

DISCUSSION GUIDE: ROMANS 1:18-25
February 19, 2017

INTRODUCTION:

From Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20, Paul begins an assault on the self-sufficiency of man before God. He begins by dismantling any excuse the Gentiles may have and then takes aim at the Jews in the next chapter. The point Paul is making is that all mankind stands equally in need of the sovereign grace of God. Humanity has no hope apart from God's gracious intervention through His Son, which Paul will get to in Romans 3:21. But for now, Paul is carefully laying out the case against all mankind.

1. The concept of God's wrath is the central theme of Romans 1:18-32. We might be prone to think of God's wrath in human terms—as if God's anger is on the same plane as ours. We also tend to separate God's wrath from his other attributes, such as his holiness and love.

—Discuss how God's wrath is connected to his love and holiness.

—What are the consequences of disconnecting God's wrath from his love and holiness?

2. Paul says in vv19-20 that God has revealed himself through Creation. But mankind has suppressed the truth and rejected God. As result, man is without excuse and accountable to God for rejecting Him.

—Discuss what it means to suppress the truth about God. How has all mankind done this?

—Discuss what it means that all mankind is without excuse before God.

—A common objection to Christianity says: 'How can God judge people who've never heard of Christ?' But Paul says people are accountable for rejecting the God who they did know through Creation, not the Christ they never heard of. How does this truth remove the notion that some people are somehow innocent or neutral before God?

3. Mankind suppresses God and props up counterfeit substitutes for him. Whether a statue of a false god, or the broken pursuit of some intangible thing—the Bible calls these things idolatry.

—We're tempted to think of idolatry as a primitive form of worship or something reserved for obviously false religions like Hinduism. But how are all people prone to idol worship?

—Discuss some common idols that our culture is prone to falsely worship.

4. We tend to think of God's wrath as something entirely in the future. It is certainly true that a day of final judgment awaits, but vv24-25 makes it clear that in another sense the world is already experiencing God's wrath in that he has handed mankind over to himself. In mercy God says, 'My will be done,' while in judgment God says to man, 'your will be done.' God gives man over to his own desires and lets him face the consequences.

—Discuss this truth. Consider ways in which our culture might be currently experiencing God's wrath.

—Praise God that we know the good news that this bad news of Romans 1:18-32 is setting up. Take time to praise God for ways he has shown us mercy through Christ by removing His wrath from us.