



Romans 1:26-32 (ESV)

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Romans 1:26-32 (HCSB)

²⁶ This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

²⁸ And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do what is morally wrong. ²⁹ They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. ³² Although they know full well God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*¹

Romans 1:26-32

1:26-27 Not only homosexual acts but also such **passions** or desires are said to be **dishonorable** before God. Just as idolatry is unnatural (contrary to what God intended when he made human beings), so too homosexuality is **contrary to nature** in that it does not represent what God intended when he made men and women with physical bodies that have a “natural” way of interacting with each other and “natural” desires for each other. Paul follows the OT and Jewish tradition in seeing all homosexual relationships as sinful. The creation account in [Genesis 1-2](#) reveals the divine paradigm for human beings, indicating that God’s will is for man and woman to be joined in marriage. **Consumed** (or “inflamed”) gives a strong image of a powerful but destructive inward desire. The sin in view is not pederasty (homosexual conduct of men with boys) but **men** engaging in sin **with men**. There is no justification here for the view that Paul condemns only abusive homosexual relationships. **Due penalty** could refer to the sin of homosexuality itself as the penalty for idolatry. Or, the “and” in **and receiving** may indicate some additional negative consequences received **in themselves**, that is, some form of spiritual, emotional, or physical blight. The “due” penalty refers to a penalty that is appropriate to the wrong committed.

1:28-31 Human sin is not confined to sexual sins, and Paul now lists a whole catalog of the evils common among human beings as a result of turning from God.

1:32 People do not generally sin in innocent ignorance, for they **know God’s decree** (at least in an instinctive way) that their evil deserves condemnation. Indeed, the evil goes further when people **give approval** and applaud others for their sin, probably because having others join in their sin makes them feel better about the evil course they have chosen.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*²

Romans 1:26-32

1:26-27 Lesbians and homosexuals often argue that this verse only prohibits sexual abuse of children, or else they say that **natural sexual relations** are not violated when men and women who are born with a tendency for homosexual desires (as they claim) practice homosexuality. But Paul clearly says lesbianism is **unnatural**, and the Bible elsewhere strictly prohibits all homosexuality (e.g., [Lv 18:22](#)). The Creator intended male and female to be joined in marriage ([Gen 2:24](#)). As an example of the sort of sexual perversion Paul would have been aware of in his day, the emperor Nero castrated a boy named Sporus and married him. Such **degrading passions** result in **appropriate penalty**.

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 1".

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 1".

[1:28-32](#) In [verse 24](#) God is described as delivering society to impurity, in [verse 26](#) to degrading passions, and in [verse 28](#) to a **worthless mind**. The mind becomes (Gk) *adokimos* (disqualified), an untrustworthy guide in moral choices because people have rejected knowledge of God. [Verses 29-31](#) contain a list of vices similar to ancient vice lists. Pagan moralists often lamented the loss of virtue in their societies. Paul's list of sins was no darker than what other writers of that time reported. All sin is serious. Lesbianism and homosexuality may seem particularly objectionable, but any of the 21 sins listed (cp. [Gal 5:19-21](#)) cut people off from the life of God and bring spiritual death. When society applauds **others who practice** these sins, it has lost its moral compass. Ancient philosophers warned about the social effects of popular plays. Murder and immorality were so common on stage that people no longer reacted when they occurred in daily life. Modern entertainments have a similar effect on minds and the values that guide behavior.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 1:26-32

[1:26, 27](#) God's plan for sexual relationships is his ideal for his creation. Unfortunately, sin distorts the natural use of God's gifts. Sin often means not only denying God but also denying the way we are made. When people say that any sex act is acceptable as long as nobody gets hurt, they are fooling themselves. In the long run (and often in the short run), sexual sin hurts people—individuals, families, whole societies. Because sex is such a powerful and essential part of what it means to be human, it must be treated with great respect. Sexual desires are of such importance that the Bible gives them special attention and counsels more careful restraint and self-control than with any other desire. One of the clearest indicators of a society or person in rebellion against God is the rejection of God's guidelines for the use of sex.

[1:26, 27](#) Homosexuality (to turn against or abandon natural relations of sex) was as widespread in Paul's day as it is in ours. God is willing to receive anyone who comes to him in faith, and Christians should love and accept others no matter what their background. Yet, homosexuality is strictly forbidden in Scripture ([Leviticus 18:22](#)). Homosexuality is considered an acceptable practice by many in our world today—even by some churches. But society does not set the standard for God's law. Homosexuals believe that their desires are normal and that they have a right to express them. But God does not encourage us to fulfill all our desires (even normal ones). Those desires that violate his laws must be controlled.

If you have these desires, you can and must resist acting upon them. Consciously avoid places or activities you know will kindle temptations. Don't underestimate the power of Satan to tempt you, or the potential for serious harm if you continue to yield to these temptations. Remember, God can and will forgive sexual sins just as he forgives other sins. Surrender yourself to God, asking him to show you the way out of sin and into the light of his freedom and his love. Prayer, Bible study, and loving support of Christians in a Bible-believing church can help you to gain strength to resist these powerful temptations. If you are already deeply involved in homosexual behavior, seek help from a trustworthy, professional, Christian counselor.

[1:32](#) How were these people aware that God's justice would require death? All human beings are created in God's image; thus, we have a basic moral nature and a conscience. This truth is understood beyond

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1892-1893.

religious circles. Psychologists, for example, say that the rare person who has no conscience has a serious personality disorder that is extremely difficult to treat. Most people instinctively know when they do wrong—but they may not care. Some people will even risk an early death for the freedom to indulge their desires now. "I know it's wrong, but I really want it," they say; or "I know it's dangerous, but it's worth the risk." For such people, part of the "fun" is going against God's law, the community's moral standards, common sense, or their own sense of right and wrong. But deep down inside they know that sin deserves the punishment of death ([6:23](#)).

