

ROMANS 1:18-32

Previous Lesson: Introduction and 1:1-17

- 1) Epistle of Paul to saints at Rome; written from Corinth AD 56-58
- 2) *Prologue*: Gospel promised before through prophets in the Scriptures; Jesus Christ – seed of David and Son of God; obedience to the faith among all nations
- 3) Paul's desire to go to Rome, see the brethren, and preach the gospel, the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes

I) The Unrighteousness of the Gentile World (1:18-23)

- A) Why Paul is ready to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome (v. 15):
- 1) "For" [because] he was not ashamed of the gospel – power of God to salvation (v. 16)
 - 2) "For" in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith (v. 17)
 - 3) "For" the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress [hold down, hinder] the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18); **Gospel is revealed because God's wrath is revealed*
- B) The wrath of God was revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men
- 1) What may be known of God is manifest among men because God has shown it
 - a) Since the creation, God's invisible attributes, eternal power and Godhead [divine nature], are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made (cf. Psa. 19:1-2; Isa. 40:21-22) **Seeing the invisible God by revelation*
 - b) They are without excuse – cannot claim that they could not, or did not, know God
 - c) First examples will be from the Gentile peoples and nations
 - 2) They did not glorify God, nor were thankful – became selfish, self-centered
 - a) Became futile in their thoughts; foolish hearts were darkened
 - b) Professing to be wise, they became fools (cf. Jer. 10:14, 23)
 - c) Changed the glory of incorruptible God into image of man and animals – idolatry!

The reasons Paul gives for being ready to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome is that he was not ashamed of the gospel wherein is revealed the righteousness of God, and that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Because of the revelation of God's wrath against sin, the revelation of the gospel that saves was needed.

God's wrath is revealed because ungodly men suppress, or hold down, the truth in unrighteousness. Evil cannot tolerate the bright light of truth and, therefore, seeks to keep truth hidden. This is the result when men turn away from God.

Paul identifies the ancient Gentile world as an example of such unrighteousness and ungodliness. These ancient societies were without excuse because God's invisible attributes of power and divinity could be clearly seen (note the paradox of "seeing" the "invisible"). This understanding was provided by the physical creation (natural revelation), while the word of God (special revelation) revealed His mind and purpose. Instead of glorifying and thanking God, they foolishly looked to their own futile and darkened wisdom and created idols of false gods in the form of the creation itself.

II) Further Unrighteousness of the Gentile World (1:24-32)

- A) God “gave them up” (v. 24), “gave them up” (v. 26), “gave them over” (v. 28)
 - 1) Allowed evil men to pursue their chosen path of sinful destruction (cf. 2 Tim. 3:13)
 - 2) Retributive justice – given over to the “penalty of their error which was due” (v. 27)
 - 3) Reversal of principle in James 4:8 – forsake God and He will give up the sinner to sin
- B) Uncleanliness in the lust of their hearts, dishonor their bodies, worshiped the creature
 - 1) Exchanged the truth of God for the lie – deception, evil
- C) Dishonorable, vile passions – women and men doing what is “unnatural,” “shameful,” “unseemly” “indecent” “error” “perversion”
 - 1) Women exchanging the natural use for what is against nature, and men with men burning in lust for one another – *homosexual activity* (cf. Lev. 18:22; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)
 - a) Violation of God’s order for the sexual union in marriage of a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; 1 Cor. 7:2)
- D) Not retaining God in their knowledge, they developed a debased [corrupt] mind
 - 1) Evil thinking and actions that destroy lives, relationships, and society
 - a) “filled with” unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness
 - b) “full of” envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness
 - c) “they are” whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (sins people commit against one another)
 - 2) Those who practice such things are worthy of death (cf. Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8)
 - a) Also, those who “approve of those who practice them” – the approval of sin is sin

Three times in this context it is said that God gave sinners up/over due to their unrepentant course of evil. Their hearts were given over to lust, their bodies to dishonor, and their worship to the lie of idolatry, and this evil continued down a worsening path. Vile, unnatural, and shameful passions of homosexual activity among women and men illustrated the depths of depravity in the ancient Gentile world which continued even into Paul’s day (the first century AD, especially Roman society), and continues into our day.

The debased mind that rejects God continued to manifest itself in ever-worsening vile characteristics of societal evil. Even today we are seeing the practice and fruit of this same ungodly behavior in increasingly pagan, ungodly cultures. The approvers as well as the practitioners of such things are judged as worthy of death – eternal separation from a holy God.

Paul has clearly identified and condemned the ungodliness of the Gentile nations past and present that brought them under the wrath of God and the sentence of death. Next, Paul will also identify the Jews as condemned sinners under the wrath of God.