

## The Dangers of Depravity # 3

Romans 1: 18-23

After taking a moment to introduce himself and reveal his desire in life (fulfilling the calling he has received to preach the Gospel,) Paul now begins a discourse of grave sincerity. He has spoken of the Gospel being the power of God unto salvation for all who believe regardless of their race or social status. While presenting the Gospel, Paul also knew he would need to present the evidence which reveals the need for the Gospel. Many would deny any need for salvation in the Lord. This passage begins to deal with the utter depravity of mankind.

Man left to himself is capable of all manner of sin. There are no limits of the depths to which man will sink apart from God. We are all born in sin and in need of salvation. Before salvation is possible, all must see their separation from God, the depravity of their sin, and their utter need for salvation. These verses reveal our great need for salvation due to the sin in our lives. They deal with the way in which God deals with those apart from Him in sin.

Let's take a few moments to examine the [certainties](#) we discover while considering: [The Dangers of Depravity](#). First we discover:

**I. The Wrath of God** (18) – [For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;](#) Let's consider the wrath Paul spoke of here. We notice:

**A. The Sovereignty** (18a) – [For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...](#) Many today deny the fact that God is a God of wrath. They only view Him as a God of love, One who pours out blessing regardless of our behavior or actions. God is love, but He is also holy. His holiness demands that sin be dealt with. That is why Christ came to bear our sin as the substitutionary atonement for sin. Those who deny Christ, refusing salvation, remain in their sin and accountable to God. His wrath will be poured out on those whose sin has not been atoned through the shed blood of Christ.

- This is truly a humbling thought. God is sovereign, the Creator and sustainer of all that exists. One may have experienced judgment or wrath from a human perspective, but God's wrath will surpass all others. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

**B. The Scope** (18) – [For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;](#) The wrath of God will not be reserved

for those deemed unworthy from a human perspective. Humanity seeks to categorize sin, seeking to punish some acts severely, while practically ignoring others. This reveals that God will judge all ungodliness and unrighteousness in men, regardless of human perspective. Society may have embraced it or even celebrated it, but God will judge all unrighteousness apart from Christ.

- We also find an interesting aspect concerning God's wrath: those who face it will be without excuse. We will deal with this in more detail in a moment, but God will judge those who **hold the truth in unrighteousness**. This carries the idea of knowing truth, but willfully choosing to suppress that truth and literally ignore it. God will not hold those guiltless who suppress the truth!

**II. The Witness of God** (19-20) – Here Paul discloses the way God reveals Himself to humanity and our responsibility to respond. Consider:

**A. The Revelation** (19a) – **Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them.** God has chosen to reveal particular aspects of Himself to us. It is impossible to fully comprehend God, but He does reveal Himself in such a way that we discover irrefutable evidence of His existence. The revelation of God has been manifested to all, even the unrighteous. This has the idea of “*making apparent or plain; causing to shine or appear.*” God has manifested Himself clearly to all men in a variety of ways. Many suppress the truth received, but it was given of God. One cannot stand before God in judgment and claim ignorance. He has revealed Himself!

**B. The Rehearsal** (19b) – **Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.** I am convinced this confirms repeated revelation. God doesn't just manifest Himself to people casually, or once and never again. He manifests Himself and then He clearly shows Himself to humanity. He literally opens their understanding of His manifestation, causing them to see and understand. The act of showing means “*to make apparent; to show openly in a conspicuous manner.*” God reveals Himself in such a way there is no doubt that He is God.

**C. The Responsibility** (20) – **For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:** Paul reveals that creation itself is likely the first and one of the most powerful revelations of God to humanity. All one has to do to encounter God is to consider the world in which we live and all that inhabit it.

