
Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON III : THE UNIVERSAL DEPRIVITY OF MAN — CHAP I VERSES 18-32

INTRODUCTION

Paul has just introduced the theme of his letter: *“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.”* (1:16,17 KJV) Paul now jumps into his exposition of this gospel: God acting to bring people into a right relationship with himself, Rom 1:18-4:25. In these four chapters are two very prominent words: **righteousness** and its cognates **justify** and **righteous** occur 24 times in these verses. Even more prominent is the word **faith** and its cognate verb **believe** which occur 27 times, usually in close connection with *“righteousness”* or *“justify.”*

Prior to talking directly about the death of Christ for sinners however, Paul lays the foundation by proving all man is in need of a Savior. This foundation covers over half of this section, Rom 1:18-3:20. Paul sums up his comments on this section like this: *“all people, both Jew and Gentile, are under the power of sin.”* (Rom 3:9) **“Paul’s aim is to show that the whole of humanity is morally bankrupt, unable to claim a favourable verdict at the judgment bar of God, desperately in need of his mercy and pardon.”** [Bruce, *Romans*, pg 77]

This foundational section itself may be divided into two (some say three) smaller sections: the depravity of man (with a special emphasis upon the Gentiles, 1:18-32) and the depravity of the Jews (2:1-3:8; note some divide this last section into the moral man, 2:1-16, and specific sins of the Jews, 2:17-3:20). Today we will look at 1:18-32, saving the remaining portions for the weeks to follow. Our passage today divides itself into three main parts (or, two main parts with a transition verse):

- the ‘revelation’ of God’s wrath and why that wrath is justified: people commit ungodly and unrighteous acts, and suppress the truth; therefore they are without excuse — 1:18-20
- ways in which people have suppressed the truth in more detail, along with some of their consequences — 1:21-31
- concluding indictment and transitional verse to next section — 1:32

WHO IS PAUL ADDRESSING IN THIS SECTION? — Who does Paul address in Romans 1:18-32? Traditionally and almost without argument this passage is said to describe the Gentiles. But note Paul does not call them *“Gentiles”* but *“people”*; in fact, the word *“Gentile, nations”* does not occur in this passage at all. **The passage itself seems to speak of mankind as a whole without distinction between Jew and Gentile.** This is further implied when Paul transitions into the next chapter. In chapter two Paul shifts his attention directly to the Jews but 2:1-4 indicates the people spoken of were included in the previous section: *“You, therefore, have no excuse...”* (Rom 2:1a NIV) On the other hand there are indications those spoken of in this section did not have the privileges afforded the Jews. For one thing, Paul accuses them of rejecting the natural revelation of God, but the Jews were privileged with God’s word, his special revelation to mankind.

Perhaps the best way to reconcile these differences is to not look at these initial sections as separate entities, as if the focus of one section excludes the focus of the other sections. Douglas Moo suggests we rather look at Paul’s argument as a series of concentric circles, proceeding from the general to the specific. [Moo, *Romans*, pg 97ff] The **outer largest circle** (1:18-32) consists of all mankind with an emphasis upon those apart from the Jewish privileges. While not removing the Jews from this focus, it does mean Paul was not speaking directly to them. The **middle inner circle** (2:1-16) speaks to the moral person, implicitly the Jews. The final **smallest inner circle** (2:17-29) targets the Jews specifically, accusing them on the basis of God’s revelation.

WHAT ‘AGE’ IS PAUL CONSIDERING IN THIS SECTION? — Several commentators note the changing verb tenses in today’s lesson. In vv. 18-19a,32 Paul uses the present tense while in vv. 19b-31 Paul uses the Greek aorist tense which is often used of events which occurred once in the past: people *turned* from God; he *handed* them over. Without going into deeper grammatical arguments, most of which are over all of our heads, we could summarize the conclusions with Moo’s comments: **“[T]his foolish and culpable rejection of the knowledge of God is repeated in every generation, by every individual. 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.”** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 98]

TODAY’S LESSON IN A NUTSHELL

“THE apostle having stated that the only righteousness available in the sight of God is that which is obtained by faith, proceeds to prove that such is the case. This proof required that he should, in the first instance, demonstrate that the righteousness which is of the law, or of works, was insufficient for the justification of a sinner.... The residue of this chapter then is designed to prove that the Gentiles are justly exposed to condemnation. The apostle thus argues: God is just; his displeasure against sin (which is its punishment) is clearly revealed, ver. 18. This principle is assumed by the apostle, as the foundation of his whole argument. If this

be granted, it follows that all who are chargeable with either impiety or immorality are exposed to the wrath of God, and cannot claim his favor on the ground of their own character or conduct. That the Gentiles are justly chargeable with both impiety and immorality, he thus proves. They have ever enjoyed such a revelation of the divine character as to render them inexcusable, vers. 19, 20. Notwithstanding this opportunity of knowing God, they neither worshiped nor served him, but gave themselves up to all forms of idolatry. This is the height of impiety, vers. 21-23. In consequence of this desertion of God, he gave them up to the evil of their own hearts, so that they sank into all manner of debasing crimes. The evidences of this corruption of morals were so painfully obvious, that Paul merely appeals to the knowledge which all his readers possessed of the fact, vers. 24-31. These various crimes they do not commit ignorantly; they are aware of their ill-desert; and yet they not only commit them themselves, but encourage others in the same course, ver. 32. The inference from the established sinfulness of the Gentile world, Paul does not draw until he has substantiated the same charge against the Jews. He then says, since all are sinners before God, no flesh can be justified by the works of the law, chap. 3:20.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 34f]

GOD’S WRATH AND WHY IT IS JUSTIFIED (1:18-20)

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 shewed 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 (1:18-20 KJV)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (1:18-20 NIV)

for revealed is the wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men, holding down the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which is known of God is manifest among them, for God did manifest [it] to them, for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, by the things made being understood, are plainly seen, both His eternal power and Godhead — to their being inexcusable (1:18-19 Young’s Literal Translation)

