

SCRIPTURE

Friends, why **1:18-3:20**? “The history of fallen mankind is devolutionary, not evolutionary!” From my perspective, these verses explain why our world is behaving and thinking as it is. There are many qualities of God mentioned in the Bible: He is eternal, holy, merciful, gracious, forgiving, truth, just. See **Ex. 34:6-7**. Let’s begin these verses by also emphasizing that God is love; we’ll especially see this in **5:1-10** and **8:31-39**. He loves each person and wants to have a Father-child relationship with us. He’s eager to draw us into relationship. Romans is a reasoned presentation of the Good News of Jesus as Lord. *God’s* righteousness (justice) is available to everyone who believes in and receives Jesus as Lord! Why necessary? Because all have sinned and fallen short of the essence of who God is, proven in **1:18-3:20**. Each person is accountable to God for what he/she’s done with the truth he/she has received.

In **1:18-3:20** we enter a courtroom with God as judge and jury. The case is God versus mankind, His charges against practices of the human race. And we find, everyone is guilty! Apart from Jesus, we’re helpless, ungodly, sinners, & enemies of God (**5:6-10**). All humanity suppresses and ignores truth about God from creation, from within themselves, and from Scripture. The failure here is with mankind, not with the evidence proving God exists and is powerful. The evidence is clear: people are without excuse. All are guilty.

Read 1:16-20. WHY GOD’S WRATH IS REVEALED AGAINST UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. **:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.** Not only God’s power (**:16**) and righteousness (**:17**) have been revealed, but so has His wrath. God’s wrath is part of His character. God’s wrath (orgē) represents all His hatred and resistance to the evil of mankind. Divine wrath is not uncontrolled rage or unreasonable outbursts. It is God’s holy response to certain thinking/behavior/words/choices. His wrath is something currently being revealed (**1:24,26,28, Eph. 5:6**). He ‘is giving sinning people over’ to: idolatry, dishonored bodies, degrading passions, and depraved minds. Why? So each person and nation will see He’s a holy God and how desperately we need Him! It is evidence of His love. It is for the purpose of drawing sinful man to Himself. He wants to grant repentance, people to come to the knowledge of the truth and come to their senses. So each person and nation will see He’s a holy God and how desperately we need Him!

His wrath is the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin; it’s a part of a holy God’s character. We see God’s wrath demonstrated in the OT: flood, confounded language, Sodom and Gomorrah, Pharaoh and his army, the pagan king Belshazzar. See page 6 for “The Wrath of God” handout.

Godlessness means a lack of reverence, an irreverence that reveals one is against God, not simply in terms of indifference but also of rebellion. It is considering Him not worthy of our trust and gratitude. Some results when a person or nation tries to live a God-less life: The idea of sin is dismissed. People try to ignore the fact that man is a sinner by nature and by choice. There ends up no one to be accountable to, no ultimate authority. People do what is right in their own eyes. God’s ideas of salvation, marriage, family,

parenthood, church, law and order, are either dismissed or redefined.

Unrighteousness is anything that isn’t right/just in God’s sight, and it most often reveals itself in how one treats others. If God is dismissed and only humanism is left, the emphasis on the individual being God’s unique creation is lost (**Gen. 1:26-28, 5:1-2, Col. 3:10, James 3:9**). Because every person knows truth about God (known, understood, acknowledge), to place anything before the knowable God of the Bible is ungodly and results in wicked practices.

‘Suppress’ means to hold down, like keeping the lid of a container closed so whatever is inside can’t escape. Paul is emphasizing that the sin is deliberate. God has revealed Himself in creation, written and verbal revelations, Jesus, history. Therefore, when that which He purposely reveals for our benefit is suppressed and we don’t give God honor/glory, it is the greatest offense.

:19-20 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. :20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. What about the heathen who haven’t known some truth about God? There aren’t any! God’s truth is evident within them (**1:19, 2:14-15**, hearts and consciences and thoughts) and outside them (creation **1:20**, history, Bible). *There are no acceptable excuses. Knowledge about God is evident, constant.* Nowhere is God without a witness.

:20 Since His creation of the world, God’s invisible attributes (His eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly discernible through the things which He has made. “Man was created to be a spectator” through telescopes, microscopes, natural observation. Again, people do not have an excuse. **Ps. 8, 19:1-4a—“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.”** You see the stars and the human body and beauty of earth and you realize that didn’t just ‘big-bang’ into being and place. He is, and He’s powerful! It is possible to tell something about God from the world He made. Also see **Acts 14:15-17, 17:23-28**.

