

ROMANS 1

God's Wrath on Immoral Sinners

Greeting: Messiah Jesus, God and Man

1 Paul, a servant (δοῦλος) of Messiah Jesus, called to be an apostle (ἀπόστολος), set apart (ἀφορίζω, perf. pass.) for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Messiah our Lord,¹ 5 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, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Messiah. 7 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 Messiah.

Paul's Eagerness to Come to Rome

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Messiah for all of you, because your faith (πίστις) is proclaimed in all the world.² 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's desire (θέλημα) I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.³

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written,

The righteous shall live by faith.⁴

¹ In Romans, "Lord" (κύριος) will almost always refer to Jesus.

² Paul is most thankful for the Roman's faith, not their works. Above all, he wants faith. Good Romans are expected to worship the Roman gods and pay allegiance to the Roman emperor. These Romans, by contrast, are believing in a Jewish carpenter from Galilee who died on a Roman cross. It's easy to see why Paul is proud of them.

³ **Ac 19:21** 21 Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

⁴ This verse is the one that changed Martin Luther's life and thereby the Western world. For Paul, "there is no quest of men's being righteous before God other than by faith" (Cranfield, *ICC*, 104).

*The Wrath of God Is Revealed*⁵

18 For (γὰρ)⁶ the wrath of God (ὀργὴ θεοῦ)⁷ keeps being revealed (ἀποκαλύπτω, pres.)⁸ from heaven against all ungodliness (ἀσεβεία) and unrighteousness (ἀδικία)⁹ of people (ἀνθρώπων), who in unrighteousness (ἐν ἀδικίᾳ)¹⁰ keep trying to suppress (κατέχω, pres.)¹¹ the truth.¹² 19 For what may be known (γνωστός) about God¹³ is plain to them, because God

⁵ Here begins the first of four main segments of Romans (1:18-4:25; 5:1-8:39; 9:1-11:36; 12:1-15:13). The heart of the first segment is Ro 3:21-26. In this segment the “righteousness” word group occurs 24 times, and the “faith” word group appears 27 times. The main point is that both Jews and Gentiles gain righteousness by faith alone. Universal human guilt is the theme of 1:18-3:20. In Ro 1:18-32, Paul has in mind primarily Gentiles (Cranfield, *ICC*, 105). Paul’s indictment of humanity in Ro 1:18-3:8 proceeds through a series of concentric circles: from the whole of humanity (1:18), to humanity apart from special revelation, mainly Gentiles (1:19-32), to the righteous person, mainly the Jew (2:1-16), to the Jew explicitly (2:17-3:8). The Jew seems to be Paul’s main target (Moo, *ICNT*).

⁶ The conjunction γὰρ is explanatory. From v. 16, the question has arisen, why must Jews and Gentiles be delivered, and from what? And how is it that both Jews and Gentiles are saved on the same basis? Don’t Jews have a privileged position before God? These are the questions Paul will proceed to answer.

⁷ The wrath of God (ὀργὴ θεοῦ) is God’s holy hostility to evil (Stott, *BST*), his determination and firm resolve to destroy evil (Hodge). He is vigorously and personally opposed to all corruption, evil, and injustice (Morris, *PNTC*). His wrath is not arbitrary, capricious or irrational, but thoroughly just and rational (Cranfield, *ICC*), as Paul’s use of logic demonstrates. In vv. 18-25, γὰρ is used three times, διότι twice, and διό once. God’s wrath is rationally justified.

⁸ The revelation (ἀποκαλύπτεται) of God’s wrath in v. 18 compares to the revelation (ἀποκαλύπτεται) of his righteousness in v. 17. God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel because his wrath is revealed in his handing over sinners to the consequences of their unrighteousness (vv. 24, 26, 28). In vv. 17 and 18, ἀποκαλύπτεται is in the present tense, signifying God is continuously revealing his righteousness and wrath in every generation of human history. God will exercise his wrath in the future, to be sure, but here Paul is focused on the present, ongoing revelation of God’s righteousness and wrath.

⁹ ἀσεβείαν καὶ ἀδικίαν is a hendiadys. The two terms are combined to give a more rounded description of man’s sinful state (Cranfield, *ICC*).

