

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**ROM. 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

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

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:

**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.**

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

**23 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.**

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

**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.**

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:

**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.**

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;

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

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

**31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:**

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.

## NOTES

# God's Wrath Against Mankind

Lesson Text: Romans 1:18-32

Related Scriptures: Psalm 19:1-6; II Timothy 3:1-5;  
Deuteronomy 4:15-20; Ephesians 4:17-18

TIME: A.D. 56

PLACE: from Corinth

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"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" (Romans 1:20).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

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

**Wrath of God (Rom. 1:18).** Beginning in verse 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 even then being "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." To be sure, the description of God's end-time wrath in Revelation 6 through 19 is frightening, but He also metes out punishment in a variety of ways in the present.

That the unsaved "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18) means they suppress the truth about themselves and God by their deeds.

**Witness of God (Rom. 1:19-21).** Although the pagan world did not have the special revelation of the Law, they did have the general revelation of creation. Nature reflects at least the existence of a Creator. While some look at nature and theorize that it was the result of a cosmic accident that set biological evolution in motion, this is

simply a manipulation of the evidence, which actually points to an ultimate Creator. Both the complexity and predictability of creation leads to this conclusion, as the very first verse of the Bible affirms. As Paul declares, the Creator's invisible attributes are "clearly seen" through the creation He made.

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 ignoring the obvious evidence.

There have been times in history when the population acknowledged the existence of God. But since the Fall, men have generally rejected the one true God. They became ungrateful for what He had done, and they failed to glorify Him. This led to futile thinking on their part and the darkening of their hearts. In short, rejecting God intellectually led to rejecting the moral standards He had ordained.

**Worldly wisdom (Rom. 1:22-23).** 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. Such worship of false gods still exists in many parts of the world. And while most people today may never bow before a literal graven image, they still worship false gods. The idols of modern society are popularity, possessions, and power, to name a few.

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

**Sexual immorality (Rom. 1:24-25).** 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 (vss. 24, 26, 28).

Paul's reference to lusts and the dishonoring of bodies has to do with sexual sin. Those who try to change the truth of God's Word to fit their lifestyles have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (vs. 25). Consequently, sinful humanity has decided to worship and serve created things rather than the Creator.

**Sexual perversion (Rom. 1:26-27).** 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. The Mosaic law addressed these practices in the fif-

teenth century B.C. (Lev. 18:22; 20:13).

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). The "recompence of their error" (vs. 27) refers to the consequences they suffer because of this. They include, but are not limited to, sexually transmitted diseases, some of which can cause infertility, wreck a person's health, or even cause death.

Despite knowing that 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 with homosexuals as with any other sinners. They are not our enemies but are simply lost people, like all other sinners. And Christ died for sinners of all types, without making any distinctions.

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

**Reprobation revealed (Rom. 1:28-29).** 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. 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" 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.

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.”

“Maliciousness,” not surprisingly, has to do with malice. It literally means “harboring a desire to do harm.”

The word “debate” actually means “strife” or “quarreling.” “Deceit” means “guile” or “duplicity.”

**Righteousness rejected (Rom. 1:30-31).** Toward the end of his list, Paul mentions 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.”

Some sins may be directed toward one’s family. “Covenantbreakers” are those who are disloyal and faithless. They cannot be counted on to keep their word and should not be trusted. 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 actions of such people are “unmerciful,” being devoid of mercy or compassion for those in need. As a group, they are “without understanding.”

All these evil characteristics show that these people are really “haters of God” (vs. 30). Their behaviors confirm

the fact that they are driven by an obsessive animosity toward their Creator.

**Repentance repudiated (Rom. 1:32).** 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.” But many ignore or excuse their depravity. 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 and 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.

—John Alva Owston.

## QUESTIONS

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?”
8. What is “fornication” (vs. 29)?
9. How do we know that many people are “haters of God” (vs. 30)?
10. How do depraved people respond to those committing the same sins?

—John Alva Owston.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The sinful nature of man incurs the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18).
2. God has provided us with clear instructions for righteous living (vs. 19).
3. God requires repentance of sin; it is the only way to escape certain degradation and destruction (vss. 20-26).
4. God requires us to take a stand against sin in a fallen world (vs. 27-30).
5. The result of disobedience to God is death and destruction (vs. 31).
6. Encouraging others in sin makes more likely the unbeliever's destruction (vs. 32).

—Valante M. Grant.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Is there any conflict between God's righteous wrath against mankind and His love and mercy toward sinners? Discuss.
2. When we continue to willfully do things that we know displease God, what does that say about our faith?
3. Where do you see the sin Paul teaches against in today's society? What does this say about how God views what's happening today?
4. Discuss strategies to maintain righteous standards in a sinful environment. How can we do this and still show grace to the lost?
5. Why is it so important to take a stand against unrighteousness? What is the consequence of condoning ungodly behavior?

—Valante M. Grant.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**“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” (Romans 1:20).**

In Romans 1:18, Paul wrote that God's wrath is being revealed against “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” and described those men as people “who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” To “hold” means to hold down or suppress. It pictures people suppressing the truth about God.

It is not for lack of testimony that these people reject God. The “invisible things” of God, “his eternal power and Godhead,” are clearly revealed in His creation. Creation testifies to the existence and power of the Creator. This natural revelation is revealed to all people, even those who are not acquainted with the Bible. As such, those who reject the true God are “without excuse.”

The problem with these people is not lack of revelation from God but rather their own willful refusal to acknowledge God. They have no place for Him in their lives.

Instead, these are people who have created their own gods. What are these “gods”? They are idols of the people's own choosing.

How do we respond to people like this? We show them Christ's love. Remember, we were all like them before we became followers of Christ. We need to reach out with wisdom and gentleness.

—Jennifer Francis.