

## ABANDONED TO HOMOSEXUALITY ROMANS 1:26–27

### INTRODUCTION

For several weeks now, we have been studying Paul's teaching on **the wrath of God** as **His righteous response to human rebellion**.

As we've learnt, God has a **holy and intense hatred for sin** which is expressed in the present by His **judicial abandonment** of mankind.

That is, God gives us over to our sinful impulses.

As **R. C. Sproul** wrote, "*We become slaves to the things that we want to do.*"<sup>1</sup>

Paul refers to this with his repeated phrase, "**God gave them over...**" which gives us **the theme of this section** of his letter.

Here, from **verses 24–31**, Paul is discussing **HOW God demonstrates His wrath** towards human rebellion.

We've also learnt that the **apex of human rebellion** is man's rejection of the worship of God for the **corrupted worship of idolatry**.

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Romans*, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 50.

To say that simply, **the essence of sin is idolatry.**<sup>2</sup>

Sexual sin is then **a consequence of man's rejection** of the Creator for the worship of His creation.

**Paul links sexual sin to idolatry** elsewhere, as we find in **Colossians 3:5**, “**Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.**”

Paul wants us as his readers to understand that the **corruption of human sexuality** is a **result of man's wretched rebellion** against God, and **God's wrathful response** to man.

So then, as we learnt this past Sunday, **the first demonstration** of God's wrath is the **corruption of human sexuality**.

Just as all people have been **corrupted in their worship of God** because they have rejected the knowledge of God, so we see that all people have been **corrupted in their sexuality** because God “gives them over” in punishment.

So we find that **sin becomes the punishment of sin.**

Since the rebellion of sin is **universal to all people**, so the punishment of a **corrupted sexuality is universal too.**

That is, **God's judicial abandonment** is seen in sexual sin which is common to all people—both men and women.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Andrew David Naselli, *Romans: A Concise Guide to the Greatest Letter Ever Written* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 42.

That brings us to the **second demonstration** of God's wrath which Paul will describe in the text before us today.

Paul has been describing mankind as **caught in a death spiral** of sin which brings judgement, leading to further sin and consequent judgement.

In other words, God's wrath against man **intensifies** as he hardens his heart against God in the **intensified rebellion of idolatry**.

**The more man is corrupted** in his worship, giving himself over to idolatry, **the more God gives him over** to further corruption, leading to greater depths of depravity.

As mankind hardens its heart against God, it leads to a **rejection of His created order** and, as a result, **a rejection of the natural sexual relationship** between men and women.

Rejecting God's design for sex in marriage, men and women **plumb the depths of their depravity** as they degenerate into **unnatural sexual relationships**.

That is, man's intensified rebellion against the worship of God leads to God's judicial abandonment of men and women to the **further corruption of their sexuality** in **homosexuality**.

Simply put, **mankind is abandoned to homosexuality**.

For Paul, the corruption of men and women in homosexuality is **convincing evidence** of **man's rebellion** and **God's wrath**.

Homosexuality is the **obvious example** of **sin being the punishment of sin**.

This point is important to note because Paul is **not singling homosexuality out** as the **grossest or most repulsive** of sins.

If anything, Paul would **single out idolatry** as the **apex of human rebellion**.

Neither is Paul singling homosexuals out as **uniquely or uncommonly sinful**, as if they stand apart from the rest of humanity in **some special category**.

Rather, Paul is highlighting homosexuality as **the clearest example of human corruption** that demonstrates the judicial **abandonment of God**.

In other words, **every one of us might fall to such depths** of depravity if we harden our hearts against God in idolatry and experience the consequent wrath of God.

As **R. C. Sproul** comments—

*“When the apostle Paul describes the radical corruption of the human race, he sees the sin of homosexual behaviour as the sin most representative of the radical nature of our fall.*

*It is seen here not simply as a sin, nor even as a serious sin or a gross sin, but as the clearest expression of the depths of our perversity.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Sproul, *Romans*, 51.

**In Paul's day**, homosexuality was certainly clear evidence of the **corruption of humanity and the moral decay of society** in the Roman Empire.

**Some have claimed** that “*fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals.*”<sup>4</sup>

Whether that is **accurate or not**, homosexuality was rampant within Roman culture.

