

# Romans 1:28-31

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-1/romans-128-31/>

*Eventually when people persist in sin and insist that they know best, God will give them over to a depraved mind. This results in a loss of mental health—a mind that cannot tell right from wrong and is totally focused on “me.”*

The judgment or wrath of God in this chapter comes via three instances of *gave them over*, and this is the third and final stage in a progression of increasing judgment. This is the final stage of God’s wrath: because *they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer* (v 28), He decides to remove His protection and allows us to experience the full consequence of what we desire, by giving us *over to a depraved mind* (v 28). It seems that one of the worst consequences is our sinful nature gaining control of us:

*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 (vs 29).*

Note here that when we *do not see fit to acknowledge God any longer*, and we exchange the knowledge of God for a lie (Romans 1:25), we are left with a mind that has no foundation, no moral center, no base other than just "me." A mind without a foundation for *proper* behavior can now be open to any behavior.

A *depraved mind* indicates a mind that can’t tell right from wrong. Some translations say “debased mind”—we have lost our "base." We are now slaves of a sinful nature with no goodness.

Once we lose the moral anchor God provides, we become slaves of desires that lead us to destruction and use our mind to rationalize our behavior.

The list Paul makes in the following verses draws an excellent picture of what someone is like when all their efforts are bent to "myself" as being the center of all things. It turns out that when our minds are just focused on “self” we turn into the sort of person whom people may fear—but no one likes.

Paul now expands the list of sinful behaviors we are led to when we have Self instead of God as our foundation. God pours out His wrath by removing His protection, therefore we lose our "base" and now have a *depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper* (v 28), resulting in behaviors on this list:

- *being filled with all unrighteousness,*
- *wickedness,*
- *greed,*
- *evil;*
- *full of envy,*
- *murder,*

- *strife*,
- *deceit*,
- *malice*;
- *they are gossips*,
- *slanderers*,
- *haters of God*,
- *insolent*,
- *arrogant*,
- *boastful*,
- *inventors of evil*,
- *disobedient to parents*,
- *without understanding*,
- *untrustworthy*,
- *unloving*, and, finally
- *unmerciful* (v 29–31).

No one ever wants to be characterized by such behaviors or to engage with such a person. You will not see these characteristics on a résumé. Even those who are evil expend substantial resources justifying themselves, asserting that evil is good (or asserting there is no such thing as evil).

It is a natural progression. If we have Self as our "base"—if fulfilling our appetites is the chief end we pursue, of course *greed* would characterize our lives. If *greed* is now justified in our debased mind, then of course *envy* would naturally follow. This would naturally lead to cheating, lying, or coercing to achieve our envious desires.

Subsequently, we will surely quarrel with anyone who stands in our way and have malice toward them, resulting in *strife*. To the extent we are able, we will destroy the person obstructing our desires from being met, which is the root attitude behind *murder*. Short of physical destruction, we can pursue personal destruction through *deceit*, *malice*, and *unmerciful* antagonism toward others.

After beginning with sexual sin, Paul continues to expand the list of sinful behaviors we are led to when we have Self instead of God as a base or foundation. In addition to the characteristics of *greed*, treachery, and *murder* that a self-based mind embraces (v 29), Paul describes a general set of traits that undermines any authority that might compete with Self as our ultimate authority.

Being *disobedient to parents* is the root of overthrowing authority. *Insolence* and *slander* are typical ways to resist moral authorities.

*Slander* is one of the most effective ways to undermine any individual who might be a threat to "myself" standing at the center of all things. In his writings, C. S. Lewis does an excellent job of illustrating that the ultimate outworking of sinful behavior is aloneness. Just think, if everyone is exercising these behaviors seeking to cause everyone else to focus on them, the ultimate result must be that everyone ends up in a world with just themselves.

What a sad state we insist on when we walk our own path instead of humbling ourselves before our Creator. This list of behaviors is a list of God-hating activity which leads to self-destruction and aloneness. The alternative is to gain life through knowing God (John 17:3). The path to knowing God comes through obeying His command to love others.

These are the resulting characteristics of a person whom God has turned over to themselves as a moral base. Examining this list of negative defining characteristics, we can affirm that these behaviors make effective relationships with other people impossible.

When our mind is *depraved* and we only seek self-orientation, we lose the ability to empathize or see anything from anyone else's perspective. If that is the case, we will have no discernment and no trustworthiness. That would be expected since we have now rejected the notion that there is a right or true way independent of our view or opinion. Therefore, we will always justify our actions and will not be willing to submit to a notion or idea that there is a "right" thing to do, (which is what makes someone trustworthy). In our assertion that we know all, we end up *without understanding*.

Also, since true love is seeking the best for others, and mercy is based on identifying and empathizing with others, a debased self-seeking mind has no basis for either. When we turn to Self as our moral base, we turn away from love, trust, and mercy. This leads to *strife*, which destroys our communities and organizations.

### **Biblical Text**

**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;**