

# Romans 1:24-25

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-1/romans-124-25/>

*When we claim to know better than God and pursue unrighteous living, God removes His protection and gives us over to the natural consequences of those choices. God intends great things for us, and when we pursue unrighteous living, our bodies are dishonored.*

When we as humans engage in prideful living, refusing to acknowledge the order God created in nature and refusing to submit to the knowledge of right and wrong God placed within us, we incur God's wrath. The form of wrath Paul highlights here is a form that seems to be common in the Bible: God removes His hand of protection and allows us to obtain what we desire. We suffer the natural consequences of our choices.

Paul shows a progression of judgment in three steps:

- God gave them over " to lusts (v 24),
- to "passions" (v 26), and then
- to a "depraved mind" (v 28).

In each of these instances, the Greek phrase translated "God gave them over" is exactly the same, "*paredoken autous ho theos.*"

God's judgment takes other forms as well. Sometimes God heaps upon people's heads the harm they wish on others and sometimes God simply intervenes. But God built a natural order of cause and effect into the universe, and usually allows it to act upon us. For example, Paul will tell us that the "wages [consequences] of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This repeats the same biblical theme that began in the first part of Genesis (Genesis 2:17).

It seems God also restrains evil and gives people time to repent prior to being judged. God says He pours out judgment on the third and fourth generation, mercifully providing two or three generations for repentance (Exodus 34:7). God gave 120 years for repentance prior to Noah's flood (Genesis 6:3). 2 Thessalonians 2:6 specifically says God's Spirit is restraining evil.

Perhaps the most personal illustration of God restraining evil is found in Job where Satan complains to God concerning Job. Satan asserts that Job, God's prize student of just living, has special protection from God, that God has "made a hedge around him" (Job 1:10) that prevented harm from coming to him.

It seems something like this is implied in Romans 1, that there is a sort of protection God removes when we pursue sin unrelentingly so that we are "given over" to the natural consequences of sin. Also, God's hedge of protection is referred to in 1 Corinthians:

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13)

Paul describes the first step in God’s judgement: *Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them* (vs 24).

It is interesting that the first step in God's judgment of giving us what we desire is to let us have what we lust for in our sin natures: things that are unclean. The result is that our *bodies would be dishonored* (v 24).

The Greek word translated *dishonored* is “*atimazo*.” “*Atimazo*” can be translated “dishonor,” “shame,” or “treat with contempt.” We dishonor something when we treat it in a manner that is far beneath its appropriate level of dignity. God intended our bodies to do service to Him and others and to animate life. When we pursue the lust of sin and God gives us over to it, we dishonor our bodies by making them pleasure-seeking and self-absorbed with the result of self-destruction.

Perhaps immorality destroys true and lasting oneness. Perhaps chemical use destroys our awareness and judgment over even our minds. Perhaps anger and dissension lead to isolation and loss of community. Whatever form it takes, sin leads to our destruction.

The seed of lust for unclean living is to discard truth and replace it with lies. God places knowledge of right and wrong within our heart, so in order to deny that knowledge, we *exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.* (v 25).

In Paul's day the Gentiles were largely pagans, so they had multiple religious ceremonies and gods, but these amounted to the same end: a) a moral excuse for immoral living, and b) a means to gain the illusion of control over others. Paying the priest or the idol some price in exchange for a favor demonstrates a belief that I can get what I want through my actions and influence over others. Pagan idolatry is a prideful declaration that “I am in control.” In pagan idolatry, the ceremonies and traditions support a belief that “I am controlling these powers so I get my way.”

Modern man has devolved further in his prideful approach to living. The idolatry of modern man asserts a declaration that “I am in control and there is no power greater than I.” The immense pressure, stress, and simple non-reality associated with trying to live out that belief is like a blind person trying to live as though he can see perfectly; everywhere we turn we will run headlong into a painful reality that differs from what we assert.

To have our *bodies dishonored* is to despise our bodies. The inference is that the prideful approach to life results in self-harm. When we refuse to follow God's design, we opt for self-destruction.

The *truth of God* leads to life and benefit. But when we walk in unrighteousness, we *exchange the truth of God for a lie*. When we live a life of lies, we suffer the adverse consequence of self-destruction. The inference is that when we worship our selves, we choose a path of self-destruction. But when we humble ourselves, and follow God's ways, we find life and blessing.

This is a companion thought to Jesus's assertion of how to gain the most from life:

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

(Matthew 16:25)

We ought to follow the *Creator, who is blessed forever*. This is the path to our true self-interest.

### **Biblical Text**

**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.**