**One Roman historian** wrote about **Julius Caesar's perversity** that, “*He was reputed to be the lover of many women and many men, which gave rise to the saying that he was ‘every woman's man and every man's woman.’*”<sup>5</sup>

That same perversity **characterises our culture today** in the **growing acceptance and celebration** of homosexuality.

However, we must not miss Paul's point that the **present-day LGBTQIA movement** and the increasing number of male and female homosexuals is a **result of mankind's idolatry and God's judicial abandonment**.

Men and women come to **behave like lustful animals** because of their hardness of heart, preferring the corrupted worship of creation instead of the faithful worship of the Creator.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews, 1957), 25.

<sup>5</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, translated by Robert Graves (Penguin Classics, 1957, revised 2007), 28–29.

<sup>6</sup> “*He looks derogatorily at them as sex-animals.*” S. Lewis Johnson Jr., *Discovering Romans: Spiritual Revival for the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 36.

By way of introduction then, it's important for us to consider the **modern relevance** of what Paul is explaining in the text before us today.

Paul has described the **paganism of his day** in terms of idolatry, which is evident even in our day as a **'new paganism,'** or **'neopaganism'** as it is otherwise called.

Theologian **Peter Jones** insightfully links the **revival of paganism** with the **increasing depravity of the sexual sin** embraced and celebrated in society.

**He writes**, "*The recent radical changes in our society, include, simultaneously, both the liberation of sex and the rediscovery of pagan mystical spirituality.*"<sup>7</sup>

As such, the **sexual perversion** we see in our culture is the **fruit of neopagan spirituality**.<sup>8</sup>

**Rosaria Butterfield**, who was herself a **devout lesbian** before converting to Christianity, recognises the same link.

**She wrote**, "*Homosexuality is inherently pagan, where men see themselves as god and everything shares the same essential nature.*"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Jones, "Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 3 (2000): 445.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Peter R. Jones, "Sexual Perversion: The Necessary Fruit of Neo-Pagan Spirituality in the Culture at Large," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 265.

<sup>9</sup> Rosaria Butterfield, *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 97.

See also, Rosaria Butterfield, "Are We Living Out Romans 1?," *Desiring God*, accessed April 4, 2025, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/are-we-living-out-romans-1>.

**Though the link** between this new paganism and the rampant sexual immorality of our culture should be obvious after what we have learnt from **Romans 1**,

**many do not recognise** that role that an **ideology like feminism** plays in promoting the **homosexual revolution**.

**Feminism is an ideology** that challenges traditional gender roles, family structures, and societal norms.<sup>10</sup>

However, the **new paganism** of our culture **promotes feminism** as an expression of its rebellion against God.<sup>11</sup>

**Think of it like this**—in the **idolatry of neopaganism**, **mankind rejects the distinctions** between God and creation, between good and evil, and eventually, between male and female.<sup>12</sup>

These distinctions are **essential truths that mankind rejects** in its suppression of the truth.

As the corruption of man **affects his mind and ability to think rationally**, he becomes more **committed to the deception** that these essential distinctions do not exist.

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion on the terms 'gender' and 'sex,' see Denny Burk, "Mere Complementarianism," ed. Jonathan Swan, *Eikon: A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (Spring and Fall 2019): 28–42.

<sup>11</sup> "Not many are willing to consider feminism as a major driving force of the neo-pagan ideal." Peter Jones, *Biblical Foundations*, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview: Exposing Christianity's Greatest Threat* (Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale Press, 2015), 65–66.

As **Rosaria Butterfield** writes, “*The category sacred to feminism is women’s equality with men in all things—to the point of denying the creation ordinance and basic biology. Under feminism, men and women are interchangeable.*”<sup>13</sup>

Because man believes God and creation are **interchangeable in worship**, he ultimately comes to believe that men and woman are **interchangeable in their social roles and sexual relationships** with one another.

What we don’t often recognise, then, is that the **new paganism** of our day is **driving the new sexuality of our culture**.

It begins with **radical feminism** which seeks to **deconstruct heterosexuality** and the unique roles of men and women.<sup>14</sup>

That makes way for **homosexuality** to **reconstruct human sexuality** and roles into a **pure form of pagan sexuality**.

