

Wrath: Deserved, Declared, Delivered

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[0 : 00] The Apostle Paul gives us a salutation to this epistle in the first eight verses, and then the general introduction begins in verse 9 and ends by stating the burden of his epistle to the Romans, which is the subject of righteousness of God.

We would translate this verse, the man who is righteous by faith shall live. We are not in complete agreement with either the King James nor the New American Standard that renders that but the righteous man shall live by faith.

That does not really convey the meaning. The meaning is the man who has been made righteous on the basis of faith is the man who will live. And the idea, of course, is eternal life.

The question might then be asked, why is this righteousness of God needed? Why is there a need for the gospel? Why is there a need for the cross of Christ? It's made very apparent as you go through the first few verses of this epistle that this is Paul's theme.

And then he tells us in verse 18 why this is necessary. Verse 18 reads, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

[1 : 15] And there you have it. The reason we have a need for a gospel, the reason there is a need for the cross of Christ, is because the wrath of God is revealed. And without the cross of Christ, without the gospel that Paul talks about in verses 16 and 17, you and I are clearly sunk.

Because there is nothing left for us but the wrath of God. Since man is estranged from God, alienated from God, in so far as the spiritual relationship is concerned, God can do nothing with us but judge us.

Therefore, God's wrath is revealed. And Paul says you can be thankful that though God's wrath is revealed, the gospel of Jesus Christ is also revealed. And it is seen in the cross of Christ.

That is, when you look at the cross of Jesus Christ and realize what happened there, it is not only a picture of God's infinite love and mercy and grace that placed the Savior on the cross, it is also a picture of the righteousness of God.

And you ought to look at the Christ on the cross and say, this is what it took. This is what the righteousness of God demanded. This one, this sinless one upon the cross, he is there because God is righteous, because God is holy.

[2 : 29] You must make that connection. I am convinced that no one can really understand or appreciate salvation to the extent that they can even make an intelligent decision until they appreciate the principle of substitution.

The righteousness of God, the holiness of God, demanded that sin be paid for, and Jesus Christ paid for it. That's the price that was required.

Someone has defined the righteousness of God as that righteousness which God's righteousness requires him to require. That's a good definition. It's not merely a tongue twister. It is the truth of the matter.

Because God is absolute holy, because God is absolutely perfect, because God is absolutely righteous, he has only one standard, and that's his own, the one that is consistent with himself. And as we look then upon a humanity that is wallowing in iniquity, we say, well then where does that leave man? It leaves man right where you might think. He's sunk. He is without hope, without God in this present world.

[3 : 33] This is the tack that Paul the Apostle takes throughout the first three chapters of Romans. It is a continual picture of man's true condition, his true dilemma before a holy God.

And Paul says, all have sinned. That's his conclusion. You see, he begins with the heathen. Well, most of us knew that the heathen were out of it. But then he goes on to the moral man.

Now, this is the man who pays his bills and doesn't beat his wife and is an upstanding man in the community. And he consigns him under judgment. And then he goes to the religious man.

Now, I ask you, if the religious man doesn't make it, who can? Paul says, no, the religious man doesn't make it either. A man's Judaism, pure as it may be, will not suffice to make him acceptable before a holy God.

So what then is Paul's conclusion? He wraps it up in chapter 3 and says, so we conclude then that the whole world is guilty. They are all under sin, all under condemnation.

[4 : 33] You say, well, does that mean then that there aren't any good people? That's what it means. Does it mean then that everybody's condemned? That's what it means. Everybody is on the same equal footing.

We are all under the just condemnation and judgment of God. That's what we deserve. That's where we are. That's what we are. Not me, say you. Oh, yes, say I.

You too. This is what Paul says. More than that, this is what God says through Paul. We're all condemned. Do you know that you are sitting right next to a rat and that a rat is sitting in your seat? That's not a very nice picture, is it? You look over at that person, you sniff and you smell their boot or whatever it is, and boy, you know, it doesn't smell like a rat, doesn't look like a rat, all shiny and cleaned up, nice smile on the face, the pearlies are showing, and we put on a great front.

