

The Judgment of Sexual Freedom (Romans 1:24-25)

Introduction: Please open your Bible to Romans 1:24-25.

“My body, my choice.” That is the mantra of millions of Americans. “My body, my choice” is a political slogan used by those who advocate for abortion. At a recent roundtable discussion on so-called “Reproductive Rights” (Sept. 9, 2021), **Vice-President Kamala Harris** said the following...

“The President and I are unequivocal in our support of Roe v. Wade and the constitutionality of Roe v. Wade, and the right of women to make decisions for themselves with whomever they choose — about their own bodies. And, needless to say the right of women to make decisions about their own bodies is not negotiable. The right of women to make decisions about their own bodies is their decision; it is their body.”

In other words, “My body, my choice.”

Since the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade in 1973 to legalize abortion, an estimated **62 million** babies have been aborted in this country. About **1 million** babies are aborted **every year** in this country. That is about **2700 abortions every day, 114 every hour**. In this country a baby is aborted on average **every 31 seconds**. And this is sanctioned by our federal government.

Planned Parenthood is the single largest provider of abortions in this country. And it is substantially supported by our federal government. Last year Planned Parenthood received **\$617 million** in federal funding (in the fiscal year ending in June 2020).

The **atrocities** of the abortion movement in this country far exceeds those of the **Nazi holocaust** against the Jews or of the **trans-Atlantic African slave trade**. Abortion is the holocaust of all holocausts. It is our **national reproach**, our **national sin**, our **national shame**. It is the **greatest moral evil** of our times.

And it is based upon **flawed argumentation**. The argument of “My body, my choice” is fatally flawed because it fails to recognize that a baby living inside of a woman’s body is **distinct from a woman’s body**. An unborn baby is a **separate human being** with its own **DNA**, with its own **gender**, with its own **blood type**, and with its own **vital organs**. So no woman has the right to kill her baby. It’s not her body, and it’s not her choice. Abortion is not about a reproductive health. It has nothing to do with health care. It is murder, plain and simple. A baby is not like a tumor that needs to be removed, but a precious life that needs to be protected.

But what is it that really drives the abortion movement in this country? To be sure there is a complexity of motivations, but the one thing that really drives the abortion movement more than anything else is **sexual freedom**. What people really want is **sexual autonomy**. People want **unfettered sex with no consequences**. When you hear people say, “My body, my choice,” what they are really saying is that they want the freedom to have sex with whoever they want, whenever they want, without any responsibility, even at the expense of sacrificing their children.

Dear people, sexual freedom is one of the most powerful idols in this country. Millions and millions of people in this country bow before the god of sexual freedom. And those who worship

the god of sexual freedom sacrifice their children upon the altar of sexual freedom. Why is there such a thirst in this country for abortion? Because of our nation's unbridled, unrestrained, and unashamed craving for sexual freedom.

The **1960s** was a dramatic turning point in our country. It was a tumultuous decade in which our nation **underwent a revolution, a sexual revolution**. A younger generation of Americans revolted against the sexual moral values of their parents and grandparents. Up to that time sex within marriage was **the cultural norm** which was **replaced with a new cultural norm** of having sex outside of marriage with whomever you want. It was at that time that premarital, casual sex began to be normalized and celebrated. And sexuality became a common part of the national conversation and began to be commonplace in popular culture in things like literature, music, and television.

The sexual revolution that began in the 1960s **progressed in the decades that followed** at such break-neck speed **that we are now arguably living in the most sexually perverse culture in the history of the world**. Everywhere you look you will find sexual perversion. It is ubiquitous. It's everywhere. It dominates the entertainment industry from music to movies to television. It dominates our government and our educational system. It dominates White House, the schoolhouse, and the jail house. It dominates marketing and commercials. It dominates the workplace and the marketplace. It dominates the military and the ballfield. It's even in the check-out lane at the grocery store where sensual magazines are placed on the rack which promote sexual perversity.

With the advent of the internet, personal computers, and smartphones, the accessibility and intake of pornography is so massive in this country that it boggles the mind. There is an insatiable desire for sexual perversity in this culture that is staggering.

As I stand before you this morning, we have not one, but two great national sins: One is **the murder of the unborn** whose blood cries up to God. And the other is **sexual perversity**. As we have already noted, one is the result of the other. And both of these have been our national sins for decades.

