

Romans 1:18–32

April 13, 2025

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, 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 are without excuse. ²¹ 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. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ 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.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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. ²⁹ They were filled 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 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.

I. Introduction

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul opens his argument in Romans by establishing the universal reality of sin and God's righteous wrath against it, setting the stage for the necessity of the gospel. He highlights how God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, particularly in the way humanity suppresses the truth about God. Despite the clear evidence of God's existence and power through creation, people reject Him and turn to worship creatures in idolatry. This passage marks the beginning of Paul's argument about the corruption of human nature, showing that sin is not merely a failure of knowledge, but a deliberate act of willful

disobedience. As Paul outlines the consequences of this rejection, he sets the stage for the gospel's need in restoring humanity to a right relationship with God. This passage serves as a sobering reflection on the depths of human depravity, calling for both repentance and an understanding of God's righteous judgment.

II. Exposition and Commentary

1. Humanity's Suppression of the Truth (vv. 18-23)

- God's wrath is revealed because people *suppress the truth*—not merely from ignorance, but from active rebellion.
- The reality of God is evident in creation, but instead of worshiping Him, people turn to idols.
- If the evidence of God is so clear in creation, why do people suppress it?
- According to Paul, what can we know about God from creation?

2. God's Judgment: Giving Them Over (vv. 24-32)

- Three times, Paul states that *God gave them up* to their sinful desires, showing that divine judgment involves not only permitting but actively giving people over to the consequences of their desires as part of His righteous judgment.
- The passage lists various sins—sexual immorality, greed, envy, murder, deceit, arrogance, disobedience, and more—demonstrating the full spectrum of human depravity.
- What does it mean that people *suppress the truth* about God?
- How is God's wrath revealed in giving people over to their desires?
- What forms of idolatry do you struggle with?

General Revelation: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, vol 1: Prolegomena*

God's revelation began in creation and continues in the maintenance and governance of all things. He reveals himself in nature all around us, displays in it his eternal power and divinity, and in blessings and judgments alternately shows this goodness and wrath (Job 36; 37; Ps. 29; 33:5; 65; 67:7; 90; 104; 107; 145; 147; Isa. 59:17-19; Matt. 5:45; Rom. 1:18; Acts 14:16-17). He reveals himself in the history of nations and persons (Deut. 32:8; Ps. 33:10; 67:4; 115:16; Prov. 8:15, 16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 13:1). He also discloses himself in the heart and conscience of

every individual (Job 32:8; 33:4; Prov. 20:27; John 1:3-5, 9, 10; Rom. 2:14, 15; 8:16). This revelation of God is general, perceptible as such, and intelligible to every human. Nature and history are the book of God's omnipotence and wisdom, his goodness and justice. All peoples have to a certain extent recognized this revelation. Even idolatry presupposes that God's "power" and "divinity" manifests itself in creatures.

2nd London Baptist Confession 1:1

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience,¹ although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation.² Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diversified manners to reveal Himself, and to declare (that) His will unto His church;³ and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now completed.⁴

¹ 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Is. 8:20; Luke 16:29,31; Eph. 2:20

² Rom. 1:19-21, 2:14–15; Psalm 19:1-3

³ Heb. 1:1

⁴ Prov. 22:19-21; Rom. 15:4; 2 Pet. 1:19–20

Bridge: David Peterson, *Romans*. Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary

The problem of evil demands answers and is a key obstacle to belief in a good God for many people. But if we truly face the problem of evil as this passage exposes it, we will see the need for the solution that a good God has provided (1:16-17; 3:21-26). The issue is humanity's unwillingness to acknowledge their Creator and to live in a way that honors his character and intentions. People prefer to be wise in their own eyes and to pursue godless and unrighteous patterns of thinking and behavior. Idolatry and sexual immorality are two particular consequences of rejecting what can be known about God from the created order. But Paul's concluding list identifies many ways human life is affected by this refusal to acknowledge God. A Christian assessment of the moral and social evils that characterize human life must include this theological perspective. The justice of God's wrath needs to be faced, as he abandons humanity to the consequences of sin. Our present experience of God's judgment anticipates, but does not replace, the ultimate "day of wrath"

(2:5). It functions as a warning of final judgment and as a stimulus to seek reconciliation with God. Convincing people of the rightness of God's present and future judgment against sin is an important preliminary to proclaiming and explaining the saving righteousness of God. The more we understand the enormity of our disregard for God and his intentions for our lives, the more we will see our need for his saving grace and the transforming power of the gospel.

Memory Verse:

Romans 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Song: *Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me* by Augustus Toplady (1776)

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which
flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

2 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. **2** We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. **3** Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? **4** Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? **5** But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

6 He will render to each one according to his works: **7** to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; **8** but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. **9** There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, **10** but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. **11** For God shows no partiality.

I. Introduction

Romans 2:1-11 transitions from Paul’s argument in Romans 1 to address both Jews and Gentiles within the context of God’s impartial judgment. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul condemns Gentiles for their rejection of God’s truth and their resulting moral decay. However, in chapter 2, Paul shifts his focus to the Jews, as he begins to point out that God’s judgment is not based on nationality or mere outward conformity to the law, but on true righteousness. He begins by confronting those who are self-righteous, regardless of their ethnic identity, emphasizing that all will be judged according to their deeds.