THE ‘WRATH OF GOD’ — wrath = a settled, determined indignation; not to the momentary, emotional, and often uncontrollable anger to which human beings are prone. “If it is felt that the word ‘wrath’ is scarcely suitable to be used in relation to God, it is probably because wrath as we know it in human life so constantly involves sinful, self-regarding passion. Not so with God: his ‘wrath’ is the response of his holiness to wickedness and rebellion. Paul would certainly have agreed with Isaiah in describing the execution of God’s wrath as his ‘strange deed’ (Isa 28:21), to which he girds himself slowly and reluctantly; indeed, he sets forth the revelation of God’s wrath here as the background to his ‘proper work’ of mercy, which is so congenial to his character that he speeds with joyful haste to lavish it on undeserving penitents.” [Bruce, *Romans*, pg 78f] *“The wrath of God is his punitive justice, his determination to punish sin. The passion which is called anger or wrath, and which is always mixed more or less with malignity in the human breast, is of course infinitely removed from what the word imports when used in reference to God. Yet as anger in man leads to the infliction of evil on its object, the word is, agreeably to a principle which pervades the Scriptures, applied to the calm and undeviating purpose of the Divine mind, which secures the connection between sin and misery, with the same general uniformity that any other law in the physical or moral government of God operates.* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg] *“As long as God is God, He cannot behold with indifference that His creation is destroyed and His holy will trodden underfoot. Therefore He meets sin with His mighty and annihilating reaction.”* [Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*; q.v. Moo, *Romans*, pg 100]

CLEARLY REVEALED — revealed = ‘to uncover, to bring to light,’ and hence ‘to make known, whether by direct communication or in some other way.’ “It is however implied in the whole form of expression, that this revelation is clear and certain. Men know the righteous judgment of God; they know that those who commit sin are worthy of death. As this is an ultimate truth, existing in every man’s consciousness, it is properly assumed, and made the basis of the apostle’s argument.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 35]

UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN — “The object of the divine wrath is twofold — ‘all the godlessness and wickedness of men.’ Paul explicates the first term in vv. 19-27 and the second in vv. 28-32.... *The two together serve to denote the failure of mankind in terms of the requirements of the two tables of the Decalogue.*” [Harrison, *Romans*] *“Man is a religious (against God) and moral (against man) failure.”* **Ungodliness** = ἀδικία (adikia) a lack of reverence, an impiety that arrays man against God, not simply in terms of neglect but also of rebellion. This could be taken adverbially: ‘they suppress the truth unrighteously’ (Godet) but is more likely instrumental: ‘through unrighteousness (e.g. unrighteous acts) they suppress the truth’ (Murray). **Unrighteousness** = injustice against man, relating to the vitiating of man’s conduct toward his fellows.

WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS — hold = κατέχω (katexō) – the verb could mean ‘possess, retain’ (1 Cor 7:30; 11:2; 15:2; 2 Cor 6:10; 1 Thes 5:21). Lightfoot favors the word to mean simply ‘grasp’ therefore it speaks of man ‘holding and possessing the truth while living in unrighteousness.’ The sentiment would then be the same as in verse 21 where the heathen are said to know God and yet act wickedly. But most commentators favor the sense of ‘detain, to repress, suppress, hinder, holding down’ due to the context and as used in 2 Thes 2:6,7. They possess the truth and suppress it by their unrighteous

living. **“Whenever the truth starts to exert itself and makes them feel uneasy in their moral nature, they hold it down, suppress it. Some drown its voice by rushing into their immoralities; others strangle the disturbing voice by argument and by denial.”** [Lenski, *Romans*] **Note this makes man accountable for his actions. Man is not a victim; rather man wilfully and deliberately rejects the counsel of heaven for his own wicked deeds.** **“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.”** (John 3:19,20)

NATURAL REVELATION — This portion of scripture speaks of what theologians call **the natural revelation of God**, as is contrasted with the **special or supernatural revelation of God**. The differences between these may be set forth as follows:

<i>Natural Revelation</i>	<i>Special or Supernatural Revelation</i>
the revelation of God through creation, providence and conscience	the revelation of God through the scriptures and the incarnation of Christ
universal access – ‘all mankind’	limited access – ‘those who have access to the scripture’
limited capabilities – makes man responsible but natural revelation alone cannot save	unlimited capabilities – able of bringing the hearer to salvation; only limitations is the finiteness of mankind
reveals eternal power, divine nature, wrath of God	full revelation, as much as man is capable of understanding

HOW DOES GOD REVEAL HIMSELF NATURALLY? — CREATION — “These properties of God that cannot be ‘seen’ (aorata) are ‘seen’ (kathoratai) — an example of the literary device called oxymoron, in which a rhetorical effect is achieved by asserting something that is apparently contradictory. God in his essence is hidden from human sight, yet much of him and much about him can be seen through the things he has made. Paul is thinking primarily of the world as the product of God’s creation (see, e.g., Ps 8), through the acts of God in history may also be included.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 104f] **PROVIDENCE** — “And this revelation of God in nature is really much more than the mere fact of creation, for ‘the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen,’ thus implying His acts of providence as well as of creation.” [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 68] While not directly a part of today’s lesson, Paul continues in the next section to give another means of natural revelation:

CONSCIENCE — **“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”** (Rom 2:14,15 NIV).

WHAT DOES MAN KNOW OF GOD BY NATURAL REVELATION? — ‘His invisible things’ are further qualified in the verse as ‘His eternal power and Godhead’ [Young’s Literal Translation]. We see further in the last verse of the chapter these words: **“Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”** (Rom 1:32 NIV) “We have seen that there are two things that all men may know about God — namely, His eternal power and Godhead. Our present text [v32] amplifies this to show that in the manifest knowledge of God that is available to all the race there is the sense of His justice and His holiness. Sin should be hated by Him, and sin will be judged by Him.” [Barnhouse, *Romans*, vol 1 pg 295] In the simplest of terms, all man knows within his heart the following truths: **(1) There is a God; (2) that God is a powerful God; and (3) that God is righteous and hates sin.** ‘That which may be known’ — not in the absolute sense because that would surpass our capacity to understand. “God is incomprehensible even by angels, and it is by Himself alone that He can be fully and perfectly comprehended; the finite never can comprehend the infinite, Job 11:7.... But what maybe known of God by the works of creation, He has not concealed from men.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 57] Wuest: **“Because that which is knowable concerning God is plainly evident...”**. [Wuest’s Expanded Translation] ‘Manifest’ = φανερός (phaneros) usually means ‘making visible, bringing to light’ (Rom 2:28; 1 Cor 3:13; 11:19; 14:25; Gal 5:19; Phil 1:13; 1 Tim 4:15). Note this is a different word than is used in vv. 17,18 for ‘revealed.’

