

Without Excuse

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

January 15, 2023

Text: Romans 1:18-25

Purpose: God has demonstrated who He is through His creation. But mankind has refused to believe and even created substitutes for God. God's wrath will fall upon all that fail to acknowledge and glorify God. When a person turns from God, He turns men and women over to their own selfish desires which leads to destruction.

There were three little boys standing around bragging – as young boys often do. The first boy said, “I am so tough that when my mom buys me a pair of jeans, in one day I can have a hole worn in both knees.”



The second boy said, “That’s nothing. When my mother buys me a new pair of tennis shoes, I can have a hole worn through the sole of the shoe before lunchtime.”

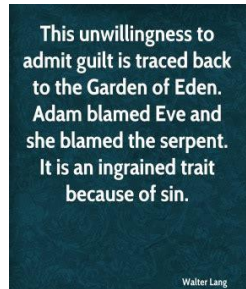
The third boy standing there said, “Awh, that’s nothing. When I go to my grandparent’s house, I can wear both of them out in an hour.”

At the heart of those three boys’ conversation was pride. They were proud that they could wear something (or someone) out in a short period of time.

I am so glad that God doesn't try to wear us out quickly when we sin. Rather God is a patient God. He is a loving God. And He is a forgiving God. But over time, God's patience runs out and the wrath of God is manifested and He will judge sin. A part of God's wrath may include our bent to choose sin and therefore we wallow in our sin until sin has given birth to awful consequences.



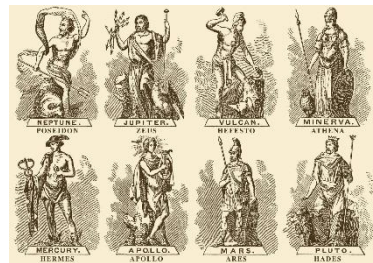
In my lifetime, I have seen others justify their sin. (And to tell you the truth, on occasion I have come to God with my list of excuses for my sins.) It wasn't my fault that happened. It wasn't my fault the other person said that mean thing and I got angry at them. From the Garden of Eden until today, we have been blaming each other for our sinfulness. When God confronted Adam about eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam blamed Eve. When God spoke with Eve, she blamed the Serpent. No one wants to take the blame for doing wrong, even when we know we have done wrong.



But Paul in his Epistle to the Romans clearly tells his Gentile audience that the world does not have any excuse for denying God.

The Roman Polytheistic World¹

The world in which Paul lived was a very religious society. When Paul visited Athens, he began his address found in Acts



17:22 by saying, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious."

The stoic and epicurean philosophers of the day were very interested in religion and gods. The religion of the Greeks was an elaborate polytheistic system. There was Zeus which was thought to be the father of both gods and men. Zeus divided his dominion with his two brothers Poseidon and Hades. Poseidon was to rule the seas, Hades ruled the underworld, and Zeus ruled the heavens.

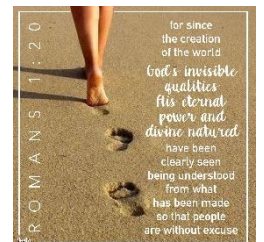
Various gods were assigned different emotions which influenced mankind. Aphrodite caused humans to love, Athena give wisdom, and Ares represented the tendency to fight.



At the Acropolis in Athens, there were hundreds of statues dedicated to various gods. There on the top of that hill stands the Parthenon, whose beautiful columns stand today since its construction in 440 B.C. This temple was built in dedication to Athena. Her helmet, spear, and breastplate were popular symbols of Athena.

The world of Paul was saturated with Polytheistic thought.

But Paul would argue that God has manifested himself to man, not through fables, but through the inward conscience. We have an innate sense of right and wrong built within us. Paul would say that sense of justice was put there by God himself. Paul also argues in verse 20, that mankind has seen



the invisible attributes of God through nature. These two areas of revelation by God about God should be enough to draw us closer to knowing God.

But Paul describes mankind as one that is self seeking and turning from God. When we turn from God and seek our own way, the wrath of God is displayed.

I. God's Wrath is Displayed²

In verse 18, we see the character of God's wrath. God is slow to anger and merciful from generation to generation. We describe wrath as a sudden outburst of anger. But God's wrath has been building for thousands of years. One day, on judgment day, God's wrath will be demonstrated clearly.

