

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 4

I. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. Verses 18-32 – Righteousness needed by the Gentiles.

1. Verse 18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...”

- a. After stating that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, Paul now states that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. The same Bible that reveals God’s righteousness also reveals His wrath. Paul also will explain how God’s wrath is revealed in the verses that follow. It is by God giving mankind over to their own lusts, degrading passions and depraved minds! God letting men have what they want is at least, in part, His wrath revealed. This doesn’t mean that God is going around heaven having temper tantrums. This is expressing God’s attitude toward sin! His holiness demands a reaction against all moral wrong. God’s wrath is a fixed attitude of displeasure toward sin and a hatred toward sin!
- b. “...against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...” — The word “all” includes every form of sin, and these sins are characterized by:
 - 1) “**ungodliness**” which means “**a lack of reverence toward God and suggests a disregard for the existence of God.**”
 - 2) “**unrighteousness**” which means “**injustice**” and “**moral wrongfulness.**”¹
- c. “...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” — The word “suppress” means to “hold down”; “impede”; “hold back” and “hinder”. The “truth” will destroy wickedness, so wickedness always fights against it.

2. Verse 19 – “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.” – In this verse Paul begins to enlarge upon the idea that ungodly and unrighteous people willfully suppress the truth.

- a. He’s about to show us how God made Himself known in TWO ways. The first way is found in this verse:
 - 1) Through Conscience. **The knowledge of God is “manifest in them...”** – The word “manifest” means; “apparent”; “evident” and “to be plainly recognized or known.” (This idea of conscience will come up again in 2:14-15).

“For that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God [Himself] has shown it to them.” Romans 1:19 – Amplified Bible

**“Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”
Romans 1:19 – New American Standard**

3. Verse 20 - “For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”. The second way God has made Himself known is:

- a. Through Creation. All humans know something of God from creation (cf. **Job 12:7–10 and Ps. 19:1-4**). In theology this is called “**natural or general revelation.**” It is not complete, but it is the basis of God’s holding responsible those who have never been exposed to God’s “**special revelation**” of Scripture or, ultimately, in Jesus (cf. **Colossians 1:15-17**).
- b. “...His invisible attributes are clearly seen...” - The things which are invisible of God, namely, “...His eternal power and Godhead...” are clearly seen. This is quite a paradox, invisible things which are visible. Paul is saying that the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator are understood by the things that have been made, namely, the material creation. If people would reason upon the basis of the law of cause and effect, they would have to conclude that such a tremendous effect as the universe, demands a Being of eternal power and of divine attributes. That Being must be God who should be worshipped. God has shown us something of His eternal power and divine nature through creation, “...by the things that are made...”. He has given natural or general revelation that is obvious both in creation and within the mind and heart

¹Unless otherwise indicated, see Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon and the Word Study Dictionary for Definitions.

of man.

- c. **“...so that they are without excuse.”** – The word **“excuse”** here means, **“defense”**. They are not able to defend themselves. God makes it very clear that no human being will ever have an excuse for rejecting the existence of God.

4. **Verses 21-23 - Five indictments are brought against man in these verses.**

- a. **“...although they knew God, they glorified Him not as God...”** — At one time all mankind had the light, but they refused to have God in their knowledge. There are thousands today who know there is a personal God, but they choose not to glorify Him as God.
- b. **“...nor were thankful ...”** — They received God’s blessings, then turned upon Him as if He were their enemy, or, they just ignored Him completely.
- c. **“...but became futile in their thoughts...”** — The word **“futile”** means **“empty”**; **“foolish”** and **“vain”**. Today people ridicule Jesus Christ, and salvation by His atoning sacrifice on the Cross. Only ONE RESULT can follow such sin ...
- d. **“...their foolish hearts were darkened”** — The word **“darkened”** suggests that the human heart was NOT **“dark”** in the beginning. They once knew God, but were **“darkened”** because of sin. Metaphorically this refers to **“moral darkness”** and **“ignorance.”** They became **“fools.”** (cf. **John 3:19-21**).
- e. **“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and to birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things”** — Rejecting the knowledge of the true God, they created **“gods”** in their own human image, and even in the image of animals, birds, and beasts: **THIS IS THE RECORD OF THE DOWNWARD COURSE OF FALLEN MAN!** All these things are still true of people who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and His Salvation.

5. **Verses 24-25 - God Gave Them Up To Uncleaness and Idolatry.** The phrase, **“...gave them up...”** is so important Paul repeats it three times in this passage (see vv. 26 and 28). Dr. Bob Utley states, **“This was the worst possible judgment. It was God saying ‘let fallen humanity have their own way’”**²

- a. He gave them up to **“uncleaness”**. This word means **“filth in a natural or physical sense moral uncleaness, lewdness, incontinence in general.”**
- b. **“...to dishonor their bodies among themselves”** – The word **“dishonor”** means; **“to be treated with indignity or to cause to be disgraced or degraded. To treat shamefully.”** It seems to mean the using the body for immoral purposes and thus degrading or abusing it.
- c. **Verse 25 – “Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...”** Everybody has a god. If a person won’t worship the Lord of Heaven as his God, he always finds some substitute to worship instead. Whatever takes first place is his **“god.”**

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 1:24–28.