

ROMANS

From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 2

The Pagans need the gospel (Romans 1:18-32)

The Wrath of God (Romans 1:18)

Verse 18

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

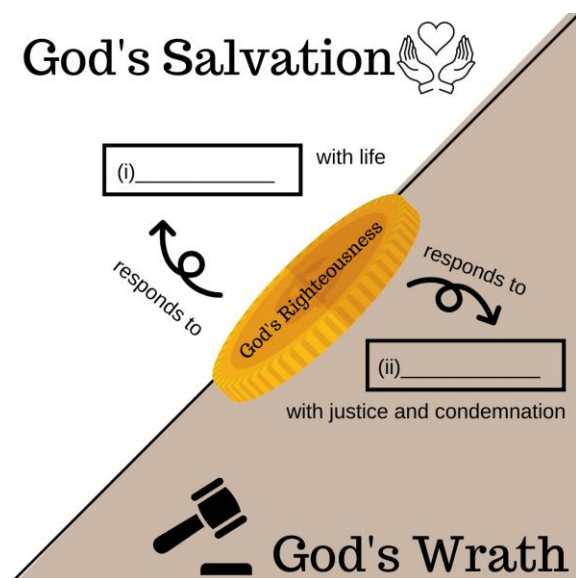
1) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. God's wrath is:

- A. same as human's wrath
- B. different from human's wrath
- C. Unreasonable, irrational, capricious
- D. Excessive, disproportionate

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. God's attribute of Righteousness can cause Him to express which of the following emotions?

- A. Wrath (Anger)
- B. Indifference (Don't care/ Tidak apa attitude)
- C. Compassion (Grace)

c) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer to fill in the blanks.



God's righteousness:

- responds to human's (i) _____ with life.

- responds to human's (ii) _____ with justice and condemnation.

A. (i) suppression of truth ; (ii) living by faith

B. (i) living by faith ; (ii) suppression of truth

C. (i) good works ; (ii) idolatry

D. (i) good works ; (ii) suppression of truth

The Nature of Sin (Romans 1:19-25)

Verse 19-25

Rom 1:19-25

since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

2) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Who does 'them' and 'they' in the passage refer to?

A. Christians in Rome

B. Moral Gentiles/Pagans

C. Immoral Gentiles/Pagans

D. Religious Jews

E. Jewish Christians

Background information

Just as a Jews call non-Jews as Gentiles, non-Christians are called Pagans.

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. In verse 19-20, what facts about God are plain knowledge?

- A. Salvation
- B. The Trinity
- C. Eternal power
- D. Divine nature
- E. the Gospel

c) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. In verse 21-25, what examples of idols people worship instead of God?

- A. Images of mortal human being
- B. Images of birds and animals and reptiles
- C. Created things

The Consequence of Sin (Romans 1:26-31)

Verse 26-32

Rom 1:26-32

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they 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.

3) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. In verse 24, 26, and 28, "God gave them over", because:

- A. It is an act of judgement to allow their own sins to ruin them. <Metaphor: Like letting them eat all the sugar they want so they get diabetes and dental caries.>
- B. He doesn't want to care about what evil they do anymore.

b) Reflection question, in your own words, describe or give an example of the negative behaviours listed:

Verse	NIV	ESV	Description or Examples
26	shameful lusts	dishonorable passions	Porn, premarital sex, multiple partners
26	exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.	exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;	LGBTQ, incest, bestiality, pedophile
28	they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God	they did not see fit to acknowledge God	Don't care about God, or don't want to think about God or explore and study God or learn about what God wants.
29	filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity	filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.	Have a lot of selfish, evil desires to do evil things. Desire to cheat for money or other things.
29	full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice	full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.	Hateful and consuming desire to hate others to the point of wanting to hurt or kill them.
29-30	They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful	They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful,	Talk bad about others, not just atheists but anti-theists, hate the idea of God, show off, never learn from their lesson
30	they invent ways of doing evil	inventors of evil	Very creative ways to carry out evil stuff.
30	they disobey their parents; (v.30c)	disobedient to parents	Don't listen to anything their parents have to say. The parents have no influence in their lives. However, not to be used by parents for ungodly stuff: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4)
31	they have no	foolish	Incapable of understanding others or

	understanding,		what God is, so they are 'fools'. Their brain is lacking the ability to detect truth from lies.
31	no fidelity,	faithless,	Sleep around, flirt around
31	no love,	heartless,	Incapable of loving others
31	no mercy.	ruthless.	Incapable of compassion or empathy. (没有同情心)

Case Studies

Case 1

Kenneth was inspired after studying Romans and decided to share the gospel widely with his friends but was sorely disappointed because many of them rejected the gospel. They threw up many objections in his face especially on the wrath of God, this made Kenneth confused.

