THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Last lesson
   1. Mankind rejects God's witness of Himself in His creation.
   2. God's condemnation is on those who reject God Who is evident in His creation.
   3. Mankind not only rejects the God of creation but makes his own gods which are creatures.

B. Outline of Romans
   1. Introduction (1:1-17)
   2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
      a. Condemnation on unrighteousness (1:18-32)
         1) Resisting God's truth in pursuit of unrighteousness brings condemnation (18-23)
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            a) One is abandoned by God to fornication (24-25)
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ROMANS 1:18-32, *CONDEMNATION ON UNRIGHTEOUSNESS*

A. Resisting God's truth in pursuit of unrighteousness brings condemnation (18-23)
   1. God's condemnation is for suppressing God's truth (18), ***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.***

      a. *For*
         1) This normally gives a reason or explanation for a preceding statement.
         2) Here, I believe Paul is emphasizing the importance of God's righteousness which brings His wrath on those who do not live by faith in Christ alone.
         3) Romans 5:9, *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*
         4) Douglas Moo, *Why has God manifested his righteousness and why can it be appropriated only through faith? Viewed in this light, this conjunction introduces the entire argument of 1:18–3:20—which, indeed, is encapsulated in v. 18.*

      b. *the wrath of God*
         1) *wrath* means *anger, indignation, punishment* toward sin.
         2) Here, the emphasis is on punishment of sinners.
            a) Romans 2:8, *but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*
            b) Ephesians 5:6, *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

         3) John Stott, *Human anger, although there is such a thing as righteous indignation, is mostly very unrighteous. It is an irrational and uncontrollable emotion, containing much vanity, animosity, malice and the desire for revenge. It should go without saying that God's anger is absolutely free of all such poisonous ingredients . . . his wrath is his holy hostility to evil, his refusal to condone it or come to terms with it, his just judgment upon it.*

      c. *is revealed from heaven*
         1) Paul makes it clear that the sovereign God of creation is He whose wrath is upon sinners.
         2) How is God's wrath being revealed now?
            a) Paul will demonstrate in Romans 1 that God's wrath is revealed in His turning over human beings to their chosen way of sin with all of its consequences.
            b) It has been said, *The history of the world is the judgment of the world.*
            c) Douglas Moo, *For the present experience of God's wrath is merely a foretaste of what will come on the day of judgment.*

3) *Revealed* speaks of special revelation and *plain* (verse 19) deals with natural (general) revelation.
   a) Grant Osborne, *The Gentiles did not have revealed truth like the Jews had in their Scriptures, so God convicted them according to what they knew: nature.*
   b) Paul emphasizes God's revelation through nature to Gentiles in Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:15-17) and at Athens (Acts 17:22-31).

d. *all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*
   1) *Ungodliness* means *lack of reverence for God through disobedience.*
   2) *Unrighteousness* means *injustice toward other humans.*
   3) These two picture mankind's failure to love God and others as we should, Matthew 22:37-39, *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
   4) John Witmer, *God hates sin and judges it, but loves sinners and desires their salvation.*

e. Unrighteousness suppresses the truth.
   1) *Truth* refers to *truth that people know about God*, Romans 1:25, *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*
   2) *suppress*
      a) Grant Osborne, *The verb "suppress" means to hinder something by hiding or removing it from sight. The truths of God are buried under an avalanche of rationalization and wicked behavior. People surmise that their sinful behavior cannot be all that bad if they can engage in it over and over and get away with it. Nothing could be further from the truth!*
      b) John Witmer, *This suppression of the truth is Paul's first reason for God's condemnation of the pagan world.*
      c) Paul gives more detail by what he means on *suppress the truth* in verses 19-20.

2. God's condemnation is for ignoring God's revelation (19-20)
   a. God reveals Himself to mankind through natural revelation (19), ***For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.***

      1) Tom Constable's definition of natural revelation, *Natural revelation describes what everyone knows about God because of what God has revealed concerning Himself in nature. What He has revealed about Himself in Scripture is "special revelation.*"
      2) Characteristics of natural (general) revelation
         a) It is clear testimony, *plain to them* (19).
            1] *Plain* means *visible or clear* (verse 20)..
            2] God has shown it to mankind based on natural revelation which is explained in verse 20.
            3] *For* ties verse 19, *clear testimony*, to verse 18, content of the testimony.
            4] Douglas Moo, *Only by an act of revelation from above—God "making it known"—can people understand God as he is.*

         b) It is understandable, *clearly perceived* (verse 20)..
         c) It has gone out to every generation, *ever since the creation of the world* (verse 20).
         d) It does not reveal everything about God, *his eternal power and divine nature* (verse 20).