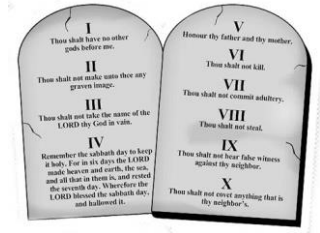


When I think of the wrath of God, I am reminded of the movie, "*Raiders of the Lost Ark*." In that movie, Indiana Jones is in search for the Ark of the Covenant which was made by the Israelites while in the desert for 40 years. Inside the Ark were the stone tablets which were the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod, and a pot of manna. Once the Ark had been found in that movie, the Nazi's decided they wanted to open it up. When they did, fire from heaven fell and all that looked upon it were consumed by the wrath of God.



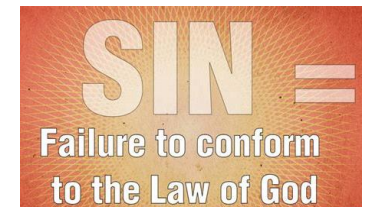
The course of God's wrath is against all **ungodliness** and unrighteousness. If you were to look at ungodliness as an attack on God himself, you could say that directly relates to the first four of the Ten Commandments.

When we deny God, make other idols, take God's name in vain, and fail to remember the Sabbath, you are involved in ungodliness.



The second word used in connection with the course of God's wrath is his attack upon the **unrighteous**. This could be classified as all other sin. Sin against one another. It could be directly related to the remaining six Ten Commandments - failing to honor your parents, murdering, committing adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting your neighbor's possessions. The course of God's wrath is manifested upon ungodliness (the first four of the Ten Commandments) and unrighteousness (the last six of the Ten Commandments).

But what is the cause of God's wrath? It is directly related to men's awareness of God's Truth and failing to obey it. Men and women choose to continue in sin and turn from God's instruction. When they do, they are inviting the wrath of God upon themselves.



II. Man's Waywardness is Described (v. 19-23)

Verses 19 to 23 goes into detail about man's deliberate choice to abandon God. Man's waywardness will be judged because they are without excuse.

Man is Ignorant of God by Choice (v. 19-20)

First, God has revealed himself to man through His creation. Psalm 19:1-2 says, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech and night unto night reveals knowledge.”*



God’s handiwork is creation. Isaiah 40:12 gives a vivid picture of how vast God really is. *“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?”* Only God could be such an architect and builder of such a vast creation.

We are left without an excuse. Abraham Lincoln once said, *“I can see how that it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he can look up into heaven and say there is no God.”*

Look up – the heavens declare the glory of the Lord.

Man is Irreligious by Choice (v. 21-22)

But people have refused to acknowledge God and turned their back on Him. It is a deliberate choice to walk away from God. They refuse to glorify in God or even thank Him for the provisions of life.



In doing so, it is as if the light of their soul begins to darken. Their foolishness and deliberate choice in rejecting God causes men to have a darkened, hard heart. In man’s wisdom the choice has been made to eradicate God from their life, and in doing so, they have actually become a fool. I never want to be in a place in life where my heart is not tender towards the things of God. I desire the fellowship of God too much to continue to walk in sin and rebellion. I am afraid many individuals have hardened their hearts so much that God simply lets it die and become a heart of stone.

I pray that if you have not accepted Christ as your Savior that God has not hardened your heart to the point where you will not respond.

Man is Idolatrous by Choice (v. 23)

We are religious by nature. We will worship something. The question is, *“If God is not the object of your devotion, love, and adoration, then what is your god?”* God has created a God sized void in our hearts. The only thing that will satisfy that emptiness is God Himself.



But if we rule out God, then we will create other idols. In Solomon’s day it was Baal. In Paul’s day, the Greek gods became their idols. They worshipped the creation instead of the creator. Every step towards an idol is a step away from God. God clearly commanded that we leave idols alone.

We may think we don’t have idols today. But don’t we? We make our jobs an idol. We make money our idol. We make our sports team or sports hero’s our idols. We make

our hobbies our idols. We make our yard an idol. We can even make our family an idol. We may think we are religious by adding angels, crosses, or religious pictures in our home. We need to be careful those items don't become an idol to us. Anything that receives devotion, love, and adoration besides God is an idol.

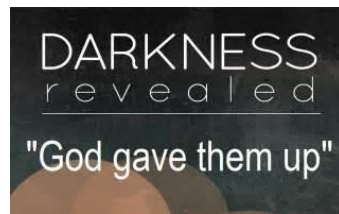
III. Man's Wickedness is Detailed (v. 24-32)

We do not want to accept or believe mankind is so evil or wicked. We want to believe that people are basically good and do not want to do wrong. But mankind is prone to sin. Once we turn our back on God, we become more and more debased. Verses 24 to 32 illustrate clearly for us that there are serious consequences for refusing to come to God. God is patient and forgiving, but failure to seek out God for His offer of restoration and forgiveness, will result in God saying "Enough!"

