

**Romans (6):
God's Indictment and Dealings with Idolaters
(Rom. 1:18-32)**

Introduction:

Let us turn in God's Word to Paul's Epistle to the Romans to which we will give attention to Romans 1:18ff. Last Lord's Day we addressed perhaps the most difficult verse to understand in this epistle. Thankfully, we will find what follows to be quite clear and straightforward in its truth claims. But whereas the passage before us, which is Romans 1:18-32, is easily understood, it is probably the most offensive and objectionable passage of the Scriptures to the "world" in which we are living in this first quarter of the 21st century. For this passage is one of the clearest declarations in the Word of God against the sin of homosexuality. But we embrace and proclaim without apology what God's Word teaches us regarding these matters. And so, even though we expose ourselves to ridicule and hostility in the community, even as this message is broadcast on a number of local access television stations in the area, we will not apologize for God's Word, diminish or obscure its clarity, or "soft-pedal" its implications. But much more than homosexual sin is condemned in this passage, as we will see. And we will also see that this pronouncement of God's judgment against sin is necessary and preparatory for bringing forth God's mercy and grace in salvation for sinners such as the ones described before us.

I. Introduction to Romans 1:18-32

As we approach this passage, I am aware of the sensitive nature of the behavior that we will need to address. We are not as those who promote sinful behavior, who brandish their practice before the sensitive conscience or the innocent youth. We believe what God's Word declares, "For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret" (Eph. 5:12). But at the same time we are aware of our need to speak plainly. God has given us clear instruction on how to address these matters in Ephesians 5:5-12:

⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸or at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. (Eph. 5:5-14)

And so, where we are hesitant to speak of these things, especially with women and children present, we will do so in a manner that we can expose these "unfruitful works of darkness." Let us read **Romans 1:18-32**.

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise,

they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

As we approach this passage of Holy Scripture, it is important that we understand its role in the apostle's teaching to this church at Rome. We considered last week Paul's formal introduction to his epistle in **Romans 1:16f.**

¹⁶“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

The gospel that Paul was to present to his readers concerned the righteousness of God to save sinners through faith. This gospel was the same for all people everywhere, to both Jew and Greek. But the people of the first century would not have readily embraced this message for there was a great difference in opinion about the need of salvation and the way of salvation from the perspective of both the Jews and the Gentiles. Paul would need to show that all the world was in need of this gospel in order to commend it fully to his readers. And so, Paul began to lay out a case that both Gentiles and Jewish people were sinners, who were under the wrath of God, who were both in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, beginning with verse 18, Paul argued that the whole world is under sin and need of the grace of God for salvation that is in Jesus Christ alone.

Every person is “without excuse” because every person—whether a first-century pagan or a twentieth-century materialist—has been given a knowledge of God and has spurned that knowledge in favor of idolatry, in all its varied manifestations. All therefore stand under the awful reality of the wrath of God, and all are in desperate need of the justifying power of the gospel of Christ. We will never come to grips with the importance of the gospel, or be motivated as we should be to proclaim it, until this sad truth has been fully integrated into our worldview.¹

Paul completes his argument and concludes this aspect of his teaching with **Romans 3:9** and **10**, as well as **verses 19** and **20**.

⁹“What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God.’” (Rom. 3:9, 10)

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom 3:19, 20)

¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1996), p. 98.

And so, between Romans 1:18 and Romans 3:20, the apostle Paul sets before his readers the guilt and of all the world and he shows the need for sinners to experience the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we look over this section of the epistle, we may discern the flow of the argument in the following outline:

- I. Introduction
 - A. Salutation (1:17)
 - B. Thanksgiving and prayer for Paul to visit Rome
 - C. The theme of the epistle: the gospel of the righteousness of God
- II. God's righteousness in His wrath against sinners (1:18 – 3:20)
 - A. The unrighteousness of idolaters (Gentiles) (1:18-32)**
 - B. The unrighteousness of those who judge others but do the same things (Jews) (2:1-3:8)**
 - C. The unrighteousness of all people (3:9-20)**

Now this section of the epistle is commonly shown in the outlines of commentators to have Paul addressing the sinfulness of Gentiles in 1:18-30, and Paul addressing the sinfulness of the Jews in Romans 2:1-3:8. And I believe that this is essentially correct. However, Paul was more subtle than directly naming the Gentile and naming the Jew in his indictment. Specifically Paul indicts the idolater (1:18-32), and then the so-called moralist (2:1-3:8). However, although Paul intimated that he was speaking of the Jews beginning with 2:1, he did identify them and speak directly of them in 2:17ff. Because of this, I put "Jews" and "Gentiles" in parentheses in the outline, for Paul does not name them directly. Paul was being rather subtle in directing his charges to these people.