¹⁰ Does ἐν ἀδικίᾳ mean: (1) men unrighteously suppress the truth (adverbial)? (2) men suppress the truth by means of unrighteous acts (means)? (3) men suppress the truth in a condition or state of unrighteousness (sphere)? or (4) men suppress the truth in order to commit unrighteous deeds (purpose)?

¹¹ κατεχόντων is an iterative or customary present (Wallace, 520-22), signifying people hinder/restrain/suppress the truth of God in every generation. The history of man is one constant attempt to suppress the truth about God. Do people: (1) actually suppress the truth; (2) suppress the truth only with respect to themselves; or (3) merely try to suppress the truth? People deliberately suppress the truth in order to commit unrighteous acts (Stott, *BST*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). They stifle any truth which challenges their self-centeredness (Stott, *BST*). They try to suppress the truth but ultimately are unable to (Cranfield, *ICC*). People do not actually succeed in restraining the truth because it continues to be clearly seen, and they are without excuse (Hendricksen).

¹² τὴν ἀλήθειαν refers to the truth about God that is accessible to all people through creation. Ultimately, truth cannot be thwarted by man’s unbelief or unrighteousness. Truth is truth no matter whether man believes it.

¹³ “[W]hat can be known about God or God, to the extent that he can be known” (*BDAG*, 204).

himself¹⁴ made it known (φανερῶω, aor.)¹⁵ to them. 20 For (γὰρ)¹⁶ his invisible attributes,¹⁷ namely, his eternal power and divine nature,¹⁸ keeps being clearly perceived (καθοράω, pres.) through understanding (νοέω, pres.),¹⁹ ever since the creation of the world,²⁰ in the things that

¹⁴ ὁ θεὸς is given prominence by its position before the verb, so a translation “God himself” is justified.

¹⁵ “[T]o cause to become known, disclose, show, make known” (*BDAG*, 1048). A real revelation of the knowledge of God has taken place. God, in so far as he is knowable, is truly manifest (Cranfield, *ICC*, 113). In our midst and all around us, and also in our own creaturely existence, God is objectively manifest. His whole creation declares him (Cranfield, *ICC*, 114). The visible creation discloses the invisible God (Stott, *BST*). Creation must be the product of a Creator who possesses eternal power and divinity (Mounce, *NAC*). The knowledge of God is all around people, even in the fact of their own existence as creatures (Cranfield, *ICC*). God desired to make himself known through creation (Cranfield, *ICC*; Morris, *PNTC*; Stott, *BST*). It is his own deliberate self-disclosure (Cranfield, *ICC*). He has created people in such a way that his existence and power are instinctively recognized when they view the created world (Schreiner, *BECNT*).

¹⁶ Again the γὰρ is explanatory. Questions have arisen: How exactly has God made knowledge of himself clear? What is the content of this knowledge? Verse 20 answers these questions.

¹⁷ τὰ...ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ (lit., “his invisible things”) refers to God’s attributes, especially his eternal power and divine nature (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*; Schreiner, *BECNT*).

¹⁸ θεϊότης should be translated “divinity” or “divine nature” (*BDAG*, 446) and is probably a summary term of all of God’s attributes (Hodge; Cranfield, *ICC*; Morris, *PNTC*). The TSKS construction hints at what one would expect—God’s eternal power is a subset of his divine nature.

¹⁹ “[T]o grasp or comprehend someth. on the basis of careful thought, *perceive, apprehend, understand, gain an insight into*.... [W]hat is invisible ... is clearly perceived (w. the eye of the understanding)” (*BDAG*, 674). Both νοούμενα and καθορᾶται are present tense, suggesting God’s invisible attributes and divine nature continue to be clearly seen by all people at all times in human history.