4) a) Open discussion: How do you respond to a non-believer asking this question: "How can you say God is a 'God of love' when he is a wrathful God demanding vengeance on humans?"

Simple answer:

The wrath that comes from God is a sign that He cares about His people and the injustice done to people. Can you worship a God who turns a blind eye to evil? The corrupted people in power? The murderers? The rapist who raped your mother? Is a God who ignores evil deserving of worship? I'm glad that this God is a God of justice that will make right the evils as well provide a way for a wretched sinner like me to have Jesus bear the wrath in my place, He doesn't need to lower His perfect standard of justice, just needs to fulfil the standard through the gospel.

Advanced answer:

What the Romans verse tell us about the wrath of God:

#1: Its existence.

A loving God is also a wrathful God.

Some may question how this can be, or say, "I have trouble with this." In this situation, a guiding question can be: "If you deeply love a person or even a place (like a lake), does that preclude wrath?" Here is a quote to use:

We tend to be taken aback by the thought that God could be angry. How can a deity who is perfect and loving ever be angry?... We take pride in our tolerance of the excesses of others. So what is God's problem?... But love detests what destroys the beloved. Real love stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys. Nearly a century ago the theologian E.H.Gifford wrote: 'Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hate in him the drunkard, the liar, the traitor.'... Anger isn't the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference... How can a good God forgive bad people without compromising himself? Does he just play fast and loose with the facts? 'Oh, never mind...boys will be boys'. Try telling that to a survivor of the Cambodian 'killing fields' or to someone who lost an entire family in the Holocaust. No. To be truly good one has to be outraged by evil and implacably hostile to injustice.

– Rebecca Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons*

#2: Its presence

It is here working now (the present tense "is revealed").

#3: Its object

The object of God's wrath is "godlessness" (a word which refers to disregard of God's rights) and "wickedness" (which, strictly speaking, is a word which refers to disregard of human rights to love, truth, justice, etc.).

#4: Its deservedness

The wrath is deserved. It is versus people who know better, who "suppress the truth." (See the next question.). This important idea of "suppressing the truth" shows that every person "down deep" knows there is a God to whom they owe allegiance. Verse 21 goes so far as to say all human beings, even the pagans "knew God." (This doesn't mean that they had a personal covenant relationship with him, but that their knowledge of God's existence is very real, but repressed.)

#5: It's the reason we need the gospel.

The NIV translation leaves out the word "for" which (in the Greek) starts the verse. The word connects v.18 with vv.16-17 and shows us that the gospel is necessary not simply to make us happy but because there is such a thing as the wrath of God. All of Paul's confidence and joy

and passion for the gospel (1:1-17) rests upon the assumption that all human beings are, apart from the gospel, under the wrath of God. If you don't understand or believe in the wrath of God, the gospel will not thrill, empower, or move you.

Case 1.1

One of his friends pointed out that when Steven Hawking did his first thesis for his PHD he was open to the possibility that there is a God and later on he changed his mind and now believes there is no God. He said in an interview with El Mundo newspaper in a June 2015 interview "before we understand science, it is perfectly natural to believe that God created the universe. But now science offers a more convincing explanation"

b) Take a look at Romans 1:19-23 and explain why Professor Hawking is suppressing the truth?

Simple answer:

Hawking cannot see that it is possible for a powerful God to use Science to design the world. Also, everything that is created eg. DNA is too specifically coded to say that it happened by random chance. I cannot throw a few nails and wood planks together and hope that it randomly becomes a chair if enough time passes. Someone smart and intelligent will need to design and craft it.

Advanced answer:

Firstly, the complexity and enormity and design of the universe replete with its laws like the law of gravity (9.80665 ms^{-2}) make for a compelling argument for the existence of an all powerful being that not only creates but holds the universe together in a finely tuned manner. Hawking's argument is illogical. Just because we have the science to discover how the intricate cell is engineered or the universe expands does not tell us why the cell was engineered nor its ultimate purpose.

Science and Religion are on parallel tracks. The former tells you how and the later why. Since Professor Hawking is not omniscient or all knowing he cannot logically conclude that there is no God with any degree of certainty. The most he can surmise is that he cannot garner enough evidence to convince himself that there is a God but he cannot exclude a God.

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 (Romans 1:20 ESV)

Paul writes that the design and enormity of the world clearly indicates a Creator of enormous power and majesty. In theological terms this is known as general revelation where God leaves a

witness or fingerprint of his presence in the intricacy of creation. It is not enough for specific worship which is revealed by the bible but it is enough to push man along the path to responding to God.

