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# Man's Ruin— God's Redemption

*Revised Edition*

*a study of man's utter need and God's complete answer in Romans 1:16-32*

L. R. Shelton, Jr.  
1919-2003

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*Man’s Ruin—God’s Redemption* by L. R. Shelton, Jr. These 23 expository messages were first delivered over the radio in 1987. This is the revised edition of 2005. L. R. Shelton, Jr. served as Pastor of Mount Zion Bible Church, Pensacola, Florida, from its founding in 1979 to his homegoing in 2003.

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, except as indicated otherwise.

**L.R. Shelton, Jr.** (1923-2003) was born and reared in New Orleans, Louisiana. As a young man, he was the Associate Pastor in his father’s Baptist church. Though he did not attend college, he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, Lloyd-Jones, and the Puritans. In 1970, he moved to Litchfield, Minnesota to establish a church, Christian bookstore, and evangelistic ministry, with a vision to send the old writings worldwide free of charge. In 1978, he moved to Pensacola, Florida, where he founded Mount Zion Bible Church.

***Man’s Ruin – God’s Redemption*** gives detailed explanation of Romans 1:16-32 to show the depth of man’s sin and the downward spiral in which he finds himself, ending in eternal separation from God. The last chapters focus on the living hope we have in Christ, the perfect unmerited Substitute provided by God in His love for us. We see that God’s righteous justice require penalty for sin, that man is incapable of paying for it himself apart from his own death, that a perfect Substitute was provided in Christ at the cross, that man must have holiness in order to stand before God, and that this holiness is found only in Christ.

## Romans 1:16-32

*“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them.*

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:*

*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

*Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

*Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

*Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:*

*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

# 1. Man's Awful Ruin

## Introduction

This portion of God's Word in Romans 1:16-32, more than any other, shows the awful plight and degradation of the human race because of our fall in Adam in the Garden of Eden. In Adam, we rebelled against the sovereign God of the universe and became gods unto ourselves. These verses teach us what is wrong with the world today, what is wrong with the nations, and what is wrong with you and me, who make up the nations of the world. We have left the one and only true and living God. We have turned to our own way, to do what seems right in our own eyes. We follow the dictates of our depraved hearts, which hate God, holiness, righteousness, and our fellow man, and which love sin and darkness. We worship and serve the creature (ourselves) more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever.

## Obvious Facts

We will be giving a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 1:16-32. But before we begin, we need to point out some very obvious facts:

*First*, because of their fall and ruin in Adam by disobedience to God, men are *by nature* in an awful state of sin and degradation.

*Second*, because of their continual state of rebellion against God and their holding the truth of God in unrighteousness, men bring upon themselves the very *reprobation*<sup>1</sup> of God; for it is said of them that "God also gave them up to uncleanness" (v. 24), "God gave them up unto vile affections" (v. 26), and "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (v. 28).

*Third*, men left to themselves with the restraint of God removed will only *grow worse* and worse in sin, being filled with all the awful sins mentioned in verses 29-31. In other words, there is nothing in the entire universe that can stop men from devolving downward into hell, if left to themselves.

*Fourth*, the awful ruin of man, his love for sin, and the power of sin over him are greatly demonstrated in verse 32, which reads, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Here we see these things:

- Men have an inner knowledge from God of the reality of sin.
- Men have a consciousness that God must hate, judge, and punish sin.
- Men persist in the ways of sin in spite of the warning of their own natural conscience.
- Men come to the point where they condone, approve, and then aid and rejoice in the sin of others.
- Men come to the place where they are the supporters of their own sin and the vices of others rather than supporters of the righteousness of God.

The *fifth* fact noted in these verses is that, apart from the power and grace of God in Christ, *no man can deliver himself* from his awful, ruined state. Why not? Let John 3:19-20 answer:

*"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be re-proved."*

Man is so blinded by Satan and sin that he chooses darkness rather than light, evil rather than good, unrighteousness rather than righteousness, his own way rather than the way of God, and hell rather than heaven.

*Sixth*, Romans 1:16-32 teaches us that man abides under the righteous *wrath of God* and that the judgment and wrath of God will fall upon sin. This is the wrath which is revealed in all its awesome fury "from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (v. 18).

Another way of reading this verse is,

*"For God's [holy] wrath and indignation are revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who in their wickedness repress and hinder the truth and make it inoperative."<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> **reprobation** – disapproval and rejection.

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## God's Wrath and Gracious Redemption

Not only is the love, mercy, and grace of God revealed from heaven, but the attribute of *the wrath of God* is also revealed from the same place. It comes from the same holy and righteous God who sits upon the throne of His holiness (Psa 47:8); and this wrath and indignation is against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their wicked lives stifle the truth. They repress and hinder the truth, thus making it inoperative in their hearts and lives, for their wills *will not break* and *will not bow* to the authority of God by acknowledging His eternal power and Godhead, even though this truth is clearly seen and revealed to them (vv. 19-20). All these things will have our attention as we look at each verse individually.

These verses teach the awful ruin and plight of man because of the deep depravity<sup>3</sup> of his heart, yet out of them shines forth *the gracious redemption in Christ*. In the Gospel, the good news, God has provided salvation for poor, helpless, hopeless sinners. In it He reveals “the righteousness of God,” which is given to every one who believes; for “the just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17).

In this opening message we must also show that these verses, which portray the awful ruin and plight of man before a holy and sin-hating God, are part of a context which continues in Chapter 2, going on to verse 18 of Chapter 3, telling us that *all men* stand guilty before God, that *all men* have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that *all men* abide under the wrath of a sin-avenging God: Jews and Gentiles,<sup>4</sup> rich and poor, learned and unlearned, slaves and masters, wise and unwise, savages and civilized, male and female, young and old—men of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues. All are shut up to the fact that they are sinners and need the grace of God in salvation, or they will spend eternity in hell under the just wrath of God.

Further, in all of these verses the Holy Spirit shuts us up to the fact that men cannot and will not bring to God any righteousness of their own that He will accept. He washes all the sand out from underneath our feet, leaving us helpless and hopeless before a sovereign God, in a guilty, lost, and damned state, where we are doomed and lost forever, abiding under the awful wrath of God—unless the grace and mercy and love of God through Christ enters in by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Then, after shutting us up completely to our helplessness and hopelessness and to our condemned, guilty state before the holy and righteous God, we find in Chapter 3, verse 21, the precious words, “But . . . God.” Yes, when all man’s hope for saving himself is gone, when man is shut up to nothing but his sin and God’s wrath, we hear the precious and gracious words of the Gospel message: God Himself has provided a way! God has made a way of escape! He has provided a righteousness which He will accept, which is His *own* righteousness. This righteousness is revealed in the Person of His only Son by whom He has come to reconcile the world unto Himself.

You may ask, “How did He do this?” Paul tells us:

*“For He [God the Father] hath made Him [Christ, God the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2Co 5:21).*

God so loved us that He came in the person of His Son to die for the sins of His people, all of which are recorded in these verses. He did this so that we might stand before Him justified, holy, cleansed, without blame, and dressed in *His righteousness alone*. He did this so that we could become His sons, adopted into His family, and made in the image and likeness of His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we see *God’s gracious redemption*, redeeming man from his awful ruin in sin.

## 2. “The Wrath of God” Romans 1:18

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*

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<sup>3</sup> **depravity** – because of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden, depravity is the corruption of human nature which renders all people guilty before God and inclines the hearts of all to sin. *Total* depravity does not mean that all men are in all ways as wicked as they can be. Rather it means that every faculty of man is polluted by sin rendering all sinners incapable of saving themselves. *Radical* (from the root) depravity expresses this thought more clearly.

<sup>4</sup> **Gentiles** – those who is not of the Jewish faith or of a non-Jewish nation; one from a pagan nation.

## Leaving the Revelation of Scripture

When we leave the revelation of Holy Scripture and run to our own reasoning, we cannot understand the awful, ruined condition of man nor why he acts the way he does. You see, this is the reason our statesmen, politicians, national leaders, psychiatrists, teachers, judges, and the average man on the street cannot account for the behavior of the human race. Here is why they cannot understand man's bestial ways and cannot be trusted: they will not believe the truth of God's Word. It clearly teaches that man is by nature a depraved soul, a servant of sin and Satan. Rejecting this, they grope for answers concerning human behavior. They look for the answers in education, science, peace conferences, and peace treaties, not realizing that man has left God and turned his back upon the only Source of life, hope, peace, and salvation. Man has turned his back upon God, His Christ, His Word and His salvation from sin. Therefore, man knows nothing of the power of God in regeneration.<sup>5</sup> Only this can make him a new creature, who walks righteously, honestly, and uprightly in this world.

Further, when we leave the revelation of Holy Scripture, we leave the only light that guides poor, depraved sinners to *the* Light, Jesus Christ. We are left in our awful, ruined condition without hope and without God. We are left with *no way out* of the deep pit of human confusion, atheism, skepticism, and sin with all of its forms of ungodliness and unrighteousness. Apart from the revelation of Scripture, we have no answers to our problems nor can we understand why men and nations act as beasts.

## Our Only Hope

*The only hope* for you or for me, the only hope for mankind, is the Gospel of the grace of God, revealed to us in the love of Christ as He suffered and bled and died upon Calvary's cross for our sins. *The only hope* for mankind is the new birth, the making of a new creature in Christ. *The only hope* for mankind is the Holy Spirit's work in us, giving new hearts and new natures. This breaks sin's power in and over us and causes us to follow God's Christ in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness. Again I say, *the only hope* for mankind—for you and for me—is to believe this Gospel of the grace of God, which is His gracious redemption in Christ. By the power of this Gospel, let us come to God by faith, trusting only in the merits and righteousness of Christ. In Him we will find rest for our never-dying souls. *Our only hope* is to take our place as lost sinners before God, telling Him of the awful, ruined condition of our hearts and of our need for His salvation from the pollution of sin.

You see, we cannot pull ourselves up by our bootstraps from the pit of corruption in which we find ourselves. We cannot change our hearts and make ourselves better. Education and science cannot do it. A change of environment cannot do it. We only grow worse along with the rest of the world. We only grow more and more like the devil in hatred for God and man, in unbelief and rebellion, in worshiping the creature, and in bowing down to the gods of gold, silver, pleasure, and self. We go further and further from God, until we hear Him say, "I have given them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts; I have given them up to vile affections; I have given them over to a reprobate mind"; and, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, for I never knew you."

## Only Wrath Remains

When we reject God's way of salvation as revealed in verses 16 and 17 of Romans 1; when we will not bow to Christ in humble faith and live our lives dependent upon Him, there remains nothing but the *wrath of God* spoken of in verse 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Considering this verse of Scripture, we see that God is a God of wrath as well as a God of love and mercy. We find that God's righteous wrath against sin is one of His attributes and comes from the same place His love and mercy come from: heaven itself.

We notice also that this wrath—this hatred of sin and the need to punish it—is revealed from heaven against men who are here described as ungodly and unrighteous, those who live in hatred against God and man. You see, *ungodliness* is our vertical relationship to God. We hate Him and therefore sin against Him. *Unrighteousness* is our horizontal relationship to man, and we hate and sin against him too.

## Man by Nature

Not only that, but man by nature—you and I without the grace of God—holds the truth in unrighteousness. He represses it and holds it down by saying he will not believe it. He will not bow to it; he will not face it. This is an awful sin, an awful crime against God. Psalm 138:2 tells us that God has magnified His Word above His name; and he who will not

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<sup>5</sup> **regeneration** – one of the Biblical words for salvation which means being made spiritually alive by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit; a word describing being born-again by God's Spirit.

believe or bow to the authority of God's Word calls God a liar. Therefore, there is nothing left but the awful wrath of God upon him and his ungodliness and unrighteousness.

It is a terrible thing for you to cast away the Word of God and not believe it! It is an awful thing for you to pick and choose what you are going to believe among the doctrines of the God's Word! It is an awful thing to reject that revelation of divine truth that is able to make you wise unto salvation! It is an awful thing for you to know the truth, hear the truth, and hold it in your mind as the truth, but yet repress it! It is an awful thing not to bow to the authority of the truth, which calls you to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! It is spiritual suicide to acknowledge that truth, and yet not to bow to its authority!

### Personal Application

Dear reader, if this is true of you, then because of the hardness and stubbornness and the impenitence of your heart, you are thereby only treasuring up unto yourself wrath against the day of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to you according to your deeds (Rom 2:5, 6).

Did you know that he who does not bow to the truth sets himself above the truth of God? He acts as if he were the judge of truth, thus saying like Lucifer (who became Satan), "I am God; I am like the Most High" (Isa 14:13-14). Did you know that when you do this, you have rejected God's redemption in Christ, so that the only thing left for you is the righteous wrath of God? It will surely fall upon you in the day of God's righteous judgment!

Ask yourself these questions: "Am I stifling the truth by unrighteousness? Am I wickedly opposing the truth? Am I hindering the truth by unrighteousness?" These are searching questions, and should be answered in your soul today, for you stand on dangerous ground if you repress the truth in unrighteousness. Your *only hope* is to believe the truth as it is in Christ, casting yourself upon Him by faith, crying for mercy, and trusting Him, who alone can save you from the wrath to come.

## 3. "They are without excuse"—Romans 1:19-20

*"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it to them.*

*For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head; so that they are without excuse."*

### All Mankind Is Guilty

Having given an overview of these solemn verses from Romans 1, we will begin our verse-by-verse exposition at verse 19. When we have finished with verse 32, we will return to consider the righteous and just wrath of God upon our sins (v. 18), and the great and glorious salvation that God has provided poor, hell-deserving sinners (vv. 16, 17).

First, let us consider verses 19 and 20:

*"For that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God [Himself] has shown it to them.*

*20 For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity, have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made (His handiworks). So [men] are without excuse [altogether without any defense or justification]."*<sup>6</sup>

These verses teach that *all mankind is guilty* of holding the truth of God in unrighteousness. All mankind is without excuse for not bowing to and worshiping the true and living God. Why? "For that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God has shown it to them" by means of His *general revelation*<sup>7</sup> in creation, nature, history, and conscience.

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<sup>6</sup> Amplified.

<sup>7</sup> **general revelation** – this term means that God reveals something about His divine nature through His creation and its order of things.

## What All Know

These verses teach that the savage in the African forest or in the jungles of the Amazon can know two things about God; the scientist in the laboratory and the philosopher in the library can know two things about God; the common man in the street and the religious cultist can know two things about God. In other words, all men in all ages without exception have known and do know two things about the God of the universe: 1) His invisible nature, and 2) His divine attributes, i.e., His eternal power and Godhead (or divinity). *All men without exception know that there is a Supreme Being!* And how do they know this? By God's general revelation, which comes from His creation, His natural laws, His history, and what He has put into the conscience of man.

Now I understand that there must be more than *general* revelation for a person to be saved, for the Scriptures teach that there must be the *special* revelation<sup>8</sup> of the Spirit by the Word. What these verses teach is that no man can claim at the judgment in the last day that he did not know God, because by God's general revelation every man is stripped of all excuses for not bowing to Him and worshipping Him. The knowledge that God has given to man concerning His eternal power and Godhead condemns man entirely.

### 1. Creation, or Nature

The psalmist penned these words in Psalm 19:1-4:

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."*

These verses reinforce what is taught in Romans 1:19-20, that the things of God which are invisible, namely, His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen by all men and written upon their conscience. This state of things has been true since the creation of the universe. The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator have been understood since the beginning by the things that have been made, namely, the material creation. Therefore, man, reasoning upon the basis of the law of cause and effect, is forced to the conclusion that such a tremendous universe demands a Supreme Being of eternal power and of divine attributes. That Being must be the Deity who should be worshipped. And God has given man a mind and an understanding so that he can reason and know by general revelation that God is and must be worshiped.

We must understand, then, that no honest person can be an atheist. People do "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18), but they cannot suppress something that they do not believe exists. The creature will always remain the offspring of the Creator and dependent upon Him, whether he recognizes God in this life or is judged by Him in the next.

### 2. Inner Consciousness, or Conscience

When we read Romans 2:14-15, we understand that all of mankind has written in their hearts and upon their *conscience* what is required in the Law of God. This is left over from our fall in Adam; therefore, all men are without excuse. God has equipped man with a sense of right and wrong. Listen to these verses:

*"For when the Gentiles [heathen], which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."*

This has been evidenced by missionaries who have gone to heathen lands where the Word of God had never been preached. There they found men putting into effect some of the commandments of God by punishing murderers, thieves, kidnappers, and adulterers. *All men are without excuse before God*, for not bowing down to Him and worshipping Him according to the light they have. This is the reason verse 21 of Romans 1 is added:

*"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."*

## Personal Application

My question is "If those who have nothing but general revelation will be punished for not obeying and worshipping the true and living God, what punishment are you worthy of, who have had the light of the revelation from the written Word of God?" Luke 12:46-48 teaches us that a man, woman, young person, boy or girl, who has had the revelation of God's Word, who has known the commandment to repent and believe the Gospel and yet *would not*, shall be beaten with many stripes. In other words, their place in hell and their punishment will be great compared to those who only had general

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<sup>8</sup> **special revelation** – God's divine self-revelation made known by His works and prophets in history and reaching its completion in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which is recorded in the Bible. Only special revelation can completely show us our sinful predicament, as well as God's promise of salvation and its fulfillment in Christ.

revelation, i.e., the light of creation. For the Scripture says these shall be beaten with few stripes. Their punishment will be far less than those who had the revelation of God's Word, yet would not bow to God's authority.

I trust you have understood these words and that the Holy Spirit will let you see how you stand guilty of not bowing to the authority of Christ and His Word, and that you are without excuse, and that your damnation will be just. I say, *flee from the wrath to come!*

## 4. “Their foolish heart was darkened”—Romans 1:21

*“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”*

We have seen why every man from Adam to the close of this age will be without excuse in the Day of Judgment. He had light from his conscience, from God's creation, His natural laws, and from His history (which all manifest God's eternal power and Godhead). He will be without excuse for not using the light that he had to serve, worship, and honor the Supreme Being of the universe. He will be without excuse because John 1:9 tells us that Christ, the true Light, lights every man that comes into the world, at least with the light of general revelation, for God has never left Himself without a witness. So no man can truly ask, “Who is God?” “What is God?” “Where is God?” or “What does God want?” Creation all around us is witness that there is a Supreme Being.

### Deep Depravity of Heart

Let us further consider verse 21 of Romans 1: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Here we have set before us the deep depravity of men's hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us the natural heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Men have known God from the beginning, and yet they live in a state of rebellion against Him. They will not glorify Him as God by bowing to His authority in Christ. They will not give thanks for all He has done for them in providing all things in and for their lives. They will not give thanks for general revelation from creation, His natural laws, and what is written in their consciences in the biblical revelation, that a gracious God has come down to earth to make a way of escape for their never-dying souls from the wrath of God, by the sacrifice of Christ Himself upon the cross.

From Adam to this present day, men hate God. They turn away from Him and will not listen to Him. So they become vain in their imaginations and in their carnal reasonings, and their foolish hearts are darkened. All their thinking has ended in futility, and their misguided minds are plunged in darkness. They busy themselves with silly and futile speculations about God, and their stupid minds grope about in the darkness.

What about you who read and hear God's Word preached from week to week, but will not bow before the sovereign God? Second Timothy 3:7 says you are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”—the truth that you are a lost, guilty sinner before God. You are ever learning, but never able to learn the truth that you are totally depraved, taken captive by the devil at his will (2Ti 2:26). You are ever learning, but never able to learn the truth that your *understanding* of spiritual things is darkened. Your *affections* are prostituted because you hate God. And your *will*, which is a slave to sin and your wicked heart, will not come to Christ because you hate the sovereign God. God calls men to salvation in Christ on *His* terms: complete surrender of the whole man to the whole Christ—Prophet, Priest and King.<sup>9</sup> You would rather be damned in hell than to come to God as a helpless beggar, acknowledging that you have nothing to offer Him but yourself. You would rather be damned than acknowledge that you are a poor sinner, whose whole head is sick and whose whole heart is faint; that you are a poor sinner who, from the sole of your feet even to your head; that you have no soundness, nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, which have not been closed, neither bound up, nei-

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<sup>9</sup> **Prophet, Priest, and King** – Jesus Christ is a *Mediator*, that is, a “go-between,” or one who intervenes between two hostile parties for the purpose of restoring them to a right relationship. Jesus is the go-between for God the Father and sinners. He is a *Prophet*: He reveals God's will for our salvation by His Word and Spirit. He is a *Priest*: He offered Himself a sacrifice once upon the cross of Calvary to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile sinners to God. Likewise, He makes continual intercession for His people, meaning He always entreats on their behalf before God. And He is a *King*: He conquers and draws His people to Himself by His grace, He rules and defends them, and restrains and conquers all His and His people's enemies.



ther mollified with ointment (Isa 1:5-6); that you are a poor sinner who has *no goodness* and *no righteousness of your own* which God will accept.

