept. He's not merely a spectator of our sin and our misery.

God is our judge. God is our judge who acts. And that's the first thing that this text is setting out to us. God is righteous and sometimes he abandons us to our sin.

A, because we choose it. B, because he is the righteous judge. The second point, which is very similar to the first, is this. The handing over to sin is rooted in our rejection of God.

[ 7 : 49 ] The handing over to sin is rooted in our rejection of God. And I know I'm saying very much the same thing, but I want to draw it out a little bit more. Because what is happening in Romans 1 is it's like a spiral staircase.

You come to the same truth from a different angle again and again. It's just drawn out a little bit more. That handing over to sin is rooted in our rejection of God. So think back to verse 18.

He's used two words there. He says, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. And I think structurally, what he does then is he goes straight on from verse 18 to talk about ungodliness.

That's what we looked at last week. That first dark exchange. We worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator. And it's expressed there purely in terms of worship.

But from there, from verse 24, he goes on, having dealt with ungodliness to deal with unrighteousness. And the point of the passage is not to say that these things exist side by side.

[ 9 : 02 ] But the point of the passage is this. Unrighteousness flows out of ungodliness. One flows from the other. And that's why the dark exchange of ungodliness or a refusal to worship God as God flows into unrighteousness.

And it results, ungodliness, a refusal to worship God in all the misery and blackness of sin. It's not that he's simply saying to us, well, there's ungodliness and then there's unrighteousness.

It's not. What he's saying is this. It's so much more important than vital for you to get that there's a problem with worship. And because there's a problem with worship, there's a problem with the way that you live.

And the one flows out of the other. There's a problem with our worship. And because there's a problem with our worship, there's a problem in the way that we live.

And so having understood that, what he then does is he sets up homosexuality as the starkest example. But it's not the only example. Did you notice?

[ 10 : 18 ] He talks about gossip. He talks about boasters. He talks about people who are disobedient to parents. Gossip's the same thing.

There's a problem with worship. And because there's a problem with the worship, there's a problem with gossip. Boys and girls, the reason why you disobey your mum and dad is because there's a problem with worship.

There's a problem with how you view God. There's a problem with your love of God and your service of God. And that results in disobedience to parents. So you've got to see the root of it. So verse 24, he speaks in this way. He says, And for this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

And they worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who's blessed forever. Amen. And for this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

[ 11 : 32 ] For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to an Asian. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. There's this impurity.

And the impurity that's referred to here, verse 24 and 25, is normally sexual impurity. But do you notice in verse 25, he gives you the reason.

What's the reason for this dishonoring? It's because of the great exchange, isn't it? Verse 25. Can you grasp the force of this? I don't know whether I'm explaining it very well.

Why does God abandon them into sexual impurity? It's because they've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. It's tied together. He says the same thing in verse 26.

When he outlines, do you see what he says? For this reason, in case you missed it, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.

[ 12 : 39 ] The natural meaning there is this. It's here, they gave up what God intended and they exchanged it for what God did not intend.

Likewise, men gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. So look at verse 28.

See the same thing there again. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, problem with worship, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Their thinking became damaged.

And so what happens then? You've got a knock on effect, haven't you? If your thinking has been damaged, the way you think about sin is damaged. And I think we need to pause here for a moment, take a deep breath, and we remind ourselves that this is true of every sin.

It's true of every sinner. But the passage is not saying that we all sin in those ways. The passage is saying to us we're all sinners.

[ 13 : 46 ] The passage is not saying that God has acted to judge us all by handing us over to sin. But it is saying, isn't it, really clearly that sometimes that is what God does.

So when you see the growth and the acceptance of the sins that are mentioned in Romans 1 in this way, that is an evidence of God's wrath. Now to keep it in mind, notice how the text is tied so tightly together.

And what it means is this. It means this. The deepest problem is not homosexuality. What's the deepest problem from Romans 1? The deepest problem is idolatry.

The deepest problem is not sexual sins. They are a reflection that we do not worship God, the creator, as we should worship and honor him and accept his truth.

