

The Wrath of Divine Abandonment Part 2

Romans 1:24-32

It has been a bittersweet experience, thus far, going through Paul's epistle verse by verse. And we still have yet a few chapters to go where Paul continues to bring home his point that man is under condemnation because of his sin. But, believe me, folks, the good news is coming. The good news is that we can have the righteousness of Christ.

But we come, again, to Romans chapter one. We have been focusing now on verses 24 through 32 and this will be the second in a two part series that I am doing on the wrath of divine abandonment. We continue to make our way verse by verse through this marvelous epistle.

Before we look at the text closely, I would like to get you to think with me for a moment. As a pastor every week I interact with a number of people who are struggling in profound ways with their sins. Not only within our congregation, but also with the listeners that we have in various parts of the world. And, of course, there is only so much that I can do to help them. My priority is you, not them. But the point is I am constantly hearing of what sin is doing to people's lives and it is devastating. It is absolutely devastating, marriages that are falling apart, folks that are unable to maintain relationships, families falling apart, people ruled by their sexual appetites, by their greed, by various addictions, men and women enslaved by life dominating sins.

And so often they are like the dog that returns to its vomit. They do them over and over and over and over again regardless of how many times you have warned them.

Some sins are particularly gross and prolonged. Others are subtle, hard to detect, but equally deadly in the end.

And what is fascinating is many times the people are blind to their own sin. It is always somebody else's fault. Or, well, you just don't understand. Some are sins of omission, others sins of commission. But they are all foolish. They are all irrational. They are all destructive. They are all acts of rebellion against God.

Sometimes people are suicidal. I have, I think, five people that I am working with right now who are falling in that category. And inevitably in those situations these are people who have no understanding of God. They have no humility of spirit. Typically they are blinded by pride and ignorance. More often than not they are in love with their sin more than the truth.

My point with all of this is to say sin is absolutely devastating. It is insanity. It is moral madness.

That is why Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:3, "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives."¹

¹ Ecclesiastes 9:3.

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And as we look at the Word of God and as we look at people around us we see that sin is always a downward spiral. It never takes you from a low place and moves you to a high place. It often leads people to the government welfare systems. Sometimes it moves people into the rescue missions. We see a lot of homeless people. And more often than not, these are people who are self-willed. They are unteachable, ungodly. They have squandered their lives and many times their fortunes for the fleeting pleasures of life.

As Paul has said, “They suppress the truth in unrighteousness and eventually God gives them over.”

Like the prodigal son in Luke 15 they hit bottom. You end up dining with pigs, right? Wallowing in the filth and the mire of the world. Some of you have been there. Some of you are on your way there unless you repent, unless you get serious about Christ.

Well, friends, this is where sin will take you. This is where God will allow you to go so that you will come to your senses. And this is what Paul is describing in this section of Scripture in Romans 1:24-32. There are three stages of abandonment that will ultimately be manifested in an idolatrous culture. And by way of review we will look, again, at the first two and then dwell on the third one. But each stage becomes progressively worse in its evil and therefore in its consequence. But, yet, each is a provision of God’s mercy in that he allows man to experience the far reaches of his depravity in order to get his attention so that he will repent. But if a man refuses, if a man refuses to humble himself in genuine repentance and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and submit to his lordship in every area of his life, this temporary and partial abandonment that so often occurs will become eternal and complete.

Jesus said in John 3:36, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”²

And for that person he will one day say, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.”³

By way of review, the first stage of the wrath of divine abandonment is God gives people over to sordid immorality, shameful, vile, degrading immorality.

Verse 24.

“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity.”⁴

This is carnal craving or longing for that which God forbids. This is a yearning for sexual immorality. Paul calls it impurity. It means uncleanness. This is habitual sexual immorality that destroys the body. We see that with sexually transmitted diseases, the

² John 3:36.

³ Matthew 25:41.

⁴ Romans 1:24.

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stress of guilt and broken relationships, unwanted pregnancies, the spiritual and physical trauma of abortion and on and on it goes.

That is why Paul says, "...that their bodies might be dishonored among them."⁵

You see, people that indulge in these types of activities dishonor their body. It literally means to treat the body with contempt, to despise it.