Yes, this twenty-first verse of Romans 1 states that you will not glorify God by bowing to Him as sovereign Ruler of your life. You have not been thankful for His Word that teaches you of your depravity before Him, but you have busied yourself with silly speculations as to who you think the sovereign God is. You go about saying, “I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” You do not know that you are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17).

Thus you are ever learning and never able to comprehend that God the Holy Spirit must quicken<sup>10</sup> your dead understanding and heart in regeneration before you can repent and believe. You have indulged in your futile speculations about God until your stupid mind has become darkened to the Word of God, which clearly teaches the need of regeneration before a man can enter the kingdom of God; that a man is *not* born again or regenerated because he believes. Oh, no! He believes *because* he has been regenerated—born again—by the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit.

## Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

In John 3:3, 6, 7, our Lord teaches this very clearly to Nicodemus:

*“Except a man be born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God . . . that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”*

Then He goes on to describe regeneration (the new birth) in verse 8:

*“The wind bloweth where it listeth,<sup>11</sup> and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

Then in verses 14-18 our Lord speaks of men believing to the salvation of their souls. It was not until our Lord explained the necessity of the new birth, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, that He speaks of men believing—believing in Christ, resting upon Christ, looking to Christ. All this is evidence that the Holy Spirit has been at work in the soul.

Let us go further with this truth. In John 3:8 our Lord draws a comparison between the wind and the Spirit’s operation in our hearts. Have you ever wondered why? Listen! “The wind bloweth where it (pleases) . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

First, the wind is *irresponsible*, that is, not having to answer for what it does, sovereign in its action. The wind is an element altogether beyond man’s control. It neither consults man’s pleasure nor can it be regulated by his devices. The wind blows where it pleases, when it pleases, and as it pleases. So it is with the Spirit. He is sovereign in His operation upon the hearts of men. No man can command Him to do anything.

Second, the wind is *irresistible*. When the wind blows in the fullness of its power, it sweeps everything before it. Those who have looked upon the effects of a tornado just after it has passed know something of the mighty force of the wind. So it is with the Spirit. When He comes in the fullness of His power into the hearts of those whom He was sent to regenerate, He breaks down man’s prejudices, subdues his rebellious will, and overcomes all opposition.

Third, the wind is *irregular*. Sometimes the wind moves so softly it scarcely rustles a leaf; at other times it blows so loudly that it roars. So it is in the the new birth. With some, the Holy Spirit works so gently that His work is imperceptible to onlookers, as in Lydia’s heart. The Word says of Lydia, “...whose heart the Lord opened” (Act 16:14). With others, His action is so powerful, so radical, so revolutionary, and so potent that it is like the Lord’s light from heaven that struck down Saul of Tarsus (Act 9), when he was on the road to Damascus.

Fourth, the wind is *invisible*. It is one of the very few elements in nature that is invisible. We can see the rain, the snow, and the lightning’s flash, but not the wind. So it is with the Spirit. His Person is unseen; He works as the Spirit of God in the hearts of men.

Fifth, the wind is *inscrutable*. There is something about the wind which defies all effort of human explanation. Its origin, its nature, and its activities are beyond man’s understanding. Man cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with the activity of the Holy Spirit: His operations are conducted secretly, His workings are mysterious. Oh, but I praise the Lord; He *does the work* in the hearts and souls of His people, or no one would be saved!

Sixth, the wind is *indispensable*. If a dead calm were to continue indefinitely, all vegetation would die. How quickly we wilt when there is no wind at all! Even more so is it with the Spirit. Without Him there could be no spiritual life at all. Oh, how I praise Him for working in my soul and giving me life and hope in Christ, for granting me repentance to turn to God from my evil way, and for granting faith to believe Christ to the saving of my soul!

<sup>10</sup> **quicken** – make alive.

<sup>11</sup> **listeth** – pleases; chooses.

## Personal Application

If you are repressing this truth by holding it in unrighteousness, your foolish heart is darkened, for you profess yourself to be wise, but have become a fool. This is because you will not bow to the sovereign God, confessing that He is Lord, and that you are nothing but dust and ashes. My heart grieves for you. My heart goes out to you who will not glorify God or thank and praise Him for His marvelous light that lights every man that comes into the world.

Our text tells us that all men in all ages are adverse to God. Romans 3:10-12 tells us, “There is *none* righteous, no, not one: there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is *none* that doeth good, no, *not one*.” So all men stand before God guilty of not walking according to the light they have. All men stand guilty before God of not glorifying Him and giving praise and thanksgiving to Him. Therefore, our text is a beacon unto all men in their natural spiritual state: they, as depraved sinners before God, abide under the just wrath of that God whom they have not served, worshiped, or trusted. They are despising the riches of God’s goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God—all that God has done for them in nature, conscience, and from His Word—is intended to lead them to repentance. They are only treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God because of their hardness and impenitent hearts.

Remember, at the judgment, God will render to every man *according to his deeds* (Rom 2:4-6).

## 5. “Worshipped...the creature more than the Creator”—Romans 1:23-25

*“And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:*

*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

### Men Worship the Creature

We have seen that “the natural man [the sinful man, the man alienated from God] *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*” (1Co 2:14). Therefore, man by nature has become a fool in spiritual things, even though he professes himself to be wise. This is the reason every man outside of Christ changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image he makes with his hands, why he worships the creation of God or his own depraved reasoning. It is because every man has to have a god—he must bow down and worship something or someone. And since men do not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, they change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever (Rom 1:23-25).

John 3:19-20 comments on these verses of Romans 1: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Yes, *every man* walks in spiritual darkness because he worships his own will and his own reasoning, and will not bow to the light of God’s Word that tells him he is spiritually depraved.

To understand these Scriptures and the depravity and deceitfulness of man’s heart, all one has to do is read the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the abominations and wickedness of the idolatry of the heathen nations, and also of the nation of Israel. One had the revelation of nature, and the other had the revelation of the Word of God. Let me give you two examples out of hundreds that I could choose from. In Isaiah 44:6, God speaks to the prophet concerning the nature of His Being in these words: “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

Then going further, God takes up the case against those who believe in any other God than Himself: “They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed” (vs. 9).

And speaking of different kinds of idols, He describes the man who cuts down a tree and uses part of the wood for one purpose and another part from which to carve an idol:

*“He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak... he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god” (vv. 14-17).*

Then through the prophet, God expresses the great pity of this man who would have so little sense that he could take a branch of a tree and watch half of it go up in flames as he warms himself, and then carve the other half into some horrible form and worship it. God says that such a man feeds on ashes (v. 20): “A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” We would certainly say, “How stupid of a man to do this! To think that a piece of wood could be a god who would hear him, speak to him and help him!” But my dear reader, every man outside of Christ is in this fix, as we will show you.

The other illustration is found in Ezekiel 8. Here we find the elders of Israel worshipping idols, going against all the gracious light that God had given them through His prophets and His written Word. “And He [God] said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel... with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth” (vv. 9-12).

These verses in Romans teach us that every man outside of Christ makes and bows down to his own idol and worships it, saying, “The Lord does not see, the Lord has forsaken the earth.” Oh no! God has not forsaken His earth; you only hope He has, so you will not have to face Him in that great day of judgment. You, like Israel, have “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,” and so have “changed the truth of God into a lie”!

This nation and this world are rapidly becoming worshipers of the devil and involved in the occult. Men and women are turning themselves over to spiritism, going after astrology, the horoscope, witchcraft, and sorcery, and especially bowing down to the god of drugs, the “chemical god” that gives a good feeling and (as they think) solves all their religious problems. All of these have “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,” and so have “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

## The Way of Cain

But the occult, devil worship, and spiritism are not the worst things that make men idolaters, who change the truth of God into a lie. The worst thing is this worldwide idol worship of *man’s will*. This to me is far greater than all other abominations committed by man. Jude 11 refers to this as “the way of Cain”: “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.”

You ask, “Who was Cain?” He was the first child born to Adam and Eve, who became the world’s first murderer when he killed his brother Abel. Why? Because he wanted to worship God with his free will *in his own way*, apart from the blood sacrifice. So Cain became the type of religious natural man who believes in a God and in religion, but only according to his own free will, his sinful reasoning. First John 3:12 reads, “...Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” There are two doctrines in the Bible that men hate with all their soul: 1) they hate to be told that *God is sovereign* in salvation, and 2) they hate to be told that they are *radically depraved*, which means that their will, their understanding, and their wicked heart are enslaved to sin.

Can we project ourselves into the mind of Cain and understand why he did this horrible thing—first, by trying to worship God with the works of his own hands, and second, by killing his brother, who had bowed to the Lordship of Christ, confessing he was a sinner and offering the blood sacrifice in his place? Cain must have thought, “Why should I go to the field and take a lamb? Why should I have to deal with such a distasteful thing as a blood sacrifice? Here are the fruits of

the field—they are beautiful. Can I not make something that appeals to my senses as being beautiful and lovely? This satisfies my senses and does not offend me in any way. Surely God should be satisfied with something that satisfies me. Why should I admit that I am a sinner?” Likewise, many modern Cains think, “Why should I go outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ? Why should I become guilty before God and come in at the strait gate and walk in the narrow way, when I can make my ‘decision’ by my free will and get saved any time I want to? Why do I have to bow to the Lordship of the sovereign God? Surely my will is as free as His!”

In other words, Cain was pitting human reasoning against divine revelation. He knew God, but he would not worship Him in God’s way. He was not thankful; he became vain in his imaginations; his foolish heart was darkened. Professing himself to be wise, he had become a fool. He was attempting to substitute a basket of fruit for the blood sacrifice, without which there is no remission of sin.

Cain was a forerunner of the aesthete<sup>12</sup> of our day who turns away from the sacrifice of the blood substitute. Cain was the forerunner of everyone who holds on to the worship of his free will, refusing to acknowledge before God that his will is depraved and that a work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit must be done in his heart before he can truly believe savingly.

If it were possible to read the invisible spiritual names of men, you would discern that there are more men who have the mark of Cain than those who live under any other mark. We fail to see that we have elevated Cain to a high rank among us. Many Cains fill our churches and most of our pulpits. They sit in the seat of the learned in our religious schools. They edit most of our religious papers and magazines. They are being ordained to the ministry every day. They pray and worship at the altar set up in their own hearts (the altar of free will), and someday these Cains will be sent to the lake of fire!

## Personal Application

Is it for naught that the Holy Spirit speaks of those who depart from the faith, as those who have gone in the way of Cain (Jude 11)? Oh, my dear reader, if you have eyes to see, you will see that the religious life of America is filled with the doctrine and doings of Cain. Those who tell you that because God is love, He will demand no punishment for sin and would send no one to hell, have gone the way of Cain. Those who have wished to substitute a religion of form and ceremony for the religion of the substitutionary death of the Savior have gone the way of Cain. Those who look upon mankind as a wonderful product of evolution have gone the way of Cain. Those who have substituted human philosophy for divine revelation have gone the way of Cain. Those who have substituted decision and free will for regeneration by the power of God the Holy Spirit have gone the way of Cain. Those who have substituted the “carnal Christian theory”<sup>13</sup> for a life of righteousness and true holiness (worked in the believing sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit) have gone the way of Cain. And those who have a form of godliness but deny the Holy Spirit’s power to give them a new heart and keep them steadfast to the end by His grace have gone the way of Cain.

This, then, is what these verses in Romans 1 are teaching us. Those who have professed themselves to be wise have become fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into idols. They have changed the truth of God into a lie, and have worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

## 6. “Changed the truth of God into a lie”—Romans 1:25

*“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

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<sup>12</sup> **aesthete** – one who professes a special appreciation of what is beautiful.

<sup>13</sup> **Carnal Christian Theory** – a popular, but tragic misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. Many who embrace this error teach that a person may be saved and yet continue in sin as a lifestyle without ever growing in holiness. But Paul addresses the Corinthian believers as “carnal” because they are acting in a fleshly, immature, and divisive way like children. He rebukes them because they believe themselves “wise” (3:18), yet they are acting like “babes,” who need milk (3:2). While all Christians act childishly sinful at times and must be reproved like the Corinthians, Paul is certainly *not* teaching that there is a category of “carnal” Christians, who may continue to live in unrepentant worldliness and sin while still having hope of heaven. Scripture teaches that all who are born of God’s Spirit will become more Christ-like through life-long growth in sanctification (Rom 8:29, Phi 1:6, Heb 13:21). When they fall into old sinful habits, the Lord Jesus will lovingly rebuke and chasten (discipline) them (Rev 3:19), so that they will repent, look to Him, and grow to spiritual maturity.

Having gone over verses 19-23 in our verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 1, we will now look at verse 25, leaving verse 24 to cover with verses 26-28, which all speak of the awful theme of God's just reprobation upon sinners because they did not and would not worship and glorify God in their lives.

Let us review verses 22-25 to get the setting:

*"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:*

*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."*

In these verses we see the awful spiritual ruin of man in his fall in Adam, the depths of the human heart in its depravity in sin, and the great gulf of sin that separates God from His sinful creatures (those who at first had been made in His moral likeness). They describe the heart of every man born of woman, destitute of any goodness or righteousness to commend them to God. Why? Because of their fall in Adam, their hearts became "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). Not only this, but they have no understanding of spiritual things because the natural man (the sinful man, the man alienated from God) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*" (1Co 2:14).

## Changing Truth into a Lie

Therefore, man by nature has become a fool in spiritual things, even though he professes himself to be wise. How does he do this? The answer is in verse 25: *he changes the truth of God into a lie* and worships and serves the creature—his own depraved reasonings—more than the Creator, the God of Truth, Who is blessed for ever.

You see, *the truth of God* is that all good things are in God the Father, given to us by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit of Truth, for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). *The lie* is that there is something good in man that will some way or somehow commend him unto God and give him entrance into heaven. But Romans 3:10-12 tells us,

*"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

Therefore, *all men* are dead in trespasses and sins. *All men* have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And therefore, *all men* need Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, for no man comes unto the Father but by Him (Joh 14:6).

The more I look at this twenty-fifth verse the more convinced I am that man in his natural state throughout all ages has taken the truth of God and changed it into a lie, has bowed down and worshiped the creature (that is, his own depraved reasonings or the reasonings of others), thereby becoming an idolater. Surely Isaiah 44:20 applies to each and every soul out of Christ: "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Yes, if you have not bowed to God in Christ and embraced the truth in Him, you have a lie in your right hand and in your heart, for you are an idolater, an image worshiper before God!

## False Teachers

The soul that is under greater judgment is the preacher or teacher who teaches lies and damns not only his own soul but others (Isa 9:15)! This is so clearly brought out in 2 Peter 2:1-3:

*"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."*

What Peter is saying here is this: these false prophets and teachers malign and defame the truth because they are filled with lust and greed. Therefore, they will exploit you with cunning and false argument, and thereby you are deceived in

believing the lie: you will be damned with them. This is awful, but it is true. I have personally witnessed the fulfillment of these Scriptures in the lives of false preachers and teachers in my lifetime.

## Which Truths Denied

Now what are some of the truths of God which man maligns and defames, thereby turning the truth of God into a lie?

First, man hates and denies the *absolute sovereignty of God* over all His creation and creatures. He will not believe, but denies, makes fun of, and turns away from the truth that God works *all things* after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11), and that He does “according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest Thou?” (Daniel 4:35). He will not listen to Psalm 135:6, which reads, “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places,” Man explains it away and then bows down to the idol of his own reasoning. He turns the truths of Romans 9:15,16 and 18 into a lie, thus denying the absolute sovereignty of God because he hates the God of Truth, who does as He pleases with man, His creation. Listen to these verses:

*“For he [God] saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.”*

Yes, man hates this truth and so bows down to the idol of his own reasoning concerning the absolute sovereignty of God, thereby turning this blessed truth into a lie.

Second, man hates and denies *his total inability* to do anything spiritually good. This spiritual inability means that you, the sinner, are so spiritually bankrupt that you can do *nothing* pertaining to your salvation. If you were judged by man’s standards, I am sure you would possess some admirable qualities and perform some virtuous acts; but in the spiritual realm, when judged by God’s standards, you as an unsaved sinner are *incapable of good*. The natural man is enslaved to sin; he is a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or to prepare himself for salvation. In short, the unregenerate man is *dead in sin* and *his will is enslaved* to his evil nature.

But you turn this truth of God’s Word into a lie and bow down before the idol of your own reasonings because apart from the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit in your soul, you *will not admit* that you are a lost, undone, ungodly sinner in need of the divine Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the Word of God says in Romans 5:6 that Christ came to die only for the *ungodly* sinner, for “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”; and in Romans 4:5, God’s Word says He justifies in Christ based upon His righteousness, only the ungodly: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would even in this hour show you that you are an ungodly sinner, and cause you to cry after Christ for mercy!

Third, man hates and denies the righteous *wrath of God* against his sins. He hates and denies the thought of being cast into hell by this holy God, Who hates sin and every worker of iniquity (Psa 5:5). You see, men will deny this truth and turn it into the lie of universal salvation (everyone will be saved), the lie of total annihilation of the damned (no afterlife), or the lie of “God loves everyone and will send no one to hell.” But the truth of God’s Word is that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17), and “God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he [God] will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow, and made it ready” (Psa 7:11-12). Also, in Deuteronomy 32:39-41:

*“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me.”*

Then there is Revelation 21:8 that continually reminds us that every Christ-rejecter, every soul that bows not to the Lordship of Christ in this life, shall feel the awful wrath of this holy and righteous God:

*“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

You may say, “I hate a God like that! I will not believe that God will do that to His creatures.” Well, you are doing just what Romans 1:25 says you will do! You are bowing down to the idol of your own sinful reasonings and turning the truth of God into a lie. You are bowing down and worshiping the creature (yourself, your carnal reasonings) more than the Creator, the God of truth, Who is blessed forever.

Fourth, men deny the truth of God that is declared in 1 John 5:7, that *God is trinity in unity*, manifesting Himself in three distinct Persons: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.” You see, men turn this truth into a lie, and will not give praise unto the triune God: Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. They deny that all comes to us *from* the Father, all comes to us *through* the Son, and all comes to us *by* the Holy Spirit.

They turn the truth of God into a lie and will not love Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They bow down to the idol of their own reasoning and worship the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Ephesians 1:3 speaks of the Father as God; John 20:28 speaks of the Son as God, and Acts 5:3-4 speaks of the Holy Spirit as God. Our love and devotion, praise and adoration, are due to all *three* as the *one God* (trinity in unity), for the same Greek word for God used in reference to the Father in John 6:27 is used for the Son in Hebrews 1:8, and for the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:4.

## Personal Application

I trust that as you meditate and ponder upon this study you will be faced with the questions, “Am I turning the truth of God into a lie? Have I bowed to the God of inspired Holy Scripture, Who is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Or am I bowing down to the idol of my carnal reasoning and turning the truth of God into a lie?”

Oh, that each of us would face the Lord this day and bow to His authority, crying to Him for mercy! Oh, that each would stop turning the truth of God into a lie, and instead would believe His truth. Oh, that each would rest by faith in Him who is the Truth, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

## 7. “God gave them up” Romans 1:24-28

*“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”*

### “God Gave Them Up”

Verses 24, 26, 27, and 28 of Romans 1 bring us into the realm of God’s judgment upon sin and His wrath against sin, for we read here three times that God gave men up to their own depraved hearts and left them to themselves in their sins.

What we have set forth here is the sad state of a man or woman, young person, boy or girl, being given up by God so that they are left alone to follow what their depraved hearts so much desire, to have their fill of sin. You see, by a positive action of God’s will, they are abandoned to their own ways, abandoned to their own impurity, abandoned to their own lusts, to follow the cravings of their own hearts, until they run their course of life and fall into hell, where the worm of conscience never dies, and the fires of hell and their own lusts are never quenched. Never were more awful words spoken than these: “God *gave them up* to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts” (v. 24), “God *gave them up* unto vile affections” (v. 26), and “God *gave them over* to a reprobate mind” (v. 28).

### “God Gave Them Up” Today

Let me ask you, “Were these verses of Scripture written only to describe the awful plight of the Gentiles and Jews of Paul’s day, or are they relevant to the day in which we are living?” You and I both know the answer. These verses of Scripture describe not only the awful plight of sinners in Paul’s day, but the plight of all souls outside of Christ. For surely, we are living again in the days of Noah and Lot! The vast majority of mankind has been given up to reprobate minds, to do those things which are not convenient.

The so-called “sexual revolution” of the last three decades is nothing more than the positive action of God’s will as He abandons man to his own lusts, to follow the cravings of his own wicked heart, and to receive in his own body the inevitable penalty of his own perverseness. Why is this? Verse 28 tells us, “And so, since they did not see fit to *acknowledge God or approve of Him or consider Him worth* the knowing, God gave them over to a base and condemned mind to do things not proper or decent but loathsome.”<sup>14</sup>

God abandoned them to their own depraved thoughts, saying, “All right, you didn’t think I was worthy of your worship; you didn’t think I was worthy of your praise; you have seen no need of Me, but have relegated Me to the garbage heap of oblivion. So I have *abandoned* you to your own heart’s lusts ‘*to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*’” (Rom 1:28-32).