- Many argue it all just happened with a “Big Bang,” that life somehow evolved from a single cell organism into the complex species today. Take just a moment to consider that. Is it plausible

that the complexities that exist and are required to maintain life within the human body evolved from a single cell organism like an amoeba? I think not! Does it make sense that the known universe simply happened, with our earth being suspended in space exactly the right distance from the sun to sustain life? Again, I think not! Why are humans the only species to possess a soul that has the ability to discern between good and evil? Mere animals do not reason as we do; they do not care about future consequences or right and wrong. God created man by breathing breath into him so that he became a living soul. God created us so we could fellowship with Him! Creation itself declares the presence and power of God!

- The Scripture reveals that each of us is responsible to acknowledge and respond to the revelation of God. He has revealed Himself in such a way that **we are without excuse**. If we had nothing more than the world around us, we would possess enough to acknowledge the existence of God. **Psalm 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.**

**III. The Wickedness of Men (21-23)** – As we conclude our study today, we discover the depravity and wickedness of unregenerate men. Consider:

**A. Their Arrogance (21a)** – **Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.** Paul speaks of those who recognized God through His manifest revelation and yet chose not to worship Him or seek Him. They understood that God was responsible for creation and all the blessings it affords and yet they refused to offer thanksgiving to God. They chose to claim the credit reserved for God and glory in themselves and their ability rather than giving God the praise He is due!

- Many today will acknowledge the existence of God, but refuse to praise Him for who He is. They feel as if they are “self-made” and owe gratitude to no one. I have come to realize I am nothing apart from the Lord. All that I am or ever hope to be is of Him and His provision for me!

**B. Their Apathy (21b)** – **but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.** Denying the revelation of God and refusing to acknowledge Him has devastating consequences. These have no desire for the things of God or His righteousness. They refuse to associate with those who claim fellowship with the Lord. They are left to their depravity and become vain in their thoughts and actions. They have literally become *“destitute of real wisdom, going down the wrong path, while becoming perverse and foolish.”*

- This is a dangerous path to travel. Their foolish hearts become darkened to the light of truth. They have been exposed to truth through the revelation of God, but the light of truth is

suppressed due to their rejection of that truth. They continue a downward spiral that leads to more darkness, while getting further from the truth of God. (As we will see later in the chapter, this can lead to total abandonment to their sin, suffering the effects of a reprobate mind.)

**C. Their Alienation (22)** – [Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools](#). Their arrogance and apathy leads to alienation from the Spirit and leading of God. In their minds they have it all figured out, presumed too intelligent to believe in the God who graciously revealed Himself, and yet they have become fools. The longer they travel the path of depravity, the fainter the light becomes, the less they feel and experience the convicting power of God. It is a sad existence to be left to oneself, never feeling the drawing power of a holy and righteous God! They do not realize they have rejected their only means of hope and salvation. [Prov.14:12 – There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death](#).

**D. Their Apostasy (23)** – [And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things](#). The downward trend continues to worsen. Arrogance led to apathy, which leads to alienation from truth. If one continues this dangerous path, apostasy is generally the next step. Man is a spiritual being; he will worship something. Once one has denied the revelation of God, he is compelled to seek out something else to worship. The apostate will worship creation above the Creator, [V.25](#).

- *That's what a man does when he is left to himself! However, notice if you will the downward spiral: man, birds, animals and reptiles. It is just the opposite of what some people believe about evolution. Notice that when man steps away from God he doesn't evolve, he devolves. He doesn't progress upward, he regresses downward. All of this tends to prove the point that a life without God is a life that is on a downward pathway!*<sup>i</sup>

**Conclusion:** One may look at this and focus solely on the negative aspect. The presence and consequences of sin cannot be denied, nor should they. However, I choose to focus on the positive aspects. We are the creation of a holy and righteous God. He doesn't have to love us. He doesn't have to reveal Himself to us, and yet He does. He didn't have to send His Son to die for our sin, providing for our redemption, and yet He did. In the midst of the gloom and despair of sin, there is hope. God reveals Himself to us because He desires to fellowship with us. He desires us to be cleansed from all unrighteousness through the sacrifice of His Son. He is holy and must deal accordingly with sin, but He offers imputed righteousness through Christ!

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<sup>i</sup> The Sermon Notebook - The Sermon Notebook – Romans.