

ROMANS 1:26-32 "God's Grace Is Greater Than the Vileness Of Sin."

**Romans 1:26-32** <sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, <sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. <sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, <sup>29</sup> being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup> and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

This part of the letter to the Romans is really rather discouraging in many ways as Paul explains how turning from the One true God will inevitably lead to some form of idolatry.

And as we consider verses 18 through the rest of chapter one we see God's displeasure, which Paul describes, as the Lord's wrath against sinners who reject the grace of God.

Verses 18-23 shows how man dishonors God in idolatry and then in verse 24, after explaining all of this we read, "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another."

Paul again sums up what he had said in the previous verses by saying in verse 25 ... "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen."

And as if to drive the point home he again speaks of how this sort of rejection of God manifests itself as God responds to their sin.

Rom 1:26-27 "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men

committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

As I said last week when people willfully dishonor the One true God, God may very well turn people over to their own sins where they are dishonored.

In the case before us it involves sexual perversion. Now I'm not going to spend a lot of time getting too specific here as this kind of behavior is very unnatural and not a very pleasant subject.

But the gist of it all is that God is addressing the perversion of lesbianism among women and homosexuality among men.

I once worked for Dr. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries, producing his radio program, Truths that Transform. And what I would do is devote a week of programming to a particular subject and how it affects the church.

One week might be spent on education in America; another on how Christians can defend their faith before the world, known as Apologetics; and I remember devoting one week to the problem of homosexuality in America.

I had interviewed former homosexuals who had since given their lives to Christ, been forgiven of their sin, and had their lives transformed by God to a normal life. One particular man in Miami I had interviewed had recently gotten married, and these days I need to add, to a woman.

I had interviewed Doctors and Christian counselors who treated homosexuals and studied in great detail not only the emotional problems of homosexuals, but also the physiological questions involving their biological make-up.

The homosexual lobby in America has continually said that homosexuals are born that way and that in an effort to live out their true sexual identity they are only pursuing the natural desire of their physical make-up determined by their genes.

What many people in America haven't realized is that the truth of God has been exchanged for a lie in this case. Of the Doctors I've spoken to; of the numerous reliable books I've read on the subject, there is no one in the medical profession who can prove genetically that homosexuality is a biological phenomenon.

It just isn't so. God makes it quite clear that homosexuality is the result of His judgment on sinful man who chooses to turn from God and turn to self for the answers to life.

Granted, any sin which mankind is involved in will affect other people, often times innocent people. Sin can also affect your physical body and in turn affect your emotional make-up which can in turn affect choices you make in life.

The original curse from God in the Garden of Eden given to Adam and Eve, because of their rebellion, has affected billions and billions of people who didn't even know them.

And so yes, young girls and boys are being targeted by homosexual adults who will lure them into a life of homosexuality. Their innocence is attacked and it's tragic. But sinful men have always affected others, whether it's an unborn child of a prostitute with Aids, who has contracted the disease from his mother, or innocent civilians in Sarejevo dying at the hands of godless power-hungry people.

Sin is a curse. But sin has been defeated at the cross of Jesus Christ and He alone is our solution to the penalty of our sin.

Homosexuality is only a small part in the bigger picture of how sin separates us from God and how God views all sin. But homosexuality is what Paul addresses here in our text.

Unfortunately, in this country there is a large homosexual lobby and part of their plan is to get into the schools to recruit the young. And they've been very successful.

This is why it's politically incorrect to say anything negative about homosexuality. That wasn't so 30 years ago. For example, to question a fellow Governor or a U.S. Senator on their sexual preference is seen as the quickest way to bring down the wrath of the homosexual lobby, and in turn jeopardize your next election.

The public schools today are teaching young children that a "homosexual family" made up of two men or two women who have children, either from a previous marriage or through adoption, is no different than the family where there is a man and a woman who are married and have children.

In fact, in this country today it is politically incorrect, or evil to say that you hold to the Bible as the inerrant word of God and that

behavior contrary to God's word is sin. But to say that behavior like homosexuality is okay, because some in this country say it's okay, is deemed good.

The only thing I can say is that I must trust the God who has proven Himself, not only in His creation, but more importantly, in sending His Son who died for our sin and rose from the dead. To choose what is politically correct according to man, over what is truly correct according to God, is to say that evil is good and good is evil. God has something to say about that as well.

In fact when bringing judgment on the wicked, the prophet Isaiah records God's words when he wrote in Isa 5:20-21 "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight."

And then in Mal 2:17 "You have wearied the LORD with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them....."

We don't have to get into the perverse details of homosexuality to know that it's evil; not because it may disgust us, but because God says it is evil. He declares it sinful and against that which is natural.

