



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## **The Lie**

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Romans 1:24-27

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*<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

*<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> 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.*

*(Pastor prays)*

### **The Witness of Creation Points Us to the Creator**

One of the dynamic features of the Bible is that it so often speaks clearly and unmistakably about the primary issues of our day. This text is one of those times. John MacArthur says that this passage is the most sobering and fearful passage in the book of Romans. Donald Grey Barnhouse said that the last nine verses in Romans are the most terrible verses in the Bible.

Here you feel the panic of a humanity sucked into the quagmire of its own filth. In these few verses you have the human heart as it is without Christ, a crawling mass of eternal frustration, and the graphic reality of a world in its timeless rebellion against God. In this passage and next week's, Paul is drawing out the consequences of a world that refuses to worship God as He is. Paul gives us a horrifying picture of a variety of lust and vices as he pursues the theological purpose of showing that all people are sinners and have believed the lie.

Let's take this passage in context and hear what God says.

Earlier in verses 16 - 17, he gave us the point of Romans. **The Gospel is the power of God for Salvation for all who will believe.** Verse 18 tells us why we need the Gospel. **Because the**

**wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth.** He goes on to say in verse 23, the reason God judges sinners is an exchange. **They exchanged the glory of God for images of man, birds, animals and creeping things.** In verse 24 you see that word “therefore.” That word is a grammatical bridge linking what we are going to talk about today with all we have heard so far, and today I want to convince you to...

### **Reject Satan’s Lie and Receive God’s Grace**

Let’s address the lie in the text.

### **The Lie Tells You to Trade Good for Evil**

Let's go to the middle of the passage in verse 25 and find the reason behind God’s giving them over in verses 24 and 26. Verse 25 says., *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

There's the word *exchange* again. This is basically a restatement of verse 23. The lie tells you to exchange the glory of God for a lesser glory and the truth about God for a lie.

You see that in verse 25. A lie. In Greek the word is a definite article, so it would read like this: *because they exchanged the truth of God for the lie—* and then the rest of the verse explains what the lie is, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

So at the root of sexual immorality, whether it is heterosexual (in verse 24) or homosexual (in verses 26 through 27), the root is a God problem. To live in heterosexual sin or homosexual sin is to live under the wings of a lesser god. It’s to believe the lie that the focus of your awe and reverence and devotion is on a creature rather than the Creator and its simple idolatry. It’s putting some aspect of God's creation in the place of God. And in this exchange, you run into theological, moral, emotional, and mental bankruptcy.

Listen, no one is ever standing still, no one is stationary or static in their proximity to God. You are either closer or further. Verse 25 tells us the root of sin is unbelief and idolatry. Verse 24 and verses 26 - 27 tell us the fruit of sin is sexual immorality and homosexuality. Verse 25 tells us the lie — the ultimate lie— is to deny the one true God for a god of your own making that not only understates your issues and struggles but condones your need to sin. And it's a lie.

The truth about God is that He is our holy and just creator who created you in His image. That image is disfigured and marked by sin and we are separated from God. The good news is that

God loved the world, sent Jesus who took the punishment for our sin, God raised Him from the dead and we receive grace. The lie is work and strife, but the truth is grace. The first thing about the lie is that it tells you to trade good for evil.

### **The Lie Tells You to Feel Okay When You Are Not Okay**

Let me take you back to verse 24. Now read that first horrifying phrase. Therefore, God gave them up in the lust of their hearts, impurity, and to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. Let's chop it up.

“God gave them up” is a terrible phrase used in the Old Testament to describe God giving the Israelites to their enemies for punishment. That phrase is an active phrase, not passive. In Galatians and Ephesians, Paul uses the phrase to describe Christ giving Himself up to die. It is the intense act of a just God handing sinners over to their own sin, whereby the sin itself becomes part of the judgment.

Look again at verse 24. He gave them up to three things: the lust of their hearts, impurity, and the dishonoring of their bodies.

Let's look at the first thing, the lust of their hearts. Here is the strong craving for a forbidden sin. It might manifest in this day and time to the addiction to pornography. That addiction gives you a false image of God that creates a false image of the body and a fake idea about sex. And part of God's judgment is the giving you over to the secret desires of the heart. When you get what you lust for, it's God's judgment. Sin eventually creates its own penalty and it's a lie.

