

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 194 – July 13th – Romans 1:18-32

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

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 Moo, Douglas, J *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
 Murray, John *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959 & 1965.
 Wright, NT *The Letter to The Romans*, The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002.

Verse 18f.

Verse 18 marks a sudden transition to the theme of sin and judgment – a theme that continues to 3:20 (though see Wright's comments on previous verses). Only with 3:21 does Paul pick up again the theme of the gospel outlined in vv. 16-17. Paul is outlining the predicament which makes the gospel necessary. "His argument moves in several clearly marked stages. Heading the entire section is the announcement of God's wrath against sin (1:18-20). But almost as important in this announcement is the insistence that God's wrath is *earned*: Human beings have suppressed God's truth. Paul goes on to show how all people, Gentiles (1:21-32) and Jews (2:1-29) alike, have rejected God's truth and brought justly on themselves God's wrath. In 3:1-8 Paul moves away from the main story line to qualify what he says in chapter 2 about the privileges of the Jews. Then in 3:9-20, he brings the discussion to a close with a final indictment of humanity." Moo.

Wright comments, "Romans 1:18-3:20 ... is all about God's righteousness, both in the sense that God is the judge in the cosmic lawcourt and in the sense that God is in covenant with Israel, the covenant that causes peculiar problems when Israel, too, is found guilty in God's sight... God created humans to bear the divine image within the creation and called Israel to shine the divine light into a darkened world. Faced with human rebellion and Jewish faithlessness, will God abandon these projects? This section repeatedly emphasises that God will remain faithful, though it does not explain how – except that God's wrath means precisely the determination not to give evil the last word, to root out from the good creation all that defaces and destroys it. Already therefore, we find ourselves looking ahead both to the end of chap. 8, with the renewal of humans and of creation, and to the end of chap 11, when 'all Israel shall be saved.' It is because the creator God remains implacably opposed to all the forces of evil that there is hope. The revelation of wrath is itself, however paradoxically, part of the good news."

Verse 18

Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων,

The parallel with verse 17 (present tense of ἀποκαλυπτο) may suggest that it is the gospel and its proclamation which is also the revealer of God's wrath. Moo thinks this unlikely since it does not fit with Paul's consistently positive use of the word 'gospel.' He says, "Probably, then, the 'for' that begins this verse introduces all of the section that follows: It is necessary for God to reveal his righteousness in the gospel *because* God has also found it necessary to reveal his wrath against sin." – but see Wright above.

"As with all of Paul's 'apocalyptic' theology, the 'end' expected by Second Temple Jews has split into two; the end had in one sense happened, but in another sense was yet to happen fully (see esp. 1 Cor 15:12-28). Thus, although the wrath is still to be revealed in the future (2:5), the last day has in some sense been brought forward into the present... The fact of Jesus has drawn back the veil on the wrath to come." Wright. Cf. 2:16.

ὄργη, ης f wrath, anger

"It has been noted that in only one other place does Paul add to the word 'wrath' the genitive 'of God' (Col 3:6, cf. Eph 5:6), and that he never uses the verb 'to be wrathful' with God as subject; and deduced that Paul thought of the divine wrath in impersonal terms, as an almost automatic force which resists evil. It is doubtful whether this view can stand. When Paul speaks of wrath, it is in general quite clear from the context that the wrath is God's; so, for example 3:5; 9:32. Wrath is God's personal (though never malicious or, in a bad sense, emotional) reaction against sin." Barrett. Note also Moo's helpful discussion concerning the wrath of God on pp. 64,65 where he considers Dodd's views on this issue. Moo concludes "believers seeking to understand Paul's presentation of the gospel in Romans need to adjust their own perspective to match the biblical worldview. Reading and rereading Scripture is the only practicable way to soak up that biblical worldview."

Wright emphasises that "wrath" is an aspect of God's passionate concern for all that he has made, he will "tolerate nothing less than the best for them."

ἀσεβεια, ας f godlessness, wickedness

Religious corruption – particularly illustrated by idolatry, cf. Eph 2:12; Col 1:21.

