

Pornography

By Ted Wise

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four footed animals or reptiles.

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

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die" - yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them. (*Rom. 1:18 through Rom. 1:32*)

That is really a startling passage of Scripture!

Paul is actually saying that a man can go from being thankful, and from failing to acknowledge the nature of his Creator as revealed in the creation, into homosexuality!

It is pretty startling isn't it?, that you can go from being unthankful to being "gay"?

When I first became a Christian I never wanted to go to church nor to associate with anybody else who was a Christian.

I was at a loss in trying to study the Bible and in understanding just what the things I read in it meant. There were lots of things that I just didn't understand at all. But one of the things that I was able to understand, as I read in the first chapter of Romans, where Paul says that if I look at the creation, I will be able to see some of the very nature of God revealed there.

I took that as a sort of hint. I thought, "Maybe I can look around and see the things written in the Bible actually going on around me. Maybe I can look around me and see the things written in the Bible actually going on around me. Maybe I can read something and look to see if it is true. "

I was very skeptical about the Bible anyway. I was only willing to believe it if it was really true in a way that I could see. I didn't know what faith was,, but I didn't think that it was betting on horses or blindly and gullibly

swallow something just because somebody said so.

So, what I want us to do this evening, is to take a look around and see if we can observe this part of the book of Romans actually going on today. There is as obvious historical reference, that Paul is making here, to Sodom and Gomorrah and other places where whole societies and civilizations have turned so horribly corrupt that homosexuality was the rule of the day.

I am sure that you are familiar with the Old Testament account of how the angels visited Lot in Sodom and how every last man and boy in the city surrounded Lot's house because they heard that there were two new fellows in town. What they actually wanted was to "make love" to the angels. That was the first thing on their minds, to commit a little sodomy with these two guys who looked interesting to them. How about today? Can we look at our society and use this Scripture in Romans as an indicator, a thermometer, to enable us perhaps, to understand some of what is going on around us.

How, as the passage says, do wicked men suppress the truth?

One of the ways we do it is that when we want to sin we almost always go get a friend to do it with. We find a buddy. We become convinced that if we can share the guilt, a little bit,, maybe it won't be quite so bad. "Well, I wasn't the only one. He did too." You know the tactic.

Then our conscience bothers us and we try to invent reasons like "The Devil made me do it, or "Well, it's OK, Times have changed. Contraceptives have been invented. "Thou shalt not fornicate' was because they didn't want a lot of unnecessary children. That surely doesn't apply, today."

We can invent all sorts of excuses which are not operating on the basis of truth at all, but are operating on error and are suppressing the truth with lots of lies and rationalizations and alibis.

Not only that, but according to what Paul says here, we are with our excuse at all because the truth is plain to us in the creation around us. The very nature of God and the way God intended us to be and to behave is written on the creation.

During the days of the Scopes trial, when folks were arguing over whether the Theory of Evolution should be taught in the schools, there were lots of songs and ditties about how much better behaved monkeys were than human beings.

They all ended with, "I'd rather be a monkey than a human being," and would say things like, "you've never seen a monkey steal" and "you've never seen a monkey commit adultery." They were pretty "corn ball" but there was an element of truth in them too. If you do look into creation you do see a standard of behavior that we people do not adhere to, naturally. It seems to be almost foreign to us, as human beings. We open up houses of prostitution, and enslave people, and do things to them which animals don't do to each other.

And how does this happen: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. . ." I am sure that you have all read about trans-sexuals, people who think that somehow God has made a mistake and that it is possible for a woman to be born inside a man's body and that this fellow's life is filled with terrible conflict and so he may go to Sweden to undergo an operation to change his body to match his insides, supposedly enabling him to become a person who functions as a woman instead of a man, thus correcting the gross error that God has made somewhere along the line. That is how a man becomes foolish by exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images.

