



Romans 1:18-32

“Big Problems: Unbelief and Sin”

Reading and Study Guide for the week
of Jan. 14-20, 2024

Memory verse: *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* (Romans 10:9)

This week, read and study Romans 1:18-32. Some questions to answer and think about this week with your family or Community Group:

1. If God were to deliver a "state of the world" speech for all of us to hear, what do you think He would say?
2. How do people today distinguish between right and wrong?
3. What is God’s response to the people who ignore and disobey Him? ([1:18](#))
4. What makes all people accountable to God? ([1:20](#))
5. What is the primary problem people have in their relationship with God? ([1:21](#))
6. What happens to the hearts and minds of people who reject God? ([1:21-22](#))
7. When people deny God, what do they often put in His place? ([1:21-23](#))
8. How does God respond to people who ignore and deny Him? ([1:24](#), [26](#))
9. How are attitudes toward sexuality affected when a person denies God? ([1:24](#), [26-27](#))
10. How can God hold us responsible for breaking His laws?
11. What examples can you list of how we worship created things rather than the Creator?
12. Who among your friends is caught in this trap of rejecting God and needs your prayers of intercession this week?

Life Application Bible Notes

[1:18](#) Why is God angry at sinful people? Because they have substituted the truth about him with a lie ([1:25](#)). They have stifled the truth God naturally reveals to all people in order to believe anything that supports their own self-centered lifestyles. God cannot tolerate sin because his nature is morally perfect. He cannot ignore or condone willful rebellion. God wants to remove the sin and restore the sinner—and he is able to, as long as the sinner does not stubbornly distort or reject the truth. But God shows his anger against those who persist in sinning. Make sure you are not pursuing a lie rather than the true God. Don't suppress the truth about him merely to protect your own lifestyle.

[1:18ff](#) [Romans 1:18-3:20](#) develops Paul's argument that no one can claim by his or her own efforts or merit to be good in God's sight—not the masses, not the Romans, not even the Jews. All people everywhere deserve God's condemnation for their sin.

1:18-20 In these verses, Paul answers a common objection to belief in God: How could a loving God send anyone to hell, especially someone who has never heard about Christ? In fact, says Paul, God has revealed himself plainly in the creation to *all* people. And yet people reject even this basic knowledge of God. Also, all people have an inner sense of what God requires, but they choose not to live up to it. Put another way, people's moral standards are always better than their behavior. If people suppress God's truth in order to live their own way, they have no excuse. They know the truth, and they will have to endure the consequences of ignoring it.

1:18-20 Some people wonder why we need missionaries if people can know about God through nature (the creation). The answer: (1) Although people know that God exists, their wickedness blinds them to the truth. Missionaries sensitively expose their sin and point them to Christ. (2) Although people may believe there is a God, they refuse to commit themselves to him. Missionaries help persuade them by sharing God's Word and by pointing out the dangerous consequences of their actions. (3) Missionaries help the church obey the great commission of our Lord ([Matthew 28:19, 20](#)). (4) Most important, although nature reveals God, people need to be told about Jesus and how, through him, they can have a personal relationship with God. Knowing that God exists is not enough. People must learn that God is loving and that he sent his Son to demonstrate his love for us ([5:8](#)). They must be shown how to accept God's forgiveness of their sins. (See also [10:14, 15](#).)

1:19 Does anyone have an excuse for not believing in God? The Bible answers an emphatic *no*. God has revealed what he is like in and through his creation. Every person, therefore, either accepts or rejects God. Don't be fooled. When the day comes for God to judge your response to him, no excuses will be accepted. Begin today to give your devotion and worship to him.

1:20 What kind of God does nature reveal? Nature shows us a God of might, intelligence, and intricate detail; a God of order and beauty; a God who controls powerful forces. That is *general* revelation. Through *special* revelation (the Bible and the coming of Jesus), we learn about God's love and forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. God has graciously given us many sources that we might come to believe in him.

1:20 God reveals his divine nature and personal qualities through creation, even though creation's testimony has been distorted by the Fall. Adam's sin resulted in a divine curse upon the whole natural order ([Genesis 3:17-19](#)); thorns and thistles were an immediate result, and natural disasters have been common from Adam's day to ours. In [Romans 8:19-21](#), Paul says that nature itself is eagerly awaiting its own redemption from the effects of sin (see [Revelation 22:3](#)).