WHAT IS THE END RESULT OF NATURAL REVELATION? — MAN IS WITHOUT EXCUSE — **‘That they may be without excuse.’** (v20) “This opportunity of knowing God through His works was sufficient, and unrighteousness is inexcusable. There is no self-defense. **Man may not see much by nature, but what he does see he is able to see clearly, if only he will give heed.**” [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 68] Natural revelation is sufficient to make man responsible, but is not by itself sufficient to accomplish his salvation. Man is not to be pitied however. **‘Having been clearly perceived’** = lit **‘being understood are perceived’** (nooumena kathoratai), where hooumena = refers strictly to intelligence, kathoratai = refers strictly to physical sight. (bruce, pg 80) **“Both the verbs ... describe how, on contemplating God’s works, man can grasp enough of His nature to prevent him from the error of identifying any of the created things with the Creator, enabling him to keep his conception of the Deity free from idolatry.”** [Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, pg 137; q.v. Bruce, *Romans*, pg 80] In other words, even what man is able to understand about God through Natural Revelation is rejected. **This is not a knee-jerk reaction but rather man perceives, reflects and makes a wilful decision, and is therefore inexcusable.** “The last clause of v. 20, ‘so that they are without excuse,’ states a key element in our interpretation of vv. 19-20. For Paul here makes clear that ‘natural revelation,’ in and of itself, leads to a negative result. That Paul teaches the reality of a revelation of God in nature to all people, this text makes clear. But it is equally obvious that this revelation is universally rejected, as people turn from knowledge of God to gods of their own making (cf.

vv. 22ff). Why this is so, Paul will explain later (cf. Rom 5:12-21). But it is vital if we are to understand Paul's gospel and his urgency in preaching it to realize that natural revelation leads not to salvation but to the demonstration that God's condemnation is just: people are 'without excuse.' That verdict stands over the people we meet every day just as much as over the people Paul

rubbed shoulders with in the first century, and our urgency in communicating the gospel should be as great as Paul's." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 105f] "Paul does not here teach that it is the design of God, in revealing himself to men, to render their opposition inexcusable, but rather, since this revelation has been made, they have in fact no apology for their ignorance and neglect of God. *Though the revelation of God in his works is sufficient to render men inexcusable, it does not follow that it is sufficient to lead men, blinded by sin, to a saving knowledge of himself. As Paul says of the law, that it was weak through the flesh, that is, insufficient on account of our corruption, so it may be said of the light of nature, that, although sufficient in itself as a revelation, it is not sufficient, considering the*

de-prav-i-ty (dĭ-prāv'-ĭ-tē) —
noun: moral corruption or
degradation. From deprave: cf.
L. pravitas = crookedness,
perverseness.

indisposition and inattention of men to divine things. [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 37f]

ARE THE HEATHEN LOST? — This portion of scripture answers the question whether or not the heathen are lost without the gospel. *Natural Revelation condemns but cannot save.*

Consider two men which have the same deadly disease. One of those men live in New York City and is very influential. But even though he has a lot of money and can afford the best of medical care, the disease eventually gets the best of him and he dies. The other man is quite the opposite. This man lives in a Third World nation, far away from civilization. This man too eventually succumbs to the disease and dies. Question: what was the cause of death for each of these men? Was it the fact one had access to medical care and the other did not have access? No, both men eventually died due to their incurable disease. *In like manner, all mankind are sinners. Whether that sinner lives in a prosperous civilization with free access to the gospel, or whether the sinner lives in a far away country where the gospel has been silenced for centuries, both sinners will eventually die and stand in judgment... not for whether or not they had access to the gospel but they die because of their sin.* Where and how they lived does not effect the outcome in this matter.

But as with all illustrations, the above is not perfect and someone might counter the illustration by pointing out that the man who has access to the gospel has the opportunity to repent of their sins, embrace Christ and therefore have their sins forgiven. The question then changes from "what was the cause of death" to "is God just to not allow one of those man the chance to be forgiven while giving the other opportunities to hear the gospel?" To answer that question, allow me to give another illustration.

I was into drugs while I was in the Navy. After being busted for drugs twice, I was placed in the brig. I had heard all sorts of stories of what the Marine guards did to the prisoners and I was scared to death! Upon my entry into the brig, I was searched (quite thoroughly, thank you) as well as my few belongings which I brought with me into the brig. While being searched, a guard came across my journal which I had foolishly brought with me. "Look at this! I've got to pass this along to the captain," the guard said. I immediately got angry and responded, "Hey, give that back! I've got my rights!" To that the guard laughed and said, "Your rights ended when you came through that door."

What was true with me in the brig is true of mankind. God created man for fellowship with him. *It was man* who turned his back on God. *It was man* that wilfully rejected all God has done for him. And *it is a just and holy God* that commits such mankind to judicial punishment. This is the point I'm trying to make: *We lost our "rights" back in the garden of Eden and we are condemned sinners waiting for punishment. God does not owe us anything! Not only does God not "owe" us salvation, he does not even "owe" us the opportunity to hear the gospel or to hear the name of Jesus.* We have no rights, and God is just and righteous to deal with us according to his pleasure.

Applying that to the heathen, they too will die without Christ and stand in judgment because of their sin (although they will be judged according to their knowledge, as we will see in Romans chapter two). God is not unjust to not give anyone the opportunity of salvation. For those who are saved, what this does is magnify the grace of God. Not only is God gracious to give us salvation freely through his Son, but he is gracious even to have allowed us to hear the gospel message that brought us to salvation. If you have never thought of grace in that manner before, take a few minutes to meditate on these thoughts prior to continuing. We have a great and gracious God. His mercies are more than we may even understand this side of heaven. To the Lord belongs praise for every part of our salvation ... even in allowing us to hear the truth. What a wonderful God we have.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE GOSPEL: THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN — We have already noted Paul begins his exposition of the gospel with the sinfulness of mankind, known among theologians as *the depravity of man*. "The idea of a wrathful God goes against the wishful thinking of fallen human nature and is even a stumbling block to many Christians. Much contemporary evangelism talks only about abundant life in Christ, the joy and blessings of salvation, and the peace with God that faith in Christ brings. All of those benefits do result from true faith, but they are not the whole picture of God's plan of salvation. The corollary truth of God's judgement against sin and those who participate in it must also be heart. For Paul, fear of eternal condemnation was the first motivation he offered for coming to Christ, the first pressure he applied to evil men. He was determined that they understand the reality of being under God's wrath before he offered them the way of escape from it. That approach makes both logical and theological sense. A person cannot appreciate the wonder of God's grace until he knows about the perfect demands of God's law, and he cannot appreciate the fullness of God's love for him until he knows something about the

fierceness of God's anger against his sinful failure to perfectly obey that law. He cannot appreciate God's forgiveness until he knows about the eternal consequences of the sins that require a penalty and need forgiving." [MacArthur, *Romans*, pg 59f] This may be illustrated in how Jesus used evangelism: when the rich young ruler came to Jesus to be saved, Jesus took him to the law to show him his sin (Matt 10:16-22). The rich ruler walked away without coming to salvation. In another instance as Jesus witnessed to the Samaritan woman at the well, he again took her to the law to show her sinfulness (John 4). She responded favorably however and trusted in the Messiah for salvation. ***Until a man or a woman can see their sinfulness, there is no need to progress further with the gospel!*** This is the meaning behind "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17)

