

Romans 1:26-32

Rom 1:26-32 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. (27) Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. (28) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (29) being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, (30) backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; (32) who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practise them.

Questions On The Text

What is God's view of homosexuality and lesbianism?

Verse 26-27: These verses are talking about same-sex relationships. The word "use" in both verses, may sound like a fairly ordinary word in English, but in Greek, it was well-known to refer to sexual intercourse. In other words, both these verses refer to the natural use of a woman for sexual intercourse.

Thus, the abandoning of the natural use of a woman in having sexual intercourse with a man, and the resulting homosexuality and lesbianism, are described as "vile passions". The word "vile" means dishonourable or disgraceful. They are also described as against nature, lust, shameful and error.

When people reject the knowledge of God, what does God give them over to?

Verse 28: He gives them over to a debased mind. "Debased" means to be disapproved, fail the test, be disqualified. No longer is their mind capable of understanding or discerning true morality.

Verses 28-32: This passage describes the results of a mind that fails the test. It is a list of things that are not fitting. They are filled with a whole bunch of bad things including:

"Unrighteousness" can mean injustice.

"Sexual immorality" is the Greek word *porneia*, and refers to all kinds of sexual activity outside of marriage including adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, incest, paedophilia, rape, and more. Sexuality is an important issue in God's sight.

"Murder" should be understood in the light of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22. Anger is the root of murder, and God is not merely concerned with externals, but is very interested in what is going on in our hearts too. See 1 Samuel 16:7.

"Whispering" refers to a person who goes about secretly undermining a person's reputation.

"Backbiting" means much the same as "whispering", although it does not necessarily include the idea of secrecy.

"Boasters" refers to people who make big claims in an effort to impress others. It was used of impostors.

"Disobedient to parents" is a clear reference to breaking the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12), and an indication of how much God values the need to honour parents (whether they deserve it or not).

What is the penalty for these sins?

Verse 32: It is the righteous judgment of God that those who practise these things are worthy of death. This fits in with what Paul will say later in Rom 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death”. This penalty was clearly spelled out to Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:16-17) when God warned him that if he disobeyed God’s instructions and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die. This verse tells us that people who practise these things actually know of God’s righteous judgment and the penalty of death.

Not only do people practise such behaviour, but also approve of others when they do it too.

Further Questions For Discussion:

God condemns homosexuality, but how do you think God feels about homosexuals? Here’s a clue: Read John 3:16. Also, you might want to read the excellent book *God’s Grace and the Homosexual Next Door*, available through our bookstore.

Can you think of examples where, because of a mind that fails the test, people have been unable to discern the difference between right and wrong?

How many of the sins listed in Paul’s list are primarily inner sins, sins of the heart?

Why is the death penalty for sin described as “the righteous judgment of God”?

Why do people who practise evil encourage others to do the same?