

# God Gave Them Up by Brian Bordersen

by Brian Brodersen

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*God's wrath is being poured out because men suppress the truth, ignore God's revelation, and refuse to give glory and thanks to God, leading to a thankless generation and a culture that dismisses God.*

**Duration:** 1:07:10

**Scripture:** Romans 1:21

**Topics:** "Gods Wrath", "Gospel Salvation"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Romans 1, highlighting the wrath of God against ungodliness and unrighteousness, the suppression of truth, the rejection of God's revelation, and the descent into depravity. It emphasizes the cycle of sin throughout history and the need for the gospel as the only hope for salvation. The speaker underscores the power of the gospel to transform lives and bring deliverance from sin and judgment.

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## Transcript

Okay, we are carrying on in our study in Paul's epistle to the Romans. So once again, we find ourselves this evening in the first chapter and as I mentioned in closing last week, we're going to finish up chapter one tonight as we pick up in verse 18 and go all the way through to the end of the chapter. And so let me read to you from verse 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divine nature, so that they are without excuse. Because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness in the lust of their hearts to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions, for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness.

They are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, who knowing the righteous judgment of God that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. The verses before us seem to be a clear description of the world as we know it, and yet it is actually a description of the world in Paul's day. But it isn't only a description of the world in Paul's day.

It is a description of what has happened and what will happen to every civilization, nation, people, tribe, or person who rejects the knowledge of the true God. So we have to understand, Paul says a lot in these verses here, and of course we could zero in on, you know, some of the different things that he's addressing, but I think it's important that we look at these verses from the perspective that Paul intended, and not to get off into the finer details of it. And Paul's intention here is to show why the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven.

That, remember, that's his purpose. Remember his even bigger purpose, as we've talked about, is to show why men need the gospel, why there's not a single possibility that anybody's going to survive the judgment of God. Therefore, everyone needs the gospel.

Everyone needs that grace that God's gospel supplies. So again, here he's building this case, and he is giving a description of, like I said, his generation, but he's also describing what has happened in cycles all throughout history. This cycle has been repeated over and over again historically, and we happen to be at the end, it seems, of another one of these cycles of sin.

This is kind of like, this is the reason why the passage seems so familiar to us, it's because we can look around us and see very similar kinds of things. Now, some people have said, well, you know, Paul, he kind of exaggerated. He overstated the case.

You know, you can't really trust that his description was accurate. Surely, things weren't as bad as he made them out to be. William Barclay, in his commentary on Romans, he addressed that, and he said, this picture might seem the work of some almost hysterical moralist who was exaggerating the contemporary situation and painting it in colors of rhetorical hyperbole.

It describes a situation of degeneracy of morals almost without parallel in human history, but Paul said nothing that the Greek and Roman writers of the age did not themselves say. So, as a matter of fact, when you look at what the Greek and the Roman writers said, Paul seems to have almost understated the case in comparison to what some of them said about the culture that they were living in. And, of course, one of the reasons it seems that Paul might have understated it is because Paul doesn't go into the graphic kind of detail that they would have done as writers.

But going on, as Barclay often will do, he gives a lot of great, he's the master at looking at the background and the cultural situation and the historical situation. He goes on and he says, regarding that time, he says, it was an age when things seemed out of control. And then he begins to quote from writers at the period that we're talking about here.

So, Virgil wrote, right and wrong are confounded. So many wars the world over, so many forms of wrong. When Tacitus came to write the history of this period, he wrote, I am entering upon the history of a period rich in disasters, gloomy with wars, rent with seditions, savage in its very hours of peace.

Another writer, Suetonius, writing in the reign of Tiberius said, no day passed but someone was executed. Another Roman historian, Livy, he said, Rome could neither bear its ills nor the remedy that might have cured them. Another writer, Propertius, wrote, I see Rome, proud Rome, perishing, the victim of her own prosperity.

Barclay goes on and says, it was an age of unparalleled luxury, quoting from Juvenal. He said, a luxury more ruthless than wars broods over Rome. No guilt or deed of lust is wanting since Roman poverty disappeared.