      3) Limitation of natural revelation.
         a) It is designed to show man that there is someone greater than himself and to whom he is accountable.
         b) It does not give enough information for man to receive salvation which requires a Gospel presentation.
         c) William Newell, *Utter uncompromising, abandonment of hope in man is the first preliminary to understanding or preaching the gospel.*

   b. Mankind has always perceived God's invisible attributes (20), ***For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.***

      1) *For*
         a) Paul continues what he began in verse 19 concerning the knowledge of God.
         b) Now, Paul explains how God has made the disclosure.

2) God is perceived in His creation.
   a) *invisible attributes*
      1] The word is literally *unseen.*
      2] This verse is referring to God's divine nature.
      3] John 4:24, *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

   b) Paul identifies *eternal power and divine nature.*
      1] *Eternal power* is identified with His divine nature.
      2] *Divine nature* is literally *deity.*
      3] Douglas Moo, *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.*

   c) John Stott, *The conviction that God reveals himself through the created universe is still meaningful to us in the twentieth century. . . Christians still believe that God's power, skill and goodness are displayed in the beauty and balance, intricacy and intelligibility of the universe, as scientists keep on probing it.*

3) *clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world*
   a) Mankind has understood the nature of a divine Creator since the world was formed.
   b) An Old Testament parallel is Psalm 19:1-3, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.*
   c) God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:8, *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

4) *So they are without excuse*
   a) People, primarily Gentiles, are subject to the wrath of God due to personal responsibility for rejecting natural revelation by suppressing the truth through unrighteous lifestyles.
   b) Jews, as Paul will note later, have the additional responsibility of rejecting the law of Moses.
   c) Warren Wiersbe, *Men knew the truth about God, but they did not allow this truth to work in their lives. They suppressed it in order that they might live their own lives and not be convicted by God's truth.*
   d) John Witmer, *The witness to God in nature is so clear and so constant that ignoring it is indefensible. Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they have.*

3. God's condemnation is for perverting God's glory (21-23)
   a. Hearts are darkened by not honoring and giving thanks for truth known about God (21), ***For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

1) *For*
   a) Again, Paul uses *for* to declare natural revelation is a fact to which man must respond.
   b) It is the reason Paul declared that *they are without excuse* in verse 20.

2) *they knew God*
   a) Natural revelation leads to the fact that there is a God but does not alone lead to saving knowledge.
   b) The light of natural revelation should lead a person to greater truth which does bring salvation through Christ alone.
   c) Grant Osborne, *Here we have the inherent weakness of natural revelation. It points to God, but it does not bring people to salvation. Instead, people invariably suppress its witness and turn to their own gods, primarily the self. Awareness of natural revelation alone brings people before God's throne of judgment without any way out.*

3) The proper response to knowledge of God is honoring God as God and giving Him thanks.
   a) The majesty of an ordered creation should lead to thankful hearts for the God of creation.
   b) Paul declared that the purpose for which God created mankind was to honor God for His Person and to thank Him for His works.
   c) John Witmer, *People's suppression of the truth is seen in their rejecting the clear evidence of God as the sovereign Creator and their perversion of that knowledge into idolatry.*

4) Rejecting God's authority leads to wrong thinking and hardened hearts.
   a) *futile in their thinking*
      1] *Futile* means *to turn thoughts toward worthless things*, 1 Corinthians 3:20, *and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."*
      2] In Acts 14:15, it is translated as *vain things* referring to idolatry, *Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.*
      3] Rejecting God is a downward spiral in which man seeks something else to take God's rightful place.

   b) *foolish hearts were darkened*
      1] It means *lack of understanding or discernment due to improper choices or sin.*
      2] Ephesians 4:18, *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.*
      3] Robert Wilkin, *God's wrath allows sin to sink the sinner deeper, causing a spiritual stupor. Thus, what causes this futility and darkness—that only God can remove—is sin that takes over and degrades humanity.*

      4] John Witmer, *When truth is rejected, in time the ability to recognize and to receive truth is impaired (cf. John 3:19–20, And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*)
      5] Douglas Moo, *At the very center of every person, where the knowledge of God, if it is to have any positive effects, must be embraced, there has settled a darkness—a darkness that only the light of the gospel can penetrate.*

b. God's wisdom is replaced with foolish pride evidenced by idolatry(22-23), ***Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.***

