

Avoiding the Slippery Slope

Four “Therefores” of Paul

NERO
54–68 AD

Fifth emperor of Rome
A.D. 54–68. His reign
saw the Great Fire of
Rome in 64 AD and
the expansion of the
empire's frontiers.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

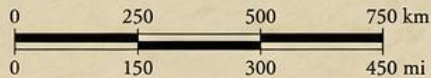
DURING THE REIGN OF NERO

c. 54–68 AD

At its greatest extent under Nero, the Roman Empire ruled much of Europe, North Africa, and West Asia.



- Roman Empire
- Client Kingdoms and Dependent Territories
- Provincial Boundaries
- Major Cities



KEY FACTS

- Empire at its greatest extent under Nero
- Over 50 million people
- More than 120 provinces
- Pax Romana: a period of relative peace and prosperity

Genre: Deliberative Rhetoric

It is an argument intended to persuade the readers to change their behavior.

Chapters 1-11: Rhetorical Argument

Chapters 12-15: Call to Christian duty

Romans 1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish

hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil

things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning,
untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who,
knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who
practice such things are deserving of death, not only do
the same but also approve of those who practice them.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

v. 18, Wrath sent out.

“Wrath is continuously being revealed because people keep sinning. God’s delight is in His mercy. Moral laws of the universe require that God’s anger automatically goes on being revealed to those who go on disobeying Him.”

Jewish New Testament Commentary (JNTC)

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

v. 18, Wrath sent out.

Wait! 1 John 4:8 says God is love.

It is in the context of God's holiness (hatred for sin) and justice (dispensing punishment) that sin brings on itself, that His love, mercy, & grace become so precious.

JNTC

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

Results in our exchanging the truth for a lie, v. 25.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

Results in surrender (vv. 24, 26-28).

“given up” or “over” translates to surrender.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

Results in surrender.

“given up” or “over” translates to surrender.

God surrenders humanity to:

their own hardness of heart

vile passions

a debased mind

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

This is not a sermon about homosexuality.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

This is not a sermon about homosexuality.

“The basic attitude of people who believe the Bible should love sinners, not their sin. Believers must accept the Bible’s judgments on what is and what is not sin.”

JNTC

Sin does not change the value of any person.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

Paul's writing sets up his critique of sins less often denounced by his readers in verses 28-32.

The Downward Spiral of Humanity, Romans 1:18-32.

The Bad News:

The righteous requirement for these activities is death.

The First “Therefore”

Romans 2:1-2

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

The First “Therefore”

Jews saw sin as an affront to God but something everyone did.

Romans were high-principled individuals even among pagans.

Jews prided themselves in possessing and knowing God’s laws.

Both would be quick to condemn the vices of the pagan world.

The First “Therefore”

Inexcusable:

Romans 3:23 NKJV

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Matthew 7:3 NKJV

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye,
but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

The First “Therefore”

Inexcusable:

“Spotting evil in others has not rooted out evil in you.
Your sin is pride.”

JNTC

The First “Therefore”

“What do you mean, I do the same things?”

It is not about the “vice list.” It is about “root causes.”

The First “Therefore”

Root Causes:

We suppress the truth of God’s character when we live a compromised life.

The First “Therefore”

Root Causes:

We suppress the truth of God’s character when we live a compromised life.

- The Integrity Gap.
 - (What is in your margins?)
- Compartmentalized life
 - (church, work, family, social media, friend groups)

The First “Therefore”

Root Causes:

Steps to making God an idol:

Know but not glorify God

Ungrateful

Futile thoughts

Darkened heart

Declare self wise/become a fool

God not retained in our knowledge

The First “Therefore”

Overall, it is a failure to acknowledge dependence on God, seeking to usurp the role of Creator.

“Humanists and legalists can make the same mistake: they suppose they can become righteous through self-effort without trusting God.”

JNTC

The First “Therefore”

TRUTH:

Divine truth, or the faith and practice of the true religion.

The existence and will of the one true God, in opposition to false idols.

The First “Therefore”

Romans 2:3-11, NKJV.

And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by

The First “Therefore”

patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—
indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
For there is no partiality with God.

