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# *Sunday Church School*

*March 14, 2021*

**“God’s Wrath Against Mankind” – Romans 1:18-32**

**Golden Text: Romans 1:20**

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## Romans 1:18-32

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

<sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

<sup>20</sup> 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,

<sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

<sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools,

<sup>23</sup> and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

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<sup>24</sup> Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

<sup>25</sup> who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

<sup>27</sup> Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

<sup>28</sup> And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

<sup>29</sup> being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers,

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<sup>30</sup> backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

<sup>31</sup> undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

<sup>32</sup> who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

While prioritizing the greatest problem facing the world, outside of the Church setting, SIN is rarely mentioned as leading the list.

Yet sin is at the root of the world’s problems – from a personal and family problems perspective, to all the ill and wrong in the world.

As odd as it may seem to some, admitting we are sinners in need of a Savior is the very first step toward redemption.

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## **LESSON OUTLINE**

**I. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN —Rom. 1:18-23**

**II. THE DISTORTING POWER OF SIN —Rom. 1:24-27**

**III. THE DEPRAVITY OF SIN —Rom. 1:28-32**

### **I. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN (Rom. 1:18-23)**

- After introducing himself to the Roman Christians and assuring them of his desire to see them in person, the Apostle Paul begins a long discussion concerning the **sinfulness of humanity**.
- This comes to a climax when he writes, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” **(3:23)**.
- Beginning in Romans 1:18, Paul focuses on the depravity of the Gentile world.
- While we usually think of the wrath of God as coming at the end of time, Paul declares that God’s wrath was in the present sense being “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.”
- Although God’s end-time wrath in Revelation 6--19 is frightening, He also metes out punishment on the unrepentant in a variety of ways in the present.

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- When Paul says the unsaved “hold the truth in unrighteousness” (V 18), he means that they **suppress the truth about themselves** and God **by their evil deeds**.
- This, however, is not because they are totally ignorant of God or His will for their lives.
- Even without Scripture, human beings can know some things about God (John 1:9; Acts 14:17).
  - ❖ Jesus the True Light, has given light to every man coming into the world.
  - ❖ Jewish tradition declared that God had offered the law to all seventy nations at Mt. Sinai but lamented that they had all chosen to reject His word
  - ❖ Similarly, the world of John’s day has failed to recognize God’s Word
- Although the pagan world did not have the special revelation of the Mosaic Law, they did have the general revelation of creation.
- Nature reflects at least the existence of a Creator, therefore both the complexity and predictability of creation leads to this conclusion, as the very first verse of the Bible affirms.

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- With all this evidence, mankind is “without excuse,” for God’s “eternal power and Godhead [deity]” are clearly evident.
- Hence, anyone who concludes that God does not exist is simply ignoring the obvious evidence to the contrary.
- No wonder the Bible calls such a person a fool (Psl. 14:1; Prov. 1:7)
- In short, rejecting God intellectually led to rejecting the moral standards He had ordained.
- Unfortunately, man does not realize that when people reject God, they set themselves up as their own gods.
- They mistakenly think they are wise, but in fact, they are fools.
- Atheists arrogantly imagine that they know more than others, especially Christians, whom they assume to be among the most ignorant of all people.
- Those who rejected the knowledge of the true God in antiquity became idolaters.
- Instead of worshipping the invisible God who created everything, they began fashioning their own gods that resembled both men and beasts.

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- And while most people today may never bow before a literal graven image, they still worship false gods when they worship God falsely.
- The idols of modern society are popularity, possessions, pleasures, and power, to name a few.

## **II. THE DISTORTING POWER OF SIN (Rom. 1:24-27)**

- When people decide that they do not want to know God or obey Him, the Lord will give them over to their sinful desires—and the consequences that follow (v 24, 26, 28).
  - ▶ UNCLEANNESS ▶ LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS ▶ DISHONORING THEIR BODIES
  - ▶ VILE PASSIONS ▶ WORKING AGAINST NATURE ▶ DEBASED THINKING
- Two of the most popular lies told by Satan are:
  - 1) sin has no consequences, either immediate or long-term (Gal. 6:7-8).
  - 2) the sinner is not hurting about else just themselves
- As far as the modern world is concerned, anything done between consenting adults is generally seen as acceptable

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- But as far as Scripture is concerned, sexual activities are only permissible between a man and woman who are married to each other (Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 6:15-20; Heb. 13:4).
- Those who try to change the truth of God’s Word to fit their lifestyles have “changed the truth of God into a lie” (Rom. 1:25).
- Consequently, sinful humanity has decided to worship and serve created things rather than the Creator.
- As we know from the Decalogue, God demands exclusive loyalty.
- Anything less than this is idolatry, no matter what form it takes (Ex. 20:3-6).
- Homosexuality has been around for a long time (Gen. 19:1-17) and was rather common in the ancient pagan world.
- The practice continues today as governments, along with even some religious denominations, place their stamp of approval on so-called same-sex marriage.
- While we may think that these trends developed suddenly in our time, they did not for they were addressed in the Mosaic law (Lev. 18:22; 20:13).

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- As already mentioned, if women decided to lust after women, and if men decided to lust after men, God would allow them to do so.
- These practices are “vile affections” and “against nature” (Rom. 1:26) and the “recompence of their error” (V 27) refers to the consequences they suffer
- Some claim that homosexuality has a genetic component.
- Even if this is true, it offers no justification for the practice, since other conditions that have genetic components, such as cancer, diabetes, alcoholism, depression, extreme violence, anorexia, are disorders, not positive lifestyles.
- Disease is not blamed on the victim; thus, those guilty of “vile affections: should not be celebrated nor affirmed.
- Despite knowing the brief pleasures of these activities ultimately lead to pain, suffering, and death (Rev. 22:14-15), we should strive to share the truth of the gospel
- These who are guilty of “vile affections” are not our enemies but are simply living contrary to the laws of God’s nature – just like all other sinners.
- And Christ died for sinners of all types, without making any distinctions.