If I can add to what I shared with you last week to give you a further understanding of this, in Corinth, the place where Paul was when he wrote this epistle, you could find the cults of the gods of Egypt and Rome and Greece, some of the most blasphemous forms of idolatry. And the temple of Aphrodite was there, the goddess of love. It was located in the highest spot there in the middle on the [?]. And there was a temple as I told you last week filled with over 1000 prostitutes. And, bear in mind, this was a port city. A lot of sailors were there. What we might call traveling businessmen would come through there along with all the people that lived there. And they would spend their money worshipping and satisfying their lusts.

What a deceiver Satan is.

The city was so immoral that the name Corinth became a synonym for gross immorality even in that day.

Temple excavations in Corinth have revealed some amazing things. There they have found thousands of terra cotta votive offerings presented to Asclepius. This was the God of healing. Worshippers would come into the temple of Asclepius and they would sleep there in the temple and allow... there were hundreds of thousands of non poisonous snakes that they would sleep with and allow those snakes to come over their body thinking that that would somehow heal them.

In fact, the symbol of Asclepius was the snake and the medical emblem today comes partially from this ancient cult. You see a serpent entwined around a staff.

However, I might add that that this kind of demonic mythology can be traced all the way back to Egyptian and Sumerian and Babylonian cultism where we see similar symbols.

As a footnote, isn't it interesting how Satan loves to be symbolized as a crafty serpent even as he appeared to Eve in the garden? In fact, in Revelation 12:9 the Lord says that, "the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world,"⁶ is, indeed, the serpent of old. He is the serpent.

In various chambers of these temples that they have excavated they found many clay molds of various body parts, various limbs, hands, feet, fingers, noses, lips, ears even

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Revelation 12:9.

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female breasts, male and female genitals, et cetera. And these clay copies of human body parts would be hung all around the temple by the worshippers in need of healing.

So if you had one of these body parts that needed healing you would make this and you would hang it in the temple.

They did not know that their diseased body parts were the result of a deadly sexually transmitted disease called syphilis, a bacteria that can lie dormant for weeks if left unchecked will eventually kill you. What a picture of sin, right?

You disobey God and you think there is no consequences, but all the while the infection is building. Indeed, “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁷

Well, like the idolaters of today, the ancient pagans refused to worship the true God. And as Paul says here in verse 24, “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.”⁸

In fact, I believe that that macabre ghoulish scene of those body parts hanging around that temple must have influenced Paul’s thinking when he used the imagery of our bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit. What a contrast, we being a part of the body of Christ.

Well, dear friends, unless you live in a cave, you know that our culture is drowning in the idolatry of self and sex resulting in sordid immorality. And why is that? Paul tells us in verse 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.”⁹

So the first stage of divine abandonment is that of sordid immorality. And bear in mind, once again, this is a perversion of God’s intention for sexual relations within a marriage. And then, secondly, the second stage is that of shameless homosexuality. And this is an inversion of God’s intention for sexual relations, an inversion, also, of our natural instincts.

Verse 26.

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading [that is shameful, vile] passions; for their women exchanged the natural function [referring to sexual intercourse] for that which is unnatural.”¹⁰

⁷ Romans 6:23.

⁸ Romans 1:24.

⁹ Romans 1:25.

¹⁰ Romans 1:26.

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In other words, that which is contrary to the basic instincts that govern our behavior.

Verse 27.

“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.”¹¹

Remember the word burn, a powerful word. It means to be enflamed, to be ignited, to be set on fire. And because the grammar is in the passive voice, it can literally be translated, “They are set on fire in their desire.”

They become enflamed. They become consumed with a craving to become sexually involved with another man like the men of Sodom in Genesis 19 whom God blinded. Yet they were so on fire with desire they continued to exhaust themselves to break into Lot’s house.

I must pause for a moment. I confess I find it very difficult to speak of these things. They are reprehensible to me. I have had to deal with so many homosexual people. I love them and I pray for them and I have seen some of them come to Christ, but I certainly find no joy in these vivid descriptions. And last week I had to speak some concerning the bizarre sexual practices in the homosexual community. But, friends, I don’t want you to be deceived by the lies that are being advanced in our culture by the politically correct experts.