What man wants most is the freedom to practice all sorts of sexual deviations and sexual perversions without restraint, and this is what God has given man over to (vv. 24, 26, and 27). A *reprobate mind* causes man to drink his fill of all twenty-three sins spoken of in verses 29, 30, and 31. Nowhere else in Scripture will you find set forth so forcefully what happens to a man who holds the truth of God in unrighteousness as in these verses. Here you find the highest faculty of man, his mind, his understanding, receiving the greatest judgment of God—the *blinding of the mind* to the soul’s need, and being given over to the debased, immoral, corrupt, rotten, depraved nature of his animal passions. This is awful, but this is God’s Word, and we see the fruit of it on every hand today.

## The Cause of Degradation

Having given an overview of what these verses of Scripture mean, and before we give a verse-by-verse exposition of them, let us look at some of the causes of this degradation and what has brought man to this state. I believe first and foremost the cause lies in the fact that *the preaching of the holy Law of God has almost vanished* from our so called “Christian” pulpits today. Most men who say they have been called to the Christian ministry have forgotten Romans 3:19-20, which thunders forth that God has a Divine Law. And when that Law is set forth before men, their mouths become stopped and they become guilty sinners before God, for “by the law is the *knowledge of sin*.” When the Divine Law of God is not preached, men do not know what sin is, nor that God hates and punishes sin, nor that He is angry with the wicked every day (Psa 7:11). Some men even preach that the holy Law of God is not relevant today! They do not preach it nor do they tell their converts that they are subject to God’s laws. No, they do just the opposite—they declare there is no law for the believer!

Therefore, because men do not know God’s holy requirements as set forth by the Law—that they are to love Him with all their heart, and with all their soul, with all their mind, and with all their strength (Deu 6:5-6, Mark 12:30)—they go on in their sinful ways, sowing to the flesh, not caring for God nor man, bent only on satisfying their hearts’ desires, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. They know nothing of the awful judgment that awaits them at death!

The second cause of the degradation of men into these awful sins of lust and shame is found in the fact that they are no longer *called upon to repent* and turn to God from their sins. Repentance is the missing note in present-day preaching, and it has been for decades. Men are not told that unless they repent, they will perish (Luk 13:3, 5). They are not told that God is angry with the wicked every day (Psa 5:5). They are not told that if they do not repent, God will whet His sword of judgment and bring them down to hell in His wrath (Psa 7:11). They are not told that they, as wicked sinners, must forsake their way before they can walk in the way of righteousness or that they must forsake their thoughts of goodness about themselves before they can return to God. This is awful, but true! No longer are men called to repentance, but only to “make a decision” for God!

## “Easy Believism” and the “Carnal Christian” Theory

The third cause of the degradation of man into these awful sins of lust and shame lies in the preaching of *man’s so-called “free will”* instead of the sovereign will of God in salvation. “Easy-believism” has taken the day, and men are called upon to “make a commitment to God,” to “make a decision,” based upon the so-called “Four Spiritual Laws.” And when they do, they are made two-fold more the child of hell than the one who preached to them! And when they have no power to hold them and keep them in the narrow way, and they begin to follow again after sin and the lust of the world,

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<sup>14</sup> Amplified.



they are told this is natural, for they are only “carnal Christians.” They are told, “You made your commitment, so you are safe,” while all the time they are deceived and *headed straight for hell!*

The “carnal Christian” theory that is being promulgated from our pulpits today is a major cause of the conditions we find. God *is giving men up* to “uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts,” *giving them up* to “vile affections,” and *giving them over* to “a reprobate mind.” Most people in this nation believe that they are Christians. In fact, they will go as far as to say they are “born again,” yet they continue to live just like the rest of the world. These are the people who embrace humanism, who listen to and believe every lie about God and His Christ that comes from the news media, the television, and every avenue of information controlled by Satan.

I believe that about forty to fifty years ago, Satan and his demons got together and counseled as to how they could corrupt this nation. One of the things suggested in this council was to subtly begin introducing the carnal Christian theory into the churches so that men would feel comfortable in sin, and yet believe they were Christians and were going to heaven. Satan knew from that generation would come the next preachers and teachers who would not know Christ and therefore preach a perverted Gospel.

Then the question was asked at this council, “How can we get the “world” into the homes of those who call themselves Christians, so as to subtly turn their hearts from Christ and His holiness, from prayer and Bible reading, and cause the unsuspecting ones to be seduced by the world?” The suggestion was made and put into operation, to make a little black box, and to put it into homes under the pretense of having a little entertainment along with the local and world news.

At first everything seemed harmless enough, until people were mesmerized by Satan; then all the filth and garbage of hell began to come into the homes. Men claimed the right to free speech to promulgate every false doctrine about God, and every lustful thing imaginable came on the screen: scenes that glorified rape, murder, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, nakedness, blasphemy, lust, greed, incest, wife-swapping, stealing, lying, pornography, drunkenness, abortion, etc. Our society has become nothing but a promiscuous society, having been *given over* to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, dishonoring their own bodies among themselves, and *given over* to vile affections. Ours is a society which God, for the most part, has *given over* to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

## Education as a god

Last, but not least, the cause of the sad state of our society is that man has made *a god out of education*, and our school rooms for the most part have been turned into houses of infidelity and atheism, teaching the theory of evolution, which denies Christ and His Lordship as Creator of all things.

All of the barriers between the sexes have been torn down in our school rooms. No longer are the family or father and mother held in high esteem; no longer is sex a sacred thing, meant only for the marriage bed. Sex is taught to our young children there, when this is a matter to be taught in the home. Men who profess to be wise have only become fools when they promulgate that teaching sex to young children will help them understand life better, for now we have more teenage pregnancies, more young unwed mothers, and more illegitimate children than at any other time in our history!

Our philosophers, psychiatrists, and psychologists have told the world to “do your own thing; think for yourself; be a law unto yourself; express yourself in any way you think best.” So God has *given men up* to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind. He has said, “All right, you want your way, you want your fill of sin, you want your lusts, you don’t want to retain Me in your knowledge; therefore, I will give you up.” All of these things combined—and many others—have brought us to this time in the history of the world, when all of society is running pell-mell into hell, with no thought for their souls. All of this is awful, but it is true. It is God’s Word: “*God gave them up!*”

## Personal Application

Though this is what has happened to our society as a whole, God has been patient and long-suffering, and has not cast us into hell. He still holds out the scepter of grace to those who will bow to Him in repentance and faith. May I urge you to turn to Him and seek Him with your whole heart, no matter what worldly pleasures it costs you.

# 8. “Uncleanness” Romans 1:24

*“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves”*

## Review

Praise the Lord, that when He moved upon men to write the Holy Scriptures, He did not gloss over nor minimize the awful effect of sin upon man when he fell in Adam in the Garden of Eden. No, the Scriptures declare man to be a sinner, having come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), a sinner whose “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mar 7:21, 22). All these evil things show that man’s fall in sin makes him a depraved creature before God. Every faculty of his being is in a state of enmity<sup>15</sup> and active rebellion against God: he hates God, His Christ, His Word, holiness, and righteousness. Instead he loves every form of evil to the extent that he would rather be damned than give up his ways, his thoughts, and his “right” to do with himself as he pleases.

So every sinner outside of Christ is subject to the woes spoken of in Romans 1:24, 26, 27, and 28, when mercy and divine patience are not acted upon in heartfelt repentance, and the heart is not moved to embrace Christ as the only Lord and Savior of the never-dying soul. Then the light goes out, and on the road to hell the soul is abandoned by God to uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind.

Let us look further at these verses to see what they teach us about the sad state of those who are given up and given over to their hearts’ desire to have their fill of sin. First, verse 24 reads, “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” Another translation reads: “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their own hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, abandoning them to the degrading power of sin.”

Since men choose to give up God and worship the creature, God does nothing more than give men up to the *control* of the sinful things they prefer above Him. You see, when men persist in following their totally depraved natures, God allows them free rein to do as they please in sin.

### “Uncleanness through the Lusts”

Now the natural result of God’s giving man free rein to his lust leads to immorality of the vilest kind. The expression “God gave them up to *uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts*” means He gave them over to profligate living, that is, living which is described as being immoral, debauched, vicious, licentious, debased, corrupt, degenerate, wild, depraved, and evil. In other words, God abandons them to their own hearts’ desires and their passionate cravings. And sin does nothing but beget sin, so there is no limit to which they will go to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, to satisfy their passions and cravings.

In the last three decades we have seen this Scripture fulfilled before our very eyes. Men and women, young people, boys and girls, have been swept up in the so-called “sexual revolution,” and every moral restraint has been broken down. They have given themselves over to the lust of their own hearts in every type of sexual perversion: fornication among singles, adultery among the married, lesbianism among women, homosexuality among men, and sex orgies and parties among all age groups. Every damnable, lustful thing that could be imagined by man, given to him from the devil himself, pours forth from television, radio, movie theaters, the stage, rock music, magazines, books, and newspapers. Everything is calculated to appeal to the base lust of man; therefore, all of this has become the norm. Men no longer hold to anything decent; chastity, modesty, morality, and marriage vows are laughed at, made fun of, and relegated to the scrap heap of oblivion or to the “Puritan age.” The cry is, “We are free to do our own thing without the restraints of past generations!” But oh, my dear reader, you are not free. You are only *a servant to sin*, shackled by Satan and “taken captive by him at his will” (2Ti 2:26)!

### “Dishonor Their Own Bodies”

“To dishonor their own bodies between themselves” means that men are so given over to the lust of their hearts to “fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3), that they have become bestial—their animal passions have made them like beasts! You can’t pick up a newspaper today without reading reports of rape, incest, sex-related murders, cruelty, viciousness, and the brutality of men and women who have been given over to their depraved, lustful minds. They have become sadists. And when you add alcohol or drugs to this and stir up sexual desires by rock music, men becomes beasts. Brutality becomes the standard of the day.

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<sup>15</sup> **enmity** – deep seated, often mutual hatred and hostility.

This is awful, when men who are already depraved are given up by God to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. But this is the day in which we are living, and men love it because they hate God, His holiness, His restraint, and His way of grace, which is the narrow way in Christ.

Not only is sexual filth and bestial behavior meant by the words “God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves,” but also the *filth of the tongue* that comes from the wicked heart—in the form of cursing, blasphemy, swearing, abusive and vile language, irreverence to God’s name and the name of His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The lust or desire of the heart in expressing itself does so in that which is unclean, impure, dirty, foul, polluted, filthy, lewd, and indecent. This describes the generation in which we are living. This describes the individuals who have been given up by God to their hearts’ desires, to live their lives as they please with no restraints. This is the road to hell, for Proverbs 14:12 tells us, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of *death*.”

You see, men think while going on in the lust and filth of their sins, giving vent to all the cravings of their passions, that all is well with their never-dying souls. They think they will surely go to heaven when they die. But they are deceived! All the time they are heading straight for the pit of hell! “Many will say to me [Christ] in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ...And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22, 23).

Let me probe your heart. Are you saying, “Lord, Lord,” and all the while “living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit 3:3)? Are you saying, “Lord, Lord,” and all the while living in the lusts of your flesh, “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3)? Are you saying, “Lord, Lord,” and all the while living in subjection to your animal impulses: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, greed, and covetousness? Then you are *deceived*, for covetousness and greed are idolatry, deifying self and other created things instead of God (Col 3:5).

### **Personal Application: Holiness**

But the salvation that God gives in Christ is a *holy* salvation, for it is written that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). Holiness is worked in our hearts and lives by the *Holy* Spirit; we trust in a *holy* God who has called us with a *holy* calling to a life of *holiness*; and by the grace of God, we are going to a *holy* place called heaven, and nothing shall enter into that place that defiles or works abomination or makes a lie. Therefore, “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, *be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1Pe 1:15, 16).

My dear reader, are you walking in a way of holiness, desiring to live a holy life in Christ? Or are you walking after the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Are you a child of wrath? We should think upon these things and make our calling and election sure (2Pe 1:10).

You may say, “But I don’t live like that! I am moral and upright and live a clean life. I wouldn’t think of living the way you have described today!” All right, then, let me ask another question: does the following verse apply to you? “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them *that do them*” (Rom 1:32). Do you take pleasure in the sins of others? Do you read the filthy things that are written about the lives of others and take pleasure in what they do? Do you read the things that are written about the debauched lives of rock stars and movie and TV stars and take pleasure in what they do? Do you sit and watch movies and TV with delight and pleasure? And are you taken up with the infidelity, fornication, whoremongering, lying, stealing, and everything else they portray? Then you are partakers with them, for you are putting your *stamp of approval* upon their lives and the lives of those they portray! If you like that kind of entertainment, if you like to eat that kind of garbage and to drink from those kinds of wells, you are really revealing your own heart! You are showing that you *approve of sin*: therefore, your heart is in the same condition as theirs. Deep down in your heart, you actually care nothing for true holiness and righteous living before God.

God help us to seek His face and turn by His grace from our wicked ways, confessing our sins and our need of Christ and His cleansing blood!

## **9. “Vile affections”—Romans 1:26-27**

*“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."*

## What "Vile Affections" Are

As we move on in our study, we see that God, in His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, has not only given men and women over to *uncleanness*, but also to *vile affections*. Look at verse 26:

*"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections [to disgraceful, dishonorable, shameful passions]; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature."*

Even the women perverted the natural use of their bodies to the unnatural—turning against God's natural plan and indulging in sexual sin with each other. And in verse 27 we read,

*"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."*

Or to put it another way, "In like manner also even the males, leaving the natural use of the female, were consumed with passion for one another, men with men working abomination, and incurring in their own persons the inevitable penalty of their own perversion."

These verses of Scripture describe for us the awful ruin of man in sin and the depths to which men and women fall in sin when God gives them up to their hearts' desires. He gives them over to the most disgraceful, shameful, and degrading sins: lesbianism and homosexuality, or sodomy. He abandons them to their own hearts' desires, and they receive in *this life* the inevitable penalty of their own perversion and in *the life to come*, judgment and wrath. This is what happens when men and women, young people, boys and girls change the truth of God into a lie and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. You and I both know that this describes the day in which we are living, for we see the results of this perversion everywhere.

In Luke 17:28-33 and the related Scriptures, we are warned that judgment fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah because their sin was very grievous against God.

*"And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them" (Gen 19:5).*

*"And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous" (Gen 18:20).*

*"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev 18:22).*

*"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luk 17:28-33).*

Their sin cried unto God because of its greatness, and so in the same way judgment has fallen and will fall upon our nation and the nations of the earth. For this same sin cries unto God because of its greatness against His holiness. We are seeing homosexuality and homosexual sympathizers, who have become bolder and bolder. Instead of "hiding in the closet" as in years past, they have gone public, boasting of their unnatural and ungodly perversion. Is this not reminiscent of the days of Lot? They are doing the same thing that Isaiah said of ruined Jerusalem and fallen Judah: "They declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not! Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves" (Isa 3:9). Are we not seeing this today? Are not men receiving in their own bodies that recompense of this sin? Of course they are! What about the diseases we are seeing today among homosexuals? AIDS is spreading like wildfire. Is not this the judgment of God upon sin—*willful disobedience to the Word of God*?

Satan has men blinded to their condition before God and to the judgment that awaits them because of sin! We are in the days of Lot, when they did eat and drink, buy and sell, plant and build, at the same time indulging in the awful sin of homosexuality: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all!" Oh, that we would hear God's warning: "*Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed*" (Luk 17:28, 30)!

The sins of sodomy, homosexuality, and lesbianism God *hates*, and yet we are asked to accept and sanction that which God in His holy Word has called an abomination in His sight. We are asked to give people “their right” to practice and promote their immoral acts because they enjoy what they are doing, and claim it is only an “alternative life-style,” even though God’s Word says they are marked for judgment.

## What God’s Word Says

To the law and to the testimony: what does God’s Word say about sodomy, that is, homosexuality and lesbianism? It is not what we think or what some news reporter, or talk show host, or teacher, or preacher, or psychiatrist, or some poor soul caught in this sin says about it. But this is what God’s Word says: “Even their women did change the natural use into that which is against *nature*.” Lesbianism is *perversion*. “And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (1:26-27). These passages leave no doubt that God’s Word says lesbianism and male sodomy are “error.” His attitude toward the practice has not changed because He does not change. It is still a sin that the Holy God *hates*.

In addition, very strong language is used in Deuteronomy 23:18: “Thou shall not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.” To show His utter contempt for this awful sin, God calls a homosexual a dog!<sup>16</sup> It makes me shudder to think of the awfulness of this sin in the sight of God and of God’s pronounced judgment against it.

With this thought in mind, let us look back at verses 26 and 27 in Romans 1, where we find that the words “women” and “men” should be translated “female” and “male.” This puts them on the level of beasts, *given over* to the disgraceful affections of their own depraved hearts, *abandoned by God* to the awful judgment which awaits those who practice these sins and never come to repentance and faith.

Further, in Leviticus 18:22 God’s Word calls this sin an *abomination* in His sight: “Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is *abomination*.” Or, it could read, “Homosexuality is absolutely forbidden, for *it is an enormous sin*.” This same commandment is still in effect today, for God has not changed.

Now look at Leviticus 20:13 and hear God’s judgment upon this sin in the days of Moses: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.” As God has not changed, His attitude toward homosexuality is still the same today. *Sodomites will be punished* in the Day of Judgment unless they confess, repent, and are washed in the blood of Christ. The penalty for homosexual acts is *death to both parties*. They have brought it upon themselves. Let me repeat: *God has not changed*, and this sin still bears the death penalty, not in man’s courts, but before the bar of God’s court. This is not my word but God’s Word. Saying it is not a sin does not alter God’s Word. Saying that what you do is none of my business does not alter the fact that it *is sin* in the sight of God. Sodomy will bring down the wrath of God upon you if you do not confess, repent, and look to the blood of Christ for cleansing.

This sin of homosexuality is wrecking lives by the millions across the world, and the casualties continue to increase as it is being presented to our young people as an “alternative life-style.” But they are not told about the loneliness such a life causes. They are not told that half of the people caught in this sin are dependent upon alcohol and drugs to keep them going. They are not told that over half of the suicides in this country are among homosexuals. They are not told that sexual diseases are rampant among those who practice this sin. They are not told of the guilt and shame felt by those caught in this mesh of Satan. They are not told that once caught in this sin, there is usually no escape except by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Then there is AIDS, the awful judgment that has fallen because of this sin. Let men say what they will: this disease is *a judgment from God* upon those who have defied Him and have said they will not turn from their wicked ways.

Here is what the New Testament has to say about the sin of homosexuality. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 we read,

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor *effeminate*...shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Then in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 we read,

<sup>16</sup> “‘The price of a dog’ is . . . a figurative expression used to denote the gains of the *kadesh* (*sodomite*), who was called *kinaidos* by the Greeks, and received his name from the dog-like manner in which the male *kadesh* debased himself.” *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F., Hendrickson: Peabody, MA.

“The best evidence for the existence of homosexual shrine prostitutes among the Canaanites comes, not from Canaanite literature, but from the Biblical text . . . it would appear, however, that the male prostitute was found in Judah along with his female counterpart until the purge by Asa. Together, they obviously represented a pagan, and therefore local, influence on the religion of Judah (Deu 23:17; 1Ki 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2Ki 23:7). The term ‘dog’ appears to have been used in Scripture to refer to homosexual cult prostitutes (Deu 23:18). Leviticus uses a strong word ‘detestable’ to describe homosexual practice (18:22; 20:13). *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Elwell, W. A., & Elwell, W. A. 1997, c1996, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids.

*“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind...and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine”*

What a word this is! God’s Law is against sin, and listed right along with murderers and kidnappers is the man or woman who is snared in the sin of homosexuality. The Law of God is against those who persist in this sin, and the soul that sins must die the second death in hell!

## **Personal Application**

I don’t know who God has given up to this sin of homosexuality, so I will not say who can and cannot be saved, for surely God’s grace is sufficient to save any sinner. But I do know that if anyone caught in this sin is ever to be saved, he must face fairly and squarely the fact that what he is indulging in is *sin*, and that only by the grace and power of God can he be delivered from it. The homosexual seeking help must begin at that point or he will not begin at all. This sin, like any other sin, must be confessed and laid out before God as *sin*. If he is ever to be delivered, the poor soul must repent of it, hate it, turn from it, forsake it, and flee from it by the power of the Holy Spirit and by His grace, and turn to God in Christ, believing on Him as Lord and Savior.

## **10. “Reprobate mind”—Romans 1:28**

*“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”*

### **What a “Reprobate Mind” Is**

We come now to verse 28 in our study, and we find that God has given men and women over to a *reprobate mind*: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things which are not convenient,” that is, to do those things which are indecent, improper, and loathsome, until they were filled—permeated and saturated—with every kind of sin (see verses 29, 30, and 31).