‘MAN EXCHANGED ... GOD HANDED THEM OVER’ (1:21-28)

The next major portion of today's lesson consists of three generally parallel 'retribution' sequences:

- **vv. 21-24:** people 'change' (ἀλλάσσω, *allassō* = 'to transform, to change, to make other than it is') the truth of God for idols — God 'hands them over' (παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi*)
- **vv. 25-26a:** people 'exchange' (μεταλλάσσω, *metallassō* = old word for 'exchanging trade;' same base word as v23 but stronger) the truth of God for a lie — God 'hands them over' (παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi*)
- **vv. 26b-31:** people 'exchange' (μεταλλάσσω, *metallassō*) natural sexual practices for the unnatural — God 'hands them over' (παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi*)

THE SAD TRANSACTION — 'change, exchange' – *The sense is not that they change one thing into another, but that they exchanged one thing for another.*

GOD 'HANDS THEM OVER' — (παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi*) 'Gave them over' (NIV) = 'handing them over'; finds its origins in OT where God regularly would 'hand over' Israel's enemies so they could be defeated in battle; e.g. Exod 23:32; Deut 7:23. It is ironically also used when God handed Israel over to another nation for punishment; e.g. Lev 26:25; Josh 7:7; Judg 2:14; 6:1,13. The closest NT parallel we have of this word being used as Paul does in Rom 1 is by Stephen in Acts 7:42 where God *'turned and gave them over to worship the host of heaven.'* The word is παραδίδωμι (*paradidōmi*) is common in NT, used 119x. Used of (1) 'handing over, entrusting' various things to people – 1 Cor 13:3; (2) 'handing over' of people into judicial custody – Matt 26:15; John 19:11 Judas 'handing over' Jesus to the Jewish authorities; (3) 'handing over, committing' of Christian tradition – 1 Cor 15:3. "What does Paul mean by this? Clearly he cannot be saying that God impelled people to sin. Not only would this contradict the biblical depiction of God (cf. Jas. 1:13), but the phrase that qualifies this 'handing over to uncleanness,' 'in the passions of their hearts,' shows that those who were handed over were already immersed in sin. Paul's purpose in this verse is to highlight the divine side of the cycle of sin; but it must be balanced with the human side, presented in Eph 4:19, where Paul says that Gentiles 'gave themselves up' to licentiousness, leading to all kinds of 'uncleanness.' ... Chrysostom interprets this handing over in a passive sense: by withdrawing his influence over these disobedient idolaters, God permits them to continue in, and indeed to plunge more deeply into, the sin they had already chosen. As Godet puts it: ***'He [God] ceased to hold the boat as it was dragged by the current of the river.' No doubt such a withdrawal of divine influence would produce this result. But the meaning of 'handing over' demands that we give God a more active role as the initiator of the process. God does not simply let the boat go — he gives it a push downstream.*** Like a judge who hands over a prisoner to the punishment his crime has earned, God hands over the sinner to the terrible cycle of ever-increasing sin. Is this punishment reformatory in purpose? Chrysostom thought so; the depths of sin in which the idolater is plunged are designed to awaken the sinner to the awful seriousness of his or her situation. In that God's handing over of his people in the OT was not the final word, and in light of the possible parallel to this action in the temporary confinement of Israel under sin through the law (Gal 3:21-25), this might be the case. But it must be added that both biblical and secular history afford us with many examples in which such punishment has not led to spiritual reformation." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 110f]

‘LETTING GO OF THE BOAT’ — following up on Godet's illustration, it is important for we as believers to recognize the sin in Romans 1 is within our hearts even still. Therefore it is only by the grace of God that we are not worse sinners than we already are. "Perhaps our hearts are tempted to say that although this was possible in the old heathen world, it is now quite beyond the bounds of probability in a professedly Christian land. [note: this was written before 1924] Let us not be too sure of this. The words of the Psalmist are still true, 'Who can understand his errors?' The possibilities of evil in the human heart apart from divine grace are as real as they ever were, and no one who knows the plague of his own heart will ever dare to say that even these depths of evil are impossible, apart from the restraining influence of the grace of God. Let us take heed to these wise and solemn words of Bishop Moule: – 'Nor was it lightly, or as a piece of pious rhetoric, that the saintliest of the chiefs of our Reformation, seeing a murderer carried off to die, exclaimed that there went John Bradford but for the grace of God. It is just when a man is nearest God for himself that he sees what, but for God, he would be; what, taken apart from God, he is, potentially if not in act. And it is in just a mood that, reading this paragraph of the great Epistle, he will smite upon his breast, and say, "God be merciful to me the sinner." (Luke 18:13)'" [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 74f] ***Those afar from God are proud and self-righteous, full of themselves. Those nearest to God sees themselves as God sees them, full of sin.***

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were ***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave*** *because, having known God they did not glorify [Him] as God, nor gave thanks,*

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 incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted 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 (1:21-24 KJV)

thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. (1:21-24 NIV)

but were made vain in their reasonings, and their unintelligent heart was darkened, professing to be wise, they were made fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of fowls, and of quadrupeds, and of reptiles. Wherefore also God did give them up, in the desires of their hearts, to uncleanness, to dishonour their bodies among themselves (1:21-25 Young's Literal Translation)

THE 'DE-VOLUTION' OF MAN — *“Indifference to God soon makes its inevitable progress downwards....* The outcome of indifference to known truth was false notions and worthless speculations about God, followed by the disappearance of the idea of God from their minds. The absence of truth is quickly and inevitably succeeded by the presence of positive error. When God is not in the mind vanity soon fills up the void, and darkness suffuses the senseless heart.” [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 68] *“The whole clause therefore means, that the heathen, in refusing to recognize the true God, entertained foolish and wicked thoughts of the Divine Being; that is, they sank into the folly and sin of idolatry. And their, foolish heart was darkened; they lost the light of divine knowledge.”* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 39]

