

**GOD'S PERFECT JUDGMENT**  
**(SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2022)**

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**SCRIPTURE READING:** LEVITICUS 18; ROMANS 1:18-32 (FOCUS: 26-32)

**INTRODUCTION**

We know very well the onslaught of perversion that we are seeing, especially targeted at children.

In the face of evil, we turn to God's Word.

Our goal: to magnify God's grace, to see the horror of sin, and appreciate again the fearsome nature of God's wrath.

We are not here to celebrate our own righteousness, but we must not be ashamed to give a public witness and testimony to God's truth.

**God's judgment is fitting and terrifying. It is good to consider God's perfect justice and give thanks for the peace we have with God through Jesus Christ.**

We will look at Romans 1:26-32 in three parts.

First, I would like us to consider the structure and flow of verses 18-32. Then we will give attention to verses 26-27 and 28-32 in two parts.

**1. STRUCTURE OF ROMANS 1:18-32**

This is a perfectly logical and beautiful passage but difficult to try to break up into separate parts.

Here is how I see the flow of this passage.

**First**, verse 18 is the **main point** of this entire section.

The perfect and holy wrath of God descending from Heaven is being revealed against ungodly and unrighteous men and women who suppress the truth through their unrighteous actions.

**Second**, verses 19-20 give the first reason why God is perfectly justified in expressing His wrath and bringing judgment. All men are without excuse because God has made Himself known through creation.

**Third**, verses 21-23 give a second reason.

Men have sinned greatly against God through pride, unthankfulness, and other rebellious actions.

**Fourth-Sixth**, in verses 24-28, we see specifically God's judgment on sinful men and women.

As part of His perfect judgment, God gives them over to horrible sins. These verses also further describe the continued rebellion of men and women to God's purposes.

**Seventh**, verses 29-31 compose the longest listing of sins in the NT, showing the horrible consequences of sin not just on the individual but towards other people.

**Eighth**, verse 32 provides a fitting conclusion and transition into chapter 2.

Let me point out **four other things** from verses 18-32 which show the literary beauty of this passage even though it describes such ugly and wicked things.

Three times in this passage we have the language **God gave them up** or **God gave them over**. This is the specific judgment that this passage describes.

Verse 24 – God gave them over to uncleanness

Verse 26 – God gave them over to vile passions

Verse 28 – God gave them over to a debased mind

Also look again at the **three-fold** use of the verb changed or exchanged.

Verse 23 – Men exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images of men and other created things.

Verse 25 – Men and women in their rebellion exchange the truth of God for the lie.

Verse 26 – Women exchange the created purposes for their bodies for that which goes against the created order.

There is also a three-fold use of the word or idea of approving something.

Verse 28 – They did not like to retain God. This could be translated as they did not approve of God in their knowledge.

Verse 28 – The end of this verse uses an adjective that is related to the verb **retain** or **approve**.

God gave them over to a **debased** mind. This could be translated as an unproven mind, one that is wicked and worthless.

Verse 32 – Though it is not exactly the same word, the end of verse 32 uses a similar verb speaking of the wicked **approving** of those who indulge in sin.

This is not just a passage that expresses the anger of God but also how His punishments are perfectly given to those who continue in their rebellion.

It is a beautifully written passage, though it describes in great detail the horrors of sin and man's rebellion.

**The beauty of God and the horror of sin.**

## **2. GOING AGAINST THE CREATED ORDER, vv. 26-27**

These two verses have been subjected to numerous attempted revisions.

There is absolutely no reason to understand these two verses in any other way than the plain and clear reading.

Let me also state that if I seem somewhat vague in my word choices it is only because of the mixed-age grouping of our audience.

Verse 24 states that in consequence of idolatry, God gives up sinners to uncleanness, which means moral corruption or immorality.

Verse 24 also describes perverted lusts and the dishonoring of the physical bodies that God has created.

**Verse 24 as a category would probably include the greatest number of people in terms of the rebellion that is described.**

A **smaller percentage** of people are characterized by the vile sins described in verses 26 and 27.

It is of matter of debate what is the percentage of people who are described by verses 26 and 27.

From recent surveys, the number of people self-identifying in accordance with verses 26 and 27 is exploding!

When you give up God's truth there is no end to the perversion that follows. This we see throughout history – modern and ancient.

In verse 26, Paul first speaks of the sin of women and then in verse 27 the repulsive sin of men.

Verse 26 speaks of God giving up people to vile passions.

The word **vile** could be translated as dishonorable.

We have discussed before the concepts of shame and honor in the first century world.

Importantly, Paul speaks of the actions described here as being **dishonorable**. This is the objective truth even if all people did not understand it to be such.

I generally speaking don't like to use the word nature or natural preferring to use the word creation or created, but it is clear that Paul in verse 26 is speaking in terms of God's created order, and not man's imagination of what a new order might be.

