

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 1:18-32.

In Romans 1:1-17, Paul introduced the gospel. The gospel is the powerful means of the God of the Bible to save people. It is God's message about crediting the righteousness of Jesus Christ to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul's purpose is to prove the doctrine that "righteousness is by faith only". To do this it was necessary to first show that all people are without any righteousness, which can satisfy the demands of God. And because all people are without any righteousness of their own, they are exposed to God's condemnation. In Romans 1:18-32 Paul shows that all the Gentiles (non-Jews) are unrighteous and stand under God's condemnation. In Romans 2:1 to 3:20 he shows that all the Jews are also unrighteous and stand under God's condemnation. Thus, all people without any exception are unrighteous and need to be justified!

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 1:18-32 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 1:18-32 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 1:18-32. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is the consequences of a godless character.

One. God is holy and righteous in character and behaviour. Therefore God is completely just and fair when he condemns people who are unholy in character and unrighteous in behaviour. A person that can be charged for being godless or wicked is therefore justly exposed to God's righteous indignation. He cannot claim God's love and favour on the ground of his own character or behaviour!

Two. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul first proves that the Gentiles are completely unrighteous. In fact, they are godless and wicked. Therefore, in order to be saved, the Gentiles need God's righteousness. Without it, they will certainly perish! In verse 18-23, Paul describes the *godless character* of the Gentiles and in verse 24-32 he describes their *wicked behaviour*.

Three. God has revealed his divine character and powerful conduct very clearly through his works in creation. The Gentiles have always been able to know enough of God's character and behaviour. They have always been able to know that there is a divine being and that he is very powerful. Therefore the godless character and wicked behaviour of the Gentiles is completely inexcusable!

Four. Although the Gentiles have an opportunity to know God, they do not worship or serve God. Instead they not only *suppress the truth* about the living God (18), but also *exchange the truth* about the living God for their own invented lies (25)! As a result, they give themselves up to all forms of idolatry. The uneducated Gentiles make idols of stone. They exchange the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and animals. But the educated Gentiles invent their own idea of god, their own religion and their own religious book. They create a god in their own likeness, because then they can worship their god without the need to change their godless character or wicked behaviour. However, if anyone desires to worship the living God, the God of the Bible, his character and behaviour must be changed!

Five. The consequences of a godless character are terrible! Everything godless people think with their minds becomes futile, absolutely useless in God's eyes. And everything that comes out of their hearts is only darkness. "Every inclination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). "Out of their heart come only evil thoughts" (Matthew 15:19). *In their innermost being*, the Gentiles have demonstrated their darkness and have lost the ability to do anything that is righteous!

(T) An important truth for me is the consequences of a wicked behaviour. In Romans 1:24-32, Paul describes the wicked behaviour of the Gentiles and its terrible consequences. The Gentiles do not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, which they receive either out of God's works in creation or out of God's moral laws that are written on their hearts. Instead, they not only continue to *do* every kind of wickedness themselves, but also *approve* every kind of wickedness that is done by others. The consequences of a wicked behaviour are terrible! God gives the wicked people over to their own wickedness! They reap exactly what they sow (Galatians 6:7)! They foster sinful desires like pornography and commit all kinds of sexual immoral acts. So God *gives them over* to a life of shameful pornography

and degrading sexual immorality. He gives them over to shameful and ungovernable lusts and to a depraved mind. God *abandons* people that invent, do or promote wickedness to a life of continued wickedness. They sink further and further into depravity and crimes, and especially into sexual immorality. The evidence of such moral corruption is the vast sexual promiscuity, gross homosexuality and consequent terrible sexual diseases among both men and women. The Gentiles prove that they are completely unrighteous by doing every kind of wickedness in the world. *In their outward behaviour*, the Gentiles have demonstrated their terrible depravity and have lost the ability to do anything that is righteous!

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 1:18-32 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (1:18) Why is God angry with people?

(T) God is not only a *loving* God, but also a *holy and righteous* God.