We don't look all that bad to each other, but the person sitting next to you is not your ultimate judge. The ultimate judge is the one who has one standard, and that is perfection.

[5 : 45] And if you don't have perfection, you're not going to make it. Well then, if we have to be perfect, I guess we are. We are sunk.

That's true. You see, that is the first great conclusion you must come to, because until you come to that conclusion, you can never be saved. As long as you think you are worthy of being saved, you can never be saved.

You have to, first of all, see yourself as God sees you. And when you do, you will say with Isaiah, Woe is me.

I am a man who is undone, a man of unclean lips, dwelling in a generation of people with unclean lips. It's a very depressing, but very truthful picture that Paul sets forth of the human race.

And do you know he is prosecuting us? Some have described the epistle to the Romans as a great legal polemic. They envision a courtroom scene.

[6 : 51] God is on the throne. He's the judge, but he's also the jury. And over in the defendant's chair is the whole of the human race.

All of us are on trial. And Paul the apostle is the prosecuting attorney. And has he ever got a case? In chapter 1, 2, and 3, he sets forth exhibit A, exhibit B, exhibit C, so that when he finishes, we don't even have a defense.

It is as though we stand up to plead our case, and we can't open our mouth. And Paul says, so that every mouth is stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God.

We know the case against us is so formidable, we don't even have a defense. And the judge's gavel comes down.

[7 : 52] Guilty. Guilty. Guilty. Guilty. Well, where do we go from there? Well, the only thing you can do then is impose sentence. Now, if the judge on the bench is not an honest judge, he can look the other way.

He can wink. He can say, well, there were some extenuating circumstances. He could say, well, I want to be known as a God who is merciful. And he could let us off, but if he did, he would have to come down off that bench of righteousness because he would no longer be entitled to it.

So in the back of the courtroom, there is one who comes forth and approaches the bar and says, Your Honor, I want to take all of the sentence and all of the judgment and all of the punishment that is due to this guilty human race.

I want to take it upon myself. And the judge could look at this one and say, Well, you have no guilt. You have no sin. You have no blemish in you.

You are perfect in your nature. And therefore, that would make you acceptable to pay the price of sin. The innocent die in place of the guilty. And Jesus Christ did exactly that when he went to the cross and he freed us so that those who come to him and place their faith in him as their personal sin bearer, there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

[9 : 22] He is your way out. He's your only way out. This is the great theme of this epistle. Paul tells us that the gospel of Jesus Christ is needed because the wrath of God is revealed.

And apart from the wrath of God, there would be no necessity for the righteousness of God nor for the gospel of God's grace which provides it. And you know, this is where liberalism is and has been for a long time.

The reason that liberalism does not make much at all, in fact, the reason they even deny the substitutionary death of Christ and the necessity for the new birth by faith in Christ, the reason they deny all that, they have no necessity for it.

They do not accept the wrath of God either. And if there is no wrath of God, if there is nothing from which to be saved, then who needs to be? If there is no final reckoning, if there is no day of accounting, then nobody really needs to be too concerned about a personal relationship to Christ. It's just non-essential, that's all. This is precisely where they are. There are two revelations that Paul gives here. One is the gospel is revealed, the power of God is revealed in the gospel, and the power or the wrath of God is revealed from heaven in verse 18.

[10 : 41] And this word heaven, from which God's wrath is revealed, is a synonym, and it simply means the source or the personification of deity.

It is revealed from God. It doesn't mean that you can walk around and look up at the heavens and say, well, there's the wrath of God. It doesn't mean that at all, but it means that the revelation is taking place and its source is heaven.

The wrath begins with God. The wrath that is in question here, and there are two Greek words that are used. We looked at these at the time we were there, and we saw that the one word for wrath is orge, and this is the one that is used here in reference to God.

It is a slow, gradual building wrath that increases over a period of time. In fact, it is the same word which is used in classical Greek for the growing and maturing of a plant that eventually bursts into bloom as a flower.

The stalk and the plant, the head of it, is growing and swelling and becoming bigger and bigger, and that which encloses it is tighter and tighter, and then all at once it breaks forth.