Seneca spoke of money, the ruin of the true honor of things and said, we ask not what a thing truly is, but what it costs. That sounds like something you hear in Newport Beach. Lucretia said, crime became the only antidote to boredom.

And then finally, Barclay goes on and says, it was an age of unparalleled immorality, quoting from Seneca. Women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married. Juvenal cites the case of a woman who had eight husbands in five years.

He also cites the incredible case of Agrippina, the empress herself, the wife of Claudius. We read about Claudius in the Book of Acts, who at night used to leave the royal palace and go down to serve in a brothel for the sake of sheer lust. And then he goes on and he says, and vice did not stop with the crude and natural vices.

Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. 14 out of the 15 Roman emperors were homosexual. So Paul's describing the world that he lived in.

But you could go back in history and you could find that cycle repeated over and over again amongst various people. Of course, when you read the books of Moses, when you read, especially Leviticus numbers, Deuteronomy, when you read the Book of Joshua, you realize that that same kind of a thing had occurred in Canaanite culture. And so now here we are again, 2000 years further along in history.

And in at least in the West, but I think you can certainly extend it beyond the West. This is a very, very accurate picture that is being painted of where things are at today. So in just taking this whole section now of Romans chapter one, there are three things that I want to focus in on.

The first being this, Paul, in the verses that we read, he gives us several reasons why men are under the wrath of God. Now we've already talked extensively about the wrath of God. We've already pointed out how this, from the perspective of modern man especially, that the whole concept of God judging people or there being such a thing as a wrath of God is completely unacceptable in our culture today.

And yet the fact of the matter remains, God's wrath is presently being poured out. And so let's go back and look at the reasons for God's wrath being poured out. And we've already talked about some of this so we won't belabor the point, but remember verse 18, God's wrath is poured out because men suppress the truth.

They suppress the truth. They hold down what they know to be right in order to do what they know to be wrong. And he tells us that right there in verse 18, for suppressing the truth, the wrath of God has come upon men.

Secondly, for ignoring God's revelation of himself given in nature. And we looked at that previously, verses 19 and 20, because what may be known of God is manifest in them. God has shown it to them.

For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divine nature so that men are without excuse. And so we talked extensively about that, but let me just touch on it again for a moment. Men ignore God's revelation.

I didn't really bring this up previously, but I think it's right to mention it here. Not only does man, we talked about this, man has an innate sense of right and wrong, but man has an innate belief in a supreme being. People have to be taught atheism.

Atheism isn't the natural position. As a matter of fact, when you listen to most atheists today, and especially the so-called new atheists, all of them have sort of a story about where they left off believing in God. So they all more or less admit that at one time they did believe in God, but there was some event or something that transpired or somebody influenced them that brought them to the point of rejecting God, dismissing God, and so they became atheists.

So a man has to ignore that. He has to push that sense that's there naturally in him, that there is a God. He has to push that out.

And then, of course, there is the issue of right and wrong. And as we've already seen, men ignore that voice of conscience, if we want to call it that, and suppress that, and do the things, as we've already said, that they know to be wrong. And then, of course, we've looked at the whole issue of just creation itself.

Nature itself is speaking, speaking to people about where there's a creation, there's a creator. Where there is a life, there must be someone who brought life into being. The idea that non-living things produce living things, there's no place anywhere ever that anybody has seen anything like that.

It just doesn't happen. So for ignoring God's revelation, verses 19 and 20, then in verse 21, we're told that men are under God's wrath because they refuse to give glory and thanks to God. Refusing to give glory and thanks to God, because although they knew God, now notice that they knew God.

And of course, if you go back to the beginning, men knew God originally. And then you can go to other points in history where men knew God, but I think he's probably referring to the general knowledge of God that comes through general revelation that we talked about before. They knew that there must be a God, because where there's a creation, there has to be a creator.

Where there's a design, there has to be a designer. Because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God. Notice this, nor were thankful.