²⁰ God’s self-revelation to man through creation has been continuous since Genesis 1 (Cranfield, *ICC*). The created world has always demonstrated God’s handiwork (Morris, *PNTC*).

have been made.²¹ So they are without legal excuse (ἀναπολόγητος).²² 21 For (διότι) although they knew (γινώσκω, aor.) God,²³ they did not glorify (δοξάζω, aor) him as God or give thanks (εὐχαριστέω, aor.) to him,²⁴ but they became futile (ματαιόω, aor. pass.) in their thinking (διαλογισμός),²⁵ and their foolish hearts (καρδία)²⁶ were darkened (σκοτίζω, aor. pass.).²⁷ 22 Although they keep asserting (φάσκω, pres.) to be wise, they have become fools

²¹ The knowledge of God obtained from creation is not a saving knowledge (Morris, *PNTC*; Schreiner, *BECNT*) because the gospel message is necessary for salvation (Ro 10:13-15). Paul is not establishing a natural theology, for people cannot know God in a saving way through nature (Stott, *BST*). By seeing visible things, certain invisible things may be understood (C. Hodge; Morris, *PNTC*; Moo, *ICNT*), but not the gospel message. People can grasp enough about God's essence from creation to prevent them from confusing created things with the Creator and committing the sin of idolatry (Bruce, *TNTC*). God reveals himself in nature in such a way as to hold all people responsible, but nature does not convey the knowledge necessary to bring people to salvation (Hodge; Mounce, *NAC*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). "General revelation is sufficient to alert a man to his need of God and to condemn him if he rejects what he can learn through nature, but only faith in Christ is sufficient to save (Ac 4:12). ... God's general revelation if rejected brings just condemnation; but if accepted, then He will bring the further necessary message of the gospel in order that that man might be saved (Ac 10:3-6)" (C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, 37-38). **Ac 14:15-17** 15 We [Barnabas and Paul] bring you [residents of Lystra] good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Yet he did not leave himself without testimony, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

²² Etymologically, ἀναπολόγητος is an adjective built from the prefix α- ("without") and the verb ἀπολογέομαι ("to speak in one's own defense against charges presumed to be false, *defend oneself*" (*BDAG*, 116-17)). In the NT, the term is used only in Ro 1:20 and 2:1. In Ro 2:1, Paul turns on the moral sinner to show he too has no legal defence before God. God has made the universe in such a way that people are responsible and culpable if they reject the general revelation given to them (Morris, *PNTC*). God has given such a clear disclosure of his power and divinity through creation that people who reject that disclosure are without a legal excuse (Murray). People have no excuse for their failure to respond appropriately to the revelation of God in creation (Dunn, *WBC*). Through creation God has provided sufficient evidence of himself to hold all people accountable (W. Hodge; Dunn, *WBC*). Natural revelation leads not to salvation but to the demonstration that God's condemnation is just and that people are without excuse.

²³ All people do actually know something of God's eternal power and divine nature. We all know all the time that there is a God (Phillips). People's natural knowledge of God should have lead to worship, but it has not.

²⁴ The aorist active participle γινόντες is concessive (*LN* 28.1; Wallace, 634), which should be translated, "although they knew about" (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). The aorist tense is important because it shows people's knowledge of God precedes their refusal to worship him (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*). That people's knowledge of God precedes their rejection of him makes their rejection more blameworthy (Morris, *PNTC*). The appropriate and rational response to the evidence of general revelation is worship of the one, true Creator God. Despite the evidence, people refuse to do this (Hodge; Moo, *ICNT*). The most fundamental sin is the rejection of God as God by failing to worship him (Schreiner, *BECNT*). Creatures owe their Creator worship, and when they fail to do so they are without defense (Dunn, *WBC*).

²⁵ **Lk 5:22** 22 When Jesus perceived their reasonings (τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς), he answered [the scribes and Pharisees], Why do you question in your hearts? **1 Co 3:20** 20 The Lord knows the reasonings (τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς) of the wise, that they are futile.

²⁶ The term καρδία, usually translated "heart," may be translated "mind" here (*LN* 26.3, *BDAG* 508-09; Schreiner, *BECNT*). Paul has the intellectual element of people's inner lives particularly in mind. See *Heart*.

²⁷ Peoples' minds have become dark as a result of their failure to worship the true God. The intellect is not a part of human nature somehow exempted from man's general corruption. The human mind cannot be appealed to as an impartial arbiter capable of standing outside the influence of the sinful ego and returning perfect objective judgment (Cranfield, *ICC*, 118). There is a disconnection from reality in failing to recognize and glorify the true God (Cranfield, *ICC*). People's natural capacity to reason accurately and logically about God has been damaged permanently (Moo, *ICNT*). Man's whole intellectual and emotional life has become dark (Dunn, *WBC*). At the center of every person, where the knowledge of God must be embraced, there has settled a darkness that only the light of the gospel can penetrate (Moo, *ICNT*).