Here in this verse we have man given over by God to the depravity of his own heart, to work every evil imaginable, until he is so saturated with sin that he is like the devil himself, nothing but sin and wickedness personified! A literal translation of this verse is: “And so, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or approve of Him or consider Him worth the knowing, God gave them over to a base and condemned mind to do things not proper or decent but loathsome.” Again, let us read it like this: “Moreover, since they considered themselves too high and mighty to acknowledge God, He allowed them to become the slaves of their degenerate minds, to perform unmentionable deeds.” Or, we can read it this way: “And even after putting God to the test for the purpose of approving Him should He meet their specifications, and finding that He did not, they disapproved of holding Him in their full and precise knowledge. God in turn gave them up to a mind that would not meet the test for that which a mind was meant, to practice those things which were not becoming or fitting.”

What these different translations bring out is this: The human race has put God to the test for the purpose of approving Him should He meet their specifications (which they have laid down for a God who would be to their liking). And finding that He did not meet those specifications, they refused to approve Him as the God to be worshiped, or to have Him in their knowledge. This is also true of man today: he has put God on trial and found that God is not a God to his liking, so he worships and serves himself, and turns to his own way, walking in the paths of darkness and depravity. Then, because man has rejected God after trial, God has *given him over* to a mind incapable of discharging the functions for which a mind is meant. The things of salvation and of God are foolishness to him.

Oh, how deep is the depravity of the human mind, affections, and will! So depraved is that which makes up man’s soul—his understanding (his reasoning capacity), his affections (his loving capacity), and his will (his volitional capacity)—that the divine distinctions of right and wrong are confused and lost, so God’s condemnation cannot but fall on him at last.

You can fight and argue all you want to about man's free will in salvation, but this verse of Scripture puts all your arguments to naught; for your will can only choose what your understanding and affections (your reasoning capacity and your loving capacity), tell you to choose. And since God has given you over to a depraved mind in the fall, you will only choose that which is sinful and evil every time! Apart from the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, no man would be saved. For by nature no man wants the God of the Bible to rule over him; much less does he want to fall down and worship that God. After all, this God does not meet man's specifications. Man wants to go to heaven and yet have his fill of sin while still on this earth.

This is the reason man hates the terms of God's narrow way in salvation, which is a complete surrender of the *whole* man to the *whole* Christ and bowing to Him as Lord. This is the reason man hates the terms of discipleship, which means *forsaking all things and taking up the cross daily and following Christ* (Luk 14:33, 9:23). This verse teaches that all men, in all ages and *under all conditions*, *hate God* and will not seek Him. They will not trust in Christ, nor bow to His Lordship, nor serve and worship Him daily apart from the operation of the mighty grace of God in their souls. The effectual work of the Holy Spirit enlightens and draws the soul to Christ in saving faith and repentance. In other words, every sinner is completely dependent upon God in the salvation of his soul.

## The Effects

Now let us look at the effects of God's giving man over to a reprobate mind. When you understand what this word *reprobate* means, you can then fully understand its effects. It means that man has a mind that is depraved, corrupt, debauched, immoral, sinful, unprincipled, degenerate, evil, wicked, and shameless. All of these things are seen in the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, men and women, young and old, those in high positions of society, and those in the low strata of society, people of all races, nations, and tongues. There is no difference—all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. These things are also found in those who profess religion without Christ, and in those who profess no religion at all.

Let us take the case of *abortion*. I ask, "Who has legalized the mass murder of our unborn babies? Who are they that would put their stamp of approval upon such evil, wicked, unprincipled, immoral, debauched, and shameless acts?" They are men and women who are in high office, who have great education, who for the most part are rich, and who pride themselves in being people of knowledge and understanding. They are men and women who sit in the highest court of our land. Yet God has given them up to a reprobate and depraved mind to do those things which are not convenient.

Who carries out these acts of legalized abortion which the reprobate minds of the learned have ordered—the butchering of our unborn babies? It is some of our doctors and nurses who perform these shameless acts, who, because of their wicked, debauched, unprincipled and covetous hearts and minds, do those things which are not convenient [that is, not decent], and have sold themselves to the devil to work these abominable deeds. Verse 28 reads that God has given them all over to a reprobate mind.

Another effect upon man today is in the craze for *drugs* of all types—especially cocaine. Why will doctors and lawyers and bankers—men of high education—sink so low as to be part of such a group that distributes mind-blinding, mind-ruining drugs which have blighted the lives of millions of our young people? It is because of the covetousness of their depraved hearts that they can commit such shameless acts, and have no concern for the welfare of the millions which they kill and deform! God has given them over to a reprobate mind "to do those things which are not convenient."

Yet another effect upon man is found in the debauched, degenerate, wicked, unprincipled and shameless writings and pictures called *pornography*, which has swept our land today, appealing to the base animal lusts and desires of men and women, young people, boys and girls. You see, the mind that stoops to such debauchery can be nothing less than a reprobate mind, given over by God to do those things which are not convenient. The people who write, photograph, print and sell such material are only motivated by greed and covetousness; they care nothing for the souls of those whom they destroy!

All of this has led to the *worship of the human body*. All man can think of is that which is filthy and vile, evil and wicked. Especially the female body has been exposed, glorified, and made a national deity by our newspapers, magazines, books, radios, televisions, stage and movie theaters. Our society bows down before her shrine in daily ritual, as the heathen nations did both before and after the time of our Lord.

Everywhere you turn today—drugstores, supermarkets, eating places, hotels and motels, and on the street—we see and read of the sex goddess, the sex god, until it is sickening. Men and women, to their own shame, have glorified and worshiped the naked body as a thing of beauty, which God says is an abomination in His sight. Our nakedness is our shame; it shows that we are sinners! God made clothes of animal skins for our first parents in the Garden of Eden; for after they had sinned, they found that they were naked. So to unclothe our bodies and to parade them before man to be lusted after and worshiped is a slap in the face of God and openly says to Him, "I am *not* a sinner, and I defy You to punish me! I am going to walk as I please and do as I please, and You and Your Word *will not* tell me what to do!" So here again we see God

giving men and women, young people, boys and girls over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient, which are not decent, but are corrupt, debauched and wicked.

There are many more effects of the expression “God gave them over to a reprobate mind,” but I will only mention one more now, which to me is the saddest of them all. It is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12:

*“Then shall that Wicked be revealed . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

The most awful effect of them all comes when God gives people over to reprobate minds by allowing *false preachers* to fill their pulpits and false teachers to fill their seats of learning. Both the men who teach and their converts are sent a strong delusion that they should believe a lie and be damned. This is the effect in religion of God’s *giving men over* to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. And what are these things? Men deny in word and deed the holiness of God. They deny the awfulness of sin that separates them from the holy God, and they deny the awful condition of their depravity. They deny the sovereignty of God, and they put the will of man upon a level with God. Man becomes his own savior and lives by his own laws and rules, which allow him to live in sin and rebellion against God.

Preaching and teaching that glorifies man’s will above God’s sovereignty in salvation, denies the one thing that man needs to know above all others to be saved: he is a radically depraved sinner, helpless and hopeless. He must have the gracious work of God’s Spirit in his soul to be saved; and he must trust the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone is our salvation. To miss this is to be deceived, to believe a lie, and to be damned!

## 11. “Unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness”—Romans 1:29

*“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers”*

### Review

We have looked at what verse 28 of Romans 1 means regarding the helplessness and hopelessness of man’s salvation apart from the mighty grace of God. He needs the effectual work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, call, enlighten, and convert him. We showed you some of the effects of this upon man’s understanding, affections, and will in our day: *abortion, drugs, pornography, and strong delusions* from false preachers, who fill our pulpits, and from false teachers, who fill our seats of learning. These strong delusions lead people to deny the one and only true and sovereign God and to make man’s depraved will equal with God’s will. In this way, man chooses and becomes his own savior and lord. Once again let me state this truth: man in his natural state with a depraved, degenerate, and reprobate mind will *never* admit that salvation is *of the Lord* unless God’s Spirit works in him. He doesn’t believe that Romans 9:16 is true: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

No, the natural man will not acknowledge that God is *sovereign*. Although he knows by the revelation of nature and conscience that God exists, he is an atheist at heart by his own choice. This leads us into verses 29, 30, and 31 of our exposition, where we find the longest list of sins to be found in the Scriptures—twenty-three in all! Now this is not a complete list or an exhaustive catalog of sin. But it does convey to us the horror of those sins, which enslave the natural man in moral chaos. This does not mean that all these sins are found in every individual upon the earth. But it does mean that all men are guilty of some of them, and some men are guilty of all of them. And all men certainly have the propensity<sup>17</sup> to commit them all because every man is a depraved soul with a degenerate mind. Therefore, he needs to be regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Notice the wording in verse 28 and the explanation in verses 29, 30, and 31. Verse 28 says that “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Then follows the expressions “being filled with” and “full

<sup>17</sup> **propensity** – an inborn inclination; a tendency.



of.” These mean that every person who has ever been born, except for our Lord Jesus Christ, is permeated and saturated with every kind of sin. This establishes the truth of the *total depravity* of mankind, including man’s understanding, his affections, and his will.

What these verses of Scripture teach us is that every man has sinned and come short of the glory of God, and stands guilty before God as a condemned sinner, having broken His holy and righteous law. They teach us that every man is filled with all unrighteousness and can only grow worse in sin, until he is brought before the judgment of God—to be pronounced worthy of eternal torment in hell for his rebellion against God.

Also these verses teach us that if any man is to be delivered from the power, penalty, and presence of these sins, he must be regenerated by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. He must be given a new nature, a new heart. He must be granted repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. He must be given the power to look by faith to Christ and His blood for cleansing from these sins. He must be given God’s grace to believe and be justified. His justification is grounded in the imputed righteousness of Christ, which He alone worked out for us by His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into glory as our living High Priest.

## “Unrighteousness” and Ungodliness

After laying this groundwork, we need to work our way through this list of sins and see how the Scriptures picture the awful plight of sinful man outside of Christ. Verse 29 begins by saying that sinners are filled with all *unrighteousness*. The best way to define this word is to see how it is used in verse 18 of Romans 1. There we read,

*“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*

Now the word *ungodliness* denotes our sins against the first table of the Law and shows our attitude and relationship toward God—a *vertical* relationship. The word *unrighteousness* is injustice in our dealings with our fellow man. There is in the heart of every man a passionate desire to inflict injustice and wrong upon others, as evidenced by Cain slaying his brother Abel. For more than 6,000 years, men have committed acts of injustice and violence against their fellowman, with no regard for the commandment to love their neighbor as themselves. “Ungodliness” is *sin against God*, and “unrighteousness,” as it is used here, is *sin against our fellowman*.

Now let me point out something here. If you have never understood that you are an ungodly sinner in your *vertical relationship* to God, then you will never understand your unrighteousness in your *horizontal relationship* toward your fellowman. The subtle thing that has happened today in preaching, teaching, and Bible studies across this nation is that the focus is on the horizontal relationship to our fellowman—how to get along with our neighbor or our spouse or our children. If that’s all you learn, you will never understand your ungodliness—your broken vertical relationship to God. You’ll die and go to hell without hope and without mercy! This is a subtle trick of Satan. It is taught everywhere! Men are taught how to get along with each other on the horizontal plane, while nothing is ever said about their vertical relationship to God, that is, that men are ungodly sinners in His sight. I say it again: “If you never know that in your vertical relationship to God, you stand as an ungodly sinner before Him; and if you never come to repentance, then you will go on in unrighteousness, as is taught here, and never be saved!”

## “Fornication”

The next sin is the sin of *fornication*, or sexual lust in thought and in deed. We discussed this in our study of verse 24, where we read that “God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” Fornication tops the list as the most prominent of the vices with which the heathen were filled because it was practiced even as a religious act to heathen gods.

It is the same today, for men and women, young people, and even boys and girls are selling their souls upon the altar of lust to satisfy their god, which is themselves. It is a sin which fills the hearts of men today, a sin which has brought on disease, heartache, broken homes, broken lives, and ruined reputations. Unless you repent and cleanse your guilty soul by faith in the blood of Christ, fornication will bring you down to the grave and hell in shame. You will suffer under God’s judgment for ever and ever.

## “Wickedness”

The next sin with which men are filled is *wickedness*. This word in Scripture means depravity, iniquity, evil purposes, desires, and wicked ways. It reveals the heart of men because men delight in doing that which is wrong and sinful. 1 John 5:19 tells us that the whole world lies in wickedness, takes pleasure in it, and abounds in it. Wickedness is the word used in Ephesians 6:12 for the followers of Satan in the spiritual realm—the “hosts of wickedness.” It is a kindred word to that

used for the devil, whenever he is called “the wicked one.” David said in 1 Samuel 24:13 that “wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.” All men are wicked by nature; it comes from the heart, from the affections that flow from the fountain of evil waters within.

### “Covetousness”

The next sin given here is the sin of *covetousness*, the sin that breaks the Tenth Commandment: “Thou shall not covet” (Exo 20:17). It is a sin that describes the heart of every man, for every man by nature is greedy, grasping, lustful, selfish, over-reaching, craving for more and more and still more. Covetousness and greed are like the leech that cries, “Give, give, give! I want more!” In Ephesians 5:3 the word applies to ravenous self-assertion in matters of sex at the expense of others, and this is prohibited in the Tenth Commandment. In Colossians 3:5, the Holy Spirit defines covetousness as *idolatry*, and idolatry is the worship of something other than God:

*“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

My prayer is that there would go up from our hearts today a deep, mournful cry against this sin of covetousness, which bows down before the idol of *self* and what self desires and lusts after! For it is a sin *against God*, and a sin so prevalent that it is running rampant today. It is a sin that is rooted so deeply in every heart that it can only be brought to the light, confessed, hated, and turned from by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit. It can only be blotted out before the eyes of a sin-hating God as it is confessed, repented of, turned from, and hated—and then forgiven and cleansed in the blood of Christ by faith.

### Personal Application

Oh, my dear reader, I ask you, “Have you ever repented of your wicked heart? Have you ever cried unto God to deliver you from your wicked heart and wicked desires, which are sin against Him? Have you ever hated your wicked ways and desired to be washed from your wicked sins in the blood of Christ? Does sin trouble you and bring you to your knees, crying for mercy?” If not, you are in a terrible state: hell awaits you. A little tear, a little sigh, a little profession, a little doing what you think is right will not avail you in the Day of Judgment! There must be a radical cleavage between you and sin. When Christ makes you a new creation, then you can say you belong to Christ! Old things must pass away, and all things must become new (2Co 5:17).

You are deceived to think you are on the road to heaven, if you have not departed from your wicked ways and your evil companions. Isaiah 55:7 reads, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” You are deceived to think that you belong to Christ, when in fact you are not willing to depart from sin and wickedness.

It does not matter how good your profession may look, or how many preachers have told you that you are saved. If there has not been a radical cleavage between you and your sins, between you and your former life, then you know nothing of the cross of Christ and what it means to be saved by God’s grace. You cannot say with the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” No, all you can glory in is your profession, your “decision.” If you get the least bit disturbed, you assure yourself that all is well by saying, “You know, ‘Once saved, always saved.’”

But, my dear reader, God’s Word says that you are lost. You are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Unless you come before God as a repentant, believing sinner, you will hear those awful words in the Day of Judgment by the Lord Jesus Himself: “Depart from me, for I never knew you.” Those are strong words, but they are the Word of God.

In these days when sin seemingly has become a virtue, we need to have sin set before us as *sin*. We need to know what sin is and how it is defined. We need to name it, to know its awfulness, its foulness, and its stench before Almighty God. We need to know God’s hatred for it. We need to know the judgment that awaits every sinner, who dies in his sin outside of Christ.

You can never know Christ’s forgiveness of your sins until you know what sin is, what a sinner you are, and how ruined you are because of sin. You need to know your helplessness because of sin and the hopelessness of ever delivering yourself from it apart from the grace of God. You need the Holy Spirit working in you to regenerate, enlighten, call, convert and give repentance and faith.

## 12. “Maliciousness; full of envy, murder”—Romans 1:29

*“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers”*

As we continue to look at the heart of man and his sad state of rebellion against the holy and righteous God, we do not see a pretty sight. For when God gives men over to a reprobate or degenerate or depraved mind, to do those things which are not convenient, they are *filled with these sins* that pour forth from their depraved hearts and minds. We meet these sins in our own life and in the lives of others. We meet them in the home, on the street, in the marketplace, in the workplace, in schools, in colleges and universities, and even in churches; in the rich and poor, learned and unlearned; in our seats of government and the places of ill repute. They pour forth from the hearts of men under all kinds of circumstances, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Just to read this list of sins in Romans 1:29-32 sounds like a roll call of the entire human race, for all can answer to most of these sins, having committed them at sometime in their lives.

The four sins we have considered thus far—unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, and covetousness—give us an insight into the depravity of the human heart. But when you begin to look at the other sins in the list, you know that surely the stench of these “putrefying sores” fills the nostrils of God and causes Him to pour out His wrath upon everyone who does not turn from these sins in true repentance and hatred for them, as they have been committed against the holy and righteous God.

### “Maliciousness”

Continuing our exposition of the awful sins with which men are filled and to which they are given over by God, *maliciousness* is mentioned next. This word denotes ill will, malice, malignity, and the desire to injure. It is a word that means a vicious, hateful, harmful, and merciless disposition—wickedness that is not ashamed to break the law. Surely it is a word that characterizes the heart of every soul outside of Christ. It is a sin that we see manifested every day in every strata of society. It is a sin that needs to be repented of and hated, and for which souls need to turn to Christ for cleansing and forgiveness.

### “Full of Envy”

In verse 29 of Romans 1, we find the expression “*full of envy*.” Now “envy” means to feel displeasure and ill will at the superiority of another in his happiness, success, reputation, or possessions. Envy is a sin which breeds jealousy, resentment, covetousness, greed, spite, and rivalry, and it leads the soul it possesses to hatred and to murder. It was because of envy that the Pharisees delivered up our blessed Lord to be crucified (Mat 27:18). Christ was holy and they were not. So they envied Him, hated Him, and caused Him to be put to death.

Do you have an envious heart, full of jealousy, resentment, and covetousness? If so, you should cry unto God to break its power in your life and deliver you by His grace or it will surely lead you to murder and to hell.

### “Murder”

The next sin mentioned is *murder*, the taking of another’s life. Envy and murder are only a breath apart. Revelation 21:8 says that murderers “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” The sin of murder breaks the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” or “Thou shall do no murder” (Exo 20:13). The sin of murder is certainly one of the worst sins of our day because life is the most precious thing that God can give. A murderer is guilty of taking life which God has given; therefore, he is “playing God” by saying when and how a person should die. God does not look lightly upon those who try to take His place. He alone has the sovereign right to take away life; therefore, He has given us the Sixth Commandment as a hedge about human life to preserve it, for life is sacred to Him.

Yes, the Bible declares human life to be sacred. It is a divine creation, mysterious and magnificent in its origin, and utterly beyond the control or comprehension of any human being. Human life is never to be taken away by the sinful will of others, for how can they tell the full meaning of that life and what it will bring forth? You see, the revelation of God made to man out of His blessed Word proves that He has purposes for *every individual*, stretching far beyond the present. To

terminate a single life is to set yourself up as wiser and superior to God! The immensity of the issues of death is so great, that there can be no sin against humanity and against God greater than taking human life.

God has left a statute upon the pages of His holy Word which He has never repealed. It is found in Genesis 9:6: “Who so sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” If the courts of our land do not exercise capital punishment for murderers, who have “played God” by taking the life of another, then God will not only require the slain person’s blood at the hands of the murderer, but also at the hands of the judges and authorities, who fail to obey God’s righteous law in Romans 13.

In Genesis 4:10, God says to Cain, the first murderer, “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.” Abel’s blood had as many “tongues” as drops, which cried aloud for vengeance. In Psalm 51:14 we hear David crying mightily unto God, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.” Why? Because David had shed the blood of Uriah, even though he had used the sword of the enemy to do it. And Uriah’s blood cried unto God for vengeance. We read in Exodus 21:28 that if a beast killed a man, it was to be stoned to death; and its flesh was not to be eaten. Therefore, if God required the death of a beast, which did not have the use of reason to restrain it, how much more will He be full of wrath against those who take away the life of a precious soul!

### ***Abortion***

This being true then, let me ask you, “How many cries are going up before God today as murderers stalk our streets, enter our homes, and shed the blood of thousands of precious lives?” To the average individual, life is cheap—but not to God. The saddest question of all is, “How many cries are going up today from the blood of millions of unborn babies, murdered through *abortion* and *infanticide*?” These cries are going up to heaven into the ears of a holy, righteous, and sin-hating God. From nearly every hospital, clinic, doctor’s office, and home, the daily cry for vengeance upon those who are shedding the blood of innocent, unborn babies goes up to God. For God Himself made each precious child in His own image and likeness.