[11 : 56] And this is the wrath of God which breaks forth after his long suffering has been exhausted. It is as though God is building up wrath, building up more and more and more because of his creature's iniquity, and eventually it breaks forth.

This is the wrath that breaks forth here. We are told that it is revealed is a present passive indicative in the indicative mood, and it simply means that it is continually being revealed.

It is going on all the time. In every generation, the wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness. This is an interesting word, and I want you to understand it.

It does not mean what you might automatically think ungodliness means as being especially wicked or vile or that kind of thing, but the way the Greek New Testament uses the word ungodly, it can be applied to a man that you would think of as being a pretty nice guy.

Ungodly in the sense here simply means that the person who is ungodly does not take God into account for anything. God is just unnecessary in his life.

[13 : 10] He just rules him out. God doesn't figure into any of his decisions. God doesn't count. He's not thought upon as being seriously involved at all. That's the meaning of the word ungodly.

He just has no time nor consideration for God. And this often leads to the next thing, unrighteous, unrighteousness. This is the child of ungodliness. It is a predictable result of ungodliness because ungodliness is a lack of right attitude inwardly.

Unrighteousness is produced as wrong conduct outwardly. The outward behavior is stimulated by the inner attitude. The seeds of ungodliness are within a man and when they grow, when they germinate and grow and develop, then they manifest themselves in unrighteousness.

Someone who is ungodly but is not unrighteous will be. Give him time. He's on the way. Unless there is the dramatic introduction of something that halts that and turns it around, such as the gospel.

Then he says, it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The word suppress may also be rendered repress, hold back, hold down, to detain, to imprison.

[14 : 30] That's it. To imprison. It means that when a man hears truth and takes in truth, he will not allow that truth to do what it was intended to do, which means to reorder his thinking or to formulate

his thinking or to change his mind or to set his course in another direction or to confirm an action.

He will not allow it to do that. He imprisons the truth within him and will not allow it to break forth and do its work. He suppresses it, holds it down. You know why he does?

Because he knows where the truth will lead him but he doesn't want to go there. This verse is one of the most single important verses in all of the New Testament that deals with the responsibility of the human being.

It starts right here. I cannot, I do not have words in my vocabulary to impress upon you the absolute necessity for allowing the truth to have sway in your life.

I can think of nothing that is more important than that. I can think of no consequences that are more severe than those which come from knowingly repressing the truth and not walking in the truth that you have.

[16:00] Very, very vital. Very vital. Paul said this is where it all begins. God's wrath is revealed against men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

One of the chief ways that God's wrath is revealed is by the law of cause and effect. God has built into his creation a system, a kind of mechanism, if you will, that operates on the basis of cause and effect.

It is very predictable. You may refer to this as natural law if you want. God set it up. It works in the spiritual realm too. And what it means is this.

These laws that are put into motion by God, if they are violated, there are very predictable simple consequences that come from it.

For instance, if you violate the laws of agriculture, your crop's going to fail. That is not just a long shot.

[17:08] It's pretty well guaranteed. Can you imagine a farmer who says, you know, I think all this business about plowing the ground, preparing the soil, and cultivating the soil is just a bunch of nonsense.

Seems to me that all you really need to do is have the seed and go out and scatter it around. So you just go out and you find a nice field and maybe it is all hard and packed down and full of stones and everything and you just throw the seed around.

Well, you're not going to have much of a crop. And anybody who knows anything about farming is going to tell you that won't work because you see there are certain laws and principles regarding agriculture. You've got to follow them if you want to crop.

When you go to build a building, here's somebody who's going to build a beautiful building and an architect says, well, now look, you've got certain stress here and you have to support this. This is a very load-bearing situation.

You've got to have a post or something here. Well, I don't want to put a post here because that's going to ruin the looks of the whole thing. I don't see why I can't put the post someplace else. Well, you can't because if you don't put the post where the post is supposed to go, you violate one of the laws of architecture and the building's going to come down.