(μωραίνω, aor. pass),²⁸ 23 in that they exchanged (ἀλλάσσω, aor.)²⁹ the glory of the immortal³⁰ God³¹ for the likeness of an image (ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ)³² resembling mortal man, birds, animals, and creeping things.³³

²⁸ As a result of their failure to worship God, people have lost of touch with reality. Their thinking suffers from a fatal flaw, the disconnection from reality involved in their failure to recognize and glorify the true God (Cranfield, *JCC*, 117-18). People's folly is their idolatry (Hodge, Moo, *ICNT*), in which the glory of God is abandoned for the worship of idolatrous images (Schreiner, *BECNT*). Idol worship displays the stupidity of man. **Ps 94:8-11** 8 Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? 9 He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? 10 He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge— 11 Yahweh—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. **1 Co 1:20** 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²⁹ The exchange people made was a worship exchange (Moo, *ICNT*; Morris, *PNTC*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). In the exchange of the true God for false idols people show they are fools. **Jer 2:11** 11 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

³⁰ God's glory is incorruptible, whereas people and animals are subject to corruption and death. The greatest rugby player who ever lived will age and die, but God never dies.

³¹ This refers to the splendor and majesty that intrinsically belong to God (Moo, *ICNT*). It is likely a collective term for all of God's attributes (Hodge). "Given the opportunity to bask in the glory of the immortal God, people have rather chosen, in their folly, to worship the images of mortal human beings and beasts" (Moo, *ICNT*). See *The Glory of God*.

³² ὁμοιώματι ("likeness, image, form, copy," *BDAG*, 707) and εἰκόνοσ ("likeness, form, appearance," *BDAG*, 281-82) are similar in meaning. Both terms are frequently used of idolatry (Moo, *ICNT*, Schreiner, *BECNT*). In their stupidity, people did not just worship creatures, but images of creatures (Dunn, *WBC*). **Ps 106:20** 20 They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. **Jer 10:14** 14 Every man is stupid and without knowledge. Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.

³³ Besides idolatrous images of man, people began to worship images of birds (πετεινόν), animals (τετράπους), and reptiles (ἑρπετῶν), a threefold division of the animal kingdom (Moo, *ICNT*, Mounce, *NAC*) also seen in Ge 1:22-25; Ex 32; Dt 4:16-18; Ps 106:20; and Je 2:11. The downward descent of man's idolatrous worship is evident. The worship proceeds from God to idols of man, to idols of birds, to idols of taller land animals, to idols of animals close to the ground. All people have a terrible proclivity to make gods of their own. This tragic process of human "god-making" continues in our own day. How foolish it is for people to substitute direct contact with God's awesome presence for the indirect, shadowy relationship found in idolatry (Moo, *ICNT*). See *Idolatry*. **Dt 4:16-18** 16 Beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.

The First Handing Over

24 Therefore³⁴ God (ὁ θεὸς) handed them over (παραδίδωμι, aor.)³⁵ in the cravings (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις)³⁶ of their hearts to [sexual] dirtiness (ἀκαθαρσία),³⁷ to their dishonoring (ἀτιμάζω, pres. mid.)³⁸ of their bodies among themselves,³⁹ 25 because they exchanged (μεταλλάσσω, aor.)⁴⁰ the true God (τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ) for the lie (τῷ ψεύδει)⁴¹ and worshiped (aor.) and served (aor.) the creature⁴² instead of the Creator,⁴³ who is blessed to all eternity! Amen.⁴⁴

³⁴ Διὸ signifies the result of the exchange people have made. Paul now begins to speak of the consequences of man's refusal to worship God (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). The whole dreadful panoply of sins that plague humanity has its roots in the soil of idolatry (Moo, *ICNT*).