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

We must not lose sight here of the common root: the thought here is of human injustice in stark contrast to the justice or righteousness of God revealed in the gospel.

A wrong relationship with God leads to moral corruption. One cannot hope to 'reform manners' or transform society apart from the power of the gospel.

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ἃ. truly
κατεχω hold fast, keep, restrain

Here κατεχω is used to mean 'hold down' or 'hold imprisoned' – i.e. the truth is deliberately stifled, as Paul goes on to show in the verses that follow. "The truth is dangerous – so rebellious humans suppress it, hide it away, try to prevent it leaking out. Not only in war is truth an early casualty." Wright.

Verse 19

διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν.

διοτι because, for, therefore

γνωστος, η, ον known, what can be known
φανερος, α, ον evident, plain, visible
φανερωω make known, reveal, make evident

Verse 20

τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε ἀίδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοῦς ἀναπολογήτους,

ἀορατος, ον unseen, invisible

God's invisible attributes.

κτισις, εως f creation, act of creation
ποιημα, τος n what is created or made

Dative of instrument.

νοεω perceive, discern
καθοραω perceive clearly

Cf. for instance, Ps 19.

τε enclitic particle and, τε ... και both ... and also

αἰδιος, ον eternal, everlasting
θειοτης, ητος f deity, divine nature

These qualities illustrate rather than exhaust what is revealed of God through creation and history.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἰμι

εἰς τὸ εἶναι expresses purpose as well as result.

ἀναπολογητος, ον without excuse

Moo makes the following points regarding natural revelation:

- i) There is such a thing as natural revelation (contra Barth);
- ii) What God reveals of himself through nature is limited;
- iii) The results of natural revelation are limited.

God's revelation of himself through the created world cannot, of itself, bring people to a true knowledge of God but does *leave them 'without excuse.'* Such revelation can, however, lead to a desire to learn more of God – to know God.

Verses 21-31

These verses are dominated by a threefold repetition, 'they exchanged ... therefore God gave them over,' vv. 22-24, 25-26, 27-28. "In each case, human beings put their own 'god' or sin in place of the truth God has revealed to them. God reacts by 'handing them over' to the consequences of the choice they have made." Moo.

Verse 21

διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἠὲ χαρίστησαν, ἀλλὰ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά·

γνόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl γινωσκω
δοξάζω praise, honour, glorify, exalt
ἢ or

εὐχαριστεῶ thank, give thanks
ἐματαιώθησαν Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 pl
ματαιοομαι be given to futile
speculation

διαλογισμός, ου m thought, reasoning
σκοτίζομαι be or become darkened
ἀσύνετος, ον without understanding, dull,
senseless, foolish

The problem of fallen mankind is not primarily their ignorance but their rebellion.

Verse 22

φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν,

Wright comments on vv. 22-23, "here Paul is deliberately, though covertly, retelling the story of Genesis 3, on the one hand, and of Israel in the wilderness, on the other."

φάσκω claim, assert
εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι
σοφός, η, ον wise, experienced
μωραίνω make foolish

Cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25.

Verse 23

καὶ ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἑρπετῶν.

Paul's language reflects Ps 106:20 and Israel's fall into idolatry when the people made a golden calf to worship (Ex 32, see also Jer 2:11).

ἄλλασσω change, alter, exchange
δόξα, ης f glory
ἀφθάρτος, ον imperishable, immortal
ὁμοίωμα, τος n likeness
εἰκὼν, ονος f image, appearance, statue
φθαρτός, η, ον subject to corruption
πετεινόν, ου n bird

τετραποῦν, ποδός n four-footed animal,
animal

ἑρπετόν, ου n reptile

The literal idolatry of some illustrates the heart idolatry of the many, even those who would not be so foolish as to bow down to a physical idol.

Verse 24

Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς,

διὸ therefore, for this reason
παραδίδωμι hand or give over, deliver up

"'God gave them up.' This repeated phrase carries scriptural echoes from Ps 81:12." Wright. The psalm retells Israel's idolatry after the exodus.