Therefore, we need to recognise that **feminism**, and its dislike of anything uniquely masculine, eventually leads to **advocating for the validity of homosexuality**.<sup>15</sup>

Within the church, so-called **‘evangelical feminism’** can go as far as emphasising the feminine attributes of God, interpreting Scripture from a woman’s perspective, and referring to God in feminine terms, such as ‘Mother.’

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<sup>13</sup> Butterfield, *Five Lies*, 154.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Peter Jones, JETS, 446, fn. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 237–249.

Coming full circle then, it promotes **this false 'god' and a false sexuality** as the **rejection** of the truth about God leads to a **rejection** of His created order for men and women.

So there is an **undeniable link** that we often overlook between the **new paganism** of our day and its **two-pronged attack** on human sexuality.

Neopaganism uses **feminism** to **break down the distinctions** between men and women so that they are interchangeable in every way, and **homosexuality** then **builds up the idea** that men and women are interchangeable in sexual relationships.

As **Rosaria Butterfield** admits, "*Feminism was my religion before Christianity was.... Feminism and lesbianism fused together in my worldview. Feminism was the blood that pumped my lesbianism into life. My feminism was my idol.*"<sup>16</sup>

**So then**, the corruption of worship in idolatry leads to the corruption of man in **sexual ethics**, resulting in **increasingly-depraved passions and practices** as God abandons mankind to be punished by the consequences of its own sins.

That is why it is essential for us as believers to **maintain the biblical distinctions** between God and creation, between good and evil, and between male and female.

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<sup>16</sup> Butterfield, *Five Lies*, 155–156.

In Christ, we are called to the **restoration of our knowledge and worship of God**, as well as the **restoration of our sexual morality** in both desire and deed.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, we find that **God cares deeply** about His people maintaining the **strict distinction** between men and women.

Therefore, God commands us to be **masculine men and feminine women**.

In **Deuteronomy 22:5**, Moses commands that men and women maintain the **distinction of masculinity and femininity** in **what they wear**, “**A woman shall not wear man’s clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God.**”

**Turn to 1 Corinthians 11** as we’ll see that not only our clothing, but **even our hair is theological**.

The way we dress and the way we cut our hair reflects what we believe about God.

**In answer to a question** about head coverings for women, Paul explains in **1 Corinthians 11** that women do need to cover their heads, but not with a cloth or man-made headwear, rather with the long hair that God gives to women as a **display of their unique femininity**.

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<sup>17</sup> “The four major challenges the church faces today in its sexual ethics are feminism, postmarital sexual libertinism, transgenderism, and homosexuality. Each of these is a part of neopaganism. Feminism overturns the biblical ideal of the woman; sexual libertinism severs sex from marriage and encourages men and women to act sexually without respect to morality; transgenderism rebels against the very concept of divine design in terms of identity and appearance; homosexuality revolts against sacred order in terms of sexual identity and practice.” Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2019), 202.

As he argues **1 Corinthians 11:14-16**—

**14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him,**

**15 but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.**

**16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other [literally: 'such'] practice, nor have the churches of God.**

Clearly, **God is not a feminist**—He has created men and women with the distinctions of masculinity and femininity and expects that to be reflected in our clothing and our hairstyles.

As **Andy Naselli** comments—

*“God created males to look and act like males and females to look and act like females.... Nature teaches men to look and act like men in their culture and teaches women to look and act like women.”*<sup>18</sup>

It is this distinction that is **corrupted by feminism** that lays the foundations for **homosexual passions and practices**.

In fact, Paul appeals in **1 Corinthians 11:14** to “**nature**,” which is **God's regular or established order of things**.<sup>19</sup>

That is **the very natural order** that Paul contends in **Romans 1** that homosexuals **exchange and abandon** in their sexual sin.

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew David Naselli, “1 Corinthians,” in *Romans–Galatians*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. X, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 317.

<sup>19</sup> BDAG, φύσις.

That is why **one author** wrote, “When people trade away the God of creation for other gods, they also trade away the design of God’s creation for a parody of that design.”<sup>20</sup>

That is precisely Paul’s point as he **explains that God has judicially abandoned** mankind **to homosexuality**.