Now, it has been pointed out that there had been *Jewish idolaters*, and so they would fall under Paul's indictment of Romans 1:18-32, which is normally understood to be directed to Gentiles only.² For example, we read of the Psalmist's charge of idolatry against the Jews in **Psalm 106:19-22**.

¹⁹They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. ²⁰*They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.* ²¹They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, ²²wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. (Psa. 106:19-22)

We also read **Jeremiah 2:11f**,

¹¹*Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.* ¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:11-12)

It may also be shown that there were some *Gentile "moralists"*, who looked down on others for their behavior, who could thereby be included under the condemnation of Paul's indictment of 2:1ff, which is normally understood to be directed to Jews only. Nevertheless, I believe that it can be shown that although Paul did not specifically mention the Gentiles in Romans 1:18-32, he was subtly speaking of them and his readers would have perceived his words as such. There are several reasons for this. First, Paul's words reflect the typical way that Jews regarded Gentiles. Second, the idolatry that Paul references, although had been true of Israel in the past, was not true of Jews when Paul wrote this epistle.³ Third, Paul speaks very graphically of homosexuality in Romans 1:18-32, which was a sin common among Gentiles, but was not overtly practiced or celebrated among Jews.⁴ Fourth, the Jews would never be characterized as those in verse 32 who approved of that sinful

² Mark A. Seifrid, "Natural Revelation and the Purpose of the Law in Romans", *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.1 (1998), 115-129.

³ God's punishment of Judah in its exile to Babylon cured it of idolatry. Israel had its problems after returning from Babylon, but overt forms of idolatry was not one of them.

⁴ Some forms of homosexual sin were not only commonly practiced but were honored among pagan Romans. Paul could write of the Christians in the church at Corinth that some of them were formerly characterized by homosexual behavior.

practice. Fifth, later in the passage Paul declares that he had previously proved that all, both Jews and Gentiles were under God's wrath. "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin" (Rom. 3:9). When had Paul "already charged" Gentiles under sin? It would have been in Romans 1:18-32.

Let us begin to work through these verses.

II. Exposition of Romans 1:18-32

A. Paul's indictment against idolaters (1:18-23)

We read in verse 18, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*" In verse 17 Paul had declared that "the *righteousness* of God is being revealed." Here, Paul declares that "the *wrath* of God is being revealed."

Many people in our world who are at least theists in their belief system, in that they believe God exists, do not believe that God is actively involved in His world. And we could also say sadly that there are many professing Christians who believe that the true God is withdrawn from His world. They long to see God at work in their lives and in the world. They pray for God to intervene. Many are puzzled and even perplexed because they do not see Him at work. They believe God is an absent, uninvolved God. But Paul has already assured his readers that God is not only revealing His righteousness in bringing salvation, he declares that God is also actively revealing His wrath upon sin in the unfolding of history. God is actively involved in His world. "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*"

What is God's wrath? **Arthur Pink** described it well:

The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of Divine equity against evil. It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which He passes upon evil-doers. God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God's government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded. Not that God's anger is a malignant and malicious retaliation, inflicting injury for the sake of it, or in return for injury received. No; while God will vindicate His dominion as the Governor of the universe, He will not be vindictive.⁵

John Gill wrote of God's wrath:

The Wrath of God is the heat of His great anger (Deut. 29:24). It is His anger not only kindled and incensed, but blown up into a flame; it is the "indignation" of His anger, the "fury" and "fierceness" of it, (Isa. 30:30, 42:25; Hosea 11:9) and it seems to be no other than His punitive justice, and includes His will to punish sinners according to the demerit of their sins in strict justice; His threatenings to do it, and the actual execution of it; which is the vengeance that belongs to Him, and He will recompense; even His vindictive wrath, or vengeful judgment...⁶

Let us not be ashamed or make apology for the wrath of God. It is a holy and righteous attribute of our God. Again, **Pink** introduced this topic of God's wrath with these words:

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And *such were some of you*. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

⁵ Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Reiner Publications, n.d.), p. 97.

⁶ John Gill, *The Body of Divinity* (Turner Lasiter, 1965), p. 97.

