

## **Abandoned by God**

### **Romans 1:24 - 32**

*<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup>They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. <sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. <sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

**In today's Bible lesson, Paul addresses a terrifying notion, the possibility of abandonment by God. David Jeremiah has asked two important questions, "Does man reach a point of no return in his sin before God?" and, "Isn't God supposed to be infinitely gracious and forgiving?" The answer to both questions is 'yes'! God is righteous, and when His righteousness is violated by those who reject Him, He releases them to the consequences of their own actions." To summarize, by man's own willful, persistent rejection of and departure from God and His ways, God will allow man to be left with nothing more than his own desires and the consequences of them. A frightening prospect indeed!**

**The essence of sin is man's attempt to depart from God and live according to his standards and pursuits. From the Fall in Genesis until today, mankind has a pattern of wandering away from God. While God is gracious and patient, He has also granted us the freedom to choose whom we will serve and how we will live. Three times in today's Bible lesson, we read that God does in fact give people up (1:24, 26, 28)...to their sins, desires, habits, choices, etc.**

**God certainly does not abandon people without doing anything to draw people away from sin and to Him. He has given them a revelation of Himself in the creation, the human conscience, Scripture and finally in His Son. There is enough evidence and leadership available to man for him to know who God is and the pathway that leads to the Lord and life.**

In today's Bible lesson, some scholars have argued that God gives over or abandons people in three areas: idolatry, immorality and iniquity. Idolatry is exchanging a passion for God and His truth for *anything* else. Immorality is perverting what was originally made good by God for selfish plans and purposes. Iniquity is a lifestyle in which one no longer distinguishes between good and bad or right and wrong. In some cases, those distinctions are removed altogether.

Paul gave us a variety of words and descriptions of idolatry, immorality and iniquity in Romans 1:24-32. These descriptions are illustrative but not exhaustive. We could easily suggest other habits, choices or lifestyles that fit this way of life. For example, the Old Testament prophets often railed against injustice, oppression, partiality and selfishness. We have to be careful not to think we are safe from these temptations just because our own personal battles may not be written down in the lists that Paul or other Bible writers give us. Remember the words of Jeremiah, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it" (Jeremiah 17:9).*

In Romans, God reveals both human sin and divine grace. Sin can resist grace. But grace can defeat sin. A stubborn, hardened heart will not open itself to grace. When the door of a hardened heart does not open, then God abandons the heart and allows it to pursue that which has hardened it.

#### Applications . . .

1. Take time now to examine your own heart. *Have you willfully walked away from the Lord and chosen your own desires and designs?*
2. Review today's Bible lesson again. What evidences of the things Paul wrote about do you see in our society? *Are these things present in your own life too?*
3. Take a few moments to consider what a life abandoned by God would look like. *How do you think someone arrives at such a devastating place?*
4. Resolve to make time each day for self-examination to see where your own heart is relative to where God would like it to be.

*"As Paul illustrates in these verses,  
and develops theologically through the end of chapter four,  
man is not basically good but evil. His nature is innately bent toward sin.  
Like an untended garden, when man is left to himself  
the bad always chokes out the good."*

**STUDY OF ROMANS**

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**John MacArthur, Commentary on Romans, Volume 1**