

Romans 1:18-32

Meditation

J.I. Packer

Propitiation

SALVATION IS BY GRACE
THROUGH FAITH

Propitiation in the Bible

In the Old Testament, it underlies the prescribed rituals of the sin offering, the guilt offering (“trespass-offering” in the KJV), and the day of atonement (Lev 4:1—6:7; 16:1–34); also, it finds clear expression in such narratives as that of Numbers 16:41–50, where God threatens to destroy the people for maligning his judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram: “Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started.’ . . . So Aaron . . . made atonement for them. . . . And the plague stopped” (vv. 46–48).

In the New Testament, the *propitiation* word group appears in four passages of such transcendent importance that we may well pause to set them out in full.

The first is Paul’s classic statement of *the rationale of God’s justification of sinners*.

“But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested . . . even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a *propitiation*, through faith, by his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:21–26 RV).¹

1J. I. Packer, *Knowing God—20th Anniversary Edition*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 1993.

We have now the principal point or the main hinge of the first part of this Epistle, — that we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone. We have not this, indeed as yet distinctly expressed by Paul; but from his own words it will hereafter be made very clear — that the righteousness, which is grounded on faith, depends entirely on the mercy of God.

<450118> ROMANS 1:18-23

18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;	18. Revelatur enim ira Dei e cœlo, super omnem impietatem et injustitiam hominum, veritatem Dei injuste continentium;
19. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them.	19. Quia quod cognoscitur de Deo manifestum est in ipsis: Deus enim illis manifestavit.
20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:	20. Si quidem invisibilia ipsius, ex creatione mundi operibus intellecta, conspiciuntur, æterna quoque ejus potentia, et divinitas; ut sint inexcusabiles.
21. 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.	21. Quoniam quum Deum cognovissent, non tanquam Deo gloriam dederunt, aut grati fuerunt; exinaniti sunt in cogitationibus suis, et obtenebratum est stultum coreorum.
22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,	22. Quum se putarent sapientes, stulti facti sunt,
23. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.	23. Et mutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis Dei similitudine imaginis corruptibilis hominis, et volucrum, et quadrupedum, et serpentum.

18. *For*^{f42} *revealed*, etc. He reasons now by stating things of a contrary nature, and proves that there is no righteousness except what is conferred, or comes through the gospel; for he shows that without this all men are condemned: by it alone there is salvation to be found. And he brings, as the first proof of condemnation, the fact, — that though the structure of the world, and the most beautiful arrangement of the elements, ought to have induced man to glorify God, yet no one discharged his proper duty: it hence appears that all were guilty of sacrilege, and of wicked and abominable ingratitude.

To some it seems that this is a main subject, and that Paul forms his discourse for the purpose of enforcing repentance; but I think that the discussion of the subject begins here, and that the principal point is stated in a former proposition; for Paul's object was to teach us where salvation is to be found. He has already declared that we cannot obtain it except through the gospel: but as the flesh will not willingly humble itself so far as to assign the praise of salvation to the grace of God alone, Paul shows that the whole world is deserving of eternal death. It hence follows, that life is to be recovered in some other way, since we are all lost in ourselves. But the words, being well considered, will help us much to understand the meaning of the passage.

Some make a difference between *impiety* and *unrighteousness*, and think, that by the former word is meant the profanation of God's worship, and by the latter, injustice towards men; but as the Apostle immediately refers this unrighteousness to the neglect of true religion, we shall explain both as referring to the same thing.^{f43} And then, *all the impiety of men* is to be taken, by a figure in language, as meaning "the impiety of all men," or, the impiety of which all men are guilty. But by these two words one thing is designated, and that is, ingratitude towards God; for we thereby offend in two ways: it is said to be *ἀσέβεια*, impiety, as it is a dishonoring of God; it is *ἀδικία*, unrighteousness, because man, by transferring to himself what belongs to God, unjustly deprives God of his glory. The word *wrath*, according to the usage of Scripture, speaking after the manner of men, means the vengeance of God; for God, in punishing, has, according to our notion, the appearance of one in wrath. It imports, therefore, no such emotion in God, but only has a reference to the perception and feeling of the sinner who is punished. Then he says that it is *revealed from heaven*;

though the expression, *from heaven*, is taken by some in the sense of an adjective, as though he had said “the wrath of the celestial God;” yet I think it more emphatical, when taken as having this import, “Wheresoever a man may look around him, he will find no salvation; for the wrath of God is poured out on the whole world, to the full extent of heaven.”

