

When God No Longer Restrains

Romans 1:22-32

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Introduction: Man is at war with God, but many Christians think it is a one way conflict. “If God is love then He certainly is not at war with men.” BUT, God is resisting men. He is pushing back by revealing His anger in the created world. This is a daily opposition and it is directed at ungodly men who abuse one another and hide the truth of God’s glory from one another.

Romans 1:18 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is [*being*] revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

On the Earth, when evil is unopposed, it marches over the entire planet as quickly as it can. Hitler envisioned a worldwide kingdom and pursued it with lightning speed...until he was opposed and restrained. God boldly asserts that He is restraining the evil of mankind including their offenses toward Him and their hateful treatment of one another.

It is the nature of mankind to ignore God even though they know He exists having both eternal power and divine nature. If God cannot be ignored [and it is the job of believers to make sure that He is not] then men will try to suppress the truth about God in whatever ways they can devise. Because mankind is determined not to give their Creator the honor He deserves they must invent other explanations for what exists all around them. It becomes then, preferable to come from gas rather than from God. From aliens rather than from a benevolent and gracious Father in Heaven.

Romans 1:21 ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

BUT...God is light! He is the source of light and light and truth march hand and hand. Light reveals the truth about what the universe is and where it came from. As men flee God they flee the light and the only place to go is further and further into darkness. This has not just suddenly happened in our age. 2500 years ago Isaiah spoke about such men...

Isaiah 5:20-21 ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!

This empty darkness reigns in every age and place where God is actively suppressed by men. But God, with measured wrath, actively resists being ignored. With that same wrath He restrains humanity from all the evil it might otherwise do.

Our text today contains one of the most solemn warnings of Scripture. It describes a circumstances in which God no longer restrains the evil impulses of humanity. When He releases the floodgate of malice and hatred that is poised to burst upon humanity. We have seen it in the modern world in the form of Nazism, Communism and now Militant

Islam. What happens when men become convinced of the lies they have told themselves and confirmed in their intent to suppress the Glory of The One True God and His creation? When they see **their** ideas as the only wisdom and truth? Romans chapter one answers that by describing the determined descent of man into darkness and God's calculated response. Speaking of such men God says....

Romans 1:22-32 ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 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. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 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. 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, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and 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.

Romans lays bare the exact nature of humankind. It reveals the hidden truth about humanity and not just what can be outwardly seen. It tells what men are capable of when left unopposed. It also explains why men are not always as bad outwardly as God says they are inwardly. Because GOD is restraining men and nations. We all need God's version of reality not our theories!

This passage reveals why people and cultures, apart from God, get worse and worse until they die. Scripture says three times that God gave them over. Simply stated...."God quit restraining them!" He is still revealing His wrath from heaven, but there comes a point in a nation and person's life where God will just let them do what they want. These verses document the decline of men and cultures into obscurity. It is where they want to go and where they want to be, because it is as far away from God as they can possibly get. Scripture tells us that when God gives cultures and humans over:

- Their God given love for their own bodies is abandoned [24]
- Their God given knowledge of God is abandoned [25]
- Their God given sexuality is distorted and even abandoned [26-27]
- Their God given image is scarred and even abandoned [28-31]
- Their God given conscience is seared and then abandoned [32]

Their God given love for their own bodies and others is abandoned [24]

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

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts: Why did God do this? [therefore].... Because they deliberately corrupted God's eternal power and divine nature. It is a judgment....God lifted His restraining hand when they changed the glory of God into the image of sinful man then into animals. Is God a man? Well according to the Mormon Church He is.

Romans 1:23 ²³ *they* exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

“Lusts” does not mean just sexual sin, but mankind gets there really fast from this point. It means strong burning desire. When they start saying that God is a man, or a bird or an animal God responds by letting men follow their lusts.

If you are tempted to think this is unkind of God, it is not. He is not doing anything to them. He is letting them do what they want which, if I am not mistaken is what unbelievers everywhere say that is what they want Him to do. Scripture also says this...

Ephesians 4:18-19 ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, **have given themselves over** to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

So that their bodies would be dishonored among them: If God did not make you in His image and for a purpose then your body must be solely yours to use for your own pleasure and satisfaction. “Dishonored” means shamefully treated. Paul is writing from Corinth where they had erected the idol temple to the goddess of fertility Diana. Every night 1000 prostitutes who lived in the temple would descend into the streets of Corinth to ply their trade which was in their mind a worship. They had cast off the true God and become the masters of their own destiny.