If we are really made in God's image, it doesn't seem very likely to me that he has made a mistake in regard to how we have been created - whether man or woman. I know that we all get doubts about our masculinity or our femininity. I want to suggest a really simple way to solve the problem. Stand in front of a mirror. If you see a man, that is what you are. If you see a woman, that is what you are. But often that isn't what people do. They go on inventing fantastic rationalizations and excuses and write great distortions of truth which have even become

fields of study in which you can receive a degree.

I want to read you some of this foolishness from an advertisement in the magazine *Psychology Today* which lists the titles of the articles it contains as seventeen reasons why you should read the magazine. I won't read all seventeen - just a few which stand out:

"Why it may be time to end the taboo against incest"

"Is it time to grant the right to commit suicide?"

"How valid is a nude psycho-therapy session?"

Aren't these ideas intelligent and learned and wise and smart? No, they are just plain stupid. But the point is that this is going on. Men are becoming fools and calling it wise. And so I see that this principle of reading something in the Bible and looking for it in life checks out, and what I read is happening. Men do stop being thankful to their Creator. They do stop worshipping him. They do exchange him for some other ideas of what they should pattern their lives after.

We are a little too sophisticated to go into the worshipping of animals and reptiles and things like that, but one of the idols listed here is the image of mortal man, and that is something we are not too sophisticated to go into. They change very frequently these days, but we definitely have a whole lot of current ideas about what you are supposed to be like and how you are expected to conform to this image. "What sort of a man reads *Playboy Magazine*?" Here is this big ad showing you what sort of man you should be. And in ladies' glamour magazines you can read and see what sort of woman you ought to be. There are actual suggestions, actual images, actual idols recommended for you to pattern your life after. Today's modern man asks, "Is it time to recognize incest as legitimate?" That is the kind of image suggested by these men who have become foolish and futile in their thinking.

Therefore God gives them up to their impure hearts. This is where we come to the issue of turning homosexual. How can that actually happen? How could it happen that we as a nation, as a people, could go from being unthankful to our Creator to being homosexual? And is it happening around us today? It must be! "Gay Liberation" is in the newspaper every day. More and more people are "coming out front" and saying that they have been what are called "closet queens" all their lives. They have been secretly homosexual and now they finally realize, in their delusion, that it was really O.K. and so they want to practice it everywhere and with everybody. How does it come about? This is the really startling thing that God says, in effect: "Being unthankful will turn you 'queer'." That is "far-out", but it is happening, and you actually can see it going on around you.

Perhaps it is most readily visible when men are locked up in prison with lots of other men. Only a very small percentage of the inmates do not actually practice homosexuality with each other. The great majority of prisoners do. They may be the "male" partner in their relationships or the "female". In fact some will even give women's names to certain of the other prisoners, and in their natural conversation, without any affectedness at all, they will refer to them as "she" and "her". While they are in prison they regard these other men as being women, in some way.

Now, how does that happen? Well, you remember when there wasn't any butter available during World War II and so margarine was invented to take its place. It wasn't too "groovy" at first. It was just that white lard-like stuff. Sometimes it was in a bag and you could squeeze in a yellow dye so that it didn't look like lard. You see, we have an innate ability to take substitutes and refine them until we prefer them to the original. This happens all the time. We took margarine, which was basically a substitute for the butter we couldn't get, and we refined and developed it until today there are lots of people who prefer it to butter. This is part of our nature. Turned in one direction it is very creative. It is what allows man to "jerry-rig" or repair something in an inventive way. It is what develops gourmets and art critics. It is the ability to take something less than ideal and to make do with it, in fact even to refine and develop it and make it better.

So let's see what happens to the man in prison. He is cut off by prison bars from his normal relationships with women. So he takes a substitute, one of these other prisoners referred to by a girl's name, and he forms a homosexual relationship with this person. When most prisoners leave prison they go back to normal sexual relationships. Some don't, but most do. So we see a principle here. When most men are cut off from relationships with women they will accept a substitute. This principle has been borne out by literally thousands of years of penal history. It is nothing new.

