

God's Poetic Justice

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. [Rom. 1:24]

This verse makes a strange statement, but if we note the pattern of God's judgment in sacred Scripture, we see that a form of poetic justice tends to emerge in God's punitive measures. By *poetic justice* I mean that God's punishment is perfectly matched to the sin. In other words, there is a kind of identity between the particular type of sin and the particular type of punishment. Let me explain.

The sin referred to in this verse is that of dishonoring God. The resulting punishment is that men and women are given over to their own evil desires. It isn't as if God visits evil upon them out of nowhere; instead, he gives them over to their own lusts and to their desires and inclinations to dishonor him. In effect God says, "All right. You refuse to honor me; you don't want to honor me; then you don't have to honor me. I'll let you do what you want to do. And I'll let your evil desires run their course." God allows their evil to go unchecked to its natural outcome.

The effect is dreadful. Those who are

given over by God to their sinful nature will find that their bodies are dishonored and degraded among themselves. In our age there is a crisis of human dignity, a crisis of honoring one another. But when the honor of God is ignored, it is virtually inevitable that humankind will slide headlong into degradation and dishonor.

When God's honor is exalted and his majesty worshiped, then human dignity is elevated. Conversely, wherever the dignity of God is attacked, sooner or later the dignity of humanity suffers. Since human beings are created in the image of God there is a very real sense in which, as God goes, so goes the image-bearer. If we corrupt and denigrate the living God who is our Creator, then the image of himself, which he has made, suffers accordingly.

Coram Deo

As you look at twentieth-century society you will certainly be able to list many areas in which human beings are degraded and dishonored. Think about the changes that are needed. Then, in light of the Great Commission ([Matt. 28:19–20](#)), ask God what part you can have in restoring those men and women to God.