

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF REPROBATION

(Romans 1:18-32)

( A Publication Of "The Inner-city Church Planting Mission" )

## INTRODUCTION



The Lake Of Fire

There is within Scripture, a sobering warning for those who would choose to reject the LORD JESUS CHRIST as their LORD AND SAVIOR and rebel against the laws of HIS Word. It is a warning, that unless heeded and responded to with humility and repentance, will result in physical, emotional and spiritual destruction here on earth, and eventually an eternal condemnation in the "...lake of fire...", which is hell! (see Revelation 19:20; 20:10)

The individual who has reached this level of rebellion is referred to in Scripture as a "*reprobate*" (see Romans 1:28).

*"reprobate"* = morally perverted; defiled; hopelessly sinful . . . and thus rejected by GOD

The following Scriptures reinforce the above definition . . .

*"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." II Timothy 3:8*

*"Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know GOD, but in works they deny HIM, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Titus 1:15-16*

The purpose of this study in Romans 1:18-32, is that we might see the "*reprobate*" described in detail and learn how reprobation develops. We then can learn to defend ourselves against it, and also help free those who might already be in the grip of its devastating destruction.

## I. GOD'S Revelation To All Mankind (vv. 18-20)

It is important to remember that as we study "The Development Of Reprobation", the Scriptures declare that GOD has revealed HIMSELF to all mankind. Every man, woman and child that has ever lived, has had some knowledge of the LORD GOD. Verses 18-20 of Romans chapter one tell us this . . .



No One Is *"...Without Excuse..."*



*"For the wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of GOD is manifest in them, for GOD hath showed it unto them. 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*

All Creation "Speaks" Of GOD

*that*

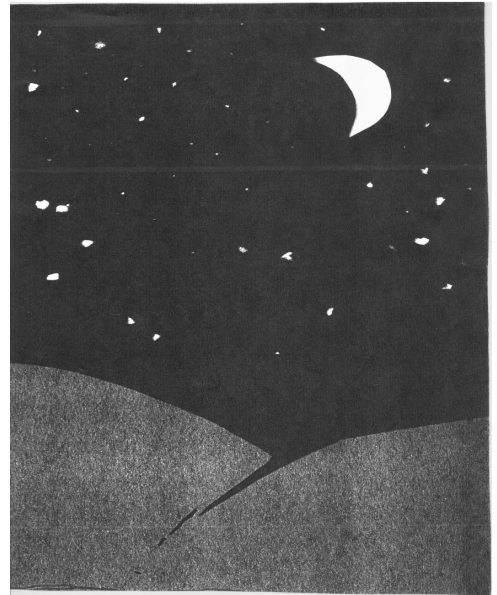
*they are without excuse."*

Notice four important truths we learn from this passage . . .

- \* *"... the wrath of GOD is revealed ... against all unrighteousness of men..."*  
The Scriptures declare that, "... all (of us) *have sinned* ..." (Romans 3:23). Yet GOD has "*revealed*" HIMSELF to all of us in spite of this, even to the point where, "*that which may be known of GOD is manifest in (us) ...*"
- \* *"... men ... hold the truth in unrighteousness."*  
A better translation of this phrase would be, "... *men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.*" What the Scriptures are saying here is, GOD reveals HIMSELF to all mankind, but many choose to "*hold down*" (i.e. - suppress and ignore), what GOD has revealed about HIMSELF.

- \* "... the invisible things of HIM from the creation of the world are clearly seen (and) understood ..."

These "invisible things" are referring to GOD's "eternal power and GODHEAD..." That is, HIS many attributes of Deity such as omnipresence, omniscience, etc. Not only are these "things... clearly seen" by all mankind, but they are "understood" as well. That is, all mankind comprehends that there is SOMEONE greater WHO has created the earth and even themselves.

