

## GUILTY

### ROMANS 1:18-28,32

#### INTRODUCTION

From chapters 1:18 - 3:21 Paul is mounting the argument that all men – Jew and Greek – are dead in sin and void of the life of God outside of Jesus Christ. None is without excuse, all are guilty before the holy God and He will vindicate His glory by crushing and searing all who stand opposed to His revealed glory – Jesus Christ. He begins his argument by highlighting the beautiful song of creation has been singing from the beginning about the knowledge of God and the ugly rejection of this song by sinners.

#### REVEALED IN NATURE (ROM. 1:18-20)

In our increasingly secular age many desire a God who is loving – fully and only – loving. Therefore, to speak of a God of wrath, they believe, assigns to God the passion of selfish anger, describing Him as one who seeks revenge on those He opposes. This, however, is not the biblical understanding of God's wrath. God is holy and, therefore, sin cannot exist in the same space or place that God deems His. Therefore, since the earth and everyone it is His creation each is called to worship and adore Him in lives of holiness. To behave otherwise sets us at odds with this holy God. Therefore, Paul tells us that this wrath, or righteous judgment, of God is revealed from heaven (its origin is holy) against the godless - those whose hearts are not his - as well as those who live in constant sin and are unrighteous (Romans 1:18). God's wrath is on such people because they intentionally "*suppress the truth*" that is revealed about God in creation (Romans 1:18-19). Paul says, "... *his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world...*" (Romans 1:19). While men cannot gain saving knowledge through creation, Paul is clearly saying that the evidence of the existence of God is so clearly expressed in creation that everyone, everywhere, is "*without excuse*" in their rejection of Him (Romans 1:20). That this *wrath of God* is "*being revealed*" (Romans 1:18), shows that wrath is not merely a past and or future action. It is taking place *now*, evidenced in the increased and intensified rejection of the Lord and the falling away of many (See 1 John 2:19-20). We are seeing the action of heaven before our eyes!

#### REPLACED BY NONSENSE (ROM. 1:21-23)

Paul has established that all men can know God through the witness of creation itself. Thus, creation is God's confrontation with men and when man is confronted in this way there are always two choices before him: to reject God or to choose Him. These terms *reject* and *choose* should be understood and even stated, in the biblical context in which Paul writes these verses. Paul uses phrases such as "*they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude*" (Romans 1:21) and "*they... exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man...*" (Romans 1:23) etc. These phrases speak of something deeper than a rejection of God. They show that when one *suppresses the truth* (Romans 1:18) they are not merely rejecting the ability to know God but, they are consciously, actively and intentionally embracing idolatry. They are giving glory to created things rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). Instead of thanksgiving to the God of creation reveals, they give their lives and praise to the creation that God created. When God is before us we have two options: not simply to reject or to choose. Before us are the options to either, worship and praise the true and living God or idolatry. Everyday men and women are faced with this choice when they go outside, see the sun, the stars, the tress, etc. God is not *in* these created things but they reflect back to the One who created them. Yet, men and women, all around the world choose to live according to their own thinking which is "*worthless*" (Romans 1:21) and choose to see life and truth through their own hearts which are "*senseless*" and "*darkened*" (Romans 1:23). Idolatry is a foolishness that is masked to those who refuse to see the glory of God in creation because, at its heart, idolatry only sees created things as worthy of

glory (Romans 1:23). Idolatry, to Paul, is utter nonsense and is the reason for the revealed wrath of God (Romans 1:18).

### **DELIVERED OVER (ROM. 1:24-28)**

Paul uses the phrase "*delivered them over*" three times in five verses (vv. 24, 26, 28). To repeat something three times in five verses is to communicate that this one thing is of the highest importance. The phrase "*delivered them over*" conveys the idea removing all restraints and allowing someone to engage in that which they clearly cannot live without. Notice, however, that the immorality in which Paul will speak of giving them over to is all couched in the reality of worship and truth. He says that "*They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator*" (Romans 1:25). When truth was before them they rejected the truth for the lie choosing to worship the god of the lie over the God of truth. Again, Paul is back to man's conscious, and continuous choice of the foolishness of idolatry in the face of the truth and glory of God. The specific immorality Paul speaks of is sexual in nature (Romans 1:24) and, homosexuality in particular (Romans 1:24,26, 27). As we see the growing acceptance of sexual immorality and homosexuality (Romans 1:26, 27) in our culture what we are actually seeing is the revelation of the wrath of God. God has *delivered them over* to passions they just could not be without. The acceptance of fornication, adultery and homosexuality should be signs to the church, not of the absence of God, but the presence and nearness of God fulfilling and vindicating His glory. Oddly enough, Paul teaches us that the growth of sin among unbelievers is the proof that God's Word is true and that He is saddling up and preparing to wrap things up.