In Ephesians five Paul says in verse 11, “And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”¹²

I must be faithful to that end.

He went on to say, “For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.”¹³

And, indeed, the homosexual lifestyle is abominable to God. It is as dangerous as it is unspeakably violent, men, as Paul says, “men with men committing indecent acts.”¹⁴

And, frankly, if I were to tell you what I know goes on in that community from first hand conversations not only with those who are part of that community, but also with doctor friends and nurse friends that I have, if I were to tell you, most of you simply would not believe what I had to say.

¹¹ Romans 1:27.

¹² Ephesians 5:11.

¹³ Ephesians 5:12.

¹⁴ Romans 1:27.

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Parents, you need to explain this to your children. You need to use these warnings to explain to them of these dangers, because, again, Paul makes it very clear. These people burn in their lusts. It is way beyond anything that you can imagine in terms of heterosexual lust. And if I can be so bold. They want your sons.

It has been my experience that homosexuals are not born. They are recruited. You must guard your sons. And to think that they are now being welcomed into the military is absolutely incomprehensible.

The results are catastrophic. Paul says they receive “in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”¹⁵

According to the Family Research Institute, quote, “The median age of death for homosexuals is virtually the same nationwide. And over all,” they say, “less than two percent survive to old age. If AIDS was the cause of death the median age was 39. For the 829 gays who died of something other than AIDS,” this is in a research sample that they used, “the median age of death was 42. Nine percent died old. The 163 lesbians had a median age of death of 44. Only 20 percent died old. 2.8 percent of all gays die violently. They were 116 times more apt to be murdered, 24 times more apt to commit suicide and had a traffic accident death rate eight times the rate of a comparably aged white males. Heart attacks, cancer and liver failure were exceptionally common. Twenty percent of lesbians died of murder, suicide or accident, a rate 487 times higher than that of white females age 25 to 44. The age distribution of samples of homosexuals in the literature from even from 1989 to 1992 suggests a similarly shortened lifespan,” end quote.

And unless they repent, the eternal consequences will be exceedingly, infinitely worse than what they experience in life. And for this reason, again, if you are struggling with this, I plead with you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and allow him to transform you and make you a new creature in Christ, release you from this slavery, this bondage.

So when a man rejects God, God rejects man. It is as simple as that. And he gives him over, first, to sordid immorality Paul tells us and then to shameless to sexuality. And now we come to the topic today, the final stage of abandonment. And that is God gives them over to shocking depravity.

Verse 28.

“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.”¹⁶

The term “depraved,” *adokimov* (ad-ok'-ee-mos) in the original language, an interesting term. It means unapproved. It means worthless. It means useless. In fact, it was a term used to describe worthless metals that would be refiners due to their impurity.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Romans 1:28.

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Now there are a myriad of examples of this I could give you and I don't want to waste a lot of time on this, but I do want to give you perhaps one that illustrates this the best. And I especially wanted to use this one because it will speak to many of you young people. I want to give you an example of shocking depravity of a depraved worthless mind by speaking of one of the most popular singers and now, I understand, songs in America. The singer is called Lady Gaga and her popular song is *Born This Way*. And, again, she is considered to be one of the most popular, a real indicator of where our culture is at.

If you see her appearance on television or in any of the media you will see that it is beyond bizarre. It is demonic. She looks kind of like a cross between a stripper and a space alien that is high on crack cocaine going to a Halloween party. I don't know how else to describe her. It is just completely out there.

Recently she was carried into the Grammy awards show inside of a giant egg. Maybe you saw that on the commercials. And, frankly, it would defile this sacred desk for me to mention some of the other things that she wears in public on television.

When asked to reveal her secret for staying thin and how she gets her creative juices flowing, here is what she said, quote, "I am on the drunk diet. I live my life as I want to, creatively. I like to drink whiskey and stuff while I am working. But the deal is I have got to work out every day and I work out hung over if I am hung over and it is about the cross training and keeping yourself inspired. I have to say I also do a ton of yoga."

Well, born this way. Let me give you some of the lyrics. This is an example of what happens when a culture is given over to idolatry, the idolatry of self.