Hence when Hawkings says there is no God he is simply ignoring the witness of creation. It is no different to dropping an iPhone in the lap of someone and claiming that no one was responsible for the iPhone, its design, function and unique features reflect purpose and ingenuity. This stubbornness is inexcusable. Hawkings is suppressing the logical conclusions of the truth because he does not want to believe not because there is not enough evidence. Testimony to this is the fact that the majority of mankind from time immemorial have always believed in some kind of higher power or God. Atheism finds very few in its ranks simply because it goes against logic and our own nature to insist there is no higher power.

The second important issue is that an attitude where truth is suppressed leads to consequences clearly stated:

“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. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” (Romans 1:21-22 ESV)

Hawkings, although touted as one of the most brilliant minds in our time, is described by Paul as a fool. His suppression of the truth brings with it dire consequences, it makes him truly illogical. His mind becomes incapable of discerning the truth because his motives are wrong.

A clear example of this is in the newspapers where the current Attorney General has acknowledged the money deposited in his boss's accounts but clears him of any wrongdoing without a clear explanation of the motive of the “donation” or the consequences. You would think these were intellectually obvious issues that must accompany any investigation as even the media from outside the country have clearly asked these questions but the AG seems satisfied with his own simplistic explanations. Once the motive is not a clear commitment to the truth then one must be prepared to be a fool to accept self-contradictions.

Case 2

Hillary has a very laid back approach towards faith and God and says: *“I live a good moral life. I don't lie or cheat or hurt others. I am married to one man and have 3 kids and we contribute significantly to our community. My husband is a public servant serving in the MPSJ council and works hard and honestly for Subang Jaya. Why should God interfere with me, I did not do anything wrong against Him directly. Why can't he leave me alone?”*

5) a) Discussion question. How do you respond to Hillary?

Simple answer:

I would ask why Hillary wants to exclude her creator outside her life when He is the one who gave her life. Does she expect a mother to leave her child (who she gave life to) alone? Will she leave her 3 kids alone to do whatever they want? Is her being involved with her kids always a negative interference or because she, being an adult with a better idea of how this world functions, wants to be involved in their lives out of love and to teach and guide them on how to behave in this world to have a 'good' life?

Advanced answer:

Hillary is suppressing the truth and ignoring her responsibility to God. It's like starting a business and making money and then receiving a letter from the Inland Revenue Department and saying "Why should I pay anything to them, I haven't done anything bad or robbed a bank."

Paul writes that:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth"
(Romans 1:18 ESV)

This indicates the issue of accountability. The truth they suppress is the truth about God Himself..

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. (Romans 1:20 ESV)

The use of the word "no excuse" implies accountability. They are accountable to Him to acknowledge his creation.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him
(Romans 1:21 ESV)

They are to honor God and give thanks to God for the world in which they live in and have their family, for the air which they breathe and food that they eat and the warmth of the sun they enjoy. It's created by God and owned by God and purposed by God to achieve a certain goal which is to glorify God. Man is created in God's image to relate and worship and enjoy Him.

Background information

D.M.Lloyd-Jones writes:

“According to the Bible every human being is in one of two positions, either under sin or under grace... The Bible does not say, ‘is he a good man?’... We must always think of ourselves not primarily in terms of actions — it is our whole condition that matters. If you visited a foreign country, the first thing they would want to know about you is not the color of your eyes, your bank balance, or whether you are a nice person — but to what country you belong. In the same way, the Christian gospel does not start with details. You may live a very good life and not be a Christian at all... all, both Jews and Gentiles are under sin... and belong to that realm.

[Many] fail to realize this about sin. They will persist in thinking of it in terms of sins — particular sins and actions... [Sin] means you live in such a way that you do not often think of God, and if you do, you think of Him in terms of what He could and should do for you... [Sin is an entire] outlook of self-centeredness and human-centeredness. Our very outlook, the very way we organize our lives and our thinking — opposes God.”

Case 3

Robert works for a Chinese firm that develops a piece of land in Putrajaya. He is an engineer and a high flyer, rapidly climbing the corporate ladder. However, once in this company, he finds things very different and encounters a lot of difficulties with his bosses. They make him work more than 100 hours a week, even on weekends. They tender very low prices compared to the local developers and purchase very substandard materials. Their Chinese workers are imported and work practically round the clock and are paid very low salaries. They stay in the development site and live in very primitive makeshift tents and are given very poor meals and are not allowed to travel beyond the compound. The Chinese bosses however are free to go as they like and every weekend treat themselves to very expensive meals in KL Hilton and have purchased millions of ringgit worth of property. Their wives tout the latest Louis Vuitton bags and travel overseas every month. When Robert brings up the matter of building standards and worker welfare the bosses refuse to listen or make any changes. Robert is contemplating leaving the company but the money is very good for him and his own family who live in his Damansara mansion and his three kids are all in the top schools in KL. He weighed all his options and decided not to move.