The word natural means here that which is in accordance with the basic order of things in nature or creation.<sup>1</sup>

Further, though I don't really like the basic concept of natural law, Paul's point is that even non-Christians should recognize that the sins of verses 26 and 27 go against "nature."

Even though we don't have to rest on what is called natural law to speak against these sins, it is true that because of God's revelation, men and women should know these things to be true.

Verse 26 then speaks quite clearly of the horror when women give up marital relations and instead engage in things which go against God's order.

And note that verse 26 is only one example of the vile passions which men and women are given over to as an expression of God's wrath and perfect punishment.

Verse 27 begins with the word likewise and speaks of the similar sin of men.

Some try to argue that what is condemned in verse 27 is the kidnapping of either men or boys.

I must have missed that in my Bible, because I see nothing that would restrict the general description of verse 27.

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd Edition*. 3rd ed. University Of Chicago Press, 2001. s.v. φυσικός.

Verse 27 rather speaks of men also giving up normal marital relations, burning in lust for one another, committing that which is shameless, and receiving the fitting penalty for their sinful actions.

Look at the end of verse 27 again – **receiving in themselves the penalty of their error or perversion which was due.**<sup>2</sup>

This is an interesting phrase.

It speaks of God giving the perfect punishment.

What more is meant by this phrase?

Douglas Moo suggests two likely options.

- 1) The perversion is the punishment.
- 2) Those who engage in such activities will suffer eternal punishment.

But what about the many diseases associated with this behavior?

He notes, I think correctly, that not all people who engage in such perverse behavior contract diseases; additionally some who are not guilty of such wicked behavior in some cases contract AIDS.

But he notes, “AIDS [or other diseases] may be an additional manifestation of the wrath of God against rebellious and sinful humanity.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce, F. F. *Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 6. Accordance ed. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. 116, including footnote 133.

It should be stated that Christians are far more loving to those who engage in such sins by seeking to preach the gospel than those of the world who say, it is perfectly fine if you want to make such a choice.

Because if you study the statistics, you do find that the sins of verses 26 and 27 very often lead to horrible diseases and other related consequences.

To call these alternative lifestyles in an approving way is hateful, ludicrous, and foolish.

Robert Gagnon used to teach at a very liberal PCUSA seminary in Pennsylvania, but he is one of the foremost conservative scholars on the issues addressed in this chapter.

He has shared with that when he has debated the top liberal scholars, **even they have to concede that the Bible clearly calls homosexuality sin.**

Romans 1 is not the only passage which speaks of the sins of verses 26 and 27.

If you are engaging in a discussion of the issue, I would also call your attention to the following passages:

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; I Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

Stand firm on the five clear passages of God's Word when speaking on these issues.

Study these passages.

Know their context.



Learn also the most common arguments that are used to explain away the truth of these passages.

**There is no reason for doubt but there is good reason to study and seek to master the truth of God's Word.**

### **3. THE FULLNESS OF SINS THAT CHARACTERIZE A DEPRAVED GENERATION, VV. 28-32**

Another repeated theme in this passage is that of **knowledge**.

Verse 19 speaks of what may be **known** of God.

Verse 21 reads, although they **knew** God, they did not glorify Him as God.

Verse 28 speaks of not retaining God in their **knowledge**.

Verse 32 ends speaking of **knowing** the righteous judgment of God.

This is a chapter not just about sinful actions but first about the twisting and perversion of knowledge.

We have already seen the use of the word exchange.

In verse 28 we have a similar idea – they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. As I mentioned earlier this could be translated, "**They did not approve to have God in knowledge.**"<sup>4</sup>

This is similar isn't it to verse 18 and suppressing the truth in unrighteousness?

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<sup>4</sup> *The Net Bible Notes*. Accordance ed. ed. W. Hall Harris. Richardson: Biblical Studies Press, 2005. s.v. Romans 1:28.

Because they do not approve to have God in their knowledge, God turns them over to the perfect judgment. He gives them a mind that is unproved or worthless.

I think the sense of this word here is also that they are given over not to just a low IQ mind but one is the morally debased or depraved.

This then leads further to do things that are not fitting.

**Isn't Romans 1 such an amazing chapter in describing the age in which we live?**

Paul in verses 29-31 gives the longest listing of sinful behaviors and attitudes that is found in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

What is the purpose of such a long listing?

First, it emphasizes that the rejection of God leads to many different but related sins. **There are many fruits but a common root.**

Second, this list emphasizes how the sins of verses 24, 26, and 27 are not just private sins.

We often hear about how the government should stay out of people's bedrooms. I agree that governments generally speaking should stay out of people's bedrooms.

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<sup>5</sup> There are two textual variants in verses 29-31, so some Bible translations only have a listing of 21 sins and not the 23 sins that are found in the NKJV ESV following the NA text has 21 as do other versions following this Greek text.