The point is that there is a kind of prison which exists outside of prison in the midst of our society. That is what Paul is talking about here. We just haven't gotten quite to the end of what he so graphically describes.

In the old days, in the Gay Nineties and the Roaring Twenties, if a man wasn't interested in a relationship with a woman which was not merely physical but from inner person to inner person, a spiritual type of relationship, the kind that God intended us to have with our wife or husband, he would go to an old fashioned house of prostitution. Particularly in San Francisco these were big, glorious affairs with fine furniture, and thick rugs, and champagne and caviar. There was lots of drinking, camaraderie, and uproarious living. When you went to the house a second time, you went back to the same girl. It was frowned upon to go to a different girl each time you went you went to the same house. So there was a relationship, of sorts, with the prostitute - not a very deep one, but a relationship nevertheless.

That was in the old days. Things have deteriorated considerably since then and now houses of prostitution aren't like that at all. A man doesn't go there to spend the evening. It is more like a factory. He goes in, pays his money, is serviced, and then goes out the door, and that is that. The object of the woman involved is not to maintain friendships but to get as much money as she can in a single evening.

And it used to be in the old days that men who were a little leery of physical relationships with women, who didn't actually want to touch them, who wanted a little more distance from them than that, would go to the great burlesque houses on the Barbary Coast of San Francisco. They would look at dancing girls. But there was still a boisterous camaraderie, and they got to know the girls and called to them by name. But that, too, has deteriorated into the North Beach topless club scene.

Now things have gotten worse than that. We actually have a very large number of people in our population in the United States who aren't even interested in looking at girls. They just want to look at pictures of girls. And do you know what looking at pictures of girls is? It is autoerotism, having sex with oneself. There is no other person involved.

And that is what is involved in homosexuality too. Do you see the sneaky idea which has been creeping into our culture? I suppose that it comes and goes, but lately it has been very prevalent. That image of himself which man has erected - all these ideas of what you are supposed to be, how you are supposed to act, how you are to be very sensual, very, very sexy, a great lover - does not stress the kind of relationship that God intended - heart to heart, inner person to inner person. Instead it stresses physical relationship, and then from a physical one, it stresses one with pictures, a relationship with yourself rather than with somebody else.

On an airplane a couple of years ago I picked up the *Playboy* magazine somebody had left in the seat beside me. (I never buy it - it's too expensive.) This was when Hugh Hefner was writing about what a "playboy" actually was - the great "Playboy Philosophy". In response somebody had written a letter describing his idea of the perfect playboy's evening. This is the way he envisioned it: First there is this girl - blonde, nude, looks just like a Barbie Doll - and she is already in bed. He goes to bed with her. They "make love". He doesn't even say, "Hello." He gets out of bed. The girl and the bed disappear into the ceiling and down from the ceiling comes a card table with his cronies seated around it and they play cards the rest of the night. That was his idea of a perfect evening! Isn't that marvelous? Actually he was masturbating, mentally, using a woman. He wanted no relationship with her. He wanted sex with himself. He just didn't want to say so. And that is really the basis of *Playboy* magazine - having sex with yourself. Sure, it talks about girls, but only about the outside of them. It is not about relationships with the girls - just with their bodies, and in a self gratifying manner. And if self gratification is what

is on your mind, you are having sex with yourself.

How do you get from there to "gay"? Well, it is almost an impossibility to make love to yourself. There are probably some people who can do it, but generally speaking it is physically impossible. Here is where the analogy with margarine comes in. A man finds that it is very unsatisfactory to try to make love to himself, so he starts looking around for some other way to do it. One of the ideas that occurs to a man who is all caught up in himself is, "If I were a woman and a man at the same time, maybe then I could make love to myself." And he starts developing the weird idea that maybe he really is a woman inside and so he can change his sex and thus maybe be in two places at once and solve the whole problem. The other thing that occurs to such a man is to find somebody who can be like margarine, who can substitute for himself, who can take the place of himself, and thus he can make love to himself.