6) a) Discussion Question. Why do you think Robert won't move? (Use Romans 1:18-31 help you answer this)

Simple Answer:

Roberts likes the money and the status. He worships them and is addicted and a slave to money and status.

Advanced Answer:

There are several issues here:

#1 Counterfeit god construction.

Paul uses two words: we worship and serve created things. It means we were created to worship the Creator, so if we reject him we will worship something and that which we worship we will serve or have to "obey." Human beings are goal-oriented. To live in the world, we have to order our lives into priorities and something must have the highest priority, that which gives us meaning. Now whatever that is, we "serve." It becomes the "bottom line," that defines and validates all other things we do.

Because God created the world, all created things have some glory in them, of course, so it is possible to find these things admirable. The problem comes from giving any created thing inordinate affection — affection that is ultimate, like that which we owe God. Robert and the bosses have given money and personal comfort and luxury their ultimate affection beyond God.

#2 Bondage and addiction.

Paul says "therefore God gave them over to the sinful desires of their hearts." This means that the things we serve will not free us. Rather, they control us. We are "given over to them." We have to have them in order to be happy, to like ourselves, to have meaning in life. And since they do not satisfy (because our hearts were made to center on God, not on any created thing), we always need more and more.

Another great quote:

"Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by acceptance. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives." – Rebecca Pippert, Out of the Saltshaker

So with the situation with Robert it's not that he cannot see the social injustices being perpetrated, it's that he too is controlled by money and luxury, he obviously is fairly rich with a mansion in Damansara Heights but this is never enough. The richer one is the higher is the level where one considers is enough.

b) Discussion Question. Do you think Robert is the same as his bosses?

Boss is same-same but worse.

Case 3.1

Here is some data from the New York Times on people’s perception of being rich

The screenshot shows the top of a New York Times article. The title is "What It Takes to Be 'Rich'". Below the title is a sub-headline: "The more you have, the more you need. As income goes up, so does the amount of money people think it would take to consider themselves rich." A horizontal bar chart displays the following data:

Annual Income	Perceived Rich Threshold
Under \$25,000	\$293,000
\$25,000 to \$60,000	\$394,000
\$60,001 to \$120,000	\$426,000
Greater than \$120,000	\$501,000







Source: YouGov, Inc.

c) Discussion question. “The more you have, the more you think you should have.” Do you think this is a clear sign of addiction?

Yes.

d) Reflection question. What are the personal idols we can see in ourselves? Look at the idols below and rate from 0-10 how you are doing on each and feel free to share.

Personal Idols	0- Denial. “I still don’t see why this is wrong.”	5- “Struggling to improve.”	10- Doing okay or this isn’t an idol I struggle with.
A. Workaholism. Work becomes the thing you live for — to be productive and useful.			

B. Codependent "enabling." Needing to feel needed is what you live for.	
C. Beauty and image. This can have various forms, including eating disorders.	
D. Sex and physical gratification. (Paul mentions these in vv.26-27).	
E. Romance. This is not the same as pure sexual gratification. You live for crushes or for someone to love you.	
F. Perfectionism in general. You live to keep complete control of your life.	
G. Materialism. Money and possessions become the salvation and driving force of your life.	

c) Reflection question. Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. Here are some idols in our community, describe in your own words or give an example of how it happens.

