

ROMANS 1:18-32 – The Unrighteousness of Gentiles

1) How does this passage fit within the broader argument of Romans?

2) Read through 1:18-32. What is the flow of the argument of this passage? What are its main points?

Rejecting God (1:18-23)

3) According to v. 18, why do we need the gospel? Why is it so crucial for us to understand this?

4) According to v. 18, what do the ungodly and unrighteous do? What does “the truth” refer to in this verse?

5) How does Paul justify his assertion that people “suppress” the truth? Why are people “without excuse”?

6) According to vv. 21-23, what is the fundamental sin that lies at the heart of our rejection of God?

7) How has sin corrupted human reasoning and understanding? What does this reveal about the extent of our sinfulness?

8) According vv. 18-23, how should we understand sin and God's wrath?

Digging Deeper: God's Wrath

- The Old Testament regularly pictures God as responding to sin with wrath (Exod. 4:14; 15:7; 32:10-12; Num. 11:1; Jer. 21:3-7)
- In the OT prophets particularly, the wrath of God is associated with the Day of the Lord as a cosmic, climactic outbreak of judgment (eg. Zeph. 1:15-18).
- Although the apostle Paul works with this same conception of God's wrath, he stresses the working and effects of God's wrath. Paul speaks of wrath as a present reality under which people outside Christ stand (Rom. 3:5; 4:15; 9:22; Eph. 2:3).
- Paul often also predicts the outpouring of God's wrath on the future day of judgment (Rom. 2:5, 8; 5:9; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10).
- The book of Revelation frequently mentions God's wrath (Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15).

The Consequences of Rejecting God (1:24-32)

9) According to vv. 24-27, what is a consequence of rejecting God?

10) Why does Paul focus on homosexual relations?

11) According to vv. 28-32, what is a consequence of rejecting God? What kind of sins do these verses focus on? How is this significant?

12) According to Romans 1:18-32, what is our plight? Why do we need the gospel?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1) How do we fail to glorify God and give him thanks?

2) Our idols might not be physical ones, but they exist in our hearts. What are the idols of our hearts? How do our idols affect our thoughts, attitudes, words, actions and relationships?

Expose our heart idols by asking these questions:

- What do we devote our time, money, energy and affections to?
- What or who gives us our identity, security, joy and contentment?
- What or who, if taken away from us, would make our life intolerable?

3) Why is sin so sinful? How does a biblical understanding of sin impact how we live?

4) How does this passage deepen our understanding of the gospel?

5) How does this passage grow our love for and gratitude to Jesus Christ?

6) How does this passage help us to cultivate humility and compassion in our relationships with others?

OUTLINE OF ROMANS

I. Introduction (1:1-17)

- A. Salutation (1:1-7)
- B. Thanksgiving (1:8-15)
- C. Statement of theme (1:16-17)

II. The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (1:18-4:25)

- A. The universal reign of sin (1:18-3:20)
- B. Justification by faith (3:21-4:25)

III. The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation (5:1-8:39)

- A. The hope of glory (5:1-21)
- B. Freedom from bondage to sin (6:1-23)
- C. Freedom from bondage to the law (7:1-25)
- D. Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit (8:1-30)
- E. The believer's security celebrated (8:31-39)

IV. The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel (9:1-11:36)

- A. Introduction: The tension between God's promises and Israel's plight (9:1-5)
- B. Defining the promise: (1) God's sovereign election (9:6-29)
- C. Understanding Israel's plight: Christ as the climax of salvation history (9:30-10:21)
- D. Summary: Israel, the "elect", and the "hardened" (11:1-10)
- E. Defining the promise (2): The future of Israel (11:11-32)
- F. Conclusion: Praise to God in light of his awesome plan (11:33-36)

V. The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct (12:1-15:13)

- A. The heart of the matter: Total transformation (12:1-2)
- B. Humility and mutual service (12:3-8)
- C. Love and its manifestations (12:9-21)
- D. The Christian and secular rulers (13:1-7)
- E. Love and the law (13:8-10)
- F. Living in light of the day (13:11-14)
- G. A plea for unity (14:1-15:13)

VI. The Letter Closing (15:14-16:27)

- A. Paul's ministry and travel plans (15:14-33)
- B. Greetings (16:1-23)
- C. Concluding doxology (16:25-27)