Now, with all of that in mind, I ask you this question: Is this country under the wrath of God? The answer is emphatically, "yes." There is **no question** that this nation that we live in and love, is under the wrath of God. Another way to say it is that we are living in **Romans 1**. I cannot think of a passage that is more relevant to our times than **Romans 1**. When you read **Romans 1** it's as if the Apostle Paul wrote it yesterday while living here in 21st century America. What we learn in **Romans 1** is that our national sin of sexual perversity is not just worthy of God's judgment, **it is God's judgment**. That is why I have titled this message: *The Judgment of Sexual Freedom*.

I agree with **Billy Graham** who said, "If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

At this point in our study of **Romans** we are looking at the **second major section** of the book... **I. The Gospel Introduced (1:1-17)**.

II. The Gospel Explained (1:18-4:25).

The way Paul begins to explain the gospel is **by explaining our need** for the gospel. Before we can appreciate the **good news** of the gospel we must first understand the **bad news** of sin. Until you appreciate the **disease** you will never appreciate the **cure**.

We are calling this...

A. The Need For Righteousness (1:18-3:20).

And the way Paul establishes our need for righteousness is **by proving our condemnation** before God. He begins with...

1. The condemnation of Gentiles (1:18-32).

At this point you can think about **Romans** like a **road trip**. **Romans 1:1-17** is like driving through Yosemite National Park where there is so much beautiful and glorious scenery as Paul introduces to us the gospel that he preached. But when Paul **begins the body** of this letter in **1:18** it is like **entering into a dark tunnel**. And when you enter into this tunnel, you are surprised by how dark it is and by how long it is. It begins in **1:18** and it doesn't end until **3:20**. That is a long, dark tunnel of man's sin before God. We will not come out of this tunnel and see light again until **3:21**.

Admittedly, this is a very difficult section of **Romans**. But it is absolutely essential if we are going to truly understand our sinful condition before God and why we so desperately need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The long, dark tunnel begins with...

a. The reality of God's wrath (v. 18a).

Sinners are in the hands of an angry God.

From there we drove further into the tunnel by looking at...

b. The reasons for God's wrath (vv. 18b-23).

Why is God so angry with sinners? Paul gives us **two reasons**: Because sinners **suppress the knowledge of God** that is revealed in creation. And because sinners **refuse to worship God**. Instead of worshiping God, sinners **exchange** the glory of the incorruptible God for the worship of idols. The most fundamental problem of man is **a worship problem**. This was true in the ancient world of Paul's day. And it is still true in the modern, advanced world of our day. At his heart, sinful man is an idolator. The **chief sin** of man is that he refuses to glorify God. Sinful man will worship anything or anyone except his Creator. For this reason, God is angry. God has every right to be angry with sinners. God's anger is completely justified.

That brings us now to...

c. The revelation of God's wrath (vv. 24-32).

Now, I have to warn you, as we drive through this section of **Romans 1**, it is the darkest part of the tunnel. My dad was a career army man who fought in the Vietnam War. And he used to tell me that in the jungles of Vietnam, it was so dark at night that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. It was the darkest place he'd ever been. That's how this passage is. It's the darkest part of the tunnel.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote a four-volume commentary on **Romans**. And he called this text

the most terrible passage in all the Bible. He's right. There are numerous passages in the Bible that deal with human sin and divine judgment. But there is no other single passage quite like this one. And one of the many things that is so astonishing about this passage is that it is like a **snapshot of American culture**. It is a **clear and dramatic portrait of our national sins**. We are indeed living in **Romans 1**.

Now, we know that God is angry with sinners. And we know why God is angry with sinners. But not until now does Paul explain **what the wrath of God is**. The text that is before us in **vv. 24-32** is so critical to our understanding because **it reveals the nature of God's wrath**.

And as we think about the nature of God's wrath one particular verse that speaks to this is...

Psalm 90:11, "Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?"

The power of God is beyond human comprehension. God is far more powerful than you realize. God demonstrates His power in many ways. God demonstrates His power in His ability **to create** the world by the mere breath of His mouth. God demonstrates His power in His ability **to sustain** all things. God demonstrates His power in His ability **to govern and rule** all things. God is an infinitely powerful being.

But another way that God demonstrates His power is in His ability **to judge** the world. God's power to judge the world is awesome! Who understands the power of God's anger? No one fully understands the power of God's anger! But even a limited understanding of the power of God's anger is enough for us to fear Him.

So what is the nature of God's wrath? How does God express His wrath? God expresses His wrath in multiple ways:

1. Cataclysmic wrath.

This is when God has brought catastrophic judgment upon the world like in the global flood (Gen. 6-8) and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19).

2. Consequential wrath.

This is the principle of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7). God is a moral being. And His creation reflects His moral nature. God has made the world in such a way that there are natural, built consequences to sin. If a person sows sin, he/she will reap destruction.