It is sad to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or at least they wish there were no such thing. While some would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the Divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight, they like not to think about it, and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it. Even with those who are more sober in their judgment, not a few seem to imagine that there is a severity about the Divine wrath which is too terrifying to form a theme for profitable contemplation. Others harbor the delusion that God's wrath is not consistent with His goodness, and so seek to banish it from their thoughts.⁷

We should be able to look about in our world, in our society, in our culture, in our lives, and we should see that ***“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”*** “The wrath of God is dynamically, effectively, operative in the world of men and it is proceeding from heaven, the throne of God, that it is thus active... There is a positive outgoing of the divine displeasure.”⁸

God's wrath is revealed ***“against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”*** There may be a distinction in these two forms of sin. The first, ***ungodliness***, is the sin within the realm of one's duty before God; it is ***religious*** in nature. Paul shows that the manifestation of the sin of ungodliness is the sin of ***idolatry***. The second, unrighteousness, is in the realm of ***morality***. Paul shows that the manifestation of unrighteousness is ***immorality***.⁹ God is actively, judicially, administering justice, manifesting His wrath against “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”

God is just in the administration of His wrath, for the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men is conducted even as they ***“suppress the truth”*** (v. 18). This suggests that there is full culpability on their part. The wrath of God is revealed to people who sin, but who know that they are sinning against God. The fact that they may not seem to understand or be aware of God's judicial dealings among them is because they actively and energetically ***“suppress the truth.”***

Paul then explains what he meant by this idea of their suppressing the truth. **Verse 19** reads, ***“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.”*** Paul declares that God had revealed knowledge about Himself to these ones who were on the receiving end of His wrath. They knew better. Their guilt is great. God's wrath upon them is just.

What was it that God had shown to these people, indeed, to all people everywhere? **Verse 20** records, ***“For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”*** God has revealed in the things that He made and in the manner that He made them certain aspects of His nature. This is what is commonly referred to as ***natural revelation***, that is, the revelation of God in nature. We might turn to Psalm 19 in this matter:

¹The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
²Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
³There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.
⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
⁵Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
⁶Its rising is from one end of heaven,
And its circuit to the other end;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psa. 19:1-6)

⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

⁸ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1959), pp.35f.

⁹ Ibid.

The psalmist describes the creation as a verbal witness of the God who created it. The day and night are twin witnesses that are continuously heralding the presence and power of God. When honest people look at the world about them, they have ample witness from God. God Himself is revealing His existence and a measure of His wisdom, power, and goodness through the things that He has made.

Paul declares that God's *invisible attributes* of His *eternal power and divine nature* have been clearly displayed before all people. God's eternal power describes the eternal existence of God and the unlimited degree of His power. His divine nature depicts God's "Godness", His deity, as the One who is the sum of His attributes. God has revealed Himself clearly as the eternal all-powerful God in that He had created all things.

Paul declares that all people everywhere have fallen from their former position of privilege and knowledge. **Verse 21** reads, "***For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***" The theory of history that most people embrace is that taught by the evolutionist and the materialist. They understand history to record the gradual development of primitive man into a more sophisticated and thinking person, whose religions also developed from primitive ideas to higher and more complex systems as the millennia unfolded. But the Scriptures present mankind in decline. There was a time when all mankind "knew" about the God who had created them more clearly and fully than they do now. But their suppression of the truth resulted in a decay and departure from their former privilege and knowledge. This historical degradation is suggested in Paul's words, "***For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.***"

When Paul wrote, "although they knew God", he was not saying that they knew God in a personal and saving relationship; rather, they knew of God's existence and they knew in a measure what He is like. But they failed to respond in a manner that their knowledge should have led them. Two great sins that unbelievers commit is their disregard of God in failing to *honor* Him, that is, to *glorify* Him as God, and secondly, in their failure to render *thanksgiving* to God for who He is and for all that He has done. And so, people refuse to glorify God as God. They are in this way failing in the major purpose for which God had created them.

When people do not respond to God in a right manner, they experience degradation in their reasoning and in their moral standards. Those who fail or refuse to glorify God and thank God for who He is and for what He has done experience a judicial diminishment in their ability to understand spiritual matters rightly and clearly. People become "futile" in their thinking. They are "foolish", that is, as the Word of God describes a foolish person as one who fails to order his life according to God's ways and will. Their "foolish hearts" become darkened. Here Paul uses the term "heart" to describe a person's thinking and reasoning capability.

And then in **verses 22 and 23** Paul describes the level in which these people fall because of their willful rejection of God and failure to worship Him: "***Claiming to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.***" People who do not acknowledge the true God and who fail to honor and thank the true God become idolaters. They begin to render what they should have given to God alone, to the things that God has made. They elevate the creature in their minds, giving more attention and value in their hearts to those things than God, to whom they should be rendering honor and thanksgiving. At first glance we might view these verses only to be addressing pagan primitives in obscure places untouched by civilization. But this is not so. There are many man worshippers today to be found in every so-called civilized city and place in the world. Much of the sports' world is idolatry. Don't misunderstand, the enjoyment of sports need not be idolatry. But some Christians may need to strive more than others not to make it an idol. And what is Hollywood but a place in which men and women are worshipped for their beauty or power? And do not those in Hollywood strive to set themselves up as idols that others may worship? But has not our whole country been in pursuit of an "American Idol" for a number of years?

