



**GOD'S WRATH ON**

**UNRIGHTEOUSNESS**

**THE BOOK OF**

**ROMANS**

**Chapter 1:18-32**

# God's Wrath on All Unrighteousness

Although the thematic verses in Rom 1:16-17 open the body of the epistle, v.18 opens the epistle's first major theological section that continues through 3:20 and discusses God's wrath against all unrighteousness. This section of Romans addresses the problem of human nature after the fall into sin. It draws one to the certain conclusion that no one can be righteous before God based upon their works. Therefore, Paul divides people into three major groups:

Romans  
1:18 – 3:20



# God's Wrath on All Unrighteousness

1. **Gentiles (vv.18-32):** Open and coarse sinners, whom Paul's readers (Roman Christians) would have identified as rank unbelievers, especially the Romans, living lifestyles of blatant sinfulness;
2. **Moralist (2:1-16):** This group is of "higher" and "nobler" standards who believe that living a good life is all that's necessary to appease (and please) God. This group condemns the first group and truly believes that because of their more nobler way of life, they won't be condemned.

Romans  
1:18 – 3:20

# God's Wrath on All Unrighteousness

3. *Jews (2:17 - 3:9)*: They lack righteousness like all of us, but assume they have always had it; since they are descendants of Abraham and members of God's chosen people, blessed with God's revealed Word, many of them suppose they are already safe and secure in God's Kingdom!


Romans  
1:18 – 3:20



# God's Wrath on All Unrighteousness

Paul then wraps up this section by discussing all people (3:10-20). The bottom line is that the sinner, who has knowledge of God and His law, yet fails to do all that He demands is in the same unrighteous state as the sinner who is in overt rebellion against God. This section establishes an important foundation for Paul's proclamation concerning the Righteousness of God revealed in Christ and received through faith.

Romans  
1:18 – 3:20




*V.18 – For there is revealed God's wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...,*

**Let's take a moment and look at a few other places where Paul speaks about the wrath of God (ὀργὴ θεοῦ). So that we can get a clearer idea of his mindset regarding this issue, let's review: Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 2:14-16.**

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**






*(Eph. 2:3) “... among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*

*(Col. 3:5–7) “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.”*


**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**



*(1 Thess. 1:9–10) “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*


**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**





*(1 Thess. 2:14-16) “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.”*

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**




*V.18 – For there is revealed God’s wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...,*

**God has promised and shown His wrath to sinners since the fall; yet, He has also promised and shown His mercy in abundance. We can conclude that God has never shown human beings the full extent of wrath that we deserve due to our sin. The OT speaks of the “*Day of the Lord*” when God will abundantly show forth His wrath over sin. This “*Day of the Lord*” dawned with Jesus and God’s eschatological (end time or Judgment Day) wrath, which was visited upon Jesus as He drank “*the cup of wrath*” in His suffering and death. In Jesus, we see the justice of God: He visits His wrath over sin upon His Son in order to show mercy to His entire creation.**

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**






*V.18 – For there is revealed God’s wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...,*

**Even as the “end-time” righteousness of God was unveiled in Jesus and is now being revealed in the Gospel (v.17), so also the “end-time” wrath of God that was unveiled at the cross is now being revealed through the chaos of sin (v.18). In this way, the wrath of God functions as condemning Law in service to the Gospel as we swiftly move to the end of time (Rom 4:15: “*the Law brings wrath*”). On the Last Day, those who are not righteous by faith in Christ will experience the full “end-time” wrath of God over sin, not because their sin was *not* forgiven in Christ, but because *they rejected the mercy shown by the Creator in Christ Jesus.***

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**



*V.18 – For there is revealed God’s wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...,*

**There are three clear aspects to the wrath of God in Paul’s letters:**


First, we have been saved from the damning “end-time” wrath of God, against our sin, through Jesus;

Second, this “end-time” wrath of God, which was laid upon our Lord continues to be visible and is functioning as the Law in our world; **and**,

Third, the revelation of the final wrath of God will climax on the Last Day when sinners, without faith in Jesus, will experience God’s anger against their rebellion that stems from unbelief. Remember, it is UNBELIEF that condemns!