But the problem is that the sins here described invariably lead to sins that move from the bedroom into the public square. When egregious sins are tolerated and promoted many other problems will follow.

Third, Paul through this listing is again showing how there is absolutely no place for self-earned salvation.

Men and women apart from Jesus Christ are not just a little bit lost.

No, this listing shows how serious the condition is.

Some would say, well I have never committed the more serious sins of verses 26 and 27, but there is something on this list that every person at some time in his life has committed.

Verse 29 begins with the expression, **being filled with all...**The tense of the verb shows this is an already existing state, and in the place of God these are the things that now dominate men and women in rebellion.<sup>6</sup>

The long listing also expands the end of verse 28 – these are the things which are not fitting.

Douglas Moo suggests these sins could be grouped into three categories – the **first five** are more general.

The **next five** revolve around envy and its consequences.

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<sup>6</sup> Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. 118.

The **last thirteen** begin with two words depicting slander, move on to four that focus on arrogance, and conclude with seven that are less closely related.<sup>7</sup>

Let me make a few comments on some of the specific sins listed here.

The list begins with unrighteousness, a word used two times in verse 18.

God's wrath is revealed against people who engage in the sins listed here. These sins we can say are also part of the suppressing of the truth mentioned in verse 18.

From verse 29 you see how these sins are directed both against God and man. **All sin is an attack on God, but many sins also then attack other men and women.**

Note from the end of verse 29, the word **whisperers** is not a good thing but refers to those who gossip and spread stories both true and false about others.

In verse 30, the word translated as **haters of God** originally meant one who was hated or forsaken by God, but here it is properly translated in the active sense – those who hate God.<sup>8</sup>

It is also worth noting that disobedience to parents is rightfully on such a listing of truly evil of sins.

Many other sins flow from the sin of disobeying your parents.

Finally, this listing ends (v. 31) with a string of sins that all begin with the Greek letter **alpha**, which often turns the meaning of a word into its opposite.

This is seen in the NKJV translation by the prefix **un-**.

There is something fitting about the way this list ends. **Sin transforms a person into the opposite of what he was created and called to be.**

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 120.

Verse 32 serves as a fitting conclusion to this section as well as a preparation for chapter 2.

What a powerful statement is made in verse 32.

These sins are not the result of ignorance.

If only people could be given a little more education.

Lack of education is not the problem. They know the righteous judgment of God.

The word judgment here would be better translated as decree.

They know the **decree of God** that those who practice such sins are deserving of death. And yet they not only engage habitually in these sins, even more they approve of others doing the same.

## CONCLUSION

**God's judgment is fitting and terrifying.**

**It is good to consider God's perfect justice and give thanks for the peace we have with God through Jesus Christ.**

Consider a few additional points of application and reflection.

This passage is a masterpiece in that it shows the beautiful but sometimes difficult harmony of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. There is no conflict between these two realities. Both are clearly displayed in verses 18-32.

Often, we think of certain sins as being the reason why God is going to bring judgment on America – pornography, adultery, homosexuality, etc.

These sins to invite the judgment of God, **but it is also true to say that these sins are themselves the judgment of God.**

Abortion not only calls for God's judgment it is sadly also the judgment itself of God.

Our message to those who engage in homosexuality is not simply if you don't turn God will bring you to judgment **but also is even now your lifestyle is the judgment of God.**

Considering such a listing and viewing the many abominations of our nation, be careful that your response is not like the Pharisee that Jesus described in Luke 18. "God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector..."

No, the prayer that you should pray is, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

It is also worth observing that 1 Cor. 6, one of the passages you should keep in mind when you get into a discussion of some of the sins described in this chapter, Paul speaks of the believers in Corinth has having been once guilty of either the same sins or very similar sins.

**1Cor. 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

There are other important reasons why the discussion of horrible sins is important for the Christian to consider.

Satan constantly seeks to make you lose sensitivity to the nature of sin and its horror and offense to a holy God.

Satan loves it when Christians become used to sin or laugh at it. It is so easy to do, but no sin rightfully should ever be seen as a matter for joking or laughing. Yes, there is a sense where you laugh at your mistakes or your previous foolishness, but still sin should never be a laughing matter.

This listing should never encourage pride or a spirit of self-centeredness, but it is given so that you will not lose sight of the horror of sin.

We also consider how in our culture the promotion of what is vile is everywhere? What can we do to stand against this?

Finally, if we were honest and had the time, we all could construct a long listing of sins that we still fall into. David spoke honestly of his sins being more in number than the hairs of his head.

A frequent consideration of sin is proper so that you forsake any trust in yourself or in your good works, but that you continue to fully trust and rest in the perfection of Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice.

**Prayer**

**Closing Hymn: 429**

**Benediction and Commission – 1 Cor. 15:57-58**

But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.