The First “Therefore”

Seek to glorify God: glory, honor, and peace (vv. 7, 10).

Peace: with God, harmony, not a state of tranquility.

Seek to please self: wrath, tribulation, anguish (vv. 5, 8-9).

The First “Therefore”

. . . but, the goodness of God, v. 4.

- Leads to repentance
- Marked by:
 - Forbearance (self-restrained, tolerance)
 - Longsuffering (patience, endurance, slowness in avenging wrongs)

The First “Therefore”

Paul’s audience:

How did we go from pointing fingers at (sinners) to God pointing a finger at us?

The First “Therefore”

If I am a living expression of Jesus to non-Christians,
where is my FORBEARANCE; where is my
LONGSUFFERING toward those who practice such
things?

The First “Therefore”

People often do not need to be told they are sinners.

People most often need to know there is a way out.

The First “Therefore”

God will not forsake us, but He will allow us to forsake Him with consequences.

His forbearance and longsuffering have an expiration date with a purpose. He will only hold us for so long on the slippery slope until His justice requires Him to let go. God is love, and God is just at the same time.

The First “Therefore”

1 Corinthians 5:5, NKJV,

Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

God’s intention is always our salvation/reconciliation.

The Second “Therefore”

Romans 5:1-11.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The Second “Therefore”

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

The Second “Therefore”

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The Second “Therefore”

PEACE: A relationship of harmony, not individual tranquility. Peace means the believer is always on God’s side.

The Second “Therefore”

GRACE: Good will, loving-kindness, favor.

The merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues.

-Thayer.

The Second “Therefore”

Hope changes the way we walk through tribulation:

- from devastation to Spiritual growth.
- leads to greater hope through testimony/experience.

The Second “Therefore”

Hope does not disappoint (make ashamed).

- The Holy Spirit is given to us.
- He pours God’s love out in our hearts.

The Second “Therefore”

Love, vv. 6-8:

- Jesus chose to die for the ungodly.
- God’s love is demonstrated in Jesus’ death for us.

The Second “Therefore”

The Result of this Faith, Hope, & Love is:

The Great Undoing

We are saved from wrath!

The Second “Therefore”

The Great Undoing:

Saved from Romans 1:18 wrath through justification.

Justified: to render ‘just’ or ‘innocent’, undoing our guilt.

The moral laws requiring wrath to go out are satisfied, as we are deemed innocent by the blood of Jesus.

The Second “Therefore”

The Great Undoing:

We are reconciled to God.

Reconciled here means “**exchange**, that is, restoration to (the divine) favor.”

It is the great exchange when we trade back the
LIE and receive the TRUTH!

The Second “Therefore”

The Great Undoing:

We are reconciled to God.

Reconciliation is now: “we have received.”

The Second “Therefore”

If Christ died for me while I was a sinner, then He has died for those who are currently called sinners. My judgment won't lead them to the key of faith that will help them exchange the LIE for the TRUTH.

If God's love is truly abounding in my heart, I will remember that God's love was expressed in Jesus' death for sinners, and I will die to myself.

The Third “Therefore”

Romans 8:1-11

There is **therefore** now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous

The Third “Therefore”

Requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The Third “Therefore”

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Walk.

According to the flesh, vv. 1, 3.

Flesh: human susceptibility to sin; self-centeredness, as opposed to God-centeredness.

“A life ruled by the flesh is a life dependent on finite human effort and resources.”

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP NT)

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Walk.

Walk: to live, follow (as a companion):- be occupied with.

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Walk.

A walk according to the flesh:

- leads to condemnation, v. 1.
- Leads to death, v. 3.
- Does not fulfill the law, v. 4.

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Walk.

A walk according to the Spirit:

- No condemnation, v. 1.
- Righteous requirements are fulfilled, v. 4.

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Walk.

In light of Paul’s argument beginning in chapter 1, the question becomes:

Is the law written on your heart by the Spirit or practiced as an external standard of righteousness?

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Focus.

In the flesh (vv. 5, 7-8):

- Mind is focused on the flesh, v. 5.
- Mind is carnal: death, v. 6.
- Enmity with God: “incompatible with true life and peace.”
Jamieson, Fausset, Brown (JFB)
- Cannot please God, v. 8.

