

When in Romans  
The Wisdom of Fools  
Romans 1:18-2:1

## 1. The Righteousness of God, Revealed

Paul's Apostolic Mission - to bring about the obedience of faith among the gentiles

Romans 1:1-7 (ESV)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the **obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel transforms us:

- By restoring our right standing with God

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- By renewing our mind and conforming us to the image of Christ

Romans 8:29 (ESV)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- For the sake of the redemption of God's creation

Romans 8:19 (ESV)

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

We are not transformed to escape the created world, we are transformed to be God's agents of restoration in creation.

God's glory is the ultimate end of the Gospel. When God is glorified, we have peace!

Why is the righteousness of God necessary?

Romans 3:23 (ESV)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

## 2. The Wrath of God, Revealed

Romans 1:18–2:1 (ESV)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 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. 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, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions...

For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice...

They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

God's wrath is to be understood in view of the Gospel

*The essence of God's action in wrath is to give men what they choose, in all its implications: nothing more, and equally nothing less.*

- J. I. Packer

*If I did not believe in the doctrine of the wrath of God, I would not understand the death of Christ upon the cross, it would be meaningless to me.*

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Again those who suppress the truth... [Keep at top]

Romans 1:18–20 (ESV)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 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.

God has clearly made himself know through his creative actions

There is order in the world

Psalm 19:1 (NET)

The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky displays his handiwork..

Colossians 1:16–17 (NET)

for **all things** in heaven and on earth were **created by him**—all things, whether **visible** or **invisible**, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him.

Exodus 3:7 (NET)

The Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

We are made in the image of God

- We order the world

Proverbs 16:9 (NET)

A person plans his course, but the Lord directs his steps.

- We have moral inclinations

Proverbs 12:2 (NET)

A good person obtains favor from the Lord, but the Lord condemns a person with wicked schemes.

*‘I call myself a cultural Christian. I’m not a believer, but there’s a distinction between being a believing Christian and being a cultural Christian. ... I love hymns and Christmas carols, and I sort of feel at home in the Christian ethos. ... We [in the U.K.] are a “Christian country” in that sense ... If I had to choose between Christianity and Islam, I’d choose Christianity every single time. It seems to me to be a fundamentally decent religion in a way that I think Islam is not.’*

- Richard Dawkins (Author, Evolutionary Biologist)

- We can know God (Reason)

John 1:14 (NET)

Now **the Word became flesh** and took up residence among us. **We saw his glory**—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.

- We desire to have meaning and purpose

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (ESV)

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, **he has put eternity** into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

[Again those who suppress the truth...]

Romans 1:21–23 (ESV)

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, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

- We were created to worship

Psalms 29:2 (ESV)

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

Ephesians 1:11–12 (ESV)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

- We would rather worship what we can see and control

Exodus 32:1–6 (NET)

When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “**Get up, make us gods that will go before us.** As for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him!” So Aaron said to them, “Break off the gold earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people broke off the gold earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. He accepted the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, **and made a molten calf.** Then they said, “**These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.**” When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow will be a feast to the Lord.” So they got up early on the next day and offered up burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.

Idolatry - The worship of someone or something other than God

Revelation 9:20 (NET)

The rest of humanity, who had not been killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so that **they did not stop worshiping demons and idols** made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk about.

Colossians 3:5 (NET)

So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is **idolatry.**

The due penalty...

Romans 1:24–32 (ESV)

Therefore **God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because **they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and **worshiped and served the creature** rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason **God gave them up** to dishonorable passions.

The distortion of the created order

Humans have suppressed the Truth of God to such a degree that they distort the natural order of God's creation and in doing so, sin not only against God, but against creation and themselves.

...For their **women exchanged natural relations** for those that are **contrary to nature**; and the **men likewise** gave up natural relations with women and were **consumed with passion for one another**, men committing shameless acts with men and **receiving in themselves the due penalty** for their error.

Homosexuality and all of its related counterparts highlight the depth in which sin has distorted the created order.

And since they **did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up** to a **debased mind** to do what ought not to be done. **They were filled** with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things **deserve to die**, they not only do them but **give approval** to those who practice them.

God's wrath in the present and in the age to come

- God turns impenitent sinners over to their own devices
- All will face the judgment seat of Christ and a final verdict will be rendered

### 3. What should our reaction be to the message of God's wrath in view of the Gospel?

Humility

- I am a member of the human race and I have suppressed the truth about God and continue to do so at times.
- All sin misses the mark and renders me guilty before a Holy and supremely powerful God.

Luke 18:9–14 (NET)

Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else. "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: '**God, I thank you that I am not like other people:** extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, '**God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!**' I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. **For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.**"

Hope

- Because of God's Justice and Righteousness, which are bound to His unchanging character, we can be assured that He will ultimately rid the world of sin and its effects, and He will deliver His people from the evil.

Psalm 89:14 (NET)

Equity and justice are the foundation of your throne. Loyal love and faithfulness characterize your rule.

- God is serious about justice and that means He will go to whatever lengths necessary to rid you of sin and conform you to the image of His son, just as He will punish and destroy evil and wickedness.
- Though we do suffer the immediate effects of our sin, we are freed from the condemnation that results in spiritual death.

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- If the Gospel can transform my cold and calloused heart, there is hope for others, no matter how 'bad' their sin is.

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

## **Resources:**

Preaching the Word: Romans-Righteousness From Heaven  
R Kent Hughes

Romans for You, Romans For you. (God's Word for You series)  
Timothy Keller

Romans: An Expository Commentary  
R.C. Sproul

Into the Heart of Roman  
N.T. Wright

Bible Doctrine  
Wayne Grudem

People to be Loved  
Preston Sprinkle