Here is some of the lyrics, quote, "Don't be a drag, just be a queen. Don't be a drag, just be a queen, don't be a drag, just be a queen, don't be. Give yourself prudence and love your friends. Suddenly, kid, rejoice the truth. In the religion of the insecure I must be myself, respect my youth. A different lover is not a sin. Believe, capital H I M, hey, hey, hey. I love my life. I love this record. I am beautiful in my way because God makes no mistakes. I am on the right track, baby. I was born this way. Don't hide yourself in regret, just love yourself and you are set. I am on the right track, baby. I was born this way. Ooh, there ain't no other way."

This is a song that has, I am told, a number one spot on I-tunes in 23 countries around the world with sales over 500,000 dollars.

How do you respond to that?

Paul tells us in verse 22.

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“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man.”¹⁷

And then in verse 28, “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.”¹⁸

You know, you can tell a lot about a culture by examining their popular icons, the idols that they worship, idols that have rejected the true God and like the people that worship them have been abandoned to—as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:4—the god of this world, referring to Satan who “has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”¹⁹

Friends, compare Lady Gaga’s depraved lyrics expressing the sentiments of a worthless mind with those of another lady, one that was physically blind, but by God’s grace was given 20/20 spiritual vision. Her name was Fanny J. Crosby. Here is one of the lines she wrote.

Praise him, praise him,
Jesus our blessed Redeemer.
Sing, oh earth, his wonderful love proclaim.
Hail him, hail him, highest archangels in glory,
Strength and honor give to his holy name.

Let me give you another one.

To God by the glory great things he hath done,
So loved he the world that he gave us Son,
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear his voice.
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice.
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory. Great things he hath done.

What a stunning contrast between shocking depravity and transforming grace, the righteousness of Christ.

You see, this is Paul’s point in this section of Scripture. To provide this contrast, to demonstrate man’s need for the righteousness of Christ, a righteousness foreign to him because he is under the condemnation of God because of his sin.

¹⁷ Romans 1:22-23.

¹⁸ Romans 1:28.

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:4.

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You see, when a man sees God's revelation of his glory and his grace in creation and conscience, and instead of grabbing hold that revelation as if it is the most precious treasure on earth, instead of that he kicks it aside and he rejects it and he chooses to worship himself or some other idol that he has concocted. When that happens God gives them over.

I want you to notice the list of vices that Paul gives as a representative sample of what will characterize the way of idolatry and immorality. Again, what I would call shocking depravity.

Notice in verse 29 he says, "Being filled with," a very important phrase. It means that their heart has no room for anything else, but what follows. This is what they are filled with.

And I might also add this helps explain those individuals who just cannot seem to restrain their flesh. They cannot maintain a life that manifests the righteousness of God.

First of all, he says, "Being filled with all unrighteousness."²⁰ It could be translated iniquity or sin. This is describing a heart as well as a lifestyle that consistently violates God's standard of righteousness found in his law. They simply refuse to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength and their neighbor as themselves. They are incapable of that. They are filled with wickedness, he adds. This is basically a synonym for unrighteousness. And this describes those who actually enjoy doing evil.

It reminds me of God's chosen people who ignored his Word and chose instead to go their own way. So the Lord spoke through his prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 4:22 and said this. "My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children, And they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know."²¹

Paul adds they are filled with greed. This is covetousness. Maybe to resurrect an old English word, it is the sin of avarice. It is having an insatiable appetite for more and more and more, never being satisfied, more and more possessions. You are never content. And you are bent on gaining what you desire no matter how you achieve it.

This is part of the worldly cravings that John spoke of the, lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life. I might also add this includes this prevailing sense of entitlement that we have in our culture today where people basically think, you know, I deserve more and I am going to get it regardless who I have to hurt.

The term is also used in Ephesians 5:3 in the context of asserting one's self upon another in the context of sexual intimacy. He says, "But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints."²²

²⁰ Romans 1:29.

²¹ Jeremiah 4:22.

²² Ephesians 5:3.

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Paul goes on. They are filled with evil. This is malice. It refers to cruelty. It is a desire to injure other people, the type of people who are unashamed to break the law. I am always amazed at these people that think they can outrun the cops. They always get caught.