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Focus.

In the Spirit (vv. 5, 6):

- Mind on things of the Spirit, v. 5.
- Spiritually minded: life and peace, v. 6.
 - Life: “the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God.” Thayer

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Focus.

In the Spirit (vv. 5, 6):

- Mind on things of the Spirit, v. 5.
- Spiritually minded: life and peace, v. 6.
 - John 10:10b NKJV, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: The Believer’s Focus.

In the Spirit (vv. 5, 6):

- Mind on things of the Spirit, v. 5.
- Spiritually minded: life and peace, v. 6.
 - Peace: “is the very element of the soul’s deepest repose and true bliss.” (JFB)

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: Good News

Believers are in the Spirit.

- IF the Spirit of God dwells in you, v. 9.
- IF Christ is in you, v. 10.
- Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Righteousness (v. 10): integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting.
(Thayer)

The Third “Therefore”

A Spiritual Difference: Good News

Benefits of the indwelling Spirit.

- Life to your mortal body.
- Resurrection power livening in you.

The Third “Therefore”

“The sense is, that under the gospel, by the influence of the Spirit, the entire man will be made alive in the service of God. Even the corrupt, carnal, and mortal body, so long under the dominion of sin, shall be made alive and recovered to the service of God. This will be done by the Spirit that dwells in us, because that Spirit has restored life to our souls, abides with us with his purifying influence, and because the design and tendency of his indwelling is

The Third “Therefore”

to purify the entire man, and restore all to God. Christians thus in their bodies and their spirits become sacred. For even their body, the seat of evil passions and desires, shall become alive in the service of God.” Albert Barnes

The Third “Therefore”

Song of Solomon 2:15 NKJV

Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

foxes — generic term, including jackals. They eat only grapes, not the vine flowers; but they need to be driven out in time before the grape is ripe. She had failed in watchfulness before (Song of Solomon 1:6); now, when converted, she is the more jealous of subtle sins (Psalms 139:23). (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown)

The Third “Therefore”

Psalms 139:23-24 NKJV

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

The Fourth “Therefore”

Romans 12: 1, 2.

I beseech you **therefore**, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Fourth “Therefore”

Living Sacrifice, v. 1.

- Living: “Life with all its energies, intellect, moral, and physical powers, as one long sacrifice; one continued offering unto God.” JNTC
- Holy: “not divided, separate, but entire and complete. To be with the best affections of our hearts and lives.” JNTC

The Fourth “Therefore”

Living Sacrifice, v. 1.

- Acceptable: “Only what He appoints. Not invented services; make crosses; seek persecutions and trials; or provoke opposition.” JNTC
- Pleasing: “to please Him should be the highest aim; the fact that we do please Him is our highest reward” JNTC
- Service: can be translated as “worship”.

The Fourth “Therefore”

The Way Forward, v. 2.

- Conformed: “do not put on form, fashion, or appearance of this world.” JNTC
- This World: “this age or generation of people.” JNTC
 - Secular religion practiced mindlessness and immorality while considering themselves virtuous.
 - They sought tranquility (peace without God), not reconciliation.

The Fourth “Therefore”

The Way Forward, v. 2.

- Transformed: “exchange worldly form/habit to cultivate a spirit attached to God and kingdom causes.” JNTC
- Renewing of Mind: “change into new views and feelings.” JNTC

The Fourth “Therefore”

The Way Forward, v. 2.

Prove: “such a renewed mind is essential to successfully inquire after the will of God.” JNTC

- Acceptable: “that which is pleasing to God.

The Fourth “Therefore”

The Way Forward

Ephesians 4:22-24 NKJV

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The Fourth “Therefore”

“The problem is not lack of knowledge, but failure to acknowledge God and render proper worship and obedience.” NIBC

The Fourth “Therefore”

I will not take Jesus’ work on the cross for granted. I will not live a passive Christian life.

I will actively stand in grace through faith, and seek not to know God only in order to conform to standards and practices in my own strength and understanding, but to KNOW HIM, walk with Him, and rejoice in the hope of His now and future glory.