What about someone who has never heard God’s Good-News message of Jesus? **Heb. 11:6** says, **“He must believe that God is there, and must diligently seek Him.”** All know enough about God that they can seek & honor & thank Him. If we seek after Him, He will give further truth about Himself, and this truth will eventually lead to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. But...no one does (3:11)!! The message of the Bible is God pursuing us, not we Him!

God alone deserves our worship. A person’s god is that for which he/she lives, for which he gives his thoughts, time, energy, money. The warped thinking about the Biblical God is the product of not just ignoring but rejecting Him, of deliberately suppressing the truth about Him. Four consequences? Idolatry, dishonored bodies, degrading passions, and depraved minds.

It is the ‘**truth of God**’ that must be used as the straightedge by which everyone and everything is evaluated. “The rightness of human action must be determined not by the fluctuating moral standards of a volatile society but by the unchanging revelation of an eternal God. Truth can be known and right still exists!”; regardless of the world’s opinions and denials.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of mankind. Yet God has provided the way through Jesus by whom we can experience His righteousness, His justice. It seems everyone would rush to hear and accept God's good news on how to escape His wrath and enjoy His righteousness that forgives our sins, gives us new hearts, gives us an intimate relationship with Him and direct access to Him, writes His truth on our hearts and minds, and places the Holy Spirit within us (New Covenant).

Mankind's rejection is first expressed in ungodliness. How does 'ungodliness' show up in everyday life? People suppress God's truth and don't honor Him as God or give thanks to Him. Incredible! It is not a knowledge problem but a belief and will problem. THE SIN of all mankind is suppressing God's revealed truth. All are guilty before God. In **:21-32** we 'see' the results of willful rebellion in the presence of clear light.

Read :21-23. THE FIRST RESULT OF REJECTING GOD AND HIS TRUTH: IDOLATRY. **:21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.** In **:19-20**, everyone knows some truth about God. From creation, consciences, history, the Bible, & Jesus, we know there is a powerful God who exists. From our Creator we receive breath, food, rain, clothing, shelter, the gift of life itself. He deserves our honor and our thanks. But, people don't honor or thank Him! Out of His love, He lets us choose, for Him or against Him, but God uses His wrath (& Law) to show us our need of Him.

The consequences of suppression are immediate. Instead of honoring God as God or thanking Him, they substitute their own ideas, futile in their speculations. Futile = empty/meaningless/aimless. Speculations = reasonings. In the final analysis, without God, all of mankind's efforts and ideas are judged to be empty reasonings. Their without-understanding hearts are darkened, not able to make sound judgments. All end up with their own ideas of who and what God is (or whether He exists) and what is right or wrong.

:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools. Phillips, "Behind a facade of 'wisdom' they became just fools." Without God, we claim the ability to know everything and handle anything. "Fools!", God says. People, thinking they know more than God, openly reject His thoughts and ways. The fool (moron) in Scripture is a person who willfully makes decisions contrary to God's truth. They are fools because they make themselves and their futile ideas/opinions/speculations the standard and the law of life, instead of the will of God. The world by its wisdom did not know God (**1 Cor. 1:21**). It still doesn't!

:23 And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. When individuals or nations give up God, they do not cease to be religious. They just make other gods for themselves, suppressing God's revealed truth, breaking the first commandment (**Ex. 20:3-5**). From God's glory—the Hebrew word for glory means weight, worth, value; it's the essence of who God is (He alone is worthy of our worship or worthship)—to people trading Him in for an inferior model, for mortal man or things that

fly/run/crawl! People recognize God exists and He's powerful. But, instead of seeking Him and turning to Him with honor and gratitude, they exchange the glory of God (in all His majesty, greatness, power, and deity) for mere images, with no substance. That is idolatry!!

The essence of sin is to put self or anything else in the place of the Biblical God. Human religion in its various forms is a type of judgment/wrath for suppressing the revelation God has given of Himself in creation, history, conscience, Scripture, and Jesus. These are not actions of people seeking God; they are actions of people rejecting God!! If the God of the Bible doesn't have the place of preeminence that is rightfully His, then humans will put something/someone in His place: Nebuchadnezzar in **Dan. 4:28-32**, Roman Caesars, humanism, government. Perhaps we don't worship birds and beasts in this country but when one hears of animals and trees being valued equally or more highly than unborn babies, we wonder! People do this because they wrongly believe they are capable of handling their own creation!

Read 1:24-25. THE SECOND RESULT OF REJECTING GOD AND HIS TRUTH: DISHONORED BODIES, SEXUAL IMPURITY. **:24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. Therefore—**this immorality is a result of the idolatry into which men fall. So we have another sign of a God-less and unjust person/society who/which has suppressed God's truth: dishonored bodies. Living for desires/urges/cravings becomes a way of life for those who have rejected God and His truth. God removes His restraints. "If you suppress My truth, ignoring the evidence of My existence and power, if you don't want to honor or give thanks to Me, I'll let your godless, wicked, idolatrous desires run their course." This is both permissive as well as judicial. What has been done—rejecting God and His truth—is allowed to break out into the open. **Gave over** is active; it is to accomplish a specific purpose. God's purpose for turning people over to their impurity is redemptive: so they'll see their need.

