"WHEN GOD LETS GO"

(The Consequences of Unbelief)

Romans 1:24-32

10/20/2019

***Unbelief has serious consequences**!

(When God lets go, men plunge [sink or fall] into abominable wickedness.)

What happens when God lets go?

3 Consequences:

I. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO <u>FILTHY BEHAVIOR</u> (v. 24-25)
(Corrupt <u>Actions</u>: God "gave them up to uncleanness" - v. 24)

II. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO <u>UNNATURAL PASSIONS</u> (v. 26-27)
(Corrupt <u>Affections</u>: "God gave them up unto vile affections" - v. 26)

A. Unnatural passions <u>start</u> with a <u>perversion</u>
("<u>Change</u> the natural use...<u>leaving</u> the natural use")

B. Unnatural passions <u>end</u> with <u>punishment</u> (a "pay-check")
("Receiving...that recompense")

III. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO <u>REPULSIVE THOUGHTS</u> (v. 28-32)
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INTRODUCTION:

If man is as depraved as the Bible says he is, why are not conditions on earth worse than they are?

ANSWER: the common grace and mercy of God.

*God restrains sin for the sake of <u>His people</u> (EX: Abraham's lie to Pharaoh and God's plagues sent to keep Pharaoh from his wife - Gen. 12:17; Abraham practices the same deception before Abimalech - SEE Gen. 20:1-6 - to whom God said, "I also withheld thee from sinning against me" [v.6]).

*God restrains sin for the sake of <u>His plan</u>. God tells us that His <u>Spirit</u> is presently restraining (withholding or hindering) the flood gates of sin until the time planned by God comes (SEE II Th. 2:6-7).

God warned that His "Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3).

Three times this phrase appears: "God gave them up to" (v. 24, 26, 28)

It means to hand over into. The imagery is of God releasing His fingers (His restraining grip on them) and allowing them to sink, fall, drop, descend, or to go full force down over the cliff <u>into</u> the direction they wanted to go.

Why would God let anyone go? ANSWER: <u>Unbelief</u>

NOTE preceding context: After Paul described the necessity of faith (belief in the Gospel, v. 17), he unfolded the inexcusableness of unbelief (v. 18-23).

Men will not be able to stand before God at the Judgment and say: "I did not <u>have</u> the truth about God" (v. 18), "I could not <u>see</u> the truth about God" (v. 19-20); ~I did not <u>know</u> the truth about God" (v. 21-23).

After having shown the inexcusableness of unbelief, Paul now unfolds the consequences of unbelief (v. 24-32).

What happens when God lets go?

What is the result when God no longer holds back sin?

What is the outcome when He pulls off the restraints?

What would happen if God did not put as tight a reign on sin, if He did not hinder the full potential of depraved man to corrupt himself?

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The three consequences involve the corruption of the <u>total man</u> - His <u>volitional</u> aspect (will) (v. 24);
His <u>emotional</u> aspect (feelings) (v. 26);
His <u>intellectual</u> aspect (mind) (v. 28).

I. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO <u>FILTHY BEHAVIOR</u> (v. 24-25)
(Corrupt <u>Actions</u>: God "gave them up to uncleanness" - v. 24)

V. 24

"Wherefore" - ties this verse to the preceding (v. 23).

Because those who refused to believe God substituted His glory for idolatry, God gave them up.

"Uncleanness" = refers to that which is impure, dirty, or filthy!

"Lusts" = ungodly appetites or desires

"Hearts" = the center of our will; that which makes choices; that which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

Unbelievers tend to wrongly blame God for the world conditions. God can never be charged with sin or even being a culprit to sin (James 1:13-14).

It is men who, of their own choice, decide to go in a direction. At this point, God can choose to be gracious and restrain them or to let them go (He is under no obligation to restrain).

God never leads to uncleanness, though He may allow men to go there.

If they go, it is because they "gave themselves over to it."

Eph. 4:18-19 - "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Uncleanness is what unbelieving man wants. Man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18).

Like a pig that naturally loves the stinky, dirty mud (II Pet. 2:22), man who is in rebellion against God has a natural tendency toward filth, and will sink all the way down into the miry clay when God's restraining hand is removed.

"Dishonor = to disgrace, to de-value, to cheapen.

The phrase "among themselves" indicates that a physical or sexual activity is in view.

Sexual immorality dishonors your physical body. It cheapens you, makes you feel dirty. On the other hand, purity honors your body.