1) Wisdom not tied to God is foolishness.
   a) It is rejecting the glory of the immortal God.
      1] 1 Timothy 1:17, *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*
      2] Isaiah 6:1-5, *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"*

   b) Wisdom not tied to God is foolishness.
      1] 1 Corinthians 1:20, *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*
      2] Romans 1:25, *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*
      3] Douglas Moo, *. . . this foolishness involves not only refusing to worship the true God but also embracing false gods.*
      4] John Witmer, *Man's refusal to acknowledge and glorify God leads to a downward path: first, worthless thinking; next, moral insensitivity; and then, religious stupidity (seen in idol-worship).*

2) It is exchanging the immortal God for that which is mortal.
   a) It is idolatry, replacing the true God with images of things created by God.
      1] Jeremiah 10:14, *Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.*
      2] Acts 17:29, *Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.*

3] Isaiah describes the stupidity of idolatry in Isaiah 44:9-20.
4] Douglas Moo, *This tragic process of human "god-making" continues apace in our own day, and Paul's words have as much relevance for people who have made money or sex or fame their gods as for those who carved idols out of wood and stone.*

b) Paul alludes to the creation story of the threefold division of the animal kingdom as noted in Deuteronomy 4:16-18, *beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.*
c) Douglas Moo, *Paul's estimation of non-Christian religions also becomes clear in this verse. Far from being a preparatory stage in the human quest for God, these religions represent a descent from the truth.*

B. The results of condemnation (24-32)
1. One is abandoned by God to fornication (24-25)
a. It is a lie to worship oneself which leads to sexual impurity (24), ***Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,***

1) *Therefore*
a) Paul addresses the result of man's refusing the knowledge of the living God and choosing manmade idols.
b) God responds to man's choices.

2) *God gave them up*
a) *Gave up* means *to hand over* as *into custody to the police*, *to abandon to something*.
b) Ephesians 4:19, *They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*
c) Tom Constable, *God gave man over by turning him over to the punishment his crime earned, as a judge does a prisoner.*
d) Some have described God's role in *gave them up* as His active role in making people sin. The emphasis should be that God gives them up to ever-increasing sin as we will see in coming verses.

3) *in the lusts of their hearts to impurity*
a) God gave them up to impurity which had taken root in their hearts.
b) Here, God is dealing with sexual impurity.
1] *Impurity* speaks to *unnatural vices, that which is filthy or dirty.*
a] Aristotle defined *impurity* as *reaching out after pleasure.*
b] The Stoics defined it as reaching out for pleasure *which defies all reason.*
c] Clement of Alexandria called it *an unreasonable reaching for that which will gratify itself.*
d] William Barclay said it *is the passionate desire for forbidden pleasure.*

2] Colossians 3:5, *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
3] John Witmer, *Sex within marriage is a holy gift from God, but otherwise sex is impurity. . .*

4) *to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves*
a) This is a further description of *impurity* which is sexual behavior outside the marriage bond.
b) John Stott, *The history of the world confirms that idolatry tends to immorality. A false image of God leads to a false understanding of sex. Paul does not tell us what kind of immorality he has in mind, except that it involved the degrading of their bodies with one another (24). He is right. Illicit sex degrades people's humanness; sex in marriage, as God intended, ennobles it.*
c) At this point, I believe *among themselves* is not referring to men with men and women with women, but individuals having sexual relations outside God's intended purposes. God has given them up and has no part in condoning their activities.

b. Only God is to be worshiped not creatures (25), ***because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.***

1) There is a parallel between verse 23 and verse 25.
   a) In verse 23, mankind exchanges the glory of God for images.
   b) Here, it is exchanging the truth about God for a lie.
   c) Verse 23 is a specific description of idolatry whereas verse 25 is a general description.
      1] Idolatry is exchanging worship of God Who is true for substitutes for God which are all lies.
      2] The *lie* is worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.
      3] Jeremiah 10:14, *Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.*
      4] Warren Wiersbe, *"The lie" is that man is his own god, and he should worship and serve himself and not the Creator.*

2) *Who is blessed forever! Amen.*
   a) Paul's doxology emphasizes the foolishness of not worshiping the eternal blessed God.
   b) John Witmer, *Mankind made himself his god in place of the true God. Because God the Creator is forever praised (in contrast with creatures who are undeserving of worship). . .*
   c) *Amen* comes from the Hebrew word which means *so let it be.* Paul is giving approval or emphasis to what he just said.

