

Jesus Christ our Lord." That is just as sure and inexorable. If you violate God's law, you must expect to abide under His wrath. If you receive His grace, you may just as certainly expect to abide in His righteousness.

This lesson comprises the entire book of Romans. It is the story of man's violation of God's spiritual law and its consequences. It is also the story of man's acceptance by faith of God's righteousness and its consequences. Because man had violated God's law his world was dark indeed. For that reason I like the

literal rendering of Romans 1:4. "And *horizoned* the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (author's italics). When the world was in its darkest hour, God "horizoned" His Son to proclaim the dawn of a new day — the day of His righteousness.

Your life also is dark indeed, made so by the unforgiven sin within your soul. But look to the horizon of your life! There you see the resurrected Son of God, triumphant over sin. Triumphant over your sin. And that triumph can become a reality through your faith in Him!

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## THE IMPATIENCE OF GOD

October 11, 1959

*"For this cause God gave them up . . ."*—Romans 1:26

Did it ever occur to you that God is impatient? In one sense of the word God is forbearing and longsuffering (Rom. 2:4) in that He withholds from us His wrath. But there is an end to God's patience. There comes a time when the judgment of God descends upon nations, cities and individuals. The Bible abounds in such incidents. We find it in Romans 1:19-32. In our time we have largely lost sight of this part of the personality of God. Therefore, we shall do well to recover this concept of His nature.

When Paul mentioned the wrath of God, he justified it with the word "because" (1:19). Is God's wrath without cause or reason? The apostle says, "No." He justified this answer by citing the cases of both Gentile and Jew. As we progress in our study we shall see this in chapters 1:19-3:23. For the present let us confine ourselves to the Gentile or heathen world. Therefore, let us consider, first, the knowledge about God; second, the rejection by man; third, the consequence of rejection; fourth, the answer of God.

First, note the knowledge about God.

Paul says that all men have a knowledge about God. In verse 19 he says, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them." He explains this in verse 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."

The apostle is saying that all men have a knowledge of God in nature. Even if you never saw a Bible, you could recognize the existence of the invisible God through His visible creation. You look at the heavenly bodies as they move in fixed orbits and on schedule. You observe the seasons as they come and go without variance. You see the forces of nature all the way from the thunderstorm to the rose. You discover universes in atoms and perfect symmetry in snowflakes. Did these things just happen? Is the universe the product of the accidental coming together of atoms?

Now you are endowed with reason. And to say that the foregoing statement is true is to violate every rule of logic. Even in the theory of organic evolution we accept as basic the law of cause and

effect. For every effect there must be a cause. So when you see the tremendous effect of a natural universe, you are driven to recognize a Cause of infinite proportions and power. Whether you name this Being the First Cause, a Great Machine, a Great Mathematical Mind, or God the conclusion is the same.

Paul says that in nature we see this Being's "eternal power and Godhead." Thus through the light of a created universe, you, as an unsaved man, recognize that there is a supreme Being with eternal power and divine attributes to whom worship and obedience are due. And because you have suppressed this conviction, you are without excuse.

Second, consider the rejection by man. Once again we meet the word "because." The wrath of God abides upon men "because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (v.21). The word "knew" is experimental knowledge. They knew God by observing the universe, but they did not glorify Him as God. Furthermore, they were not thankful for His gifts through nature — food, clothing, shelter, even life itself. As one has said, they deposed God as Creator, and they abused His created gifts. The result was life emptied of meaning both as to cause and purpose. Their unintelligent hearts were filled with darkness.

Paul continues more emphatically. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (v.22). According to Liddell and Scott's lexicon, in their profession of wisdom in rejecting God they became silly, they played the fool, became stupefied and insipid. Not a very pretty picture of the proud atheist or agnostic is it?

But Paul is not through. They "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (v.23). Here he describes the pagan idol worship of the likenesses of men, birds, beasts,

and snakes. Note the descending order. In forsaking God man never ascends. He goes down from one idol to another, and always in descending order. The word "changed" means to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place. Thus they changed their worship of God for that of idols.

Now do you say, "Well, what about it? I am no idol worshipper." Well, are you? Change the wording ever so slightly, and we shall see. For "man" read "humanism;" for "birds" read "jet liners;" for "fourfooted beasts" read "automobiles;" for "creeping things" read "submarines." Do you see what I mean? I am saying that modern man has put his trust in these and other things as the ancients did in their idols. You do not have to bow down in a pagan temple to be an idolater. Whatever you have accepted in exchange for God is your idol. And in trusting it Paul says that you are silly, playing the fool, have become stupefied and insipid. You have rejected the uncorruptible God for idols which soon will decay. Everyone who has seen the decayed images taken from archaeological

## Baptist Hour Sermon Topics for November

Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs

Theme: Condemnation

Nov. 1—Look in the Mirror  
(Romans 3:1-22)

Nov. 8—There's a Price on  
Your Head (Romans 3:23-31)

Nov. 15—God Keeps Books on  
You (Romans 4)

Nov. 22—You Are At God's  
Mercy (Romans 5:1-11)

Nov. 29—Old Adam's Children  
(Romans 5:12-21)

Hear them on

**THE BAPTIST HOUR**

Read them in

**THE BEAM**

excavations knows of which I speak. The prophet Jeremiah said of you that you have forsaken the fountain of living water and have hewn out broken cisterns which can hold no water (2:13).

