

GOD'S GLORIOUS GOSPEL**Romans 1.18—2.29****The Gospel: God's Righteous Wrath and Judgment****I | CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS**

1 / Paul's purpose and aim for writing this Book-letter to the Romans is two-fold: [1] to thoroughly lay out in detailed explanation and comprehensive development what the Gospel is; and [2] to show that this one Gospel is equally applicable to both Jews and Gentiles—without distinction, favoritism, or partiality. God is not predisposed to favor Jews; nor is He predisposed to discriminate against Gentiles. God is neither prejudiced for Jews nor against Gentiles just because of who they are. **For God shows no partiality, ch 2.11.**

2 / Therefore, Paul will throughout Romans address one of the primary cultural dynamics that was plaguing the church fellowship in Rome and the unity among the Jewish and Gentile saints: conflicts, tensions, and even rivalry among the two ethnic groups. That's why we will hear Paul repeatedly state some variation of his all-inclusive statement: **to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile].**

3 / Our last lesson passage concluded with Paul's all-inclusive 'dynamic' confession of the God's Gospel in v 16. And then, Paul introduces in v 17 what will be his summary statement of **what the Gospel reveals—and that is, 'the righteousness of God!'** The Gospel is the message and the power by which **the Righteous God saves—declares to be righteous before Him—those who are unrighteous.** Or, as John Stott says, *"...in the Gospel God's righteous way of 'righteousing' the unrighteous has been revealed" [ch 1.14-17].*

4 / However, since *everyone—Jews and Gentiles—are ALL unrighteous before God in their human-born nature and condition, therefore, the only way we can be 'righteous' before God is BY FAITH in the Gospel God has revealed in Christ!* So, everything in Romans here on will be the **revealing** of that Gospel of God in Christ which *everyone* must believe by FAITH! **"For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'" [ch 1.17].** That phrase **'from faith for faith'** simply means: **'it is by faith, and only by faith, from beginning to end—and it's always been that way!'** Paul quotes here from **Habakkuk 2.4** to show that those who were saved in the Old Testament/Covenant era were saved by the same faith that the Gospel as it is now revealed in Christ requires! It is by FAITH and FAITH ALONE exclusively, solely, and always!

5 / NOW, beginning with this lesson passage, Paul will begin to lay his foundation for why it must be by FAITH. And that is because all of us—the whole human race without distinction—are **unrighteous and ungodly**, and since we are NOT **the righteousness of God** by born human nature and condition, we are therefore *under the righteous wrath and judgment of God.* And if we are to be saved from God's righteous wrath and judgment against our sin, we must have FAITH IN, believe in the Gospel He has revealed in Christ!

ch 1.18-31 | God's righteous wrath is revealed from Heaven against all our unrighteousness and ungodliness—particularly those godless, pagan cultures [whether 'cultured' or 'uncultured (ch 1.14)] who reject His Glory for their own preferred 'lesser glories'

v 18: NOTE the repetition of the word **'revealed.'** In v 17, God **reveals** His righteousness in the Gospel of Christ—which we must believe and receive by FAITH. In v 18, we must believe in God's righteousness by faith because the righteous God's **wrath is revealed from Heaven** against the unrighteousness and ungodliness we are and practice in our born human nature and condition. We call this 'the bad news of the Good News.' In the following descriptions of our universal human sinfulness, Paul will reveal that we all have **suppressed the truth of God's righteousness by our unrighteousness.**

vv 19-20: God has shown us who He is in His creation. We know there is a God of **eternal power and divine nature** who is above, beyond, and more glorious than we are. And He has revealed Himself so clearly and powerfully, **So they are without excuse.**

vv 21-23: Our refusal to acknowledge, honor, and give thanks to God who so clearly reveals Himself in His creation has not only perverted ['darkened'] our very faculties of thinking and emotions, but we have also 'exchanged' and counterfeited His Glory for the worship and glory of ourselves and other elements of His created things! NOTE that any object, idea, or belief of our 'spiritual loyalty' to which we give ourselves in 'worship' is an idol ... and is a rejection of the Glorious God, the Creator.