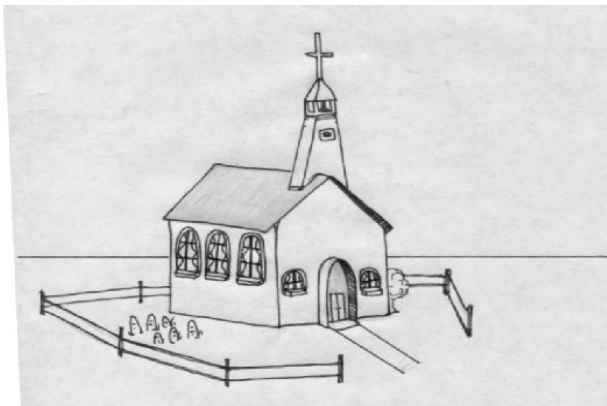


"The Heavens Declare The Glory Of GOD"  
(Psalm 19:1)

- \* "... so that they are without excuse ..."

Because GOD has "revealed" HIMSELF to all mankind, so much so that all mankind knows and understands that there is a GOD, every man, woman and child that has ever lived will have to give an account to the LORD someday concerning their response to this revelation. No one will be able to say, "GOD, YOU didn't tell me about YOURSELF. GOD, YOU didn't show me concerning YOURSELF." Indeed, "... they are without excuse..."

## II. Eleven Steps In The Development Of Reprobation (vv.21-28)



"Religion" Does Not Guarantee Salvation

1. "... they knew GOD ..." (v. 21a)  
The Word "knew" here means "to understand completely". This does not mean this person is a CHRISTian, for the context here makes it clear that they are not. Rather, as verses 18-20 above have taught us, every human being (including the reprobate), has some knowledge and understanding of the LORD.

- 2. "... they glorified HIM not as GOD ..." (v. 21b)

The word "glorified" here means "to acknowledge GOD for WHO HE is". The reprobate knows and even understands GOD to a certain degree. However, he refuses to acknowledge HIM as

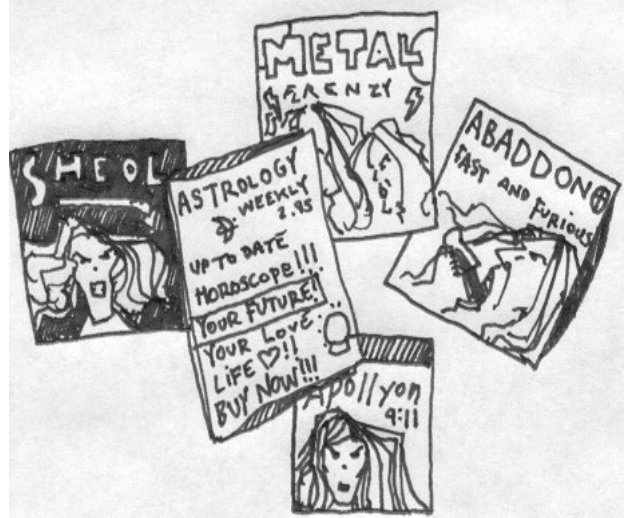
GOD and the fact that he will have to give an account to HIM someday.

3. "... *neither were* (they) *thankful ...*" (v.21c)

If the reprobate refuses "to acknowledge GOD for WHO HE is", it naturally follows that he will not be "*thankful*" to the LORD either.

4. "... (they) *became vain in their imaginations ...*" (v. 21d)

This is the next step in the development of reprobation. One's mind and thinking process becomes defiled (see Romans 1:23). The word "*imagination*" here means "reasoning". As the reprobate becomes more and more defiled in his thoughts, his ability to reason in a Biblical and moral way becomes less and less of a reality.



Man's Reasoning Can Be Deceptive

5. "... *their foolish heart was darkened.*" (v. 21e)

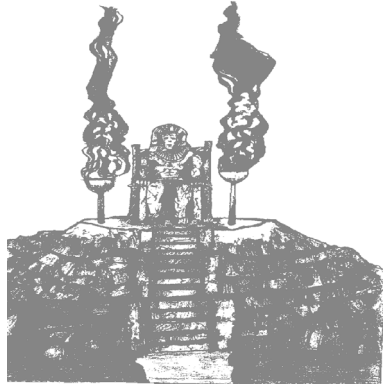
This step in the development of reprobation is a frightening one. Up until this point, the reprobate has had some knowledge of GOD. But because of their rejection of this knowledge, they begin to experience the loss of this very knowledge. JESUS spoke of the reality of this truth when HE said . . .

