

# Romans (1:24-32)

## Three "Gave 'em Overs"

PART 4 - JULY 4, 2004

### GIVING 'EM OVER

Last time, we looked at four truths:

1. God has revealed Himself to all of mankind
2. Man suppresses truth in order to avoid God
3. This amounts to Godlessness and wickedness
  - *Godlessness* is living without concern for God
  - *Wickedness* is living without concern for man

God is just as indignant at man's mistreatment of his neighbor as He is at man's mistreatment of his Creator.

4. God's wrath is revealed against these sins

Remember, wrath is compassion when it's directed at that which injures and destroys innocence. Now, before we read today's verses (which we'll do in three sections) I want to point out a phrase that is repeated three times:

1. God **gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts ... (1:24)
2. God **gave them over** to shameful lusts. (1:26)
3. God **gave them over** to a depraved mind ... (1:28)

To fully understand verses 24-32, we need to examine what it means to "give someone over." Or first, what it *doesn't* mean:

- It doesn't mean that you "give up on" them.
- It doesn't mean that God quits loving them.

And it doesn't mean there's no hope for them; just the opposite. Have you ever had to stop trying to help someone who didn't want your help? (e.g. ex-spouse, adult child, old friend).

Maybe you came to your wits end, and had to say something like, "I love you, but I can't *run* your life, and I can't let you *ruin* mine. So, you have to make a choice." And maybe they didn't choose you. They chose drugs, or booze, or adultery, or some other illegal, immoral, or injurious behavior.

And you had to release them, and “give them over,” in hopes and prayers that they would “hit bottom” and look up.

- This is what the Prodigal Son’s father had to do.

Q: Remember what happened when the son finally came to his senses and returned home?

... while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. - *Luke 15:20 NIV*

Jesus tells us that this is the heart of a father who is forced to “give his child over” to sinful demands and ignorant choices.

## IMMORAL PASSIONS

Let’s read the first section together:

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. - *Romans 1:24-25 NIV*

1. The 1<sup>st</sup> thing God *gave them over* to: Immoral Passions (indulgences that violate His moral law).

We tend to “sow our wild oats” and then pray for crop failure! See where it says: “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie”. That lie hasn’t changed since Adam and Eve. It’s a two-fold lie:

- A. You can sin and get away with it (no harm, no foul).
- B. You can be like God (self determining, independent).

The devil didn’t tempt Adam and Eve by saying, “You can be like *me*.” He said, “You can be like *Him*; you can be your own god!”

Then Paul says, “Amen,” which contrary to popular belief doesn’t mean, “The End.” It means: Indeed, absolutely, and right on!

At this point immoral passions are more behavioral choice than addiction. But like a carrot on a stick, true satisfaction stays just out of reach and lures us to reach further and further.

- New experiences are *only* found down ever more depraved paths.

## INDECENT PERVERSIONS

### 2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing God *gives them over* to: Indecent Perversions

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 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. - *Romans 1:26-27 NIV*

This is the key N.T. verse that indicts homosexuality as an unnatural behavior that will ultimately bring destructive consequences (physically, spiritually, and relationally). However, there're two things we must readily understand:

#### A. Paul is not limiting his assault to homosexuality

This is simply being used as one example. Homosexuality is no better or worse a sin than any haywire heterosexual act.

- There is no room for hatred or homophobia in the church.

Paul probably used this example because he's writing to Romans, and many of their Caesars (at the time of Paul's writing) had been notoriously homosexual or bisexual.

#### B. God understands the clutching force of sexual deviancy

People will pass a point of simple choice. Addictive behaviors are part choice, part psychology, and part conditioning.

Do you know what makes a Sunday drive nice? Weather? Scenery? I'm thinking brakes and steering! The sex drive is like that. It's wonderful when you're in control - following the rules. Otherwise, though thrilling at first, it's going to end in disaster.

- And those trapped inside need and deserve gracious assistance when they cry out.

Q: What do you suppose that means: "[they receive] in themselves the due penalty for their perversion"?

You know, sin takes a costly toll. Let's go back to verse 18:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men ... - *Romans 1:18 NIV*

Notice, it's in present tense: it's "being revealed". In other words, God's wrath can be detected, it can be seen.

Q: You ever seen someone (like at a class reunion) and noticed the toll that "hard living" has taken on their physical features, their countenance, even their posture?

The person who chases after sin will eventually exhibit the destructive force of sin for all to see. I want to show you eleven mug shots of a young woman from age 16 to 21; [Photo] five short years. She died at 30 of an overdose. God doesn't have to send fire and brimstone on us, we call it down on ourselves.

- The penalty for sin is the consequence of sin

(e.g. S.T.D.'s; drug addiction and alcohol abuse; unbearable guilt and shame; alienation and broken relationships; physical deterioration; self loathing and suicide)

## IRRATIONAL PRACTICES

3. With this in mind, the final thing God *gives them over to*: Irrational Practices (taken to the nth degree).

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. 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; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 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. – *Romans 1:28-32 NIV*

When someone is "given over," there's nothing to slow them down from an ever-increasing dissension into depravity. They are free from the Holy Spirit's tugging, prompting, nudging, restraining, and even protection from the enemy.

It's like being above Niagara Falls in a boat; with God holding the tether from shore. You keep asking for more slack until there isn't any. But you demand and tug; and God warns. Finally, because of free will, He has to relax His grip; just enough so that you can jerk the rope out of His hands.

- And you're on your own – free – headed for the falls.

And yet, God doesn't "give them up." He waits on the shore and longs for them to cry out for help before it's too late.

- The descent into depravity begins with one small lie.
- Do not underestimate the enemy's power of persuasion.

If we flirt with immoral passions or corrupt indulgences we open the door to what could end up a ship-wrecked life.

- It's best to look up and cry out long before you hit bottom.