They failed to glorify God, and to glorify God simply means to view him in the way that he ought to be viewed or respond to him in the way that he ought to be responded to. How should we respond to God? We should respond to him in praise and worship and obedience, but they didn't do that. They failed to give glory to God and they failed to be thankful.

They failed to be thankful. And you know, we see this today being repeated all over again, don't we? We're living in a thankless generation, and we're seeing this regression. We're seeing this continual slide into this kind of a society that Paul is describing here, a society that's on the verge of destruction, disintegration.

But all around us today, people have lost the ability to be thankful. And the irony is that we have more today, and especially in this nation, we have more today than any previous generation of human beings have ever experienced as far as material blessings and prosperity and all of those kinds of things. We've got more than anybody's ever had, and we've got a thankless generation.

We've got a generation of entitlement. You know, people today just think, well, of course this is the way it is. You know, this is the way it ought to be.

I deserve this, and I even deserve more. So we live in the midst of a thankless generation. But these are the very things that bring about God's wrath and his judgment.

And then verses 22 and 23, the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven because of man's perverting of the glory of God. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things. Therefore, God also gave them up.

So, perverting the glory of God. And of course, in the ancient world, I mean, probably a real obvious example, you remember would be after God saved Israel out of Egypt, he brought him to Mount Sinai. Moses was there giving the commands.

And you remember Aaron was coerced by the people to make us a god. We don't know what happened to Moses. He hasn't come back down the mountain.

Make us a god that can lead us. And so what did they do? They made an image of a bull, a calf, the golden calf. And they took the glorious God and reduced him down to this four-footed beast, perverting the glory of God.

There's still plenty of idolatrous cultures today around the world where people worship animals, where they worship insects. This is very much alive and well in the 21st century. We here in the West are a little more sophisticated than that.

At least we think ourselves to be more sophisticated. And really, we have perverted the glory of God. And we have exchanged, as he goes on to say here in verse 25, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator.

The creature we worship is man himself. We worship ourselves. We worship humanity.

We worship our own intellect. We worship our own ideas. This is the idolatry of the West, man worshiping himself, deifying himself, worshiping other men, putting men's ideas and theories and philosophies above God.

We have a radically idolatrous culture, even though we don't recognize it so often. You know, we might jokingly talk about American idol, but there certainly are many idols in America, aren't there? You see the way people react to celebrities and things like that. It's nothing less than idolatry.

My daughter works in the fashion industry. She's in an environment where celebrities are in and out. She tells me about some of the people that she works with, how it's all about seeing a celebrity.

It's all about getting close to them. It's all about pretending like you know them. It's all about you know maybe some way somehow I can you know be identified with this person.

And you know of course she's a Christian, so she just sort of looks at all this and thinks it's insane. But this is where we're at today. Worshiping and serving the creature rather than the creator.

So these are the reasons Paul gives us here for man being under the wrath of God. Secondly, the apostle tells us here in these verses the inner process that man passed through that led him to dismiss God. See that's what we're talking about here.

We're talking about a culture that dismisses God. And that's like I said earlier, Paul's painting a bigger picture here. He's not, although of course individuals are obviously involved in this because culture is made up of individuals.

But yet he's looking at it on more of a cultural or a societal or a civilizational level. And I think the extremely significant thing is this is the culture that we're living in. But this wasn't always the culture of the West.

The culture of the West for many centuries was a culture that wasn't dismissing God. It wasn't necessarily obeying God. It wasn't necessarily following the scriptures.

And we talk about America originally being a Christian country. That's somewhat of a misnomer obviously because the implication of that would mean that everybody in the country was Christians. The government was based on the Christian faith and all that, which of course was never the case.

But what was the case is that we as a nation and many other nations of the West in particular, there was a general belief in a deity and generally speaking that deity was associated with the Bible. So the God of the Bible was recognized or acknowledged generally all throughout Western culture for many centuries. But in the last century men have dismissed that.

So that's no longer the case. The predominant philosophical view today is scientific atheism or scientific agnosticism at best. Again in regard to the bigger picture of the culture, obviously there's many people in the culture that still believe in God.

