



**God's Wrath Against "Pagan Practices"**  
**(Romans 1:18-32)**

# **Review from last week:**

- **The Faith-Righteousness Connection (Romans 1:16-17)**

# **\*The righteous shall live by faith**

## **(Romans 1:17)**

<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,<sup>[b]</sup> as it is written, **"The righteous shall live by faith."**<sup>[c]</sup>

b. Romans 1:17 Or *beginning and ending in faith*

c. Romans 1:17 Or The one who by faith is righteous shall live

# Those who are saved shall live by faith

- “We walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)  
[Effective living requires using more than just what the senses perceive]
- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6)  
[Believe wholeheartedly in the Lord, even when it may not seem logical]

# **\*The one who by faith is righteous shall live**

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# Who is “Righteous”?

- The “righteous” are those who are saved by grace through faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross to pay the price for our sins
- <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

# Bringing it together

- **The Faith-Righteousness Connection (Romans 1:16-17):**
- We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.
- Because of this faith, we are made righteous by Christ's righteousness
- We then continue to grow in our faith by walking by faith
- That is, we are saved and made righteous through faith, and we continue to grow in Christ by continuing to walk in faith.

# Paul's Direction in Romans, chapters 1-3

- (By Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken in *The Literary Study Bible*)
- **(Romans 1:18-32)** Immoral people are guilty before God (Gentiles/ "Pagans")
- **(Romans 2:1-16)** Moral people are guilty too (Philosophical ethicists)
- **(Romans 2:17-3:8)** Even religious people are guilty (Jews)
- **(Romans 3:9-20)** The whole world is guilty before God (Everyone)
- **(Romans 3:21-31)** The righteousness of God through faith (The Solution)



# **A reading of Romans 1:18-20a**

- **I. God's Presence in ~~Natural~~ General Revelation**

# I. God's Presence in ~~Natural~~ General Revelation

## (Romans 1:18-20)

- **“General Revelation”**: “A term used to declare that God reveals something about the divine nature through the created order. This self-revealing of God through creation is general because it only gives “general” or “indirect” information about God, including the fact of God’s existence and that God is powerful.
- This is in contrast to “special revelation,” which is more “specific” and “direct,” and includes the appearance of the living Word (Jesus Christ himself) and the written Word of God (the Scriptures), revealing a holy, loving and just God who graciously provides forgiveness of sin.
- General revelation is likewise “general” in that it is available to all humankind, in contrast to the divine self-disclosure that God revealed to certain persons.”
- *--The Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*

# General Revelation

- The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4 ESV)

# “Special Revelation”

- **“Special Revelation”**: “Although the Bible seemingly affirms both general and special revelation, only special revelation can disclose completely our sinful predicament, as well as God’s promise of salvation and its fulfillment in Christ.”
- Examples of Special Revelation: Jesus, the Bible, God’s appearance to the prophets
- <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 ESV)
- “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

# Natural Theology

- “Natural theology maintains that humans can attain particular knowledge about God through human reason by observing the created order as one locus of divine revelation.”
- Oppositional view: If this were accurate, it would eliminate the need for Jesus as a sacrificial redeemer for human sins; thus, most Christian theologians reject this theory.

# An argument against “Natural Theology”

- “Natural theology . . . Expresses the belief that it is possible for human beings through nature to come to know God, and that therefore, as the way to God, creation is an alternative to Christ. . . .
- But there are degrees to the knowledge of God, and these phrases cannot possibly refer to the full knowledge of him enjoyed by those who have been reconciled to him through Christ.
- For what Paul says here is that through general revelation people can know God’s power, deity, and glory (not his saving grace through Christ).”

--John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 74

# **A reading of Romans 1:20b-25**

## **II. Humanity's Apostacy and Idolatry**

## II. Humanity's Apostacy and Idolatry (Romans 1:21-25)

- **Why do so many people fail to respond to the Gospel?**

“How we see and don't see what's right in front of us, depend[s] on what we're intent on believing” (Frank Bruni).

- **Apathy:** when someone just doesn't care
- \*(Romans 1:22) “Claiming to be wise, they became fools” [refuses to listen]
  - “Things are going just fine with me”
  - “People are basically good”
  - “We are responsible for our own happiness”
  - “We construct our own reality”
  - “God either doesn't exist or we cannot know him/her/it”
  - Karma: “live a good life and you will be rewarded”



# II. Humanity's Apostasy and Idolatry

## (Romans 1:21-25)

- **What have we traded God for? (“Modern idolatry”)**

(Romans 1:23) “And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images”

- Physical pleasures
- Leisure/recreation
- Wealth and materialism
- Power (political, relational, business, etc.)
- Prestige and fame
- Gender identity supersedes spiritual identity
- Etc., etc., etc.

- All the above replace a longing to have a close, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ with something else, something lesser.

## **II. Humanity's Apostacy and Idolatry**

(Romans 1:21-25)

- “All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit.” (Isaiah 44:9)
- “What profit is an idol  
when its maker has shaped it,  
a metal image, a teacher of lies?  
For its maker trusts in his own creation  
when he makes speechless idols! (Habakkuk 2:18)

# **A reading of Romans 1:26-32**

## **III. Consequences of Unrighteousness**

A. Dishonorable Passions (1:26-27)

B. Debased Minds (1:28-31)

C. Encouragement of Sin (1:32)

# Keep in mind . . .

- Most people tend to believe that the sins committed by others are worse than those committed by themselves
- Most people conveniently identify the “worst sins” as those which they themselves do not happen to be tempted by
- Most people evaluate their own virtue by comparing themselves to others, rather than evaluating themselves by the more demanding standards and expectations set by God in the Bible
- An applicable cliché: “When you point your finger at others, three of your fingers are pointing back at you.”

# **IV. Takeaway: Walking with Discernment**

(As Christians, we are oftentimes called to juggle seemingly incompatible objectives)

A. Humility	AND	Confidence
B. Mercy	AND	Justice
C. Imago Dei	AND	Accountability
D. In the World	AND	Not of the World



**Let Us Pray**

A photograph of two hands raised in prayer, holding a glowing white cross. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, golden sunset sky with clouds. The sun is visible through the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The background shows a horizon line over water.