Hear it loud and clear, based upon the eternal Word of God, which was written in heaven and is settled forever: abortion is murder, and “no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1Jo 3:15). Except you repent of this sin and turn to God in confession, trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse you from this sin by His precious blood, you shall miss heaven and abide under the wrath of God in hell for eternity. That’s God’s Word, not mine! No murderer has eternal life abiding in him—he cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Every woman who has premeditatedly aborted her unborn child is a murderer in the sight of God. Every midwife, every doctor who has premeditatedly aborted an unborn baby to relieve the mother of an unwanted pregnancy is a murderer in the sight of God because they are “playing God.” They are cutting off a life which God has made, and all life is from God. Every judge who has ruled or who enforces a law that allows abortion upon demand is an accomplice to murder in the sight of God. Every senator and member of Congress, whether at the state or national level, who votes for abortion upon demand is an accomplice. They are murderers in the sight of God and abide under His righteous judgment.

To God, killing our unborn babies is the worst of all crimes being committed in our country today. And it is being done under the guise of protecting the rights of mothers, who are usually only concerned about themselves instead of the God-given privilege of bringing children into the world. God is not unmindful of what is going on! The blood of all these murdered babies cries unto God for vengeance. And unless there is individual repentance and national repentance, God’s judgment is going to fall swiftly and hard upon this country!

God is concerned about that baby in the mother’s womb, for He gave it life. It may have come into being by the normal process of a male and female being joined together as one; but it was God who gave life in conception, and God alone has the right to say when it should be taken away. God’s Word says in Psalm 127:3-5, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.” Children *are* “an heritage” of the Lord; God alone gives little children. Therefore, *woe be unto that woman or man* who destroys them, whether in or out of the womb!

It has always been a strange thing to me that so many doctors, judges, lawyers, and legislators can say that if a baby is killed in the womb, it is *not* murder. But if that same baby is killed after it has come out of the mother’s womb, *then* it is murder. Consistency, where art thou?

Did you ever read the verses in Exodus 21:22-25 that protect the rights of the mother and her unborn? Look at what happened to the man who hurt or killed the unborn: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her [a premature birth or miscarriage] . . . then thou shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” In other words, the unborn child was protected from someone who would murder for money, or from the woman who, for some whim, wanted her pregnancy ended because she did not want her child. You see, the unborn child has rights too. If the unborn child was injured, then God’s Law said life for life; the one hurting the child in any way was to be punished. This is God’s Law; therefore God’s judgment rests upon our murderous nation today because of all the shedding of innocent blood.

There are no Scriptures in the Bible that show us the beauty and preciousness of life any plainer than Psalm 139:13-16. It describes for us the life of the unborn child and how God looks upon it. Listen as David speaks of himself in his mother's womb:

*"Thou hast possessed my reins; Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

When we read this Scripture, all the talk about a fetus "not being a person" goes to the four winds. Note carefully: every part of this baby, who later grew up to be David the psalmist, was fashioned under the hand of God. David said that it was "my substance." He said, "I was made in secret . . . all my members were written . . . when as yet there was none of them." David's body was being formed; David himself was being curiously wrought in the womb of his mother. That tiny life, which was being formed in the womb, was David, David's substance, David's body. He was a person. And so is everyone who is conceived. *Life begins at conception because* God gives life. Therefore, let me repeat: abortion is murder in the sight of God. And this sin of infanticide goes crying to God for vengeance.

### Personal Application

Oh, that our lawyers and judges and doctors and legislators would hear the Word of God and wipe their abortion laws from our books! Oh, that they would not be party to Satan's scheme of completely abolishing our families, nor of putting a license upon the sins of fornication and adultery, which foster this practice of murdering unborn babies!

Let each one of us, who knows the Lord in reality, cry unto God for revival and for an outpouring of His Spirit upon us in this hour. Oh, that confession of this sin would go up before God! Oh, that true repentance would be wrought in every heart that is guilty of it. Oh, that we would turn from this wicked practice and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for cleansing by the merits of His precious blood!

## 13. "Debate, deceit"—Romans 1:29

*"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers"*

### "A Reprobate Mind"

We have now finished verse 28, where we read that "God gave them [men] over to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things which are not convenient." Verses 29-32 follow, with a description of the many sins which men are filled with:

*"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."*

The word *reprobate* (v. 28) was used in Biblical times for coins when they were lightweight, for metals when they had too much dross, and for soil when it was sterile, that is, when it would produce no food. So when the word *reprobate* is used here, it means that the natural mind, the mind of man outside of Christ is sterile regarding spiritual things or reprobate concerning and approving of God. So the natural mind of man disapproves of God and is unfit to comprehend Him, for the natural man does not know God. That is why we read in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: "For they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And again in Romans 8:7-8, "The carnal [or natural] mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Every man who is unsaved is walking in the flesh, and has a sterile or reprobate mind concerning God. He cannot comprehend Him, he cannot approve of Him; all he does is disapprove. To what he reads in the Bible concerning God, he

says, “Away with that! I don’t want it! That’s not the God I want!” It is just as we read in Psalm 14:1: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God [or, ‘No God for me!’].”

The inevitable result of God’s abandoning man to a reprobate mind was that all men were given over to practice things that are “not convenient,” things that are not fitting, things that are forbidden, things that are shameful. What we must keep in mind is that these things that fill men up are known to God. They are not hidden from His eyes. Listen to Hebrews 4:12-13:

*“For the word that God speaks is alive and full of power—making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword [or surgeon’s scalpel], penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [that is, of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. And not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open and exposed, naked and defenseless to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” [Amplified].*

This is the reason men hate the Word of God, the preaching of the Word of God, and the requirements of a holy God. When that Word penetrates, it goes to the deepest part of our nature, “exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.”

## **Total Depravity**

Therefore, we must not forget as we look at this list of horrible sins, that God says men are filled with these things. That does not necessarily mean that all of these sins are outwardly manifested in every member of the human race, but that the seeds of all these things are a pervasive part of our make-up. By nature every one of us is corrupt because of our fall in Adam. The heart of every man is essentially evil, and all that is wrong with humanity comes from our hearts.

As Mark 7:21 tells us, “For *from within, out of the heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” The greatest mistake we can make is to think that man is naturally good, that there is something in man which can satisfy the divine, holy nature of God, that there is a divine spark in each man which must merely be fanned to flame. The Bible teaches the opposite. The Word of God clearly shows that man is naturally evil with no spiritual understanding of God. This is the basis of the blessed Doctrine of the Grace of God, giving salvation to those who put their trust in the Savior, graciously provided for sinners in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will never know the grace of God in His love toward sinners, until we know the deep depravity of our own heart. The extent to which the Holy Spirit shows us our heart is in the hands of a sovereign God. But He will show us our heart under Holy Spirit conviction and lead us to know that we are sinners in need of the grace of God as it appears in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are those who deny the Doctrine of Total Depravity on the grounds that it fails to recognize any good in man. But the presence of all this evil in man does not deny the existence of a “natural goodness” in varying degrees. For example, I loved my wife and children and treated them kindly before God saved me, but this natural goodness only made it possible for me to live together in some form of unity and harmony with them, but not with God. What the Doctrine of Total Depravity means is that there is no good in man *that can satisfy God*; therefore, all the help that man receives *must originate* in God, and come to man by the grace of God. And it is that grace of God, and the grace of God alone, by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in us, that brings salvation to poor sinners in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **“Debate”**

With these thoughts in mind, let us continue our study of the shameful sins that men have been given over to. The next sin mentioned in verse 29 is the sin of *debate*. This is a sin of strife, contention, discord, fighting or conflict. You know as well as I do that humans come from their mother’s womb in a state of quarreling, contention, bickering, squabbling, and discord. It is our very nature to strive against our fellow man. This was evidenced by the first two brothers that ever lived: Cain murdered his brother Abel because of envy and hatred.

The sin of debate is a sin that is in the heart of every man, because by nature we do not like to be told to obey. We strive against obedience. We do not like to admit that we are wrong, so we strive to prove that we are right. Covetousness and jealousy fill our hearts, resulting in strife and contention against others. And even after God saves us, it takes the power of His grace and Spirit to keep this spirit of conflict, discord, and controversy broken. It is only as we take the blame and lie crying for humility, always taking the low place at the feet of Christ that we are able to walk with love in our hearts. Only in this way can we lay this sin down and be content to walk in peace, whatever it costs us. Only then by the grace of God will we be content.

## “Deceit”

Romans 1:29 also speaks of the sin of *deceit*. Deceit has many synonyms which in themselves are very enlightening, and which show the heart of natural man: hypocrisy, deceptiveness, treachery, betrayal, dishonesty, falsehood, lying, trickery, being two-faced, and insincere. We say that a man who is using deceit does not really mean the same thing in his heart that he says with his mouth. He is using deceit to lure us, to ensnare us, to beguile us. He does not want his true motive known. This was how the deceiver, Satan, beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden. He used deception to lure her into sin and rebellion against God.

The root meaning of the English word *deceit* is the Greek word for “fish bait,” that which entices the fish and covers the fish hook. This is the method Satan has used ever since he caused our first parents to fall, and it is the method used by every one of his children since then. John 8:44 tells us that every man by nature is a spiritual child of his father, the devil; and the lusts of his spiritual father he will do. This is the reason God tells us in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Men lie to themselves and to everyone else because their hearts are deceitful. They play games with themselves. Why? Because they do not want to face the truth of their deceitful heart. They do not want others to know the truth about them because the pride of their heart has deceived them. They go about thinking all is well and crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace (Jer 6:14, 8:11).

Oh, my dear reader, the worst condition you can be in is to be deceived into believing that all is well with your never-dying soul, when in fact you are headed straight for hell! You are deceived because there has never been a work of grace in your soul, and your life has borne no fruit of the Spirit. You are devoid of holiness and have no desire to live a holy life. You play games with your never-dying soul, cheering yourself on that you are a child of God, while at the same time you live in the lust of your heart. You lie, cheat, steal, curse, and always deal in insincerity. You are double-dealing, two-faced, treacherous, and underhanded, all the while lying to yourself and to everyone else.

## Personal Application

This is what the Scripture means when we read, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all . . . deceit.” My prayer is that God by His Spirit will deliver you from a deceitful heart, that He will take away your stony heart and give you a new heart and a new nature, that you may be honest with God and with yourself and your fellowman, and that you will seek for the glory of God only as revealed in the precious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. To speak “Peace, peace” to your soul while you live in a state of deception is committing soul-suicide!

My prayer is that God will open your heart to your soul’s need, and that you’ll stop playing games with your never-dying soul. May you cry to God to open your heart and let you see what is there! Cry to God to make you a self-denying one, who will speak truth and be honest with all men; and who will live that life which God promises to give you by His grace. He will enable you to walk with Him day by day. God hates hypocrisy and two-facedness. The only way we can face a holy and righteous God is by dealing honestly with Him, confessing what is in our heart, pleading for His precious blood to cleanse us.

How we need the grace of God’s Spirit to work in our hearts, to save us from these awful sins, and to give us a hatred for them! We need Him to give us a heart that cries out against these sins and desires to be finished with them! And we need Him to grant us saving faith which looks to Christ and knows that He has put our sins away from God’s sight by the precious blood which He shed so willingly upon Calvary’s cross!

Our only hope is that the Holy Spirit will open our hearts and eyes to our great spiritual need and cause us to seek God’s face in repentance and the blessed Savior in saving faith.

## 14. “Malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud”—Romans 1:29-30

*“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debauchery, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

*Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents”*

## “Malignity”

Let us now look at the sin of *malignity*. The word “malignity” comes from the root word “malice,” which describes a heart of bitterness, ill will, hatred, and hostility. It describes persons who have a vicious and merciless heart. They malign the character of everyone but themselves; and who slander and defame, abuse and blacken, discredit and smear the character of others. They are malignant, that is, they are harmful and hurtful towards others. In other words, they show their depraved heart and life by ill will toward others.

Why will men—men of the church, men of the world, men who profess religion—vilify, abuse, and hurt their wives and children, acting bestially toward them? It is because they are filled with malignity. They have never been born again from above; they have a life to live, but they are dead to spiritual things. To me it is one of the saddest things of our day to see the sin of hatefulness in our homes, churches, and places of business. We let our hearts go out in malice towards others, being spiteful towards them and desiring to hurt them, even to the point of murder. How this sin has turned our homes into battlefields, our churches into places of utter confusion, and our lives into a state of utter hatred toward God and man! It makes me shudder! I have seen this sin of malignity wreck the lives of hundreds, and only by the grace of God have I myself been delivered from its effects and kept from practicing it to the fullest extent that my depraved heart would do if left to myself.

Oh, how I praise my living God for His saving and keeping grace that causes me to cry out after Him, to seek His face and pray for a pure heart, a loving heart, a compassionate heart towards my fellow man! My prayer is, “Lord, deliver me from such a life of hatred and bitterness!” He and He alone is our hope for a life of love, compassion, and caring, reaching out and touching others in love.

## Sins of the Tongue

The next two sins go together, for *whisperers are gossips* and *backbiters are slanderers*. What gossips do secretly, slanderers do openly. These sins of the tongue, which flow from the depraved heart, are sins which are wicked and vicious, harmful and hateful, ruthless and diabolical. They defame and smear the characters of others secretly and openly, leaving the ones accused with no way to defend themselves. They often cause those listening to such gossip and slander to turn on the ones accused without cause. These sins are in the deepest parts of our depraved nature and show themselves every day in our homes, churches, schools, and in the marketplace. They are sins hated by God because they break His holy law: “Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor” (Exo 20:16).

The Scriptures call slandering “smiting with the tongue” (Jer 18:18). It is possible to smite others without ever touching them, and no physician can heal the wounds of the tongue because they go deep into the soul. Slander is a great sin because he who commits it is acting like the devil, who is a liar from the beginning (Joh 8:44). The slanderer wounds three at one time: the one who is slandered; the one to whom he reports the slander, by causing uncharitable thoughts to spring up against the party being slandered; and his own soul, by spreading what is false and thereby breaking the Ninth Commandment.

Slander is a great sin and one we all stand guilty of. Therefore, let us cry unto the living God in confession and repentance, seeking grace and mercy in Christ. Let us seek the cleansing that is offered from this foul sin through the blood of Christ. My cry is, “Oh, my Lord, deliver me from such a tongue that the slanderer carries with him daily! Give me in its place a tongue to praise Thee and not to speak evil of my neighbor or friend or loved one!” Colossians 4:6 is another portion of Scripture which I plead daily against this sin: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

## “Haters of God”

We move on now to look at the sin of *hating God*, or as stated in our text, *haters of God*. What? Haters of Him in Whose hands our breath is? Haters of Him, Who is all goodness, Who causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine? The One who gives us our daily bread, the One who clothes us and watches over us? Is man so depraved that he hates the God Who made him in His own image? The Scriptures confirm that he does: “The carnal mind [the fleshly mind, the natural mind of man] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). You see, man hates God’s holiness, His justice, His sovereignty, and even His mercy—especially in the gracious and merciful way in which it comes to us in our Lord Jesus Christ

This is an awful sin to lay at the doorstep of man, but it is true. Man will do anything but love God, acknowledge Him, serve and worship Him. Man will not submit to the authority of God’s rule in his heart. Man will do anything but pray—and I mean secret prayer. One of the surest marks of the people of God is that they pray. Man will run from God, like



Adam did; but he will never run to God, unless God by His regenerating Spirit and grace gives him a new heart. Only the new birth enables sinners to seek Christ, to desire Christ, and to be willing to leave all and follow Christ. Men talk about their free will to seek after and love and serve God. But it is not so because man by nature hates God. For him to love, serve, and worship God, he must be freed by a power greater than himself, before he will close in with Christ.

One of the things that the Holy Spirit showed me under conviction was that I was a hater of God and did not want Him to rule over me. I say it from the depths of my heart, that to admit out loud to God that I indeed hated Him was the hardest thing I ever did, but it was true. I hated Him and would have never come to Him, desired Him, or loved Him apart from the gracious, almighty work of His Holy Spirit in my soul. Oh, how I praise Jesus! He loved me and gave Himself for me and patiently drew me unto Himself by His cords of love! Do you praise God for breaking the hatred of God in your heart? *Has He broken it in you?*

## “Despiteful”

Next in the list of sins which God gives men over to is the sin of being *despiteful*. This is another sin that resides deep in the recesses of the soul, for each man in his heart holds his fellowman in contempt. “Despite” shows itself in resentment, bitterness, ridicule, and disdain for others. Even though this spirit of despite and contempt may never come to the surface, it still hides in the heart. It causes men to despise the Spirit of grace, and it keeps them from Christ.

## “Pride”

Closely associated with the sin of despitefulness is the sin of *pride* (v. 30). Now pride is another sin God hates, for we have nothing to be proud of. All that we have has come from the hand of God. Pride is a sin that is universal: haughtiness, arrogance, conceit, inordinate self-esteem, vanity, and vainglory are as common as the air we breathe. You and I both know this is true. Ours is a proud, defiant age—internationally, nationally, socially, and personally. Yes, the sin of pride is responsible for much of the confusion, sorrow, heartache, and tragedy in our world today.

The awfulness of the sin of pride is that it deceives you concerning yourself as a sinner, and concerning God as the Holy One. Look at verse 3 of the Book of Obadiah: “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground?” Man’s question reveals his pride! But see God’s answer in verse 4: “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.” Yes, every person will be brought down, for we read in Isaiah 2:11-12 these words, straight from the Spirit of our great God:

*“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day, for the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.”*

This sin of pride turned angels to demons and turned Lucifer to Satan. This is the sin that wrecked all mankind when it crept out of heaven into paradise. Proud man wanted to be like God and take His place. Pride keeps man from admitting that he is lost and does not know the way out of the sad condition he is in. Pride closes the heart against God, and no light gets into the darkest part of the heart.

Pride makes a man believe all is well with his never-dying soul: he goes to church and gives of his means for its support, while all the time his heart is closed against the light of the Gospel. He knows nothing of the reality of Christ and daily communion with Him. He leaves off prayer and the study of God’s Word. He will not humble himself daily before God, or fellowship with God’s people, or sit under the preaching of God’s Word.

God hates the proud heart: it boasts that sin is not the hateful thing God says it is. It doesn’t believe it needs the Savior which God provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. God hates the proud in heart: He calls for repentance and confession of sin today, but your proud heart deceives you into believing there is plenty of time to repent. God hates the proud in heart: He calls for you, a sinner, to come to a complete surrender of all you have and all you hope to be; but pride deceives your heart into believing that a *partial* surrender is acceptable with God.

## Personal Application

I say this to each and every one who is proud in heart: cry unto God for mercy! Come in deep contrition to His throne of grace, crying for mercy! Your only hope lies in Christ and His precious blood, which He shed for ungodly sinners. Come pleading that blood!

I say what the Word of God says, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1Pe 5:6). Be clothed with humility, for “I [God] dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a

contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15). So I say, bow down low at His feet in humble submission to Him, for He alone can break and forgive the proud heart.

*Will you come today?*

## 15. “Boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding”—Romans 1:30-31

*“Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

*Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”*

Sin is nothing but ruin, chaos, and filthiness before God. But it is a true description of your heart and mine by nature. Only the power of the Gospel of the grace of God can save us, redeem us, and change us into saints and children of the living God. That is the reason Paul proclaimed in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” In this Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; for the just shall live by faith.

### “Boasters”

Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2 tell us that *boasters* are associated with the proud in heart, which we studied in the previous chapter. You and I both know that this is a proud world in which we live. Man is proud of who he is, what he has done, and what he can do; therefore, he begins to *boast*. He knows nothing of the condition of his heart before God and does not consider the fact that he possesses nothing but what has been given to him from above. The only difference between a man with an IQ of 180 and an idiot is the fact that a sovereign God made them to differ. Therefore, man has nothing to boast about, for all he possesses comes from a sovereign God.

If you are eaten up with pride and have become conceited, swell-headed, self-applauding, self-flattering, haughty, egotistical, arrogant, and full of boastfulness, I tell you that all of this flows from your wicked and deceitful heart. Boasting is just the opposite of the Christ-like spirit, which is humble, contrite, and self-emptying. Humble men look upon others as being better than themselves. Boasting is a sin that needs to be confessed, repented of, and put away by faith in the precious blood of Christ. Otherwise, you will find out in hell that all your boasting was empty and vain, and your proud heart deceived you.

### “Inventors of Evil Things”

The next expression that engages our attention is the phrase *inventors of evil things*. What does this mean? Is there not enough sin in the world that men would dare to invent more? Are there not enough things to do and see, places to go, pleasures to indulge in, acts of violence to commit, and all manner of eating, drinking and making merry to satisfy the flesh? Are there not enough sins in the world, that men would invent new ways to sin, new ways to defy God’s law, new ways to ruin themselves, and new ways to pervert the natural use of the body?