*"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that (which) he hath." Matthew 13:12*

6. "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ...*" (v.22)

As the reprobate becomes more and more void of true knowledge and understanding, he becomes more and more confused and even delusional in his thinking. He believes what he is doing is right, but in reality he is living in direct contrast to GOD's righteous standards.

7. "*(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)



Idolatry is a natural step in the development of reprobation. GOD has created each one of us with a desire to worship someone or something. As the reprobate rejects GOD, he then seeks to fill that void with the

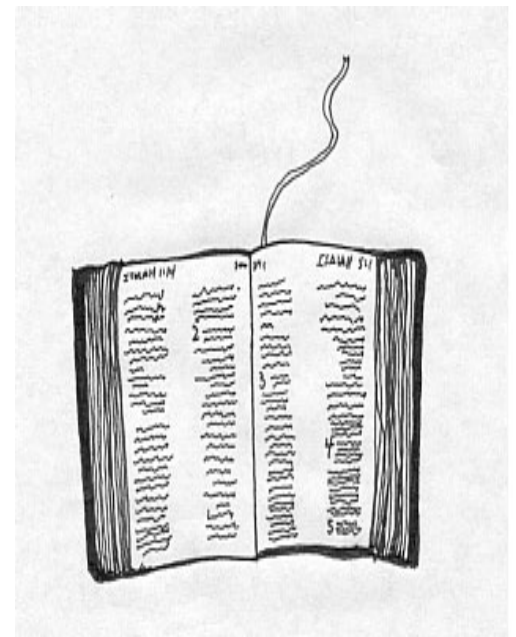
worship of idols . . . including himself.

8. *“Wherefore, GOD also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”* (v. 24)

The word *“uncleanness”* here means “sexual perversion”. Adultery, fornication, sodomy, pornography, incest, bestiality, etc. are all manifestations of this *“uncleanness”*. Notice that Scripture says, *“GOD... (gives) them up...”* to these practices. In a sense GOD says, “If this sexual perversion is what the reprobate desires, then they will not only practice these wicked habits, but will indeed be enslaved and controlled by them!” It is in verses 26-27a, that the Scripture expands on this one particular aspect of *“uncleanness”*, that being sodomy (i.e. homosexuality). GOD labels sodomy as an *“abomination”* (see Leviticus 18:22), and something HE utterly abhors. It is as if GOD is saying that as far as “sexual perversion” goes, sodomy is the ultimate, wicked manifestation. Scripture proceeds to declare that because of this perversion, these people *“... receive in themselves that recompense (i.e. - penalty), of their error which was meet (i.e. - due them).”* A host of modern diseases, including A.I.D.S, is one illustration of this Divine judgment!

9. *“(They) changed the truth of GOD into a lie ...”* (v. 25a)

This is the next step in the development of reprobation. When the reprobate reaches this point in his downward spiral of wicked perversion, he then seeks to justify his life-style by taking the Word of GOD and “twisting” it to say something it was never meant to say. This is certainly a characteristic of many of the religious cults of today.



10.           “... (they) *worshipped and served the creature more than the CREATOR ...*”  
          (v. 25b)

Now the reprobate has become the “god” of his own life. Not only has he rejected the knowledge and understanding of the only true GOD, but through his own pride and self-will, he actually has become deceived in thinking that he himself is “GOD”.



GOD destroyed the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of the great sexual perversion there.  
(see Genesis 19:1-25)

Sodom And Gomorrah Being Destroyed

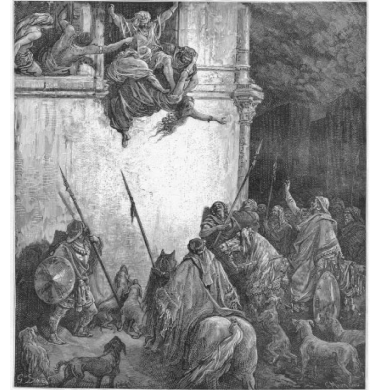
11.           “... *GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind ...*” (v. 28b)  
Verse 28a tells us that, “*they did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge ...*”. A clearer translation might read, “they refused to have GOD in their thinking . . .”. They have now totally pushed GOD and HIS revelation aside. The development of reprobation is complete. They have reached “the point of no return”. GOD has no choice but to give up on them, and to give “*them over*” to the foolishness of their own reasoning, the perversion of their own lusts, and the hopeless sinfulness of their own habits!