They are full of envy. This is a powerful term. It means to be aroused to anger. When someone has something that you want and you also begrudge them for having what you think you deserve, they are filled with that. This is part of the whole class warfare many of our politicians like to engage in. It plays into the vice of people who are already predisposed to being full of envy. They are also full of murder.

You know, all of the previous vices lead to this, don't they, especially that of envy. Think about it. Out of envy Cain murdered Abel. Out of envy the brothers of Joseph planned his death. Out of envy the Jewish leaders murdered Jesus. The people were following him rather than them. Out of envy the Muslim world wants to destroy Israel and the United States and everybody that has more than they do and on and on it goes.

They are filled with strife. This means debate, contention. The word can be translated people that are quarrelsome. They are always wrangling. It describes a contentious person.

They are also filled, he says, with deceit. This refers to someone who is dishonest, but also who is cunning and treacherous in their dishonesty. This is the charlatan. This is the cheater, a person who is disingenuous or duplicitous. How many times do you encounter people who look you in the eye and smile and tell you a big fat lie? They are gossips, he says.

Actually, I missed one. They are malice. They are filled with malice. This speaks of people that are filled with spite. They are cruel, depraved in their character. And they are crafty. They love to harm other people.

And then also they are filled with gossip. He says they are gossips.

Interesting term. It is really a whisperer, a secret slanderer, one who likes to vilify other people and spread rumors to harm other people, but they dare not say in public what they will whisper in your ear.

But then he moves to one that is similar. They are slanderers. It could even be translated back biters. You see, what gossipers will whisper in secret the slanderer will speak loudly for all to hear.

They are also haters of God. This refers to those who are exceptionally impious, those who are exceptionally wicked, who have an excessive contempt for God.

Also they are insolent. This is speaking of an insulter. It could even be translated a violent aggressor. This describes the arrogant man who likes to cast insults at others and does whatever he can to mistreat them.

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In fact, it is interesting Paul said of himself in 1 Timothy 1:13, “I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a [here it is] violent aggressor.”²³

Also they are arrogant. We all know that term. Those who are proud, haughty, those who consider themselves to be superior to others and despise those they consider beneath them and treat those people with contempt.

They are boastful, he says. This is the braggart. This is the empty pretender who is loud and proud without cause. We like to say the person who is a legend in his own mind.

They are also inventors of evil. The idea here is they come up with novel or new forms of evil. They delight themselves in coming up with new creative ways to mock God, to exalt themselves and destroy those they despise.

How often do we find ourselves saying, “What are they going to come up with next? What are they going to come up with next?”

Can you imagine 20 years ago seeing kids walking around with their pants sagging down around their knees deliberately trying to show their underwear? I mean, you talk about a depraved mind.

The dancing that I see in some of the news that goes on in the schools where they are simulating sex acts, unbelievable.

MTV constantly pushing the limits to desensitize our kids from immorality. Reality TV shows that flaunt depravity.

Dear Christian, I have got to pause here of a second. If you are into this kind of stuff you need to examine your heart. How can you possibly allow yourself to be entertained by the very things that God abhors? How can you possibly find pleasure in sins for which Jesus suffered and died on the cross on your behalf? Are you kidding me? How can you possibly find joy in watching sins that now cause endless torment to countless millions of people suffering in hell? Wake up.

He says they are disobedient to parents. This is the child that will not respect authority, the authority of his parents. By the way, if they won't respect that authority, they won't respect any other authority and they are not going to respect God's authority. That is why discipline is so important.

God put it in the law in Exodus 20 verse 12. “Honor your father and your mother.”²⁴

In fact, if you fail to do that, that was a capital offense. Do you realize that?

²³ 1 Timothy 1:13.

²⁴ Exodus 20:12.

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Exodus 21:15. “And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”²⁵

Boy, that would be a wake up call, wouldn't it?

Verse 17.

“And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”²⁶

Today you see it all over the place, kids arguing with their parents, defying their parents, slandering their parents, sometimes even striking their parents. Amazing.

Also he says they are without understanding. Real simple. This means senseless or stupid, foolish, undiscerning.