[18:20] Simple, isn't it? Take nuclear physics, about which I know nothing, but I know this. There are certain laws that are in motion regarding nuclear physics, and if something happens, if somebody doesn't do something right or a piece of equipment malfunctions so that it doesn't do what it's supposed to do and a law of nuclear physics is violated, you've got a three-mile island.

That's what happens. It's very simple. Nothing profound about this. It's very simple. It's called cause and effect. Now, in the spiritual realm, God has revealed himself to us, and he has provided us with truth.

And if you violate that, and you are not obedient to that revelation, Paul says, there are certain predictable things that are going to take place.

I guarantee it. And you know something? Every generation that has ever come along since Adam and Eve has repeated this process over and over and over and over again.

It goes through every new generation that comes up, and there's nothing new about it at all. Verse 19, he tells us, that that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them.

[19:48] How did it get in them? It got in them because God made it evident to them. He explains that in the next verse by saying, for since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen being understood through what has been

made so that they are without excuse.

Paul says, hey, man, you have no excuse for rejecting God nor rejecting God's truth. You have no excuse. Because God is not hiding. Never has been.

He has clearly revealed himself through what has been made. And this information gets in you because God made it available to you. And when you look out there on creation and you see on a starlit night the myriads of heaven and the sun and the moon and all the rest of the mountains, the lakes, the streams, you are able to see and visualize with your sensory perception that all of these things came from somewhere.

All of this creative act requires some creator. And you can take that that you are able to visualize this external thing that you can see called creation and you can put this in your mind and you have the ability to reach a logical conclusion.

No animal has that ability. capacity. A horse cannot graze along on some grass and say, hmm, this is really good grass. I am surely thankful to the creator who made this grass.

[21 : 30] It sure is great. And there is some water in the stream for me too. Now I realize that this came from God. Horse doesn't have that capacity. No other animal has that capacity. They have a response, but it's a conditioned response like Pavlov's dog, you know, where you ring a bell and the dog comes and there's water and food there and the dog eats.

And then you ring a bell and the dog comes and there's food there and he eats. And then the next time you just ring the bell and the dog comes, boy, he's licking his chops. He's ready for a meal, but there's anything there.

Yet his response has been conditioned so he's still salivating and he's anticipating, but there isn't anything there. You can condition a dog to react like that, but Paul says man is much more complex than that because man can provide a reasoned response.

He's able to deduce, to figure out things, to put it together. He is able to take isolated instances of information and put them together and come to a conclusion.

And because man is able to do that through what God has made, he is without excuse. God built that ability into him. He is accountable for what he does with it.

[22 : 44] The phrase invisible attributes are clearly seen as one that seems to be a little, in fact, it seems to be greatly ambiguous, almost contradictory.

We looked at this and discovered it to be a Greek literary tool called oxymoron, O-X-Y-M-O-R-O-N, and it means sharp dull. How can something be sharp and dull at the same time?

Well, that's exactly what the Greeks intended to convey, and they used it for the sake of emphasis. The word oxy means sharp, the word moron means dull, and you put them together and it's sharp dull.

And you can realize the legitimacy of this as a communicative tool when you consider some other phrases that are used likewise, such as sweet sorrow, or wise folly, or dumb like a fox.

That's an oxymoron. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12, when I am weak, then am I strong. That really doesn't make much sense, does it, on the surface, unless you understand what he's driving at and how he means it.

[23 : 53] In my weakness, in and of myself, I feel very weak and very limited, but it is in that weakness that Jesus Christ moves in and takes up the slack. And I enjoy his strength.

When I am weak, I draw upon him. So Paul uses the word here, invisible attributes, clearly seen, and this also contains an intensifier in the Greek, which means that it is emphasized and it is clearly, yes, very clearly seen, evident, obvious, very apparent.

In other words, it means that God so put himself on display in creation that you couldn't miss it if you tried. God is that's what it means.

Therefore, man is without excuse, totally without excuse. God isn't hiding someplace behind a clump of bushes where only a few select people are able to discover him.

God is splendidly displayed in his glorious creation. Man isn't able to miss it. being understood. Power to deduce.

