

You Become Like What You Worship
Romans 1:23-2:2
Berean Baptist Church
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INTRODUCTION

God made you to love you. But real love must be in truth and so the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all who suppress the truth by setting up idols in their hearts. But what is an idol?

An idol is anything or anyone that you worship and serve in the place of God. **Idol-worshippers** are people who have exchanged worshiping God for the worshiping of something else.

The classic picture of an Idol-worshiper is one who serves false gods. But yourself, your activities, your money, your religion and, your job can all be idols.

This passage shows that God gives Idol-worshippers over to the natural consequences of their sin. From this root-sin of trading truth for lies, all other sins grow. God gives idol worshipers over to their own false worship, warped affections, and broken mind.

If you are putting something before God in your heart, that is your idol, you must know that the wrath of God will be revealed on your life for as long as you persist in your sin.

Do not worship and serve anything other than God! Forsake every idol, ask Jesus to save you and heal your religious devotion, your heart, and your mind!

Romans 1:23-25 God Gives Idol-Worshippers Over To Their Own False Worship

Vs 23 What a terrible trade! People, made in the image of the incorruptible God, give themselves to worship images of corrupt men. And they go farther in folly! They worship the birds above their heads, the beasts they share the earth with, and even things that crawl beneath their feet. Idol-worshippers eventually worship anything and everything but the One person that deserves worship.

Consider how backward and offensive this is to God. He made us to be His special beloved and to have exclusive, and intimate fellowship with him. He also made the rest of creation for us to appreciate and enjoy. But we ignore the One who loves us and we give ourselves to the lesser things that He made.

What idols do you make? what do you put before God in your affections and actions?

Vs 24 God gave Idol-worshippers over to their own lusts and this leads to dishonorable actions.

They are "given-up" in the sense that God does not restrain or heal their own evil nature. Sin rages unchecked and they do harm to themselves and others.

The desire to worship something other than God may be strong but that does not mean that they are right, good, or according to the Truth.

Vs 25 The act of worshiping the creature rather than the creator is exchanging the Truth for a lie.

Do not take an idol, or worship and serve anything other than God! Idol-worship leads you to

uncleanness, dishonor, and lies. Ask Jesus to save you and teach you how to worship rightly!

Romans 1:26-27 God Gives Idol-Worshippers Over To Their Own False Affections

Because Idol-worshippers exchange the truth of God for lies, they also change physical intimacy (which God made to be naturally enjoyable) into an act against nature.

Vs 26-27 “natural use” means the appropriate relationship; the right way of relating to one another. This is opposed to “vile affections...against nature ...working which is unseemly.” The Holy Spirit is explaining that homosexual relationships are an expression of a broken relationship with God.

God designed physical intimacy between one man and one woman to reflect both His own nature and the proper relationship between God and humans. So, it is not surprising that when a person exchanges the truth of God for lies, their physical affections begin to get warped.

Physical intimacy is never merely physical.

Matt 19:4 (Jesus) said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The relationship of becoming "one flesh" is rooted in our creation and intended to be part of a complete union established by God and unbreakable by man. All physical intimacy is either participating in God's plan or rejecting that same plan. Whether we want it to be or not, every act of physical intimacy is a profound spiritual statement.

This means that physical intimacy in the context of God's plan of a committed marriage is not just intensely enjoyable but also spiritually healthy. God made it wonderful, fun, and healthy in every way. But physical intimacy outside of God's plan is just as completely unhealthy. It is not just a cause for future judgment, but it is an immediate act of self-harm. This is why those who engage in it are...

“receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.”

And the Bible also says **“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (1 Cor 6:18)”**

Vs 27 “burned in their lust” Two things should be noted about this phrase: it does not describe biblical love which is an intentional, measured choice to put your spouse first. But it also does not describe some cheap superficial feelings. These are intense, burning desires. The feelings are real, but acting on them is still wrong.

Do not allow your affections to be your final authority!

Idol-worship twists your affections and leads you to self-harm. Ask Jesus to save you, to heal your heart, and teach you to love rightly!

This was radically counter-cultural when Paul wrote it. But what does it mean for us today?

1. We must see physical intimacy outside of marriage as a harmful act which is both a symptom and a cause of spiritual problems.
2. We must acknowledge that inappropriate physical desires, and especially same-sex attractions, are real and can be very, very strong.
3. We must show compassion, not hostility, to those who are committing these types of sins. They are sinners like you. But for God's grace you would be in the same position and the same power that saved you can save them.
4. We must distinguish between the desire to sin and the choice to sin. Many Christians struggle with same-sex attraction in the same way that we all struggle with various sins, but the desire to sin is different from the act of sinning (1 Cor 10:12-14).
5. Those Christians who experience same-sex attraction must be loved and taught biblical truths. They are not slaves to sin (Rom Ch 6) and have all that they need in Christ to overcome their besetting sin (2 Peter 1:1-4).

God may eventually allow them to experience normal sexual desires, or God's will may be that they live celibate lives. Either way, they are not second-class Christians. Their lives in Christ can be full and joyous. Their mighty struggles with sin will eternally echo to the glory of God in the great story of our redemption. (Rom 7:14-25).

Romans 1:28-32 God Gives Idol-Worshippers Over To Their Own False Mind

Here we see the third “giving over” as the mind of the idol-worshiper is given over to its own falseness.

Vs 28 Paul says in the first half of Vs 28 (they did not like to retain God in their knowledge) that "they considered God to be worthless (without value) in their mind." And in the second half of Vs 28 (God gave them over to a reprobate mind), Paul said that "God gave them to their own worthless (without value because it is counterfeit) mind."

Paul uses two different but related words for worthless to make this point: They think that God is worthless, but it is actually their counterfeit thinking that is worthless.

Vs 29-31 After the mind, affections, and religious desires are given over there is nothing to restrain a person from the evil that they have given themselves to.

These are the fruits of the reprobate mind. Notice that some are very small by our standards. For example, “whisperers” (literally “gossipers”), “spiteful,” and “disobedient to parents” are under the same condemnation as murders.

Do not allow your mind to be your final authority!

Idol-worship twists your thought process and makes your thinking futile. Ask Jesus to save you, to heal your mind and teach you to value Him!

Romans 2:1-2 So We Desperately Need One Who Can Judge And Save According To Truth

Vs 1 We are all guilty of the crimes, so we pile condemnation upon ourselves when we judge others.

Vs 2 But there is a true judge that we will all give account to and He judges without partiality. Your only hope is to be saved from this judgment.

If you, a sinner, pass judgment on the wicked while you are guilty yourself, how much more do you deserve judgment! Ask Jesus to save you and heal you!

CONCLUSION

God's grace has always been the only thing holding you up. His grace operates in every moment of your life and in every part of you, preserving you, and pleading with you, and trying to get through to you. But if you insist on giving up the truth for lies, the glorious God will give you up to your cheap idols.

You will find no lasting strength in serving lies, ask Jesus to give you a love for the truth.

You will find no lasting satisfaction by following your lusts, ask Jesus to heal your affections.

You will find no lasting peace by forgetting God in your thoughts, ask Jesus to heal your mind.

You will find no lasting safety in judging others, leave off self-righteousness and ask Jesus to forgive you.

Psalm 115:4 Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.

5 They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;

6 They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell;

7 They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.

8 Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.

9 ¶ O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.

Your idols are blind, voiceless, and powerless. They cannot help you. But you will become like them if you worship them, just as you will become like Christ if you worship the one true God. This is a great spiritual truth: you become like what you worship!

Do not worship and serve anything other than God! Forsake every idol, ask Jesus to save you and heal your religious devotion, your heart, and your mind!