

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS & MAN’S REBELLION – Chapters 1-3

LESSON 5 – IS EVERYONE CONSIDERED LOST? – Romans 1:18-27

Skeptics seem to ask these questions more than any other about the validity of the Gospel message. “What about those who have never heard about Jesus? How can a loving God send those to hell who’ve never had opportunity to receive Christ?”

Very few Christians will ask these same questions...not because they are already believers but because they’re not sure they know the answers. But there is an answer and that will be the focus of this lesson from Romans 1.

In this lesson and the next, we will look at the case God makes against those who have not accepted the Gospel.

It’s important to take note of the subject found in verse 18...the wrath of God. Unfortunately, we don’t hear much about God’s wrath today in spite of the fact that it is revealed to us just as clearly as His righteousness is...

Verse 17, “The righteousness of God is revealed...”

Verse 18, “The wrath of God is revealed...”

Paul tells us that God’s wrath is deserved by everyone because they have refused the revelation of God and His righteousness. Let’s look at the reasons why everyone is considered lost.

Because of Their Revelation from God

Paul says that we have a revelation from God, and because of that revelation, we are without excuse.

God’s Revelation in Conscience

In verse 19, Paul says that in the heart of everyone is the knowledge of right and wrong put there by God Himself. Even the heathen or pagan have an inner witness that speaks of a source of right and wrong, a greater and higher power to which they are accountable.

There is built into us a desire to communicate with God...a God vacuum if you will...a realization of our guilt.

Acts 28 tells the story of Paul’s shipwreck and being bitten by a snake. The pagan natives came to the conclusion that he was being punished for some wrong he had done. How did these pagans have the knowledge that sin deserves punishment? Paul tells us in Romans that this knowledge is in the heart of every person.

God’s Revelation in Creation

Paul tells us in verses 19 and 20 that God has revealed Himself not only through our conscience but through His creation. No passage of scripture presents this better than Psalm 19.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

The evidence of God’s personal and creative handiwork has been in creation from the beginning...no one can miss it.

So people will not be judged for rejecting Jesus, about Whom they’ve never heard; but will be held responsible for rejecting the revelation God has given them through conscience and creation.

Because of Their Rejection of God

In spite of the witness of conscience and creation, people have rejected God. Paul continues in verses 21 through 27 to say that people have not glorified God, but instead have made images of God to worship...images in the form of man and animals.

Romans 1:25, "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised."

Is it any wonder that God's wrath is revealed?

Let's look at some ways people reject and suppress the knowledge of God...

Rejection Through Irreligion

When people remove God from their thinking, they become consciously irreligious. The more they learn, the more confirmed they are in this unbelief. The "scientific worldview" does not allow any room for God. People may not know much about God, but the point is that they reject what they do know.

Rejection Through Ingratitude

Paul says everyone has been the recipient of God's grace and goodness but in spite of this does not thank God.

Romans 1:21, "Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him."

Rejection Through Intellectualism

When people reject and suppress the knowledge of God, there is nothing left but their own knowledge. This chance to come up with their own ideas concerning the purpose and origin of creation is a way to exercise human pride. When people's hearts are darkened, they become blind to the truth. This rejection and suppression of truth is a downward spiral leading to the revelation of God's wrath.

Rejection Through Idolatry

People create their idol and are then deceived by their idol. Notice there is a progression even in idolatry. First they worshipped an image of man, then birds, then animals, and then reptiles.

Psalms 106 describes the devastating results of idolatry among God's people. If Israel...God's people...fell into idolatry, how much more tempted are those who don't know God to do the same?

Rejection Through Immorality

Verse 24 talks about the strong connection between idolatry and immorality. Immorality is the child of idolatry because idols do not protect from impurity nor do they move people toward holiness. Paul instructs us in 1 Corinthians 10:14 to, "flee from idolatry" and twice tells his readers to run away from immorality (2 Timothy 2:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:18).

Rejection Through Inversion

Verse 26 takes us further into this downward spiral of immorality. Rejecting God and His standards ultimately leads to inverting and reversing His created order.

There is no clearer reference in the New Testament to the sins of lesbianism and homosexuality than found here in Romans 1. The key word in verses 26 and 27 is the word "natural." Scripture is clear that lesbianism and homosexuality is not natural.

Paul talks about unnatural consequences that result from unnatural acts.

Over in Galatians 6:7-8, Paul tells us that, "God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction."

The more perverse the act of sowing, the more perverse the consequences reaped.

Never forget that no sin...including the sins of lesbianism and homosexuality...is beyond the limits of God's grace and forgiveness. God is ready to forgive even those to which His wrath is revealed.

Lessons on Lostness from Romans 1

1. Because all have sinned, only the grace of God keeps us from being included in Romans 1.
2. The direct opposite to sin in Romans 1 is the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Re-read Romans 1:18-32 and reverse all the negative terminology. Replace it with the positive acts and attitudes of the one who knows Christ. What a difference that makes! The power of the Gospel will turn away God's wrath and reveal His righteousness instead.