vv 24-25: "Therefore..." as a righteous consequence of His righteous judgment, **God has 'given us up, given us over' to the delusions and addictions to those sets of lies we have chosen to believe—preferred religion—whatever it may be.** And then, to emphasize God's righteousness in this *turning us over to our own preferred idol-worship*, Paul adds this doxology: **"the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."** NOTE: God's giving us over to our worship of our preferred sets of lies is *His present WRATH OF GOD that is being revealed now in this time!* And it is a foreshadowing of **the wrath to come** in that final Day of Judgment **"on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed"** in the end, **ch 2.5, 16.** Paul is leading up to that—but the accepted perversions of the culture right now in our own day and time is **the wrath of God being revealed** against us.

vv 26-27: What follows here is a sordid, detailed commentary of why God is righteously justified for **revealing His wrath** against a society and culture that so denies, abominates, and perverts God's Glory that He reveals in His creation order. **V 25** says **"because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator"** – and then **v 26** follows with **"For this reason..."** God reveals His wrath against our unrighteousness by **'giving us over, giving us up'** to what we choose to do as a society and culture of **ungodliness**. And the ultimate example is the prevalent practice of the homosexuality culture among both men and women. Both male and female homosexuality practices are **exchanges** and perversions of God's righteous and glorious creation order. **"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."** NOTE that when a culture normalizes and 'declares to be right and natural' the abominable practices of homosexuality—that in itself is **the wrath of God being revealed from Heaven**. And the inevitable corruption, decay, and eventual erosion and destruction of that culture is **the due penalty for their error**. And, it is the righteous precursor of the coming Day of Wrath upon them, both individually and corporately that will be meted out in their eternal condemnation in the Day of God's righteous judgment, **ch 2.5, 16.**

vv 28-31: When these ultimate **shameless acts** are normalized, accepted, and codified into a culture, every other practice of sinful unrighteousness will follow as an exercise of **the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth [going back to v 18].** **"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..."** and then what follows is a whole catalog of depravity that will be **'approved and practiced.'** All of these social abominations will pervade and permeate their society because when they reject God and His righteousness to choose their own preferred lifestyles, God **gives them up to a debased mind**. They have no righteous sense of right and wrong, no conscience, and no ability to discern what is good.

ch 2.1-16 | God's righteous wrath is revealed from Heaven against judgmental moralizers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles

vv 1-2: Paul now turns his attention to another group of godless practitioners of unrighteous—those who think of themselves that they are the **'righteous elite'** and judge, condemn, and reject everyone else who is **'not one of them.'** Paul has already rendered the former class of pagan idolaters, who have rejected God for their own 'idea-worship,' are **without excuse** before **the righteous wrath of God**, **ch**

1.20. Now, the same indictment and verdict of **“Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges”** those who do not ‘worship’ their preferred ‘god.’ **“We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.”**

vv 3-5: Two rhetorical questions expose their perverted and depraved delusions of ‘self-righteousness’ and ‘self-justification’: **“Do you suppose, O man...?”** and **“Or do you presume...?”** God has extended to them all over centuries of time **the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, [they] not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance...** God has not immediately, in their real-time generations destroyed them all, giving them space to repent and turn to Him in repentance. BUT, they are all consumed by their own self-imposed judgments in history, and God’s full, final, and eternal condemnation yet awaits when **the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven...on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.**

vv 6-11: God will judge every person, every peoples, every culture by the one righteous standard that applies to all—**“the Jew first and also the Greek [Gentile]...for God shows no partiality.”** God will render to each one according to his works because our ‘works’ are the practical outworkings of our ‘faith’—that is, what we believe, trust in, and worship. The over-arching condition and requirement for righteousness [being declared righteous before God] is GOSPEL FAITH in God’s provision: **“The righteous shall live by faith” [ch 1.17].** So, here are the two contrasting ends of those believe, trust in, and worship God...and those who do not: **“to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.”**

vv 12-16: Paul continues with God’s righteous indictment and judgment against all those who moralize themselves into believing they are ‘right with God’ in their own self-assessment and self-justification because they presume they have practiced their religion in accordance with God’s revealed Law. But they have done so only outwardly and superficially and not with true saving faith in God.

[1] **“The Law”** is God’s standard for judgment because The Law is the expression of God’s own righteousness. Therefore, in order for us to be **righteous before God** or ‘right with God,’ we must be in perfect, absolute compliance with and conformity to **The Law**. This is the basis of the Gospel’s message.