Idols in Our Community	Examples or Description
<p>A. Fascism. Make an idol of one’s race or nationality. “I am acceptable because I am a _____” rather than getting identity as a child of God.</p>	<p><i>“I’m Chinese” is more important than “I’m Christian”.</i> <i>“I’m American” is more important than “I’m Christian”.</i> Racism or a negative view of people from other countries will result. <i>“I’m lucky that I’m born Chinese, and not ‘ghosts’ like Hak guai or guai lou.”</i></p>
<p>B. Communism. Make an idol of the state. Government, not God, will solve all problems. Marx said everything is political, and all problems are political/economic ones, rather than spiritual ones.</p>	<p><i>“The problem is with the government, if they do their job properly, all problems will be solved.”</i> <i>“It is possible for perfect justice in this lifetime.”</i></p>
<p>C. Populism. Making an idol out of public opinion or majority rule, rather than what God says is right.</p>	<p><i>“Because everybody say mah.”</i> <i>“They all say one.”</i> <i>“Majority of people bribe anyway, must be okay.”</i> <i>“Over 90% of Americans sleep around, so it’s normal and okay.”</i></p>
<p>D. Capitalism. Making an idol out of the market. Like communism, seeing all our problems as economic ones.</p>	<p>Capitalism manifests itself in different ways. One, most obvious, way is idolizing people who have amassed significant amounts of financial wealth and consequently concluding that they’re more intelligent, hardworking or just better than we are.</p>
<p>E. Rigid multi-culturalism. One’s ethnic group or culture is sovereign. No one can criticize it — it is absolute, rather than the Word of God.</p>	<p><i>“My culture has always practiced cutting of female genitals, no one can criticize it, because it’s been a tradition for hundreds of years.”</i> <i>“My culture says multiple wives or husbands are okay.”</i> <i>“My culture has always practiced for children to respect and obey the elders without question, it’s been a tradition for thousands of years. I don’t have to listen to what younger people have to say.”</i></p>

F. Enlightenment humanism.
Makes an idol of reason and scientific investigation. Science has an answer for everything and reason will open all doors.

"What you can see around you and what Science can show is more important than a 'Creator' or 'Designer'."

Sum: At the root of all problems (personal or social), all non-Christian philosophies and ideologies, is the elevation of some created thing to the place of ultimate worship and ultimate arbiter of truth and meaning.

Case 4

One of the consequences of our rebellion against God is the practice of homosexuality. One of Kenneth's friends noted that the verse says "For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another (Romans 1:26-27 ESV)

If modern medicine has discovered that homosexuals are born with a natural attraction towards people of the same sex then this verse does not apply to them. They argue: "Most homosexuals live in monogamous happy relationships doing what comes naturally. Why should the church interfere?"

7) a) Discussion question. How should Kenneth counter their use of the word "natural"?

It is important that at the time Paul wrote this there was no understanding of genetics or the Mendel's Laws of Heredity. Hence when Paul wrote 'natural' and compared with "those contrary to nature" (v.26), he meant that by nature/design, men have sexual desire for women and vice versa. Sex and sexual desire between the same gender is contrary to God's design in Genesis where a man and woman became one flesh and it was the ideal or norm. Just as a man having more than one wife is against the ideal and norm.

Paul did not mean "natural" in terms of our innate propensity to desire some one of the same sex. He meant someone who went against what occurred naturally in the created world. There is a difference between homosexual orientation and homosexual practice and the sin here is the latter not the former.

Quick Verse Reference

Romans 1:26 (ESV)

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;


Background information















Mendel's Laws of Heredity

: a principle in genetics: hereditary units occur in pairs that separate during gamete formation so that every gamete receives but one member of a pair

— called also law of segregation

MENDEL'S LAW OF INHERITANCE



Seed		Flower		Pod		Stem	
Form	Cotyledons	Color	Form	Color	Place	Size	
							
Grey & Round	Yellow	White	Full	Yellow	Axial pods, Flowers along	Long (6-7ft)	
							
White & Wrinkled	Green	Violet	Constricted	Green	Terminal pods, Flowers top	Short ($\frac{3}{4}$ -1ft)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

b) How is homosexuality a reflection of worship of the creature rather than creator?

Homosexuality is the result of man worshipping the creature rather than the creator.

Scenario 1: If a man says, "I love this man, God cannot deny me this, if He does, I'm going to reject Him." He loves that man more than he loves God. He is now worshipping the creature (the man) rather than the creator.

Scenario 2: If a man says, "I love men, God cannot deny me this, if He does, I'm going to reject Him." He loves men more than he loves God. He is now worshipping the creature (male gender) rather than the creator.

Scenario 3: If a man says, “*My same-sex love is important to me, God cannot deny me this, if He does, I’m going to reject Him.*” He loves “love” more than he loves God who is the source of love. He is now worshipping the created (love) rather than the creator.

Now we have seen that every problem comes from idolatry of some kind — so homosexuality isn’t the only one! But Paul may be saying that homosexuality comes from the idolizing of same-sex love.

Example of idolizing and prioritizing other created things than the Creator himself:

My money and financial security is more important than God, God cannot deny me this.

My son’s career is more important than God, God cannot deny me this and let him work in full-time ministry.

My sexual freedom is more important than God, God cannot deny me this, why does He care who I sleep with?

My marriage status is more important than God, God cannot deny me this and keep me single, make me a widow, or let my wife divorce me.

There is a problem in recognizing that you value the baked goods and rejecting the baker who can supply you with much better baked goods eternally if you choose Him.