No, man is never satisfied with the things of this world and of the flesh. These things were never meant to give satisfaction to the natural man, for only Christ can satisfy man’s need. We read in Isaiah 57:20-21, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

Our society, as we all know, is restless and never satisfied. It must always have something new to try. Men have become inventors of evil things. Our drug-crazed society speaks for itself. Why must millions upon millions of our people give themselves over to that which satisfies not and which only brings ruin and death? Because they have tried everything they can think of to satisfy the flesh and its lustful desires, but remain unsatisfied. So their insatiable flesh craves something new. They continually seek greater thrills, thus always inventing new evils. Sinful men are truly like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, and they must have more and more of sin, until it damns them to hell. Isaiah 57:21 is true: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

It is tragic, but true: our young people today see with their eyes and hear with their ears the tragic end of their favorite rock star, movie star, or athlete, who has gone after some new invention of sin. But our young people *still* follow them into the very same sinful practices, as sheep follow the Judas goat that leads them to the slaughter pen and death.

Oh, my dear young people, why go on in such a mad search for pleasure in this life? You will never find it! The only true life and peace and happiness is found in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who calls to you in the Gospel of His grace. The only true satisfaction that can be found in this life is found in Christ alone: Christ alone made true peace by the blood of His Cross. Christ alone brought in the true righteousness, which God will accept as your justification. Christ alone can stir up your heart to seek in Him true pleasure and riches. I plead with you to "seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy ...and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:6-7).

### **"Disobedient to Parents"**

The next sin listed in Romans 1:30 characterizes the heart of every person by nature: *disobedient to parents*. Where do you go today to find a home where children love and obey their parents? They are few and far between. Almost everything in our society is set on destroying the government of the home, where the husband is the head of his wife and where the parents are the head of their children. Disobedience in our homes is the norm. Christ is left out, and His Word is not read, believed or obeyed. The commands of God are laughed at; so our children grow up godless and Christless with no respect for home, parents, man, or God. What has been the result? Our society has become lawless because children are not taught to obey their parents. Everyone does what seems right in his own eyes (Jdg 21:25). We have sown to the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind (Hos 8:7).

Look at the Word of God concerning this matter of obedience of children to their parents. The Fifth Commandment reads,

*"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exo 20:12).*

*"Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness" (Pro 20:20).*

*"For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death" (Mat 15:4).*

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3).*

We see by these verses of Scripture that God commands children to obey their parents. There is set before them a blessing and a curse in both the Old Testament and the New. Therefore, my heart's cry to every child and young person is to heed God's Word: obey your parents in the Lord and receive the blessing of the Lord instead of His curse. Come crying unto Him today for mercy because of your spirit of disobedience. Pray that He will work true repentance in your heart and life. Cry unto God for a new heart that will obey your parents, and trust Christ to deliver you from this sin of disobedience.

### **"Without Understanding"**

We move on now to the next sin to which men given over: being *without understanding*. This means that every person by nature is without spiritual or moral understanding, for we read these words in 1 Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I cannot think of anything more awful than that every man is born into this world without understanding of spiritual things. Every man is unintelligent and stupid regarding spiritual matters; or to put it another way, every man spiritually is saturated with stupidity and ungodliness. A wicked man has no mind for the things which make for salvation.

Even the greatest minds on earth are born into this world as spiritual morons. Therefore, in order to be saved, God must work a miracle of grace in each and every man's heart, mind, and will. This is the teaching of God's Word: *natural man is without understanding*. If a man comes into this world as a spiritual moron, he has no capacity in his understanding, affections, or will to seek after God. God in His sovereign grace and mercy must teach him by His Spirit. There must of necessity be a new creation, a new birth performed, and a new heart and spirit given. Otherwise, there can be no spiritual life.

## Conclusions

We must draw the following conclusions from the list of sins we have been studying from Romans 1:16-32.

1) God in His infinite mercy and grace left us this list of sins to let us know the *awfulness of our sin* and the *righteous judgment we are under*, so we might cry unto Him for salvation in Christ.

2) God in His infinite mercy and grace left us this list of sins to let us know that *Christ alone can deliver us* from the power, penalty, and presence of them. By coming to earth in the form of a man and dying beneath the curse of our sin, Jesus of Nazareth saves sinners.

Herein is love! Herein is sovereign love! Herein is gracious love! Herein is God's love for our never-dying souls!

God did this out of a heart of love and grace for His people so they might be delivered from the wrath to come and the awful curse of His broken Law. Oh, my friend, has God's Spirit ever opened your heart to see your lost, cursed condition before Him? Has He ever granted you repentance and faith to flee to Christ from His wrath which is to come? Have you been washed from these sins by the blood of Jesus Christ? Have you by faith seen that Christ died for your sins? Your *only hope* is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 16. “Without [spiritual] understanding”—Romans 1:31

*“Without [spiritual] understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”*

### Necessity of the Spirit

God's Word teaches the truth regarding *the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit* in our understanding, affections, and will. The Spirit works salvation in the poor sinners for whom Christ died. It is commonly taught today that the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with our salvation and that we only come to know and receive Him *after* we are saved, when we pray for His baptism, His fire, and His power. In other words, all we have to do is believe on Jesus with our wills, and we can come to know the Holy Spirit after we are saved.

This is not what the Bible teaches. This only shows that men are *without spiritual understanding* of God's method of grace and salvation. Our blessed Lord said,

*“And when He is come [the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit], He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come” (Joh 16:8-9, 11, 13).*

The salvation that God gives in Christ is a *spiritual* thing. Scripture refers to it as the new birth, the creation of a new man, the implanting of a new nature, the giving of a new heart, the passing from death unto life, the bringing in of a new covenant, the dawning of a new hope, the casting down of the strongholds of Satan, the loosing of the prisoner, the delivering of the captive, the giving of sight to the blind, the translating from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and the walking on the road of holiness toward heaven.

### How Salvation Takes Place

If all this and much more is accomplished in salvation; and if salvation is a spiritual thing, discerned and understood only by a spiritual man; and since we read in Scripture that those to whom salvation is given are *dead in trespasses and sin* (Eph 2:1); then *how* does all of this take place? These things can only be accomplished in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He was sent down from heaven to work this salvation in us and to prepare our hearts for repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever misses the Spirit's work of conviction misses God's salvation in Christ because without the Spirit's powerful operation on the soul, no one can be saved.

The Spirit's work is to show us our hearts and to give us love for and belief in Christ. So let me ask some questions, which can only be answered in light of the scriptural teaching about the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work in us.

*How is such a marvelous work as set forth in 1 Corinthians 2:9 to take place, if a man is dead in trespasses and sins?* For we read, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This work can only be performed in a sinner's heart by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Anyone who denies this fact shows that he is *without spiritual understanding* and has no knowledge of the true and living God.

*How is a person to believe*, when he does not know what and whom to believe? A sinner has no spiritual eyes to see either his own depraved sinful heart or the beauty of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, because the Scriptures say, man cannot do this of himself. There must of necessity be the Spirit's work upon his soul, so that he can see his sinfulness and Christ's beauty.

*How is a man going to repent*, when he has no knowledge of what to repent of?

*How is a man going to flee from the wrath to come* when he has no knowledge of his danger as a criminal before a just and holy God?

*How is a man going to seek Christ*, when he has no sense of his need or any idea of *how* to seek Him?

*How is a man going to be constrained to seek light*, when he has no knowledge that he is in spiritual darkness?

*How is a man going to love God*, when he does not see that he naturally hates Him?

*How can a man exercise free will in choosing Christ*, when his will is enslaved by Satan?

*How is a man going to walk in the paths of righteousness*, when he is satisfied with the paths of self-will, self-pleasing, self-confidence, and self-righteousness?

The answer to all of these questions is, a person cannot do these things or change his ways apart from the *powerful working of the Holy Spirit* in his heart, his understanding, his will, and his affections. No man has ever been born from above apart from Spirit's operation in his heart. No man has ever closed savingly with Christ apart from the Spirit's work in his understanding. No man has ever turned to God from sin in true repentance apart from the Spirit's liberating influence upon his will. So any man, woman, young person, boy or girl, who does not know the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her heart, is without understanding, knows nothing spiritually, and is still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity (Act 8:23).

You may think that is a bold statement to make, but I make it on the basis of the Word of God. How can a dead man raise himself from the grave? How can a blind man make himself see? How can a deaf man make himself hear? And how can a lame man make himself walk? He cannot, either physically or spiritually. Every individual is dead in trespasses and sin (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13) and *without spiritual understanding*, if they have never experienced the working of the Holy Spirit on his or her soul.

## **The Sovereignty of God**

Another great spiritual truth about which the natural man is without understanding is the *sovereignty of God*, or God on the throne. Man does not know and will not acknowledge what Daniel 4:35 teaches:

*"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He [God] does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"*

I say again, man is without spiritual understanding. He will not acknowledge that God is sovereign in giving His salvation. And he utterly resists Romans 9:16, 18:

*"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy . . . Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth."*

My friend, do you know and acknowledge God's sovereign right in salvation, or are you still without understanding in spiritual things? Have you ever bowed to the sovereignty of God?

## **One Way**

There is another truth that men do not understand: *there is only one way a man may reach heaven*. And that is through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Individuals will try every way they can think of to jump over the fence and get on the narrow way that leads to heaven without coming as a broken-hearted sinner to Christ, trusting and bowing to Him as Lord of their lives.

To bow to Christ as Lord means that you bow to Him as God, the God Who left heaven's heights to come down to earth's depths as a Man, the God-Man. God became man, so that He might die upon Calvary's cross for sinners. Nothing but the shed blood of Christ can wash away sin and satisfy the demands of God's broken Law. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ, secured for us by His life, death, and resurrection, can justify us before the courts of heaven.

Men are in spiritual darkness and without understanding in regard to the righteousness of Christ. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, having not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom 10:3). Again, I ask, "Have you ever bowed to Christ as Lord? Are you justified by faith before God? Do you trust the imputed righteousness of Christ as your only righteousness?"

## **Made Holy**

Listen to Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The natural man, who is without spiritual understanding, does not see that when God saves a poor sinner, He imparts to him His divine nature (2Pe 1:4).

The Scriptures teach that individuals are saved, renewed by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus they become partakers of the same moral nature of God. They now have the same views, the same feelings, the same thoughts, the same purposes, and act by the same principles as God.

Do we who are saved do this perfectly? No, for we are not yet in our new bodies. But this moral nature, this holy moral principle of grace, is in us; and our desires are to be holy even as our God is holy. So when people talk about being saved and being children of God, and yet they are still motivated by the principles of sin and the world, then you can rest assured they are still without understanding of spiritual things.

## **Perseverance**

One more truth that is denied today, showing that the natural man is without understanding regarding spiritual things, is the precious truth of *the final perseverance of the saints*. When God saves a poor sinner by His grace, He keeps and holds him safe to the end, bringing him to heaven at last. He does this in the way of holiness, not in the way of self-will and sin. This doctrine of the grace of God in preserving His people to the end of life and getting them safely home to heaven is found throughout the Word of God. He who denies this great truth calls God a liar. Let's look at just a few of the many, many precious Scriptures referring to the final perseverance of the saints.

*"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37).*

*"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Joh 10:27-28).*

*"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).*

The Bible is filled with references to the great truth of the preserving power of God over His people, and he who denies this precious truth is without spiritual understanding just as 1 Corinthians 2:14 says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

## **Personal Application**

My dear reader, if you are without understanding, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will open your blinded eyes to see your lost condition before God, that He would give you grace to seek Christ alone for salvation, that you may see a beauty in Him, and that your soul would flee to Him for refuge from the righteous judgment of God.

# **17. "Covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful"—Romans 1:31**

*"Without [spiritual] understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful"*

Sin is nothing but ruin, rebellion, chaos, and filthiness before God. But this is a true description of what flows from the natural heart. It takes the power of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ to save, redeem, and change us into saints and children of the living God. It takes the powerful working of God's Holy Spirit in us to regenerate, convert, justify, and make us like the holy Lord Jesus Christ.

### **“Covenant-breakers”**

As we continue on through the list of sins in Romans 1, we come now to the sin of *covenant-breaking* (v. 31), which literally means “without good faith, faithless, untrustworthy, treacherous, false to one's word, disloyal, double-dealing, and hypocritical.” Surely this describes the natural heart of man! Jeremiah 17:9 confirms this: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

The truth is no man knows the depth of the deceitfulness of his own heart. Only He, Who searches the hearts of all men, knows the extent of the wickedness of man's heart. This is the reason that in salvation God must give us a new heart (Eze 36:26). He has said He will do this by His grace because of the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ at the cross.

Let me ask you, “Where will you go today to find a man whose word is his bond, one who is trustworthy, one who is honest with God and with his fellowman?” They are few and far between, for we are all liars, covenant-breakers by nature. This sin of covenant-breaking is evident at every level of society. We see it among nations who go back on their word, even before the ink is dry on the treaties they sign. In our own government, from the highest to the lowest office, this sin abounds. Men strive toward their own ends, caring nothing for their pledge to uphold the Constitution. They do not carry out the laws they were put in office to protect. Even in business we find covenant-breakers, who are false to their word and caught up in double-dealing, lying, and stealing.

Marriages are destroyed by the sin of covenant-breaking, when spouses are faithless to their vows. My dear man, my dear woman, let me ask you a question: “How have you treated those vows which you took at the marriage altar? Have you been a covenant-breaker by being unfaithful to your husband or wife?” The sin of adultery is rampant today. It is covenant-breaking, and God hates it!

Oh, that we would understand that God demands truth in the inward parts and that God marks all sin. Our covenant-breaking must be cleansed by the blood of Christ, if ever we are to stand guiltless before God!

### **“Without Natural Affection, Implacable, Unmerciful”**

The next three sins to which men are given over are described by the expressions “*without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful*.” We will group these sins together, for they have so much in common. A person, who is without natural affection, will certainly be implacable<sup>18</sup> and unmerciful.

The definitions of these terms are a commentary within themselves upon the awfulness of human nature. When someone is said to be without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful, he or she is someone who is unloving, heartless, callous, cruel, ruthless, inhumane, pitiless, unrelenting, remorseless, unforgiving, irreconcilable, unappeasable, merciless, without love, and only concerned about self—in other words, selfish through and through.

No wonder the great evangelist George Whitefield<sup>19</sup> said that man in his natural state apart from the grace of God is *half devil and half beast*. These sins describe that kind of person. How many wives are living with husbands who are unloving, heartless, cruel, pitiless, unforgiving, merciless, and completely selfish? How many husbands are living with wives who are heartless, callous, cruel, ruthless, unforgiving, unappeasable, merciless, and completely selfish? Marriages and homes are hell on earth because men and women are without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful. They have no love for each other.

How many children are living in homes where one or both parents are unloving, heartless, cruel, ruthless, inhumane, pitiless, unrelenting, unforgiving, remorseless, merciless, and only concerned about self? Child abuse abounds today as never before! Again, how many children never see the light of life outside their mother's womb because their mother and father are heartless, cruel, ruthless, inhumane, pitiless, callous, and merciless? They murder their children to satisfy their own selfish, lustful desires. Just as men and women in Old Testament days offered their children as sacrifices to their god Moloch by throwing them into the fire, so today modern, civilized men and women—and I use the word *civilized* loosely—kill their unborn children to satisfy the god of lust!

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<sup>18</sup> implacable – not willing to be reconciled with others.

<sup>19</sup> **George Whitefield (1714-1770)** – the best known evangelist of the eighteenth century and one of the greatest preachers in the history of the Christian church. Born in England, he addressed crowds as large as eighteen thousand in the American colonies during the Great Awakening.

There is no need to deny it: we are living in an age when God has given men over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which ought not to be done. People of all ages are living like devils: they are *without natural affection* for each other, *implacable*, and *unmerciful*—heartless, unforgiving, and merciless.

Perhaps you are thinking, “That’s not my heart; I don’t live like that!” Let me ask you this question: If you had been walking along the road and came upon the man mentioned in Luke 10—beaten, robbed and left for dead—would you have walked by on the other side, like the priest and the Levite in their righteousness and “holier-than-thou” attitude without stopping to help the poor victim? If so, then your heart is cruel, ruthless, callous, pitiless, and merciless.

The Word of God pictures man in such a state of depravity that he is capable of committing any sin under the right circumstances. I say again that any man, woman, young person, boy or girl at anytime is capable of committing the most awful sins and crimes, if not restrained by the mighty hand of God. Ask any child of God, whom God has shown just a little of his wicked and depraved heart; he will tell you that the only reason he is not like the murderer on death row is because the distinguishing grace of God has held him in spite of himself.

This is the reason you and I need the powerful working of God the Holy Spirit in our souls. We need Him to convince us that we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked sinners (Rev 3:17). We desperately need the grace of God in Christ to forgive us our sins, to blot them out, and to cleanse our heart and conscience; so we can stand before a holy God without feeling His awful wrath upon us in hell. You and I need God to grant us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We need His grace to hate sin and turn from it. We need saving faith in Christ by which we trust our miserable, lost, and ruined souls into His precious hands to save us, keep us, and deliver us from the wrath to come.

Have you ever felt your need of Christ and His cleansing blood? Has the Holy Spirit ever opened your heart and let you see that you are unloving, heartless, callous, cruel, ruthless, inhumane, pitiless, unforgiving, and unmerciful? Do you see that you stand in need of the grace of God to save you and of the blood of the precious Lamb of God to cleanse you from all sin? Oh, that you would answer these questions truthfully before God at this hour and cry unto Him for mercy!

## The Results

Now as we reach the end of this list of twenty-three awful sins to which God has given men over, we find a statement that is just as startling as the list of horrors:

*“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom 1:32).*

This verse of Scripture is one of the most damning verses in the Bible. It teaches us that men have from God an inner knowledge of the reality of their sin; that men have a consciousness that God must hate and judge sin; that men persist in the ways of sin despite the warning of their own native conscience; that they come to the point where they condone, approve, and rejoice in the sin of others. Finally, they come to the place where they are the patrons<sup>20</sup> of vices rather than of the righteousness of God. This verse also shows us that there are no true atheists, for all men everywhere, in every walk of life, have a consciousness of God and know that He must hate and judge sin.

## Personal Application

My dear reader, if you are without Christ today, then you are under His wrath. I urge you to seek Him while He may be found and put your trust in Him and His precious blood to hide you in that Great Day of His wrath. For it is surely coming. Revelation 6 tells us that the Lamb, Who now invites us to come, will be the Lamb Who will sit upon the Throne of judgment. Men will cry for the rocks and mountains to hide them from His face, but none will escape His wrath without faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. I plead with you to turn to Him today for mercy for your never-dying soul!

## 18. “Knowing the judgment of God...worthy of death”—Romans 1:32

*“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

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<sup>20</sup> **patrons** – those who support, protect, or champion someone or something.



## Five Truths

We previously mentioned that Romans 1:32 is one of the most damning verses in the Bible because it teaches five things which are true of every man since the fall of Adam, whether it be the financier of Wall Street, the college professor or student, the preacher in the pulpit, the criminal in jail, or the inhabitant of the jungle.

First, this verse teaches that men *have an inner knowledge of the reality of sin*, which comes from God.

Second, men have a consciousness that *God must hate and judge sin*.

Third, men persist in the ways of sin *in spite of the warning of their own native conscience*.

Fourth, men come to the point that they *actually condone, approve, and take pleasure in the sin of others*.

Fifth, men come to the place where they *are advocates and supporters of sin and vice, rather than of the righteousness of God*.

### 1. Men Have Knowledge of Sin (“knowing the judgment of God... are worthy of death”)

*Men have an inner knowledge from God of the reality of sin.* We have to understand that without the Word of God there is no moral standard of right or wrong. Men today have thrown aside God’s Word and do what seems right in their own eyes. Their philosophy is, “If you want to do it, go ahead! If it feels good, do it! If it satisfies you or makes you happy, then do it!” The attitude by which most live their lives today is, “Let me do my own thing! Don’t show me the Word of God; don’t read to me the Ten Commandments; don’t tell me what is right or wrong! I’m going to do my own thing!”

Let me say this: “To do your own thing is to end up in the lake of fire under the judgment of God.” The Word of God says this about that philosophy: “He that *doeth* the will of God abideth for ever” (1Jo 2:17). Those who live for self and “do their own thing” will hear these awful words: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23). Only those who do the Father’s will enter heaven, says the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the will of the Father? The will of the Father is for you and me to repent of our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7).

God sets the moral standard in His Word, and He doesn’t vary from it at all. There are no gray areas with God. He sets the moral standard according to His own moral Being; and since He is holy, righteous and just, He can do nothing less. When God made man in His image and breathed into him the breath of life, man became a living soul made in the moral likeness of God. Just because man fell away from God in the Garden of Eden, he is not relieved of his responsibility towards God. Man is still to worship and obey God: he is to love Him with all of his heart, mind, and soul, and his neighbor as himself. He is to walk in the way of righteousness and holiness. And even though man finds that he is unable to do this in his depraved state, he is still not relieved of his responsibility. God made man in His own moral image and wrote His Moral Law upon his heart.

Our text says, “...*knowing* the judgment of God,” which means that even though sin has estranged<sup>21</sup> man from God, even though he has degenerated into savagery and bestiality, even though he might live in arrogant pride and in rebellion against God, he is conscious of the reality of sin in him. This is because the Moral Law of God is written on his heart, making him without excuse. The text not only says that man has the knowledge of the sinfulness of sin within him, it also says that while he is committing it, he is conscious that “they which do such things are *worthy of death*.” He *knows* in his heart that the judgment of God has been pronounced against such things.