## PROPOSITION

**With that introduction**, let’s turn our attention to the details of the text as we study **Romans 1:26–27**.

Here, Paul explains the **abandonment of men and women to homosexuality** in **three steps**:

1. **The reasons (26)**
2. **The reality (26–27)**
3. **The result (27)**

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<sup>20</sup> Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 109.

## 1. THE REASONS (26)

Paul continues on his **subject of the wrath of God**, and while the consequences of man's rejection of God are severe enough in the corruption of human sexuality, **man does not turn in repentance but further hardens his heart** against the truth.

Therefore, **man intensifies his rebellion** against God and God responds with **another, more intense, demonstration** of His wrath against human rebellion.

Paul explains the **abandonment to homosexuality** as he begins **verse 26**—

**For this reason God gave them over to dishonourable passions...**

The phrase, “**For this reason**” points us **back to verse 25** and the **insanity of idolatry** as men and women, “**exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...**”

Therefore, we can see in **verse 26** a **repetition of the same reasons** that explained the **corruption of heterosexuality** that we considered last Sunday.

**The two reasons** for God's judicial abandonment of mankind to homosexuality are **man's wretched rebellion in idolatry**, and **God's wrathful response to idolatry**.

Let's consider them again briefly as we find them in **verse 26**.

## a. Man's wretched rebellion

What is important to note as we consider these **two reasons** for a second time is that Paul is not being needlessly repetitive.

**This is not simply a restatement** of what he has already said, but the **reality of the escalation of both** the sin of man and the response of God in punishing sin.

As we look at **verse 26**, Paul is clearly indicating that man **continues undeterred down the path** of his rebellion and self-destruction by **hardening his heart** in the false worship of creation.

We see that in the words, "**For this reason**," which indicate that man is **not deterred from his wretched rebellion** of idolatry by the consequences he experiences as God "gives him over" to his sin.

As we established last week, **God is not the cause of man's sin** because His wrathful abandonment is a **response to man's wilful rebellion**.

As **James 1:13-14** says—

<sup>13</sup> **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

<sup>14</sup> **But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.**

We are given over to the sinful things **that we want to do**.

Therefore, **the first reason** that men and women are abandoned to homosexuality is their own wretched rebellion.

## b. God's wrathful response

The **second reason** that men and women are abandoned to homosexuality is **God's response to their sin**, as we see in **verse 26** again, "**God gave them over to dishonourable passions...**"

Homosexuality is the **second demonstration** of God's wrath.

God takes the **second step in "handing over"** mankind to its **sinful passions and practices**.

As we've established already in the previous sermons, this is **God's just response to sin** because **He is holy and righteous** and is therefore **compelled by who He is** to punish sin.

It is, as we've been saying, a **"judicial abandonment."**

**Specifically**, Paul states that God abandons men and women to "**dishonourable passions**."

There is **clever wordplay** here as Paul indicates that the consequence of humanity's **refusal to honour God** as Creator is that men and women **become dishonoured**.

In **verse 24**, we saw that our **bodies become dishonoured** as a punishment for idolatry, but here Paul states that the **dishonour penetrates deeper into the inner man**—we are dishonoured in the corruption of who we are.

**We see this in the contrast** between the “**lusts**” that Paul refers to in **verse 24** and the “**passions**” here in **verse 26**.

Though we might think the **two terms to be synonymous**, there is an important and telling difference that describes the **escalation of God’s punishment**.

The **Greek term** for “**passions**” is the **narrower and intenser word**.

These “**passions**” refer to the “*diseased condition out of which the lusts spring.*”<sup>21</sup>

The earlier term “**lusts**” are then **the evil desires and longings** that **grow out of the passions** we have—passions that **degenerate from natural affections to unnatural**.

**The degeneration is then pictured** as man being given over to more corrupted “passions,” along with a loss of control.

**In this loss of control**, men and women—as if men and women behave like **lustful animals** who are enslaved to their cravings.

As **one author** notes, “*Thus it appears that the divine punishment was the more severe, in that they were given over to a condition, and not merely to an evil desire.*”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

There are **two important implications** as we seek to understand the human heart and the culture that we live in.

