

A Word About Wrath: The Bad News of the Gospel

Romans 1:18–32 . . . 2:1–5

Where are we in this letter?

How do we know that we have moved from introduction to body?

- Have to compare Romans to other letters of Paul
- Have to compare Romans to other letters of the time
- Salutation (is over)
- Thanksgiving (is over)

1:1–17	1:18–4:25	5:1–8:39	9:1–15:33	16:1–25
Gospel	Faith	Hope	Love	Gospel
Introduction	God's faithfulness (1:18–3:30) Man's Response (4:1–25)	Christ (5) Grace > Law (6) Grace > Flesh (7) Spirit (8)	God's Love to His People (9:1–11:36) Man's Response (12:1–15:33)	Closing

As you read Romans 1:18–32, what stands out?

1:18–20

The Wrath of God is revealed

They are without excuse

1:21–32

For although they knew God . . . (v. 21)

They (1) did NOT honor, (2) give thanks

They became foolish

Exchanging glory . . . (vv. 22–23) . . . glory

God gave them up (v. 24) . . . dishonoring their bodies

Exchange (v. 25) . . . truth / lies . . . Creator / creature

Creator (v. 25)

God gave them up (v. 26) . . . dishonorable passions

Exchange (v. 26) . . . natural relations / unnatural

They did not acknowledge God (v. 28)

God gave them up (v. 28) . . . debased mind

Fruit of the flesh (vv. 29–31)

For although they know God's righteous decree + death . . . (v. 32)

They do them and give approval

2:1–5

They are without excuse (v. 1–4)

Storing up Wrath (v. 5)

What is wrath?

- state of relatively strong displeasure, w. focus on the emotional aspect, *anger*¹
- strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, w. focus on retribution²

What is the difference between God's wrath, the gods wrath, and man's wrath?

- Man's wrath is emotional and out of control; it often rages in selfishness
- The gods wrath – in Greco-Roman culture, the gods were basically humans writ large, and hence Zeus often flashed thunderbolts when he was displeased, but his wrath was based on his selfish desires
- God's wrath is not out of control . . . it is
- What does it mean God is impassible?

Does not have passions / emotions . . . but this too easily misunderstood.

He is not controlled by his creation; he is not subject to his creation.

Therefore, he exercises his emotions as he decrees.

But certainly, he has decreed to display wrath towards sin!

What does Romans 1 say about the wrath of God?

- It stands against ungodliness / unrighteousness
- It is just . . . men are without excuse

What else does Romans say about wrath?

- Men in unrighteousness are storing up wrath
- It is just for God to be patient, but it is not just for him to be infinitely patient

Why does this matter?

- The world is heading towards a final judgment
- In the present, God's wrath is seen in handing over sinners to their sin
- In the future, God's wrath will be seen in judging sinners for their sin
- **This is the context of salvation and the message of the gospel!**

¹BDAG, 720.

²BDAG, 720.

What else stands out in verses 18–20? Or 2:1–5?

- **The creation – what does v. 18–20 say about creation?**

God has revealed himself in creation – eternal power and divine nature

All creation KNOWS God has revealed himself

No one is ignorant of God – rather they suppress the truth in unrighteousness

- **The kindness of the Lord is seen in creation – this is called common grace**

God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance

But God's kindness is being abused and turned into a source of pride

- **Common grace – What is that?**

Common to all . . . but not given in equal measures

Common . . . in that it is not saving

Often unregenerate receive more common grace . . . than the elect

Common grace . . . is meant to lead to repentance / salvation . . .

Rejection of common grace . . . is part of God's justice

What is the relationship between vv. 18–20 and vv. 21–32?

Conclusion: They are without excuse.

Explanation: Why they are without excuse.

Also . . . notice the relationship between revelation in creation and the Creator

v. 25 – This is the center of the section!

Because the world failed to honor the Creator, he handed his creation over to sin

What does they “knew God” mean?

- We have three places to look at . . .
 - v. 21 – knew God . . . but did not honor him or give thanks
 - v. 28 – they knew God . . . but did not acknowledge him
 - v. 32 – they God’s righteous decree and wages of sin is death . . . but God gave them over
- There is a general knowledge of God in creation . . . and thus the problem of mankind is not information . . . but affection.
- **Romans 8:6** – Mankind in its natural state . . . hates God

Where or When did this hostility begin? – Is there any clue in the text to creation?

- Who desired to be wise . . . Genesis 3:6
- Who exchanged the glory of God for glory of create things . . . Genesis
- So who is the source of sin – mankind (Rom 5:12) . . . Satan . . . CREATION

What do these verses tell you about the world?

- **About God**

God is not the inventor of evil . . . he made the world good

He scripted a world where sin was possible (ordained) . . . but he did not do it

- **About mankind**

Mankind cannot get back to where we began – Three Circles

Our deepest problems are interior . . . and there is no way we can seek God

- **About sin**

False worship is at the heart of sin . . . law-breaking is the result of idolatry

The world fell in pursuit of human flourishing (wisdom, glory) – sin masquerades in light

- **About our need for salvation**

We need more than debt repayment, we need to justification and regeneration

What is God's response to mankind's sin?

- **Wrath and Grace – The Gospel**
 - **God gave mankind over (3x)**
 - **God made a plan for salvation**
 - **Wrath and grace are not at odds (Romans 11:32)**

When did he give them over?

- After they sinned
- When they sought to replace God

So did God predestine people to hell? Did he hand them over to sin before they sinned?

- No – he set his love on his people before the world began
- But – his act of judgment / wrath is asymmetrical to his grace; he will judge according to their works (Romans 2:6)
- He will not pre-judge!

How does he give them over?

v. 24 **God gave them over to their lusts . . . to impurity . . . to dishonoring the body**

The reason reinforces what was said . . . B/C they exchanged truth / God

They messed up Creator . . . and the Creator gave them to their bodies

v. 26 **God gave them over to their dishonorable passions . . .**

This is also bodily . . . and he uses homosexual desires

In historical context this would have reflected the culture of Rome . . .

But the commandments against homosexual acts are in the Law too
Cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13

But this is not the worst sin . . . nor the most interior

v. 28 **God gave them over to a debased mind . . .**

The laundry list covers the world . . .

It reinforces the fact . . . that failing to acknowledge God this is the result

What stands out in this series?

- I see an intensification from exterior (body) . . . to interior (mind)
- There is a movement from things they do . . . to who they are
- There is an interplay between exchanging and being handed over . . . this looks a lot like the negotiations of Pharaoh and God

God hardened Pharaoh . . . Pharaoh hardened himself . . . He was hardened

So it is with human sin . . . we exchange God for others . . . he hands us over

How does God hand us over?

- The same way God the light creates the dark . . . it is a matter of privation
- This is the wrath of God . . . not the same as the final judgment, but it is a passive, privative aspect of his judgment
- God does not just punish us for sin . . . he also gives us sin to punish us

What is the take away from this . . .

- Grace is God stopping us from getting what we want
- Creation is filled with God's kindness . . . and it is meant to lead us to salvation

How might this truth change your evangelism?

How might this truth change your own heart?

- The gospel does not ignore creation – it begins and ends with creation

God created the world for his glory; he is saving a people for his glory

How might a Salvation-centered Christianity miss God as Creator?

[All that matters is evangelism . . .]

- **How should we read this passage with respect to homosexuality**

[1] It is not the greatest sin . . . but it is one that stands against nature

[2] Sexual sin . . . is not punishable . . . it is a punishment

[3] All of us have sinned . . . and fallen short . . .

[4] When a culture celebrates sexual sin . . . it is inviting the judgment of God