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## **III. THE DEPRAVITY OF SIN (Rom. 1:28-32)**

- The Gentile world chose to reject the knowledge of the true God, and their behavior reflected this.
- Once again, “God gave them over” to evil desires and their consequences.
  - ❖ I.e., He allowed their sinful bent to take over and rule their lives.
  - ❖ The result was “a reprobate mind,” literally, “a rejected mind,” indicative of a depraved way of thinking.
  - ❖ The word “convenient” in V 28 does not mean the same thing we usually think of; rather, it points to what is **indecent**.
- In addition to the general rejection of God reflected by such perverse lifestyle behaviors, Paul now begins a long list of other perverse sins.
- All of these things reflect that which is unacceptable in the eyes of God.
- The word “unrighteousness” in verse 29 is a general word for any behavior that is unlawful.
- In this case, though, Paul describes these people as being **filled with unrighteousness**, not merely committing unrighteous deeds from time to time

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- The word “fornication” is a general term for sexual immorality.
- Earlier Greek manuscripts include only the word **poneria**, simply meaning “wickedness” or “evil,” and omit **porneia** (fornication).
- The two words are very similar in both pronunciation and spelling, and thus could easily have been confused.
- The manuscripts from which the King James Version was translated, however, have both words.
- “Covetousness” is a common word for greed and means “a desire for more.”
- A good NT illustration is Jesus’ parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21).
- In the OT, Achan’s sin (Josh. 7:18-26) and the story of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21) are examples of this sin.
- Closely related is being “full of envy” (Rom. 1:29), although that sin can relate to things other than a desire for material prosperity.
- “Maliciousness,” not surprisingly, has to do with malice and it literally means “harboring a desire to do harm.”
- Such malice can lead to “murder,” also mentioned by Paul in this verse.

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- The word “debate” actually means “strife” or “quarreling,” and should not be taken to mean that it is wrong to carry on a debate concerning various issues, religious or otherwise.
- However, debates can often become quarrelsome and contentious if not handled with caution.
- “Deceit” means “guile” or “duplicity,” which is certainly characteristic of the world in general.
- Toward the end of his list, Paul makes mention of several sins of the tongue. This includes “whisperers” (vs. 29), or gossips.
- “Backbiters” (vs. 30) is literally “to speak against” and could be rendered “slanderers.”
- The “despiteful” are the insolent, a word that derives from a root meaning “to abuse.” Such people are often “inventors of evil things.”
- Obviously, those who are “proud” end up being “boasters.” Some sins may be directed toward one’s family.
- “Covenant-breakers” (vs. 31) are those who are disloyal and faithless.

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- Others are “disobedient to parents” (vs. 30) and lacking in “natural affection” (vs. 31), meaning they are unfriendly and unloving toward their own families, as well as toward others.
- The word “implacable” means unrestrained by any covenants or principles; it could be rendered “ruthless.”
- The attitudes and actions of such people are often “unmerciful,” being devoid of mercy or compassion for those in need.
- As a group, they are “without understanding,” in other words, foolish and stupid, since such behavior is self-destructive.
- All these evil characteristics show that these people are really “haters of God” (V. 30).
- Though many of them have never read the Bible, all people know that sin deserves God’s judgment—“that they which commit such things are worthy of death.”
- Every human experiences guilt for breaking God’s laws. Such guilt is meant to lead us to repentance (2:4).
- As we know, were it not for sin, there would be no death in the world (5:12).

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- God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek. 33:11); nevertheless, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and that includes physical, spiritual, and eternal death (Rev. 20:12-15).
- But many ignore or excuse their depravity, and instead of repenting, sinful humanity continues to practice that which they know displeases God and brings His condemnation upon them.
- Even worse, such depraved persons applaud, ignore and even encourage those who engage in similarly degraded behaviors.
- The godly response to such debauchery is to soberly and lovingly warn such people and share the good news of the gospel with them.

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## **TODAY’S AIM**

**Facts:** to study Paul’s description of human depravity and God’s just wrath.

**Principle:** to understand that without salvation in Christ, all people remain objects of God’s wrath.

**Application:** to offer praise and thanksgiving for Christ’s deliverance from God’s just wrath.

## **ILLUSTRATING THE LESSON:**

The moon does not radiate its own light. It reflects light from the sun. The perceived shape of the moon is based on the angle that it reflects the sun’s light. Its brightness depends on the amount of sunlight it reflects. A full and bright moon is an indication that the moon is reflecting a maximum amount of sunlight. The dark side of the moon is the side facing away from the sun. Without the sun, the moon would be completely dark. Similarly, God is the light of humanity. Without God, mankind lives in spiritual and moral darkness, under His righteous wrath and judgment.



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## **“ADVANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE”**



1. When and how is the wrath of God poured out on humanity?
2. How does the created world point to the existence of God?
3. What happens when people reject the knowledge of God?
4. Instead of worshipping the true God, what do people do?
5. What does the Bible say about homosexuality?
6. In reference to people’s sinful desires, what does it mean that God “gave them over” (Rom. 1:28)?
7. What is a “reprobate mind”? What is “fornication” (vs. 29)? How do we know that many people are “haters of God” (vs. 30)?

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