The truth of God means, the true knowledge of God; and to *hold in* that, is to suppress or to obscure it: hence they are charged as guilty of robbery.

— What we render *unjustly*, is given literally by Paul, *in unrighteousness*, which means the same thing in Hebrew: but we have regard to perspicuity.

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19. *Inasmuch as what may be known of God*, etc. He thus designates what it behoves us to know of God; and he means all that appertains to the setting forth of the glory of the Lord, or, which is the same thing, whatever ought to move and excite us to glorify God. And by this expression he intimates, that God in his greatness can by no means be fully comprehended by us, and that there are certain limits within which men ought to confine themselves, inasmuch as God accommodates to our small capacities what he testifies of himself. Insane then are all they who seek to know of themselves what God is: for the Spirit, the teacher of perfect wisdom, does not in vain invite our attention to what *may be known*, τὸ γνωστὸν; and by what means this is known, he immediately explains. And he said, *in them* rather than *to them*, for the sake of greater emphasis: for though the Apostle adopts everywhere Hebrew phrases, and כִּי, *beth*, is often redundant in that language, yet he seems here to have intended to indicate a manifestation, by which they might be so closely pressed, that they could not evade; for every one of us undoubtedly finds it to be engraven on his own heart,^{f45} By saying, that *God has made it manifest*, he means, that man was created to be a spectator of this formed world, and that eyes were given him, that he might, by looking on so beautiful a picture, be led up to the Author himself.

20. *Since his invisible things*,^{f46} etc. God is in himself invisible; but as his majesty shines forth in his works and in his creatures everywhere, men ought in these to acknowledge him, for they clearly set forth their Maker: and for this reason the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews says, that this world is a mirror, or the representation of invisible things. He does not

mention all the particulars which may be thought to belong to God; but he states, that we can arrive at the knowledge of his eternal power and divinity; ^{f47} for he who is the framer of all things, must necessarily be without beginning and from himself. When we arrive at this point, the divinity becomes known to us, which cannot exist except accompanied with all the attributes of a God, since they are all included under that idea.

So that they are inexcusable. It hence clearly appears what the consequence is of having this evidence — that men cannot allege any thing before God's tribunal for the purpose of showing that they are not justly condemned. Yet let this difference be remembered, that the manifestation of God, by which he makes his glory known in his creation, is, with regard to the light itself, sufficiently clear; but that on account of our blindness, it is not found to be sufficient. We are not however so blind, that we can plead our ignorance as an excuse for our perverseness. We conceive that there is a Deity; and then we conclude, that whoever he may be, he ought to be worshipped: but our reason here fails, because it cannot ascertain who or what sort of being God is. Hence the Apostle in ^{<581103>} Hebrews 11:3, ascribes to faith the light by which man can gain real knowledge from the work of creation, and not without reason; for we are prevented by our blindness, so that we reach not to the end in view; we yet see so far, that we cannot pretend any excuse. Both these things are strikingly set forth by Paul in ^{<441417>} Acts 14:17, when he says, that the Lord in past times left the nations in their ignorance, and yet that he left them not without witness (*amarturon*.) since he gave them rain and fertility from heaven. But this knowledge of God, which avails only to take away excuse, differs greatly from that which brings salvation, which Christ mentions in ^{<431203>} John 12:3, and in which we are to glory, as Jeremiah teaches us, ^{<450924>} Romans 9:24.

21. For when they knew God, etc. He plainly testifies here, that God has presented to the minds of all the means of knowing him, having so manifested himself by his works, that they must necessarily see what of themselves they seek not to know — that there is some God; for the world does not by chance exist, nor could it have proceeded from itself. But we must ever bear in mind the degree of knowledge in which they continued; and this appears from what follows.