3. Eschatological wrath.

This is the final day of the Lord. This is that time of future wrath at the end of the age during the tribulation period when God will unleash three series of wrath from heaven upon the world: the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 6-19).

4. Eternal wrath.

This is when unrepentant, unbelieving sinners are cast into hell forever. Hell is pictured as the lake of fire which burns forever and ever. Hell is the place of eternal, conscious punishment where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.

Who understands the power of God's anger! I tremble as I think of the power of God's anger.

But none of these expressions of God's wrath is what we find in **Romans 1**. We know that God is angry with sinners. And we know why God is angry with sinners. But how does God express His anger against sinners in **Romans 1**?

What we see in **Romans 1** is...

5. Abandoning wrath.

In **v. 18** Paul says, "For the wrath of God *is* revealed from heaven." Several weeks ago we noted that the verb "revealed" is **present tense**. And so when Paul speaks about the wrath of God here he is speaking about the wrath of God **that is right now being revealed** from heaven. As we gather here today, right now, the wrath of God is being poured out from heaven upon the world. How? By giving unrepentant, unbelieving sinners over to their sin. Paul says this not once, not twice, but three times (**vv. 24a, 26a, 28a**). These are some of the most frightening words in the Bible.

Now, the structure of **Romans 1:24-32** unfolds into three sections:

- 1) Man's abandonment to sexual perversity (vv. 24-25).
- 2) Man's abandonment to homosexuality (vv. 26-27).
- 3) Man's abandonment to a reprobate mind (vv. 28-32).

There appears to be a progression here of man spiraling further and further down into sin.

This morning we are only going to look at the **first section** in **vv. 24-25**. Next week we will begin to look at the **second section** which will take us several messages. There is a lot for us to consider in **vv. 26-27** especially given the times we are living in. And then we will look at the **third section** in **vv. 28-32** probably in just one message.

Last week I gave you chart/map of man's devolution (a map of **Romans 1:18-25**):

The clear and constant witness of God's self-revelation in creation (vv. 19-20).

Man knows God but suppresses the truth of God (vv. 18, 21).

Man refuses to worship God (v. 21)

Man's thinking becomes futile (v. 21).

Man's heart becomes foolish and darkened (v. 21).

Man becomes self-deceived about his true spiritual condition (v. 22).

Man worships idols instead of God (v. 23).

Man's abandonment to sexual perversity (vv. 24-25).

Let's now drive through the tunnel of these two verses beginning in...

v. 24 "Therefore"

Please notice how Paul continues to make logical arguments. He continues to make his case that sinful man is under the wrath of God.

He says...

"Therefore God"

Please notice that **God is the subject** here. Up to this point, in **vv. 18-23** Paul has primarily focused on what sinful man does to God:

1. Man suppresses the knowledge of God (v. 18).
2. Man does not glorify God (v. 21).
3. Man does not give thanks to God (v. 21).
4. Man exchanges the glory of God (v. 23).

And we talked last time about how when people refuse to worship God terrible things happen to them. There are **natural consequences** for rejecting God and for refusing to worship Him in vv. **21-22...**

- man's thinking becomes futile (v. 21).
- man's heart becomes darkened (v. 21).
- man becomes a fool (v. 22).

Remember, these are all **passive verbs** which speak, not of what man does, but what happens to man when he rejects God. When man refuses to worship God, futility indwells his mind, darkness settles in his heart, and he becomes a self-deceived fool, unable to see his true spiritual condition before God. These are the natural consequences of rejecting God.

But now in v. **24** Paul focuses on what God does to man...

"Therefore God gave them over"

God is the **subject** of the verb. God is the one doing the action. God is not passive. God is not a bystander. He is personally and actively involved in expressing His wrath against sinful man **by giving them over**. Giving them over to what? Giving them **over to sin**. This is **judicial abandonment**. This is **the wrath of abandonment**.

Listen, one way God punishes man's sin is **by giving man over to his sin**. But we must be very careful here: Paul is not saying that God makes people sin. These are people who are already immersed in sin. They already do not want God. They resist and suppress the knowledge of God. They want their sin. And at some point, **God has enough and He gives them over**. He lets them go. He lets them have their way. So God is not making them sin. He gives them over to the sin they already want. He removes the restraints of conscience and common grace and lets them go.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine a person who is involved in terrible things. And he is bent on continuing in those terrible things. In love, you try to restrain him and keep him from going down the road of destruction. But as he continues to fight and resist, you eventually let him go. This is what God does to sinners who are resolute in their rejection of Him and in their refusal to worship Him. God lets them go their own way as an act of judgment.

