

General outline

- A. Condemnation of man (Romans 1:18—3:20)
Man is hopelessly lost (Who we are without Christ)
- B. Salvation of man (Romans 3:21—8:39)
Christ is the only answer (Who we are in Christ)
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. <u>Vindication</u> of God (Romans 9:1—11:36)
The casting away of Israel | } | <p>This section is parenthetical, justifying God's casting away of Israel.</p> |
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- D. Exhortation of man (Romans 12:1—15:33)
Reflecting who we are in Christ. (Who we should be in Christ—practical application)

Romans 1:18—3:20

This portion of Romans makes it clear that there is no good in the heart of any man. The natural man is repulsive, vile and evil to the very core. Even though a man is capable of doing good deeds, the inward man is incapable of doing anything that pleases God. The good deeds done by an unregenerate sinner are considered good only in comparison to other men. When those same deeds are compared to God's standards they are worthless.

Isaiah 64:6 And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;

- A. Condemnation of all mankind (Romans 1:18—3:20)
 1. The ungodly and unrighteous man is condemned (Romans 1:18—32)
 2. The self-righteous man is condemned (Romans 2:1—16)
 3. The Jew is condemned (Romans 2:17—3:20)

Romans 1:18

This verse introduces this section. Unbelievers are split up into two groups: ungodly and unrighteous. The first group live their lives as if there is no God. The second group live their lives as if God has not given mankind any moral instructions or limitations.

It is because of unrighteousness and ungodliness that men suppress the truth. The truth is suppressed because man does not want to have any moral or ethical responsibility. It is man's desire to be the one in control and that can't be done if there is a God that needs to be acknowledged. With God out of the picture, man can do pretty much as he pleases with no moral responsibility.

It is against these men that God's wrath is being revealed. They either deny that there is a God or deny that He has set certain moral conditions upon the human race. Those who deny God are atheists who have gotten rid of any of the limitations that they feel God imposes on them. If there is no God then there is no one above you telling you what you should and shouldn't do. They feel they then become the master of their own destiny.

This verse is in contrast to verse 17 where we see God's righteousness being revealed through the Gospel. Even though man is born into sin and can do nothing of himself to reach God, God reaches down in love to offer the gift of salvation through His Son. It is revealed to all but accepted by few.

Just how God's wrath is being revealed is not made perfectly clear from this passage. That God's wrath is currently being revealed is clear because the Greek word (*αποκαλυπτεται*) is in the present tense.

According to Alva J. McClain in *Romans: the Gospel of God's Grace*, there are three ways God is revealing His wrath:

1. It is revealed in the Bible. Many focus on the love of God but ignore the wrath. John 3:36 makes it clear that those who do not obey the Son will have the wrath of God upon them.
John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
2. The wrath of God is revealed in the cross. When Christ hung on the cross it was because of and for our sins. It was at that time that the Son experienced God's wrath on our behalf.
3. The wrath of God is revealed in the natural world. Sinners will reap the results of their sins. The wrath of God is revealed in the consequences of sin.

Of course God's final wrath will be revealed at the Great White Throne judgment when all unbelievers will stand before God and will find themselves guilty of rejecting the Son.

Revelation 20:11—15¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence (earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire This is the second death, the lake of fire.¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Romans 1:19—20

These ungodly and unrighteous men are suppressing truth that is obvious to all. God reveals Himself in creation. Everything in creation points to an intelligent being who carefully planned and formed every element of the universe. Every part of creation seems to be infinitely detailed and complex. The more we discover, the more we know we don't know. The earth is set at just the exact distance it needs to be from the sun to be able to sustain life. Everything has been put on this planet for us to not only sustain ourselves but to thrive. As we zoom out of our solar system we can see there are probably well over 100,000,000,000 suns in our galaxy. As we move away from our galaxy we can see there are at least 100,000,000,000 other galaxies and again it could be much more. The universe is so vast that it's impossible to say how big it really is. That would give us a minimum of at least 1×10^{22} stars. To help you visualize this number someone estimated that there are 1×10^{20} grains of sand in the whole world. That gives us 100 stars for each grain of sand.

If we go in the other direction and look through a microscope we can see the same complexity continuing even into the quantum level with the neutrino being the smallest detectable particle we know of. They are so small that they pass through the earth without hitting anything. More than 50 trillion solar electron neutrinos pass through the human body every second. Roughly 100,000,000 neutrinos — tiny high-energy particles produced by stars — pass through each square centimeter of your body every second. On average, however, only once in a human lifespan there will be a collision between a neutrino and an atom in your body.

Just in observing our earth we can see how everything interacts and sustains itself. Developing the interdependencies through evolution would be impossible because each function is interconnected to other functions in such a manner that it would be impossible to have one function evolve and wait for an interconnecting function to catch up with its evolutionary change. The world is too perfectly balanced for it to have come into existence by accident.

