

Romans 1:16-32

"The Wrath Of God Revealed"

*Paul the apostle was ready to preach the gospel! In fact, he was *eager* to do so! He wanted to come to Rome & he wanted to give them the gospel of J.C. His life belonged *to* Jesus, he'd been commissioned *by* Jesus, so he was ready & eager to get the good news *of* Jesus (the fact that He'd laid down His life for the sins of the world & rose again that we might be reconciled to God through faith in Him) to as many people as he possibly could! Because that is the means that God has ordained by which mankind is saved!

& Since all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God that means all men everywhere need to be saved! So wherever he may be, wherever God might send him, he was ready, willing & wanting to share the gospel... May God give to each of us an increasing burden to broadcast the good news of the death & resurrection of J.C. to those around us.

Maybe you're thinking, "I don't know preacher, it's kind of embarrassing to talk about." – Couple thoughts with that. #1 I'm so glad that Jesus wasn't embarrassed to hang, beaten, naked & despised upon a cross for me... Listen, what happened *to* Jesus, was *for* me! #2 Aren't you glad someone wasn't too embarrassed or ashamed to share the gospel *w/you*? ... God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power & of love & of sound mind. So be strong, & of good courage; don't be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is *w/you* wherever you go. * – Paul understood that, so he says (let's begin in Vs 15).

Vs 15-17

Though Vs 16 & 17 are relatively small, they're one of the summit peaks of the book or Romans. These Vs represent the "why" behind what Paul writes in this letter.

& He tackles the topic head on, "I am not ashamed of the gospel". You think you have cause to be ashamed or embarrassed, Paul all the more so! Today we've sort of *romanticized* the cross. We make jewelry of it, artwork & décor. People tattoo them on their body or have them printed on a shirt. It wasn't like that in Paul's day. The Roman's crucified the lowest of the low. Crucifixion was such a despised & loathsome way to die that it wasn't even *legal* to crucify a Roman citizen.

& Here's Paul writing to the church in the sophisticated capital city of the Empire regarding a message centered on a crucified Jewish Savior, embraced (more than anything) by the lowest classes of people & he says, "I'm not ashamed of the message." Why? Because Paul understood something about the message of the gospel & that is this, it is *the* power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. –

*I want you to see this. The gospel isn't a self-help, problem free philosophy, it's not good advice, it's not a motivational mantra, it doesn't say, "You got this! Pick yourself up by your bootstraps & keep moving forward." Or any other cultural colloquialism. Paul doesn't say that the gospel *brings* power, or is a *display of* power, but that it *is* power, & that it's the effective operation of *God's* power leading to salvation!

We're so easily misdirected. We hear a preacher sharing the gospel & we can sometimes think, "Wow, he's really a powerful speaker! Man, he's packing some *punch* into that message!" Ladies & gentlemen, the preacher gives nothing to the message of the gospel at all! Truth be told, some preachers seem to do their best to *suppress* its power through poor communication or some other means... But I agree w/D.L. Moody who said that the gospel is like a lion... All the preacher has to do is to open the door of the cage & get out of the way! *

& Here's some good news *about* the good news ☺. It's for "*everyone*". Did you catch that there in Vs 16? The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation for *everyone*. It's not just for the elect, it's not just for the people who didn't blow it *too* bad in life. Listen, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*"¹ *Salvation is available to *everyone*. Only 1 caveat, one requirement, you have to *believe*. *Salvation isn't gifted to you once you jump through all the right hoops, once you achieve a certain goal, once you pray enough or go to church enough or finally get a grip on that one sin that you're trying to quit so that you can come to God... Salvation is the result of placing your confidence in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of J.C. to wash away all your sins. — When you realize it's not about what you do, it's about what He's done & you place all your weight, you go all in on His work on your behalf... It's at that point when God says (in essence), "I've taken from you your sinfulness & I've given to you My righteousness." It's predicated on faith...**

Now, there's something incredibly freeing about this. This places the responsibility between God & the hearer. Once you've shared the message, you're out. There's nothing more you can do. *You do the sharing, God does the saving.*

& Chronologically, historically the message was to the Jew 1st. Jesus came to the nation of Israel, Paul sought out the Jews in each city 1st. God had chosen them to be custodians of His word, to be His representatives to the world. So the message went to them 1st.