Since sexual purity is God's will for His children (I Th. 4:3), He says that you should know how to possess your vessel (body) in sanctification and honor (I Th. 4:4).

A man who purges himself from impurity is said to be a "vessel unto honor" (II Tim. 2:21).

Heb. 13:5 says: "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed (i.e. sex in marriage) undefiled . . ."

II. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO UNNATURAL PASSIONS (v. 26-27)
(Corrupt Affections: "God gave them up unto vile affections" - v. 26)

A. Unnatural passions start with a perversion
("Change the natural use...leaving the natural use")

V. 26
"Vile affections" = disgraceful (dishonorable) passions.

1. Perversion is a "changing of the natural"

"Change" = exchange or substitute. Cp. v. 23, 25.

Whenever truth about God is substituted for lies, there is no end to the perversions (substitutes) that will follow.

What is a perversion? A twisting of something that is good; an exchanging or substitution of the lawful for the unlawful; the real for the false; the genuine for the counterfeit.

"Natural use" = the natural function; or natural sexual relations in marriage with a husband.

The natural is changed into unnatural.

Lesbianism and homosexuality is unnatural. It is against nature. Even animals instinctively know better!

V. 27
2. Perversion is a "leaving of the natural"

"Leaving" - aorist participle - After leaving (forsaking, abandoning) God's plan for sexual satisfaction.

When God created the family unit, they were named "Adam and Eve" - not "Adam and Steve!"

3. Perversion is doing the unnatural

"Burned" = became inflamed or set on fire in their lust ("reaching out; grasping at") toward one another.

Like the flames of a fire shoot out straining after oxygen to feed the fire's unsatisfied appetite, homosexuals burn with an insatiable lust toward one another.

Whenever you attempt to satisfy a sexual desire other than by God's plan and will, you will become more contorted and twisted from the proper mode and satisfaction that God made you for - more and more degenerate (Bookman).

"Men with men" - lit. males in or among (en) males

"Working" - to work with great effort; to toil

The raging madness of a homosexual drives him to go to great lengths to do that which is "unseemly" (shameful, indecent, unpresentable, disgraceful; that which should cause embarrassment).

Homosexuality is a perversion of God's law.

1 It is an abominable sin -

"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev. 18:22).

2. It is a sin that calls for the judgment of God.

a. The O.T. Law required stoning - Lev. 20:13 - "If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

b. God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for this sin - Gen. 19. Gen. 13:13 - "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

c. No one who is a practicing homosexual will go to heaven.

God said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither . . . the effeminate (those who allow themselves to be abused unnaturally), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (those who are the active homosexual) . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-10).

Is this sin unforgivable ? No (v. 11). It is pardonable, but only to those who are washed, sanctified, and justified.

B. Unnatural passions <u>end</u> with <u>punishment</u> (a "pay-check")
("Receiving...that recompense")

"Receiving" = to <u>get back</u> one's due.

"In themselves" = a reflexive pronoun. What you do comes back to haunt you, personally.

Sin always hurts the sinner!

V. 27

"Recompense" = lit. "substitute payment" for what was done (wages, requital, or reward).

"Of their error" = delusion, for going astray.

"Which was meet" = necessary.

In a context of sexual immorality (harlotry), Solomon said: "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" (Prov. 6:27, 28).

Is AIDS the judgment of God? Yes & No.

Yes, because God established the <u>law</u> that "You reap what you sow"; or as the contemporary saying goes: "What goes around comes around."

No, because God did not create the AIDS virus, rather it is a natural result of breaking His Law.

(AIDS, like other sexually transmitted diseases is the natural result of immorality)

Asking the question, "Is AIDS God's judgment?" is like asking "Is someone's <u>hitting the ground</u> after leaping out of a 50-story building God's judgment?"

Yes & No - Yes, because God created gravity. No, because the person is facing the consequences for his own defiance of God's Laws.

III. When God lets go,
UNBELIEVERS PLUNGE INTO REPULSIVE THOUGHTS (v. 28-32)
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"Did not like to retain" = - to reject after testing. To make a decision to reject the truth about God after they examined the evidence.

For these unbelievers, God did not pass their test.

"Knowledge" = a full knowledge or a direct awareness.

What type of evidence was rejected?

They had creation that pointed to a Creator. Their conscience also pointed to a creator (2:15). (Many today have heard messages, read books, went to church, etc., and after weighing the evidence they disapprove of God being something they would want a full and direct knowledge of.)

They didn't want God "getting in the way" of their thoughts.

