

The Lord Jesus said ... My Sheep

We will focus on two areas in chapter 1:16-32.

1. How nations become fully depraved
2. God's answer

How do Societies Become Pagan under Wrath?

1:18 For the **wrath** of God *is* revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

In this part of Romans, God is dealing with the Gentiles. Gentiles in that time were nations that were thoroughly pagan (depraved in their thinking and life-style), which was very unlike the Jews who had the revelation of God in the Scriptures. Consequently, the Gentiles are under the wrath (righteous anger) of God and worthy or deserving of "the judgment of God" (1:32).

But are nations born fully depraved in their societal life-style? Don't some societies (such as Abimelech's nation, Gen. 20:3-6) have a measure of law and order and a fear of the Supreme? Do they come into full depravity and darkness because God was in a "bad mood" and in uncontrolled anger erratically consigned them to be pagan? Or is it because they knew the truth and didn't want it, and deliberately walk away from it? Darkness is the absence of light. Consequently once nations leave light only darkness is left.

Romans 1 shows 6 steps from the knowledge of God's existence (revelation) that progress down to utter blindness and wickedness worthy of judgment (retribution). It also reveals the 3 stages of God's present wrath.

1

REJECTION

1:19-21a

... For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, ...Because that, when they knew God, **they glorified Him not as God**, neither were thankful ...

Verses 19-21 show that man *knew* of the existence of God. The invisible God can be clearly seen by His

hear my voice, and

visible intelligent creation. All intelligent designs demand intelligent designers. And all intelligent designs reflect the intelligence of the designer, even though he might be unseen. This is simple logic.

For example, you might see a beautiful home with acres of flowering gardens, swimming pools, tennis courts, etc. Without ever meeting the designer-owner you know by what you see that he is rich, intelligent, aesthetic, and athletic.

With creation revealing God and His eternal power, societies, knowing Him, were not thankful nor would they give Him His due glory in fear and worship.

The first step into the wrath of God and to becoming a depraved society is a spiritual one: the rejection of the Creator in His revelation of creation.

2

RATIONALIZATION

1:21b-22

1:21,22 ... but became **vain in their imaginations**, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Once the revelation of God is rejected, one is only left with human reasoning. Darkness is the absence of light. Now man will be left with only the darkness of his mind and whatever fanciful theories he can come up with to explain God – or explain Him away. In his darkened pride he will exalt in his own wisdom which in reality is foolishness – but he won't know it.

3

RELIGIOUS PERVERSION

1:23

And **changed the glory of the incorruptible God** into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Rejection of the light of creation then gives way to

they follow me ... John 10:27

human reasoning. And human reasoning leads only to the perversion of understanding the true God. Although man will still remain "religious," he now makes God into his image.

Whether it's the inanimate idols of native tribes, the mythical gods of the Greeks and Romans, the mystical "enlightenment" of the eastern world or the evolutionary lies of western intelligentsia, man now misrepresents God. We now have 'mind gods' where man's reasoning creates God in the ideas of his mind. He denies that God revealed Himself by making man in *His* image.

God's Present Wrath – Phase One

1:24 **Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.**

Romans 1:18 claimed the wrath of God *is* (present tense) revealed from heaven. There is a future phase to God's wrath when He will directly intervene with physical judgment (Rom. 1:32, 2:5, Rev. 6:19). But there is also a present phase to God's wrath.

This present wrath is not the direct intervention of God but the nonintervention of God.

For example, suppose an enemy was headed in ignorance to a washed-out bridge over a cliff. By *not saying* anything (nonintervention) you would be carrying out judgment; allowing him to self-destruct.

Man firsts rejects the revelation of God. God does not force Himself. Only then does God step back and do nothing. This nonintervention (silence) from God allows man to engage in further perversion through the lust of his heart. Man now dishonors his *body*.

4

REVERSAL OF TRUTH

1:25

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.

Man, because he is not functioning by the knowledge of God but by lusts (passions of his heart), now

"... Fear God and give glory

treats his body in a dishonorable way: he defiles, debases, disgraces and demoralizes it in the name of freedom. The body is given over to sexual perversions and debauchery which brings with it a multitude of emotional and physical sorrows.

They take the truth of God and make it a lie, thus blinding themselves to any hope. They put the emphasis not on the Creator who is to be honored and glorified, but on the creature (creation): themselves and nature. This change causes a reversal of values. To justify their perverted actions they convince themselves that what God calls good is bad – bigoted, hateful, biased, narrow-minded, etc. And what God calls bad is good – freedom, rights, pro-choice, etc.

God's Present Wrath – Phase Two

1:26a For this cause **God gave them up unto vile affections.**

God, by continuing to not intervene, allows societies to additionally self-destruct. This nonintervening is based on a cause: man reversing the truth of God and exalting self. So then God permits man not only to live by his heart's desires and to fulfill his bodily cravings, but also to digress to the baser affections of his *soul* which are wretched, evil and animalistic.

Now, man will be given to deeper rebellion resulting in ravishing *soul* appetites which further destroy.

5

RAVISHING APPETITES

1:26b-27

... 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.

Now, the fruit of God's present wrath (phase two) is lesbianism and male homosexuality. Such acts are directly against God's nature. The woman was created *for* man. The natural bodily differences make God's pattern for marriage and procreation evident.

to Him; for the hour of His judgment

When societies go against God's nature in this way there are inherent diseases and destruction associated with such behavior that will now inflict one's body internally. That nation will then be dealing with epidemics as it self-destructs under the wrath of God.