They glorified him not as God. No idea can be formed of God without including his eternity, power, wisdom, goodness, truth, righteousness, and mercy. His eternity appears evident, because he is the maker of all things — his power, because he holds all things in his hand and continues their existence — his wisdom, because he has arranged things in such an exquisite order — his goodness, for there is no other cause than himself, why he created all things, and no other reason, why he should be induced to preserve them — his justice, because in his government he punishes the guilty and defends the innocent — his mercy, because he bears with so much forbearance the perversity of men — and his truth, because he is unchangeable. He then who has a right notion of God ought to give him the praise due to his eternity, wisdom, goodness, and justice. Since men have not recognized these attributes in God, but have dreamt of him as though he were an empty phantom, they are justly said to have impiously robbed him of his own glory. Nor is it without reason that he adds, *that they were not thankful,*^{f48} for there is no one who is not indebted to him for numberless benefits: yea, even on this account alone, because he has been pleased to reveal himself to us, he has abundantly made us indebted to him. *But they became vain,*^{f49} etc.; that is, having forsaken the truth of God, they turned to the vanity of their own reason, all the acuteness of which is fading and passes away like vapor. And thus their foolish mind, being involved in darkness, could understand nothing aright but was carried away headlong, in various ways, into errors and delusions. Their unrighteousness was this — they quickly choked by their own depravity the seed of right knowledge, before it grew up to ripeness.

22. *While they were thinking,* etc. It is commonly inferred from this passage, that Paul alludes here to those philosophers, who assumed to themselves in a peculiar manner the reputation of wisdom; and it is thought that the design of his discourse is to show, that when the superiority of the great is brought down to nothing, the common people would have no reason to suppose that they had any thing worthy of being commended: but they seem to me to have been guided by too slender a reason; for it was not peculiar to the philosophers to suppose themselves wise in the knowledge of God, but it was equally common to all nations, and to all ranks of men. There were indeed none who sought not to form some ideas of the majesty of God, and to make him such a God as they

could conceive him to be according to their own reason. This presumption I hold is not learned in the schools, but is innate, and comes with us, so to speak, from the womb. It is indeed evident, that it is an evil which has prevailed in all ages — that men have allowed themselves every liberty in coining superstitions. The arrogance then which is condemned here is this — that men sought to be of themselves wise, and to draw God down to a level with their own low condition, when they ought humbly to have given him his own glory. For Paul holds this principle, that none, except through their own fault, are unacquainted with the worship due to God; as though he said, “As they have proudly exalted themselves, they have become infatuated through the righteous judgment of God.” There is an obvious reason, which contravenes the interpretation which I reject; for the error of forming an image of God did not originate with the philosophers; but they, by their consent, approved of it as received from others. ^{f50}

23. *And changed*, etc. Having feigned such a God as they could comprehend according to their carnal reason, they were very far from acknowledging the true God: but devised a fictitious and a new god, or rather a phantom. And what he says is, that they *changed* the glory of God; for as though one substituted a strange child, so they departed from the true God. Nor are they to be excused for this pretense, that they believe that God dwells in heaven, and that they count not the wood to be God, but his image; for it is a high indignity to God, to form so gross an idea of his majesty as to dare to make an image of him. But from the wickedness of such a presumption none were exempt, neither priests, nor statesmen, nor philosophers, of whom the most sound-minded, even Plato himself, sought to find out some likeness of God.

The madness then here noticed, is, that all attempted to make for themselves an image of God; which was a certain proof that their notions of God were gross and absurd. And, first, they befouled the majesty of God by forming him in the likeness of *a corruptible man*: for I prefer this rendering to that of *mortal man*, which is adopted by *Erasmus*; for Paul sets not the immortality of God in opposition to the mortality of man, but that glory, which is subject to no defects, to the most wretched condition of man. And then, being not satisfied with so great a crime, they descended even to beasts and to those of the most filthy kind; by which their stupidity appeared still more evident. You may see an account of these

abominations in *Lactantius*, in *Eusebius*, and in *Augustine* in his book on *the city of God*.