ἐπιθυμία, ας f longing, lust, passion

Matthew Henry speaks of this as God taking off the bridle of restraining grace.

ἀκαθαρσία, ας f impurity, immorality,
uncleanness

ἀτιμάζεσθαι Verb, pres midd/pass infin
ἀτιμάζω treat shamefully, dishonour
σῶμα, τος n body

Verse 25

οἵτινες μετέλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει, καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν.

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅ τι
who, they

μετέλλαξαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl
μεταλλάσσω exchange

ἀλήθεια, ας f truth, reality
ψεῦδος, ους n lie, that which is false
σεβάζομαι worship, reverence

λατρεῶ serve, worship
κτίσις, εως f creation, what is created
παρὰ preposition with acc rather than,
contrary to

κτίσαντα Verb, aor act ptc, m acc s κτιζω
create, make

εὐλογητός, η, ον blessed, praised
αἰῶνας Noun, acc pl αἰών, αἰώνος m age,
eternity

Murray comments that the dishonour done by men to God does not detract from the intrinsic and unchangeable blessedness of God which (in contrast with those described above), receives the 'Amen' from believers.

Verse 26

Διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας· αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν,

πάθη Noun, nom/acc pl παθος, ους n lust, passion

ἀτιμία, ας f disgrace, shame, dishonour
τε γαρ... τε και (v.27) for both ... and also
θηλυς, εια, υ female, woman

φυσικος, η, ον natural, in accord with nature

χρησις, εως f function

φυσις, εως f nature, natural condition

Paul's use of 'natural' and 'nature' have to be understood in the context of the emphasis on creation and Creator in the previous verse. In one sense sin is 'natural' in a fallen world. Paul's use of the term here is quite different, it means that which conforms to its created purpose. "These 'natural' relations are the ones God established for human beings in his creation." Moo.

Wright comments, "The underlying logic seems to be as follows. Those who worship the true God are, as Paul says elsewhere, renewed according to the divine image (Col 3:10).

When this worship is exchanged for the worship of other gods, the result will be that this humanness, this image-bearing quality, is correspondingly distorted."

Verse 27

ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way

ἄρσην, εν gen ενος male, man

ἀφημι leave, forsake, let go

ἐξεκαύθησαν Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 pl

ἐκκαίωμαι be inflamed (of lust)

ὀρεξις, εως f lustful passion

ἀλλήλων, οισ, ους one another

ἀσχημοσύνη, ης f shameless act(s)

κατεργαζομαι do, accomplish

ἀντιμισθια, ας f response, return, punishment

ἔδει Verb, imperf indic, 3 s (impers) δεῖ

impersonal verb it is necessary, must, ought

πλανη, ης f error, deceit, deception

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

ἀπολαμβάνω receive back, get back

'receiving in themselves the due penalty of their perversion'. It is not clear what particular consequence Paul had in mind here, and perhaps it has been left deliberately undefined. The principle is this: abandoning God's pattern for his creation will bring inevitable penalties. We may think of physical, emotional and social consequences of such lifestyle and acts.

Verse 28

Καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα,

δοκιμάζω test, approve

δοκιμάζω has the sense of to prove by testing or approve, it is used here in the sense of 'see fit', 'consider it worthwhile.'

ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge

παραδίδωμι hand or give over, deliver up

ἀδοκιμος, ον failing to meet the test,

disqualified, worthless

Note the word play. The word means not approved, hence 'rejected,' 'worthless.' It is not our proof/approval of God but his of us which is of lasting significance.

νοῦς, νοος, νοι, νοῦν m mind, thought, reason, understanding

Sin affects the mind – our thinking. "Turning away from true knowledge of God means cutting ourselves off from any ultimately accurate understanding of this world and our place within it." Moo.