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**






V.19 –20: “...because what is known regarding God is manifest in them, for God manifested it to them. For the things unseen regarding Him, by being perceived from the world’s creation on by means of the things made, are fully seen, both His everlasting power and divinity, so that they are without excuse.”

**It’s abundantly clear: man knows God is! Even if one’s knowledge is limited to *natural* revelation through creation and does not include *special* revelation (i.e., God’s deeds and words such as in Holy Scripture). Paul is not developing another way of salvation based on natural revelation; there is no other way that man can be saved except through faith in Christ (Rom 10:9; cf. Acts 4:12). Yet Paul is emphasizing that all people are accountable to God because knowledge of Him is available to all through creation!**

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**






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Notice the use of the present tense with the past tense.

“...because what is known of God is manifest in them (present tense), for God manifested it to them (past tense).” In other words, God showed His existence in His creation (past) with the result that knowledge of Him is evident (present). And He has done this so that man is “without excuse” (v.20). The Greek word for “without excuse” is: ἀναπολογήτους - that which is “without rationale or convincing argument” and refers to what is “utterly inadmissible”, i.e., impossible to accept (without solid logic, that which completely lacks merit). In other words, *atheists are lying to themselves*; they know better. Their argument has no foundation or merit! They are simply denying what they know to be true!

The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)





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**Paul describes even further that God’s invisible attributes are clearly seen! He’s talking about God’s eternal power and deity. Paul uses a literary device called an oxymoron. Paul says “His invisible attributes are clearly seen.” Paul is driving the point home that God can be known by people other than those He has communicated with in some visible and/or audible manner. The existence of God and His power are clearly manifested in the created world.**

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**

## *Let's read verses 21-32*

**Luther reflects upon the blessings of God's creation in his explanation of the First Article which states: *"...for all of which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey him."***