1:21-23 How could intelligent people turn to idolatry? Idolatry begins when people reject what they know about God. Instead of looking to him as the creator and sustainer of life, they see themselves as the center of the universe. They soon invent "gods" that are convenient projections of their own selfish ideas. These gods may be wooden figures, or they may also be goals or things we pursue, such as money, power, or possessions. They may even be misrepresentations of God himself—making God in our image, instead of the reverse. The common denominator is this: Idolaters worship the things God made rather than God himself. Is there anything you feel you can't live without? Is there any priority greater than God? Do you have a dream you would sacrifice everything to realize? Does God take first place in your life? Do you worship God or idols of your own making?

1:21-32 Paul clearly portrays the inevitable downward spiral into sin. First, people reject God; next, they make up their own ideas of what a god should be and do; then they fall into every kind of wickedness: greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. Finally, they grow to hate God and encourage others to do so. God does not cause this steady progression toward evil. Rather, when people reject him, he allows them to live as they choose. God gives them over to or permits them to experience the natural consequences of their sin. Once caught in the downward spiral, no one can pull himself or herself out. Sinners must trust Christ alone to deliver them from destruction.

1:23 When Paul says that people worshiped idols made to look like people or animals instead of worshiping God, he seems to deliberately state people's wickedness in the terms used in the Genesis narrative of Adam's fall (see [Genesis 3:1-24](#)). When people worship the creature instead of the Creator, they lose sight of their own identity as those who are higher than the animals—made in the image of God.

1:24-32 These people chose to reject God, and God allowed them to do it. God does not usually stop us from making wrong choices. He lets us choose independence from him, even though he knows that in time we will become slaves to our own rebellious lifestyle and lose our freedom not to sin. Does life without God look like freedom to you? Look more closely. There is no worse slavery than slavery to sin.

1:25 People tend to believe lies that reinforce their own selfish, personal beliefs. Today, more than ever, we need to know what the basis is for our beliefs. With TV, music, movies, and the rest of the media often presenting sinful lifestyles and unwholesome values, we find ourselves constantly bombarded by attitudes and beliefs that are totally opposed to the Bible. Be careful about what influences you use to form your opinions. The Bible is the only standard of truth. Evaluate all other opinions in light of its teachings.

1:26, 27 God's plan for sexual relationships is his ideal for his creation. Unfortunately, sin distorts the natural use of God's gifts. Sin often means not only denying God but also denying the way we are made. When people say that any sex act is acceptable as long as nobody gets hurt, they are fooling themselves. In the long run (and often in the short run), sexual sin hurts people—individuals, families, whole societies. Because sex is such a powerful and essential part of what it means to be human, it must be treated with great respect. Sexual desires are of such importance that the Bible gives them special attention and counsels more careful restraint and self-control than with any other desire. One of the clearest indicators of a society or person in rebellion against God is the rejection of God's guidelines for the use of sex.

1:26, 27 Homosexuality (to turn against or abandon natural relations of sex) was as widespread in Paul's day as it is in ours. God is willing to receive anyone who comes to him in faith, and Christians should love and accept others no matter what their background. Yet, homosexuality is strictly forbidden in Scripture ([Leviticus 18:22](#)). Homosexuality is considered an acceptable practice by many in our world today—even by some churches. But society does not set the standard for God's law. Homosexuals believe that their desires are normal and that they have a right to express them. But God does not encourage us to fulfill all our desires (even normal ones). Those desires that violate his laws must be controlled. If you have these desires, you can and must resist acting upon them. Consciously avoid places or activities you know will kindle temptations. Don't underestimate the power of Satan to tempt you, or the potential for serious harm if you continue to yield to these temptations. Remember, God can and will forgive sexual

sins just as he forgives other sins. Surrender yourself to God, asking him to show you the way out of sin and into the light of his freedom and his love. Prayer, Bible study, and loving support of Christians in a Bible-believing church can help you to gain strength to resist these powerful temptations. If you are already deeply involved in homosexual behavior, seek help from a trustworthy, professional, Christian counselor.

[1:32](#) How were these people aware that God's justice would require death? All human beings are created in God's image; thus, we have a basic moral nature and a conscience. This truth is understood beyond religious circles. Psychologists, for example, say that the rare person who has no conscience has a serious personality disorder that is extremely difficult to treat. Most people instinctively know when they do wrong—but they may not care. Some people will even risk an early death for the freedom to indulge their desires now. "I know it's wrong, but I really want it," they say; or "I know it's dangerous, but it's worth the risk." For such people, part of the "fun" is going against God's law, the community's moral standards, common sense, or their own sense of right and wrong. But deep down inside they know that sin deserves the punishment of death ([6:23](#)).

Romans Study Guide questions and notes are from