[25 : 03] We've talked about that, a reasoned response through what has been made. And you know, even the word made here is beautiful in the Greek. In the English, it's just a plain old word, M-A-D-E, through what is made.

But in the Greek, it is poema. And it's the word from which we get the word poem. I really like that. God is a poet.

He's creative. The things that God hath poema, made, created, as poetry. His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly, yes, clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

For even though, even though they knew God, now this, please, is not to be confused with a kind of salvation experience that they once had but lost.

He isn't talking about that at all. He is saying when they knew God from the standpoint of creation, they knew God in the capacity of creator. They had that knowledge.

[26 : 13] And what did they do with it? It was impersonal knowledge, but impersonal knowledge properly responded to will lead to a personal knowledge.

Think of that. Everyone here who has a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ had an impersonal knowledge of him first.

And the impersonal knowledge properly responded to will grow into a personal knowledge as long as the signals are positive. because when we respond with positive signals to what God has revealed, he gives us more, and he gives us more, and he gives us more, and when we stop, he stops.

The system shuts down. That's what these did. They had positive information from God by way of creation. And what did they do with that positive information? Did they respond in a positive way? No. They went negative and shut it down. We are told that in verse 21, even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God. That is, they would not give God his due, they would not acknowledge nor treat him as God.

[27 : 23] Do you know why they didn't? They didn't want to. They simply didn't want to. The natural man would much prefer to create his own God rather than he would to serve the God who is the creator.

There are vast multitudes of people who have a mental concept conjured up in their mind as to what they think God is. And as far as they're concerned, that's God.

Now, they're wrong. They're as wrong as they can be. But that's the God they prefer as opposed to the God of Revelation. And until they come to the place where they're willing to swap gods and exchange their made-up God for the true God, they will never know this truth.

This is the burden of Paul's message here in Romans 1. They took his beauty, they took God's sunshine, they took God's air, and they took his water, and they took every good bountiful gift, and they gave God nothing in return, not even so much as thanks.

Neither were they thankful. You know the human heart has the tendency to be the least thankful when it has the most to be thankful for.

[28 : 41] Isn't that strange? Aren't we an odd breed? That's the way we are. Have you ever talked to or read articles about people who were so absolutely dirt poor they didn't know where the next meal was coming from?

Listen, we get letters all the time from people in the Virgin Islands. These people, I kid you not, I am not exaggerating, these people save money to buy postage to write us a letter.

Now, that's poverty. This is no joke. That's poverty. And sometimes we'll open one of those envelopes, and there's a dollar or two dollars in it, and that dollar looks like it has been so worn that it should have been out of circulation 20 years ago.

And you read their letter, you would think they were living in the lap of luxury. How they are thankful to God for his goodness and for his blessings and all this, and they can just barely write some of them, but their heart is just overflowing with gratitude.

And boy, here in the U.S. of A, where we've got so much affluence, and our big kick now is we don't have enough gasoline to drive our luxury automobiles everywhere we would like to go.

[30 : 05] Big deal! These people haven't even seen an automobile, some of them. It's a relative thing, isn't it? We can have so much and be so lacking in gratitude.

There are thousands of people who risk their lives, who are put out to sea, the boat people over there. And many of them never make it to land anywhere. I was reading an account the other day where these people said that they had so many people who were dying on board the boat that immediately, as soon as a person dies, they do the only thing you can do.

They bury them at sea, they just drop them overboard. They had so many deaths on board this one ship that the continual stream of sharks never stopped following their boat.

they just had a constant diet. Isn't that something? And you and I have the brass to complain about anything.

I doubt very seriously that there will be anybody here scouring through the local restaurant's garbage cans for a meal this afternoon. But in a lot of places in the world, that's par for the course.

[31 : 31] So when you go home, fellas, if you sit down and the roast is burned, just thank the Lord you have a roast. Okay? They did not acknowledge him as God, neither were they thankful.

They became futile. This means vain, empty, devoid of truth in their speculations. The word speculations, we ought to spend a moment with that. It's the Greek word dialogismonois and from the English word we get dialogue.