The sum-total of this is that men forsook a spiritual concept of life for one of ever ranker materialism. They thought only on the human and brute level. As a result they ceased to be even human in their conduct, and lived more like animals. Life held only one end — to satisfy the animal hunger and instincts. Man lived in a godless jungle of his own making. I hardly need to apply this, for the modern meaning is quite evident to him who has eyes and will see.

Third, note the consequence of rejection. Note in verse 24 the word "wherefore." What Paul is about to say results from what he has been saying. Three times he uses the phrase "God gave them up" (vv.24, 26, 28). Like clods falling on a coffin they crash into our hearts. The words "gave them up" mean to give into the hands or power of another. Since man rejected God to worship the creature, God had no choice but to deliver him over to the power of his own evil doings. God will not violate your free-will to force you to do other than what you choose to do. But you must suffer the consequences of your choice. When you continue to jerk at the reins of God, He pulls the bridle off and lets you go to your own hurt. "God gave them up." This is Paul's way of saying that God's patience came to an end. As one has said, this action on God's part is "not merely permissive, but judicial, *God gave them over.*" If the judge cannot keep you from committing murder, he can only give you over to the executioner. So it is with God. He can reveal Himself, but you must see. He can call, but you must answer. For you to reject is for God to turn you over to Satan.

To what did God give them up? To their lustful hearts to worship their man-made idols (vv.24f). To their vile affections to commit every sort of immorality. Not only men with women, but men with

men (vv.26f). The words translated "men" and "women" are not the respectful words for men or women. They simply mean "male" and "female." In short, they did not even live like men and women, but like male and female animals.

The climax of this is that God gave them over to minds void of judgment (v.28). As the result they became permanently filled (vv.29-32, perfect tense of result) with every kind of evil. Paul lists twenty-two such sins in verses 29-31.

It is no wonder then that a Chinese reading this passage told a missionary, "This was not written two thousand years ago. You wrote it to describe the sins of my people." But you do not need to go to China to see them. Look around you! You will find that it describes so-called Christian America. Just because you live in a nation whose pledge to the flag reads, "This nation, under God . . ." does not make you a Christian. Nor does it even mean that as a person you recognize God in the real sense of the word. Modern man's rejection of God for material things has reproduced in our sophisticated age every sin listed by Paul as typifying ancient paganism. God has given our wicked age over to the sins of its own choosing. Nor is God's impatience through. History records that such nations in the past destroyed themselves. Can we expect any better fate if we continue on our present way?

Fourth, consider the answer of God. God is out of patience but not out of hope. It is exactly because of man's failure that God has made one final effort to reach man. In verse 20 Paul speaks of the "eternal power and Godhead." Since man rejected this revelation of God, God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. In Colossians 2:9 we read that in Jesus the fullness of the Godhead (another word meaning "Godhood") is permanently at home. In nature the revelation is only partial. In Jesus it is complete. In nature we see God's eternal power in creation. In Jesus we see His eternal power in redemption.

Some of you confine your worship of

God to communion with nature. God says that is not enough. If you would know Him in redemption you must know Him through Jesus Christ. Though you have exhausted God's patience so that He has given you up to your rebellious will and sinful life, you have not exhausted God's hope. That is expressed in His love through Jesus Christ. But there is an end even to God's patience with respect to your rejection of Jesus. God gave you a revelation of Himself through the life of nature, and you rejected it. Now He gives you a greater revelation through the death of His Son. If you reject Him, then there is no hope for you.

No matter how deep into sin you have gone — whether that of a vile body or of a rebellious mind — God loves you, and wants to save you. But it must be according to His will and way. These he has expressed in Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the gospel. Because of your sinful deeds you abide under the wrath of God. By your faith in Jesus you may abide in the deed of God, God's righteousness, wherein He declares you righteous as though you had never sinned. I beg you to believe this gospel today, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes — to you and to every man.

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## WHAT WILL YOU SAY AT THE JUDGMENT?

October 18, 1959

*"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."—Romans 2:1*

If you were summoned this very moment to appear before the judgment bar of God, what would you say? Could you claim salvation through Jesus Christ? Would the awfulness of your sin rise up to condemn you? Or would you plead your self-righteousness? What would you say?

Now Paul says that outside of Christ you would be inexcusable. Simply because you could claim freedom from the sins of the flesh, as attributed by Paul to the pagan Gentiles, would be no defense. For turning from them he charges the Jew with sins similar or equal to these sins of the flesh. This we see in the first eleven verses of Romans, chapter two. Over against the fleshy sins of the Gentile Paul places the spiritual sins of the Jew. The modern counterpart would be the contrast between the openly sinful man and the self-righteous man — both of whom reject Christ. Let us examine Paul's treatment as we consider,

first, the judgment of man; second, the judgment of God; third, the Judge and the judged.

First, note the judgment of man. In our scripture the man in question is the Jew. He is proud and censorious. Considering himself the chosen people of God, he sets himself up as the judge of the Gentile. The word in Romans 20:1 for "judge" means to judge down. From his privileged position he judges down upon the pagan world. Reading Paul's judgment upon them in chapter one, he says, "Amen! They are getting just what they deserve."

But Paul reminds the Jew that "wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." His approval of judgment upon the Gentiles admits to the righteous judgment of God. Therefore, he himself is under the same condemnation. His sordid history reveals that he has committed every sin attributed to the pagan. Even in his present state of moral righteousness he is guilty of the sins of pride, scorn, and of unbelief in Jesus as his Saviour.