But as far as you know just the system goes, the political system, the educational systems and all of that, we all know by experience God is not part of that equation. And Paul tells us the process that man passed through that led him to dismiss God. Where did it start? Verse 21, began to speculate and philosophize.

Because although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts. They became futile in their thoughts. You hear sometimes if you read books on philosophy or things that pertain to world views and that sort of thing, you'll hear about, and this term is still used today, but you'll go back to maybe somebody like Bertrand Russell or maybe even further back to

somebody like David Hume or someone like that.

And people will still do it today. They'll say, I'm a free thinker. That's how they refer to themselves.

There's even a free thinker society today. And what that means is this. It means I will not allow my mind to be influenced by a so-called revelation from God.

I want to think independent of a revelation from God. That's what it means to be a free thinker. That's what Paul's describing here.

Men began to philosophize. They reject the revelation of God and they come up with their own theory. Their own theories, plural.

They come up with theories of origin. They come up with theories of ethics and morality and things of that nature. And this is how this dismissal of God begins.

Man substitutes his own thoughts for God's thoughts and he builds his life and ultimately seeks to build his society upon his own thoughts. That's what humanism is. Humanism, of course, is the dominant philosophy that governs the West today.

And I think even more realistically, it's an atheistic humanism, even though some people wouldn't want to refer to it in that way. So they began to speculate. They began to philosophize.

They became vain or futile in their thoughts. Whenever you start thinking thoughts that are in opposition to God's revealed word, know this. Your thoughts are vain.

They're futile. They're worthless. And they can only lead you in the wrong direction and they can only ultimately lead you into a disastrous situation.

So as they begin to speculate, notice the next step. Their foolish hearts were darkened. It's a foolish heart that Paul says dismisses God.

And when a man begins to dismiss God, what happens? His heart is darkened and the word here could also be translated understanding. His understanding is darkened. And this is so obvious when you analyze it.

When you look at the thought processes of the atheist, the agnostic, the skeptic, the opponent to the word of God, you find that they're obviously darkened in their understanding because they can't really see things for what they are. We have today, you know, in our nation, we have a massive split in the culture and amongst the cultural leaders, one group of people known as conservatives who are essentially saying, we want to stick to the way things have always been, sort of. We like the way the founding fathers, in particular, in our case in particular, we like the way they set up government.

We like what they thought about human government, God's involvement, and so forth. That's a kind of a conservative, a synopsis of conservatism. But now today, we've got a group that are putting themselves forth more aggressively as the progressives.

Now progressive sounds great, doesn't it? I mean, who wants to be an old stick in the mud, you know, stuck back in the dark ages? I mean, we want to be progressive. We want to move forward. But the crazy thing about the progressives is that their name that they've taken to themselves is totally deceptive.

Because when you look at their ideas, they're not progressive ideas at all. They're regressive ideas. History has already demonstrated numerous times over that their ideas don't work, that they're wrong ideas.

But they are just again insisting that, you know, this is the direction that we need to go. So what's my point? My point is, what Paul is saying right here is so obviously manifested in these kinds of people, their foolish heart has become darkened. You know, I don't necessarily, I'm trying to get political here.

But I'll stay philosophical, forget political. Marxism is a philosophy. Of course, it works itself out into a political system.

But, you know, anybody who thinks Marxism is a progressive idea, they're obviously got some brain issues. They've got some mental distortion. Because we've got plenty of examples in history where Marxism has failed.

And it's failed not because it was the wrong people doing it like they suggest. You know what everybody says? Well, Marxism failed because the Russians did it, and the Russians did it wrong. And it failed because the Chinese did it, and they did it wrong.

And it failed because, you know, whoever else did it. But if we did it, we'd do it right. No, it's the system that's faulted.

Marx was wrong. It's as simple as that. But we have professors all across this country in universities teaching Marxism.

Teaching that this is a superior philosophy. Teaching that socialism is a superior way of living in society. So what can you say about it? I think, again, what Paul is saying is the case here.

Their foolish hearts have been darkened. And then, of course, we can take it out of the philosophical realm and put it over in the realm of spirituality. I mean, just look at the substitutes that these guys who reject God, look at the things they come up with.

