

1. **Introduction**: Paul begins to discuss the gospel.
2. **Romans 1:16**: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*
  - Many of today’s self-appointed “wise people” think the Gospel is foolishness, something to be ashamed of believing.
  - Paul is convinced the gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe.
  - By “salvation” Paul means God saving people from the personal threat of God’s wrath at sin (which is anything contrary to His character). God’s holy nature wrathfully opposes all unholy, unrighteous thoughts, words, and deeds.
  - Of all the bad things you want to avoid in life, being an object of God’s wrath should be at the top of the list. Yet because of our fallen nature, we are and will be objects of God’s wrath – unless He saves us!
  - Paul boldly proclaimed the life-affirming gospel in all kinds of situations, wherever he went, including while being a prisoner of Rome.
  - While in prison, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.
  - Far from being ashamed of the gospel, Paul gloried in spreading the good news.
  - Today, pressure of circumstances often causes people who are Christians to be ashamed of the gospel and people who are not Christians to ignore it.
  - Since the Fall, no one can achieve righteous standing before God without God’s intervention. No knowledge, work, sacrifice, or self-merit will suffice.
  - How then can anyone become righteous before God? Only through God’s gracious intervention. The key that unlocks the door to righteousness before God is “true faith” in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - How can this “true faith” be obtained? Paul’s answer is, only as a gift from God. It cannot be earned but is graciously given by God to those whom He chooses.
  - Nonbelievers don’t seek God. God seeks them.
3. **Galatians 2:8-9**: *For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
  - In Romans 1:17 to 8:39, Paul is explaining the why and the consequences of God’s incredible gift of faith in the gospel, a gift that is the gateway to salvation.
  - Believing the gospel is the power of God for salvation.
4. **Romans 1:17**: *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.”*
  - NIV: *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “the righteous will live by faith.”*
  - God in His faithfulness makes available through our faith a righteousness apart from the Law based on the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ.

- The gift of salvation through faith is by God’s sovereign grace from first to last.
  - God’s gift of righteousness by faith endures throughout mortal life and the life to come.
  - “Righteousness revealed” refers to the gospel revelation that Jesus’ perfect life under the Law, lived in His human nature, earned righteousness under the Law that is sufficient for everyone who believes.
  - Based on Jesus’ earning vicarious righteousness God declares believers justified or legally righteous before Him (they have met the Law’s requirements through Jesus).
  - To receive God’s gift of righteousness, a person must have firm trust in God (faith), believing God is who He says He is. By means of the life, death, and resurrection of His incarnate Son, God has provided a way to “be in the right before God”.
  - Who needs the “righteousness” of salvation and why? Paul’s answer is “everyone.”
  - In 1:18-3:20, Paul shows that all people fall short of God’s requirements to be “in the right” before Him. Everyone is guilty of sin. All deserve condemnation for disobedience through ungodly thoughts, words, and deeds.
  - If one is not “in the right” before God, they are “in the wrong” before Him and, therefore, subject to His righteous wrath.
5. ***Romans 1:18-20: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> 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.***
- In the section (1:18-23), Paul is concerned first with the wrath of God. What is God’s wrath and how is it being revealed? Secondly, he is concerned with the natural revelation of God that leaves people without excuse.
  - God’s wrath is the holy revulsion of God’s entire being against all that is in contradiction to His holiness. ***Psalm 7:11<sup>NIV</sup>: God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day.*** His wrath is a judicial wrath.
  - God’s provision of “a righteousness apart from the Law” is the only way mankind can be saved from God’s righteous judicial wrath.
  - God’s judicial wrath is manifested both in this life and in end-times judgment.
6. ***OT examples of God’s wrath:*** The flood (Gen 6-9), destruction of Sodom (Gen 19), Egyptian defeat (Ex 15:7), Assyrian destruction of Israel’s ten tribes (2 Ki 17:1-23), and Babylonian destruction of the two tribes of Judah (2 Ki 24:1-4; Jer 25:1-11).
7. ***NT examples:*** Jesus’ anger at the hard-heartedness of religious leaders (Mk 3:1-6), at the money changers in the Temple (Jn 2:13-16). During the Tribulation (Rev 6:16-17; 14:9-10; 15:7; 16:1), at the second coming of Jesus (Rev 19:2, 15), and at the Great White throne judgment where unbelievers are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15).