Once you begin down the path of sin, it is a steady decline. Only by the grace of God can we be raised from sin and into a newness of life.

The first step towards degradation involves men turning from God. Once God's patience has come to an end, God removes His hand of protection and He gives them up.

Verse 24 describes an awful scene. God gives up on someone and lets them have their complete way in sinfulness.



The complete result of that release is mankind worshipping itself. During many worship rituals the Greeks would mutilate themselves. During the dark days of Israel's kings, people would even offer their children to the fire as a way to appease their gods. The worship of self results in the offering of yourself to a false god. In the end, ultimate destruction will come in the judgment of God.

Sexual Immorality (v. 26-27)

The natural progression of moving away from God is sexual immorality. A careful study of God's word clearly shows there is only one expression of human sexuality that is acceptable – that is one man and one woman in the context of marriage to each other. All other sexual activity is considered sinful and outside of God's best design for His creation.



Mankind has fought against this clear teaching so much so, that the current battle of approval and acceptance of other forms of sexual expression has become a front and center battle in our culture over the last generation. Our culture today celebrates and embraces various expressions of human sexuality.

Each of these expressions is outside of God's best plan which is one man and one woman in the bonds of matrimony. Some sexual sin garners more attention than others but no one sin is worse than the others. All sexual sin is measured by God in the same way.

This discussion has spilled into churches worldwide with serious divisions of opinions within many congregations.

Currently, the United Methodist Church is undergoing a great upheaval now as individual churches are breaking away and forming a new denomination over this issue.

IV. Men Become Socially Pathetic (v. 28-32)

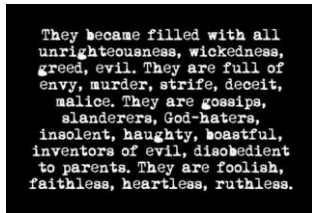
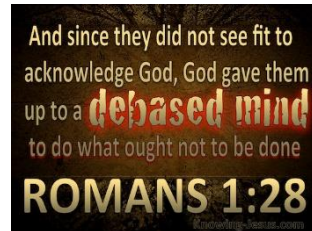
The Cause of Mental Perversion (v. 28)

As men and women continue to rebel against God, God will turn them over to a debased mind. He will allow them to continue on the path of destruction until it has finally run its course. A reprobate mind will not consider the things of God and will only consider the things that suit them best. Once you begin down the path of lying, you eventually cannot even know what the truth is anymore. Those individuals' minds are consumed and bent towards sin.

The Consequences of Their Mental Perversion (v. 29-32)

There are numerous things in this passage that are listed as a result of turning away from God. The consequences debase our human character. Those listed include: unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, deceit, God haters, despisers, proud, without natural affection, and stubborn,

They also debase our conduct and lead to fornication, murder, disobedient to parents, and covenant breakers.



It debases our human conversation by making us quarrelsome, whisperers, backbiters, and boasters.

It debases our human concepts by turning us into inventors of evil things to the point we have no understanding.

Those involved in this debauchery are not content to do it by themselves. They also want to bring others into their sin. They do not want to go it alone. The last verse in chapter one warns others that may be caught up in other's sin. Verse 32 says, "... (those involved in these sins) knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

God's condemnation is not only upon those that are involved in turning away from God and involved in all kinds of immoral sins, but His wrath is towards those that APPROVE of such activity.

Our society is bent upon approving sin.

Conclusion

It is so easy to point a finger at others in judgment of them. Christians are especially good at pointing out the sins of others while ignoring their own sin. Of all the passages of scripture that is used to condemn others – this one from Romans chapter one is one of the key ones.



I am thankful that God has given us this warning before its too late. We do not need to think too highly of ourselves because we are all sinners in need of grace. I think my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ need to read this passage carefully, because this lesson applies to every one of us.

- Have we intentionally turned our back on God and walked in a manner that WE wanted, knowing full well what God expected?
- Have we chosen to fulfill our own agenda and hardened our heart towards God's will and plan for our life?
- Have we chosen to ignore God's tugging of our heart and chosen to continue in our own way?

By ignoring God's word, we are treading on slippery ground. God says that our hearts will become darkened if we continue to reject God. And in doing so, we become a fool.



God's invitation is to repent and turn from self-reliance and self-dependance to trusting God. God's invitation is to follow Him in your journey of life. Will you come?

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Interpreters Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, pages 88-94.

² Outline from Sermon Notebook – The Guilt of the Heathen, Romans 1:18-32