³⁵ ὁ θεὸς is so emphatic as to suggest a deliberate, positive act of God is meant (Cranfield, *ICC*, 120). In other words, God has taken an active role in handing over man to impurity. This is not an impersonal working out of moral law but an active personal decision and response by God (Schreiner, *BECNT*). The handing over of people is God's just response to their rebellion. "God does not simply let the boat go—He gives it a push downstream. Like a judge who hands over a prisoner to the punishment his crime has earned, God hands over the sinner to the terrible cycle of ever-increasing sin" (Moo, *ICNT*). The wrath of God (v. 18) is revealed by means of God's handing over man to dirtiness. The intent of this delivery is punitive (Hodge; Moo, *ICNT*; Mounce, *NAC*) and rehabilitative (Cranfield, *ICC*; Dunn, *WBC*; Morris, *PNTC*). God allows people to go their own way, in order that they may at last learn to hate the futility of a life turned away from the true God (Chrysostom).

³⁶ "[A] desire for someth. forbidden or simply inordinate, *craving, lust*" (*BDAG*, 372).

³⁷ ἀκαθαρσία means especially "sexual dirtiness" (*BDAG*, 34; Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). Idolatry and sexual dirtiness go hand in hand. **2 Co 12:21** 21 I fear that when I come again... I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the dirtiness (ἀκαθαρσία), sexual immorality (πορνεία), and sensuality (ἀσέλγεια) that they have practiced. **Ga 5:19** 19 The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality (πορνεία), dirtiness (ἀκαθαρσία), sensuality (ἀσέλγεια)... **Eph 5:3** 3 Sexual immorality (πορνεία) and all dirtiness (ἀκαθαρσία) or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. **Col 3:5** 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality (πορνεία), dirtiness (ἀκαθαρσία), passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

³⁸ ἀτιμάζεσθαι is present emphasizing the continuing nature of the sexual dirty practices (Mounce, *NAC*; Schreiner, *BECNT*). It is better to understand ἀτιμάζεσθαι as middle voice (*KJV, NIV, NRSV, NET*; Hodge; Moo, *ICNT*; Dunn, *WBC*). The punishment consists not only of being dishonored but of dishonoring oneself.

³⁹ ἐν αὐτοῖς should be understood reflexively, "among themselves" (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*).

⁴⁰ The compound verb μεταλλάσσω has the same meaning as the simple verb ἀλλάσσω (v. 23). Believers reverse this exchange. **1 Th 1:9** 9 They themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

⁴¹ "The lie" likely refers to the lie of idolatry (Cranfield, *ICC*; Schreiner, *BECNT*).

⁴² When we worship ourselves, we worship a creature, not the Creator. Self-worship is no better than worshipping an idol. Don't make an idol of yourself!

⁴³ The essence of idolatry is putting some aspect of God's creation in place of God (Moo, *ICNT*).

⁴⁴ Interestingly, Paul finishes with a doxological statement: the Creator is "blessed, praised" (*BDAG*, 408), literally "into the ages" (*BDAG*, 32). People's decision to worship and serve idols in no way impacts the being, essence or nature of God. Our rebellion negatively impacts ourselves, but it doesn't impact God at all. By not worshipping God, we're only hurting ourselves. **Ro 9:5** 5 To [the Jews] belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. **2 Co 11:31** 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. Just as v. 23 sets the stage for the "handing over" of v. 24, so v. 25 sets the stage for the "handing over" of v. 26 (Cranfield, *ICC*; Moo, *ICNT*).

The Second Handing Over

26 For this reason (Διὰ τοῦτο) God himself (ὁ θεός) handed them over (παραδίδωμι, aor. act.) into dishonorable passions (εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας). For their females (θήλειαι) exchanged (μεταλλάσσω, aor.)⁴⁵ the natural (φυσικός)⁴⁶ function (φυσικός, sing.)⁴⁷ for that contrary to nature (φύσις). 27 And the males (ἄρσην, pl.) likewise abandoned (ἀφήμι, aor.) the natural function of the female (τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας) and were inflamed (ἐκκαίω, aor.)⁴⁸ in their strong desire (ὄρεξις)⁴⁹ for one another, males with males committing (κατεργάζομαι, pres.) the disgraceful act (τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην)⁵⁰ and so receiving (ἀπολαμβάνω, pres.) in themselves the necessary (δεῖ)⁵¹ penalty for their delusion (πλάνη).⁵²

⁴⁵ This is the third time Paul uses the verb “exchange” (vv. 23, 25).