<450124> ROMANS 1:24-32	
24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:	24. Propterea tradidit illos Deus in cupiditates cordium suorum in immunditiam, ut ignominia afficerent corpora sua in seipsis:
25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.	25. Qui transmutarunt veritatem ejus in mendacium et coluerunt ac venerati sunt creaturam supra, Creatorem, qui est benedictus in secula: Amen.
26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:	26. Propterea, inquam, tradidit illos Deus in passiones ignominiosas: ac enim feminae ipsorum transmutarunt naturalem usum in eum qui est præter naturam:
27. 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.	27. Similiter et viri quoque, amisso naturali usu feminae, exarserunt mutua libidine, alii in alios; masculi in masculis foeditatem perpetrantes et quam decebat erroris sui mercedem in seipsis recipientes.
28. 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;	28. Et quemadmodum non probaverunt Deum habere in notitia, tradidit illos Deus in reprobam mentem, ad faciendam quæ non deceret;
29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,	29. Ut essent pleni omni injustitia, nequitia, libidine, avaritia, malitia; referti invidia, homicidio, contentione, dolo, perversitate; susurriones,

30. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,	30. Obtrectatores, osores Dei, malefici, contumeliosi, fastuosi, repertoires malorum, parentibus immorigeri,
31. Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:	31. Intelligentiæ expertes, insociabiles, affectu humanitatis carentes, fœdifragi, sine misericordiæ sensu;
32 Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.	32. Qui, quum Dei iudicium cognoverint, quod qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte, non tantum ea faciunt, sed assentiuntur facientibus.

24. *God therefore gave them up*, etc. As impiety is a hidden evil, lest they should still find an evasion, he shows, by a more palpable demonstration, that, they cannot escape, but must be held fast by a just condemnation, since such fruits have followed this impiety as cannot be viewed otherwise than manifest evidences of the Lord's wrath. As the Lord's wrath is always just, it follows, that what has exposed them to condemnation, must have preceded it. By these evidences then he now proves the apostasy and defection of men: for the Lord indeed does so punish those, who alienate them selves from his goodness, that he casts them headlong into various courses which lead to perdition and ruin. And by comparing the vices, of which they were guilty, with the impiety, of which he had before accused them, he shows that they suffered punishment through the just judgment of God: for since nothing is dearer to us than our own honor, it is extreme blindness, when we fear not to bring disgrace on ourselves; and it is the most suitable punishment for a reproach done to the Divine Majesty. This is the very thing which he treats of to the end of the chapter; but he handles it in various ways, for the subject required ample illustration.

What then, in short, he proves to us is this, — that the ingratitude of men to God is incapable of being excused; for it is manifest, by unequivocal evidences, that the wrath of God rages against them: they would have never rolled themselves in lusts so filthy, after the manner of beasts, had

not the majesty of God been provoked and incensed against them. Since, then, the worst abominations abounded everywhere, he concludes that there existed among them evidences of divine vengeance. Now, as this never rages without reason, or unjustly, but ever keeps within the limits of what is right, he intimates that it hence appears that perdition, not less certain than just, impended over all.

As to the manner in which God gives up or delivers men to wickedness, it is by no means necessary in this place to discuss a question so intricate, (*longam* — tedious.) It is indeed certain, that he not only permits men to fall into sin, by allowing them to do so, and by conniving at them; but that he also, by his equitable judgment, so arranges things, that they are led and carried into such madness by their own lusts, as well as by the devil. He therefore adopts the word, *give up*, according to the constant usage of Scripture; which word they forcibly wrest, who think that we are led into sin only by the permission of God: for as Satan is the minister of God's wrath, and as it were the executioner, so he is armed against us, not through the connivance, but by the command of his judge. God, however, is not on this account cruel, nor are we innocent, inasmuch as Paul plainly shows, that we are not delivered up into his power, except when we deserve such a punishment. Only we must make this exception, that the cause of sin is not from God, the roots of which ever abide in the sinner himself; for this must be true,

“Thine is perdition, O Israel; in me only is thy help.”