**First**, Paul condemns **not only homosexual activity**, but also **same-sex lust and passion**.<sup>23</sup>

This is critical in light of the so-called **“gay Christian”** movement which teaches that Christians can remain in a state of **same-sex attraction** as long as they do not translate that into action.

As a leading proponent of this movement, **Sam Allberry** claims in his book ***Is God Anti-Gay?***, “*I believe that change is possible, but a complete change of sexual orientation is never promised in the Bible.*”<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to that, Paul would **unflinchingly argue** that God is indeed “anti-gay” since it is a **perversion of His created order**.

Further, God views **both the passions and the practices** of homosexuality to be sin, so we should unashamedly proclaim the gospel’s call to **repent of both the desires and the deeds**.

In other words, a **change in sexual orientation** is not only possible but it is promised as the **result of the saving power** of God in the gospel because homosexual orientation is evidence of God’s judicial abandonment.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 104.

<sup>24</sup> Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible and Same-Sex Attraction*, Questions Christians Ask Series (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2013), 48.

As **Rosaria Butterfield** stated so well, “*Gay Christianity... is false teaching.... How sad indeed for someone who is already weighed down by sin to be denied the true remedy for the problem. That is what gay Christianity does. It denies the sexual sinner repentance and immerses [them] in the futile task of trying to domesticate [their] sin.*”<sup>25</sup>

**Second**, Paul teaches that the corruption of human sexuality brings with it a corruption of men and women’s ability to **feel ashamed by their sin**.

After the fall, Adam and Even were **ashamed of their nakedness**.

In **Romans 6:21**, Paul writes of the **former sins of his readers** as, “**the things of which you are now ashamed.**”

However, as God abandons mankind to homosexuality, He also **abandons them to a loss of shame**.

That is why they are given over to “**dishonourable**” or “**disgraceful**” or “**shameful**” passions.<sup>26</sup>

Men and women **no longer feel ashamed of their sin**, and **because there is no shame there is also no restraint** upon that sin as we can see in society as it embraces and celebrates all manner of depravity in sexual sin.

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<sup>25</sup> Butterfield, *Five Lies*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Barclay M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 2010), ἀτιμία.

In the words of **one author**, “The sex which is naturally most shamefaced is in this instance the most shameless.”<sup>27</sup>

**These two implications** bring us from the reasons from the abandonment of mankind to homosexuality to the reality of this punishment for sin.

## 2. THE REALITY (26–27)

In the remainder of **verse 26, and into verse 27**, Paul describes the **reality of the homosexual practices** to which both men and women are abandoned by God in just punishment for their hardened idolatry.

In doing so, Paul **explains how God gave them** over to **dishonourable passions**<sup>28</sup>—

<sup>26</sup> ... for their females exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

<sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the males abandoned the natural function of the female and burned in their desire toward one another, males with males committing indecent acts...

Here Paul explains both the **corruption of female homosexuality**, and the **corruption of male homosexuality**.

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<sup>27</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879), 27.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Stanley E. Porter and David I. Yoon, *Romans: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Lidija Novakovic, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023), 30.

His point is **not so much to differentiate the two**, but rather to **describe the complete corruption** of humanity as God responds in wrath to both men and women who reject Him.

In the words of **Kevin DeYoung**—

*“Those who suppress the truth about God as revealed in nature suppress the truth about themselves written in nature. Homosexual practice is an example on a horizontal plane of our vertical rebellion against God.”*<sup>29</sup>

With that in mind, **let’s consider first** the corruption of female homosexuality.

### a. The corruption of female homosexuality

As Paul says in **verse 26**, **“their females exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.”**

He uses **the same language** of **“exchange”** that we see in **verse 23** to describe **mankind exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God** for an idolatrous image of man and other creatures.

Paul is thereby **cleverly reminding us again** that this sexual sin is a **consequence of the greater sin of idolatry**.

It is rebellion on the **horizontal plane** that flows from the **greater rebellion** against God on the **vertical plane**.

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<sup>29</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 52.

What is important for us to notice here is that **Paul deliberately chooses the word “females”** instead of a more common word like, **“women.”**

**This language**, together with the corresponding **“males” of verse 27**, **emphasises the sexual distinctiveness** of male and female.