⁴⁶ “[P]ert. to being in accordance w. the basic order of things in nature” (BDAG, 1069).

⁴⁷ “[S]tate of intimate involvement w. a pers., *relations, function*, esp. of sexual intercourse” (BDAG, 1089).

⁴⁸ “[T]o have a strong desire for, *be inflamed*: with sensual desire (BDAG, 303).

⁴⁹ “[A] condition of strong desire, *longing, desire*...; in its only occurrence in our lit. it is used in an unfavorable sense” (BDAG, 721-22).

⁵⁰ “[B]ehavior that elicits disgrace, *shameless deed*” (BDAG, 147).

⁵¹ “[T]o be under necessity of happening, it is necessary, one must, one has to, denoting compulsion of any kind. ...[O]f that which takes place because of circumstances or inner necessity, with the context determining the cause” (BDAG, 214).

⁵² “[W]andering fr. the path of truth, *error, delusion, deceit, deception* to which one is subject.... Of an erroneous view of God, as exhibited in polytheism, resulting in moral degradation” (BDAG, 822).

The Third Handing Over

28 And just as they did not approve (δοκιμάζω, aor.)⁵³ God, to have (ἔχω, pres.) him in recognition (ἐπίγνωσις),⁵⁴ God (ὁ θεός) handed them over (παραδίδωμι, aor.) to a worthless (ἀδόκιμος)⁵⁵ mind (νοῦς)⁵⁶ to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have been filled (πληρόω, perf. pass.) with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they knew (ἐπιγινώσκω, aor.) the requirements (δικαίωμα)⁵⁷ of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death (ἄξιοι θανάτου), they not only do them but join in approval (συνευδοκέω, pres.)⁵⁸ of those who practice them.

⁵³ “[T]o draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, *prove, approve*, here the focus is on the result of a procedure or examination” (BDAG, 255).

⁵⁴ “[K]nowledge, recognition in our lit. limited to transcendent and moral matters” (BDAG, 369).

⁵⁵ “[N]ot standing the test, then *unqualified, worthless, base*” (BDAG, 21).

⁵⁶ All sin starts with a worthless mind.

⁵⁷ “[A] regulation relating to just or right action, *regulation, requirement, commandment*” (BDAG, 249).

⁵⁸ “[T]o join in approval, agree with, approve of, consent to, sympathize with” (BDAG, 970).

Biblical Worldview

1. **We must view ourselves as servants of Jesus, set apart for the gospel (Ro 1:1).**
 - a. **Ro 1:1** 1 Paul, a servant of Messiah Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

2. **Like Paul, we are obligated to preach the gospel message to all people (Ro 1:14).**
 - a. **Ro 1:14** 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
 - b. We are servants of Messiah Jesus in order that we may preach the gospel of God.
 - (1) **Ro 1:1** 1 Paul, a servant of Messiah Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.
 - (2) If you do not preach the gospel of god, you are not a servant of Jesus.
 - c. Like Paul, we are set apart for the preaching of the gospel.
 - (1) **Ro 1:1** 1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.
 - d. Our mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations.
 - (1) **Ro 1:5** 5 We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.
 - (2) It is for the sake of Jesus' name.
 - e. We must ceaselessly ask in prayer that believers everywhere may be strengthened.
 - (1) **Ro 1:9-11** 9 Without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's desire I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.
 - f. We must desire to reap a harvest to the farthest reaches of New Zealand and the world.
 - (1) **Ro 1:13** 13 I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.
 - g. We are under obligation to all people, civilized and uncivilized.
 - (1) **Ro 1:14** 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
 - h. We must be eager to preach the gospel in Dunedin, across New Zealand, and around the world.
 - (1) **Ro 1:15** 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

3. **We are justified before God by grace through faith. There is no other way (Ro 1:16-17).**
 - a. **Ro 1:16-17** 16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, The righteous shall live by faith.
 - b. The gospel message is the power of God for salvation.
 - (1) **Ro 1:16** 16 The gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - c. Everyone who believes the gospel message receives salvation.

