

# Romans

## 1:18-32 / FIRST THE BAD NEWS: WRATH

[BRUCE'S PARAPHRASE]

18 So why do we need the gospel? Because God's wrath is disclosed from heaven against all human expressions of impiety and unrighteousness, as people try to smother the truth with their unrighteousness. 19 Let me explain. What is known about God is plain enough. It is God Himself who made it evident to (within or among) them. 20 How so? Just by looking at what God has made, people ever since the dawn of creation have understood and observed His attributes that can't be seen directly: God's eternal power, for instance, and the fact that a Creator God must exist. God made sure nobody has an excuse!

21 What happened was this: people knew all along there was a God, yet they refused to honor Him as such or express gratitude to Him. Instead they cooked up worthless theories to explain things. The light in their foolish hearts went out. 22 While pretending to be eggheads, they became blockheads. 23 So they insanely traded in the glory of the undying God for images resembling a mortal human, as well as flying things and walking things and crawling things.

### 1. ACCOUNTABILITY: No excuse!

Based on what is known about God from CREATION

### 2. APOSTASY: No exchange!

Into INDEPENDENCE

Into INTELLECTUALISM

Into IDOLATRY

24 So what did God do? God gave them up to what they wanted. It wasn't long before they were following the lusts of their hearts into sexual filth. They dishonored their own bodies with one another. 25 And all this because they had traded the truth about God for a lie. They bowed down and served the things they made, instead of the Creator who made them—who alone is worthy to be blessed forever! Amen.

26 So that's why God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Even their women, in defiance of nature, exchanged normal relations for what is perverted— 27 as did the men. They gave up the normal intercourse with a woman and became inflamed with lust for each other. Male with male performed shameful acts. And then they suffered in their own lives the payback their waywardness deserved.

28 And even as they didn't think God was worth knowing, God gave them up to a worthless mind, so they do things that don't fit. 29 They're consumed with every sort of evil and rottenness: greedy and just plain mean. They're driven by envy, murder, hostility, deceit, spite. They're gossips.

30 They're slanderers. They hate God. They're bullies, puffed-up, blowhards, constantly inventing new ways to sin. They refuse to obey their parents. 31 They're clueless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Plus they know perfectly well that God righteously decrees that anyone practicing such things deserves to die. Yet they keep doing them—worse yet, they stand up and applaud anyone who does the same damnable things. ♦

### 3. ABANDONMENT: No escape!

#### THE PATH OF WRATH

(The Bad News!)

Step 1> GOD

Creates man and reveals the glorious truth about Himself

Step 2> MAN

Scorns God and the truth in favor of the lie of "self"

Step 3> GOD

Judges them by handing them over to their many lusts

Step 4> MAN

Sins more and more in an immoral frenzy

Step 5> GOD

Enacts the death penalty they have earned by sinning (vs32)



**WARNING:** The seeds of “man at his worst” are still in our hearts. We need to work humbly and diligently not to be swept along with the world’s current.

**Q: How do we swim against the current of the human race—and of our own fallen hearts?**

1. We take God’s WRATH seriously as a visceral hatred of all sin, even the sins in us that sent Jesus to the cross.
2. We never push TRUTH away, but embrace every chance to learn more from and about God our Maker.
3. We listen to God’s CREATION as a daily wake-up call from our Maker. We accept how God made us!
4. We keep gratitude alive by prioritizing WORSHIP.
5. We accept no SUBSTITUTES for God.
6. We take an aggressive STAND for wholesome sexuality.
7. We oppose sin of EVERY kind, even those that don’t seem so repulsive to us.

For your personal reflection

**How is God’s wrath *presently* revealed? 1:18**

Paul meant that the very flow of pagan history shows God’s indignation against evil. We see it in the awful corruptions and instability in unjust societies, in the diseases that result from promiscuity, and in many other natural consequences of sin (such as the breakdown of families where addictions and abuses rule). For the most part, this display of His wrath is passive—God removing the obstacles that might have restrained society’s plunge into deeper evil and corruption. The penalty for sin is more sin! Perversions are the result of God “giving them over” to the lusts of their hearts (1:24). Yet whatever we see of God’s wrath is a small foretaste of the divine verdict that will be meted out actively at the Final Judgment.

**Why would people actually worship lifeless idols they had made? 1:25**

Though it appears foolish to most Westerners, the worship of tangible gods appeals to the high majority of the human race. Perhaps it’s the idea of having a god that’s not invisible. You know where it is. To some extent you have a god you can control, while pretending to submit to it. Idolatry actually puts man as god’s creator, a subconscious attempt at increasing the worthiness of man at the expense of the true God. That’s the great lie! “You shall be as gods!” At its root, all idolatry exalts man and demotes God. It involves a demonic mockery of God: “look what people would rather worship than the real God!” Then the demons stand behind the idols and grab the adulation for themselves, while gripping the unwary worshippers in a destructive bondage (1Cor10:20).

**Is all homosexuality a divine judgment? 1:26f**

Some insist that homosexual tendencies are genetically based; or the result of environmental influences beyond the person’s control. Paul regards the practice of homosexuality *unnatural* and connects it to the corruption of sin on our planet. Though compassion should stop us from labeling every person with homosexual urges as a person under God’s direct judgment, it’s clear from this passage and several others that God regards homosexual practice as an abomination and that those who give in to such urges in thought or action are subject to judgment. Both the Old and New Testaments condemn it strongly and should dictate our decisions as to whether homosexuality is sinful. It’s not a question of what we’re comfortable with, but what God is comfortable with! Leviticus 20:13 prescribes the death penalty for homosexual behavior. It should never be regarded casually as an “alternative lifestyle,” but should be forsaken completely as a person comes to the Lord (1Cor6:9-11). Those who are choosing this sinful lifestyle often demand special rights and protections. They cry “bigot” and “hater” against those who will not extend them the respect they crave. They’re not content to be tolerated; they must be celebrated. Yet the truth is that homosexuality is a choice against the Creator who made male and female from the very beginning. The way He dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah should tell us all we need to know. Homosexuality must be condemned outright for the sin it is, while making way for ministry to homosexuals in a spirit of love. This is a narrow viewpoint, just as narrow as scripture demands.

**How are unsaved people aware of God’s death penalty for sin? 1:32**

It’s partly a matter of their God-given conscience, which (though certainly dulled by the fall) has not been obliterated. Some have conjectured that many suicides result from a conscience that says one’s deeds are worthy of death. The awareness of God’s penalty may also be related to the vestiges of humanity’s memory of the flood (Gen6f), a cataclysm of divine judgment recorded in the lore of many cultures.