Paul is not simply stating, but is **deliberately emphasising** that sexual relations with the same sex **violate the distinctions God intended** in the creation of man and woman.<sup>30</sup>

We have **already carefully established** that mankind's **failure to distinguish** between men and women is because of the **failure to distinguish** between Creator and creation.

**This corruption of our minds**, whereby we can no longer recognise the distinction between males and females, is **exemplified in the ideology of feminism**, as we've already noted.

But Paul elaborates to teach that **man's willing embrace of this deception leads, by God's judicial design**, to the corruption of sexual practices that stray further from God's design.

**The further mankind runs in rebellion** from the worship of God, the further it runs from the **created order and design** of God.

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<sup>30</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 103.

Here we see specifically that because women refuse to worship **according to God's design**, they cannot enjoy sexual intimacy **according to God's design**.

Paul describes this **corruption as the exchange** of **“the natural function for that which is unnatural.”**

Though Paul is using **euphemism** to describe this sexual sin **without being vulgar or graphic**, he is nevertheless perfectly clear.

This **“natural function”** refers to **sexual intercourse** according to the **intention of the Creator**.<sup>31</sup>

That is, the natural order of creation plainly indicates that **sexual intimacy is designed for one man and one women** to enjoy in the context of marriage.

Homosexuality is therefore **“unnatural,”** in that it **rebels against the intention of the Creator** to pursue sexual intimacy in a manner that the female body was never designed to accommodate.

Paul is clear, then, that the corruption of female homosexuality is **“against nature,”** not simply **against culture, or societal convention**.

This also means that homosexuality is a **greater act of sinful rebellion** than heterosexuality outside the bounds of marriage.

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<sup>31</sup> “The expression ‘sexual role’ (χρησις) literally meant ‘use’ but is commonly found in circumlocutions for sexual intercourse.” Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 109.

At the same time, it is a **greater demonstration of God's wrath** as He abandons women to greater depths of their depravity, along with the **miserable consequences** thereof.

Though Paul certainly **doesn't mean to differentiate** male and female homosexuality as if one was worse than the other, the corruption of female homosexuality is **nevertheless profoundly disturbing**.

There is a **feminine delicacy** that belongs to women which makes their homosexual indulgence so **disturbing in its degeneracy**.<sup>32</sup>

Not only do female homosexuals **abandon** God's design for sexual intimacy, but they invariably **abandon** God's design for **feminine beauty and delicacy**.

Have you ever noticed that the longer on woman indulges her homosexual passions and practices, the more she looks and acts like a man?

This is an indictment not only of women, but of the culture that embraces and celebrates lesbianism.

As commentator **Charles Hodge** notes, "*Paul first refers to the degradation of females among the heathen, because they are always the last to be affected in the decay of morals, and their corruption is therefore proof that all virtue is lost.*"<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 47.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 63.

That brings us to **consider, second**, the corruption of male homosexuality.

## b. The corruption of male homosexuality

**With similar language**, Paul describes the corruption of men in **homosexual passion and practice** in **verse 27**—

**and in the same way also the males abandoned the natural function of the female and burned in their desire toward one another, males with males committing indecent acts...**

Here we see, again, the **consistent theme** in this section that as man abandons God, **God's wrathful response** is to abandon man.

However, God abandons man to the sin **to which man was already himself giving himself over.**

We find that in **Ephesians 4:19**, **“They, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”**

**That is Paul's point** here in **verse 27** as he refers to the males who abandoned sexual intercourse with women for the **corrupted practice of sex with men.**

Just as we observe the **corruption of femininity** within homosexual practice, so we see here that Paul refers to the **corruption of masculinity within the same.**

As he describes it, men “**burned in their desire toward one another.**”

This is an **intense form of lust** as God gives men over to **become “inflamed,”** as if they were **set on fire** with the passion of lust.

It is an **all-consuming corruption** that affects not just the sexual relationships of men, **but their masculinity too.**

We can **observe that in two ways**—either male homosexuals start to **look and act like females**, or they distort masculinity into a **wretched brutality.**

Paul refers to **both directions** of corruption in **1 Corinthians 6:9** with the related terms, “**effeminate**” and “**homosexuals.**”

**While not exclusive to men,** it is nevertheless typical to observe that the corruption of male homosexuality produces **acts of unspeakable perversity** as they plumb the depths of human depravity.