In spite of all this information detailing the wonder of creation, man stubbornly refuses to acknowledge God. When Paul wrote Romans about 2,000 years ago, man could observe creation and determine that it

had to be created by a being higher than himself. In this age man has even less of an excuse to deny God's existence because through technology we are now able to see in even greater detail the wonderful intricacies of the universe. The universe is even, in a sense, telling scientists that there is a God. There is approximately 96% of the universe unaccounted for (74% dark energy and 22% dark matter). I believe the Bible shows us the source of this "mystery" energy.

Colossians 1:16 ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible... ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

It is Christ who is expending the energy that scientists puzzle over. He is holding the atoms together, keeping the center core of protons from flying apart. When He releases His control, the whole universe will blow apart and a new universe will be reformed from these free particles.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Verse 21—23

Even from the beginning man has no excuse for not acknowledging God. Accepting the wisdom of the world, they rejected God's wisdom and in reality they were made fools. (They did not become fools but were made fools by Satan for their rejection of Godly wisdom. If you are wise, it is from God. If you are foolish it is from Satan.) Instead of worshiping God, they worshipped icons resembling man, birds, four-footed beasts and even reptiles. Instead of worshiping the creator they worshiped the created.

We can see the downward path of mankind:

1. They did not honor God as God. Instead they worshipped everything else.
2. They did not thank God. If He is not being honored why would He be thanked?
3. Their reasoning became perverted or twisted. They couldn't think clearly.
4. Their heart was darkened. They could no longer perceive right from wrong.
5. They were made foolish even though they thought they were wise (their hearts were darkened).
6. They completely gave up God and had no thought of Him. They substituted the true God for one of their own creation.

Verses 24—25

It is because man rejected God that God let them go—He abandoned them—and allowed them to go the direction they desired. Mankind has been given a certain level of freedom to do what he wants without retribution. In this age of Grace God has been patient, not wanting any to perish.

Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Paul was an example of God's patience.

1 Timothy 1:16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

I believe God's forbearance in this age is one reason why Paul calls this the evil age. God gave men some slack and they used up every bit trying to get away from Him. This age is evil because God is withholding His immediate judgment and man is taking advantage of God's mercy and forbearance.

Galatians 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

In spite of God's great patience, mankind's desire was to wallow in filth. The ultimate insult to God is taking a body, created in the image of Himself, and dishonoring it. In context, they dishonored their bodies sexually and did it among or between themselves. Since they have now put anything godly behind them it naturally follows that the only thing left to worship or give honor to would be something created.

These men are restraining (tying down) the truth of God (verse 18) and in its place have accepted the lie. Men have taken godly wisdom and truth, restrained it and embraced lies that can only come from Satan. In this age men will praise the wisdom of other men but never God. Hollywood has a number of award events lifting up their wonderful accomplishments but seldom, if ever, do they give God the glory due Him. What a contrast to the holy and loving God who should be honored and lauded forever by mankind.

Adam and Eve?

There are some who think verses 21—25 are specifically referring to Adam and Eve and their fall into sin. These verses seem to parallel the events that happened in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. As verse 21 says they knew God but became foolish in their thinking and were darkened. The wisdom they were seeking after became their downfall as they looked to Satan instead of God. Their nakedness was revealed and their bodies were now instruments of shame and dishonor. This parallel is not really surprising since mankind is all considered to be “in Adam” and therefore we have the same sin nature. This process of dishonoring God and glorifying Satan has been played out countless times throughout the ages.

Verses 26—27

Since mankind gave up anything relating to God they felt they could do anything that pleased them. This rejection of God led to a moral downward spiral. There was nothing left to restrain man from committing any sin he pleases. By restraining Godly truth they felt free to do as they please. We can see rampant and overt acts of homosexuality almost everywhere we look. According to this passage, homosexuality is explicitly against God and His creation. Man is dishonoring God by taking their body, created in the image of God, and using it in ways that God views as degrading and depraved. Paul makes it abundantly clear that carrying out homosexual acts is always wrong. There is no loophole saying that it is OK if done in love. This is true of any other sin. It's not wrong to be a homosexual but it is wrong to carry out the acts of homosexuality.

From these acts come naturally occurring judgments. As with any sin, there are always consequences. Sometimes these penalties of sin don't happen immediately but they will occur. From physical ailments to emotional disorders there will be some tangible retribution on this earth for doing things against God. Of course there can be consequences for those surrounding the sinner also. Through no fault of our own, sin can have its affect on us. Sin should never be minimized, as we shall see as we read further.

Verses 28—32

Three times it is said, “God gave them over” meaning He allowed them to. We can see a downward spiral of where man naturally settles when God allows them to go where they want to.

Verse 24 God allows them to pursue the lusts that naturally reside in their hearts.

Verse 26 God allows them to pursue degrading sexual passions.

Verse 28 God allows them to pursue the thoughts that their depraved minds think up.

The mind is the seat of the desires. You might be driven by lust but that drive is controlled by the mind. Whatever the unregenerate mind thinks up is what drives the natural man. And to hit the absolute bottom, these men think it and give approval to or are pleased with those who do the same.

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