Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God Gave Them Over
Scripture: Romans 1
Code: BQ8211

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. (Romans 1:24)

Therefore refers back to the reasons Paul has just set forth in verses 18–23. Although God revealed himself to man (vv. 19–20), man rejected God (v. 21) and then rationalized his rejection (v. 22; cf. v. 18b) and created substitute gods of his own making (v. 23). And because man abandoned God, God abandoned men-He **gave them over**. It is that divine abandonment and its consequences that Paul develops in verses 24–32, the most sobering and fearful passage in the entire epistle.

Paradidomi (**gave … over**) is an intense verb. In the New Testament it is used of giving one's body to be burned (1 Cor. 13:3) and three times of Christ's giving Himself up to death (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25). It is used in a judicial sense of men's being committed to prison (Mark 1:14; Acts 8:3) or to judgment (Matt. 5:25; 10:17, 19, 21; 18:34) and of rebellious angels being delivered to pits of darkness (2 Pet. 2:4). It is also used of Christ's committing Himself to His Father's care (1 Pet. 2:23) and of the Father's delivering His own Son to propitiatory death (Rom. 4:25; 8:32)

God's giving over sinful mankind has a dual sense. First, in an *indirect* sense God **gave them over** simply by withdrawing His restraining and protective hand, allowing the consequences of sin to take their inevitable, destructive courseú Sin degrades man, debases the image of God in which he is made, and strips him of dignity, peace of mind, and a clear conscience. Sin destroys personal relationships, marriages, families, cities, and nations It also destroys churches. Thomas Watson said, "Sin … puts gravel in our bread [and] wormwood in our cup" (*A Body of Divinity* [Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1983 reprint], p. 136).

Fallen men are not concerned about their sin but only about the pain from the unpleasant consequences sin brings Someone has well said that sin would have fewer takers if the consequences were immediate. Many people, for example, are greatly concerned about venereal disease but resent the suggestion of avoiding it by restraining sexual promiscuity and perversions. Instead of adhering to God's standards of moral purity, they attempt to remove the consequences of their impurity They turn to counseling, to medicine, to psychoanalysis, to drugs, to alcohol, to travel, and to a host of other means to escape what cannot be escaped except by the removal of their sin.

It is said that an ermine would rather die than defile its beautiful coat of fur; the animal will go to incredible lengths to protect it. Man does not have such an inclination concerning the defilement of sin. He cannot keep himself pure and has no natural desire to do so.

Not all of God's wrath is future. In the case of sexual promiscuity-perhaps more specifically and severely than in any other area of morality-God has continually poured out His divine wrath by means of venereal disease. In regard to countless other manifestations of godlessness, He pours out His wrath in the forms of the loneliness, frustration, meaninglessness, anxiety, and despair that are so characteristic of modern society. As sophisticated, self-sufficient mankind draws further and further away from God, God gives them over to the consequences of their spiritual and moral rebellion against Him.

The divine abandonment of men to their sin about which Paul speaks here is not eternal abandonment. As long as sinful men are alive, God provides opportunity for their salvation That is the marvelous good news of God's grace, which Paul develops later in the epistle. Like her Old Testament namesake, the Jezebel who was misleading the church at Thyatira was the embodiment of idolatrous, immoral godlessness, yet the Lord graciously gave her opportunity to repent (see Rev. 2:20–21). Despite His righteous wrath against sin, God is patient toward sinners, "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

In a second, *direct* sense God **gave … over** rebellious mankind by specific acts of judgment. The Bible is replete with accounts of divine wrath being directly and supernaturally poured out on sinful men. The flood of Noah's day and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, for example, were not indirect natural consequences of sin but were overt supernatural expressions of God's judgment on gross and unrepented sin.

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