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Romans 1:26-32

[1:26-27](#) There have always been those willing to believe that human desires are self-regulating. They do not believe that any action they enjoy could possibly be wrong. When the desire for the true God is rejected, other gods are raised up. When the desire for God is rejected, **shameful desires** take control. When people refuse God and his standards, when they are left to themselves as their own gods, nothing can stop them from seeking to fulfill their passions. Perversions of sex became rampant. God's plan for natural sexual relationships is his ideal for his creation. It is the height of foolishness to think that any sex act is acceptable as long as "no one gets hurt."

Paul's treatment of homosexual behavior falls in the middle of two other major areas at which God shows anger ([1:18](#)). The first is sinful worship; the third is a whole list of personal and relational sins. It is important to note that Paul is using homosexual practices to indicate the extent to which sin has brought chaos into every area of life. Homosexuality (to exchange or abandon natural relations of sex) was as widespread in Paul's day as it is in ours. Many pagan practices encouraged it. God is willing to receive anyone who comes to him in faith, and Christians should love and accept others no matter what their background. But homosexual behavior is strictly forbidden in Scripture (see [Leviticus 18:22](#)). Homosexuality is considered an acceptable practice by many in our world today—even by some churches. But society does not set the standard for God's law. Many homosexuals believe that their desires are normal and that they have a right to express them. But God does not obligate nor encourage us to fulfill all of our desires (even normal ones). Desires that violate God's laws must be controlled. God offers freedom from those sins through Jesus Christ and power to control our desires through the Holy Spirit.

Sin has a **penalty**, and the punishment is in keeping with the offense. The exact consequences of sin are not predictable, but they are inevitable. These people cannot call themselves helpless victims; a sinful choice was made, and it carries its penalty. Unfortunately, the due penalty also has a way of spilling over into other lives. The connectedness of everything in creation makes it almost impossible to confine sinful penalties. Often a truly painful consequence is seeing how a sin we unleashed affects others.

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 578-580.

1:28 Humans sat in judgment on God to decide whether he fit the qualifications of a God that would be to their liking; they decided he did not meet those qualifications and so **refused to acknowledge** him. They had the knowledge (they were not ignorant), but they did not want to use it. In our own times we have seen a belittling of God as no more than a pale extension of our wishful thinking, someone made in our image. Yet those most vocal in condemning the authoritative Christian view of God have been busy at work creating people who think of themselves as gods. Paul's discussion is not out-of-date. The same rebellion against God is alive in the human heart.

When people choose to reject God, he allows them to do so. Their minds become depraved, and they lose the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Their **evil minds** lead them to **do things that should never be done**, indicating acts not just offensive to God, but also offensive by human standards. God does not usually stop us from making choices against his will. He lets us declare our supposed independence from him, even though he knows that in time we will become slaves to our own rebellious choices—we will lose our freedom not to sin. Does life without God look like freedom to you? Look more closely. There is no worse slavery than slavery to sin.

1:29-31 That these people's **lives became full of every kind of wickedness** suggests a state of being filled to the point of overflowing. Once the mind of man had become depraved (**1:28**), it followed that the creative power of thought was turned to the pursuit of evil. Paul listed over twenty different ways in which the mind can be focused once it has turned away from God. (For similar lists, see [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#); [Galatians 5:19-21](#); and [Colossians 3:5](#).) The catalog of sins may not be in any particular order, but it emphasizes the extent of the evidence against humanity. Who cannot find in himself more than one among these qualities?

1:32 In the previous verses Paul pointed out several results when God abandons people to pursue their evil desires. He was convinced that each person in rebellion against God perceives the final outcome of that rebellion. But even the finality of death is ignored by many.

How are people **fully aware of God's death penalty**? Human beings, created in God's image, have a basic moral nature and a conscience. This truth is understood beyond religious circles. Psychologists, for example, say that the rare person who has no conscience has a serious personality disorder, one that is extremely difficult to treat. Most people instinctively know when they do wrong—but they may not care. Not only have they turned their backs on God and realized that their deeds deserve the ultimate penalty of death, they also are continuing in their sin and encouraging it in others.

The cause for the appalling condition of our world—the horrible perversions and the rampant evil—lies in people's rebellion against God. Although knowledge of God is accessible, people turn their backs on it, close their minds to it, and go their own way, worshiping whatever they choose. With this stroke, Paul places the final touches on the dismal picture of man's condition apart from God. From here, he will move on to deal with those who might use their knowledge of God as an excuse for missing his righteousness.

Study and Discussion Questions



Romans 1:26-32

Open It

1. How do people today distinguish between right and wrong?
2. Why do a high percentage of people today say they believe in God?

Explore It

3. How does God respond to people who ignore and deny Him? ([1:24](#), [26](#))
4. How are attitudes toward sexuality affected when a person denies God? ([1:24](#), [26-27](#))
5. What lie do people naturally believe by denying the truth? ([1:25](#))
6. When thoughts of God are pushed out, what evil attitudes and actions replace them? ([1:28-31](#))
7. Instead of fearing God, what attitude do people naturally have toward Him? ([1:32](#))

Get It

8. How common in our world are the specific sins listed in the passage?
9. What is God's attitude toward promiscuous heterosexual activity and homosexuality?
10. How can God be so angry with us and still love us?
11. How does God want us to respond to Him?

Apply It

12. How can you glorify God and give thanks to Him this week?
13. Who among your friends is caught in this trap of rejecting God and needs your prayers of intercession this week?