

We know the story of Abraham interceding for the city of Sodom, where he persuaded the Lord to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous men. But when the angels arrived in Sodom they found only Lot and his family so the city was marked for destruction.

We can view the Old Testament as God's quest for a righteous man. Adam was created innocent but even in the midst of Eden he sinned. At the time of the flood, all the wicked were pruned away and only Noah, the most righteous man of his day, survived with his family. But he also continued in sin. God chose Abraham, followed by his heir Jacob, to found a mighty nation in a prosperous land, showered with divine favor and blessings. But the nation failed. The world was even worse than Sodom: None were righteous and the ungodly were reserved for destruction (Rom. 3:10, 2 Peter 3:7).

In the end God himself, just as He had provided the lamb for Abraham instead of Isaac, provided the righteous Man – His own beloved Son. And this righteousness is not reserved for Him but is available to all who have faith in Him – first the Jews, then the Gentiles, righteousness diffusing out from Christ just as sin spread from Adam.

The Roman Gentiles who heard the gospel and the scriptures would have had a natural question: When God was working with Israel for all those long centuries, what was He doing with the rest of humanity? This chapter makes clear: He never left them without His **testimony** through the visible creation and through his provision for them. "Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness". They are without excuse. But not without a Savior.

Questions:

1. Practically speaking, what would it look like to be ashamed of the gospel?
2. Verse 17 says the righteousness of God is revealed; verse 18 the wrath of God. How are these related?
3. How does nature display God's eternal power and divine nature?

4. What did men do that separated them from God?
5. Find the definition of idolatry in these verses.
6. Verse 22 accuses men of claiming to be wise while actually foolish. What are ways people do that?
7. Why do you suppose that man, as a consequence of having rejected God's testimony in creation, was given over to unnatural desires?
8. Does God cause people to sin?
9. Verses 29-31 describe the inclinations of godless people. There is a similar bill of indictment in 2 Tim. 3:2-5, describing men in the last days. What traits on these lists do people often approve of, as v. 32 says?