People's own emphasis and desires and bodies reveal what false god they've been worshipping. Look at our society today. Sex outside of marriage: proof of an individual and/or society which is rejecting God. Look at the evidence!

Dishonor means to put an incorrect appraisal upon another's worth or to refuse to treat another with the respect which is his/her due. Instead of looking at another as 'made in the image of God', there's the tendency to look at another as 'a body to be exploited'. Understand the value of God's unique creation. God created our sexuality as something very special, good, to be enjoyed within the secure boundaries of marriage between a man and woman. But if God and His beautiful plan are rejected, if His truth is suppressed, people will indulge in sexual behavior foreign to that for which we were designed. As **1 Cor. 6:13,18** make clear: sexual immorality not only is sin against the Lord but is sin against one's own body.

Remember how it begins: **:25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a (lit. the) lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever (lit. to the ages). Amen.** The exchange of the God's

truth for the lie, the contention that someone/thing is to be served in the place of the true God. They end up worshiping and serving the creation, a created thing, instead of the Creator, who alone is worthy to be worshiped forever and ever. Humans are made to worship, but if they don't worship the Biblical God, often their 'worship' is expressed with another person's body, in their thinking and/or their practices.

Listen, fellow Christians, if you have failed in these areas, God is lovingly disciplining you (**Heb. 12:5-11**). Confess your sin and believe (**Mk. 1:14-15**). Continue getting to know your God and who He's made you in Christ and how to walk in the Spirit's strength. Deal severely with the tempting thoughts and situations in your own life. The Creator is forever worthy to be praised. Only by worshiping the Biblical God and bowing the knee to Jesus can we be set free from sin's controlling power.

Mankind's viewpoint at this time in our history has a viewpoint already decided: "Anything which can't be tested or scientifically observed must be placed in the category of unreal." That gets rid of the Biblical God or Him as Creator! One's worldview is a choice.

God gave truth to mankind (:19-20), and mankind's responses prove mankind rejects it (**1:21-3:20**). Some of the evidence of suppressing the truth? Mankind has rejected the truth within (**2:14-15**) and the evidences of creation without (**1:19-20**). People without Jesus neither honored God as God nor thanked Him; they have traded Him in for an image, an inferior model. What is the verdict against every person who rejects God and His truth? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God, which shows up in people becoming futile in their speculations, their foolish hearts becoming darkened, becoming fools, and remaining 'religious' but without the Biblical God; plus, they are 'given over' to sexual immorality, dishonored bodies. More in **1:26-3:20**. Humanity's only hope is God's salvation, righteousness, the Gospel, found in our Lord Jesus.

So, while God's wrath is revealed to all mankind, God's Good News is also revealed to us (**1:16-17**). That's the story in **3:21-4:25**! It is only when people are convicted of their sins toward God (suppressing His truth, not honoring Him as God nor thanking Him, trading Him in on an inferior image, rejecting the convicting work of the Holy Spirit: **Jn. 16:8-11**) that they will be ready to repent of those sins and believe the 'Good News' message, by faith turning to Jesus. This is the great privilege of the Church, your task and mine, to spread this message, that "love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." We spread this good news by our own witnessing, by supporting church-planters and new churches, and by sending out and encouraging evangelists and missionaries. Our message is faith in the Person and work of Jesus alone. With whom will you share this Good News?

The alternatives are clear, it's either God's righteousness or God's wrath. There are no other choices. Will you live by faith in what God has revealed and done, or, suppress His truth and not honor and thank Him? This is the most important question you will be asked on earth. Your answer determines your eternal destiny, forever with God or separated from Him. Let God search us for anything we are putting in His place for salvation, righteousness, the

Gospel, meaning, fulfillment, purpose. We need God's righteousness, found only in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. May we not suppress God's revealed truth, exposed by idolatry and sexual immoral practices, but believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus.

NOTES

Wrath of God (notes on **Romans 1:18**, MacArthur Study Bible)

This is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed randomly at people whom God does not like. It's the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin. MacArthur has many Scriptural references in notes.

"Is revealed" essentially means to uncover, make visible, to make known. God reveals His wrath in two ways: 1. Indirectly through natural consequences of violating His universal moral law, and 2. Directly through His personal intervention. Many examples in MacArthur's notes.