Now, the cause of this is the prison that we have taken out of prison and transferred out into society. All this continual advertising of sensual behavior has actually cut us off, as a people, from the natural relationships we are supposed to have with one another. You see, the more this business of physical relationships, and then eventually pictures, is stressed as an ideal, the more it prevents us from developing the ability to relate to someone heart to heart. That ability remains immature in us. So we develop the margarine until it tastes just like butter. We turn to the substitute and refine it until it is palatable and acceptable, and the whole society goes "gay" - not because God made a mistake but because people refuse to be thankful and to give honor to their Creator, and thus they exchange the glory of the immortal God for images, pictures, ideals to act out, ways to be.

An example of what I am talking about would be *Esquire* magazine, which used to be the *Playboy* of the day. But it is declining slowly into a homosexual publication. The males modeling clothes in it are obviously "gay". They are practically winking at everybody! The magazine is turning into a sort of men's *Vogue*. Meanwhile, even plain old hard-core pornography still has pictures of men and women relating to one another, at least in one way.

Women's magazines have gone still further, though. They took a giant step somewhere. Have you noticed that all the ads in a women's magazine depict women just loving themselves? I have some sample ads to read to you: "The new seductive mood in fashion calls for a frankly sensuous face. So I've created a new breed of face coloring - rare, sultry shades so brimming over with luscious shine that they had to be poured into pots! The shining emphasis is on the eyes. Cheek bones are polished. The mouth makes a brilliant statement of its own. The total effect is stunningly sexy."

When they print something like that in a magazine, not a "dirty" magazine, mind you, but a regular "nice" ladies' magazine, what they are really saying is, "This is O.K. This is how you are supposed to look. Everybody knows that. If you don't look like this - well, there is something wrong with you. Better buy some of this." "This year's face and fashion call for something that is outspoken, frankly alluring. The eyes smolder, the mouth is vibrant, alive, the skin is like porcelain." "Soft-cover compact brings back make-up, real make-up in a totally new pressed cream formula that glides effortlessly across your skin." "Oh! What fun! Just smearing that stuff all over you, whee!" Narcissism, making love to yourself - that is what it is all about.

"Are you wild enough to wear it? Deep down beneath your inhibitions is a wild, sensuous creature. Unleash it!" There must be thirty of those in every women's magazine every month, all of them emphasizing this business of "Love yourself, love yourself. Make yourself into this idea. Slick yourself up. Rub this stuff on you. Pat your hair. Love your hair. Love yourself!" And that is how the prison comes into society. You can't develop, while practicing narcissism, those abilities you need to relate to other people, to build real relationships. Instead you turn and accept a substitute. You use a margarine. You find somebody who looks just like you and you try to make love to them. And that is the kind of base mind that God gives us up to if we refuse to thank him and honor him as our Creator. That is what is going on in our society right now. You can actually look around and see it happening.

Now, I don't want you to go on a campaign against pornography or in favor of censorship or anything like that. It wouldn't work. According to what we read here in Romans, the solution is in being thankful to God and honoring

and worshipping him. That is what will solve the problem, not attempting to do away with pornography. In the past, we know, the Christian church has done a lot of stupid things. During prohibition a lot of Christians found a verse or two of scripture which they understood to point out what a terrible, awful thing it was to drink alcohol. And a big part of the Christian church went on a Carrie Nation campaign to try to stamp it out. Eventually it proved to be ridiculously ineffective. And that is just exactly what could happen over pornography.

But I hope it won't, because that is not the solution. Stamping out pornography will not lead anybody out of this prison, because God himself is the one who said that he gave them up to a base mind. If we want to redeem them, preaching the gospel is the answer, preaching repentance - that is how to do it - not attempting to alter the whole world. According to Revelation it goes from here to worse. So calling people out, rescuing them, when they become trapped and enslaved by these ideas, is the answer.