(^{<281309>}Hosea 13:9) ^{f51}

By connecting the *desires or lusts* of man's heart with uncleanness, he indirectly intimates what sort of progeny our heart generates, when left to itself. The expression, *among themselves*, is not without its force; for it significantly expresses how deep and indelible are the marks of infamy imprinted on our bodies.

25. *Who changed*, etc. He repeats what he had said before, though in different words, in order to fix it deeper in our minds. When the truth of God is turned to a lie, his glory is obliterated. It is then but just, that they should be besprinkled with every kind of infamy, who strive to take away from God his honor, and also to reproach his name. — *And worshipped*, etc. That I might include two words in one, I have given this rendering. He

points out especially the sin of idolatry; for religious honor cannot be given to a creature, without taking it away, in a disgraceful and sacrilegious manner, from God: and vain is the excuse that images are worshipped on God's account, since God acknowledges no such worship, nor regards it as acceptable; and the true God is not then worshipped at all, but a fictitious God, whom the flesh has devised for itself.^{f52} What is added, *Who is blessed for ever*, I explain as having been said for the purpose of exposing idolaters to greater reproach, and in this way, "He is one whom they ought alone to have honored and worshipped, and from whom it was not right to take away any thing, no, not even the least."

26. *God therefore gave them up*, etc. After having introduced as it were an intervening clause, he returns to what he had before stated respecting the judgment of God: and he brings, as the first example, the dreadful crime of unnatural lust; and it hence appears that they not only abandoned themselves to beastly lusts, but became degraded beyond the beasts, since they reversed the whole order of nature. He then enumerates a long catalogue of vices which had existed in all ages, and then prevailed everywhere without any restraint.

It is not to the purpose to say, that every one was not laden with so great a mass of vices; for in arraigning the common baseness of men, it is proof enough if all to a man are constrained to acknowledge some faults. So then we must consider, that Paul here records those abominations which had been common in all ages, and were at that time especially prevalent everywhere; for it is marvelous how common then was that filthiness which even brute beasts abhor; and some of these vices were even popular. And he recites a catalogue of vices, in some of which the whole race of man were involved; for though all were not murderers, or thieves, or adulterers, yet there were none who were not found polluted by some vice or another. He calls those *disgraceful passions*, which are shameful even in the estimation of men, and redound to the dishonoring of God.

27. *Such a reward for their error as was meet*. They indeed deserved to be blinded, so as to forget themselves, and not to see any thing befitting them, who, through their own malignity, closed their eyes against the light offered them by God, that they might not behold his glory: in short, they

who were not ashamed to extinguish, as much as they could, the glory of God, which alone gives us light, deserved to become blind at noonday.

28. *And as they chose not*, etc. There is an evident comparison to be observed in these words, by which is strikingly set forth the just relation between sin and punishment. As they chose not to continue in the knowledge of God, which alone guides our minds to true wisdom, the Lord gave them a perverted mind, which can choose nothing that is right.^{f53} And by saying, that they chose not, (non probasse-approved not,) it is the same as though he had said, that they pursue not after the knowledge of God with the attention they ought to have done, but, on the contrary, turned away the; thoughts resignedly from God. He then intimates, that they, making a depraved choice, preferred their own vanities to the true God; and thus the error, by which they were deceived, was voluntary.

To do those things which were not meet. As he had hitherto referred only to one instance of abomination, which prevailed indeed among many, but was not common to all, he begins here to enumerate vices from which none could be found free: for though every vice, as it has been said, did not appear in each individual, yet all were guilty of some vices, so that every one might separately be accused of manifest depravity. As he calls them in the first instance *not meet*, understand him as saying, that they were inconsistent with every decision of reason, and alien to the duties of men: for he mentions it as an evidence of a perverted mind, that men addicted themselves, without any reflection, to those vices, which common sense ought to have led them to renounce.