Dialogue. It comes right out of the Greek and it means inner debating or reasoning with oneself. It is the internal explaining away of evidence because you can foresee its conclusion and you don't want that conclusion.

conclusion. So you sell yourself a bill of goods. This is called rationalizing. It means putting all of the facts and ingredients together so that you can justifiably reach the conclusion that you want to reach, even though it is not the conclusion that the evidence would point to.

But it helps you to feel better about doing the wrong thing. You justify it in your own mind. Jesus continually accused the Pharisees and scribes of doing this. The inner entertaining of false notions about God in opposition to the facts that are revealed about him in nature.

[32 : 54] Their foolish heart was darkened and this means as a result of what proceeded they are now exercising, they are now experiencing a failure or inability to see connections or consequences.

What this means is they just aren't able to put it together. They aren't able to make any connections. They can't make things fit. in light. They can't see how things relate.

Everything is just a puzzle. There are pieces missing. They cannot put it together. And the reason they cannot put it together is that the pieces that are missing are elements of truth that they have already suppressed.

And their whole argument is one that's just full of holes and it'll never be complete until they go back and pick up what they've earlier repressed. When light is rejected, darkness prevails.

And this is repeated in every generation. Then Paul says in verse 22, professing to be wise, they became fools. And this again is something I'd like to share with you from the original because you just can't see it in the English.

[33 : 57] The word wise is sophos, from which our English word sophisticated comes. They professed themselves to be sophisticated, but instead they became fools.

and the word in the Greek is moros, again from which our word moron comes, or moronic. So Paul says they professed to be sophos, they became moros.

And the words go together, although they cannot be made to sound alike in the English. They professed wisdom and sophistication. They, in point of fact, became moronic.

And they exchanged. They did not change, as the King James says, they exchanged, or they replaced God's glory, which is his calling card revealed in creation, for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

And this means you cannot promote man without demoting God. The greater you make man, the less you make God. And they turned and came up with such things as Ashtoreth and Baal and Moloch and Chemosh, Dagon, Buddha, Vishnu, and emperors, who are nothing more than human beings that are revered as God.

[35 : 23] Never will I forget, having heard about General Douglas MacArthur and one of the first things he did when the United States began occupying Japan, he insisted that Emperor Hirohito go on Japanese national radio and confess to the people that he was not God.

Isn't that something? We're talking about the 20th century. People regarded him as a God. They worshipped him. Emperor worship is something that goes all the way back to pre-Pauline days, and it is carried on even into the 20th century.

But today we do not worship these kind of statues and gods. We have more sophisticated ways of worship. We worship at the altars of science and learning. It has been this way since about the turn of the century, and there are those pseudo- intellectuals who are so humanistic in their thinking that man can do anything if you just give him two things, enough money and enough time.

He can do anything. We put a man on the moon, didn't we? We know no limitations. This is a thoroughly humanistic attitude, and it is one in which our present government, political, military, educational, social structure is built.

Most people are humanistic in their thinking, and that is our God. God today is the man himself. You see, whatever it is that is more important to you than anything else, that's your God.

[36 : 56] or whoever it is that is more important to you than anyone else, that's your God. And there is only one person who has a right to that place in your heart, and that's the true God.

There are families who become gods. There are husbands and wives who become gods, and I swear I've never been able to understand this. There are even automobiles who become gods. unbelievable. There are toys and trinkets and gadgets who become gods. There are boats who become gods. This is hard for me to say.

There's even Monday night football who becomes gods. It's possible to be, to make athletics your God.

Remember the, remember the interview of the, of the, the all-star famous baseball player who says, of course, you know that, that baseball is everything to me.

[38 : 01] Isn't that sad? Isn't that sad? Baseball is everything. Can't you see this old man, 90 years old, creaming around with his king, baseball is everything to me.

You think you'll feel that way then? But he served that as his God during the prime of his life. Money. Like the fellow says, money ain't everything, but it's sure way out ahead of whatever's in second place.