Think about it. How could anyone possibly legitimize and even promote homosexuality? How could anybody do that? I mean all discernment is gone. How could anybody possibly believe the prosperity preachers that we have on television? You know, Joel Osteen and Crethlow Dollar and Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, on and on it goes, TBN. These people make millions and millions of dollars, have homes scattered all over the country and you are going to send them your money?

How could anyone claim that Islam is a peaceful religion? That is like telling your child that a rattlesnake would make a great chew toy. I mean, you just got to have... I mean, all discernment is gone.

You see, when it comes to basic common sense and morality, these are the dear people that always come up with five when you add two and two together. They are without understanding.

Also he says they are untrustworthy. This means that they are covenant breakers. They are not promise keepers, they are promise breakers. Contracts mean nothing to them. Marital vows mean nothing. Their word means nothing. They can't be trusted. He also says they are unloving. In the King James it says that they are without natural affection. This means that they are hard hearted toward those that they should be affectionate towards like family members.

You know, pagans in the ancient days were notorious for drowning or in some way doing away with unwanted offspring. We have the same type of thing today. How could anyone possibly abort a human baby? That is unloving. How can parents abandon and because their children? How can a husband beat his wife? How can a father murder his daughter and call it an honor killing?

But it happens over and over and thousands and thousands of women are killed like that,

²⁵ Exodus 21:15.

²⁶ Exodus 21:17.

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some of them buried alive. How did this person ever get this way? They reject God and God gives them over to a depraved mind, a worthless mind. He says they are unmerciful. It means cruel, ruthless people without pity, merciless, heartless, unsympathetic. There are so many examples of this.

Let me give you one that might bring it a little bit closer to home. How could family members abandon their elderly parents to become wards of the state and never go visit them, never want anything to do with them have no compassion towards them to try to meet their physical needs, their emotional needs? How can anybody do that?

And then Paul adds this in verse 32. And, again, that was just a sample. That is just a sample list. It is not some exhaustive list.

He says, "And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death..."²⁷

By the way, let me stop here. How do they know? Because God has revealed it to their conscience. We have already studied that in Romans one. And also in Romans chapter two verses 14 and 15.

So, "A 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."²⁸

Well, isn't that true? We actually in our culture elect them to rule over us. We buy their records. We read their books. We pay money to watch them perform. We ordain homosexuals to be pastors.

It reminds me of the defiant debauchery of ancient Judah. Remember in Isaiah five God goes through a list there of woes against Judah because of their idolatry. His wrath was ignited against them and using bitter sarcasm in Isaiah 5:18 God speaks through is prophet Isaiah and he says this.

Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, And sin as if with cart ropes; Who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near And come to pass, that we may know it!"²⁹

Come on, God. We dare you to judge us.

The imagery there is that of beasts of burden dragging the sins of the people around in wagons, flaunting their sins, defying God, daring him to judge them.

²⁷ Romans 8:32.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Isaiah 5:18-19.

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Beloved, one day he will.

You know, we saw a small sample of this, the kind of judgment that God brings from time to time, just a small sample in the devastation of hurricane Katrina in 2005, remember, that destroyed much of New Orleans which is a cesspool of human depravity. And it is interesting to me that in a matter of a few minutes he reduced that place to a literal cesspool. It was interesting that the week that that was going to... or during the week that that happened there was an event scheduled. They were to observe what was called southern decadence day where 100,000 homosexuals were to gather to commit unspeakable acts in public.

And the following excerpt that I am going to read to from [?] dot com. It is a visitor information web resource for travelers to the southeast part of the United States.

Quote, "New Orleans, Louisiana, southern decadence started 34 years ago as a simple going away party. As a top gay Labor Day weekend destination, it has evolved into one of our world's major annual events, one of the largest annual celebrations in New Orleans. It has become known as the, quote, gay mardis gras. People begin to arrive on the Wednesday before Labor Day and generally don't even think about stopping or going home until the following Tuesday. With over 100,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender participants last year, the economic impact on the city was estimated to be excess of 95 million dollars. Mayor Ray Nagin has recognized its importance with an official proclamation to welcome the event," end quote.

Beloved, this is the wrath of divine abandonment. I want to close by speaking to you as Christians, those of you who know Christ. You know, at some level we see even God temporarily withdrawing his restraining and protecting grace from his own people when they persistently ignore him and disobey him. We saw this, for example, in the Old Testament.