One. God's wrath is an expression of his holy and righteous nature. The punitive justice of God is an essential attribute of God's nature. God's holy righteousness renders the punishment of sin necessary. God's holy righteousness is also the foundation of man's need of a vicarious atonement to pardon his sins. This principle is the basis of Paul's explanation of the doctrine of justification. 'God's wrath' is God's righteous and holy anger against the sin of people. It is God's righteous determination to punish the sin of people. God's wrath is revealed *from heaven*, because that is where God dwells. God's wrath is *revealed* or manifested by the actual punishment of sin in many ways. For example, God punished sin through the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra and the ten plagues in Egypt (cf. Ezekiel 14:21).

Two. God's wrath is an expression of his just and fair punishment. *Godlessness* means impiety towards God and *wickedness* means injustice towards people. God's wrath is against people who suppress the truth and who exchange the truth! *The truth* is whatever is right, holy and true in God's eyes. The truth is especially the religious and moral truth that God has revealed in the Bible (John 3:21; 8:32). God's truth in the Bible reveals the only true religion in the world and the only true morality in the world! People *repress or hinder* God's truth by means of their wickedness.

How do people *suppress* the truth? Although they have enough knowledge or awareness that God is a holy, righteous and a powerful God, they lack reverence for God himself and for God's laws, which regulate people's lives in relationship to God and other people. They know the truth, but push it away from their consciousness and practical life. Therefore, God punishes people for their lack of reverence for him and his laws.

How do people *exchange* the truth? They not only push God's truth out of their lives, but also replace God's truth with all kinds of human lies. They replace the living God with man-made inventions about god. They replace the God of the Bible with their own idea about 'god'. They replace the true teachings of the Bible with all kinds of distorted man-made teachings. God will certainly punish people who believe in all kinds of false religions and practise all kinds of false religions. The non-Christian religions are not the truth, because they suppress the true Christian religion!

2nd Question. (1:19-20) How does God reveal himself to the Gentiles?

(S) One. All people have received a general revelation of God. The God of the Bible has never left himself without a witness among his rational creatures on earth. He has given sufficient light about who he is and what he demands of his creatures through his works in creation (1:19-20) and through his moral laws written on the heart of people (2:15). God created all people with the ability to have some knowledge of God. Paul does not say that everything that may be known about God was revealed to the Gentiles. He simply says that the Gentiles had *sufficient knowledge of God to render their godlessness and wickedness inexcusable!* It is not just knowledge that there is a God, but knowledge of God's nature and attributes, like his eternal power, divinity and justice. According to other passages in the Bible, the Gentiles have knowledge of God's invisible qualities, like his goodness, wisdom, power and majesty expressed in his works.

This knowledge concerning God was made plain *to* them or better, was made plain *in* them. It is a revelation *in their minds and hearts*. In the very way human beings have been created, namely, in the image of God, they have some evidence of God's being and perfect characteristics. This enables human beings to see the manifestations of God in his created works. God has never left himself without a witness. God's existence and perfect characteristics have always been so clear, that his rational creatures are bound to acknowledge and worship him as the true and only God! That is why God's rational creatures are *spiritual and moral beings*. As rational and moral beings, people have no excuse for their godlessness and wickedness.

However, this knowledge concerning God was *suppressed and exchanged* (18,25). Although all human beings have the ability to know about God's existence and character, they "neither glorify nor give thanks" to God. This is inexcusable, because *people do not act in accordance with their knowledge of the truth!* Instead, they deliberately and wickedly oppose the truth.

Their idolatry is not the result of their *ignorance*, but the fruit of their *voluntary depraved godlessness!* They know what is right towards God (32), but nevertheless do what is wrong towards God. They do not worship the living God as their God and they do not acknowledge the living God as the Source of their life and blessings.

Likewise, their sexual immorality is not the result of their ignorance, but the fruit of their voluntary depraved wickedness. They know what is right towards other people (32), but nevertheless do what is wrong towards other people. They do every kind of wickedness towards one another (29-31). Even the most reprobate sinner knows within himself that he is guilty of suppressing the truth or exchanging the truth for a lie. He knows that he is justly exposed to the wrath of God. Romans 1:32 says that although people *know* God's righteous decree, that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. The conscience of man can never be entirely silenced!