**We do not do what we should naturally do for the Creator in light of His creation:**

**We do not honor and thank Him!**

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**

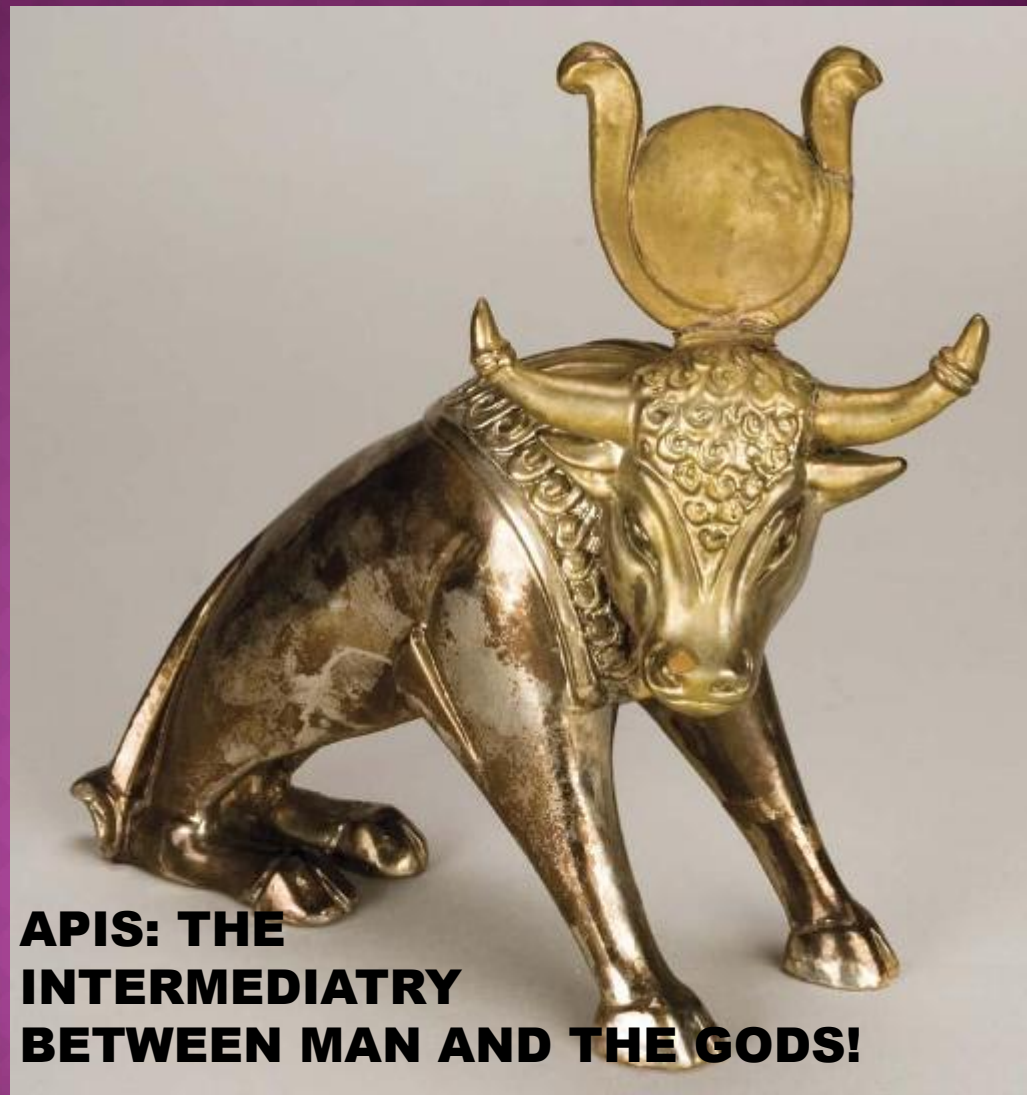


Furthermore, mankind's position towards the Creator is not neutral. Not only does man fail to honor and thank the Creator, but man rebels against Him by worshipping the creation or the created (the Green Movement, Climate Change, all forms of idolatry, etc.). Paul expresses this with his use of verb **“exchange.”** People **exchange** the glory of God for the likeness of men and other created things (v.23). They **exchange** the truth of God for a lie (v.25-26a). They **exchange** natural sexual practices for unnatural (v.26b-31). Although one can see the **sin of Adam and Eve (exchanged truth of God for a lie) or Israel (exchanged glory of God for the likeness of an animal (Golden Calf))**, these verses are primarily speaking of the rebellion of the wider Gentile world.

The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)



The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)




**APIS: THE  
INTERMEDIATRY  
BETWEEN MAN AND THE GODS!**





## The Gentiles (vv. 18-32)

The result of this rebellion is that God “gave them up” [παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς] to their sinful rebellion (vv.24, 26, 28). Literally, God hands them over to what they want: *to cause one to follow his own corrupt mind*. This “...gave them up...” should not be seen as God giving up on them! On the contrary, God allows such sinful indulgence so that man’s rebellion against the Creator becomes even more apparent with the result that man sees the absurdity of his sin and repents! One can see that Paul’s depiction of sinful rebellion in the first century remains very applicable today (idolatry, every form of sexual depravity, etc.).



Paul drives his point home by heaping up the nouns in vv.29-31. He concludes in v.32 with the observation that the people in such rebellion not only do such things, knowing that they are worthy of death, but even *approve of and applaud* those who practice them: “*Although they know God’s righteous decree*” namely, those who do such things are worthy of death, yet they not only do them, but also approve of those who practice them.

**The Gentiles  
(vv. 18-32)**





# **ROMANS 2:1-3:9**

**Moralist  
and the  
Jews**

**NEXT  
WEEK!**