As we've seen before, and as I've mentioned, and as you've heard, you know, somebody like Dawkins, we'll just throw out his name because he's well known. You know, he's willing to embrace aliens bringing life to Earth that could evolve. He's openly said it.

That it could be that aliens brought life here, but there's no God. I mean, to me, that's a foolish heart that's darkened. You're going to opt for Martians rather than God.

I mean, you know, give me a break. So nothing changes. It's the same as it was back in Paul's day.

Their foolish heart is darkened, and then here it is. Intellectual pride, professing to be wise, they became fools. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and all you have to do if you want to get a good example of how this is working itself out in our generation is read the theories that these guys come up with about origins, about, you know, all of these different kinds of things that we're talking about, about morals and everything else.

It is absolutely astounding. They profess to be wise, but they come up with the most absurd, ridiculous types of things, and they try to put that off as intelligent, and if you're really smart, you'll, you know, you'll go with us on this, and we're not the first generation to do it, but there's certainly plenty of it in our culture

today. So professing to be wise, they became fools, and then, verse 25, they exchanged the truth of God for the lie, the truth of God for the lie, and the lie is basically that God is not God, that man is somehow God, that man is somehow ultimately in control of his destiny, that man is somehow ultimately the measure of all things.

Now, thirdly, the apostle tells us how the wrath of God is presently being revealed. Remember, in verse 18, he says, for the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Present tense, it's presently being revealed when Paul wrote it, and so we extrapolate out to today.

It's still true today, but the question is, how is God's wrath being revealed today? How is it being revealed then? How is it being revealed today? And the answer is in verse 24, 26, and 28. Listen to what it says, therefore, God also gave them up. Verse 24, verse 26, for this reason, God gave them up, and verse 28, even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind.

This is how the wrath of God is being revealed. God gives men over to a debased mind. A debased mind is a mind that is void.

It is void of moral truth. That's what a debased mind is. Now, let's not be mistaken.

Sometimes people make a mistake. A debased mind is not a mind that can't be recovered. But it's a mind that remains void of truth as long as it resists submission to God.

Now, the reason I say that is because some people, because in the context as he's describing, you know, the immediate results of people being given up by God, he's describing homosexual behavior. And some people have wrongly concluded that a person who engages or, you know, gets involved in homosexual behavior, a reprobate mind is the old word. People have wrongly concluded, well, God's given up on them.

It's over. There's no hope for them. Of course, that is not what Paul is saying.

That can't be taken out of the biblical text. That's not what the scriptures teach, because we have other passages that Paul mentions the fact that people who formerly were homosexuals were now followers of Christ. So it's important that we, I think, be clear about that.

But this is what God does. He gives men up. He allows them, because they do not like to retain Him in their knowledge, because they dismissed Him, He then dismisses them.

And He lets all of the potential wickedness that is resident in the human heart, He lets it begin to overflow. And that is in itself a judgment within a society. And we can look and see that so many of the problems in the world, you know, people talk about, well, how could there be a God of love? Because look at all the suffering, all the misery and all the hardship and everything.

And, but, you know, most suffering, most misery, most hardship is caused by human beings toward one another. If you took the human element out, the suffering dramatically decreases. The problem in life dramatically decreases if you take the human factor out.

So the bigger problem is men filled with sin and then being driven by their passions and their lust, perpetrating all kinds of horrible things on their fellow men. You think of what Stalin did to some 50 million of his countrymen. You think of what Hitler did.

You think of what Mao Zedong did, or Pol Pot, or any of these other, you know, go over to North Korea today and look what they're doing there. Is God causing that? No. It's a man that has been given over and a nation that has rejected the knowledge of the true God.

And all of this suffering then is the result of this. So this is what happens. God gives them up.

And then it says in verse 27, receiving in themselves the penalty of their error, which was due. So again, in that immediate context, he's talking about homosexuality, but it extends beyond that. When a man errors, when he dismisses God, when he says that God is not worthy of his praise, or worship, or obedience, that man is erring.