We see this particularly in their **sexual abuse of minors** in everything from **drag queens** who want to interact with children in schools and libraries, to the abomination of two males **adopting children** in a corrupted form of family.

These are the kinds of things Paul has in mind when he writes in **Ephesians 5:12** that, “**It is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.**”

It is unsurprising, then, to see Paul refer to “**males with males committing indecent acts.**”

The term here for “**indecent**” can also be translated as **shameless or disgraceful**.<sup>34</sup>

The **clearest illustration** of this is found in **Genesis 19**.

**Turn there** as we briefly look at the account of **Sodom and Gomorrah**.

As you see in the **first three verses**, God sends two angels who **take on human appearance** in order to deliver a message to Lot.

When he meets them in the city, he invites them into his home, but not before the two messengers are **noticed by the men of the city**.

Then, as we read in **Genesis 19:4-5**—

**4 The men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, from young to old, all the people from every quarter;**  
**5 and they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them.”**

The **depravity and brutality** of male homosexuality is exemplified by the men of Sodom who, from the **youngest to the oldest**, came together in a **mob** in order to **gang rape two other men**.

The fact that they failed because the angels struck them and God destroyed them by fire **does not diminish the shameless, disgraceful nature** of their sexual passions and practices.

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<sup>34</sup> BDAG, ἀσχημοσύνη.

That is why **Jude 7** refers to the men of **Sodom and Gomorrah** indulging in “**gross sexual immorality**” and going after “**strange flesh**.”

Now, as we consider again the **corruption of both men and women** in homosexuality, we see clearly that they are **universally corrupted** and also **universally condemned** in the passions and practices of homosexuality.

As God reveals His holy standards in **Leviticus 18:22**, He declares that, “**You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.**”

Of course, we understand that this does not uniquely single out male homosexuality from female homosexuality.

Rather, it clearly communicates **God's condemnation of this sin** as an “**abomination**.”

This term is found frequently in **Leviticus and Deuteronomy** as it refers to an act that is **abhorrent, repugnant, or repulsive**.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly, it is used to **describe both idolatry** as well as **the sexual sin that results** from the corruption of worship.

Therefore, Scripture is clear in **condemning both the desires and the deeds** of homosexuality.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, vol. 3A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 246.

As Paul warns in **1 Corinthians 6:9–10**, “**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals... will inherit the kingdom of God.**”

Homosexuality is **neither natural nor morally neutral** as our culture claims.

As we see clearly here in **Romans 1**, it is a **corruption of God's created order** and a violation of His revealed will, and those who engage in it will **face His judgment**—both now and in the future.

Based on what we've just seen, we can draw **one further implication** from Paul's words that is important as a **counter to the lie** that we are presented with by the world.

Since homosexuality is **contrary to nature**, that is, contrary to God's created order, it is clear that **no one is born a homosexual**.

Homosexuality is the **wilful rebellion of men and woman** against God.

That our culture believes otherwise is **only further evidence** of mankind's rejection of God for idolatry and the consequent corruption of the human mind so the men and woman can **no longer think rationally or recognise the truth**.

### 3. THE RESULT (27)

**Finally**, as we look at the **end of verse 27**, we see Paul explain **the result of God's abandonment** of men and women to homosexuality—

**...receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**

Given that Paul is discussing **the wrath of God** as the just punishment of human rebellion, it makes sense to see Paul describe the result of abandonment as **“the due penalty.”**

However, the term **“due”** refers **more literally** to something that is **“necessary.”**<sup>36</sup>

It is a **“necessity of law and command”** as in the recompense for sin that is **due by the law of God.**<sup>37</sup>

So Paul is arguing that the punishment of homosexual sin is **“necessary”** because **God could not allow** His created order to be so violated without there being a just punishment.<sup>38</sup>

This **“penalty”** or **punishment** is **necessary** because of what Paul refers to as the **“error”** of male homosexuals, though we should understand it to **apply equally to females.**

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<sup>36</sup> BDAG, δεῖ.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), δεῖ.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 127.

This “**error**” is not merely a “**miscalculation**” as we typically use the term today.