2. One is abandoned by God to sexual perversion (26-27)
   a. Men and women degrade themselves when they worship themselves instead of God (26a), ***For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.***

1) *For this reason*
   a) This looks back to verse 25 and even to verse 24.
      1] It is the reason God gave up those who exchanged the truth of God for a lie because they chose to worship and serve idols.
      2] Also, note Romans 1:28, *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*

   b) *God gave them up*
      1] Greater perversion of sin occurs when there is an absence of God's grace.
      2] Robert Wilkin, *Hence, God gives them up by lifting His grace and allowing their desires to be fulfilled.*
      3] Warren Wiersbe, *From idolatry to immorality is just one short step. If man is his own god, then he can do whatever he pleases and fulfill his desires without fear of judgment.*

   c) *to dishonorable passions*
      1] It means *shameful passions* or literally, *passion of disgrace.*
      2] It is describing *impurity* in verse 24 with a detailed description in verses 26b-27.

2) Paul's context was Rome.
   a) Tacitus (Roman senator and historian, died 120 A.D.), . . . *the greater the infamy, the wilder the delight.*
   b) Juvenal (Roman poet, born 50 A.D.) as told by William Barclay, *He cites the incredible case of Agrippina, the empress herself, the wife of Claudius, who at night used to leave the royal palace and go down to serve in a brothel through sheer lust.*
   c) William Barclay, *So, far from exaggerating the picture, Paul drew it with restraint—and it was there that he was eager to preach the gospel, and it was there that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The world needed the power that would work salvation, and Paul knew that nowhere else except in Christ did that power exist.*

b. Natural human functions are exchanged for what is unnatural (26b-27), ***For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.***

1) Women exchanged the natural use of their bodies for lesbianism.
   a) *natural relations . . . contrary to nature*
      1] Natural relations were established by God, one man with one woman in the bond of marriage.
         a] Genesis 1:28, *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*
         b] Genesis 2:24, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

      2] That which is contrary to nature is when women choose an intimate relationship with another woman.
         a] Jude 7, *just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*
         b] 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*
         c] Douglas Moo, *The "natural use" has been replaced with one that is "against nature."*
         d] Tom Constable, *Homosexuality is a perversion because it uses sex for a purpose contrary to those for which God created and intended it.*

2) Men gave up natural relations with women for shameless acts with other men.
   a) *likewise*
      1] This verse is connected with the last part of verse 26.
      2] Douglas Moo, . . . *Paul shows that the same "sinful passions" that lead women to engage in unnatural homosexual acts are also operative among men, with similar effect.*

   b) *natural relations*
      1] As noted concerning females in verse 26, Paul is speaking of *natural order*, reflective of God's purposes.
      2] Homosexuality is a departure from nature.
      3] Today, some teach that *nature* means one's orientation. A man with a heterosexual nature should not be involved in homosexuality. A man with a homosexual nature should not be involved in heterosexuality.
      4] John Stott declares that . . . *to suggest that Paul intends to condemn homosexual acts only when they are committed by persons who are constitutionally heterosexual is to introduce a distinction entirely foreign to Paul's thought-world.'*

   c) *consumed with passion*
      1] It means to be *inflamed with sensual desire.*
      2] The word for *passion* is only used here in the New Testament.
      3] It is used in the unfavorable sense of *desire* or *lust* between men.

   d) *committing shameless acts with men*
      1] It is interesting that Paul speaks of exchanging what is natural for what is unnatural, lesbian practices in verse 26 and male homosexual relationships in verse 27.
      2] It is not just the acts but a chosen orientation that is shameless because it goes against God's created order.
      3] John Stott, . . . *a homosexual partnership (however loving and committed it may claim to be) is 'against nature' and can never be regarded as a legitimate alternative to marriage.*
      4] David Malick, *Paul condemned homosexuality as a perversion of God's design for human sexual relations.*

e) *receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error*
   1] Paul does not specify what the due penalty is for homosexual behavior.
   2] Tom Constable, *The "due penalty" is what man experiences as a result of God giving him over and letting him indulge his sinful desires. . . AIDS, for example, is probably the consequence of man's rebellion against God rather than a special judgment from God.*
   3] Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
   4] Henri Maurier, *The effect of retribution is to abandon the mind to that depravity.*

3) Attempts to justify homosexuality
   a) Sexual orientation as mentioned under *natural relations.*
   b) Pederasty
      1] It is sexual relations between an adult male and a young boy.
      2] This was very common in Greece and Rome.
      3] It has been put forth by those who promote homosexuality that Paul was condemning this activity, not homosexual relations between adults.