MAN FINDS A SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD — man ‘exchanges’ the glory of God for images. “‘Glory’ signifies the splendor and majesty that belong intrinsically to the one true God. Given the opportunity to bask in the glory of the immortal God, people have rather chosen, in their folly, to worship the images of mortal human beings and beasts.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 108] *“Man is a religious being, and if he refuses to let God have the place of preeminence that is rightfully his, then he will put something or someone in God’s place.* ‘Their thinking became futile.’— The suggestion that emerges from this statement is that mythology and idolatry grew out of man’s insistent need to recognize some power in the universe greater than himself, coupled with his refusal to give God the place of supremacy. He had to make a substitution.... *In modern times the western world has outgrown crass idolatry, but humanism has subtly injected the worship of man without the trappings. God is quietly ruled out and man is placed on the throne.*” [Harrison, *Romans*] Cp: *“They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt.”* (Ps 106:19-21) The 3-fold classification of non-human things (birds, four-footed beasts, and reptiles) may be compared with Gen 1:20-25; the terms ‘glory, image, resembling’ may be compared with Gen 1:26. This suggests Paul’s account of man’s wickedness is deliberately stated in the terms relating to the fall of man in Genesis 1-3. Note: ‘immortal’ (incorruptible, KJV) = only used one other time in NT 1 Tim 1:17; used here to emphasize God’s immortality vs. mortal human beings.

THE DUTY OF MAN — ‘they glorified Him not as God’ *“Paul here marks what ought to be the true and just knowledge of God, namely, that knowledge which leads men to serve and worship Him in a manner agreeable to His sovereign will, and worthy of His holy character. To glorify God signifies to acknowledge and worship Him with ascriptions of praise, because of His glorious attributes.”* [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 61] *“They did not reverence and worship God as their God; neither did they refer to him the blessings which they daily received at his hands.”* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 38]

OXYMORON: PROFESSING WISDOM, MAN BECOMES A FOOL — *It is not merely intellectual darkness or ignorance which the apostle describes in this verse, but the whole moral state. We find throughout the Scriptures the idea of foolishness and sin, of wisdom and piety, intimately connected. In the language of the Bible, a fool is an impious man; the wise are the pious, those who fear God; foolishness is sin; understanding is religion. The folly and darkness of which the apostle here speaks are therefore expressive of want of divine knowledge, which is both the effect and cause of moral depravity.* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg] *“Will God give man brains to see these things and will man then fail to exercise his will toward that God? The sorrowful answer is that both of these things are true. God will give a man brains to smelt iron and make a hammer head and nails. God will grow a tree and give man strength to cut it down and brains to fashion a hammer handle from its wood. And when man has the hammer and the nails, God will put out His hand and let man drive nails through it and place Him on a cross in the supreme demonstration that men are without excuse.”* [Barnhouse, *Romans*, vol 1 pg 245]

THE PUNISHMENT OF GOD: GIVING MAN WHAT HE WANTS — C. S. Lewis says the lost ‘enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved.’ [Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, pg 115f; q.v. Bruce, *Romans*, pg 80] *“If God permits those who forsake him to sink into vice, he does it intelligently and intentionally. The language of the apostle, as well as the analogy of Scripture, demands more than this. It is at least a judicial abandonment. It is as a punishment for their apostasy that God gives men up to the power of sin.... He withdraws from the wicked the restraints of his providence and grace, and gives them over to the dominion of sin. God is presented in the Bible as the absolute moral and physical ruler of the world. He governs all things according, to the counsel of his own will and the nature of his creatures. What happens as consequences does not come by chance, but as designed; and the sequence is secured by his control. ‘It is beyond question,’ says Tholuck, ‘that, according to the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, sin is the punishment of sin.’... God is not a mere idle*

spectator of the order of events; he is at once the moral governor and efficient controller of all things.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 40f]

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 (1:25-26a KJV)

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. (1:25-26a NIV)

who did change the truth of God into a falsehood, and did honour and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed to the ages. Amen. Because of this did God give them up to dishonourable affections (1:25-26a Young’s Literal Translation)

‘THE’ TRUTH EXCHANGED FOR ‘THE’ LIE — ‘the truth of God’ = the reality, the fact of God as he has revealed himself. ‘The lie’ = defined in the latter part of the verse: ‘worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.’ ‘Worship’ and ‘serve’ are often synonymous, both being used to express inward reverence and outward worship; although the former properly expresses the feeling, and the latter the outward service.

GIVEN OVER TO SHAMEFUL PASSIONS — In many Jewish works, idolatry always led to sexual impurity. Thus the Wisdom of Solomon: *‘the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life’* (14:12). Passions = πάθη (pathē, plural of πάθος – pathos) is used only in Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:5; both times with a sexual nuance. The context in Rom 1:26,27 makes it clear Paul is speaking of illicit sexual passions.

GOD UNTOUCHED BY SINFUL MAN’S REBELLION — Paul concludes the verse with ‘who is forever praised. Amen’ (NIV). Paul only uses this two other times (Rom 9:5; 2 Cor 11:31) although it was common in rabbinical literature, ‘the Holy One, blessed be he.’ *“Who, notwithstanding the neglect of the heathen, is the ever-blessed God.* This is the natural tribute of reverence toward the God whom men dishonored by their idolatry.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 41] “This expression is here used by the Apostle for the purpose of inflicting a greater stigma on idolatry, denoting that we ought to honor and adore God alone, and are not permitted to take away from Him even the smallest ray of His glory. It is an expression that was almost in perpetual use among the Jews, and is still frequently found in their writings when they speak of God. It denotes that we should never speak of God but with profound respect, and that this respect ought to be accompanied with praise and thanksgiving.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 65]

AMEN! — *“Amen is properly a Hebrew adjective, signifying true or faithful. At the beginning of a sentence it is often used adverbially, verily, assuredly; at the end of a sentence it is used to express assent, it is true, so let it be. Paul says Amen to the declaration that God is the ever-blessed.”* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 41] “The individual also said ‘Amen’ to express his ‘let it be so’ in response to the Divine ‘thus it shall be,’ Rev 22:20. Frequently the speaker adds ‘Amen’ to his own prayers and doxologies, as is the case at Eph 3:21, e.g. ... Thus ‘Amen’ said by God ‘it is and shall be so,’ and by men, ‘so let it be.’” [Vines Dictionary, pg 25]

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. 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. (1:26b-28 KJV)

Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. (1:26b-28 NIV)

for even their females did change the natural use into that against nature; and in like manner also the males having left the natural use of the female, did burn in their longing toward one another; males with males working shame, and the recompense of their error that was fit, in themselves receiving. And, according as they did not approve of having God in knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mind, to do the things not seemly (1:26b-28 Young’s Literal Translation)

There is a slight change in the formula of this section. In the previous two sections Paul writes “*Because* man did this, God handed them over...”. The “causal” sense is missing from the meaning of Paul’s words here, therefore it is translated “*Even as people did not retain knowledge of God, God handed them over...*”.