That's the average philosophy that we have. Money. Whatever you expend your energy for, whatever occupies the bulk of your thinking, whatever is more important to you than anything else, that's your God.

God. And if it is not the true God, now you get ready for this, if it is not the true God, you are guilty of heathenism. It is called idolatry.

And you may be on the best dressed list and the upper income echelon and the highest educational attainment and live in the right part of town and drive the right kind of automobile and send your kids to the right kind of school and be an idolater.

[39 : 13] Happens all the time. The country is loaded with them. There is a general deification of humanity that is taking place and we are seeing it on the upswing.

Sex, drugs, and yes, I'll tell you another. It is possible that a man's ministry can become his God. It is possible for a church to become ministry related rather than Christ related.

Ministry oriented rather than Christ oriented. One of the most natural things in the world to happen. And it will happen here if you don't guard against it. Where the church and the ministry becomes everything and Christ takes second place.

Sad. It happens so subtly and so gradually that you do not realize that it's happening. God gave them over. Verses 24, 26, and 28.

God gave them over. God gave them over. God gave them over. One of the most sad phrases in all the Bible. God gave them over. It means that God delivered them to their own devices.

[40 : 23] God said, this is what you want? You've got it. Take it. That's what it means. God gave them over. Dr. A.T. Robertson, the famed Greek scholar who taught for 50 years at Louisville Baptist Seminary, said of this phrase, God gave them over.

The words sound like dirt clods on the coffin as God leaves men to work their own wicked will. The worst thing God can do for you is to leave you to yourself.

Leave you to your own devices. That's what he did with these. They insisted upon that. And this giving over is not only permissive, it is judicial as well. God ceased to restrain man and allows him to pursue his own self-determined course.

You know why? Because man told God, hey, bug off, will you? Bug off. This is my life. I'm going to do what I want. I'm going to live as I please. I want to be my own person.

Hey, God, don't call me. I'll call you. Fifty years from now when I'm old and dying, can't do anything else, and the doctor says, well, we've done all we can do.

[41 : 36] Then I'll give you the time of day. But until then, don't bother me. That's this mentality. God gave them over. In the lusts, this is an inordinate desire or craving that will not be denied.

And the meaning that is conveyed also in this word lusts, the lusts of their hearts to impurity in verse 24, it conveys this. Lust has built into it this concept. The lusting is a striving for, a reaching, a trying

to attain, an extending that will not be denied.

It is grasping after. And built into the word is this idea that the thing which you are lusting after, which you may well succeed in getting, the thing which you are lusting after is never worth what you gave up to get it.

In other words, it always promises something dangling there before you as a delectable bauble of some kind. But when you get it, it never delivers what you thought it would deliver.

It never fulfills. It never provides happiness. It's just a big letdown. Remember Esau and the mess of pottage? Good illustration. Adam and Eve, what they gave up to get whatever that fruit was, wasn't worth it.

[43 : 06] What Samson gave up for his fling with Delilah, wasn't worth it. What David surrendered for his little escapade with Bathsheba, wasn't worth it.

What Judas gave up to get his lousy 30 pieces of silver, it wasn't worth it. And Judas took those 30 pieces of silver and says, funny, these things don't provide me at all with what I thought they would. And he took them back and threw them down. That's the meaning of the word lust. Impurity of the mind means unpurged, has the idea, the connotation of a cesspool.

Not very nice, but that's what it is. Dishonoring their bodies, they forfeited. The spiritual and bodies are all that remains.

And you know, this goes to explain, at least to my thinking, a long ways, why it is that unregenerate people put so much importance and so much attention upon the physical body.

[44 : 15] And you see this, of course, in the magazines and television and everywhere you look at it. Human sexuality, which God intended to be a good thing, has been debased and exploited in so many ways.

And if you ask yourself the question, why is it that man seems to place so much importance upon the physical body? I think the answer is quite obvious when you think about it a little bit.

And the reason is, this is all he's got. That's all he has. He does not have a spiritual dimension to appreciate. He has already, Paul says, rejected the truth that would give him a spiritual dimension. He doesn't have that. The body, the physical, the material, that's all he's got. He puts his eggs, all his eggs in that basket because that's the only basket he has. It's quite natural to expect him to do that.

