

Chapter Sixteen
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
God's Second Response to Lost Mankind's Denial of His Existence

“²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Romans 1:26-27).

Once man's free will begins to deny God's existence, he will move deeper and deeper into the degradation of sin. The carnal senses of man's fallen nature will be given over to the pursuit of whatever *feels good*. Yet, no matter how much they try, these senses will never be satisfied. They will constantly demand more and more to the point of obsession and even addiction (obsessive compulsion).

Mankind was never intended to live in a vacuum outside of a relationship with God. When a person makes a free will choice to live in that kind of vacuum, he chooses all that goes with it. When God gives him up to his free will choice, He simply allows man the unnatural consequences of that choice with the intent that this person will discover the absence of fulfillment in it and seek another pathway in life. God says that this type of unrestrained obsessive behavior will lead this person to some unnatural patterns of life with some serious consequences.

Those who deny God's existence are given up to vile affections (1:26-27)

The next area God gives over into a man's control is his *psyche*. This results in the corruption of his *psyche*. The only true psychological treatment of a person with a corrupted *psyche* is to bring his will into voluntary subjection to God's will as revealed by the Word of God. When God gives man's *psyche* over to corruption, he does so by giving the five gates of the *psyche* over into the free exercise of the will.

The five gates of the *psyche* are imagination, reason, memory, conscience and affections. Each of these five areas of the *psyche* will become more and more warped and distorted as this individual allows the five human senses (“for this cause” or reason, Romans 1:26) to freely exercise themselves in full perversion. As this increases in a society, people will become more and more perverse and the psychological problems will become more and more complicated and difficult to correct coming to the place where these kinds of perversions will be accepted (even promoted) as normal.

“Vile” is from the Greek word *atimia* (at-ee-mee'-ah) referring to that which dishonors or disgraces. “Affections” is from the Greek word *pathos* (path'-os), which refers to an affliction of the mind. It is usually used in the Scriptures to denote depraved or vile passions.

When man's affections are allowed free rein, unrestrained by God, they will reveal themselves in the ways listed in Romans 1:26-27. This does not mean these are the only ways. For this person, life will be viewed as existing for the purpose of satisfying every desire of the fallen nature regardless of how warped or distorted from God's commands that those desires might be.

Before anyone gets too haughty about all of this, we need to remember all these things lie within the sin natures of every one of us. The only difference is the believer has learned to exercise his conscience in moral restraint to some degree or another. The unbeliever has learned to deny his conscience.

“¹³ (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: ¹⁵ Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)” (Romans 2:13-15).

When a truth is accepted (and owned as truth), it is imprinted on the *psyche*. When this happens, the Spirit of God acts upon the conscience by conviction against anything that is a contradiction against that truth. Therefore, the “thoughts accuse or excuse” (Romans 2:15) depending on the response to the temptation. A strong conscience is one that is reinforced by a strong theological foundation of Scriptural truths imprinted on the *psyche*. A weak, defiled conscience can be produced by doctrinal heresies allowing for moral inconsistencies or a conscience that lacks sound theological foundations (truths imprinted on the *psyche*).

“⁴ As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. ⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) ⁶ But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him. ⁷ Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. ⁸ But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. ⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. ¹⁰ For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; ¹¹ And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. ¹³ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (I Corinthians 8:4-13).

“¹ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;” (I Timothy 4:1-2).

“¹⁵ Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. ¹⁶ They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:15-16).

Therefore, the way to help these people is to incrementally confront their lives with the truth of God’s Word (even when they say they do not believe it). The Spirit of God uses truth to bring about conviction. Simply, boldly and lovingly state the truth and allow the Spirit of God to bring conviction. It is His work.

When “vile affections” (Romans 1:26) are allowed to control the conscience, they cause this person to incorrectly estimate the sacredness, dignity and purity of the physical body and therefore use that body in such a way that dishonors their body. Pay attention to this: the Greek word *pathos* (path'-os) for “affections” refers to a corrupted *psyche* out of which corrupt lusts spring. The idea is that the person with a corrupt *psyche* has moved beyond merely having evil desires to a warped condition of existence in which they now live and accept as normal. The only way to confront that is with the truth of its abnormality.

The words “women” (v 26) and “men” (v 27) refer to the female and male members of the human race. The distinction is purely sexual; therefore the context of the perversion of the *psyche* is purely sexual. “The natural use” refers to the natural sexual use. “Natural” is from the Greek word *phusikos* (foo-see-kos') referring to the governing, intended, purposeful order of creation. When the individual is given over to his corrupt *psyche*, he exchanges the “natural” for the “unnatural.” God’s intended purposes are exchanged for queer, abnormal, monstrous and perverted purposes.

The words “burned in their lusts” (*ekkaio* {ek-kah'-yo} *en* {en} *autos* {ow-tos'} *orexis* {or'-ex-is}) paint a word picture of cravings and desires totally out of control. This perversion of the *psyche* creates a person with insatiable sexual cravings. This person has become addicted to his/her sexually.

One homosexual man with aids was interviewed regarding how many other men he might have infected with the HIV virus. He said he had probably had as many as 1,000 sexual partners in the last year alone. This example shows the extreme degree God intends by the words “burned in their lusts.” They are never satisfied.

“Receiving in themselves . . . recompense” is the way God naturally deals with the unnatural. God has built into the human body natural defenses against diseases. However, those defenses are intended to protect only when the human body is used for the natural (normal) practices for which it was created. Venereal diseases and sexually transmitted diseases are uncommon to monogamous, heterosexual couples. In fact, they are almost unheard of (even the ones that are recorded are probably some liar protecting himself).

God says this “recompense” is just pay pack for their “error.” “Recompense” is from the Greek word *antimisthia* (an-tee-mis-thee'-ah) meaning a reward given in compensation for something done. The idea is justice. “Error” is from the Greek word *plane* (plan'-ay), which refers to a wandering or straying from the right way. It is used here metaphorically to refer to mental straying into wrong opinions relative to morals or religion showing itself in action.

Venereal disease is God’s small way of showing a person his error in thinking (*psyche*) and punishing him for the practices that result from that error in thinking (up until this last century, most venereal disease ended in death or sterility).

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1. Fully discuss the second phase (from Romans 1:26-27) of God in bringing those who reject His existence to salvation and what is involved in this area of man's trichotomous being in this phase. _____

2. Discuss what is meant by the phrase *corrupted psyche* and how a psyche becomes corrupted. _____

3. Discuss the meaning of the words "vile affections" (Romans 1:26) and relate this to your answer to question #2. _____

4. Discuss why no one should get a haughty spirit when it comes to these sinful practices in the lives of other people. _____

5. What happens when a truth is accepted (understood and owned as truth) regarding the psyche and what does that mean? _____

6. Read Romans 2:15, 1 Corinthians 8:4-12, 1 Timothy 4:1-2 and Titus 1:15-16. Discuss how the imprinting of absolute truths on the psyche affects our conscience. _____

7. Discuss how the lack of imprinted truths on the psyche affects our conscience. _____

8. Even though someone rejects God's existence and His absolute truths, what is still the only way to help this person? _____
9. Discuss how you and the Holy Spirit form a partnership in imprinting absolutes on the psyche of a person who rejects the existence of God and His absolute truths. _____

10. Discuss the sociological ramifications of a large portion of a society with "vile affections" (Greek: *pathos*). _____

11. Discuss what God means by the word "natural" in the context of Romans 1:26-27. _____

12. Discuss the meaning behind the word picture "burned in their lusts." _____

13. Discuss what you think God means by the words "received in themselves just recompense." _____