3. One is abandoned by God to a depraved lifestyle (28-32)
   a. Those who do not acknowledge God and His authority do whatever they want to do (28), ***And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.***

   1) *And*
      a) This looks back to verse 27, *receiving themselves the due penalty for their error*
      b) A general explanation of *due penalty* is revealed in verse 28, *God gave them up to a debased mind*.

   2) *since they did not see fit to acknowledge God*
      a) *Since* introduces the consequence of not acknowledging God.
      b) *acknowledge*
         1] It means *to recognize something as being what it truly is,* or *true knowledge.*
         2] Paul is speaking of those who do not accept God's sovereign control over their lives.
         3] John Witmer, *In a sense they put God out of their minds.*

   3) *God gave them up to a debased mind*
      a) God abandons those who do not acknowledge Him.
         1] Romans 1:24, *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,*
         2] Romans 1:26, *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;*

      b) *debased mind*
         1] *Debased* means *not standing the test, unqualified, worthless, depraved.*
         2] It is a mind that cannot make right judgments.
         3] Douglas Moo, *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.*
         4] John Stott's paraphrase of verse 26a, *since they did not see fit to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to an unfit mind.*

   4) *to do what ought not to be done*
      a) The focus in verses 29-31 is not on sexual immorality but other acts of sin against God and man because of a debased mind.
      b) William Barclay, *THERE is hardly any passage which so clearly shows what happens to people when they leave God out of the reckoning. It is not so much that God sends a judgment on them as that they bring a judgment on themselves when they give no place to God in their scheme of things. When people banish God from their lives, they take on certain characteristics, and in this passage is one of the most terrible descriptions in literature of the kind of men and women they become.*

b. Paul lists some of the unrighteous things done by those who reject God (29-31), ***They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.***

1) Introductory notes
   a) By exchanging the truth of God for a lie, people's minds were being filled with all kinds of sin.
   b) Paul gives a list of immoral activities that *ought not to be done* (verse 28).
   c) Douglas Moo, *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.*
   d) Grouping the list is difficult but consider the following.
      1] It begins with four general terms.
      2] It continues with 17 specific types of sin
         a] Five seem to revolve around envy and its consequences (envy, murder, strife, deceit and maliciousness).
         b] Two words depict slander (gossips and slanderers).
         c] Four focus on pride (haters of God, insolent, haughty, and boastful).
         d] Two are extreme concerning evil (inventors of evil and disobedient to parents)
         e] The last four are negatives (foolish or senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless) which the Jerusalem Bible translation renders *without brains, honor, love or pity.*

2) Paul begins with four general terms for sin.
   a) *unrighteousness*
      1] It means *wickedness, injustice.*
      2] Luke 13:27, *But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'*
      3] 1 Corinthians 13:6, *it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*
      4] W. E. Vine, *a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness, or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience.*
      5] Gerhard Kittel, *it denotes "violation of the divine law,* note Matthew 22:37-39, *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
      6] William Barclay, *The evil* (unrighteous) *person is the person who robs both other people and God of their rights. People like that have erected an altar to self in the center of things so that they worship themselves to the exclusion of God and of everyone else.*

   b) *evil*
      1] It means here, *wickedness in the ethical or moral sense, the desire to do harm.*
      2] Acts 3:26, *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*
      3] Luke 11:39, *And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.*
      4] E. W. Bullinger, *the wicked act of the mind delighting in evil.*

   c) *covetousness*
      1] It means *greed, avarice, the desire to have more, without respect to need.*
      2] 2 Peter 2:14, *They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!*
      3] Colossians 3:5, *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
      4] It is idolatry according to Norman Geisler, *...because it seeks satisfaction in things below and not above.*
      5] G. Caird, *...the arrogant and ruthless assumption that all other persons and things exist for one's own benefit.*
      6] William Barclay, *. . .is the desire which knows no law.*

d) *malice*
   1] It means *hateful feeling, hostility, intentional wickedness, depravity.*
   2] Ephesians 4:31, *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*
   3] 1 Peter 2:1, *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*
   4] Norman Geisler, *. . .the vice that lies below anger and rage as their root.*
   5] William Barclay, *It is the degeneracy out of which all sins grow and in which all sins flourish.*