And so this passage is declaring to you and I your greatest and your deepest problem and my greatest and my deepest problem. And that is that we are glory thieves. And so instead of seeking pleasure from God who gives true and lasting pleasure, we steal that pleasure and we give it to that which is most like self.

[ 15 : 09 ] And so I think what we find here is that Romans 1 teaches us that every sin that I commit is grounded and rooted in a refusal to glorify God as God.

Every sin that I commit is rooted in me being unwilling to glorify God as God.

And that's why worship is so difficult. Isn't it? Why is worship so difficult? And there are always struggles for us in that area because that's where it all starts.

And everything else flows from that. A refusal to worship God as God. And everything else, all of our sin is simply the backwash of that.

That's the second thing. God is righteous. We reject him. The third thing is that because God is righteous and because we reject him, the result is the misery of sin. And I think that's what the

passage teaches us in verse 24.

[16:24] What he does in verse 24 is he states it as a general principle. And then in verse 26, he states it as a specific example, the example of homosexuality.

And then in verse 28, he argues it as a broad example. So can you just see that again? 26 specific. Sorry, 24 is general.

26 is specific. 28 is broad. So he moves through and he uses different kind of weapons if you like.

First of all, in verse 24, he uses a shotgun.

And the pellets of the shotgun, they spread a little bit. Because what he's saying in verse 24 is sexual sin, any sexual sin is an example of this.

and then it's as if in verse 28, he takes out a rifle and he uses one bullet. And he talks about homosexuality.

[17:27] And then in verse 28, he kind of takes out a blunderbuss, he takes out a machine gun and everything's taken out. But actually, what Paul is saying is the same thing in 24, 26 and 28.

that the result of our rejection of God is the misery of sin. First of all, in verse 24, he states it in a general sense. That in a general principle, he gives sinners over to impurity and uncleanness and sexual impurity.

Why? Because their hearts are already passionate for what is forbidden. And what is the result?

The result is that we dishonor God with our bodies. And we use our bodies in ways that God did not intend us to use them.

Or we use the bodies of others in a way that God did not intend it. And it's all stated in verse 24 in a really general way. This is what Al Mola says here.

He says, marriage stands at the center of civilization and is what he calls the civilizational essential.

So without marriage, no social structure larger than marriage can be sustained.

[18:36] There can be no community, no culture, no enduring patterns of human life. And even where there have been aberrations such as polygamy or other forms of wrongly construed marriage, these have been noteworthy because they're precisely aberrations.

And because they've been culturally transient. None of these experiments have lasted through time. God's glory will be demonstrated one way or another and the persistence and universal endurance of marriage has been a demonstration of God's glory throughout human experience.

And he goes on to draw a conclusion which is so helpful. The moment that we Christians accept that we can talk about sex without also talking about marriage, we abandon the high ground of the Christian view and surrender the questions at stake.

From the very beginning of every conversation about sex, we must emphasize that Christians cannot talk about sex without making clear its connection to marriage. And so just to spell it out if you've not understood this, the Bible teaches that all sexual activity for human beings is to be confined to a marriage relationship between a husband and a wife, a male and a female.

The Bible teaches that all sexual activity for human beings is to be confined to a marriage relationship between a husband and a wife, a male and a female.

[20:08] That makes me a sinner. That makes you a sinner. So do you see the general principle that Paul is stating here and that God is revealing to us here?

But this sexual impurity runs throughout culture is because we've chosen what is forbidden and we dishonor bodies. And what's the result of that?

The result of that is the misery of sin. And then he moves on to give you a specific example. It's a rightful shot if you like and it's the sin of homosexuality. Look at verses 26 and 27.

And what he's stating is dramatic and it is stark. It is a vivid example of the general principle of impurity. It is given in terms of dishonorable passions.

Men and women exchanging what was natural. Exchanging what God intended. And what's the result? Well the verse tells you, doesn't it? The result is that they commit acts because they're burning with lust.

[21:12] and they commit shameless acts and that in itself is the penalty. The shamelessness of it. Gay pride is deeply ironic isn't it?

But it is totally fulfilling of Romans chapter 1. If I'm following the thought of the Holy Spirit in this passage, homosexuality is the most stark expression of self-love.