I would really advise you, too, not to take a lot of this stuff into your head. I am sure that you know that if you inundate your mind with this sort of information, it is going to have an effect upon you. And if you find yourself considering others only on a physical level, if that is what is on your mind first, and you tend to develop relationships only that far and not beyond, well that is a mark of where you need to grow until you reach the example that God holds up - the inner person to inner person relationship, the real thing, the relationship that God intended - not the one that magazines advertise.

What a funny word "gay" is! I have never met sadder people. They really do receive the wrath of God in their own personalities for what they do. They suffer terribly from it. And look what else is listed in this passage too: envy, strife, disobedience to parents, ruthlessness - all the things that seem to be going on around us besides sensuality and pornography - all these come from worshipping false ideas of what man is supposed to be.

Paul starts the next chapter by saying, "Therefore you have no excuse no matter who you are, if you judge others and still do these same things yourself." I think our Lord is really showing us that he doesn't expect us to go around putting big "X" stamps on things and saying to others, "This is forbidden!" But he certainly doesn't want us filling our own hearts and minds with it either. And if you do subscribe to those ladies' and glamour magazines, and *Playboy*, it really is affecting you in a subtle way. It is hammering away at you all the time with an idea of who you should be which is contrary to what God intends you to be. And that would seem to me to hinder God's work in you. So if you would quit indulging in these, not because you are being judgmental of others or "putting them down", but simply because they are contrary to what God is trying to do in your life, I think you would probably grow more readily. Does anyone have any questions?

Q: "Should a Christian abstain from going to "X" rated movies?"

A: I have never seen one. All my life I was just dying to see a smoker movie, and then I got saved instead! All the advertising, and even the "X" rating itself, is designed to stimulate your curiosity. It makes it more attractive to your own baser nature to have it forbidden. But I don't think it is the right sort of thing for a Christian to do. If you have ever heard Dr. Gerhard Dirks talk about the comparisons between computers and the human mind then you know the famous saying from the computer field: "Garbage in, garbage out." Christians should have their minds on the things that come from God, not on the things that are upon earth. We all have only twenty-four hours a day, no one has either more or less, and so it really is a question of what we are going to use our time for. And not only would going to this sort of movie not be fruitful in terms of what God expects to produce in your life, but it would actually hinder God's working in you. It would revive things that are supposed to be dead.

What I really want to stress is the importance of a Christian witness - truly speaking to your friends about the Lord Jesus Christ - because he is the only way out of this trap. We know that the true church is the "invisible government" of the world. But what we can do directly about this pornography problem, I don't know. I don't think it is possible, at this point, to reverse the perverse by legislation. I suspect that things here will go the way they have in the Scandinavian countries - anything is publishable, everything is O.K. That is probably what will happen. I really think that our only recourse is to do what the old song says: "Throw out the lifeline." That is, we can call out as many people as possible before they are caught in it.

Q: "A lot of "gay" people just don't really understand, and they are doing it not because they want to but because they have this little "hang-up", and I don't understand why they should have to suffer."

A: They suffer because of what God says. They exchange the glory of the immortal God to worship an image, and that is why they suffer. It is like any other sort of sin. You cannot sin and not suffer. It is like any other sort of sin. You cannot sin and not suffer from it. It just can't be done. I spent a great deal of my life trying to sin and to do away with my conscience at the same time. One of the things I like best about being a Christian is the way that I suffer when I sin - it is the chastisement which guarantees me that I am one of God's people. I like it. It feels good. It feels like correction. It feels as if I am being straightened out. It really is true. To me it is like a divine joke. When I was only half believing God he actually did come into me and make me miserable every time I sinned. That is how I learned that he really is believable. And so I have nothing against God for causing suffering, from that point of view. It is right that I should suffer from doing wrong. It corrects me and puts me on the right path.