3) Those are expressed in 17 specific types of sin.
   a) *envy*
      1] It means *to have ill will toward someone because of a real or presumed advantage experienced by the other person.*
      2] Mark 15:10, *For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.*
      3] Proverbs 14:30, *A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.* Some Bible versions translate *envy* as *jealousies.*
      4] It does not necessarily want the things of others for oneself (*jealousy)* but it doesn't want the other person to have those things, Basil the Great, *grief at your neighbour's good fortune*.

   b) *murder*
      1] It means *intentional killing* and is probably tied to *envy* as the intent and *murder* as the deed.
      2] Matthew 15:19, *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*
      3] Acts 9:1, *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest*.
      4] William Barclay, *It must always be remembered that Jesus immeasurably widened the scope of this word. He insisted that not only the act of violence but also the spirit of anger and hatred must be eliminated. He insisted that it is not enough only to keep from angry and savage action. It is enough only when even the desire and the anger are banished from the heart.*
      5] Thomas Aquinas, *Man regards the deed, but God sees the intention.*

   c) *strife*
      1] It means *conflict resulting from rivalry and discord.*
      2] Some Bible versions translate the word as *variance, discord.*
      3] 1 Corinthians 1:11, *For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.*
      4] William Barclay, *It comes from the heart in which there is jealousy. . . It is a God-given gift to be able to take as much pleasure in the successes of others as in one's own.*

   d) *deceit*
      1] It means *cunning, treachery, snare*
      2] It is *that which gives a false impression* as in *diluting wine.*
      3] I Thessalonians 2:3, *For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,*
      4] William Barclay, *. . . who stoop to devious and underhand methods to get their own way.*

   e) *maliciousness*
      1] It means *having an evil nature, disposition* and is only used here in the New Testament.
      2] It is a character that *tends to mischief and misfortune.*
      3] Aristotle, *the spirit which always supposes the worst about other people.*
      4] Jeremy Taylor (17th C. theologian), *a baseness of nature by which we take things by the wrong handle, and expound things always in the worst sense.*

   f) *gossips*
      1] It means *whisperers, tale-bearers.*
      2] The word is only used here in the New Testament.
      3] It is synonymous with *slanders.* The only difference is that *slanderers* do it openly whereas *gossipers* do it secretly.
      4] William Barclay, *. . . describes the person who whispers malicious stories in the listener's ear, who takes people on one side and whispers a character-destroying story*.

g) *slanderers*
   1] It means *speaking evil of others, defamer.*
   2] The word is only used here in the New Testament.
   3] Gerhard Kittel, *Its frequent occurrence in the apostolic fathers shows how seriously it is taken in the early church, but also how rampant it is.*
   4] William Barclay, *Both are bad, but, of the two, the whisperer is the worse. It is at least possible to defend yourself against an open slander; but we are all helpless against the secret whisperer who delights in destroying reputations.*

h) *haters of God*
   1] This term is only used here in the New Testament.
   2] In the middle of this list of bad behavior, this term reminds the reader that such behavior is by choice.
   3] William Barclay, *This describes people who hate God because they know that they are defying him. God is the barrier between them and their pleasures; he is the chain which keeps them from doing exactly as they like. These people would gladly eliminate God if they could, for to them a godless world would be one where they would have not liberty but licence.*

I) *insolent*
   1] It means *one who insults in an arrogant manner.*
   2] 1 Timothy 1:13, *though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,*
   3] Joseph Thayer, *one who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong*.
   4] William Barclay, *It describes the spirit of those who are so proud that they defy God. It is the insolent pride that goes before a fall . . . It describes people who are wantonly and sadistically cruel and insulting . . . it is the sadism which finds delight in hurting others simply for the sake of hurting them.*

j) *haughty*
   1] It means *arrogant, proud, showing oneself above others.*
   2] Luke 1:51, *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;*
   3] James 4:6, *But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*
   4] William Barclay, *His whole life is surrounded with an atmosphere of contempt, and he delights in making others feel small.*

k) *boastful*
   1] It means *braggart, one whose mouth is too big for his body.*
   2] 2 Timothy 3:2, *For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money,* ***proud,*** *arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,*
   3] It is one who does not trust God because he thinks he is sufficient in himself.
   4] Xenophon (Greek historian), the name belongs to those who pretend to be richer and braver than they are, and who promise to do what they are really unable to do in order to make profit or gain.
   5] Richard Trench, distinguished between insolent, haughty and boastful by stating that the first focuses on activities, the second on thoughts, and the third on words.