“This represents the attempt of man to control his destiny in independence of God. He rejects the revelation God has made and this leads to idolatry as he manufactures idols in the likeness of his body. This in turn leads to immoral types of worship....people thought that they had the secret of fertility. By the use of appropriate rituals...the believed that they could secure growth and vitality. They had become masters of themselves and their environment, or so they thought.” *Leon Morris*

God made the human body, male and female, to reveal His image in creation. When men reject God they reject this notion with it and dishonor what should be honored. Is there more sexual abuse, rape, abortion and general sexual immorality today than before 1963? I believe that is documentable. The Scripture could no longer be read in school starting in 1963.

Their God given knowledge of God is abandoned [25]

Romans 1:25 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.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie: What Truth of God? I thought these were unbelievers and did not acknowledge the truth of God. They are! BUT God has given all men knowledge of Himself.

Romans 1:20 ²⁰ 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.

When men ignore it, suppress it, flee from it long enough and intensely enough God will simply let them go. HE is NOT obligated to hold you when you are screaming to be free of Him. Conversely, He cannot be accused of doing wrong when He does exactly what godless men want Him to do....LEAVE THEM ALONE! That He ever restrains us at all is pure grace. That He would actually draw you back from the precipice of Hell and make you His child is Grace Beyond Measure!

They worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator: This is not a new philosophy in our day or in Christ's. 450 years before Jesus, a firewood porter, turned philosopher by the name of Protagoras said..."Man is the measure of all things." By this he intended to say that there is no truth, but what men consider to be true." Although men know of God they prefer their own version of truth which is really a lie. As soon as any man prefers anything over the truth of God he has set foot on this slippery path into darkness.

Who is blessed forever: God is the source of all good and satisfaction. Because of this He is the one who is worthy to be praised and worshiped or "Blessed" by all men. But those who willingly exchange the truth for a lie do it precisely so that they will not have to give Him the glory that is due Him. They prefer the creature...themselves. For them there is something glorious in their own selves. This is akin to standing in awe before Michelangelo's David while insisting that no one named Michelangelo ever existed. This statue was found in a marble quarry having been randomly eroded into this shape by the wind.

Their God given sexuality is distorted and even abandoned [26-27]

Romans 1:26-27 ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 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.

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions: The reasons for homosexuality according to God are revealed here. It is different from other sins like lying that you can and should just give up. It is the result of the flight of men and women away from God. The step before it is to change what God has made into something man

has imagined. God has made men and women in His own image. Homosexuality obscures the image of God by denying in practice what God has made. Let me show you how;

Nothing defines our personhood more than our gender. Can you imagine a birth announcement that does not say it is a boy or a girl? Of course not and yet every effort has been made in the past 30 years to obscure every distinction between the genders. Why? Because **God made those distinctions** and He says flat out that they reveal His image in the world. The image of God in mankind cannot be fully seen [as God desires] apart from our sexuality. Not only is it wrong to make sex and sexuality something ungodly it offends God [when Christians do so] because He made both genders to Glorify Himself in Creation. Here is the truth...

God invented sexuality.

Genesis 1:27 ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

God's first command to Adam and Eve was to use the sexuality He gave them:

Genesis 1:28 ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth,

God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women: "Degrading" is the same root word as dishonor. Something is degraded when it no longer does what it was intended to do. The performance of a car or the beauty of a work of art. Sexuality is the first mentioned image of God and as such it is one of mankind's most splendid and cherished attributes. When men do not want to belong to God, be like God or especially not to have been created by God, God can and does just let them pursue their own course. Since our sexuality is our most defining attribute...and since that sexuality puts the image of God on display in the world...what are men going to dishonor first if they do not want to belong to God? Sure...the thing that most reveals Him...our sexuality.

Why does our sexuality reveal God so clearly? Because through it God has shared His most defining attribute. Without it no other attributes would exist. God is Life!

John 1:3-4 ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ **In Him was life**, and the life was the Light of men.

John 5:26 ²⁶ "For just as the Father has **life in Himself**, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

Acts 17:28 for "In him we live and move and **have our being**"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

God has shared His intellect, His emotions and His will with us, but they are all mute points without life. When men and women form a union that creates life they are revealing the image of God on the earth in a surpassing way. This is the only Biblical reason believers who love God should oppose gay marriage.

It is not because gays are worse sinners than we heterosexual adulterers and fornicators. It is because it obscures the glory and image of God on the earth like nothing else men can do. It is a tragedy for any society and for its practitioners as well.

Exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural: Radical feminism in our day despises the natural, created and blessed image of God in the female human being. If resist it and lie about it long enough and hard enough God will just let you go. This is what Scripture says here. When people tell you that the Scripture does not oppose homosexuality you should remember this passage. IT is so precisely clear that you have to tear it from the text to deny God's opposition to homosexuality.

