

Romans Summary
Week 2, Wednesday September 14, 2016
Romans 1:18-32

Paul finished his last section with the declaration that he is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to those who believe and because those who are righteous live by faith that God will be faithful to his covenant. Now he begins this section with, “For the wrath of God is revealed,” this ties in with the last section. In short, the righteous wait for God’s righteous judgment, and that’s what the wrath of God is. Through Paul’s gospel the judgment of God is shown.

Wrath, of course, is a category of the ‘last day’ when God will judge the world. However, Paul claims that through his gospel God’s wrath has already come. Meaning, like the kingdom itself, the judgement of God is both already and not yet. The main emphasis is that because Paul reveals the judge, Jesus, through the preaching of his gospel, a new period in world history has come. Ignorance has now been swept away.

Paul describes the ‘already’ dynamic of God’s wrath and the logic under it. He describes humanity as having suppressed the truth about God, though it is clearly seen from the creation. This leaves all people without excuse. More they then began to worship the creation itself rather than the creator. This idolatry is what they claimed was wise—here we have the Genesis 2 story and the Israel in the wilderness story, as well as paganism in general.

The result of this darkened heart and foolish thinking is that God gave them up (or over) three times. First, he gives them over to their impurity which leads to their bodies being dishonoured. Second, he gives them over to their passions. Specifically, homosexuality is mentioned, not as a particularly wicked sin, but because there is an inherent male and female-ness in the Genesis 1 image of God. Finally, God gives them over to a depraved mind. Here Paul uses words to paint a picture of the thoroughly wickedness of humanity.

The final word is the fitness of this judgment. People know God, they know this (general or innate) inappropriateness of this way of living. More they know that those who live this way deserve destruction, yet they continue. And, what’s worse, not only do they do it themselves, willing to take destruction, but they actually encourage others to do the same and be destroyed.

The final picture of wrath (v. 18) is death (v. 32). Death is the final and total dehumanization—after all we were made for life.

“Power of Obedience” reflection and discussion questions:

1. Rutledge finds comfort in the humanness of Peter and Paul—not stained-glass saints. How has church conflict impacted you?
2. If obedience is out of favour and disobedience is hip, then how are we prepared to cease our rebellion?
3. Christians are agents of God’s transcendent power—what are your daily decisions which will overcome the world?