The second thing mentioned in verse 24 is impurity. God gave us up to impurity. It's a broad term for moral filthiness, for nasty talk, for adultery or sex outside of or before marriage. It's the Greek word, *Akatharsia*. It's where we get the word *cathartic*, a cleansing. But the “a” on front of the word negates it and makes it the opposite, so “akatharsia” means “filled with filth.” It's every sexual act from pornography to adultery and all points in between. And if you are involved in that, it's not that God is going to judge you for it. It's that filth is *part* of the judgment because it's dishonoring.

That's the third word. Dishonoring your body and someone else's, and God didn't create you for that. You are His special creation in His image and you are promised grace through redemption when you turn from that sexual brokenness and dysphoria, causing you anxiety and

trouble. The lie tells you to feel OK about all of that, but you're not OK. It's judgment. Turn to Christ and experience the true love of God found at the cross.

There is a third lie.

### **The Lie Tells You to Think Wrong is Actually *Right***

Now let's take verses 26 - 27 together because they are saying the same thing. Verse 26 addresses homosexuality from a female point of view, and verse 27 addresses the male point of view of homosexuality. Verse 26 says there is female same-sex attraction. Verse 27 deals with male same-sex attraction.

In this passage Paul uses the clearest words available for male and female, making an emphatic declaration of God's good creation in making us male and female. And I think this passage can also speak to the struggle with transgender identity. It is a crucial passage in the contemporary debate about same sex attraction and marriage. This is the clearest New Testament passage as to why we as Christians cannot normalize it.

Let's go to the Bible and look at the words, list out the issues and then apply the Gospel. Let's look at verse 26, *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.* "Dishonorable" is a word meaning degrading, shameful, vile and depraved. It is not honoring to God, not honoring for people, not God's design for relationship and love or for combating loneliness.

Homosexuality is a perversion of God's intended relationship between a man and a woman and carries its own distinctive destructive penalty. It is a sin against nature, and verse 23 describes women who exchange natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, against nature, not natural. That is God's created natural order found in Genesis 1 and 2. Genesis 1:27 says, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* Jesus picks up this language in Matthew 19: 4 where he says, *have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female* and He will go one further into the passage saying, *what God has joined together let no man separate.*

The natural created order is heterosexual monogamy. And a homosexual union, no matter how loving it may be, is against nature and against God and can never be regarded as a legitimate alternative to marriage. The phraseology is used in both verse 26 and 27. The word "exchange" shows up again in verse 26. And what Paul is saying is that this is a bizarre trade. This trade is

entirely contrary to God's design and a flagrant violation of His divine plan. They swapped the brilliant design of God for a lie. It's a car with square wheels, and it will not get you where you need to go.

There's more. Verse 27 says they were consumed with passion for one another. <sup>27</sup>*and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.* Consumed is a *burning*. A very vivid term of a *raging fire*. It is a personal burning of sinful attraction and desire.

There's one more description near the end of verse 27 - *men committing shameless acts with men*. That word "shameless" is a strong word for "indecent." This is nothing short of sexual anarchy throwing off the rule of God. And in verse 27, Paul says it is receiving the due penalty *forever*.

Now some will say "You are making this sound like it is a worse sin than others." So I would say: be careful about saying all sins are the same. All sins have the same source, our sinful nature. And all sins have the same outcome: they cause a separation from God.

Sexual sins have the same source as all other sins causing the same separating from God as other sins. But sexual sins create the most long-term, on-Earth damage, more than any other sin. But listen, they are not irreversible. The remedy for this sin is the same as for all other sin: repentance and faith in Jesus.

And it can happen. Paul addresses this again in I Corinthians 6 when he talks to the church in Corinth. I'll read verses 9-11, <sup>9</sup>*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,* <sup>10</sup>*nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* <sup>11</sup>*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* Those are words of hope and redemption and the power of the Gospel to free us from sin. That power is found at the cross of Christ.

*(Pastor explains The Lord's Supper and prays)*