

## Romans 1:18-32

### Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness...

It is clear from the context of Romans 1 that the Holy Spirit has in mind the several judgments recorded in the Scriptures, particularly the flood, as Paul's discourse begins with all of mankind and his apostasy into idolatry and immorality, and moves forward progressively to conscience, and then to the Jew and the special revelation of scripture.

*For*, the wrath of God is revealed. "For" connects this to the previous two verses; the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and in that gospel is God's *wrath* against sin revealed; in that gospel is God's righteousness revealed.

The gospel of Christ demonstrates God's righteous justice in that He poured out His unadulterated wrath upon Jesus Christ as He singularly bore the sin of mankind.

Verse 18 states that men *hold* the truth, meaning they do possess it, as evidenced in the next verse,

### Romans 1:19

*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

### Romans 1:20

*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:*

From the beginning the *invisible* things of Him are clearly seen, or perceived, by man—in chapter 2 we will see that there is a law of conscience that operates in all of mankind which bears witness to a morality which has origins external to the creation. These invisible things, this witness of the conscience, testify of judgment, and of God's eternal power and Godhead, and thus leaves all men without excuse.

From the beginning of creation the invisible things of God may be *literally* seen by the eye of man, in that the creation, by its very immensity and the raw power that it exhibits, communicates a power that infinitely exceeds our own. The very intricacy of nature, communicates a genius

that far exceeds our own. The very instincts of the plant and animal kingdom communicate an intuition that defies our own logic.

The very dimensions of nature exist in threes:

Past, present, future  
Height, width, depth  
Solid, liquid, gas

Scientific inquiry reveals the same: positive, negative, neutral. Special revelation also reveals the same: spirit, soul, body.

Existence itself bears the fingerprints of the eternally self-existent One.

The phrase *Godhead* is found uniquely in the King James Bible and is used only three times, as the Godhead is composed of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Each usage is distinguished either by the definite article *The*, or in this case the possessive pronoun *His*, denoting individuality, specificity, and singularity. In both cases attributing to the Godhead His own unique position and characteristics as *The* (singular) Godhead, and as *His* (singular possessive) eternal power; not simply *the divine nature or being* as it is abstractly rendered in modern versions—but, THE HEAD (Col. 2:10).

All of this considered, men are left without excuse.

Romans 1:21

*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.*

This criteria, of natural revelation and of conscience leaves all without excuse, but from the creation of the world, prior to the flood, mankind for a time even possessed the additional witness of Adam, who lived for 930 years, who had first hand knowledge of God.

Verse 21 says that *when they knew God*, meaning they did *know*, and instead chose not to glorify Him as *God*, and because of this they became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.

This is the current state of unregenerate man even today. Consider the exhortation for the Body of Christ in Ephesians 4:

*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

*Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

(Ephesians 4:17-19)

You see here the vanity of the mind, the darkened understanding, and the blindness of the heart. This condition is still to some extent possible for the Christian, as Paul exhorts us not to walk like the other gentiles, and then commands that we be renewed in the spirit of our mind (4:23). This process is not automatic.

Romans 1:22-23

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,  
And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

1 Corinthians 1:20-21

*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

The wisdom of man doesn't arrive at the knowledge of God, because it seeks to justify its own sin. This we will see in the process Paul describes in Romans 1, how man changes the truth of God into a lie and worships the creature rather than the Creator, and are then "free" to give themselves over to immorality of every kind.

Psalms 14:1

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

Paul will quote this Psalm later in Romans chapter 3.

James writes,

*...the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

(James 3:17)

Romans 1:24-25

*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:  
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.*

This is the first *giving up* of man by God, to do those things which they lusted after. We see in this chapter the very Godhead Himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—strive with man: God gives them up (v. 24), God gives them up (v.26), and God gives them over (v. 28).

We see how man, when he corrupts his image and understanding of God, he naturally corrupts himself.

Romans 1:26-27

*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:*

*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.*

Even the design of creation itself was perverted.

Verse 27 shows that these, though without the special revelation of God's law, received in themselves a recompense for their sin, because, as we will see in the next chapter, what operated within their minds was the law of conscience to which they were accountable. This becomes important because Paul will also say that where no law is, sin is not imputed, and some have perhaps tried to assert that no sin was imputed to these men prior to the Law of Moses. But man has always lived with the natural law of conscience within themselves.

Romans 1:28

*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...*

*Reprobate*, or unapproved, and by implication, *worthless*. The root word, *probate*, comes from the Latin word *probare*, where we also get our English word *prove* from. This word means to *prove* or to *test*. The prefix *re-* in Latin indicates withdrawal or a backward motion. And so to be *reprobate* means to be *unapproved*.

We see then as man did not like to retain God in their knowledge they were given over to an unapproved mind, and thus walked in vanity.

In 2 Timothy 3:8, Paul warns of those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, and says of them that they are *reprobate* concerning *the faith*. That's because the work God is performing in the believer is a work of faith (2 Thess. 1:11). And so, to be ignorant of the knowledge of God contained in the scripture will necessarily prevent this process of edification.

Romans 1:29-32

*Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

*Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,  
Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:  
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.*

It's been observed and said by many pastors and teachers, that this list is constructed by the Holy Ghost in such a way that every single individual person can find themselves in that list.

*Debate, whisperers, backbiters, proud, disobedient to parents, without understanding—God says these are worthy of death.*

It's here we see the third principle of righteousness found in Romans 1.

The righteousness of God through the gospel in verses 16 and 17; the righteousness of God in His wrath against sin in verse 18, and the unrighteousness of man in verses 18-32. These basic principles become important in the case for justification by grace through faith, because they establish it as the only way to obtain salvation from God while allowing Him to maintain all of His attributes, such as perfect justice, judgment, and mercy.