[2] The two class distinctions Paul makes here are **sinned without the Law** and **sinned under the Law**. Those **without the Law** are the pagan peoples, whether ‘civilized’ and ‘cultured’ or not. They didn’t have the advantage of knowing God’s revelation of Himself. Those **who have sinned under the Law** are the Jews with their history of knowing God’s revelation of Himself in the Law. Paul will explain this distinction in the words that follow, and especially by referring to **circumcision** as the physical marker God gave His people from the beginning, **Genesis 17.9-14 ff.**

[3] The Gentiles, **who have sinned without the Law...who do not have the Law**, still know right from wrong because God has revealed a natural standard for righteousness in His creation, which they have rejected [**ch 1.19-23**]. But they have condemned themselves and made themselves **without excuse** before God and His Law because when they **by nature do what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law. They show that the work of the Law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...**

[4] On the other hand, **all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law** because they have kept and observed its requirements only outwardly and superficially. They have just ‘gone through the outward physical motions’ without a heart of **faith** toward God, trusting Him to make them right before Him. They had a ‘head knowledge’ of the Law without a ‘heart knowledge’ of love for God and **faith** in Him to make them righteous. **“For it is not the hearers of the Law who will justified [made**

righteous].” And since the Gospel that Paul preached **first reveals the wrath of God from Heaven against all the unrighteous**, Paul declares that it will be finally and eternally adjudicated **on that Day when, according to my Gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.**

ch 2.17-29 | Jews, therefore, are not ‘righteous’ and justified before God just because of their religious knowledge, legacy, or heritage—if they rely on their Jewish identity without FAITH

vv 17-24: Paul reveals the inconsistency and self-contradiction of the Jews’ trust and reliance upon their religious heritage to make them ‘right before God’...

[1] He proposes two ‘if’s to show them the fallacy and deficiency of their self-righteous presumptions that they have and keep the Law: **“But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the Law and boast in God and know His will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the Law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth...”**

[2] However, even while they presume their moral and religious supremacy because of what they ‘know’ in their minds and presume to ‘practice’ in their lifestyle, they **dishonor God by breaking the Law** they boast in and seek to impose on others—to make the ‘others’ as ‘right before God’ as they presume they are: **“While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?”** In this way, they not only prove themselves to violate the very Law they presume to impose on everybody else, but they also bring God’s **righteousness** and **righteous Law** into disrepute among the Gentiles they seek to assume superiority over. **“For, as it is written, ‘The Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’”** quoting from **Isaiah 52.5.**

vv 25-29: Mere ‘Jewishness’ will not save without FAITH in Christ from their heart...

[1] Their required compliance with the Old Testament physical marker of **circumcision**, which God gave them to mark them as people of true faith, is **of value** if—and only if—they love, obey, and trust in their hearts that God will justify them by their **faith** in Him. Otherwise, if they have the physical mark of **circumcision** without **faith in God’s righteousness**, they are seeking to establish their own righteousness and, in effect, **become uncircumcision**. On the other hand, **“if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the Law [by faith, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?”** That is, if an **uncircumcised** Gentile obeys and receives God’s **righteousness by faith**, then he is the one who finds favor with God!

[2] And then, we come to this inviolable marker of how God truly identifies who is His true Israel, or Jew: **“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”** Being a Jew by ethnicity or religious heritage in no way makes one ‘more special’ to God or ‘more favored’ by God when it comes to **righteousness**; nor are they ‘grandfathered’ into the people of God by their ethnic or religious ‘Jewishness.’ God receives us into His grace and ‘makes us right with God’ only and solely on the basis of **FAITH**. This is the consistent proclamation of the Gospel in all of Scripture—both Old and New Testaments.

CONCLUSION: Paul will continue in the next section to declare that Yes! there are advantages to being a Jew—but only in that God first revealed Himself to them through their covenant forefathers: Abraham, Moses, David, and the others. But he will also continue to bring every human being, Jew or Gentile, **ALL** under the condemnation, judgment, and **wrath of God** because of the universality of their sin. This universality of sin and **wrath of God against our unrighteousness** is what requires **FAITH!** [see **ch 3.19-20**] The Gospel of God through **faith** in the **righteousness of God in Jesus Christ** begins with this **revelation of the wrath of God** against our sin—and will lead us to **“Therefore having been justified through faith...”**

But, we must ‘become lost’ before we can ‘become the righteousness of God’ in Jesus Christ!