### III. Other Wicked Evidences Of Reprobation (vv.29-32)

In these last four verses of Romans chapter 1, we have listed for us twenty-five more characteristics of the “*reprobate mind*”. GOD is not saying here that if we have committed one of these sins we are a reprobate. We are all guilty of at least one or more of these terrible acts! But here we have twenty-five more evidences of the person who has totally rejected the LORD and HIS Word!

1. “... *filled with all unrighteousness ...*”
2. “... (filled with all) *fornication ...*” (i.e. - sexual immorality)
3. “... (filled with all) *wickedness ...*”
4. “... (filled with all) *covetousness ...*”

5. "... (filled with all) *maliciousness* ..." (i.e. - evil in general)
6. "... *full of envy* ..."
7. "... (full of) *murder* ..."
8. "... (full of) *debate* ..." (i.e. - fighting)
9. "... (full of) *deceit* ..."
10. "... (full of) *malignity* ..." (i.e. - evil character)
11. "... *whisperers* ..." (i.e. - gossipers)
12. "... *backbiters* ..." (i.e. - slanderous)
13. "... *haters of GOD* ..."
14. "... *despiteful* ..." (i.e. - violent)
15. "... *proud* ..."
16. "... *boasters* ..."
17. "... *inventors of evil things*"
18. "... *disobedient to parents*"
19. "... *without understanding*"
20. "... *covenant breakers* ..."
21. "... *without natural affection*"  
(i.e. - sodomy, bestiality)
22. "... *implacable* ..." (i.e. - unforgiving)
23. "... *unmerciful* ..."



Jezebel Was One Who  
Hated GOD  
(see II Kings 9:22)

Notice in verse 32, two last evidences of the "*reprobate mind*". First of all they, "... *knowing the judgment of GOD, that they which commit such things are worthy of death* ..." This statement by GOD brings us directly back to the beginning of our study (v.18). There Scripture tells us that . . .

"... *the wrath* (i.e. - judgment) *of GOD is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness* ..."

With these two statements, GOD is declaring clearly that even the most wicked of mankind knows that there is a GOD. Not only this, but they also realize, "... *that they which commit such things* (i.e. - the sins listed above), *are worthy of death* ..." That is, they know that they deserve not only the "physical" death that all of us experience, but also the "spiritual" death (i.e. - the eternal lake of fire), that is the end for all those who reject the LORD JESUS CHRIST and HIS Word!

The last evidence of the "*reprobate mind*" given to us here is perhaps the most tragic one of them all. For here Scripture declares that . . .

"... *not only do* (they participate in the wicked acts mentioned above), *but have pleasure in them that do them.*"

Here is the *"reprobate mind"* described in its final destructive stage. For here the *"reprobate"* knows of GOD's judgment upon him and his wicked deeds, but yet totally disregards this final punishment, and not only continues to commit these vile sins, but enjoys the company of others who do the same. As noted earlier, this is the person who has reached "the point of no return". GOD has no choice but to give up on them, and to give *"them over"* to the foolishness of their own reasoning, the perversion of their own lusts, and the hopeless sinfulness of their own habits!

## CONCLUSION



The Last Judgment

We have learned the destructive steps and consequences that come to those who would choose to reject the LORD JESUS CHRIST as their LORD and SAVIOR and rebel against the laws of HIS Word. We have seen these bring destruction to the physical, emotional and spiritual areas of the *"reprobate"*, with eventual eternal condemnation in hell. Three times in Romans 1, Scripture declares that GOD, "... gave them up (or over)..." to their *"reprobate"* acts and thinking. Again, this speaks of the person who has reached "the point of no return". Only GOD in HIS sovereign wisdom and power knows who reaches this point. Thus, those of us who love and follow the LORD should still seek to minister to the *"reprobate"* as much as we can, unless the HOLY SPIRIT clearly communicates to us to stop.

## MY LIFE COMMITMENT