In doing that special for Dr. Kennedy we had talked very frankly and openly with former homosexuals who described in detail what they did. And I can remember briefing Dr. Kennedy on some of those details.

Now, Dr. Kennedy wasn't born a Christian. In fact he didn't come to know Christ until his twenties. And during that time he was a man of the world. But I remember him looking at me in sheer astonishment when I told him what homosexuals actually did. In fact most of you probably don't have the imagination it would take to conceive of the some of the things they engage in and call it normal behavior.

But one thing I did learn from that investigation and that is that homosexuals, be they male or female are anything but gay. There is no true joy in abusing yourself like that and if they're honest they'll tell you. The suicide rate among homosexuals is some of the highest in this country.

But what is interesting about our text is that what we are experiencing today with the open acceptance of homosexuality in our country was going on back in Paul's day to a degree which may have been even greater. Paul is describing a real problem with how people, in their rejecting God, have embraced those things which epitomize the sinful condition of man.

Joseph A. Fitzmeyer in his commentary on Romans says, "The depravity involved in such conduct is the merited consequence of pagan impiety and idolatry. Having exchanged a true God for a false one, pagans inevitably exchanged their true natural functions for perverted ones."

William Barclay quoting the ancient historian Tacitus says: "I am entering upon the history of a period, rich in disasters, gloomy with wars, rent with seditions, savage in its very hours of peace. .... All was one delirium of hate and terror. He who had no foe was destroyed by his friend."

Barclay says "it was an age of unparalleled immorality. There had not been one single case of divorce in the first 520 years of the history of the Roman Republic. The first Roman recorded as having divorced his wife was Spurius Carvilius Ruga in 234 B.C. But, now as Seneca said, "women were married to be divorced, and divorced to be married." (Liz Taylor would have fared well in those days.)

Juvenal, another ancient historian "cites the case of a woman who had eight husbands in five years. He cites the incredible case Agrippina, the empress herself, the wife of Claudius, (the Roman Emperor who ruled from A.D.41-54, and whom we first saw in Acts 11:28). This Agrippina would leave her royal palace at night and go down to serve in a brothel for the sake of sheer lust."

William Barclay then sums up by saying that, "so far from exaggerating the picture, Paul drew it with restraint--and it was there that he was eager to preach the gospel, and it was there that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The world needed the power that would work salvation, and Paul knew that nowhere else than in Christ did that power exist."

Paul is simply saying that the wretched condition of his world was the direct result of sinful men sinfully rejecting the grace of God extended to them by Christ's redemptive work on their behalf. And

because of that God justly judged them by "giving them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity." (Verse 24)

As I said last week, God didn't force them to sin, He simply opened the door wider which they pried open to allow them to wallow in what they really wanted. Three times in this chapter, in verses 24, 26 and 28 it says "God gave them over."

Now as perverse as homosexuality is God makes it clear that all sin is perverse in His eyes because God cannot look on sin with delight, no matter what it is. All sin is sinful and deserving God's wrath. And of course, as Paul shares in this letter to the Romans in Rom.3:23, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

You see in man's economy the lack of heinousness counts for something. In other words since I'm not a murderer or a homosexual or a rapist, God looks down on me with favor. After all I'm trying to be a good person.

And that's admirable to the degree that we try to be trustworthy and kind citizens in this world. But, to think that anything we do could make us right in the eyes of God is to miss the requirement God has given for righteousness according to His standard.

Jam 2:10 "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."

You mean to tell me that if I keep every jot and tittle of the law of God and yet mess up in just one point I am guilty and will be condemned as if I had broken it all? You bet!

Then it's impossible to be good enough for God. That's right and that's the point. None of us are worthy to spend eternity with God, because we are sinners by nature. In fact, Christ's very disciples were confounded with this truth.

Mat 19:160-26 "Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" 17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." 18 "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother, and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" 20 "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

A light went off in their heads. If this rich man who has kept all the law since his youth can't earn heaven, how can anyone get there? What Christ showed them is that not even this rich young ruler, who claimed to have kept the law, really didn't. His heart was against God and was not willing to obey a very simple request of the King of kings... 'Leave everything and follow Me.'

This is the root of the problem. Men can outwardly claim to be doing great things for God, but God doesn't look at just the outward appearances, He looks at the heart of man and He sees rebellion and rejection.

Who then can be saved? With man it's impossible, but with God all things are possible. And what God did was to send His Son into the world, born of a virgin, lived the perfect life we couldn't, died in our place for the penalty of our sin, and then rose victoriously from the grave for our salvation.

But to simply have a gift extended is not to possess the gift. We must receive it by faith and embrace it as our own to possess it and then we receive the benefit of eternal life in Christ.

This is what Paul is leading to in verse 28 through the end of the chapter.