THE SINS OF LESBIANISM AND HOMOSEXUALISM — Paul continues in v26b to clarify his meaning, speaking specifically of lesbianism. Note how some homosexuals interpret this: Paul states this is ‘against nature, unnatural;’ therefore they say Paul was only describing something by reason of their intrinsic state or birth, therefore the sense is ‘Paul is not branding homosexuality against God’s will but rather only stating it is different than is the “usual” case.’ But in Paul’s culture, especially the Jewish authors (particularly Philo) included sexual morality as part of the ‘natural law’ and therefore applicable to all people. Transgression of this law was a violation of God’s will (e.g. Sodom). “In keeping with the biblical and Jewish worldview, the heterosexual desires observed normally in nature are traced to God’s creative intent. Sexual sins that are ‘against nature’ are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul’s appeal to ‘nature’ in this verse includes appeal to God’s created order. Confirmation can be found in the context. In labeling the turning from ‘the natural use’ to ‘that [use] which is against nature’ an ‘exchange,’ Paul associates homosexuality with the perversion of true knowledge of God already depicted in

vv. 23 and 25. In addition, we must remember that the clause in question is a description of ‘sinful passions,’ a phrase plainly connoting activities that are contrary to God’s will. When these factors are considered, it is clear that Paul depicts homosexual activity as a violation of God’s created order, another indication of the departure from true knowledge and worship of God.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 115] “[I]n both testaments God’s Word condemns homosexuality in the strongest of terms. Under the Old Covenant it was punishable by death. Paul declares unequivocally that, although homosexuality can be forgiven and cleansed just as any other sin, no unrepentant homosexual will enter heaven, just as will no unrepentant fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate person, thief, covetous person, drunkard, reviler, or swindler (1 Cor 6:9-11; cf. Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; Jude 7).” [MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, pg 107] v27 – Paul continues from v26 by using the word “likewise, in the same way” to denote the same “sinful passions” that lead women into unnatural acts are also operative in men. As in verse 26, the ‘natural use’ denotes the natural order but as reflective of God’s purposes.

‘BURNED’ — Paul uses hard words to describe the homosexual lust: ‘they burned’ = ἐξεκαύθησαν (exekauthēsan, from ἐκκαίω, ekkaīō) is used only here in NT but is used outside the NT in a metaphorical sense with reference to the ‘kindling’ of sin. “Old verb, to burn out, to set on fire, to inflame with anger or lust.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 331] **‘LUST, DESIRE’** — ὀρέξει (orexei) is also only used here in NT. ‘Ardent longing, lust.’ “There is a burning level of lust among homosexuals that beggars description and is rarely known among heterosexuals. The homosexuals of Sodom were so passionately consumed with their lust that they ignored the fact that they had been made blind and ‘wearied themselves trying to find the doorway’ into Lot’s house in order to pursue their vile passion (Gen 19:11)... In the United States and many other western countries it is not uncommon for homosexual males to have 300 partners a year. Even when relationships are on a friendly basis, the most bizarre acts imaginable are committed, and mutilation is common. In his biography, the New York City forensic expert Dr. Milton Helpert, who makes no claim of being a Christian and avoids making moral judgments about homosexuality, nevertheless comments that, after having performed thousands of autopsies, he would warn anyone who chooses a homosexual lifestyle to be prepared for the consequences. ‘When we see ... brutal, multiple would cases in a single victim ... we just automatically assume that we’re dealing with a homosexual victim and a homosexual attacker.... I don’t know why it is so, but it seems that the violent explosions of jealousy among homosexuals far exceed those of the jealousy of a man for a woman, or a woman for a man. The pent-up charges and energy of the homosexual relationship simply cannot be contained. When the explosive point is reached, the result is brutally violent.... But this is the ‘normal’ pattern of these homosexual attacks, the multiple stabbings, the multiple senseless beatings that obviously must continue long after the victim dies.’” [MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, pg 105f] See also the attached appendix.

RECEIVED THE DUE PENALTY — ‘Received in themselves’ = could refer that homosexuality itself is the punishment for the sin; on the other hand it could be a vivid way of saying those engages in such activities will suffer eternal punishment; they will receive ‘in their own persons’ God’s penalty for violation of his will. Compare 1 Cor 6:9,10 which speaks of those who practice homosexuality and not just homosexual prostitution. **NOTE: RE AIDS:** “Some Christians think that AIDS may be a manifestation of this just recompense of the Lord. But (1) AIDS strikes many more than homosexual offenders; (2) AIDS does not afflict all homosexual offenders; and Paul must be referring to a general penalty that is imposed on those who engage in homosexual relationships. The most we can say is that AIDS may be an additional manifestation of the wrath of God against rebellious and sinful humanity.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 116]

GOD WAS NOT ‘WORTHWHILE’ KNOWING — οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν (ouk edokimasan) = “Lit., did not approve. Rev., refused. They did not think God worth the knowing.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 21] “‘They did not like,’ the verb means to try or put to the test, to examine, to approve, and, ‘to regard as worthy,’ 1 Corinthians 16:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:4, and when followed by an infinitive, to think it worth while. *The heathen did not think it worth the trouble to retain the knowledge of God. They considered religion as useless, and supposed they could live without God.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 42]

GIVEN OVER TO A REPROBATE MIND — ἀδόκιμον (adokimon) = play on words; ‘they rejected God and God rejected their mental attitude and gave them over to judgment.’ The word has the basic meaning of ‘not standing the test’ and was commonly used of metals that were rejected by refiners because of impurities. The impure metals were discarded; therefore the word came to include the ideas of ‘worthlessness, uselessness.’ *The mind that finds God worthless becomes worthless itself. “People who have refused to acknowledge God end up with minds that are ‘disqualified’ from being able to understand and acknowledge the will of God. The result, of course, is that they do things that are ‘not proper.’ As in 1:21, Paul stresses that people who have turned from God are fundamentally unable to think and decide correctly about God and his will. This tragic incapacity is the explanation for the apparently inexplicable failure of people to comprehend, let alone practice, biblical ethical principles. Only the work of the Spirit in ‘renewing the mind’ (Rom 12:2) can overcome this deep-seated blindness and perversity.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 118] ‘According as they did not approve of having God in knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mind’ [Young’s Literal Translation] Wuest: “And even as 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 gave them up to a mind that would not meet the test for that which the mind was meant...”. [1:28 Wuest’s Expanded Translation]

HOMOSEXUALS CAN BE SAVED! — The church I attended when first saved used these verses to teach anyone who practiced homosexuality was ‘given over to a reprobate mind,’ which was explained to me to mean homosexuals were beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit and therefore could not be saved. Later when I changed churches I was taught differently, using Paul’s

comments to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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 NIV). The KJV states it this way: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind” (1 Cor 6:9 KJV).

