

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

Romans 1 - Session 3 (1:18-32)

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Title: **“The judgments of God”**

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 1 (1:18-32)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

WHAT PAUL IS SAYING IN ROMANS 1

HUMANITY REJECTS GOD

In Romans 1:18-32 the apostle Paul focuses his attention on the consequences that come when we reject God and His truth. Paul says in vs. 19 that each person naturally knows that there is a Creator. It is something built into us as humans. Then in vs. 20, he makes a subtle cosmological and teleological defence of God’s existence by saying that God’s divine fingerprints, the visual aids that He has given us that He exist are all over creation so that no one can say they were unaware of the Creator. Paul says that all are “without excuse” (vs. 20). Paul’s echoes Psalm 19:1-2, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”

Unfortunately, humanity has rejected God’s truth and chose to ignore all the various ways in which God proves to us that He exist. In verses 21-23, Paul describes how humankind has “exchanged” (vs. 23) the naturally given worship of the true God for the unnatural and false worship of idols. The connection between the lists of idols Paul gives in vs. 23 and the classes of creation described in Genesis 1:20–25 is definitely not by accident. Neither is the obvious link between Paul’s use of the words “image” and “form” (or “likeness”) and the well-known statement in Genesis: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” (Gen. 1:26). God said, multiply according to their kind.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

There are various forms of God’s judgments. They include:

1. Eternal wrath
2. Eschatological wrath – end time judgments
3. Cataclysmic wrath – natural disasters
4. Consequence wrath – judgment that immediately follows sin
5. Abandonment wrath – Where God turns His back on society, for example:
 - a. Samson. “...but he did not know that God had departed from him” - Jud 16:20
 - b. Judges 10:13-14 (NIV)
“But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”
 - c. Prov 1:24-31
 - d. Hos 4:17 – Ephraim joined with idols.
 - e. Acts 14:16 – “Let all nations go their own way”, yet shows His goodness through rain, etc.

ROMANS 1 AND GOD’S ABANDONMENT JUDGMENTS

Because humanity chooses to reject God, two broad judgments are laid down by God. Three times in Romans 1 (vv. 24, 26, 28) Paul says God “gave them over” to sin, and three times (vv. 23, 25, 26) he says the end results were that the people “exchanged” a good thing for something sinful, which served as their punishment.

There is always a consequence to sin. We often think that when we sin and nothing happens (no lightning bolt strikes, etc.) that God either didn’t care or didn’t notice. However, Romans 1 tells us that the first stage of God’s wrath is actually not to discipline or correct the person, but rather He allow the individual who chooses to continually and deliberately sin to do so unrestrained. His initial wrath and judgment results, as Paul says, in them “receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (vs. 27).

C.S. Lewis described it this way, “The lost enjoys forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and is, therefore, self-enslaved”.

God removes His restraining grace when He turns a society over to their sinful desires. God is letting them go to the uninterrupted cause and effect their sinful choices produce. Sin is the reason why God judge and greater sin is the result of it.

THREE STEPS OF ABANDONMENT JUDGMENT

1. Sexual immorality (v24)
God gives a society over to sexual immorality and impurity. For example:
Sex outside of marriage, Idoltary, Fornication, bestiality (sex with animals), Pornography, etc.

2. Degrading passions (v 26, 27)

Paul explicitly tells us: “God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (Rom. 1:26–27). There is no mistaking Paul here. The reference is clearly to the practice of lesbianism and male homosexuality. When abandonment judgment is in place, sexual perversion increases to the same sex.

3. Depraved (corrupt) mind (v28)

The second judgment is one that also results from the people not acknowledging God and His truth – a corrupt mind: “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful” (Rom. 1:28–31). You now have a useless mind, not doing what it was intended to. God’s moral code is destroyed and your conscience does not convict you any longer about the sin you are involved in. Various types of evil follow, e.g. hate, murder, lawlessness, etc.

God is not only against those practicing these sins, but also against them, that approve of it.

The scary thing is that it is not always that easy to see that you have entered into God’s abandonment grace. Today, T.V. programs, Award ceremonies, the Movies, Magazines, Talk-shows, the Internet, they all see as icons those that are under the abandonment judgment of God! They promote as desirable and good that which falls under God’s judgment.

WORLDLINESS

When deliberately and wilfully sin, we contribute towards the downfall of our society. There is a difference between people who sins, repent and aim to live their lives in a way that honours God, and those who choose to continually engage in sin even though they know that what they are doing is wrong. Sadly, Christians being worldly is rampant in our time. We should not love sin or the ways of the world (1 John 2:15-17). These days we are good at adding additives to the Bible. People tamper with the content of the Bible and they change words to fit and justify their worldly desires and lifestyles. We are warned not to call what God call evil, good. For example:

- Homosexuality is called an alternative lifestyle (Rom 1:24-27). God says it’s an abomination
- Abortion is no longer called murder (Ex 21:22-25), but it’s the mothers choice to life
- Adultery is called having an affair
- Fornication is called living together
- Drunkenness is called the disease of alcoholism

On the other hand, good qualities are being frowned upon. For example:

- Obedience to God is referred to as legalism, old school and outdated for a postmodern world.
- Having a love and zeal for God is called fanaticism
- Having a respect for God is religious radicalism and dangerous to society.
- Warning people about the consequences of their sin is called hate speech, phobias.

Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;"

Remember this, "Truth can't be improved with additives"

HATE SPEECH

Because I love you I have to warn you about the destructive power of sin. Those who hate you will encourage you to continue in your sin. They will make laws to support sin and a sinful lifestyle at the cost of your eternal future.

WHAT FREEDOM IS NOT

Freedom is not having the ability to do what you want. Freedom is having the ability to do what is right. Without constraints, true freedom disappears. Most people cannot handle freedom. They abuse it. God gives us the freedom to choose what we want in life, even if those choices are against His good will for us. Because of His love for us, He allows us to choose against Him. He respects our choices and will not force His will upon us. If you study the causes that brought about the downfall of every major empire in history, you will find that they rejected God and fell into moral decay as Paul mentions in Romans 1.

A KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Kingdom of heaven runs on righteousness and justice. The kingdoms of this earth stand in opposition to all that God is and stands for. When individual Christian believers lose their moral compass in life and choose to depart from pursuing holiness and Biblical character, the society in which they live becomes undone. Justice, good will and key values begin to weaken, crack and that society will ultimately collapse. To reject Biblical truth and values is to advance and promote darkness. Your conduct, words and your actions shape society whether you know it or not. The Gospel of Jesus transforms us so that we can transform others and our nation. A society chooses to fail or succeed. It all depends on their choices.

A SHORT SUMMARY

In summary, Romans 1:18-31 deals with the fact that God has innately and still is making Himself known to humanity, but He has and still is being rejected and replaced by other objects of worship. Because of this, God has delivered His Abandonment wrath of giving people over to their sin, their homosexual behaviour and also to an immoral mind. As humanity, we cannot afford to stand up in rebellion against our Creator. Looking at the state of the world today it is clear that these type of judgments Paul mentions in Romans 1 continue to be handed down today.

IS THERE ANY HOPE?

So, is there any hope? The answer is a definite yes.

2 Chron 7:14 says,

"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Our land needs healing! Many of us here in the service needs healing, because we have, through our choices, positioned ourselves as receivers of God's abandonment judgment. Let us ask the Lord to forgive us and let us turn from our wicked ways and He will restore us, He will heal our land.