Homophilia, love of the same. Love of self. It is the most extreme expression of that. So think back with me or stick with me.

you have the glory of God which is why you were created. The love of God. That's why you exist. You were made to glorify and enjoy God.

That's the purpose. You were put on this building and there's a line on this earth and there's a line and it runs and at the other end of that line there is this extreme not of glorying in God but glorying in the same.

[ 22 : 29 ] It's not a word but homoglora if I could put it like that. To worship and serve the creature to worship and serve what is the same as me and not the creator who is wholly other.

And so homosexuality love of the same is simply glorying in yourself like yourself. It's to glorify what is the same it's an issue of worship. And that is what God is revealing.

Here is the root of sin. It's the battle ground for worship. Who will be glorified in your life and in mine? And then the blunderbuss comes out the machine gun comes out and there's not a single one of us that's going to be missed by it.

He talks about all manner of unrighteousness and evil and covetousness and malice. They're full of envy murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, they're gossips, they're slanderers, they're haters of God, they're insolent, they're haughty, they're boastful, they're inventors of evil, they're disobedient to parents, they're faithless, foolish, heartless and ruthless.

And all of that flows from having a debased mind because we were already filled with these things so God is righteous and we've rejected him. the misery of sin glorying in that which is most like ourselves.

[ 23 : 47 ] Taking pleasure from that which is most like self. And the supreme example of that is homosexuality. And so again, just to be clear and so that you don't misunderstand me, the passage speaks of homosexual acts as sin but it also speaks of homosexual desires as sin.

Can you look at verse 26 and verse 27? God gave them up to dishonorable, sinful passions. Men were consumed with passion for one another.

And so it's not just the act, it is the desire. And so it's quite trendy at the moment, isn't it, of people describing themselves as, well, basically as long as you don't do anything it's all okay.

Quite prominent Christians, some prominent Christians have described themselves as gay Christians. You can't do that. Because the desire itself is sinful. We wouldn't do that with other Christians, wouldn't we?

Hi, my name's Paul, I'm a lying Christian. Hi, I'm Paul, I'm a murdering Christians. We wouldn't do that. And so all homosexual desires or passions or acts are forbidden outside all sexual activity outside of a marriage between a man and a wife, a husband and a wife, is sin.

[ 25 : 25 ] So is there no relief? Is there no good news? Is there no good news? Is there nothing this morning for you? Is there no help? Is there no hope? Is there anything in the text?

Give me some light, please. So I think the text in this context should remind us what God is saying right now. He's already said, hasn't he, there is a righteousness from God that has been revealed from heaven.

And God is willing to give it. And that's why we need it. And so thank God that he has provided what we need.

What do we need? The cure for all our false worship. The cure for all our false love. The cure for our of our obsession and with what is like us and self and he gives his son.

And that's the most glorious hope, isn't it? Do you remember Romans 1? God gave them up. God gave them up. God gave them up. But there's an echo later on in the gospel, isn't there?

[ 26 : 48 ] Do you remember? Come with me, if you will, just to Romans chapter 8 and verse 32. Because it's the same word that's used in Romans 1 three times.

Because in Romans 8 and verse 32 it tells us this. It says, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up.

He who did not spare his son, the Lord Jesus, but gave him up. It's the same word that's used three times in chapter 1. God gave him up.

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? And so is there any hope for you and I in our misery?

That hope is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And so Romans 1 causes us to recoil in horror at our sin and flee to Christ. To be healed.

[ 27 : 52 ] That we might glorify him and we might worship him and we might enjoy him and we might serve him. And so it is true that when we read Paul writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians

chapter 6 verse 9 he writes to that church and he says do not be deceived.

neither the sexually immoral nor adulterers nor idolaters nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will enter the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. And such were some of you. But you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And by the Spirit of God he said such were some of you. But you were washed by God. What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And so we flee to Christ this morning. There will be lots of questions. There will be lots of issues.

[ 29 : 03 ] This morning might be for some of you very, very painful. there may be issues in your life, struggles that you face. And I want to say to you, we want to help you.

We want to comfort you. Most of all, we want to point you to flee to Jesus Christ. And so let's pray together.