

Romans 1:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Analysis

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

The third paredōken (παρέδωκεν, gave them over) brings the climax: kai kathōs ouk edokimasan ton theon echein en epignōsei, paredōken autous ho theos eis adokimon noun (καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, 'and just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind'). Ouk edokimasan (οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν, did not approve/see fit) indicates deliberate rejection after examination. Echein en epignōsei (ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, to have in knowledge) is full, accurate knowledge—they refused to retain God in their thinking.

The judgment: eis adokimon noun (εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, to a depraved/disqualified mind). Adokimon (ἀδόκιμος) means failed the test, worthless, reprobate—the moral faculty is corrupted. Noun (νοῦς, mind) is the seat of reasoning and moral judgment. When people reject God, He gives them over to darkened thinking (v. 21), leading to immoral behavior. The result: poiein ta mē kathēkonta (ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα, 'to do things not fitting/proper'). Kathēkonta (καθήκω, fitting/proper) refers to behavior befitting humanity made in God's image—they do the opposite. This introduces the vice list in verses 29-31.

Historical Context

Paul's diagnosis is that intellectual rejection of God leads to moral collapse. History confirms this—societies that abandon God descend into moral chaos. The Roman Empire's decline paralleled its moral decadence. The Enlightenment's rejection of Christianity led to the horrors of 20th-century totalitarianism. Post-Christian Western culture's embrace of relativism has unleashed moral confusion. When God is expelled from public consciousness, objective morality vanishes, and 'anything goes.' The reprobate mind cannot discern right from wrong.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to have a 'depraved mind' (ἀδόκιμος νοῦς), and how does this manifest in cultural moral confusion today?
2. How does refusing to 'retain God in knowledge' (ἔχω ἐν ἐπιγνώσει) corrupt intellectual, moral, and practical reasoning?
3. What hope is there for those with 'reprobate minds'—can they be renewed, and how?

Interlinear Text

καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸς ἔχειν ἐν
And even as not like G3588 God to retain in
G2532 G2531 G3756 G1381 G2316 G2192 G1722

ἐπιγνώσει παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον
their knowledge gave them G3588 God to a reprobate
G1922 G3860 G846 G2316 G1519 G96

νοῦν ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα
mind to do G3588 not convenient
G3563 G4160 G361 G2520

Additional Cross-References

Romans 1:21 (References God): Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Titus 1:16 (References God): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Jeremiah 9:6 (Parallel theme): Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

Romans 1:24 (References God): Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

2 Timothy 3:8 (Parallel theme): Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

Jeremiah 6:30 (Parallel theme): Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (References God): In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Proverbs 1:29 (Parallel theme): For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

Proverbs 1:22 (Parallel theme): How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Proverbs 1:7 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.