Rom 1:28-32 "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve

death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

Paul says, 'you may not be practicing the sin of homosexuality but you're still guilty before God for your sin.' Verse 28 says "they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God".

Joseph Fitzmeyer says the literal translation would be, "they did not consider it proper to keep God in mind." They didn't consider it proper? Burping in public isn't proper, screaming fire in a public theater isn't proper, walking into a 5 star restaurant in shorts isn't proper.

To recognize God isn't proper? Well, things haven't changed so much since Paul's day. It isn't proper to recognize God in the public schools. In fact you can be expelled if you pray in school or if you promote God in an after school club.

Try referring to God in a court of law when prosecuting a law breaker. I was subpoenaed to give my deposition in a case which involved a program I produced for Truths that Transform back a few years ago, because in the program I wrote copy which addressed the killing of the elderly or the infirmed who weren't allowed to live simply because the family saw them as a burden, and they deemed the life of this individual as not coming up to their standard of what life should be.

The particular family in question got a court order to withhold food and most water from this person. 40 days later she finally died. The comment I made in the program was that if you or I did that to a family member in our home we could be accused of murder, and in fact according to God's word that's exactly what it is.

The comment in question was that God's word deemed it murder. The family accused Dr. Kennedy's ministry of calling them murderers. They recovered damages. It's not proper to acknowledge God any longer.

And so God, who always has the final word says in verse 28 ... "He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done."

A depraved mind. It almost paints the picture of some wild eyed madman foaming at the mouth and in need of being put into a straight-jacket.



The Greek language actually means a worthless intellect. Remember the phrase, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste"? God's word makes it quite clear that, no matter how filled with knowledge or how wonderful the mind can be used to help mankind, it is being wasted if it is not used to glorify God and lift His name on high. Why? Because the mind without the knowledge of God is only a mind with temporal desires.

Now, when we speak of the knowledge of God we don't mean just knowing about God, but knowing Him personally in Christ and knowing that He is our all in all. And when we know Him like that the knowledge of God will be spread abroad and men will know that they have a choice. The choice to live in their sin and die, only to continue after this life in a Christ-less eternity, or to choose Christ and His death and resurrection for our sin, and live with our Creator forever.

If homosexuality isn't our problem how about a list of other things which we've all tried on at one time or another. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it intended to be. The point is that man's rejection of God is seen as God allows men to revel in their sin.

Rom 1:29-31 "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

Look around you at the world and see if you don't agree that God's judgment is in effect by God giving rebellious man over to those things which he desires, as he rejects his Creator.

I was going to go through this list and do some commentary on it but we would be here for the next few hours. I don't think it needs much commentary. Paul certainly didn't think so. But no one is left out in this list.

But here's the beauty of how God can turn us around if we're willing to turn from our sin and turn to our Savior for the forgiveness of our sin, and to be declared "not guilty" by our God and just Judge.

Again, Paul brings this out in this letter to the Romans when he says in Rom 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.."

There isn't a person in this room, or in this world for that matter, who isn't found in this list which is really a list of the hearts' perverseness to turn from God. And what God wants us to know is that there are consequences to that. It may not be a pleasant subject to talk about in today's world, where men have turned from the knowledge of God, but God still speaks.

Rev 21:8 "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

The Scriptures tell it like it is. But it also gives the hope that what is in store for our eternal future can be changed if we will come to Christ as He makes that change from the inside out, making us new creatures in Christ, fit for His Kingdom.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church he had a rebuke for them because of some of their practices. And he reminded them that God does not look favorably on sin.

He says to them in 1Co 6:9-11 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Paul chooses some of what we might consider the "biggies" when it comes to sin and says that those who practice these things, those who have no intention of repenting of such things, will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But here's the classic statement. "That is what some of you were." But he goes on to say that even these things can be forgiven by God, and in fact are, when we come humbly to Him seeking forgiveness.

Some of our past's may be shady, but there isn't anything that God won't forgive. Because as we come to Him by faith we are told the same thing that Paul wrote to the Corinthians who also had past lives without Christ.

**1 Corinthians 6:11** <sup>11</sup> Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. "

Don't get hung up in your past. In Christ you're a new creature. My daughter has a Tee-shirt which says, "If Satan reminds you of your past remind him of his future." But on the same note don't use the grace of God as an excuse to sin. Thank God for His grace and live in that grace as you seek Him daily.

Paul reminds the Romans of that very thing when he tells them to dwell on how Christ died for them and rose from the dead for them.

Rom 6:5-7 "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin..."

We were all guilty of our sin outside of Christ, but in Him we've been set free from that penalty so that we may live in the freedom of God's grace. Live as free men and women and give this knowledge of God to the world that they too may experience the freedom of Christ's love and forgiveness.