¹ The New King James Version (Jn 3:16-17). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

But again, this beautiful exchange, our sin for God's righteousness & transaction takes place through faith. "From faith (Vs 17) to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Which is a quote from Habbakuk 2:4). — What does it mean, "from faith to faith"?

(& Btw we should take a moment to realize that the righteousness that's accredited to you & me when we believe is the very righteousness of God. What that tells us is that the very best that man can do is insufficient to get us to heaven! It's not the righteousness of Billie Graham or whoever you may esteem as a wonderful & righteous kind of person... If we could achieve it on our own, Christ wouldn't have come! Our righteousness is a *flawed from the factory* kind of righteousness via our sin nature. Salvation demands *perfect* righteousness & that's something only God can provide.)

& God imputes (or accredits) to us *His righteousness* when we believe on J.C. by faith. That's where it all begins. But don't miss this, it's where it all ends as well. From *justification* (salvation) to *sanctification* (growing in godliness) culminating in *glorification*, each & every element of our relationship *to* the Lord & our growth *in* the Lord is predicated *upon* & tethered directly *to* faith. **We're not just saved by faith, we live by faith. We don't come to Christ by faith, but then anchor ourselves through baptism, or reading our Bibles or doing good things. – Yes, those things will happen, but as a result of faith, not as an addition to faith... Our relationship to God, from beginning to never ending rests upon faith.** (Write it down so you can read it later, Gal 3:1-9).

Vs 18-19

Man! If we're not paying attention here it might seem like Paul just switched gears & threw a big ol' glass of cold spiritual water in our faces that we might sober up & snap to! & Perhaps he did! We just went from the *righteousness* of God, to the *wrath* of God revealed from heaven! He just spoke about the majestic message of the gospel, it's *what we all* need! Beginning in Vs 18 he wants us to know *why* we all need it.

& Here's why, because what we all deserve is God's *wrath* (which we might define as the outworking of God's righteous indignation against sin). Now, **God's wrath isn't some self-centered temper tantrum whereby God punishes people because they won't play by His rules. God's *wrath* is not like human *anger*. The *wrath* of God is tethered to the *righteousness* of God.** God is completely righteous; therefore, He *must* mete out justice against sin, otherwise He's no longer righteous. God's righteousness demands wrath. & This is what we need to be saved *from!*

Yes, we need saved from ourselves, we need to be saved from our sins, from the corruption of this world & from the devil... But more than anything, we need to be saved from the *wrath of God* which our sin so richly deserves! & This is what Jesus was doing on our behalf when He hung upon the cross. Somehow & in some way He bore the full weight of the wrath of God against the sins of all of humanity throughout all human history & now that His justice has been legally satisfied, He can freely (justifiably) give grace to all who believe. To the Corinthians Paul put it this way, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”² So here’s the thing, the sinner (which is all of mankind) will either receive the *righteousness* of God, or the *wrath* of God, there are no other alternatives. *

“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all *ungodliness* & *unrighteousness* of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” One day, a lawyer came to Jesus & said, “Teacher, which is the great commandment of the law?” Jesus said, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*”³ Or another way to understand that... A right relationship with God is paramount. After that, a right relationship w/the people around you. When we fail in (or violate) the 1st part, that’s *ungodliness*. When we fail in (or violate) the 2nd part, that’s *unrighteousness*.

& Those are the two things that Paul is going to spend a little time speaking about here in our text. How man has failed on both points. He’s failed in his role & responsibility before God (*ungodliness*), & he’s failed in his role/responsibility before man (*unrighteousness*). (& Btw, just so you know, *ungodliness* *always* leads to *unrighteousness*). 1st up? *Ungodliness*.

Vs 18-23

Do you understand what this is saying? Paul is saying that all of mankind is w/out excuse before God in being subjected to His wrath because although they *knew* God, they willfully chose to turn a blind eye to God & lead lives in willful, intentional *defiance against* God! (He’s unpacking the *ungodliness* of men). He’s saying that mankind didn’t elect to lead *unrighteous* lives out of *ignorance of* God, but in direct *defiance against* God. He says, (Vs 19) “Because what may be known of God is manifest *in* them, for God has *shown* it to them.” (What may be known... has been shown).