The term refers to being **misled or drawn from the right path**—it is “*behaviour which deviates seriously from that which is morally correct.*”<sup>39</sup>

So a better translation is “**perversion,**” so that homosexuals receive from God “the necessary penalty for their perversion.”

Paul describes the actual punishment as something received “**in their own persons.**”

We already know that **sin is the punishment of sin**, and so we should understand this punishment to be **the sexual perversion itself** as the punishment for abandoning the true God.<sup>40</sup>

The sin, though, brings with it **inescapable consequences** so that, as **one author** put it, “*They would be judged by the self-destructiveness of their sin.*”<sup>41</sup>

But just as Paul has described **this sin as “unnatural,”** so we should expect it to have **particularly “unnatural” consequences.**<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Louw & Nida, 88.262, πλάνη.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 126–127.

<sup>41</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 107.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: Justification by Faith*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 181.

While many people **quickly associate HIV/ AIDS** with such consequences, **we should not restrict** the “**penalty**” that Paul is referring to to such a narrow application.

It may well be **a measure of God's wrath**, but we should also understand His punishment of this sin more broadly as the **self-destruction that the sin brings** upon men and women.

As **one commentator** wrote, “*The recompense is the gnawing unsatisfied lust itself, together with the dreadful physical and moral consequences of debauchery.*”<sup>43</sup>

Such is the **inescapable result** of being abandoned by God to homosexuality.

## CONCLUSION

**As we conclude**, we have study Paul's description of the **death spiral of human depravity** that man is caught in.

As man **intensifies his rebellion against God**, God intensifies His rejection of man as He **judicially abandons** men and women to homosexuality.

Paul has explained this abandonment in **three steps**—the **reasons**, the **reality**, and the devastating **result**.

**The implications** of what Paul has written certainly help us to understand the perversity of the culture within which we live.

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<sup>43</sup> Shedd, *Romans*, 29.

However, we are once again called to remember the **saving power of God in the gospel**.

While the world rejects the truth, we should be **completely unashamed of the gospel** because it is the only hope of those under the condemnation of God.

This gospel hope is expressed in those same words we remembered last week in **1 Corinthians 6:11**—

**And 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.**

**As those who have been saved** from the wrath of God ourselves, **we should be the most humble and enthusiastic** evangelists of those enslaved to the **passions and practices** of homosexuality.

Those who are enslaved to the deception of idolatry need the **truth of God**, along with the **power of God** in the gospel that **renews their minds** in order to recognise and believe the truth.<sup>44</sup>

So as we consider the corruption of men and women in homosexuality, let us be like Paul and **enthusiastically commit ourselves** to preaching Christ for, as he would say,

**“I am not ashamed of the gospel...”**

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<sup>44</sup> “A person’s well-being is never disconnected from truth, because truth is not only true, it is better, it is beautiful, it is ethical, and it is lovely.” Rosaria Butterfield, “Are We Living Out Romans 1?,” *Desiring God*, accessed April 4, 2025, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/are-we-living-out-romans-1>.

## BENEDICTION

*Now the Father who chose you,  
the Son who bought you,  
and the Spirit who dwells in you,  
go before you in your darkness,  
stand beside you in your fears  
and hold you up in your sorrows until Jesus comes.  
Amen.<sup>45</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *Grace Be with You: Benedictions from Dale Ralph Davis*, New Edition (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2019), 29.

Romans 1:26–27 LSB

1:26	<p>For this reason God gave them over          to dishonorable passions;          for their females exchanged          the natural function          that which is unnatural,          and in the same way also the males          abandoned the natural function of the female          and burned in their desire toward one another,          males with males committing indecent acts          and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.</p>	<p>Inference of 25          Result of 26a          Explains/ expands 26a–b          Explains/ expands 27a–b          Result of 27a–c</p>
1:27		

## Sermon Notes

### Introduction

Paul explains the abandonment of men and women to homosexuality in three steps:

1. The reasons (26)
2. The reality (26–27)
3. The result (27)

#### 1. The reasons (26)

- a. Man's wretched rebellion
- b. God's wrathful response

#### 2. The reality (26–27)

- a. The corruption of female homosexuality
- b. The corruption of male homosexuality

#### 3. The result (27)

### Conclusion