Note the contrast: They disapproved of having God in their thoughts, so God in return allowed them to have a disapproved (same Greek word) mind.

They rejected God in their knowledge, so God handed over to them a rejected mind.

They considered God to be useless to their intellect, so God returned to them a useless thinking capacity.

They disapproved of having God in their thoughts, so God delivered in return a disapproved mind (a mind that is good for nothing - a mind that cannot think straight; a mind that causes the person to do things that are not proper, fitting, moral - KJV - "convenient").

Wrong thinking ("Mind") always leads to wrong behavior (doing "those things that are not convenient" [proper, fitting, moral]).

--Whenever man expels God from his thinking, there is a reason for it. It is because his mind is preoccupied with other thoughts. Because he has rejected a personal knowledge of God through Christ, he opened his mind to be filled with all types of perversion. An unbeliever is capable of any or all of the mentioned vices.

V. 29 -

1. **Unrighteousness** - the opposite of ding right or justly (God is the standard of all right).

2. **Fornication** - Sexual immorality (sex outside of marriage); the opposite of sexual gratification in marriage.

3. **Wickedness** - the opposite of moral goodness.

4. **Covetousness** (greed) - the opposite of selfless giving.

5. **Maliciousness** - the opposite of being kind.

6. **Full of envy** - rather than rejoicing in the success of others

7. **Murder** - rather than preserving life and respecting man who is made in God's image.

8. **Debate** - (strife) not peaceable.

9. **Deceit** (trickery) - not genuine.

10. **Malignity** - to malign or twist right; lit. evil ethics, rather than honest ethics.

11. **Whisperers** - secretly pouring poison into the ears of others rather than "esteeming others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2).

V. 30

12. **Backbiters** (evil speakers) - cut up, rather than build up; to stab rather than strengthen.

13. **Haters of God** - rather than loving the one who created and provided for you.

14. **Despiteful** - to be cruel for the mere enjoyment of seeing others suffer; seeking to hurt rather than help.

15. **Proud** - rather than humble under God

16. **Boasters** - (braggers) rather than using your tongue to uplift God.

17. **Inventors of evil things** - one who finds out ways to make things for evil ends (EX: abortion methods) rather than using his resources for good ends.

18. **Disobedient to parents** - rather than submitting to authority.

V. 31

19. **Without understanding** - rather than having discernment between right and wrong.

20. **Covenant breakers** - rather than being faithful to agreements.

21. **Without natural affection** - no normal tenderness or compassion.

To be missing the compassion and affection that should come natural. "Natural affection" describes a family love; feelings of loyalty because of your relationship.

It comes natural to defend your family; to have compassion on your family because of the relationship if for no other reason.

To be "without natural affection" describes a mother who has no feelings, no tender heart for her child as she aborts it (murders it); it describes a father who abandons his family or lives in sin when his little children are looking up to him; or children who forsake and neglect their aged parents after they provided for you when growing up.

22. **Implacable** - irreconcilable. It describes someone who holds a grudge; has a "chip on his shoulder"; as opposed to one who seeks restoration with others and forgives.

23. **Unmerciful** - without pity.

V. 32

Everyone who sins fully knows they are breaking God's law, and that payday is coming.

Yet, they not only practice these sins themselves, but applaud others who are joining them. "Sin likes company."

When someone is headed for hell, they don't want to go alone, so they delight in others who join them in their guilt-worthy, godless endeavors.

CONCLUSION:

Never forget the principle of "sowing and reaping" (Gal. 6:7).

Whatever you substitute for God, will become your ruin

NOTE: the pattern of:

1) rejection (substitution) and
2) consequences

(cause & effect)

They exchanged the glory (honor) of God (v. 23) and received dishonored bodies.

They twisted the truth (reality) of God (v. 25) and received unreal (twisted) affections

They expelled the knowledge of God from their minds and received a worthless (empty) mind.

1. Sow unclean idolatry (v. 23), reap unclean behavior (v. 24).

2. ow unnatural worship (v. 25), reap unnatural passions (v. 26).

3. Sow unwanted thoughts of God (v. 28a), reap an unwanted mind (v. 28b).

Nothing should be more feared than for God to say about you, "I'm finished. . . You have heard My Word; you know My righteous standards, yet you resist My Spirit. (EX: Acts 7:51)."

". . .If you want to go in that direction of unbelief -- Go!"

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." (Gen. 6:3)

The Holy Spirit is calling you (maybe just one last time): "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7, 8).