God's Present Wrath – Phase Three

1:28a And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over** to a reprobate *mind* ...

The final phase of God's present wrath on a society effects the mind. Because a society now wants none of God in their education (knowledge), God allows their minds to become reprobate. When one's mind is allowed to become reprobate (thoroughly depraved and unable to think and judge wisely), virtually every decision he makes will be harmful and wrong. It will be only a matter of time when the results of all those wrong decisions fully destroy that person or nation.

6

REPROBATION

1:28b-31

1:28b, 29 ...God gave them over to a **reprobate mind**, to do those things which are not convenient; *Being filled* with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness ...

Once the mind is gone, one is unable to *understand* God-honoring and life-sustaining values. A reprobate mind is one free from moral restraint and understanding; thus, it can no longer judge intelligently or correctly. Consequently that society will be filled with all manner of sin; religious and moral. It will think this is normal and even good progress. Hence, they will see no need for a solution and therefore not seek one. And without the right solution they will inevitably perish.

Retribution. "Who knowing **the judgment of God**, that they which commit such things are worthy of death ..." (1:32). The irony of this cycle of six downward steps from the revelation of God to the righteous retribution of God is that what was rejected – the revelation of God in creation – becomes the catalyst to cloud their ability to know truth, thus bringing the judgment of God.

is come: and worship Him that

Because they don't fear or believe in the Creator who made man in His very own image, their offspring have "inherited lies" (Jer. 16:19). And with reprobate minds they will be subject to the following results:

- human life devalued – for if a person is just a mass of chemicals, acts such as violence, abortion, suicide and murder will increase
- inability to discern right leaders and good laws
- diseases that are associated with sinful living
- the lack of meaning in life, for if there is no origin (purpose) or destiny, what hope is there?
- unfulfillment that leads to depression
- the stress that goes with sin: broken relationships, broken promises and heartbreak
- retribution of God's judgment – death: eternal separation from God in conscious torment

While it is true there is a future judgment day for individuals, the present wrath of God has already fallen on western society.

The wrath of God on North America according to the Roman's pattern

Early 1960's - the national rejection of the revelation of God in creation (no Bible and prayer in schools - Supreme Court, 1962) (1:21)

1960's - rationalization - the institutional insistence and popular acceptance of foolish evolution (1:22)

Late 60's - early 70's - religious perversion - the entrance of eastern mysticism (new age) to find fulfillment and meaning (1:23)

Mid 60's - mid 70's - dishonoring bodies - the sinful "sexual revolution," drug abuse, and legal abortion - Supreme Court, 1973 (1:24)

1970's - reversal of values - emphasis of "rights movements" & earth consciousness over God (1:25)

1970's - 80's - vile affections - lesbianism and male homosexuality accepted as normal - recompense *in* them – STD, HIV, AIDS, (1:26, 27).

1990's - 2000's - reprobate mind - God's ways are called legalistic, bigoted, and hateful. Abortion (murder) and sexual sins are approvingly called "rights" and "choice". Minds are closed. (1:28-31)

made heaven and earth" Rev. 14:7

God's Answer

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 [Gentile].

Romans has been proving that Gentile humanity is lost, under wrath, depraved, and worthy of future judgment. Man is responsible for the darkness he is in because he chose it by rejecting God in His revelation through creation. But such is the context of the gospel.

Romans also shows that pagan individuals are saveable by the power of God's gospel in His Son: Jesus the Lord.

If the root problem is spiritual (rejection of God in creation) then the solution will also have to be spiritual. Christian politics, education or values will not convince a reprobate mind. As the child's lyric says when Humpty Dumpty had a great fall: "All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again."

God's answer is the gospel of Christ. This is the gospel the church saw change some of the pagan world of their day. Man must first be reconciled with his Creator before he can then change. The gospel of the Son of God accomplishes those two major things for the repentant sinner who will trust Him in faith.

1. **Saves from future wrath.** "... Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ..." (Rom. 5:9,10).

2. **Saves from present wrath.** Because the Lord also lives, His Spirit changes the mind from a carnal (natural) mind into a renewed spiritual one: "to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

Chronicle #45c of *'The Bible of God'* series continues to look as God's truth as taught in Romans

Mailing list - Information - Copies

R. P. Amos

c/o Northgate Gospel Fellowship

240 McGuire Rd.

Rochester NY 14616



The Chronicles of the

Bible of God

45b

Romans 1 Societies Under Wrath

The first Chronicle (45a) in this series on the Scripture's 45th book, Romans, provided an overview of the thought flow of the book as a whole. It showed that God in all His actions of judging or saving is *just*.

This second Chronicle (45b) will focus on the truths of chapter 1, verses 18-32. These verses are part of a greater context where the Lord's apostle is proving the guilt of *all* mankind, showing they are worthy of the judgment of God. His purpose is to demonstrate that since all peoples (religious and nonreligious) are equally under God's wrath, they *all* are in need of God's salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. (See #1 of the *'Gospel of God'* series for further study of this subject).

In this article we will consider how a society becomes pagan in its belief system and life-style – a sign of *al-ready* being under the wrath of God.