l) *inventors of evil*
   1] It means *contriver, one who thinks up schemes or plans of action.*
   2] It is only used in New Testament in this verse and may be translated, *they think up ways of doing evil.*
   3] C. E. Cranfield, those who find *ever more hateful methods of hurting and destroying their fellow men.*
   4] William Barclay, *The phrase describes people who, so to speak, are not content with the usual, ordinary ways of sinning, but who seek out new, obscure and subtle vices because they have grown bored and seek a new thrill in some new sin.*

m) *disobedient to parents*
   1] It means *unworthy of belief* which continues the theme of arrogance in the previous four words.
   2] It has the force of *being continuously disobedient.*
   3] 2 Timothy 3:2, *For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,*
   4] William Barclay, *Both Jews and Romans set obedience to parents very high in the scale of virtues. It was one of the Ten Commandments that parents should be honored. . . The reason for including this sin here is that, once the bonds of the family are loosened, wholesale degeneracy is bound to follow.*

n) *foolish*
   1] It means *senseless, faithless without understanding due to moral defect.*
   2] Romans 1:21, *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*
   3] William Barclay, *This word describes people who are fools, who cannot learn the lesson of experience, who will not use the minds and brains that God has given to them.*

o) *faithless*
   1] It means literally, *covenant-breaking, not keeping a promise, not abiding by an agreement*.
   2] The word in this verse carries the thought *they do not feel bound to do what they have promised to do.*
   3] William Barclay, *This word would come with particular force to a Roman audience. In the great days of Rome, Roman honesty was a wonderful thing. . . By using this word, Paul was recalling the Romans not only to the Christian ethic but to their own standards of honour in their greatest days.*

p) *heartless*
   1] It means *unloving, without love or affection for close associates or family as parents to children.*
   2] The only other place the word is used in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 3:3.
   3] Seneca (Roman philosopher, died 65 A.D.), *We kill a mad dog; we slaughter a fierce ox; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown.*
   4] Douglas Moo, *The failure of people to exhibit even the affection natural to family relationships shows how deep is the corruption of morals.*

q) *ruthless*
   1] It means *unmerciful* and is only found here in the New Testament.
   2] It literally means *to refuse to hear a person's cries for help.*
   3] William Barclay, *It was an age pitiless in its very pleasures, for it was the great age of the gladiatorial games where people found their delight in seeing men kill each other. It was an age when the quality*

c. Those who reject God encourage others to reject God, as well (32), ***Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.***

1) Those who practice wickedness know better.
   a) They chose not to acknowledge God but exchanged the truth for a lie.
   b) *Righteous decree* goes beyond the Law and speaks to all people because of natural revelation, Romans 1:20, *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*
   c) Tom Constable, *Its purpose is to show the scope of social evils that results when God hands people over to a depraved mind after they refuse to acknowledge Him.*
   d) Warren Wiersbe labels 4 stages in man's spiral into degradation, intelligence (18-20), ignorance (21-23), indulgence (24-27), impenitence (refusing to repent, 28-32).

2) They encourage others to practice evil behavior.
   a) Tom Constable, *It is bad to practice these things, but it is worse to encourage others to practice them.*
   b) John Stott, . . . *they actively encourage others to do the same, and so flagrantly approve the evil behaviour of which God has expressed his disapproval.*

CONCLUSION

A. Mankind rejects God's witness of Himself in His creation.
B. God's condemnation is on those who reject God Who is evident in His creation.
C. When one exchanges the truth of God for oneself there is condemnation from God.
D. The condemned spiral down into deeper and deeper depravity.
E. Sexual orientation is not a choice by man but was established by God at creation.
F. Warren Wiersbe, *Men not only committed these sins in open defiance of God, but encouraged others and applauded them when they sinned. How far man fell! He began glorifying God but ended exchanging that glory for idols. He began knowing God but ended refusing to keep the knowledge of God in his mind and heart. He began as the highest of God's creatures, made in the image of God; but he ended lower than the beasts and insects, because he worshiped them as his gods. The verdict? "They are without excuse!"*