

Romans 1:24-27

Therefore **God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 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.

- **Idolatry And Sexual Sin**

Paul is connecting two things that we might choose to keep separate: Idolatry And Sexual Sin. In the Old Testament and in Paul's thinking sexual immorality and idolatry went hand in hand.

Most ancient religions included priests and priestesses who were the subjects of sexual immorality (heterosexual or homosexual). Almost all pagan temples throughout the Roman world had temple prostitutes.

Verse 24 & 25 make it clear that sexual perversion is closely linked with idolatry. People have exchanged (metēllaxan) the truth about God's existence and glory for the lie (pseudei) that he neither exists nor merits worship.

**Idolatry is not just the worship of useless idols; it is the express proclamation that the biblical God does not exist.**

- **The Second Exchange: verses 26-27**

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The downward spiral: Revelation, Rejection, Rationalization, Religion – and now: Reprobation.

The overarching theme in verses 26-27: God gave humans over to do with one another sexual acts that go against the created order and design.

**“Shameful Lusts”:** (see James 1:14)

“Lust”: “epithumia” -- a wrong desire or an illicit craving. A man without God craves what is wrong, unholy, and wicked. See: Ephesians 2:3

Paul: When a person lives guided by the mind and the lusts and the desires, they are literally a working out of the wrath of God.

God gave them over to unnatural sexual desires – to do what does not follow God’s original design and plan.

The centrality of sexual sin: Homosexuality was rampant and honored in Greco-Roman culture. Note: Secular historical evidence reveals that “fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals” (Barclay, Vol 27: Romans 82).

Homosexuality was both rampant and honored in Greco-Roman society. However, that culture found the same thing repulsive in women. That is why Paul emphasizes it by saying, “Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.”

When Paul says men “exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature”, he uses a well-established term for sexual intercourse, *chrēsis*. He’s emphasizing the fact that these individuals are pursuing a sexual activity contrary to the intention of the Creator.

God’s original intentions: (Genesis 1:27-28)

God created a male and a female and encouraged them to “be fruitful and multiply”. His intention was clear: he made a male and a female and

designed them to multiply.

Even with modern science -- you still have to get the sperm from a male and the eggs from a female. The origin of the species cannot be ignored.

The key word: “exchanged”: Links verses 25, 26 with the prior idea found in verse 23: People could not stomach the truth about God so they sought to exchange it for a lie in order to accommodate their sinful desires and lifestyles.

### **Inflamed With Passions (Lusts):**

Once the proper course in the created order was abandoned, men “burned with intense desire” to be sexually involved with other men in shameless acts.

Background may be the story of Sodom and Gomorrah: Hebrew wording expresses how the men of the city “burned with passion to have sex with Lot’s two guests). -- Genesis 19:1-11, 27

One scholar notes, “... When man forsakes the author of nature, he forsakes the order of nature.”

- **The Penalty Within Themselves:**

“Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

While sexually transmitted diseases have been recognized even further back than Roman times, it is far more likely that Paul is speaking of the spiritual and emotional consequences of this unintended lifestyle.

Modern statistics from two major studies done by sociologists:

### **Bell and Weinberg:**

- 83% of the homosexual men surveyed estimated they had had sex with 50 or more partners; 43% estimated they had sex with 500 or more partners; 28% with 1,000 or more partners.

- 79% of the respondents saying that over half of their sexual partners were strangers; 70% said that over half of their sexual partners were people with whom they had sex only once. (Bell and Weinberg pp.308-309.)

### **Paul Van de Ven, Journal of Sex Research**

- Survey of 2,583 older homosexuals: "The modal range for the number of [homosexual] partners [in their lifetime] was between 101–500."
- 10.2% to 15.7% of respondents had between 501 and 1000 partners.
- Another 10.2% to 15.7% reported having had more than 1000 lifetime sexual partners.

In both studies, an overwhelming number of homosexual men admitted to having between 101-1000 sexual partners.

### **So much for the myth of monogamous, emotionally stable homosexual relationships.**

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### **Two Exchanges – Two Consequences**

Consequences for the exchange of the worship of God for the created order: 1. They became fools. 2. Their hearts became darkened. 3. Sexual perversion emerged.

Consequences for the exchange of the God-created, natural sexual order for the unnatural order:

God could not simply allow man to suppress the knowledge of him and attempt to replace it with idolatrous notions and sexual immorality. The penalty for such deliberate rebellion was to give men and women over to themselves, to experience the futility of their decisions.