- (1) **Ro 1:16** 16 The gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.
- d. God has given every person a “free will space” in order to believe the gospel, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) **Ro 1:16** 16 The gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.
- e. The gospel is for all mankind, Jews and Gentiles.
 - (1) **Ro 1:16** 16 The gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- f. God’s justification plan for man operates by grace through faith, from start to finish.
 - (1) **Ro 1:17** 17 In [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith.
- g. There is absolutely nothing to add to faith.
 - (1) **Ro 1:17** 17 In [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith into faith.
 - (2) “[T]here is no quest of men’s being righteous before God other than by faith” (Cranfield, *ICC*, 104).
- h. Justification through faith alone is not a new doctrine. Paul isn’t being creative.
 - (1) **Ro 1:17** 17 As it is written, The righteous shall live by faith.

4. God’s righteousness is revealed through his wrath (Ro 1:18).

- a. **Ro 1:18** 18 The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
- b. See *The Wrath of God*.
- c. God’s wrath is necessary to the biblical conception of God (Moo, *ICNT*).
 - (1) We must not modify, minimize, or reject the concept of God’s wrath.
 - (2) Because God is holy and righteous, he will respond to evil and sin with wrath.
 - (a) God’s wrath fell upon his own Son, who was paying the penalty for man’s sin.
 - (3) Wrath upon evil is an essential element of goodness in our fallen world (Cranfield, *ICC*, 109).
 - (4) In a world of antithesis, God’s wrath upon evil and sin is very, very good.
 - (a) See *The Antithesis*.
- d. God’s wrath is justified.
 - (1) God’s wrath is justified because knowledge about God is clear and available to all people (Mounce, *NAC*; Moo, *ICNT*).
- e. God’s wrath is not indiscriminate, uncontrolled, or irrational.
 - (1) The wrath being revealed is not a nightmare of an indiscriminate, uncontrolled, irrational fury, but the wrath of the holy and merciful God directed against men’s impiety and unrighteousness (Cranfield, *ICC*, 111).
- f. God’s wrath is future, but it is also present.
 - (1) God’s wrath is future.
 - (a) Ro 2:5, 8; 5:9; Col 3:6; 1 Th 1:10.
 - (2) God’s wrath is present.
 - (a) 1 Th 2:16.
 - (b) God’s wrath is now visible in his handing over people to their chose way of sin and all its consequences (Moo, *ICNT*).

- (c) “The history of the world is the judgment of the world” (Schiller).
- (d) The present experience of God’s wrath is merely a foretaste of what will come on the day of judgment (Moo, *ICNT*).

5. Paul’s focus in Romans 1 is Gentile sinners, who are “obvious” sinners (Ro 1:18-20).

- a. **Ro 1:18-20** 18 The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men [especially Gentiles], who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth [about God]. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them [the Gentiles], because God has shown it to them. 20 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 [Gentiles] are without excuse.
- b. Ro 1:18-32 explains why Gentiles are guilty before God and need justification.
- c. Gentiles are without excuse because God is clearly perceived through creation.
- d. Though Gentiles know about God, they have chosen to worship creaturely idols.
- e. Gentiles are responsible for their refusal to worship God, who they know to exist.
- f. God’s wrath upon obvious Gentile sinners is justified.
- g. The gospel is necessary for Gentiles because they are guilty before God.
- h. The only hope for Gentile sinners is justification by grace through faith in Jesus.

6. Through creation, God has clearly revealed himself to man (Ro 1:19-20).

- a. **Ro 1:19-20** 19 What can be known about God is plain to [all people], because God has shown it to them. 20 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.
- b. People are surrounded on all sides and within their own selves by evidence for God, but they do not allow themselves to be convinced (Cranfield, *ICC*, 116).
- c. The reaching of the age of God-consciousness is assumed in Paul’s argument.
- d. Natural revelation alone does not lead anyone to faith in Jesus.
 - (1) “Our urgency in communicating the gospel should be as great as Paul’s” (Moo, *ICNT*).