The fact that man knows the worthiness of the judgment of God proves that he knows the reality of sin. This text speaks to your heart and to mine. You and I know that we sin, and we know that God must punish it.

What about the savage, the heathen, who has never heard the Word of God? It is still the same; for when the first missionaries went among people who knew nothing of the Bible or the Ten Commandments, they found them putting into practice the very moral code of the Ten Commandments. They discovered that the heathen put the murderer, the thief, or the one who took his neighbor’s wife to death. You see, the Moral Law of God was still in the hearts of these men whom we called “heathen.” It is clearly brought out in Romans 2 that the Gentiles, or heathen, who do not have the written law in the Bible as we do, shall yet be judged according to the law written in their hearts, which was not altogether erased in their fall in Adam:

*“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:14, 15).*

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<sup>21</sup> **estranged** – made hostile; alienated.

So we see that every man is without excuse, whether it is in the highest civilization, where we have the Word of God, or the lowest civilization, where the written Word of God has never gone; for the law of God against murder is written upon the conscience of the entire human race. Man knows God's law whether or not he has a Bible. But how much more will the punishment be for those who have an open Bible and yet go on in sin, than those who only have the Law of God written upon their conscience. All men are without excuse!

Therefore, you cannot say that a woman does not know that she is committing murder when she has an abortion. She does. God's Law is written upon her conscience. She cannot get away from it, as the Scripture says, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them." She is without excuse. This act of hers is *premeditated*, and therefore murder in the first degree. We know that this is the charge of the judge to a jury that is listening to a murder case: it must be established that the act was premeditated. Abortion is premeditated, and therefore murder in the first degree. The woman who has an abortion knows she is guilty just as the heathen knew they were guilty of murder, when they threw their children into the fire. Not only that, but those who perform abortions know in their own conscience that they are committing murder in the sight of God, and they are without excuse.

## 2. Men Have Knowledge of God's Judgment ("...the judgment of God")

*Men have a consciousness that God must hate and judge sin.* This knowledge is put within every man. That's what verse 32 of Romans 1 says, "Who knowing *the judgment of God*." Who is being referred to here? Those individuals who have committed all these awful sins in verses 29, 30, and 31. They know while they are committing them that they which do such things "abide under the judgment of God" and that they are worthy of death! So because of this knowledge, every man is without excuse. How awful it must be for a person's conscience to become seared as with a hot iron, allowing him or her to run headlong into sin!

If all of this is true, then we must come to the conclusion that there are no true atheists. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." And that word *fool* in the Hebrew means "stupid, perverse, senseless, contemptible person"; and it implies someone who has no understanding, morally or intellectually. This senseless man says in his heart there is no God. His mind is closed. He lives his perverse, contemptible life as if God didn't exist. A person who tells you he doesn't believe there is a God is either "morally and intellectually senseless," or he's lying because there is written upon the heart of every man the knowledge that there is a God. Look at the text: "Who knowing the judgment of God."

Preachers who preach error and heresy, who preach annihilationism,<sup>22</sup> universalism,<sup>23</sup> soul sleep,<sup>24</sup> or no hell, all know they are lying, "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). Anyone who preaches error or heresy knows in his own soul that what he is preaching is wrong! He is sinning against God, yet he continues on because his heart and mind are blinded. It is an awful thing when men will deliberately come into the pulpit and preach such error, only that they might seduce their listeners, obtain wealth, make a name for themselves, or gain a position of power. They know they are doing wrong, for it is written within their own souls, yet they will go on with it while applauding and encouraging others to do the same. They are without excuse!

Oh, I have cried unto God from the depths of my soul as I have prepared this study, "My God, how can I stand before Thee unless I stand in the blood and righteousness of Christ, for the wrath of God should fall upon me because of my sins!" I hate sin! I hate what it does to the human soul! Do you know why my blessed Lord Jesus cried when He came to the tomb of Lazarus? He didn't cry for Martha and Mary because He knew what He was going to do for Lazarus. He cried because of unbelief, its resulting sin, and what it had done to the human race. And it was due to these filthy, vile, dirty sins that we have read about in Romans 1, that my blessed Lord became sin at the cross for us sinners. He became "sin for us" (2Co 5:21): sin was imputed to Him that the righteousness of God might be imputed to His people.

If that doesn't break your heart, I don't know what will! God the Son became all of that. It is no wonder that when God the Father looked upon Him, He had to turn His back, causing the Son to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mar 15:34). Sin was imputed to Christ, and it was vile, corrupt, and abominable in God's eyes. He is "purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," so He *had* to turn His back upon the Son, judging Him as an unclean thing. That's what makes me love the blood and righteousness of Christ. That's why I cry after holiness and righteousness, and for a holy walk before Him. It breaks my heart, when I find out I've sinned against Him because it was my sin that drove Him to the cross, nailing and keeping Him there. He wouldn't come down; He couldn't come down, for He was dying in the place of His people—in my place, beneath God's wrath upon my sin!

<sup>22</sup> **annihilationism** – the error that all who die in their sins will be judged by God and thrown into the lake of fire, where they will cease to exist. Some annihilationists believe that this will occur instantaneously; others think that the unrighteous may experience a brief period of awareness. Nevertheless, all annihilationists agree that no person, however wicked, will suffer a conscious existence in hell eternally.

<sup>23</sup> **universalism** – the error that all people will be saved. This doctrine also affirms that there is no eternal punishment.

<sup>24</sup> **soul sleep** – the error that a person's soul "sleeps" between death and the resurrection and is not conscious of glory or suffering.

## Personal Application

My dear reader, your only hope is to turn to Christ and acknowledge before Him this day that you know that you are a sinner, that it is written upon your heart, and you will not hide it any more. You must come clean with God, crying unto Him for mercy. Lay down your arms of rebellion, seek Christ in His mercy, repent and believe on Him, pleading His blood and righteousness as your only hope. Will you? Oh, that you would turn to Him today!

## 19. “They...not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”—Romans 1:32

*“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

### Review

As mentioned earlier, Romans 1:32 is surely the most damning verse of Scripture in the Bible in showing that *all men stand guilty* before God in their sins, having full knowledge that their sins deserve the wrath of God. But because they are blinded by Satan, the god of this world, they go on committing these sins and take pleasure in and fellowship with others who commit them.

Notice the force of verse 32: “Though they are fully aware of God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them themselves but *approve and applaud* others who practice them.”<sup>25</sup>

In the last chapter we listed five things taught by this verse that are true of every man since the fall of Adam. No one is excluded except our sinless Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who came into this world to save us.

To bear these truths out, we have six verses of Scripture in Romans. In Romans 1:19-21 we have,

*“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened...”*

Then in Romans 2:14-16 we read,

*“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.”*

What these verses teach along with Romans 1:32 is that the image and the Law of God were stamped on Adam’s heart in the Garden of Eden. These have not been erased in the fall, but passed on to all his descendants. Whether we are born into the home of the heathen or the home of the civilized, we all possess the knowledge of God, of sin, and of God’s hatred and punishment of it. All of us are without excuse.

Once again I will state, based upon the Word of God, that there are no true atheists or true evolutionists. If anyone says he is, he is lying, because the knowledge of God in creation, of sin, and of His wrath, are written upon each and every human heart.

### 3. Men Persist in Sin (“...not only do the same”)

We have already covered the first two of the five truths taught in verse 32. Now, let’s look at the third: *All men persist in the ways of sin in spite of the warnings of their own conscience.*

Why do men persist in iniquity and in rebellion against God when they have written upon their hearts the certain knowledge of God’s holiness and His stored-up wrath against them and all their sinful acts? The answer can only be found

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<sup>25</sup> Amplified.

in the doctrine of Adam's fall and the consequent distancing in sin from God. The hearts of men are deceitful above all things and incurably wicked (Jer 17:9), and men will not come to the Lord that they might have a new heart. They follow the vain direction of their carnal minds, which is enmity against God (Rom 8:7). They will not come to Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness" (1Co 1:30). Their foolish hearts are darkened and hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Rom 1:21; Heb 3:13); and their consciences have been seared with a hot iron (1Ti 4:2). They grope in the darkness of their own hearts, seeking rest and peace, and finding none. But they persist in their sinful ways because their minds are blinded by Satan, the god of this age (2Co 4:4).

This is an awful state to be in, but it is the state of every man, woman, young person, and child outside of Christ. Therefore, how desperately *you and I and the entire world* need Christ, His righteousness, His power, His cleansing blood, and His indwelling Spirit!

#### *Why men persist in sin*

Why do men obstinately go on in the ways of sin? It is because of the *power* of sin. The hearts of men are darkened through the deceitfulness of sin. No matter how much a man is warned, he will not turn from his sin to Christ apart from the grace of God. Let me give you an example of the hold that sin has on an individual. Why will a man take a pack of cigarettes, on which is written, "The Surgeon General of the United States has found that smoking cigarettes is hazardous to your health," and smoke all twenty cigarettes? He will smoke them even though it has been proven that smoking causes lung cancer and that people all across the world are dying because of it! Men's hearts are darkened because of the power of sin. Sin grips them and makes them go on breathing death into their lungs in spite of all the warnings! Sin has such a hold on men because of the deep depravity of the human heart.

Every moment God's Word warns that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze 18:4, 20), and yet men persist in their evil ways. They will not forsake sin and come to God. Why? Because they love darkness rather than light, for their deeds are evil (Joh 3:19). They hate the light and will not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd and they would have to give up those sins. They are wedded to their sins and will not divorce them apart from the grace of God working in their souls to turn them unto Christ.

Some of you have known for decades that you do not know God. You are warned every Lord's Day that you are without Christ, without hope, and without God; yet you go on in your state of unbelief, hoping against hope that God is going to save you, somewhere, somehow, without your acting upon the light that He has given you. You have never closed in saving faith with the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him to cleanse you and make you whole, in His precious blood that was shed at Calvary's cross. You know in the judgment of God that "they which commit such things are worthy of death," yet you persist in your unbelief. Sin blinds you and holds you.

#### **4. Men Condone Sin ("have pleasure in those that do them")**

Fourth, verse 32 teaches that *men come to the point where they condone, then approve, then aid, and then rejoice in the sins of others*. This is the next logical step away from God, and this is the most awful thing in all the world! The text says they "have pleasure in them that do them," which means "agreeing with; consenting to" their sins. They not only commit the sins themselves, but delight in and applaud those that are doing the same things, knowing that "they which commit such things are worthy of death." It is terrible to go to hell by yourself, but it's worse to drag somebody else with you by applauding and encouraging them in their sins!

#### **5. Men Support Sin**

In the fifth place, we learn from our text that *men come to the place where they are supporters of sin and vices rather than the righteousness of God*. The terrible effects of the rejection of truth are seen in the moral ruin of the soul. The final step on this earth is that which leads to the approval and the applauding of the sin of others. It is the *public applause of unrighteousness*.

We have astounding instances of this every day. Society's approval rests upon all the ungodliness coming out of Hollywood and upon all of the actors with their many divorces, remarriages, and riotous living. When we watch their films and enjoy the sinfulness they portray on movie or television screens, we are approving the lifestyle of their wicked characters! But God says His judgment awaits the soul that puts his approval on sin.

If you can watch and delight in soap operas and be taken up with all of the infidelity, fornication, whoremongering, wife-swapping, lying, stealing, and everything else that is portrayed, you are giving your approval to all of this! But let me tell you, it stinks in the nostrils of God! If you like that kind of entertainment, if you like to eat that kind of garbage and to drink from those kinds of wells, you are really only revealing your wicked heart. You are showing that you approve of sin.

Instead of condemning the sins of Hollywood's celebrities, who parade their leprous and infectious wickedness on screen, people have bowed down at their shrine and worshiped them. But their life-styles are a stench in the nostrils of

God, for He abhors sin! So let me repeat: if we put our stamp of approval on wickedness, which is flaunted on TV and movie screens, then we are taking pleasure in what they do. You may say, “I wouldn’t personally do any of that!” But, my friend, you watch others do it and take pleasure in it: you are also guilty.

When any man or state or legislature puts the stamp of approval on legalized gambling, they’re taking pleasure in the sins of others. Our courts and our judges approve murder, rape, and every type of stealing when they let guilty prisoners go and will not punish them according to the law. That’s approving what they do. And every lawyer is responsible for all the technicalities he has ever used to keep murderers from being punished. Men are responsible to God! And did you know that when you secretly hope the criminal gets away, or the murderer escapes, you are aiding and abetting them in their evil ways and are guilty before God? That’s what God says!

Furthermore, ministers and churches who promulgate the “carnal Christian” theory are putting their approval upon sins that God hates. Do you know what they’re really saying, when they call people “Christians,” who make professions of faith and yet live in sin? They are saying, “Go ahead and live in your worldly pleasures, brother, because you made a profession once, so everything’s okay.” No! It’s not okay. That’s approving sin in others instead of drawing the line of demarcation. The Word of God says that he who approves the sin of others sins with them and is guilty before God.

## **Personal Application**

You may be thinking, “But everybody commits sin!” Yes, it’s true. And that’s why you and I need a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why there is preaching to warn you of the only escape from God’s wrath: the righteousness and shed blood of Jesus Christ. There is only one way you can stand justified before God, and that is by faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I call you to repentance today. I call you to take stock of what you put your stamp of approval on. Do you hate sin, or do you secretly love it in your heart? Do you approve the sin of others, glad that they can do it even though you cannot? Then you are just as guilty before God as they are. That is what Romans 1:32 teaches us. May God search deep down in our souls with this text, so that we will understand just what sin is in His sight!

My words may seem bold, but they have been written in love and tenderness because I know the power of sin. I know what it does, I know how it grips, and I know what happens when someone wants to get out of it. What is he going to do? I know sin’s power upon the soul who is crying unto God for mercy from it, who is trying to flee from it, and who is pleading for deliverance from it. He finds that he is helpless and hopeless before God, powerless to deliver himself from the fix he is in. And there he is in the hands of a sovereign God, Who can do with him as He pleases. But, praise God! When he comes to that point, there is help and hope because he’s beginning to hate sin; he’s crying out against it and fleeing from it.

I know I cannot stem the tide. Who am I, but one man against all the advertisement that floods across this nation? Everything in the magazines and newspapers, on television and radio is calculated to appeal to the flesh. It’s everywhere you look! Everything that is sold has to have a sensual woman associated with it! All of the trashy magazines in the news-stands of our stores appeal to our sinful flesh! Every lewd story that is told appeals to our sinful flesh! Every lawless thing appeals to our sinful flesh! I don’t have the power to change anybody, but I want to warn you, in hope that God will be pleased to bring His Word home to your heart. He has said, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

### *Our Only Hope*

You may ask, “What then is my hope?” Our only hope is the Lord God of glory. Our only hope lies in the shed blood and righteousness of Christ and in the power of God’s grace to change the hearts of men. After looking at these verses, if I didn’t believe in the sovereign God and that salvation is of Him, I would quit preaching, and you would never hear from me again. If I did not believe that God’s power was able to change and break the hearts of men by the love of Christ; if I didn’t believe that God’s power was able to bring men down at the feet of the Lord Jesus, crushing the power of sin, even in the midst of the wicked and perverse generation we live in; if I didn’t believe that God’s power can make sinful people new creatures in Christ Jesus; if I didn’t believe that God’s power can set their hearts and eyes on heaven and their backs toward hell and sin; if I did not believe all these things, I would quit preaching before daybreak. But I *do* believe it! I have seen it happen, and I know God does it!

Our only hope is that God’s mercy and grace will deliver us—spirit, soul, and body—from the way of sin and bring us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This God gives new hearts. This God gives new natures. This God changes a man and makes him ready for heaven by His almighty power. He takes the hammer of the cross and breaks down the heart, making us willing to seek His face and call upon His name in the day of His power. And I am going to preach it until I die! The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for therein [in the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed” (Rom 1:16-17). And that is what we need: the

righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ. I praise God that He gives it! There has never been a soul yet that ever sought Him in vain.

You have a responsibility before God to respond to the truths that have been brought forth in these pages. You are without excuse, and you will be without excuse in that day! Do you *know* Christ? Are you *in* Christ? Have you bowed to His scepter? Have you closed in with Him? The Lord Jesus is our only Help, our only Hope, our only Salvation. His blood is our only cleansing, His righteousness our only covering. And you need none other because He will preserve you in the Day of Judgment!

My prayer is that God in His grace will grant you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth (2Ti 2:25); that you will acknowledge that Romans 1 is a true picture of your heart by nature; and that your need is for godly sorrow over sin which “worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of” (2Co 7:10). May the Holy Spirit write Isaiah 55:7 upon your heart: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” May He thus enable you in “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21); and may you find in Him the suitable Savior for your soul.

May you understand that your only hope of a right standing before a holy and righteous God is the bleeding, dying, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, the Substitute for sinners. He suffered the full payment for sin in His body on the tree. Read it again: *Only in Christ* can a poor hell-deserving sinner stand righteous before a holy God.

## 20. Christ’s Substitutionary Death—Romans 1:16

*“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

### The Natural Man Apart from God

Looking back now at verses 16 and 17 of Romans 1, we read: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

We have seen in our exposition of Romans 1:16-32 that man at his best is fit only for the righteous wrath of God. He has no spiritual life or light in him and does not desire any unless the Holy Spirit illuminates his soul to the gracious redemption provided for sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me make it clear once more that these verses of Scripture provide us with a picture of the natural man apart from God. He is totally depraved, and this corresponds to the rest of Scripture. He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1); he hates God (Rom 1:30 and 8:7); his spiritual understanding is darkened (Eph 4:18); and spiritual things are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1Co 2:14). He hates the light of God’s Word and will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved (Joh 3:20); moreover, he will not come to Christ that he might have life (Joh 5:40). Therefore, we declare that every one of us is by nature void of spiritual understanding and void of spiritual affection towards God. Since our wills are governed by our understanding and affections, then our wills are depraved and will not seek God, love Him, nor come to His blessed Son for eternal life. This happens only by the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit upon his soul. Scripture is very plain: “There is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11).

The reason we have dealt so long with verses 18-32 of Romans 1 is to show how your heart and mine desperately need the Gospel of God’s grace and its power and righteousness in Christ. We need experimental<sup>26</sup> knowledge of this life by faith. Why? Because only those who understand and acknowledge that they are sinners before God (described in verses 18-32) will truly believe the Gospel of grace.

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<sup>26</sup> **experimental** – that is, knowledge that comes from experience; experiential.

## The Gospel of Christ

Please heed carefully as we expound verses 16 and 17, for the subject of God's Gospel of grace for poor, hell-deserving sinners is a most blessed truth and should have our full attention. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation "to every one that believeth" (v. 16). Therefore, the Gospel that brings salvation to sinners must be through the substitutionary death of God's only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Gospel cannot be a social gospel of humanitarian deeds nor can it be a gospel of the works of our own hands. Oh, no! It must be the Gospel, the good news, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Based upon the work of Christ, God can be just, when He justifies those who believe on His Son, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me repeat: there is only one kind of gospel, or good news, that can be the power of God unto salvation; and it is the good news that God Himself in Christ became a substitute, dying in the place of sinners. Only a substitutionary death could satisfy the demands of God's broken Law and His righteous wrath. The very nature and character of God, His *holiness*, necessitates a certain kind of salvation, one which will be in harmony with God's moral character. Only God Himself can accomplish this, and He did so in the substitutionary death of the blessed Lord Jesus on the cross and in His bodily resurrection from the tomb.

*The nature of the demands of the Law of God* necessitates a certain kind of salvation which will fully satisfy all the Law's requirements for blessing and endure all its penalties for disobedience. Only God Himself could meet these requirements, and He did so in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The nature of sin* demands a salvation in which sin must be completely removed so that man can be declared righteous before God. And God Himself accomplished this in the substitutionary death of His only begotten Son.

*The needs of man which sin produced* necessitate a certain kind of salvation, which will satisfy those needs. And God Himself met those needs in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection from the grave of His dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So we see that when Paul said that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, he was speaking of the one and only Gospel which consists of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of His people (1Co 15:3-4). Only this Gospel satisfies the holy nature and character of God and meets the demands of His broken Law.

This is the Gospel that Paul is not ashamed of; for this Gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. This Gospel alone satisfies God and His righteous claims against poor sinners. It sets God free to be just, when He justifies a repenting, believing sinner.

## The Substitutionary Work of Christ at the Cross

The New Testament describes the substitutionary work of Christ at the cross with these four words: *propitiation* (Rom 3:24-25), *reconciliation* (Col 1:20-22), *redemption* (Rom 3:24), and *sacrifice* (Heb 10:12). As we go further in our study, we will see that these four words show how the great work of God's grace in Christ meets all the requirements for such a great and glorious salvation.