‘VICE LIST’ (1:29-31)

Paul follows with what had been called a “vice list,” a literary form which is used both in the NT and secular writings of Paul’s day. “As is typical of such lists, this one exhibits no rigid logical arrangement, since rhetorical concerns play a role in the ordering of the list. Nor is it possible to give each term in the list a meaning distinct from every other term — some are virtually synonymous, and a considerable degree of overlap in meaning occurs. Nevertheless, we can note some structural as well as logical order. Structurally, the list falls into three parts: (1) filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, greed, wickedness; (2) full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; (3) gossips, maligners, haters of God, proud, arrogant, overbearing, devisers of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, without faithfulness, without affection, without mercy. A general logical sequence matches this structure. The first four nouns are rather general in their focus, the next five revolve around envy and its consequences, while the last twelve begin with two words depicting slander, move on to four that focus on arrogance, and conclude with six less closely related. Throughout the list, Paul focuses on social ills, leaving out sins relating to sexual conduct and, for the most part, sins against God directly. The purpose of this recital, which is the longest of its kind in the NT, is to show the general scope of social evils produced by the ‘unqualified mind’ to which God has handed sinners over. The harm done by people to other people is thus added to idolatry and sexual perversion to complete Paul’s sketch of the world outside Christ.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 118f] Note this list also might be compared with other lists: 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; 1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 3:2-5. “The crimes here mentioned were not of rare occurrence. The heathen were filled with them. They not only abounded, but in many cases were palliated and even justified. Dark as the picture here drawn is, it is not so dark as that presented by the most distinguished Greek and Latin authors, of their own countrymen. Commentators have collected a fearful array of passages from the ancient writers, which more than sustain the account given by the apostle.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 43]

	<i>variously translated as:</i>	<i>explanation / comments</i>
ἀδικία (adikia)	unrighteousness	when taken in a limited sense, it signifies injustice; it is often used for iniquity in general; embraces collectively the whole following enumeration
πορνεία (porneia)	fornication; whoredom	this includes all the violations of the seventh commandment, and is not to be confined to the distinctive idea which the term bears in our language; uncleanness (missing from NIV; NASB)
πονηρία (ponēria)	wickedness, evil, pernicious evil	perverseness, denotes the bad instinct of the heart, what is evil not in the sense of calamity but with full ethical overtones, signifying what is sinister and vile; it is the term used when the devil is called “the evil one;” does not refer to specific sins
πλεονξία (pleonxia)	covetousness, greed, avarice	the desire of having more; the passion for money
κακία (kakia)	maliciousness, depravity, malice	the deliberate wickedness which takes pleasure in doing harm; a disposition to injury and revenge; a condition of moral evil, emphasizing its internal and resident character; “the evil habit of mind”
μεστοὺς φθόνου (mestous phthonou)	full of envy	full of = literally “stuffed”; the keen displeasure aroused by seeing someone having something which you begrudge him
φόνου (phonou)	murder	a familiar sin among Paul’s world, especially with respect to their slaves who were put to death for the slightest offenses
ἔριδος (eridos)	debate, strife, wrangling	quarrelling; strife about words for vainglory and not truth.
δόλου (dolou)	deceit, guile	the primary meaning is “a bait, food exposed to entrap an animal,” then “the disposition to deceive,” or “an act of deception;” cunning, treachery

κακοηθείας (kakoētheias)	malignity, malice, malicious craftiness, evil dispositions	literally signifies bad custom or disposition; spite; the desire to harm people, to render his neighbor's life miserable by bitterness of temper; the desire to hurt others without any other reason than that of doing evil to them and finding pleasure in their sufferings; the disposition to make the worst of everything
ψιθυριστάς (psithuristas)	whisperers, gossips, secret slanderers	the “whispering” of the person who spreads “confidential” rumors about others; the man who pours his poison against his neighbor by whispering in the ear
καταλάλους (katalalous)	backbiters, slanderers; evil speakers	“one who speaks against”; the man who blackens publically
θεοστυγείς (theostugeis)	haters of God, God- haters, hateful to God	the highest manifestation of pride, which cannot brook the thought of this superior and judge
ύβριστάς (hubristas)	despiteful, insolent; insulting	those who treat others with contempt, as if they and they alone amounted to anything and all the others amounted to nothing; one who behaves with humiliating and unconscionable arrogance towards those who are not powerful enough to retaliate
ύπερηφάνους (hyperēphanous)	proud, arrogant, haughty	denotes a man who, from a feeling of his own superiority, regards others with haughtiness
άλοζόνας (alozonas)	boasters, boastful, vaunting, swaggerers	the man who seeks to attract admiration by claiming advantages he does not really possess; does not necessarily imply contempt or insult
έφευρετάς κακών (ephuretas kakōn)	inventors of evil things, they invent ways of doing evil	rare word, found only here; some suggest we consider “devisers of evil things” as those who find “ever more hateful methods of hurting and destroying their fellow men”; those who pass their lives meditating on the evil to be done to others
γονεύσιν άπειθείς (goneusin apeitheis)	disobedient to parents	“That such should be included in this fearful list, shows the light in which filial disobedience is regarded by the sacred writers.” [Hodge, <i>Romans</i> , pg] “Obedience to parents is here considered as a duty taught by the light of nature, the breach of which condemns the heathens, who had not the fifth commandment written in words. It is apart of the law originally inscribed on the heart, the traces of which are still to be found in the natural love of children to their parents. When the heathens, then, disregarded this duty, they departed from the original constitution of their nature, and disregarded the voice of God in their hearts.” [Haldane, <i>Romans</i> , pg 70]
άσυνέτους (asunetous)	without understanding, senseless, stupid, unintelligent	not a mere mental weakness but a moral blemish; those who, because of their rejection of God, can no longer comprehend the will of God; denotes a man who is incapable of lending an ear to wise counsel
άσυνθέτους (asunthetous)	covenant breakers, faithless, perfidious	“one who refuses to abide by covenants and treaties”; one who without scruple violates the contracts he has signed; not to be trusted
άστόργους (astorgous)	without natural affection, heartless	without tenderness; from the word “to cherish, caress, foster;” the destruction even of the feelings of natural tenderness, as is seen in a mother who exposes or kills her child, a father who abandons his family, or children who neglect their aged parents
άσπόνδους (aspondous)	implacable	truce-breakers; (missing from NIV, NASB)
άνελεήμονας (aneleēmonas)	unmerciful, merciless, ruthless	without pity; connected to “without natural affections” but more general; reminiscent of the entire population of great cities gathering to behold the gladiators, applauding at gore and gloating over dying agonies