So listen very carefully, **God's punishment for sin is more sin. Sin is the punishment for sin**. God gives sinners over to their sin so that they spiral deeper and deeper into sin. And sin is its own punishment because it eventually brings misery and destruction.

ILLUSTRATION: Some commentators use the picture of **a boat in a river** as an illustration of what God does here. Picture sinful man sitting in a boat on a river. The sinner is paddling as hard as he can to get away from God. He does not want God. He wants to have his own way. But God is holding the back of the boat restraining man in his resistance. But as man continues to resist, eventually God lets go of the boat so that the sinner goes his own way down the river. But does

God simply let go of the boat or does He do more? I think he does more.

Doug Moo, “God does not simply let the boat go --- He gives it a push downstream. Like a judge who hands over a prisoner to the punishment his crime has earned, God hands over the sinner to the terrible cycle of ever-increasing sin.”

What is the particular sin that God hands sinners over to? The sin of sexual perversity... “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”

These are people who already gave themselves over to sexual perversity. They already wanted sexual sin. And in His judgment, God gave them over to the lusts of their hearts for sexual sin.

Some people think that God is a cosmic killjoy. Not so. God created us for pleasure and joy. God created us to enjoy Him and to enjoy His good gifts one of which is sexuality. We are sexual beings by God’s good and wise design. Human sexuality is not just for procreation, it is for pleasure. So listen carefully, sexuality is God’s idea. God created us to eat food not just for survival, but for pleasure (God gave us taste buds). And God created us to enjoy the pleasure of sexuality within marriage between a man and a woman. Sex within marriage between a man and a woman is a beautiful thing. It glorifies God!

But sinful man is **not content with God’s arrangement**. Sinful man does not want restrictions on his sexuality. Sinful man wants so-called sexual freedom. My body, my choice. I can do whatever I want with my body. I can have sex with whoever I want, whenever I want, even if that means murdering children. Man worships the god of sexual freedom. But the human body was not created for immorality (1 Cor. 6:13). We are to honor God with our bodies which is something sinners given over to sexual sin refuse to do.

Why do we live in a culture where sexual perversity is so rampant? Because God has given this nation over to its sins. When a nation, a culture, or a people reject God and refuse to worship God, God gives them over to their sexual lusts. Again, sexual perversity is worthy of God’s wrath and it is God’s wrath. So called sexual freedom is God’s judgment.

But why would God do this? Paul reminds us why in...

v. 25 “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

This is essentially a repetition of **v. 23**. When sinful man refuses to worship God and worships idols instead, God hands him over to his idols one of which is sexual sin. And so a culture that is immersed in sexual perversity is the consequence of idolatry.

When man refuses to worship God, terrible things happen. God gives man over to his sexual sin. And man thinks this is what will make him happy. This is the “lie” that Paul mentions in **v. 25**.

The lie is that you don’t need God, that you can live without God and be happy. But living without God sooner or later brings misery and destruction.

So-called sexual freedom does not bring freedom. It brings bondage, guilt, regret, and shame.

Real freedom is found in obeying God.

Conclusion: Now, this leads to a really big question: When God gives people over to their sins, is it terminal? For many, many people it is. Many, many people will do nothing but continue to paddle their boat away from God not realizing that there is a waterfall downstream. And eventually they go over the edge and fall to their everlasting destruction. For many, many people, when they are given over to their sins they eventually die in their sins and suffer the eternal wrath of God in hell. But it doesn't have to be that way. Why? Because God is a God of mercy. If the sinner will turn from his sins and cry out to God for mercy, God will save him.

One reason God hands people over to their sins is to bring them to the end of their sin so that they will cry out to Him for salvation. In His mercy, God lets people see the misery, destruction, and emptiness of life without Him, so that men will call upon His name.

And so how does God express His wrath?

In...

1. Cataclysmic wrath.
2. Consequential wrath.
3. Eschatological wrath.
4. Eternal wrath.

And as we have seen this morning in **Romans 1**, in...

5. Abandoning wrath.

But there is another way God expresses His wrath, in...

6. Redemptive wrath.

This is the wrath of God that Jesus experienced in our place on the cross for our sins.

Romans 8:32

“delivered over” is the same verb used in **Romans 1:24, 26, 28** (**παραδίδωμι**/paradidomi).

God gives sinners over to their sin as an act of judgment. God also gave Jesus over to our sin as an act of judgment. God the Father gave Jesus over to suffer the wrath of God to pay the price for our sins. The wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all of our ungodliness and unrighteousness that was laid upon Jesus who died for us. This is the redemptive wrath of God. May the name of Jesus be praised forever!