And he will ultimately then receive a penalty for that. And again, that will be the natural outworking of sin. Because of course, the Bible says, what about sin? It says that sin, when it is full grown, it produces death.

Sin always brings death in some way or another. And then finally, the wrath of God is presently revealed in an overflow of wickedness. And look what it says in verse 29, being filled with all unrighteousness.

So what Paul is describing here is a civilization, a culture, a society. He's talking about anarchy. He's talking about a lawless situation where sin is just flowing over like a boiling pot.

And it's just flowing over, and it's bringing with it death and destruction wherever it goes. That is how the wrath of God is presently being revealed. Now, as we pointed out in our looking in detail at the whole subject of the wrath of God, there is a day coming when God will directly judge.

He's not directly judging yet. He's indirectly judging by allowing this pot of sin to overflow. But there's coming a day when he will directly judge.

But he talks about being filled. And notice now he goes on with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, and just this list here, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness. They are whispers.

Now, we still thank God by his grace. I mean, you can certainly find this in places in our society. But thank God it's not all pervasive yet at this point.

There's still perhaps a possibility that things could turn back in, at least to some degree, in another direction. But as we read from the Roman writers of Paul's period, it seemed that Rome itself had kind of almost come to the point of no return by the time Paul wrote that. So, but as we, you know, would look closely even at hearts and even to some extent at our own hearts, we find that these things are true, back biters.

Of course, we can find there are those who are haters of God, and the proud, and the boasters. And we think of those who invent evil things. And plenty of evil things have been invented.

Disobedient to parents. An interesting thing, of course, there was a long time in our culture, and kind of universally, really, where respect for parents, obedience to parents was something that was highly valued. It was taught.

It was required, demanded. And yet today, that's no longer the case, isn't it? Not only do we have children that don't want to be obedient to their parents, which we've always had, we have adults making laws that allow children to disobey their parents. We have adults making laws that criminalize parents who try to

discipline their children.

That's what we have today. And it hasn't gotten as bad here as it possibly could, but I'll tell you, in different places in Europe, you spank your child, you're going to jail. It's a crime.

And, you know, the whole thing has resulted in out of control children who are causing all kinds of trouble from petty theft to murder itself amongst kids. And so, undiscerning. Undiscerning means without understanding, as we've already mentioned.

Untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful. But when I read these terms, I think of the Nazis. I think of the brown shirts.

I think of the Gestapo. I think of the communists. And, you know, this is exactly how they were.

They were merciless, murderous beasts who just murdered for the sheer joy of it. And anybody who thinks that we've got some sort of a pass and that things could never go this way, the only reason why they don't go this way is because we haven't totally dismissed God yet. But if some people had their way, they would dismiss God, thinking in doing so they could finally develop that utopia.

And you know what they would find? They would find the exact same thing that everybody else has found who sought to do that. That utopia turns out to be hell on earth. That's what it actually is.

But listen, who knowing. Now, in these verses, Paul has said over and over again, one of his major indictments is that people know what they're doing. You know, we want to give people the benefit of the doubt a lot of times, don't we? Oh, they don't know what they're doing.

Paul says they know what they're doing. He said they know in suppressing the truth. They know what's right, but they ignore it so they can do wrong.

He says they knew God, but they didn't want to glorify him as God. And now he says this. He says, knowing who knowing these people that he's describing, he says they know the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death.

They know it. They know it. And they do know it.

Psychologists have done their absolute best at trying to convince people that they're not guilty, that they shouldn't feel guilty. But you know what? It's inescapable. People feel guilty.

They know what they're doing is wrong. And it's only the who's gone completely where their conscience, as Paul refers to a conscience that's seared with a hot iron. There are a few people who have gone to that point where there's no longer even any sense of conviction or voice of conscience.

But generally speaking, people know they're guilty. That's what he says. They know that those who practice such things are deserving of death, but listen, they not only do them themselves, but they approve of those who practice them.

Now, there's a lot of people that wouldn't do certain things, but they approve of what other people do. They promote what other people do. Now, here, Paul says strong words.