καθηκεῖ impersonal verb it is fitting

Verses 29-31

Moo suggests that the following list falls into 3 sections, accurately reflected in a three sentence structure in the NIV – v29a to κακια, v29b and vv 30-31. He comments, "The syntactical structure reflects a certain logical order as well. The first sentence contains a list of general terms for sin; the second focuses on basic sins affecting human relationships; and the third list is more a potpourri of sinful conduct. Similar lists of sins – usually called 'vice lists' – appear elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt 15:19; Gal 5:19-21; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 1 Peter 2:1; 4:3) and imitate a widespread secular form."

Verse 29

πεπληρωμένους πάση ἀδικίᾳ πονηρίᾳ πλεονεξίᾳ κακίᾳ, μεστοὺς φθόνου φόνου ἔριδος δόλου κακοηθείας, ψιθυριστάς,

Note how the character of the mind or disposition of the heart (νοῦς) is reflected in patterns of behaviour.

πεπληρωμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc pl
πληρωω fill, make full

Emphasises the extent of depravity. "Such people are full, Paul says twice, of all kinds of evil; like jugs filled to overflowing with noxious liquids, they are brim-full of wickedness, ready to spill over at any moment." Wright.

ἀδικία, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin
πονηρία, ας f evil, wickedness

There are several variations in MSS regarding the order of elements in this list. Many MSS, followed by the TR include πορνεία before πονηρία. Metzger thinks this more likely to be "an intrusion into the text either accidentally or deliberately" than πορνεία having dropped out of the original.

πλεονεξία, ας f greed, covetousness

κακία, ας evil, wickedness

μεστος, η, ον full

φθονος, ου m envy, jealousy, spite

φονος, ου m murder, killing

ἔρις, ιδος f strife, rivalry

δολος, ου m deceit, treachery

κακοηθεια, ας f meanness, evil done for
the sake of evil

ψιθυριστης, ου m one who bears harmful
gossip against another, tale-bearer

Verse 30

καταλάλους, θεοστυγεις, ὑβριστάς,
ὑπερηφάνους, ἀλαζόνας, ἐφευρετάς κακῶν,
γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς,

καταλαλος, ου m slanderer, one who
speaks evil of another

θεοστυγης, ες hating God, hateful to God

An ambiguous term, probably having the first of the above meanings in this list of sinful attributes.

ὑβριστης, ου m insolent person

ὑπερηφανος, ον arrogant, proud

ἀλαζων, ονος m arrogant boaster

ἐφευρετης, ου m one who schemes or
plans

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

γονευσ, εως m parent

ἀπειθεῖς Adjective, m & f, nom/acc pl

ἀπειθης, ες disobedient, rebellious

This might seem lightweight among the vices listed earlier but this is not the Biblical perception. This is transgression of one of the Ten Commandments and is evidence of a rebellious heart or mind (cf. Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3; Prov 20:20; Matt 15:4; 19:19; Eph 6:2).

Verse 31

ἀσυνέτους, ἀσυνθέτους, ἀστόργους,
ἀνελεήμονας

ἀσυνετος, ον without understanding,
senseless, foolish

ἀσυνθετος, ον faithless, disloyal

ἀστοργος, ον lacking normal human
affection, inhuman

"It was not at all unusual for pagans to drown, or in some other way to destroy unwanted offspring. In this connection think of present-day *abortion*, for which all kinds of excuses are invented." Hendriksen.

ἀνελεμων, ον unmerciful

Verse 32

οἵτινες τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγόντες, ὅτι οἱ
τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν, οὐ
μόνον αὐτὰ ποιοῦσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ συνευδοκοῦσιν
τοῖς πράσσουσιν.

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὁ τι
who, whoever

δικαίωμα, τος n regulation, requirement

Cf. 8:4.

ἐπιγινωσκω understand, recognise

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and
adjective such, of such kind

πρασσω practice, do

ἄξιος, α, ον worthy, deserving

θανατος, ου m death

Reflecting Genesis 3.

μονον adv only, alone

συνευδοκεω approve of, agree to

It is shameful enough when people engage in evil acts which they know are wrong and which they condemn in others, but it is greater depravity still when evil is called good and approved of both in oneself and others. "Once light and darkness have been renamed, the process of dehumanisation is complete and may well prove irreversible." Wright.