

**WHEN GOD GIVES YOU WHAT
YOU THINK YOU WANT
WHEN IN ROME I
ROMANS 1:26-32**
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Be careful what you ask for.

Romans 1:24-32

Therefore **God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ 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.

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.

What assumes custody when God gives you over to what you think you want?

- Consuming and shame-creating sexual urges – 1:26-27 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.
- Corrupted mind – 1:28 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.

- Refusing to acknowledge God is the pathway to intellectual corruption.

Q: What about cases in the Bible where God seems to deceive or not deliver people?

1) God hardening Pharaoh's heart.

<i>Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened,</i>	Ex 7:13
<i>and Pharaoh's heart was hardened,</i>	Ex 7:22
<i>he hardened his heart and did not listen</i>	Ex 8:15
<i>But Pharaoh's heart was hardened,</i>	Ex 8:19
<i>hardened his heart this time also,</i>	Ex 8:32
<i>But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened,</i>	Ex 9:7
<i>And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,</i>	Ex 9:12
<i>he sinned again and hardened his heart</i>	Ex 9:34
<i>Pharaoh's heart was hardened,</i>	Ex 9:35
<i>for I have hardened his heart and the</i>	Ex 10:1
<i>But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,</i>	Ex 10:20
<i>But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,</i>	Ex 10:27
<i>yet the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart,</i>	Ex 11:10
<i>The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh,</i>	Ex 14:8
<i>for the Lord your God hardened his spirit</i>	Dt 2:30
<i>and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?</i>	1Sa 6:6
<i>But he stiffened his neck and hardened</i>	2Ch 36:13
<i>the loaves, but their heart was hardened.</i>	Mk 6:52
<i>Do you have a hardened heart?</i>	Mk 8:17
<i>"He has blinded their eyes and He hardened</i>	Jn 12:40
<i>were becoming hardened and disobedient,</i>	Ac 19:9
<i>obtained it, and the rest were hardened;</i>	Ro 11:7
<i>But their minds were hardened;</i>	2Co 3:14
<i>be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.</i>	Heb 3:13 ¹

Hebrews 3:13

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

God hardening Pharaoh's heart gave Pharaoh more of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was already a cruel tyrant who had enslaved an entire ethnicity and declared a strict policy of infanticide for all their male infants. So, he did not begin with a clear moral slate but had suppressed and rejected the voice of conscience ever since he gained power.

- 2) Lying spirits in the mouths of the prophets – 2 Chronicles 18:18-22 *And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. ¹⁹ And the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. ²⁰ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the Lord said to him, 'By what means?' ²¹ And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' ²² Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster concerning you.*

King Ahab had not only ignored God but mounted a campaign to eradicate God's prophets from the nation. Ahab was a pursued evil with all his strength by heavily campaigning for idol worship, temple prostitution, and child sacrifice. God's final act towards Ahab, before carrying out the final sentence, was to serve Ahab a matured and completed version of what he had conditioned himself to receive: utter and complete self-deception.

- 3) End Times when God sends a strong delusion – 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, **because they refused to love the truth** and so be saved. ¹¹ **Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,** ¹² **in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***

During the End Times, the Antichrist will come onto the scene with a bag of tricks full of unrivaled fraud. So why would God send a strong delusion? Because they refused to love the truth and had pleasure in unrighteousness (v.10-11). They removed truth from their lives and

chose to live in deception, so God sends them more of what they pursued.

- 4) Jesus' imperative to *listen to and follow the truth* – Matthew 11:15 *He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Why? Because Truth received will transform your heart, but Truth rejected will harden your heart. If people pursue deception, then God gives them what they want. In Scripture, God never sends a deception to those who have not first deeply deceived themselves.

Q: What about those who are deceived? Shouldn't God look for an opportunity to "un-delude" them?

A: This question misunderstands the situation. The delusion sent by God and the hardening of the heart is the *final finality*, the crescendo of a lifetime spent rejecting God's kindness and mercy.

- Cruel behavior – 1:29-32 *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.*
 - A corrupted mind and heart are not static. Thoughts eventually give way to behavior.
 - Notice the progressive digression: Lust can never be satisfied. It ends with self-hatred and hatred of others. Lust promises to fulfill our desires, but it ends up dehumanizing us and those that we sin with.

Q: Where do we go from here?

A: Romans 12:1-2 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Objection: Paul was referring to homosexual sex without consent.

Response 1: At this point, I greatly appreciate the intellectual honesty of the late Louis Crompton, a self-confessed homosexual and scholar in queer studies, who writes:

Some interpreters, seeking to mitigate Paul's harshness, have read the passage Romans 1 as condemning not homosexuals generally but only heterosexual men and women who experimented with homosexuality. According to this interpretation, Paul's words were not directed at "bona fide" homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstances. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any Jew or early Christian.²

Response 2: The point is about same-sex *acts*, not *roles*³ Robert A. J. Gagnon writes:

Paul does not present a picture where one party is being degraded and exploited, but rather portrays both partners as seeking to gratify their urges with one another and together reaping the divine recompense for their mutually degrading conduct. Had Paul wanted to limit his remarks to pederasty he could have used Greek words that refer specifically to such activity...*Contrary to nature* is a reference to erasing the stamp of gender placed on male and female by the Creator. The problem that same-sex intercourse posed for Paul was that it was same-sex, not that it was inherently exploitative.⁴

¹ Thomas, R. L., & The Lockman Foundation. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Updated edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.: 1998, c1981, c1998).

² Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality & Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 114.

³ S. Donald Fortson III & Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 31.

⁴ Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 349, 350.