But it is labor in vain so to connect these vices, as to make them dependent one on another, since this was not Paul's design; but he set them down as they occurred to his mind. What each of them signifies, we shall very briefly explain.

29. Understand by *unrighteousness*, the violation of justice among men, by not rendering to each his due. I have rendered *πονηρίαν*, according to the opinion of Ammonium, *wickedness*; for he teaches us that *πονηρον*, the wicked, is *δραστικον κακου*, the doer of evil. The word (*nequitia*) then means practiced wickedness, or licentiousness in doing mischief: but maliciousness (*malitia*) is that depravity and obliquity of mind which leads us to do harm to our neighbour.^{f54} For the word *πορνείαν*, which Paul

uses, I have put lust, (*libidinem.*) I do not, however, object, if one prefers to render it fornication; but he means the inward passion as well as the outward act. ^{f55} The words *avarice*, *envy*, and *murder*, have nothing doubtful in their meaning. Under the word *strife*, (*contentione.*) ^{f56} he includes quarrels, fightings, and seditions. We have rendered *κακοηθείαν*, *perversity*, (*perversitatem*;) ^{f57} which is a notorious and uncommon wickedness; that is, when a man, covered over, as it were, with hardness, has become hardened in a corrupt course of life by custom and evil habit.

30. The word *θεστυγείς*, means, no doubt, *haters of God*; for there is no reason to take it in a passive sense, (hated of God,) since Paul here proves men to be guilty by manifest vices. Those, then, are designated, who hate God, whose justice they seem to resist by doing wrong. *Whisperers* (*susurrones*) and *slanderers* (*obtrectatores*) ^{f58} are to be thus distinguished; the former, by secret accusations, break off the friendships of good men, inflame their minds with anger, defame the innocent, and sow discords; and the latter through an innate malignity, spare the reputation of no one, and, as though they were instigated by the fury of evilspeaking, they revile the deserving as well as the undeserving. We have translated *ὕβριστὰς*, *villanous*, (*maleficos*;) for the Latin authors are wont to call notable injuries villanies, such as plunders, thefts, burnings, and sorceries; and these where the vices which Paul meant to point out here. ^{f59} I have rendered the word *ὕπερήφανους*, used by Paul, *insolent*, (*contumeliosos*;) for this is the meaning of the Greek word: and the reason for the word is this, — because such being raised, as it were, on high, look down on those who are, as it were, below them with contempt, and they cannot bear to look on their equals. *Haughty* are they who swell with the empty wind of overweeningness. *Unsociable* ^{f60} are those who, by their iniquities, unloose the bands of society, or those in whom there is no sincerity or constancy of faith, who may be called truce-breakers.

31. Without *the feelings of humanity* are they who have put off the first affections of nature towards their own relations. As he mentions the want of *mercy* as an evidence of human nature being depraved, *Augustine*, in arguing against the Stoics, concludes, that mercy is a Christian virtue.

32. *Who, knowing the judgement* ^{f61} *of God*, etc. Though this passage is variously explained, yet the following appears to me the correctest

interpretation, — that men left nothing undone for the purpose of giving unbridled liberty to their sinful propensities; for having taken away all distinction between good and evil, they approved in themselves and in others those things which they knew displeased God, and would be condemned by his righteous judgment. For it is the summit of all evils, when the sinner is so void of shame, that he is pleased with his own vices, and will not bear them to be reprov'd, and also cherishes them in others by his consent and approbation. This desperate wickedness is thus described in Scripture:

“They boast when they do evil,” (<200214> Proverbs 2:14.)

“She has spread out her feet,
and gloried in her wickedness,” (<261625> Ezekiel 16:25.)

For he who is ashamed is as yet healable; but when such an impudence is contracted through a sinful habit, that vices, and not virtues, please us, and are approved, there is no more any hope of reformation. Such, then, is the interpretation I give; for I see that the Apostle meant here to condemn something more grievous and more wicked than the very doing of vices: what that is I know not, except we refer to that which is the summit of all wickedness, — that is, when wretched men, having cast away all shame, undertake the patronage of vices in opposition to the righteousness of God.