7. People try to suppress the truth about God, but ultimately they can’t (Ro 1:18).

- a. **Ro 1:18** 18 ...Who in unrighteousness (ἐν ἀδικίᾳ) keep trying to suppress (κατέχω, pres.) the truth.⁵⁹
- b. κατεχόντων is an iterative or customary present, signifying people continue to hinder/restrain/suppress the truth of God in every generation.
 - (1) The history of man is one constant attempt to suppress the truth about God.
- c. People deliberately suppress the truth in order to commit unrighteous acts (Stott, *BST*; Schreiner, *BECNT*).
 - (1) They stifle any truth which challenges their self-centeredness (Stott, *BST*).
- d. People try to suppress the truth, but ultimately they are unable to (Cranfield, *ICC*).
 - (1) People do not actually succeed in restraining the truth because it continues to be clearly seen, and they are without excuse (Hendricksen).

⁵⁹ τὴν ἀλήθειαν refers to the truth about God that is accessible to all people through creation. Ultimately, truth cannot be thwarted by man’s unbelief or unrighteousness. Truth is truth no matter whether man believes it.

8. Therefore, all Gentiles are without excuse (Ro 1:20).

- a. **Ro 1:20** 20 So they [Gentiles] are without excuse.
- b. People's worship of idols is without excuse.
- c. People are without excuse because God's invisible attributes, particularly his eternal power and divine nature, are clearly seen through what he has made.
- d. God's condemnation of man's idolatry is just.
- e. The gospel is necessary for all people because all people are guilty before him.
- f. Paul's indictment of humanity directly conflicts with secular humanism and many other worldviews.
- g. Romans 1 cuts man down to size.
- h. We must fully integrate this idea into our worldview.
 - (1) "Every person is without excuse because every person—whether a first-century pagan or a twentieth-century materialist—has been given a knowledge of God and has spurned that knowledge in favor of idolatry, in all its varied manifestations. All therefore stand under the awful reality of the wrath of God, and are in desperate need of the justifying power of the gospel of Christ. We will never come to grips with the importance of the gospel, or be motivated as we should be to proclaim it, until this sad truth had been fully integrated into our worldview" (Moo, *ICNT*).
- i. God has disclosed himself through creation, with the result that people are without excuse for their impiety and unrighteousness (Hodge; Moo, *ICNT*).

9. Man is generally devolving, not evolving.

- a. **Ro 1:21-23** 21 ...They became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, animals, and creeping things.
- b. Man's evolution is abnormal and downward.
 - (1) "Modern heathenism is the result of an abnormal and downward evolution. Many students of comparative religion have forgotten that evolution is oftener to lower forms than to higher. Many a species in the history of life has first become degenerate, and then has become extinct. The shores of time are strewn with wrecks, and one of these wrecks is human nature."⁶⁰
- c. Pagan religions are a descent from the truth.
 - (1) Far from being a preparatory state in the human quest for God, non-Christian religions are a descent from the truth, evidence of man's deepest corruption (Moo, *ICNT*).
- d. Man generally devolves, but the process is not inevitable. Man still has free will.
 - (1) In some generations, a people's ethical behavior actually improves.

10. In Romans 1:29-31, Paul lists the vices that characterize obvious Gentile sinners.

- a. **Ro 1:29-31** 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

⁶⁰ A. H. Strong, *A Tour of the Missions: Observations and Conclusions* (Philadelphia: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1918).

They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

11. Understanding and referring often to Romans 1 is of great benefit to us.

- a. It is often difficult to explain to an unbeliever unfamiliar with the biblical worldview why the gospel is necessary for them.
- b. From Romans 1, the evangelist is able to communicate to the unbeliever that:
 - (1) God has made himself and his attributes clearly known to him.
 - (2) He is actively and continually suppressing the truth about God in unrighteousness.
 - (3) He is guilty before God and without excuse for not worshipping him.
 - (4) God will hold him accountable for his failure to worship.
- c. We need to go about evangelism in the same way the apostle Paul did.

12. Romans 1 pushes us to preach the gospel because general revelation is not enough.

- a. While general knowledge of God is available to all people through creation, that knowledge is not enough for unbelievers to be justified.
- b. The gospel message must be preached, as Romans 10:14-15 indicates.
 - (1) **Ro 10:14-15** 14 How then will [unbelievers] call on [Jesus] in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!
- c. Nowhere does Paul state or imply the gospel message is available through creation.
- d. Creation provides people enough information about God for them to be held accountable for their disbelief and idolatry, but it does not proclaim the gospel message. That is our job by the power of the Spirit!

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Notes