The first New Testament word which describes the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ is ***propitiation*** (Rom 3:24-25):

*"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God"*

The work of propitiation is that most blessed work of Christ wherein He removed all of God's anger and wrath against me and my sins by covering them with His precious blood. He did this by offering Himself unto God as a substitutionary sacrifice. To put it another way, propitiation means that the Lord Jesus swallowed up the wrath of God, so that it no longer burns against the one who has believed on Him. This saving work of Christ satisfies the moral character of God, whereby God can be just in justifying sinners who believe in and rely upon Christ and His atoning work. This is the good news of the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!

The second word used to describe this Gospel of the grace of God in Christ is ***reconciliation*** (Col 1:24-22):

*"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight."*

The work of reconciliation is that sovereign work of God the Father in which His alienation from sinners is removed through the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation flows out of and is based upon propitiation, which turns

away God's anger and wrath. God's anger and wrath are finished in the blessed blood-shedding of Christ, our Substitute upon the cross. In Him alone, God and the believing sinner are brought together in peace.

This saving work of Christ satisfies the demands of God's holy Law by paying the penalty of divine justice. By this, God's alienation is removed, and man is reconciled to God. God's holy justice is satisfied, so God and man can once again enter into a harmonious relationship. The enmity between them is gone. Reconciliation provides the legal basis upon which God can turn to save sinners. All of this is grace! This is precious to me, for it is something that God Himself planned, purposed, and carried out (2Co 5:18, 19).

*“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”*

The third word the New Testament uses to describe God's Gospel of grace in Christ is the word **redemption** (Rom 3:24): “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Redemption is that priestly work of Christ wherein He purchases us from our bondage to the Law, sin, and Satan, through the ransom of His substitutionary death.

This saving work of Christ displays that we were sold under sin and needed to be redeemed from its power by payment of a ransom. This ransom was and only could be the precious blood of the sinless sacrifice our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, we find twenty clear references to redemption as the saving work of Jesus Christ. We are told that the mission and purpose of Christ in coming to this earth was to accomplish the work of redemption for His people, or they would have been eternally lost. Each one of these references to Christ's redemptive work shows that redemption has been forever accomplished in Christ for those who believe.

The fourth word the New Testament uses to describe God's Gospel of grace in Christ is the word **sacrifice** (Heb 10:12): “But this man [Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” The work of sacrifice is that priestly work of Christ wherein He has removed our sin and its guilt by offering Himself to God in our place without spot. This saving work of Christ satisfies man's need for the removal of his sin and guilt so that he can stand before God. The believing sinner can stand clothed before God in the garment of Christ's righteousness. Christ accomplished all this by sacrificing Himself for the people of God.

## Conclusion

This is the Gospel of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth:

- *Propitiation*: the swallowing up of God's wrath in the Person of Christ, so our sins would be covered from the face of God;
- *Reconciliation*: the removing of God's alienation from hell-deserving sinners, because God took the initiative (2Co 5:19);
- *Redemption*: the delivering of sinners from bondage to the law, sin and Satan; and
- *Sacrifice*: the removing of our sin and guilt before God, so we can stand before Him in the garment of Christ's righteousness, with no condemnation.

## 21. God's Justice and Righteousness—Romans 1:17

*“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”*

The Biblical truth of salvation for believing sinners, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, must unite with the Biblical truth of the nature and character of God, against whom our sins have been committed. God cannot simply forgive sinners and let their sins go unpunished. The Bible declares that the nature of God necessitates a certain kind of salvation, which will be in harmony with God's moral character. The three attributes of God which describe His nature and His moral character are *justice*, *righteousness*, and *holiness*.



## Justice<sup>27</sup> and Righteousness<sup>28</sup>

Because God is just and righteous, He always acts with justice toward the sons of men. He can do nothing which contradicts His character or nature, as 2 Timothy 2:13 declares, “He cannot deny Himself.”

We find as we study the holy Scriptures that God’s justice and righteousness are consistently used together to describe His very being and character. We read in Deuteronomy 32:4 these words: “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Psalm 89:14 declares, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Here the psalmist declares to us that justice, judgment, and righteousness are the habitation<sup>29</sup> of God’s throne, so the salvation that He gives to believing sinners must be based upon His justice and righteousness. The moral character of God must be satisfied, and we can rest assured that He will never do anything which would contradict these attributes. This, then, is the meaning of that statement by Abraham in Genesis 18:25, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The answer is “Yes,” for He cannot act against His moral nature, which is justice, righteousness, and holiness. Romans 9:14 asks, “Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.” Perish the thought! In no way can God be unrighteous.

## Five Requirements for God’s Salvation

### 1. God Cannot Let Sin Go Unpunished

We see by these Scriptures—and many more which we could give you—that God cannot simply forgive sinners and let their sins go unpunished. He displays His justice and vindicates<sup>30</sup> His righteousness when He punishes sin. Look at these Scriptures: “[He] will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7); and “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psa 5:5). God does not bear a simple dislike, but a thorough hatred for workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing! How terrible it is to fall into the hands of an angry God, because He is a consuming fire (Deu 4:24; Heb 12:29)! Look at Romans 2:5, 6:

*“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds.”*

Therefore we see from Scripture that God’s justice and righteousness demand that sin be punished. And the penalty for sin is death; eternal death in the lake of fire, banished forever from God’s presence.

God said to Adam (Gen 2:17), “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” And die he did, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)—death in the lake of fire, banished forever from God’s presence. Either we as sinners must be punished unto death—doomed and damned in hell and lost forever—or a suitable substitute who can fully bear the punishment of our sin must be found.

### 2. There Must Be a Substitute

If God is to be just and the Justifier of sinners (Rom 3:26), and if He is to bestow upon us the salvation spoken of in our text, then sinners need a proper substitute to bear the penalty of their sins. A substitute with no sin of his own would have to bear the full punishment for the sins of those to whom it was due. That includes all of us, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

### 3. Only God Can Be the Substitute

This brings us back to the great Biblical truth of God’s salvation for believing sinners. He imputes His perfect righteousness to them, so they can stand before Him with their sin-debt paid in full. Only God Himself could have been the perfect and proper substitute to atone for the sins of His people. Only He could completely satisfy His justice and righteousness, and thus render those who believe acceptable in His sight. According to Hebrews 10:4, no animal sacrifice

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<sup>27</sup> **justice** – because God is infinitely and perfectly upright in Himself, all His works are perfect. His justice then means He always rewards or punishes a person or nation in exactly what is due them. God never shows partiality to anyone, for He always acquits the righteous and always condemns the wicked.

<sup>28</sup> **righteousness** – righteousness means to be conformed to a standard. God’s righteousness means that He is eternally, infinitely, and perfectly upright in everything He is and everything He does.

<sup>29</sup> The word *habitation* can also be understood as *foundation* or an “immovable foundation.” Thus, this verse means that God’s throne *inhabits the realms* of justice and judgment or that His throne *is established upon the foundation* of justice and judgment.

<sup>30</sup> **vindicates** – defends; supports or maintains as true or correct.

could do it. According to Hebrews 2:14-16, no angelic sacrifice could do it. According to Psalm 49:7-8, no sinful human could make atonement for his fellow sinners' sin. Listen:

*"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever)."*

Jesus Christ, Who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb 7:26), assumed a human nature in order to atone for the sin of His people. By being punished for their sins, He vindicated the justice and righteousness of God. This is plainly declared in Hebrews 2:14-18:

*"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."*

#### **4. The Substitute Must Be Sinless**

Scripture also declares that it was necessary for the substitute to be sinless. For no sinful person could have ever been the substitute because he would have had his own debt of sin to pay. Only Christ qualified to take our place. This great truth is brought out forcefully in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He [the Father] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]."

#### **5. Christ Alone Could Satisfy God's Demands**

Romans 3:24-26 states that the death of Christ was necessary because it alone could satisfy the demands of God's justice and righteousness:

*"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*

In order to be just, while at the same time justifying sinners, God vindicated His justice and righteousness by the death of a sinless substitute. And God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ Himself, was the only perfect and proper substitute, Who could die in the place of poor sinners. And what amazes me and makes me shout for joy—Glory! Glory! Glory!—is that God *freely* gave His Son, and His Son *freely* came to be that perfect Substitute. Isaiah prophesied this:

*"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him [Christ]: He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see of His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand... Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:10, 4, 5).*

The Father purposed this in eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ carried it out in time, and we hear it in the Gospel: God freely gives His gracious and glorious salvation to poor sinners, who repent of their sins and trust in Christ alone.

## **22. The Requirements of God's Holy Law**

*"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God"—Leviticus 20:7.*

*"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"—1 Peter 1:15-16.*

## “Be Ye Holy”

There is the necessity of a certain kind of salvation which is required to *fully satisfy all the law's requirements* for blessing and to endure all its penalties for disobedience. Because you and I were created to bear His image in this world, the Moral Law is binding upon all and tells us in what ways we are to reflect His Character and will. For this reason God's Law commands us to be holy even as He is holy and to be perfect even as our heavenly Father which is in heaven is perfect (Lev 11:44; 1Pe 1:16; Mat 5:48).

We can go through the entire Word of God and find that we must keep God's Law. Let me illustrate:

Does God set Himself above all other things that men worship and declare that “thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Exo 20:3)? Then we should reverence this holy and righteous God, worshiping and adoring Him as the focus of everything in life. We are commanded to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Deu 6:5; Mar 12:30). This is the righteous and holy commandment of God. Nothing less will satisfy Him.

Does God so love His own holy Person that He will not give His glory to another? He commands us, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exo 20:4-5)? Then by faith we should worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Does God so love His name that He does not want it taken in vain in any manner? Then we should love it because He has commanded, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exo 20:7).

Does God hold the family relationship of obedience to father and mother by the children to be sacred? Then so should we, because He has commanded, “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exo 20:12).

Does God hold life to be a sacred thing? Then so should we because He has commanded, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13).

Does God hold marriage and the human body to be sacred in His sight? Then so should we because He has commanded, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo 20:14).

Does God hold a man's property sacred? Then so should we because He has commanded, “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo 20:15).

Does God hold truth to be sacred? Then so should we because God's holy Law tells us, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor” (Exo 20:16). Why is lying forbidden? Because “God is not a man that He should lie . . . it is impossible for God to lie” (Num 23:19; Heb 6:18). Therefore, if we are to reflect God's moral character, then we must not lie, for God does not lie.

Does God view a man's house, his wife, his servants, even his farm animals as sacred? Then so should we because He has commanded, “Thou shalt not covet any thing that belongs to thy neighbor” (Exo 20:17).

And why has God given these commandments? First because they reflect the character and will of God, and secondly because we are image-bearers of God and must be like Him in all things or pay the penalty. This penalty is the second death: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). In the lake of fire, unrepentant sinners will abide forever under His righteous wrath, for He has said, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10).

God provides a certain kind of salvation by which He saves sinners. This salvation fully meets the demands of His holy Law in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's holy Law requires that we keep it *perfectly, personally, and perpetually*, or we cannot stand in the presence of God. We must keep His Law perfectly, or we will be doomed to hell—unless someone else takes our place.

## Requirements of the Law

What does God's Law require of us in order to be the image-bearers of God? The Scriptures declare that God requires us to personally, perfectly, and perpetually obey His holy Law, or we must suffer the penalty of His wrath and curse (Gal 5:3). The only acceptable obedience before God is your keeping one hundred percent of His holy law, one hundred percent of the time. This is because His Word declares that whoever keeps the whole Law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of breaking all of the Law and abides under God's wrath and curse forever (Jam 2:10).

The question to you and me is this: has our obedience to the holy Law of God reached this perfect standard? Remember, to be perfectly righteous, acceptably righteous before God, we must keep one hundred percent of His Law one hundred percent of the time. I am the first to admit that I have not kept the Law of God personally, perfectly, and perpetually: I have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

So what am I going to do? I cannot secure eternal life by my weak human attempts at Law-keeping; I can only abide under His curse. And the curse for my disobedience is to pay for my Law-breaking by separation from God's presence in the lake of fire forever. Therefore, the only hope I have of escaping eternal judgment in the lake of fire is for someone to stand in for me, someone who has personally, perfectly, and perpetually obeyed the holy Law of God.

### **The Glorious Gospel: Christ, Our Substitute**

This is where the glorious Gospel of the grace of God in Christ comes in, bringing hope and blessed salvation. Who else but the Son of God could live the life I should have lived and die the death I so richly deserve as God's curse for my sins? Neither angels nor sinners could fulfill the Law's demands. Someone had to live a perfect life of obedience to obtain eternal life for us. Someone had to die under the curse of God to deliver us from the penalty, the power, and finally from the presence of our sins.

This is why the obedience of Christ is viewed as necessary for our salvation. He lived a perfect life of obedience to the Law, and He obeyed His Father all the way to His death on the cross of Calvary. In Him we have a perfect Substitute before God, Who did this willingly and completely. So Scripture reveals that our salvation rests upon Christ's thirty-three and half years of obedience to His Father: Christ alone gained eternal life for us by perfectly obeying God's Law and by perfectly paying the debt for our Law-breaking.

Therefore, Christ's work of substitution and redemption brings us to God in reconciliation. He reconciles us to God by His perfect life of obedience to the Law, His perfect death beneath its curse, and His resurrection from the grave, all of which takes away the alienation and enmity between us. This brings us together in that fellowship of love and grace, and brings us by His Holy Spirit into vital union with Christ. In this vital union God gives us a new heart; He makes us new creations in Christ; and He restores that moral image of God, that we might be perfect image-bearers of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Personal Application**

My dear reader, have you ever been convicted by the Holy Spirit that you are guilty of breaking God's holy Law, and that you can be acquitted of your sins and stand justified freely by His grace in God's Son, Jesus Christ? Has God the Holy Spirit worked in your heart to show you that you have not kept one hundred percent of the Law one hundred percent of the time? Have you been made to see that you need this Gospel and that Christ is the only Substitute that God has provided?

I pray that God will so convict your soul that you may come to know the One Who has borne your sins upon His own body on the tree, that you might be that perfect image-bearer of God.

## **23. The Precious Blood of Christ**

*"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"—1 Peter 1:18, 19.*

Romans 3:24-26 tells us that the Gospel is the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation that God has provided through the substitutionary work of His only begotten Son. The Gospel is the power of God that saves us from our sins. It glorifies and magnifies God's grace by revealing that He is just and the Justifier of all believing sinners.

### **The Precious Blood of Jesus**

The power of God unto salvation to every one that believes is this: that Christ poured out His precious blood to pay the penalty for our sins, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Heb 9:22). The Gospel consists in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day

according to the scriptures” (1Co 15:1-4). God’s Word declares that it is by the precious shed blood of Christ that atonement for sinful souls has been made and that sins of believing souls has been remitted.<sup>31</sup>

From the beginning, the Bible puts great emphasis on the blood of God’s appointed sacrifice as the means of His passing over or forgiving our sins. Look at it carefully again: “And without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins].” We cannot bypass the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the heart of the Gospel. All the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were types<sup>32</sup> of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and the forgiveness of sinners’ sin by faith in His precious blood. Hebrews 9:12-14 says,

*“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

The Gospel declares how “much more” the power of Christ’s blood will purge our conscience from dead works than the blood of animal sacrifices. His blood purges us from the guilt of sin, so that we might serve the true and living God, so that He might declare us justified by that blood, and so that we might be saved from God’s wrath.

We understand then, that the good news of the Gospel is that: 1) the blood-shedding of our Lord provides us with a righteousness by which God justifies us freely from all sins; 2) we stand in Christ where no condemnation can touch us; and 3) we receive this by faith in His precious blood.

## Change in Our Lives

The first change we read about is found in Colossians 1:20:

*“And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”*

At the cross the Lord Jesus overcame that which takes away peace, and that is sin itself. By shedding His blood, He also overcame Satan, who robs us of our peace. Christ’s blood satisfied the justice of God, so that Christ becomes our peace. That is one of the benefits of the Gospel of the grace of God, as He tells us in Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Christ’s great work of redemption, this shedding of His blood, has done something else. It has *opened the way back to the throne of God*. It is the theme of the New Testament. God has made a way through Christ’s blood that we could come into the very presence of God and gain entrance to His throne of grace. This is by that new and living way which Hebrews 10:19 describes: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

First John 1:7 declares another truth: through the blood of Christ, we who have believed in Christ *have been cleansed from all our sin*.

*“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

Ephesians 1:7 declares unto us the same thing: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

Also in Romans 5:9 we are told that we, who have trusted our never-dying souls to Christ, have been justified by His blood before God, and are thereby *saved from God’s wrath through Christ*: “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

We read in Hebrews 9:14 that *our conscience*, which is our innermost man, *is purged* through the blood of the Lamb, because He gave Himself unto God for us as a Lamb without spot or blemish.

*“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

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<sup>31</sup> **remitted** – to release from the guilt or penalty of; to pardon.

<sup>32</sup> **types** – comparisons and links made between persons, events, things, and institutions of one biblical period and those of another, especially between those of the OT and the NT. The term *typology*, and thus *types*, derives from the Greek word *typos*, meaning “impression, mark, image.” Biblical authors employed typology to reveal the connection between testaments and the outworking of God’s plan of redemptive history. The *type* is the initial person, event, thing, or institution which corresponds with and is fulfilled by a later person, event, thing, or institution, which is called the *antitype*. For example, Paul portrays Christ as the antitype of Adam in Romans 5:12-21: “Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come” (Rom 5:14). On a different level, Jesus Christ is the antitype of the animal sacrifices of the OT.

*This is grace! This is mercy! This is precious! Our consciences are purged from dead works that we might serve the living God!*

Revelation 12:11 tells us that by the power of the blood of our crucified and risen Lord we are *able to overcome the wicked one*: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” In fact, Acts 20:28 tells us that the whole living church of God has been purchased through and by the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God and His precious blood are and ever shall be the song of heaven:

*“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9, 10).*

Praise God for such a salvation! Praise God for the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation! Eternal redemption is ours through the blood-shedding of our blessed Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ! His blood alone breaks the power of sin and grants us entrance into the very presence of God!

Resting upon the blood of Christ for our cleansing and our righteous standing before God produces *a marked difference* between us and the world of unbelievers. Why? Because it brings us—*redeemed sinners*—into a holy relationship with a holy God based upon the holy sacrifice of our blessed and holy Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we believe on Him, and when He cleanses and declares us righteous by faith in His blood, there is a marked difference between us and the world of unbelievers.

By the death and shed blood of Christ, we have been crucified unto the world and the world has been crucified unto us. The shedding of the precious blood of Christ means death to self, sin, and the flesh. The difference between the believer and the world of unbelievers is this: by faith the believer has been washed in the blood of Christ and has died to the world. He is no longer an unbelieving worldling: he has become a believer in Christ and belongs to another world. He has been crucified in Christ to the world; he has been buried with Christ in death. His “old man,” that is, his former life and ways, has been crucified with Christ. He has died to the power of indwelling sin because this is true of all who are Christ’s: they all have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.

This is the reason the Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” For by the power of the Gospel we are *made free from the power of indwelling sin*, according to Romans 6:22, and are made free in Christ to follow and serve Him as His children. Christ delivers us from the power of the world and the power of the devil! God’s grace gives us the power to walk in newness of life. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us that “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” We have been given new hearts and new natures, so we desire to please God, to follow after holiness, and to hate every evil and false way.

The blood of Christ has *secured the eternal damnation of Satan*, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 20:10). He will be cast into the lake of fire because our blessed Lord defeated him at the cross!

The blood of Christ has *secured the complete destruction of the power and presence of sin*. The day is coming when the plague of my heart will one day be left in the grave. The day is coming when I will be able to say because of the blood of Christ shed on my behalf, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin, is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1Co 15:55-57).

The blood of Christ has *secured for me a new body* wherein dwelleth righteousness, and I shall stand before God perfectly redeemed in spirit, soul, and body, made like my blessed Lord in holiness! Oh, I praise the Lord for this! This is real to my soul, and this is to me what the verses in our text teach: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

## **The Gospel Applied to the Heart**

The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation because of substitution. Christ died in my place. His blood was shed for the remission of my sin, and as a poor, lost, hell-deserving sinner, I have been brought before God completely justified by faith in Him alone. My sins are blotted out *forever* and will never be remembered against me any more. This is the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is what it does in the hearts and lives of those whom He saves by His grace!

This work of Christ was not only for me, but for all those whom the Father had given to Him in electing love. By grace the Holy Spirit shows them that they are sinners, who deserve nothing but the wrath of God. Unto them He will have mercy, the Scriptures say (Rom 9:15). Who are they? No one knows except God, Who has written their names in “the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27). So the invitation goes forth: “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17).

Will you come and believe on Jesus Christ? Will you trust Him with your eternal soul? He alone can save by the power of His Gospel.

*Oh! that I could repent, With all my idols part,  
And to Thy gracious eyes present A humble, contrite heart.*

*A heart with grief oppressed, For having grieved my God,  
A troubled heart that cannot rest, Till sprinkled with Thy blood.*

*Jesus, on me bestow The penitent desire;  
With true sincerity of woe My aching breast inspire.*

*With softening pity look, And melt my hardness down;  
Strike with Thy love's resistless stroke, And break this heart of stone!*

*-Charles Wesley, 1749*