Psalm 81 verse 11.

But My people did not listen to My voice; And Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.³⁰

Another text, Hosea 4:17.

"Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone."³¹

Dear Christian, if you choose to deliberately enslave yourself to certain cherished sins, you will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, Ephesians 4:29, and that divine sorrow will lead to a quenching of the Holy Spirit we reads about in 1 Thessalonians 5:19. There will be a

³⁰ Psalm 81:11

³¹ Hosea 4:17.

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withering of the fruits of the Spirit on the vine of your life. You will subject yourself to divine chastening. You will forfeit eternal reward. 1 Corinthians 3:15 talks about that.

Let me describe the process so that you don't alienate yourself from the wrath of divine abandonment even though it is different with unbelievers. It can lead to eternal judgment. For us it is going to lead to divine chastening, the forfeiture of reward and so forth, but nevertheless, we can also do things that causes God to be grieved and gives us over at some level to our sin.

Let me describe the process as I see it working out in so many lives. What happens is first of all the world becomes increasingly attractive to you. Then it gradually distracts you from worshipping and serving the Lord. No longer are you really devoted to his glory, but you are devoted to all of the things that the world has for you. You begin to see that in your life. You stop loving what God loves. Somehow the trash on television and on the internet isn't all that bad to you. You are no longer loving what God loves and hating what he hates, but you now love more what the world loves and on it goes.

You stop living *coram deo*, a Latin phrase for, "in the presence of God, in the face of God." You stop living and knowing that he is right there with you watching you. You are no longer living under his authority and for his glory. Somehow you shut him out. It is a subtle thing. Your prayer life begins to dwindle. And it is nothing more than an occasional perfunctory "thank you, Lord, for this food," before you eat. You get far more excited about your favorite sports team or something else in your life than you do about the gospel of grace that saved you. Your priorities begin to center around your own personal pleasures, around your work. The world begins to consume you. It becomes your master. It begins to control you and imperceptibly you are living your life for yourself and not for God.

You find yourself becoming increasingly depressed over things. You find yourself getting overwhelmed and anxious and angry, dissatisfied. And then you get preoccupied with something that will relieve the pain. For a lot of you it is food. For others it is some kind of pleasure, a material thing. Why do you think we have so many malls?

You come to church and you mouth the words of the hymns, but they don't really express the doxology of your heart. It is just what everybody else is doing. Church becomes boring. There is really no service that you offer to the church. You find no real spiritual growth happening in your life. You are not... men are not shepherding their wives and families. And likewise the ladies not with the children and on and on it goes.

And, of course, you have always got a great excuse. You are just so busy.

Sinful patterns of relating go unaddressed. Relationships begin to deteriorate and there is, of course, 1000 ways you can justify actions. And if you want to look of the dead parakeet in the cave, look at your marital relationship, because that is where it is going to show up. You become roommates and you are in big trouble when that happens. Life dominating sins become more devastating. You see, you begin to reap in public what you

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have sown in secret. You lose your appetite for the Word of God. You no longer have a desire to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep. What a tragic thing. And eventually you become like Demas.

Do you remember Demas, Paul's associate in ministry? Oh, he was on fire at one time. He was right there with Paul presenting the gospel. Paul said this in 2 Timothy 4:10.

“Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me.”³²

The context is that he literally abandoned me in a dire situation.

And, dear Christian friend, if that is you, it is time to wake up like the prodigal son. Do you remember when he woke up? He had finally had enough of eating the pig slop, wallowing around. He woke up. He repented. He acknowledged his sin and in Luke 15:20 we read that he arose and came to his father.

That is what you need to do. Some of you need to come home. You need to come home today. You have been gone far too long. So I invite you to examine your heart. And, once again, get excited about the glorious gospel of Christ that has saved you and given you a hope, a blessed hope of eternal life with our Savior. Well, if you don't know Christ, oh, again, how I plead with you to humble yourself before him today, acknowledge your sin and ask him to save you and he will not turn you away.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our hearts for our good and for your glory I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell's messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

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³² 2 Timothy 4:10.