

Subject: A World Gone Wild

Scripture: Romans 1:24-32

Paul begins the letter of Romans as a lawyer would present his case in court. He is out to prove that all people are guilty of sin and worthy of God's judgment. He makes a 3-part argument.

First, he shows the guilt of heathen people. Next, he proves the guilt of moral, religious people. Finally, he concludes that all people everywhere are guilty before God and without excuse. Man is not basically good, but evil.

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

In the first part of his argument, he describes the ugly picture of human sin and depravity. This is not evolution. It is devolution, the downward spiral of sin and judgment. As we come to verse 24, we notice the word "wherefore," which refers to what Paul has just said about the reasons for God's wrath. Let's go back and look at verses 18-23, so we can follow Paul's train of thought.

1. The truth about God has been revealed

The invisible God has made Himself known through the visible creation. God has revealed His eternal power and divine nature. All people have this truth about God, so they are without excuse.

2. The truth about God has been rejected

People reject the truth about God. They hold it back and suppress it. They do not glorify God or give Him thanks. They have empty thoughts and their heart is darkened. When the light of God's truth is rejected, it brings spiritual darkness. They claim to be wise, but they are fools.

3. The truth about God has been replaced

People exchange the truth about God for a lie. They make God into an image in the form of a man or an animal. They replace the one true God with many false gods.

4. The restraint of God has been removed

The main point of verses 24-32 is that when people persistently abandon God, then God will abandon them. Because of what man's sin, God reveals His anger by removing His control and allowing people to go their own way. So people continue to worship false gods and as a result they plunge into all kinds of sin and depravity.

When the truth is suppressed and rejected, and then it is replaced and perverted, the outcome is perverted behavior. God allows people to live the way they want, apart from His control.

Three times in the text it says, "God gave them up" or "God gave them over." This expression was used to describe someone being committed to prison or to judgment. It was used of the rebellious angels who were delivered to pits of darkness awaiting judgment.

God says, in effect, if you want to reject me, then I will reject you and you can suffer the consequences of your choice. This has been called God's wrath of abandonment. It shows what happens when God withdraws His hand and let's man have it his own way. Two things happen when God abandons people to let them have their own way:

A. God gave the world up to perverted morals (vs. 24, uncleanness; vs. 26, vile affections)

This picture is ugly but accurate. There is no exaggeration here. In the early 1950s, Time magazine ran an article about homosexuality. Someone in the homosexual community was upset and wrote the publisher saying that it should have a more tolerant attitude and be no more concerned about it than normal relations between a man and woman. Time magazine then printed this response: "Frankly it gives us the creeps."

Vs. 24 – uncleanness (impurity) through the lusts (desires) of their own hearts

Vs. 24 – to dishonor their own bodies between themselves

Vs. 26 – vile affections (degrading passions) – describes homosexual behavior in both women (females) and men (males); acts that are not only immoral, but unnatural.

Homosexual behavior is not a sickness. It is a sin. It is a choice. Some say that a person is born that way. Nobody is born a thief or a murderer. That is a choice. We are all born with a sin nature, but we still make the choice to sin.

B. God gave the world up to perverted minds (vs. 28, a reprobate mind)

This describes a depraved mind. The word reprobate means rejected after testing. It was used to describe metals that were discarded because they were impure. The word came to mean useless, worthless. Their minds were filled with these things, and so they did thing that were not convenient (proper). The world acts like it acts because it thinks like it thinks. This is the NASB of vs. 29-31: "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful..."

In verse 32, people know their sins deserve God's judgment, but they continue in sin and approve of people who live in sin. In other words, the reality of God's judgment has no effect on them at all. They think that because God has not judged them so far, that He will not judge them ever. This was how people thought in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot.

This is a dark picture, but there is hope even for this evil world. When God abandons people to their sins, as Paul describes here, it is not eternal abandonment. As long as people are alive in this world, there is hope. That hope is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...

It is grace that is greater than all our sins. One of the godly Puritans, John Bradford, saw a murderer being hauled off to his execution. Bradford was the first man to say, "There but for the grace of God go I." Grace will save you from sin, and grace will keep you from sin.

Romans 5:6-8 ⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.