God has various kinds of wrath:

1. Eternal wrath—hell.
2. Eschatological wrath which is the final Day of the Lord.
3. Cataclysmic wrath, like the flood in **Genesis 7-8**.
4. Consequential wrath, which is the principle of sowing and reaping.
5. The wrath of abandonment, which is removing restraint and letting people go to their sins. The fifth form is mentioned in **Romans 1:18**. He pours out His wrath against all ungodliness (sins against God) and all unrighteousness (sins in relationships with others) because they have suppressed His truth. This wrath shows up in idolatry, sexual immorality, sexual perversity, and societal sinful practices. This is God abandoning the wicked (unsaved) to pursue their sin and its consequences. Remember, the real sin is the suppression of God's truth.

For the saved, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (**Rom. 5:9, 1 Th. 5:9**). God will no longer let us go our own selfish way. The Christian will no longer experience God's wrath. Great news!

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Listen, fellow Christians, if you have failed in these areas, God is lovingly disciplining you (**Heb. 12:5-11**). Confess your sin and believe (**Mk. 1:14-15**). Continue getting to know your God and who He's made you in Christ and how to walk in the Spirit's strength. Deal severely with the tempting thoughts and situations in your own life. The Creator is forever worthy to be praised. Only by worshiping the Biblical God and bowing the knee to Jesus can we be set free from sin's controlling power.

Mankind's viewpoint at this time in our history has a viewpoint already decided: "Anything which can't be tested or scientifically observed must be placed in the category of unreal." That gets rid of the Biblical God or Him as Creator! One's worldview is a choice.

God gave truth to mankind (:19-20), and mankind's responses prove mankind rejects it (**1:21-3:20**). Some of the evidence of suppressing the truth? Mankind has rejected the truth within (**2:14-15**) and the evidences of creation without (**1:19-20**). People without Jesus neither honored God as God nor thanked Him; they have traded Him in for an image, an inferior model. What is the verdict against every person who rejects God and His truth? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God, which shows up in people becoming futile in their speculations, their foolish hearts becoming darkened, becoming fools, and remaining 'religious' but without the Biblical God; plus, they are 'given over' to sexual immorality, dishonored bodies. More in **1:26-3:20**. Humanity's only hope is God's salvation, righteousness, the Gospel, found in our Lord Jesus.

So, while God's wrath is revealed to all mankind, God's Good News is also revealed to us (**1:16-17**). That's the story in **3:21-4:25**! It is only when people are convicted of their sins toward God (suppressing His truth, not honoring Him as God nor thanking Him, trading Him in on an inferior image, rejecting the convicting work of the Holy Spirit: **Jn. 16:8-11**) that they will be ready to repent of those sins and believe the 'Good News' message, by faith turning to Jesus. This is the great privilege of the Church, your task and mine, to spread this message, that "love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." We spread this good news by our own witnessing, by supporting church-planters and new churches, and by sending out and encouraging evangelists and missionaries. Our message is faith in the Person and work of Jesus alone. With whom will you share this Good News?

The alternatives are clear, it's either God's righteousness or God's wrath. There are no other choices. Will you live by faith in what God has revealed and done, or, suppress His truth and not honor and thank Him? This is the most important question you will be asked on earth. Your answer determines your eternal destiny, forever with God or separated from Him. Let God search us for anything we are putting in His place for salvation, righteousness, the

Gospel, meaning, fulfillment, purpose. We need God's righteousness, found only in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. May we not suppress God's revealed truth, exposed by idolatry and sexual immoral practices, but believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus.

NOTES

Wrath of God (notes on **Romans 1:18**, MacArthur Study Bible)

This is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed randomly at people whom God does not like. It's the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin. MacArthur has many Scriptural references in notes.

"Is revealed" essentially means to uncover, make visible, to make known. God reveals His wrath in two ways: 1. Indirectly through natural consequences of violating His universal moral law, and 2. Directly through His personal intervention. Many examples in MacArthur's notes.

God has various kinds of wrath:

1. Eternal wrath—hell.
2. Eschatological wrath which is the final Day of the Lord.
3. Cataclysmic wrath, like the flood in **Genesis 7-8**.
4. Consequential wrath, which is the principle of sowing and reaping.
5. The wrath of abandonment, which is removing restraint and letting people go to their sins. The fifth form is mentioned in **Romans 1:18**. He pours out His wrath against all ungodliness (sins against God) and all unrighteousness (sins in relationships with others) because they have suppressed His truth. This wrath shows up in idolatry, sexual immorality, sexual perversity, and societal sinful practices. This is God abandoning the wicked (unsaved) to pursue their sin and its consequences. Remember, the real sin is the suppression of God's truth.

For the saved, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (**Rom. 5:9, 1 Th. 5:9**). God will no longer let us go our own selfish way. The Christian will no longer experience God's wrath. Great news!