Specifically, what is idolatry? **J. C. Ryle** provided this definition: "***Idolatry is a worship in which the honor due to God in Trinity, and to Him only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.***"¹⁰

We might tend to think that idolatry is committed only in primitive lands where uneducated people carve a god from a tree and bow down and serve it. But this is wrong. Idolatry is present wherever and whenever the true God is not worshipped or is not worshipped rightly. For God created man as a worshipping creature. He

¹⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied* (Charles Nolan Publishers, 2000, orig. 1874), p. 420.

will devote himself to something. When he devotes himself to honor God and be appreciative to God throughout his existence, then his relationship to everything about him may be enjoyed in its proper role in God's world and purposes. The true worshipper of the true God will be truly in harmony with God and all that He has made. But the one who refuses to honor God as God and thank God as God, as these described in Romans 1, will twist and abuse the things that God made for man's use and pleasure, and make them into idols. Those things then become snares to him and troublers of his soul. The idolater gives his time, talent and treasure to his "toys" rather than to God, not realizing what he thinks are his toys, God regards as his idols, to which he has given himself over to worship. And so, fallen man can make an idol out of anything other than God. Again, **Ryle** wrote:

Let us mark this well. It is high time to dismiss from our minds those loose ideas of idolatry which are common in this day. We must not think, as many do, that there are only two sorts of idolatry—the spiritual idolatry of the man who loves his wife, or child, or money more than God; and the open, gross idolatry of the man who bows down to an image of wood, or metal, or stone, because he knows no better. We may rest assured that idolatry is a sin which occupies a far wider field than this. It is not merely a thing in Hindostan that we may hear of and pity at missionary meetings; nor yet is it a thing confined in our own hearts that we may confess before the mercyseat upon our knees. It is a pestilence that walks in the Church of Christ to a much greater extent than many suppose. It is an evil that, like the man of sin, "sits in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4). It is a sin that we all need to watch and pray against continually. It creeps into our religious worship insensibly and is upon us before we are aware.¹¹

Because we are sinners, we are prone to the sin of idolatry, departing from the true God and making someone or something more important to us than God. We can make an idol of anything. It can be a spouse or a child, a car or a television, our hobby or our work, our wealth or our health. We must resolve to keep the commandments of God of the first tablet, in which God declared:

³You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved 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; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exod. 20:3-6)

And just because you have not literally *carved* a god of anything, do not think that you have not been an idolater. If you have *carved* any space of your heart to give to something or someone chiefly instead of God, you are an idolater in heart. This is a common problem of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian alike. It is in our nature. The cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart.

Ignorance of God, carnal and low conceptions of His nature and attributes, earthly and sensual notions of the service which is acceptable to Him, all characterize the religion of the natural man. There is a craving in his mind after something he can see, and feel, and touch in his divinity. He would fain bring his God down to his own crawling level. He would make his religion a thing of sense and sight. He has no idea of the religion of the heart, and faith, and spirit. In short, just as he is willing to live on God's earth, but, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, it is always with a fallen worship. In one word, idolatry is a natural product of man's heart. It is a weed which, like the earth uncultivated, the heart is always ready to bring forth.¹²

Idolatry is what characterizes fallen man. Idolatry is a problem which all Christians must contend and defeat. It was to Christians that the apostle John wrote, "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*" (1 John 5:21).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 421.

¹² Ibid., pp. 423f.

Now, how is the wrath of God being revealed from heaven, that is, from God, against idolaters? Paul writes in **Romans 1:24-31**:

²⁴Therefore **God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason **God gave them up** to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up** to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

God is active in the distribution of His wrath within history upon men and women who are idolaters, who fail or refuse to live for God, who fail to render to God His honor and refuse or fail to render unto Him thanksgiving.

We read three times that “God gave them up”; that is, he turned them over to indulge in their sin and be punished by their sin. Sin itself is a judgment of God. Sin leads to more sin which eventually results in death. God’s judicial sentencing people to their sin is His just judgment in history of idolatry.

We need to close for today. Next week, Lord willing, we will speak some more about this “vice list” before us at the end of Romans 1. But as we complete our consideration of these matters today, let us be reminded of this blessed truth: God is in the business of saving great sinners from their sin and from His damnation upon them for their sin. It was due to the great evil of sin that it took the life and death of the perfectly righteous Son of God to die in the sinner’s place that he might be forgive of his sins, that he might have his sins atoned for by the Lord Jesus. We are not here setting ourselves up as morally superior or self-righteous as we denounce these sins. The message of this whole passage is that the whole world, including ourselves, are guilty before our God to whom we have failed to render His honor and due. We are saying without apology, but with great clarity and conviction, that Jesus Christ is the only hope for salvation in this fallen world. May we go forth from this place and serve Him faithfully.