² *The New King James Version* (2 Co 5:21). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version* (Mt 22:37-39). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Now, they stuff it down, they “suppress” it, fight against it, disregard & deliberately obscure it, but God has made it known (manifest) nonetheless. God has shown *everyone* (throughout all time) that He exists! (So that all are w/out excuse).

A while back I posted a reel on Instagram that was dismantling evolution. A fella piped up, “We have no evidence of God.” To which I responded, “Except for all of creation!” & That’s what Paul is telling us right here in Roman’s Ch 1! 🟩 Design demands a designer. You can walk through an art gallery & see all kinds of incredible paintings & there’s one thing every painting has in common, they each have a painter. & Each painting will tell you something of the painter. Perhaps his/her understanding of color theory, the way they create depth & dimension through how they blend light & dark. You get a feel for their creativity & level of ability... And what Paul is telling us here is that when you look at creation all around you, it’s screaming to you the truth of the Creator. His “invisible attributes are clearly seen”

If you can look at a painting & know that there was a painter, you can look at creation & know that there’s a Creator. The psalmists said that like this, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.”*⁴ And Paul is saying that something of the *nature* of God can be discerned by observing His creation. Namely, His *eternal power & Divine nature*... If you truly consider (even for a few minutes) the vastness of the universe... You have *no choice* but to conclude that this Creator is incomprehensibly, inconceivably powerful. What kind of power is involved in Creating the universe? It’s beyond our comprehension.

His ability is beyond our comprehension in His *creativity*! Look at all the different species of animals, insects, birds, aquatic life, human beings. How huge the whale shark is, how tiny the ant is & everything in between. The variety is unrivaled. Think of the *intelligence* of the Creator... all the complexity involved w/in the functioning of each species. Some lay eggs, others come forth fully formed. How does the eyeball work? Think of the interconnective complexity of the digestive system. How does the brain communicate w/the rest of the body? The marvel of the reproductive system... We haven’t even spoken on the variety all the vegetation.

⁴ *The New King James Version* (Ps 19:1-4). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Some of which we eat, some we simply enjoy it's beauty, it's fragrance, the wide variety of flowers & trees... Humans breathe out carbon dioxide (which plant life needs) & they emit oxygen (which humans need)... All this by random chance & natural selection over billions of years... (No). The power of God is on display throughout His creation, His *eternal nature*. A creator is always beyond & outside of the limits of his creation. If you create time, you're not subject *to* time, you live outside of time... What we're learning here is that nature bears witness to God so *powerfully so profoundly, so unceasingly*, that to ignore it is indefensible! *

What explosion has ever resulted in order rather than chaos? Yet we're supposed to believe that this entire *orderly, balanced perfectly* universe is the result of an enormous (make nuclear look like child's play) kind of explosion? C'mon people, let's think this through! The 2nd law of Thermodynamics states that things move from order to chaos. (Leave a house alone for 100 yrs, come back & see how it's holding up), it won't be better than when it was left, it'll be dilapidated, run-down & obviously neglected. But we're supposed to suspend that truth when it comes to evolution. Given time, things got more orderly on their own... Do you see the problem here?

"Because although they knew God" (going all the way back to the beginning) "they did not glorify Him *as* God, nor were thankful." The problem wasn't that man didn't know God, he did. It's that he decided to go his own way rather than glorify Him *as* God or be thankful for His provision, His protection & direction in their lives.

What's the result? What happens when man knows God is there, but intentionally snuffs Him out of their mind & goes his own way? #1 They become futile in their thoughts; (their mind doesn't process like it was intended to). & #2 Their foolish hearts are darkened. I want you to see that what starts in the mind, ends up in the heart. & Ladies & gentlemen, when you reject the light, there's no other alternative, you're filled w/darkness... & People love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. It becomes more than a mental (matter of the mind) thing, it becomes a *moral* thing, residing in the heart. People set their heart against God.

But when you're in the dark, you can't see. What we have here is a people who can't think right (futile in their thoughts) & are blind to the truth.

