



4.
'Without excuse'
Romans 1.18-32

Background

The good news centres round the 'righteousness of God', as the previous study, centred on Rm.1.16-17, highlighted.

God's *provision* for us of a righteousness in and through His Son Jesus only makes sense – and is only seen to be 'good news' – in the light of His *revelation* to us of His own inherent righteousness and the consequent exercise of His righteous judgment or wrath.

In this next section, therefore, Paul articulates the sobering implications of the righteousness of God. With his customary relentless logic he sets out, first, the sobering fact of God's wrath (v.18); then the reason for that wrath (vv.19-23); before finally showing in what that wrath consists, and how it finds expression (vv.24-32).

What is taught in these verses is uncomfortable, unpopular – and in the view of many today, downright offensive. And while it's important, therefore, to address these verses with both a constant humility and a careful sensitivity, it's important, too, to recognise that they are nonetheless God's truth.

The wrath of God is very real; it's an expression of His righteous character; it's the way in which a righteous God must deal with those intent on going their own way.

And it's important to remember that Paul's reason for expounding the wrath of God here is precisely to show just why the gospel is 'good news'. God Himself has provided for us the remedy we need – namely a 'righteousness' in Jesus which we ourselves so lack. But we will only fully appreciate how marvellous is God's *provision* when we see clearly how dreadful is our *predicament*.

Not only is the wrath of God very real. It's also a present reality. It's not just that there's a coming day of judgment (we are to be very sure of that), we're also to see that the wrath of God is, in the here and now, being revealed. Our own contemporary society illustrates that well. What we see in our society today is not so much what warrants the wrath of God, as the evidence of the reality of God's wrath.

A sobering study, which must surely prompt much prayer for gospel ministry.

Read the whole passage, and if you can't address it all in your discussion, then start with '**days**' (1), (2) and (4).

1) Monday 29th January – suppressing God’s truth

Read [Romans 1.18-20](#)

“.. so that people are without excuse ..” (Rom.1.20)

God is the Creator from whom our lives derive, the Sustainer through whom we live, and the Judge, to whom we must give an account. Uncomfortable truths perhaps, but the truth all the same: and we suppress that truth (plain for all to see) at our peril.

Why does Paul start his exposition of the good news by highlighting ‘the wrath of God’?

What is the difference between ‘godlessness’ and ‘wickedness’?

How would you explain the wrath of God to those who see an ‘angry God’ as the contradiction of a God of love?

How have “God’s invisible qualities” been clearly seen?

Prayer: *The heavens declare Your glory, O God: the skies proclaim the work of Your hands! Help me rest in the light of Your goodness and live for the praise of Your glory.*

2) Tuesday 30th January – ditching God’s rule

Read [Romans 1.21-23](#)

“.. although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ..” (Rom.1.22)

We are made to be worshippers. Refusing to acknowledge the one true God may seem to suggest you’re clever and wise – but you’ll end up worshipping something else (as often as not yourself). Shut your eyes to the truth, and you end up in the dark, a fool.

In what sense is Paul able to say that “.. they knew God”?

Why does the failure to glorify God and give thanks to Him issue in futile thinking and darkened hearts?

How do you see Paul’s words here being played out in our society today?

Is ‘idolatry’ still an issue in society today – and what forms does such ‘idolatry’ take?

Prayer: *My heart is filled with thankfulness, for every day I have on earth is given by You, my King: grant me wisdom and grace to glorify You today in all I say and do.*

3) Wednesday 31st January – choosing a lie

Read [Romans 1.24-25](#)

“.. God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts ..” (Rom.1.25)

The first of three such statements. The God who is able to do immeasurably more than you ask or think may also give you a whole load more than what you bargain for when you foolishly choose to exchange the truth about God for something else. Be careful!

When people 'exchange the glory of God for images' what is God's purpose in 'giving them over' to sexual impurity?

What examples are there in our society today of people 'worshipping and serving created things rather than the Creator'?

Prayer: *You alone, O Lord, are worthy of my heart's praise and worship. Keep me from being distracted by other things, and help me invest my energies in seeking Your glory.*

4) Thursday 1st February – abandoning God's order

Read [Romans 1.26-27](#)

".. because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts .." (Rom.1.26)

It's the Maker in His manual who determines the 'natural' order of things. Not us, in terms of our likes and leanings. Forgot the ways of the Lord, follow your own desires – and you may just get what you ask for, with a consequent 'wasting disease' ([Ps.106](#))

What is Paul pointing to when, three times over, he declares that 'God gave them over ..'?

Why does God's righteous wrath see Him giving a people over to unrighteous behaviour?

How would you answer someone who argued that what is 'natural' should be determined by their own sexual orientation?

In the light of these verses what would Paul have made of the sexual mores being promoted in our society today?

Prayer: *Show me Your ways, Lord, and teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Saviour, and my hope is in You all day long ([Ps.25](#))*

5) Friday 2nd February – ignoring God's ways

Read [Romans 1.28](#)

".. so God gave them over to a depraved mind .." (Rom.1.28)

Futile ideologies are the reason why societies go to seed. For our minds are either *discerning* (well-taught in the ways of the Lord) or *depraved* (reliant on our finite, flawed perspectives, as God's judgment on our arrogance). Order or chaos will follow.

Is it true of Scotland today that as a nation there came a point when we did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God?

Is a 'depraved mind' an expression of God's judgment on our disowning of Him?

***Prayer:** Lord, we long for You to move in power, to see healing in our nation. O Healer of hearts, Binder of wounds, flow through this land in mercy again to restore our life.*

6) Saturday 3rd February – experiencing God's judgment

Read [Romans 1.29-31](#)

".. they have become filled with every kind of wickedness .." (Rom.1.29)

Welcome to a world that has cast off restraint! A world without boundaries might sound great, but it's anarchy rather than freedom, chaotic, confused and cruel – the law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest, a foretaste of the hell which is to come.

To what extent does Paul's catalogue of behaviour in vv.29-30 mirror what we see in our own society today?

Is there any hope for a society which has sunk to these depths and become characterised in this sort of way?

***Prayer:** Lord, we have disowned and doubted You: our spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care, we are hungry, helpless and lost without You. Have mercy on us, Lord.*

7) Sunday 4th February – flouting God's law

Read [Romans 1.32](#)

".. God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death .." (Rom.1.32)

We're addicted to sin: like every addiction, this sin is perverse and irrational. We know it leads to death, but we simply can't stop, and we kid ourselves on that by saying it's good it'll all be all right in the end. What fools we are! How great our need of a Saviour!

Many today are 3 (or more) generations away from any exposure to the truths of the Bible: can it be said of them that 'they know God's righteous decree'?

What instances can you see in our land today of approval being given to those things that are deserving of death?

***Prayer:** What riches of kindness You've lavished on us, Your blood was the payment, Your life was the cost. We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford, our sins they are many, Your mercy is more. Praise You, Lord!*