- “Ungodliness” refers to thoughts, words, and actions against God including atheism and idolatry. “Unrighteousness” refers to immoral behavior against others and self.
  - Idolatry and atheism illustrate ungodliness. Immorality illustrates unrighteousness.
  - People filled with thoughts, emotions, and deeds that contradict God’s holiness are “in the wrong” before Him and are subject to His wrath.
  - Paul speaks of increasing rejection of God’s righteous requirements.
  - The consequence is God’s wrath judicially directed toward human unbelief, unrighteousness and suppression of the truth.
  - God, in His grace, provided a way for sinners “to be in the right before Him” no longer subject to His wrath.
  - God’s witness of Himself through natural revelation is unmistakable and universal.
  - His invisible attributes (eternal power and divine nature) can be perceived through what He created. Because of God’s universal witness, all people are without excuse.
  - Willful blindness and wicked beliefs are common among all the world’s people.
8. **Abraham Lincoln:** *“I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.”*
- People are judged based on the knowledge they have received. Willful rejection of God’s self-revelation, failure to honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, leads to atheism or idolatry and glorification of human intellect.
9. **Romans 1:21-23:** *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. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*
- Failing to acknowledge God causes persons to foolishly worship their own ideas.
  - They may deliberately and consciously choose to be irreligious. Today, many believe science and philosophy have made belief in God wrong and unnecessary.
  - Deliberately considering God to be a product of imagination, they become irrational (futile in thinking and having darkened foolish hearts).
  - Ignoring God, people believe themselves to be wise and superior (educated and free from belief in fairy tales about God).
  - Eventually in self-deception they begin to believe the foolish things they say. In their delusion they conceive and create idols (both physical and mental).
  - Because the critical problem is spiritual, more education, culture, and economic advancement cannot and does not free people from such fantasies. Notice, Paul’s list of idols begins with mortal man.
  - That corresponds to Satan’s statement to Eve - *“you will be like God”* Gen 3:5).

10. ***Romans 1:24-25***: *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,<sup>25</sup> 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.*

- Men made gods in their own image. Eventually worshipping birds, beasts, and bugs, becoming lower than them, since man is lower than what he worships.
- If man is his own god, he can do as he pleases, believing they owe no allegiance and fearing no consequences.
- So, people exchange the truth of God for the “lie” of becoming like a god. The move toward self-deification produces self-indulgence.
- At some point, God gives them up, meaning He permits them to sin without restraint, doing what they please, and reaping the sad consequences of what their actions sow.
- When the glory of the immortal God is exchanged for idols, God’s response is to remove restraints and allow people to do as they choose. They inevitably follow the lusts of their hearts into sensual enslavement of debauchery and moral degradation.
- That leads to spiritual enslavement in which they believe lies rather than God’s truth. They end up worshiping creatures and created things rather than the Creator.

11. ***Romans 1:26-27***: *God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;<sup>27</sup> 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.*

- Sinning without restraint is not the cause for God “giving them up” but, rather, results from God’s judicial action. Here, God revealed His wrath, not by external punishment but simply by abandoning sinful men and women to their own lustful ways.
- When the glory of the immortal God is exchanged for idols or devotion to self, God’s response is to remove His common-grace restraints and allow people to do as they choose. They inevitably follow the lusts of their hearts into the sensual enslavement of debauchery, drugs, and in general into moral degradation.
- Moral degradation leads to spiritual enslavement, believing lies rather than the truth of God and worshiping creatures and created things rather than the Creator.
- The general category of sin in 24-25, is impure lusts of the heart opening the way for degrading sexual relationships of any kind. In 26-27, homosexuality is the specific sin described. These sins are not the result of God “giving them up.” Rather, their sinful desires were the cause of “giving them up.”
- God revealed His wrath, not by sending fire from heaven, but by abandoning sinful people to exercise their own lustful desires without restraint.
- Whatever else God’s wrath includes it always appears to involve removal of God’s common grace control that keeps people from being as bad as they might.