He says they're worthy of death. Now, he's not talking about death in the sense of, you know, line them all up and shoot them. He's talking about death in the sense of judgment.

He's talking about death in the sense of damnation. I say that because of this. I heard Sam Harris a while back in a debate, sort of an interview, and he's kind of a sort of the American counterpart to Dawkins and Hitchens.

Hitchens is kind of in the middle. He's British, but he lives in the States. So, Sam Harris, he's, you know, and he's kind of an upcoming voice.

But I was watching him in this debate interview thing, and this is what he said. He said, Romans 1 teaches that people should kill homosexuals. And I just thought, that liar.

He's a liar. He's distorting what it says. He's taking things out of context.

It doesn't say that. Where the word on death comes in, we've long passed the passage addressing the homosexual issue. What Paul says is that everybody's worthy of death.

That's what he says. He's not singling out any particular person. He's basically saying that anyone who practices any of these things, unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, all the way down the line, he says these are worthy of death.

And again, he's not calling Christians to rise up and kill people. And Christians have never in the history of the Christian faith risen up and killed people because they were living immoral lives or anything like that. This is all a fabrication by these people.

You know, again, you know, you hear, I heard Larry King say something one night, you know, implying that, you know, when homosexuals have been killed, you know, because they're gay, implying that somehow Christians were responsible for that. That's utterly ridiculous. And I wish I would have been on the program.

I wanted to say, hey, give me one example of that, would you? It's never happened. People will go out and kill other people. They don't leave church and go kill people.

They probably leave the bar or, you know, some other place where they've been involved in other kinds of sin. But, you know, nobody leaves church and goes out and kills somebody. But this is where things are at in our culture.

You know, Christians, anybody who believes that certain things are wrong, they're the bad people. This is what we've come to. But anyway, again, going back to Harris, I was, it was unfortunate that the guy that he was, well, there was nobody there to really respond to him because he pulled something completely out of context.

Now, in closing, here's what we need to remember. This miserably wretched world that Paul is describing is the world that Jesus came to save. This is the world that he came to save.

This place, Rome, that was described by Seneca and Juvenal and Virgil and all of these other Roman writers that we referred to, this is the place where Paul said, I am happy to come. I'm excited about coming to this place because I'm coming with the gospel of Christ that is the power of God to salvation. And so this is what we can't lose sight of.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the gospel is the thing that turns this back in the right direction. And even though we're living in a culture that is to a large degree attempting to dismiss God, you know what? One soul at a time, that can be turned around. God can do that.

Because there's lots of people that were atheists, that were hostile to God, that were caught up in every vile vice and perversion and crime and sin and everything else that are now followers of Jesus. And they're not only following Jesus, but they're seeking to bring other people to follow the Lord. You know, we've got so many great examples of that.

Cheryl and I, we go out to Marietta every week and we see crews of girls and guys from what's called U-Turn for Christ. Who are these girls and guys? Well, they're former drug addicts, drug dealers, prostitutes, criminals. What are they doing out at Marietta? They're serving Jesus because God saved them.

He got a hold of them. But if you listen to their stories, you know, there probably would have been a point where you would have thought, this guy's, there's no hope. There's no way.

This is a reprobate mind. See, we can't make that mistake. This is the world that the gospel has the power to affect.

This is the world. We don't need a Christian culture to have the gospel prosper. Because if you haven't figured it out already, Rome was not a Christian culture.

It was about as opposite of that as you could possibly get. See, here's the wrong thinking. The wrong thinking is that because we've lost our traditional values, because we're no longer sticking with the plan of the forefathers, because they're ignoring the constitution, because liberalism is taking over the world, we're sunk.

No, we're not sunk. We're just getting ready to fight. This is what the gospel is for.

These are the people that the gospel comes to and transforms. Look, the gospel is never going to take over the whole world until Jesus comes back and sets everything right. We need to understand that.

We're never going to turn the country around in the sense that we're going to have a born-again Christian sitting in the White House and a hundred born-again senators there making legislation and 400 whatever, you know, congress people. It's not going to happen. And if we think that, we're just deluded.

