

# Romans 1:26-27

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*God's design for sex is between a man and a woman within marriage. When we decide we know better than God, we exchange what is natural for unnatural and this brings negative consequences.*

Sometimes people fail to acknowledge that God invented sex, and designed man and woman as sexual beings. God's intended design is for a man and woman to be "one flesh" with one another through marriage (Genesis 2:24).

In Scripture, this oneness is used often as a picture for the oneness God desires to experience with humanity. In Ezekiel 16, God uses a vivid illustration of Israel as His bride whom He loves. However, this bride has forsaken her faithful husband and gone off to seek sexual relationships with every man she can find. God says this woman has fallen lower than a prostitute because at least a prostitute gets paid: "you give money and no money is given to you" (Ezekiel 16:34).

The first biblical instance of the Greek word "*ginosko*" (usually translated "know") refers to Joseph not "knowing" (sexually) Mary until after Jesus was born. This same word is used in John 17:3 when Jesus prays to His Father that His disciples might have "eternal life," then says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

The very essence of productive living is to develop intimate relationships with others. Sexual relationships outside of God's design do much to destroy this productive interaction. The very nature of promiscuous sexual interaction is self-seeking. But sexual intimacy with a spouse grows out of a strong relationship. In fact, a healthy frequency and mutual satisfaction from sexual interaction is a good gauge for the health of a marriage (1 Corinthians 7:5).

In being "set apart" or sanctified for the kind of just life God's resurrected power enables us to live, a key first step is to avoid sexual perversion. God defines this as a key part of His will in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6, where Paul tells us to keep our bodies clean and free from sexual immorality.

Same-sex behavior was completely accepted and unquestioned within Greek culture, as was promiscuity in general (including bestiality). It was common for Greek nobles to keep boys for sexual companions. Two nobles fighting over a particular boy they both had affection for sparked one major civil war in Athens. The Spartans embraced bi-sexuality as state policy. Rome embraced Greek culture, *for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is*

*unnatural and in the same way also the men abandoned natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts* (vv 26-27).

Paul here is stating that like idolatry, sexual practices outside of God's design bring dishonor to our bodies, and bring in and of itself a judgment. Paul will make clear in Romans that if we are controlled by our lusts or *passions*, we become their slaves (Romans 6:16).

When we choose sexual promiscuity and same-sex behavior, God also allows us to suffer the natural consequences: *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions* (v 26) and they *received in their own persons the due penalty of their error* (v 27).

The resurrection power God has placed within us is the power to overcome sinful lust of any sort. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul exhorts:

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."

Even though God gives His resurrection power for living to all who believe, we must choose to walk in faith that God knows best in order to engage that power. The primary thing we must daily believe is that God's way is better than living in pride, following "my way." That includes choosing to follow what God says about sexual conduct rather than following our desires, whatever those might be.

A simple (but not comprehensive) definition for "sin" might be "*choosing a path counter to God's instruction and design.*" When we sin, we damage ourselves. God instructs us in ways that are in our best interest. Even when non-believers instinctively follow God's ways, they are still blessed (Romans 2:14-15). The adverse consequence for sin is a natural consequence God built into the moral universe, and it falls on believers and unbelievers alike.

Sin brings adverse consequences, but sexual sin is especially hostile to us, which could be why Paul leads with this particular sin when discussing God's judgment on any unjust living. He will broaden the discussion of sin considerably in the following verses.

### **Biblical Text**

**26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,<sup>27</sup> 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.**