Now, the factors in a homosexual's past which supposedly make him "gay" aren't really true. We have been sold a bill of goods. The things that Dr. Freud taught aren't true. That sounds like blasphemy, but is really is the case. He was wrong. No one ever really verified any of this theories. All he really did was to produce in our society a whole new way to make excuses for what we are doing - you can blame it all on your mother and father. Marvelous! "Gay" people say, "I suffer from society, but if people didn't think homosexuality was so bad then I wouldn't feel so bad about it myself." That is not true. Even if everybody is committing some sin, according to the Bible, everybody will still suffer - even if everybody on earth is doing it. Remember the flood?

So it isn't society that makes a homosexual's life miserable. It is God who makes a homosexual's life miserable - the same One who makes my life miserable when I sin. Which is the more merciful attitude? If I say that a man was born "gay" or that is is something in his past which he cannot change that made him "gay", then I have frozen him in cement. He now has no hope. All he can do is look for an effective rationalization by which somehow to tolerate or endure what he is caught up in. It is much more merciful to say that homosexuality is a vice and that, because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross and because of his present availability to us, a person can repent and get out of the whole thing.

Q: "Ted, would you give some tips on how to be thankful, how to practice thankfulness?"

A: Yes! Let's get something positive going here! Have you ever noticed how often Paul says that he thanks God for the great gift that he has, referring to the ministry that God has given him? He regards his ministry as something that he has received by the grace of God which is exceedingly precious, and he is very thankful and joyous that God has given it to him. How does God's gift feel to you? "Oh, no, that guy isn't phoning again is he?" Does it feel like a burden, a drag, even an affliction rather than something precious? If so, you can measure yourself by the Scriptures and say, "Now, wait a minute! Am I resenting something that I really should be thankful for?" It is necessary to look at it from a different point of view.

What made Paul glad and thankful for his ministry was that he perceived the value of the people that God had actually entrusted to him. God said that those people are worth dying for. He did it himself! That is the true value of human life and that should be our attitude toward others. When I stop regarding myself, measuring and comparing myself with other people all the time, then I can begin to perceive that they are very valuable and I can become thankful for what God has entrusted to me. I can say to myself, "God died for this person. Now he has sent him to me, and he is exceedingly valuable, worth dying for." I can be thankful by appreciating just exactly the dimension of what God has entrusted to me.

It has been very popular recently to say, "'Love thy neighbor as thyself' means that you must love yourself first before you can love your neighbor." According to what Jesus teaches, that is guaranteed. We all love ourselves. No doubt about it! We are the first ones we feed when we get up in the morning. If I can get my mind off myself and actually look outward, I can begin to appreciate and really be thankful for what God is doing.

Being able to confess our sins to the Lord - not making rationalizations and excuses for ourselves - is a good thing

to be thankful for. I can be thankful for what I see in Romans 1. I can say, "Boy, I was in a pit and God rescued me." I can be thankful that God has actually revealed to us the solutions to dilemmas that are thousands of years old. I can be thankful for the Bible, for the word of God. I can be thankful for everything that I have to eat, drink and wear. It is when my pride gets in the way and I want to take credit for what I have that I become unthankful. I start getting my own ideas about what I should be instead of saying, "Yes, Lord, make me into what pleases you."

How can you be thankful in the midst of tribulation? That is the problem. Not long ago I was driving up a steep hill on the the side of Berkeley, coming back from a Christian summer camp, and I was really tired. My wife and children had been in Los Angeles visiting friends and they picked me up with our Volkswagen. Part way up the hill one of the tires blew. It was just oppressively hot out, and I was so tired! I got out of the car really mad at God for making the tire blow out." What are you doing to me? I have been working hard but you're letting this tire blow out." I pried the hubcap off and the wind blew it down the embankment. I either had to pray or pound on the car with the tire iron, one or the other.

So I started praying. And this is what came to mind: "be thankful for everything." So I started thanking God, but I didn't know what for. He began showing me what for: Well, I was in the slow lane. That was nice. I wasn't going too fast. Nothing bad happened. It happened when I was in the car, not when my wife and kids were alone. I could be thankful for that. And so forth. I could be thankful in all things, and so can you.

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Body Life Service

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