But it's okay if it doesn't happen, because it doesn't change the power of the gospel. The gospel is still the power of God to salvation. And so remember, it's the world that Jesus came into.

It's the world the apostles went out to. And let me just add one more dimension to it. It's more and more a picture of the world that we live in, but it's also this, and we can never forget this.

It's when we forget this that we lose sight of the whole point and purpose and power of the gospel. It's when we forget that this is a picture of each one of us to some degree. This is a picture of us.

Read yourself into Romans 1. You're in there somewhere, I guarantee it, and probably in more places than one. But you're no longer there, are you? Why? Because of the gospel. And just like the gospel reached you, it can reach others who are filled with all unrighteousness and sexual immorality and all of those other things that Paul mentions here.

And so again, just in closing, his whole purpose here is to show why the gospel is man's only hope. It's man's only hope. It's his only hope here and now, and of course, it's obviously his only hope in the future.

Because no one will ever escape the wrath of God unless they flee the wrath to come by hiding under the blood of the Lamb. That's the place to flee. That's the protection.

That's the deliverance. That's where salvation comes, and that's what the gospel is all about. The good news that God punished all of these wicked, vile, corrupt, perverted deeds.

He punished them already in the person of Christ. And if we come to Christ, we are forgiven, cleansed, born again, given a new life and a new opportunity to glorify God. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this great gospel. And perhaps not all of us here, but many of us, no doubt, remember vividly when we were in that place of having dismissed you, of having suppressed the truth so we could live ungodly and unrighteously, when we had our own theories and our own ideas and we set them up over against your truth. Lord, thank you that you extended mercy to us.

Thank you, Lord, that you called us. Thank you, Lord, that when the world was as degraded as could be, as we read about here in Romans 1, that it was then that you sent Christ. It was then you sent the apostles.

And Lord, as the world is once again at the end of that cycle of sin and as men are sinking in the mire of every kind of vile thing imaginable, Lord, we just pray that you would throw out the life preserver of the gospel and that many would lay hold and be drawn into the kingdom. Lord, never let us forget where we came from, so we never look on others as hopeless. Help us to remember that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, to everyone who believes.

And help us, Lord, to do our best to spread that to as many as possible in these days, we pray. And Lord, if there's anyone joined us tonight, anyone here with us that needs to turn away from their sin, that needs to repent, that needs to put you back in your proper place as Lord and God and maker and ruler, Lord, help them to do that in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Let's stand together. Pastors are up front.

You need some prayer. You need some counsel. Come on up.

They'd love to pray with you, encourage you. And you know, if you're here tonight and you're listening and you're just thinking, you know, I'm not where I need to be with the Lord. I'm not right with him.

I'm in sin. I've been doing my own thing. Let it end right here tonight.

Come on up, grab somebody, let them pray with you and walk out of here cleansed and restored and empowered by Jesus to go out and live the life that he created you to live. God bless you. Keep us in prayer.

We're heading off to Montreal in the morning, and we'll be doing a conference up in Montreal and then speaking in Montreal and in Ottawa over the weekend. So they need the gospel up in Canada. And so keep us in prayer as we head up there.

Thanks. Faithfulness Peace Let's sing it together. You're stronger You are stronger, you are stronger Sin is broken, you have saved me Faith is risen, Christ is risen Jesus, you are Lord of all No beginning, no end No beginning and no end You're my hope, you're my defense You came to seek and save the lost You've made it all up front You are stronger You are stronger, you are stronger Sin is broken, you have saved me Faith is risen, Christ is risen Jesus, you are Lord of all So let your name be lifted higher Lifted higher, lifted higher So let your name be lifted higher Lifted higher, lifted higher You are stronger You are stronger, you are stronger Sin is broken, you have saved me Faith is risen, Christ is risen Jesus, you are Lord of all You are stronger, you are stronger Sin is broken, you have saved me Faith is risen, Christ is risen Jesus, you are Lord of all You are stronger, you are stronger Sin is broken, you have saved me It is written, Christ is risen Jesus, you are Lord of all

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