

Romans 1:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Analysis

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Paul turns to male homosexuality: *homoiōs te kai hoi arsenes aphentes tēn physikēn chrēsin tēs thēleias exekauthēsan en tē orexei autōn eis allēlous* (ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, 'likewise also the men, abandoning the natural function of the woman, burned in their desire toward one another'). *Aphentes* (ἀφέντες, abandoning) indicates willful rejection of God's design. *Exekauthēsan* (ἐξεκαύθησαν, burned) conveys intense, consuming passion—not mere temptation but active pursuit.

Arsenes en arsesin tēn aschēmosynēn katergazomenoi (ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργάζομενοι, 'men with men committing shameful acts'). *Aschēmosynēn* (ἀσχημοσύνη, shameful/indecent act) echoes Leviticus 18:22. *Katergazomenoi* (κατεργάζομαι, working/accomplishing) implies deliberate action. The consequence: *kai tēn antimisthian hēn edei tēs planēs autōn en heautois apolambanontes* (καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες, 'and receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error').

Antimisthian (ἀντιμισθία, recompense/penalty) is retributive justice. Planēs (πλάνης, error/wandering) indicates moral deviation. The penalty is internal—physical, psychological, and spiritual consequences.

Historical Context

Paul's condemnation of homosexual practice is clear and unambiguous, consistent with Old Testament law and Jewish teaching. This was controversial in Greco-Roman society where such practices were normalized. Early Christianity's sexual ethics were radical—calling for chastity outside marriage, fidelity within marriage, and rejection of all sexual immorality (porneia). This countercultural stance was both attractive (offering moral clarity and family stability) and repelling (requiring repentance from cherished sins). The early church maintained this teaching despite cultural pressure, as must the church today.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's teaching challenge modern claims that homosexual desire is part of one's created identity rather than 'error' (πλάνη)?
2. What 'due penalty' (ἀντιμισθία) does sexual sin bring 'in themselves'—what are the natural consequences Paul may have in mind?
3. How can churches lovingly call all people (including those with same-sex attraction) to repentance and offer hope in Christ's transforming power?

Interlinear Text

ὁμοίως	τε	καὶ	οἱ	ἄρσεσιν	ἀφέντες	τὴν	φυσικὴν
likewise	And	also	G3588	men	leaving	G3588	the natural
G3668	G5037	G2532		G730	G863		G5446
χρῆσιν	τῆς	θηλείας	ἐξεκαύθησαν	ἐν	τῇ	ὀρέξει	αὐτῶν
use	G3588	of the woman	burned	in	G3588	lust	G846
G5540		G2338	G1572	G1722		G3715	
εἰς	ἀλλήλους	ἄρσεσιν	ἐν	ἄρσεσιν	τὴν		
one toward another	G240	men	in	men	G3588		
G1519		G730	G1722	G730			
ἀσχημοσύνην	κατεργαζόμενοι	καὶ	τὴν	ἀντιμισθίαν	ἣν		
that which is unseemly	working	also	G3588	that recompence	which		
G808	G2716	G2532		G489	G3739		
ἔδει	τῆς	πλάνης	αὐτῶν	ἐν	ἐαυτοῖς	ἀπολαμβάνοντες	
was meet	G3588	error	G846	in	themselves	receiving	
G1163		G4106		G1722	G1438	G618	

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 20:13 (Parallel theme): If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

Leviticus 18:22 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.