No wonder he has no attention nor interest for the spiritual. He does not have the capacity for it. The spirit is designed by God to be a rudder for the soul. He has no steering mechanism.

[45 : 18] He's just adrift. Paul implies that to honor the body that God has given us is to use it and enjoy it. And to dishonor the body is to abuse it and injure it.

And this is exactly what man engages in doing. Verse 25 is a perpetuation of the Garden of Eden mentality. Adam was the first one who was guilty of that. And then in verse 26, we are told that for this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions.

For their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural. And this simply means that females, and this is the word that's used in the original, isn't women at all.

And it isn't men at all. It's female. It is as though Paul is saying, listen, I will not dignify these people by calling them man and woman because they have rejected the God of creation and therefore, they have injured their own dignity.

You see, man derives his dignity from the Creator. And when you deny the Creator, your dignity goes with his dignity. And Paul, in order to emphasize here in the original, says females.

[46 : 38] It's just like he's talking about animals. They're females. What have their females done? Their females exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.

The question is asked, why did Paul lead with the females? Why did he start with the females instead of the males? I think the reason is this. Women are looked upon in most societies and most cultures as the last bastion of decency and virtue.

And when the women have gone, everything's gone. when womanhood has lost its dignity and womanhood is on the skids, you may well assume that men have already preceded them.

They're already down the tube. Paul says, this thing is so bad, he starts with the females. And the females have abandoned the natural function of the woman.

Now I'm going to talk very plain here. It may be too delicate for some sensitive ears. I'm sorry. I do not mean to offend anybody, but I'm not going to backpedal on the language of scripture just in order to keep offending some sensitive soul.

[48 : 01] We spent a couple of sessions dealing with this passage and we spoke very pointedly to the subject of lesbianism and sodomy. And I'm not going into it in that kind of detail and for that I'm glad also.

But I do want to say what this means. And what this means is that the women exchange the natural function. And the natural function means the natural use of the woman in a sexual capacity.

And this means literally that a woman is designed and created by God with certain body parts that function in a certain way.

And a woman's body parts and another woman's body parts don't make it. That's what he's saying. Now some of course would consider this old-fashioned and it is. And so sin. So sin. It is old-fashioned I suppose.

[49 : 09] The scriptures take a very clear-cut view regarding the subject of homosexuality and the Bible condemns it. Now nobody is suggesting that we get up an anti-gay task force and go out and lynch all homosexuals.

That's certainly not the answer either. And no Christian has a right to be nasty or unkind or condemning or anything else. We do not condemn people. None of us have the right to do that.

But we do condemn sin because the Bible condemns sin and homosexuality is a sin whether it's in women or whether it's in men. And the Apostle Paul says that God designed the man for the woman and the woman for the man and two men together just do not make it and neither do two women.

This is very very clear. He continues by saying in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another.

Men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And that means that homosexuality lesbianism and all of these other aberrations of sexual activity and perversions of sexual activity to a certain extent contain their own built-in consequences and their own built-in punishment.

[50 : 32] They have abandoned verse 28 they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer and this is an interesting word also we looked at in the original when we examined it and what it literally means is is that these men in every generation and this generation is no exception they gave God an exam they gave God an examination and he flunked he did not pass their test for being what they wanted a God to be so they rejected him because they want God to be the kind of God that they want but God is just not very accommodating you see he happens to like the way he is just as he is and he will not change himself to suit our fancy he tells us to conform to him he is not going to conform to us and they did not acknowledge God any longer God gave them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper and they are listed word by word in verses 29 through 32

I am not now going to go through the list defining each of these terms because some of them require a rather intricate definition and we do not have time and I can promise you it isn't all that edifying anyway but if there are those who are interested there are tapes available where each of these words is defined where we deal with it in the original and we break it down and we give some illustrations of it so they are available if you want them we'll not take time to go through them now and according to my watch we have six minutes for questions and answers well I don't know about answers but questions anyway anybody