Two. All people need a special revelation of God. Although the revelation of God in his created works is sufficient to render people inexcusable with respect to God's *judgement*, it does not follow that this general revelation is sufficient to lead them to *salvation*. In order to be saved, people need more than a general revelation of God. They need a special revelation of God. The natural religious feelings and religious wisdom of people can never save them. The experience of the people of the whole world, under all the variety of circumstances in which they have existed, proves that the knowledge of God that they derived from God's works in nature and from God's moral laws on their heart has not led them to believe in Jesus Christ. The knowledge, which the Gentiles have about God in his works, within their hearts as well as through their obscure traditions, does not lead them to the living God of the Bible. It also does not lead them to God's required righteousness and holiness. In order to be saved, the people in the world need a special revelation of God (21-23). That special revelation is given in the gospel. The gospel is the special revelation of God.

3rd Question. (1:21-27) Why does God give people over to their sinful desires and to a degrading way of life?

(T) One. God has established a definite relationship between religion and morality. *Godlessness leads to wickedness. Religious error leads to moral depravity.* People, who do not want to acknowledge what the living God has revealed about himself, will become more and more corrupt in their knowledge of the living God. The less a person relates to the living God, the more immoral and depraved he becomes in his behaviour. For example, when a person does not thank or glorify God, he becomes a fool in his thinking. When a person believes in a false god or false religious doctrines, he begins to live a sexual immoral life. The opposite is also true. When a person is living in sexual immorality, you may assume that he probably believes in false religious doctrines. God has established an inseparable link between godlessness and sexual immorality. Luckily, the opposite is also true. When a person walks with the living God, he will maintain a true and righteous morality!

Two. God often punishes sin by giving the sinner over to more sin. God's judicial abandonment of man to sin is consistent with God's holiness and with man's moral action. God does not impel or entice people to do evil, but *abandons* people to their own evil. When God *gives people over* to degrading sexual impurity and shameful indecent acts among one another (24,26), *he simply ceases to restrain their evil actions.* When God gives people over to a depraved mind that can only invent every kind of wickedness (28-31), *he simply abandons them to their own sins.* God allows them to reap what they themselves have sown (Galatians 6:7).

Three. God shows great patience with the godless and wicked people on earth. God shows great patience before he gives someone over to his sinful desires and to a degrading way of life. For example, before Cain murdered his brother, God dealt tenderly with Cain. He invited Cain to do what is right. Then God would accept him (Genesis 4:6-7). Before the flood, God waited patiently for a long time in the hope that the wicked people on earth would repent and not perish (1 Peter 3:20). God gave Jezebel, who promoted idolatry and sexual immorality in the church, time to repent from her spiritual and sexual immorality. But because she and her partners were unwilling, God brought intense suffering to them (Revelation 2:20-22).

Four. God brings present judgements on people in order to save them from eternal judgement. God brings his *present* judgements on people in order to safeguard them from his *eternal* condemnation! The purpose of God's present judgements is to discipline people, that is, to warn people, to expose their sins, to make them aware of their sins, to rebuke them for their sins and to call them to repentance. God's goal is to do what is best for people *now*. If God would simply tolerate their godlessness and wickedness to continue unchallenged, they would ultimately become slaves to their sins and God would consequently have to punish them with eternal punishment. The purpose of God's present judgements is to cause people to turn from their godlessness and wickedness and instead share in God's holiness and righteousness (Hebrews 12:4-13). God punishes in order to heal (Isaiah 19:22). However, if God's patience is not

answered by repentance, then in righteous indignation God will finally abandon them to eternal separation from God's presence and loving care (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

4th Question. (1:26-27) How does the Bible view homosexuality?

(S) God makes no statement about a person's sexual orientation, inclination or feelings, just like he makes no statement about their inclination to tell lies, to steal or to fight. *All people in the world* have by nature a sinful orientation, a sinful inclination and sinful feelings. All people face temptations to give in to their old sinful nature. What God condemns is when people give expression to their old sinful nature by telling lies, stealing, fighting and committing any forbidden sexual sins. God will destroy those, who destroy their bodies (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

However, 1 Corinthians 6:11 teaches that anyone who has committed such sins can be saved, when they come to Jesus Christ for justification and submit themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit for sanctification. God condemns homosexual practices, but those who have committed homosexual practices can be saved when they turn away from their practices to Jesus Christ.

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught you in Romans 1:18-32.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 2:1-13.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".