II. Exposition and Commentary

1. The Self-Righteousness of Those Who Judge (v. 1)

- Paul addresses those who condemn others, showing that when they do so, they condemn themselves. Their judgment is hypocritical because they practice the same sins they accuse others of.

- When we focus on the faults of others without acknowledging our own, we place ourselves in a position of judgment, forgetting that God alone is the just judge.
- Could it be that our tendency to criticize others is more about deflecting attention from our own sins than about genuine concern for others' sins?

2. The Righteous Judgment of God (vv. 2-3)

- Paul affirms that God's judgment is always just and righteous. The self-righteous judge who condemns others is in danger of the same judgment, because they are guilty of the same sins.
- The moral law is not just a standard to be imposed on others but applies to all. Paul challenges the assumption that we can escape God's judgment by pointing fingers at others.
- Does your judgment of others blind you to your own judgement before God?

3. God's Kindness Leads to Repentance (v. 4)

- God's kindness and patience are meant to lead people to repentance, not to be taken for granted as a sign of approval for their sin.
- This verse shows that God's mercy should not be abused. His patience is an invitation to turn from sin, not a license to continue in it.
- If God's patience leads us to repentance, how should we respond when we see His grace in our lives?

4. The Storing Up of Wrath (vv. 5-6)

- Those who persist in sin without repentance are storing up God's wrath for themselves. On the day of judgment, each person will be rewarded according to their deeds.
- There is a future reckoning for the deeds done in this life. The idea of "storing up wrath" reminds us that unrepentant sin does not go unpunished.
- Are you aware that your actions have eternal consequences?

5. Two Paths: Eternal Life or Wrath (vv. 7-8)

- Paul presents the standard of perfect obedience required for eternal life under the law—one which no sinner meets. This drives home the necessity of justification by faith in Christ alone.
- Paul presents two distinct paths: one leads to eternal life and peace, the other to wrath.

- How do your desires and choices reflect your eternal perspective?

6. The Universality of God's Judgment (vv. 9-10)

- Paul stresses that God's judgment applies to both Jews and Gentiles equally—both will experience the consequences of evil deeds or the rewards for good deeds.
- God shows no partiality. His judgment is based on righteousness, not ethnicity, status, or knowledge.
- How does this truth challenge any notion of superiority based on religious or cultural background?

7. God's Impartiality (v. 11)

- Paul concludes with the statement that God shows no partiality, underscoring that His judgment is fair and impartial.
- Does your life reflect God's impartiality in how you treat your neighbors, or do you show favoritism where He does not?

2nd London Baptist Confession 5:6

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin does blind and harden;¹⁷ from them He not only withholds His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts;¹⁸ but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had,¹⁹ and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin;²⁰ and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan,²¹ whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God uses for the softening of others.²²

¹⁷ Rom. 1:24–26,28, 11:7–8

¹⁸ Deut. 29:4

¹⁹ Matt. 13:12

²⁰ Deut. 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12–13

²¹ Ps. 81:11,12; 2 Thess. 2:10–12

²² Exod. 8:15,32; Isa. 6:9–10; 1 Pet. 2:7–8

Baptist History: John Gill, *Expositions*. Romans 2:11

It will not come into consideration, at the day of judgment, of what nation men are; or from what parents they are descended; nor of what age and sex persons be; nor in what state and condition they have lived in this world; nor will it be asked to what sect they have belonged, and by what denomination they have been called; or

whether they have conformed to such and such externals and rituals in religion; but only whether they are righteous men or sinners; and accordingly as they appear under these characters, judgment will proceed.

Some object from hence, though without any reason, to the doctrine of particular election of certain persons to everlasting salvation. This passage respects matters of strict justice, and is a forensic expression relating to courts of judicature, where persons presiding are to have no regard to the faces of men, but do that which is strictly just between man and man; and does not respect matters of grace and free favour, such as giving alms, forgiving debts, etc.

A judge, as such, is to regard no man's person, but to proceed in matters before him, according to the rules of law and justice should he do otherwise, he would be chargeable with being a respecter of persons; but then he may bestow alms on what objects he pleases; and forgive one man who is personally indebted to him, and not another, without any such imputation.

This, applied to the case in hand, abundantly clears it; for though God, as a Judge, respects no man's person; yet in matters of grace he distinguishes one person from another, as it is plain he does by the bounties of his Providence.

Besides, God is not bound to any person by any laws, but acts as a Sovereign; he is not moved by anything in the creature; as his choice is not confined to persons of any particular nation, family, sex, or condition, so neither does it proceed upon anything, or a foresight of anything in them, or done by them; and as there is no worthiness in them that are chosen, and saved above others, so no injury is done to the rest: add to all this, that those that are saved by virtue of electing grace, are saved in a way of righteousness agreeably to the holy law, and strict justice of God; so that no complaint can be made against the distinguishing methods of grace, upon the foot of strict justice.

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