Vs 22-23

Turning away from God doesn't make men wise, it makes them futile in their thoughts & they become fools... (The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God").

But man has w/in him the need to worship. & When he removes God from the picture, he fills that void w/something else. Something far more feeble. Idolatry comes in all kinds of forms. Americans like to worship power, or money, or sex, or entertainment. We substitute creation over the Creator in the futility of our minds & the darkness of our hearts.

Vs 24-32

I read this entire section because I wanted you to see how the wrath of God reveals itself against the ungodliness & unrighteousness of mankind. Paul points out 3 manifestations that are characterizations of the wrath of God upon an ungodly, unrighteous people. #1 (Vs 24) God gave them up to *uncleanness*. #2 (Vs 26) God gave them up to *vile passions*. & #3 (Vs 28) God gave them over to a *debased mind*.

Here's what we're seeing. Moral depravity isn't the *reason* for God's wrath, it's the *result* of God's wrath. God's wrath will give man over to the desire of his own heart. When you reject the call to honor God & walk in *holiness*, all that's left for God to give you over to is *uncleanness*. If you refuse to lead a life of *purity*, God will release you into the current of *impurity* (vile passions), He'll give you over to the desire of your own stubborn heart! That's the way His wrath is revealed!

& At the risk of redundancy, in turning away from the light, man can plunge only deeper & deeper into darkness, resulting in increasing dishonor & depravity. & When man refuses to honor God... they begin to *dishonor* themselves. Whenever the glory of God is attacked, sooner or later the dignity of man will suffer... Idolatry and gross immorality are the bitter fruits of rejecting God's revelation. Man will set himself on the self-destructive, dishonorable pathway of sin.

In Vs 26-28 we have some of the strongest language against homosexuality in all of the N.T. — Scripture refers to homosexuality (male or female) as a passion that is "*vile*" (or disgraceful), *unnatural* (meaning, even the most menial of observations will show that the female body is made to be compatible w/the male body. Meaning that instinct tells us that men/women were meant for each other, if not the human species ceases to exist). So... it's *vile*, it's *unnatural* & it's *shameful*.

But in the United States, it's *not* something that's shameful, it's something over which we're *prideful*. We encourage it in children, we have pride month set aside to recognize & celebrate our shame & our sin...

“So, you’re saying that the expansion & explosion of homosexuality w/in a society is a reflection & an expression of the wrath of God upon that society?” That’s not what *I’m* saying, that’s what the Word of *God* is saying! But when you reject the Divine Designer, then you can reject the intended design & do what you want...

“What if someone is born that way?” What way? W/a propensity toward sin? I say welcome to humanity! That’s why the Bible says that we’ve got to be “born again” not of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God! *

In Vs 28 the pattern continues. Once man rejects retaining God in their knowledge (in their mind), all that’s left is to be given over to a debased, reprobate, degenerate mind which results in doing those things which are unfitting. What we believe determines how we behave... & Lest we somehow think that homosexuality is the greatest sign of human depravity, Paul puts together a whole litany of examples that demonstrate the degeneracy of man. & I’m just gonna tell ya, *none of us* escape the list. Close

Pride, gossip, envy, unforgiveness, covetousness, disobedience to parents... they’re on the same list as murder, violence, haters of God & inventors of evil things... Most of us would never think of murder, but we’d quickly murder someone’s reputation through gossip & character assassination...

& Here’s the thing. Whether we do them, or simply *approve* or *applaud* those who do them (perhaps through the movies we watch or whatever) we stand guilty before God... & This is why we need the gospel. What we deserve is God’s judgment, what He offers us is forgiveness, salvation from His wrath by grace through faith in J.C. who has loved us & given Himself for us...

Prayer Points:

Father God, we recognize our guilt before You. & We realize our need for a Savior. & We thank You that You so loved us that You gave Your only begotten Son *for* us, that through faith in Him, we’d never perish, but have everlasting life. We are humbled & grateful for Your grace & for Your mercy.

If you’ve yet to receive God’s mercy, you’ve not turned from your sin & experienced the power of God unto salvation, then believe on Jesus today & He’ll take you from darkness to light, from dead in sin to alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.