In the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman: Both men and women need to know that the "natural function of the woman" is to attract men. Men are not all dogs like I have heard many Christian women say. God made you to attract him and He made him to be captivated by you. When women resent that men are attracted to them...when wives resent that their husbands desire them, they resent the image of God that their creator has endowed them with. This is sad and painful and common. When men turn away from their desires for women they too deny what God has made them for. The image of God in a human man!

Burned in their desire toward one another, men with men: Men are made IN THE IMAGE OF GOD to have desire for women. Homosexuality is just another logical step in fallen man's quest to get as far away from God as possible. To disown God and as much of His Image in us as possible. AGAIN...this is the reason for God's offence. It should be the only reason for our opposition to Gay marriage. The Church and individual believers were saved to give Glory to God. Humanity was made in the image of God. We want God to be seen in the world...even in unbelieving culture. We do not want Him to be hidden, suppressed and shunned.

Their God given image is scarred and even abandoned [28-31]

Romans 1:28-31 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, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer: In other words they see no value in God. There is nothing to be gained from Him and they have no faith that anything He says about life and the universe has any validity or value.

God gave them over to a depraved mind: God is not passive in the face of man's evil. But what He promises to do is let men have what they want. He is not obligated to stop us from our determined efforts to live apart from Him. The fact that He devised a way to do just that and sent His own Son into the world to carry it out at the cross is an endless source of awe, glory and worship for us. But it was grace. God is justified in giving men over to what they really want...complete and absolute freedom from Him in every way.

A depraved mind is one that is rejected because it does not work or function properly. God in common grace keeps us from ourselves...from our own dysfunctional mind, but men can so offend God and hate God that He will let them follow what they so desperately desire...their own depraved mind.

To do those things which are not proper: Things which should not be done. They are not fitting. Judge for yourself. Is it fitting to always be doing the wrong thing instead of the right thing. To be in constant conflict with others. To deceive your spouse, your parents or your employer. To wish bad things to happen to other people and to constantly saying things to make other people look as bad as possible. How about hating God and everything that pertains to Him. Being arrogant and ruthless toward people who need love and care.

This is just a summary of these things. I am not going to parse everyone of them for you, but you see the point. This is what men and women become in their flight away from God.

Their God given conscience is seared and then abandoned [32]

Romans 1:32 and 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.

And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death: Men have a conscience. And they know there is a God with divine power. God says that men know right from wrong when it comes to these behaviors toward Him and one another. They are perverse in nature, but they still know.

They not only do the same, They still do them, because they defy God. They put them in that camp as far away from God and the image of God as they can be. It is where they want to be. God has stopped restraining their incessant quest for independence from God. God allows them to act out on their thoughts and the deception of their own mind that they are free of God. They actually are in a way. God has withdrawn His limiting hand and they are running wild now.

They also give hearty approval to those who practice them: And they are not about to condemn others for doing these things. That is the same as admitting that they are also condemned. No... they do evil deeds and they applaud one another for all the acts of godlessness and unrighteousness that commit.

CONCLUSION: Where does this leave the human race? In freefall! Determined to get as far away from God as possible. .

Answer this Questions: If it were not for Christ you would descend into this pit of hopeless despair and be lost. Not every lost person commits every sin mentioned here, but the origin of them all is the same. A reckless and desperate desire to be free of God. To reject the one who gives us life and therefore is our Lord and God. To refuse to own

God and then to act in such a way as to deface, obscure and eventually erase the image of God in their own bodies.

Ask for a verdict: We should not be dismayed or surprised at the direction our culture is moving. We set our path away from God in the early sixties and have been picking up speed on that slippery slope ever since. We have kicked God out of every aspect of American life and the nation desires to silence the preaching of the Christ, but has not yet actively tried to do it. For now it is just trying to intimidate believers into silence.

We who have not descended into the darkness should not think highly of ourselves. We should think highly of the mercy and grace of God to restrain our fallen and broken hearts and to give us spiritual life in Christ. Life we did not seek, but that sought and found us instead. We were dead to God...as unable to return to Him as a corpse can return to life.

Rather than condemn the world you should get low before God in grateful praise. Don't let your prayers and singing be perfunctory. We should have descended into this abyss with the rest of mankind as we flee God. Humanity hates God, the notion of God and will not own or even consider loving God. The entire race is lying in darkness of spirit and of mind. Their thoughts are futile and lead nowhere. Their relationships are in shambles and the pursuit of our earthly desires, in the end, leave us as unfulfilled as a dead man. Natural born men are dead to God and they like it that way. When God reveals Himself they object, they flee and they deny having any connection whatsoever to the God of Creation. This was also true of you until Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to bring you to faith in Him. You were alive and attuned to the world that hates God but.....

Ephesians 2:1-10you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.