CONCLUSION / TRANSITION (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. (1:32 KJV)

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (1:32 NIV)

who the righteous judgment of God having known — that those practising such things are worthy of death — not only do them, but also have delight with those practising them. (1:32 Young's Literal Translation)

“The function of this concluding verse is to bring out even more fully the willful rebellion against God that pervades humanity. Towards this end, Paul notes that those who engage in the activities he has listed know that what they are doing is wrong.’... As Murray says, ‘we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 121f]

“Paul therefore teaches that the heathen knew they deserved punishment for their crimes, or in other words, that they were justly exposed to the wrath of God, which was revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The source of this knowledge he explains in the following chapter, ver. 14. It was a knowledge written on their hearts, or included in the constitution of their nature; it was implied in their being moral agents. As he had before shown that the impiety of the heathen was without excuse, inasmuch as they had a knowledge of the true God, so here he shows that their immorality was inexcusable, since their sins were not committed in ignorance of their nature or desert. This passage also shows that the judicial abandonment of God does not destroy the free agency or responsibility of men. They are given up to work iniquity, and yet know that they deserve death for what they do. ***The stream which carries them away is not without, but within. It is their own corrupt nature. It is themselves. Notwithstanding this knowledge of the ill-desert of the crimes above enumerated, they not only commit them, but approve of those who do (or practice) them. This is the lowest point of degradation. To sin, even in the heat of passion, is evil; but to delight in the sins of others, shows that men are of set purpose and fixed preference, wicked. Such is the apostle's argument to prove that the heathen are all under sin, that they are justly chargeable with ungodliness and unrighteousness, and consequently exposed to the wrath of God.***” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 43f]

APPENDIX: STATISTICAL INFORMATION RE: HOMOSEXUALITY

Finding: *The percent of men claiming to be homosexual is far less than Alfred Kinsey's 1948 claims that 10 percent of American males were homosexual and that 37 percent of men had some homosexual experience during their life. The National Survey of Men reports that "2.3 percent of men, age 20-39, have had 'same gender sexual activity' during the preceeding ten years" and that "1.1 percent have had such activity exclusively." In addition, the "majority of men who have had homosexual contact report that such contact occurred 'once, twice, or rarely' for less than 2 years."* [Stuart H. Seidman, and Ronald O. Reider, "A Review of Sexual Behavior in the United States", *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol 151, 1994, pg 330-339]

Finding: *Compared with their heterosexual peers, homosexual men were at greater risk for psychiatric disorders, including mood and anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders, panic disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, and simple phobia.* [Theo G. M. Sandfort, "Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders", *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol 58, 2001, pg 85-91]

Finding: *Relationship violence was found to be a significant problem for homosexuals. Forty-four (44) percent of the gay men reported having experienced violence in their relationships; 13 percent reported sexual violence and 83 percent reported emotional abuse. Levels of abuse ran even higher among lesbians: 55 percent reported physical violence in their relationships, 14 percent reported sexual abuse, and 84 percent reported emotional abuse.* [Susan C. Turrell, "A Descriptive Analysis of Same-Sex Relationship Violence for a Diverse Sample", *Journal of Family Violence*, vol 13, 2000, pg 281-293]

Finding: *Almost one-third (29.7 percent) of gays and nearly one-half (47.5 percent) of lesbians reported being or having been the victim of relationship violence. In addition, 22 percent of gays and 38 percent of lesbians admitted using violence against their partners.* [Walder-Haugrad, Lisa, Gratch, Linda Vaden; and Magruder, Brian, "Victimization and Perpetration Rates of Violence in Gay and Lesbian Relationships: Gender Issues Explored", *Violence and Victims*, vol 12, 1997, pg 173-184]

Finding: *Among lesbians, "rates of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse were all significantly higher in their prior lesbian relationships than in their prior heterosexual relationships: 56.8 percent had been sexually victimized by a female, 45 percent had experienced physical aggression, and 64.5 percent experienced physical/emotional aggression."* [Donald G. Dutton, "Patriarchy and Wife Assault: The Ecological Fallacy", *Violence and Victims*, vol 9, number 2, 1994, pg 167-178]

Finding: *Violence against women was significantly greater in lesbian relationships than in heterosexual couples. Fifty-two (52) percent of lesbians reported being "a victim of violence by their female partners, 52 percent said they had used violence against their female partners, and 30 percent said they had used violence against a nonviolent female partner."* [Donald G. Dutton, "Patriarchy and Wife Assault: The Ecological Fallacy", *Violence and Victims*, vol 9, number 2, 1994, pg 167-178]

Finding: *Rates of illicit drug use among homosexuals is well in excess of the national average. Among homosexual men, ages 18 to 25: 79.2 percent have used marijuana; 75 percent have used psychotherapeutics for nonmedical reasons; 65.2 percent have used stimulants such as dexedrine and benzedrine; 62.5 percent have used inhalants such as amyl or butyl nitrate; and 50.2 percent have used hallucinogens such as LSD. Rates among lesbians: marijuana, 82.4 percent; psychotherapeutics, 58.8 percent; stimulants, 52.9 percent; inhalants, 41.2 percent; and hallucinogens, 41.2 percent. Comparing current usage to national usage, homosexuals were found to use drugs with greater frequency: "Among adults aged 18-25, 16.5 percent of men and 9.1 percent of women have used marijuana in the past month, compared with 37.5 percent of gay men and 23.5 percent of lesbians."* [William F. Skinner, "The Prevalence and Demographic Predictors of Illicit and Licit Drug Use Among Lesbians and Gay Men", *American Journal of Public Health*, vol 84, 1994, pg 1307-1310]

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