SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter One, Verses 1–32

Not Ashamed of the Gospel — The Gospel of God, the Righteousness Revealed, and a World That Would Not Give Thanks

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul greets a church he has never seen, states the thesis that will carry sixteen chapters — the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith — and then opens the case against a world that knew God and would not honor Him. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 1:1–32

Gospel · thesis · wrath · given over

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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A greeting, a longing, a thesis, and the case against the world

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"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" — Romans 1:17

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 1:1–32

Not Ashamed of the Gospel — the gospel of God, a debt to the nations, the thesis of the letter, and a world given over

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 1 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 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."

† Before the Passage

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, probably in the winter of AD 56–57, to a church he had not planted and had never visited. Guzik notes there is no evidence Peter founded it; the likeliest origin is spontaneous — Jews and proselytes "visitors from Rome" at Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and believers who later moved to the capital carried the gospel home. Paul's plan, spelled out in 15:24–28, was Jerusalem first with the offering, then Rome, then Spain. The letter is his introduction, his credentials and his gospel, written out in full for a church that would have to decide whether to stand behind him.

Chapter 1 is the doorway to the whole argument. Verses 1–7 are a greeting that swells into a summary of the gospel; verses 8–15 are Paul's personal longing to come; verses 16–17 are the thesis of the letter; and at verse 18 the indictment begins — the case that will run to 3:20 and end with every mouth closed. Guzik titles the

chapter “The Human Race Guilty Before God.” The good news is announced first, then the bad news that makes it necessary, and the bad news starts not with the Jew but with the whole Gentile world.

Few chapters have changed more lives. Both Guzik and Sproul open their Romans teaching with the same three men: Augustine, converted in a Milan garden in 386 over a verse of Romans 13; Luther, whose discovery of “the righteousness of God” in 1:17 opened the Reformation; and John Wesley, whose heart was “strangely warmed” at Aldersgate in 1738 while someone read Luther’s preface to Romans. Romans 1:17 is the hinge of that story — the verse Luther hated before he understood it and loved after.

The Old Testament runs under every line. The gospel was “promised beforehand” (v. 2): Sproul traces it to the first promise in Genesis 3:15; the Son “of a descendant of David” (v. 3) is the heir of 2 Samuel 7. The thesis quotes Habakkuk 2:4, spoken while Babylon was coming. And the indictment borrows Israel’s own confession — “they exchanged their glory For the image of an ox that eats grass” (Psalm 106:20; cf. Jeremiah 2:11) — and the lie of the garden. Paul is not inventing a new religion; he is showing what the Scriptures were always about. The figure below maps how the thesis of 1:16–17 unfolds across all sixteen chapters.

FIGURE · ROMANS 1:16–17 AS A MAP OF THE LETTER



The thesis unfolds into the whole letter: why everyone needs God’s righteousness, how it is given by faith, how the righteous live, what it means for Israel, and what the obedience of faith looks like.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 1:1–7

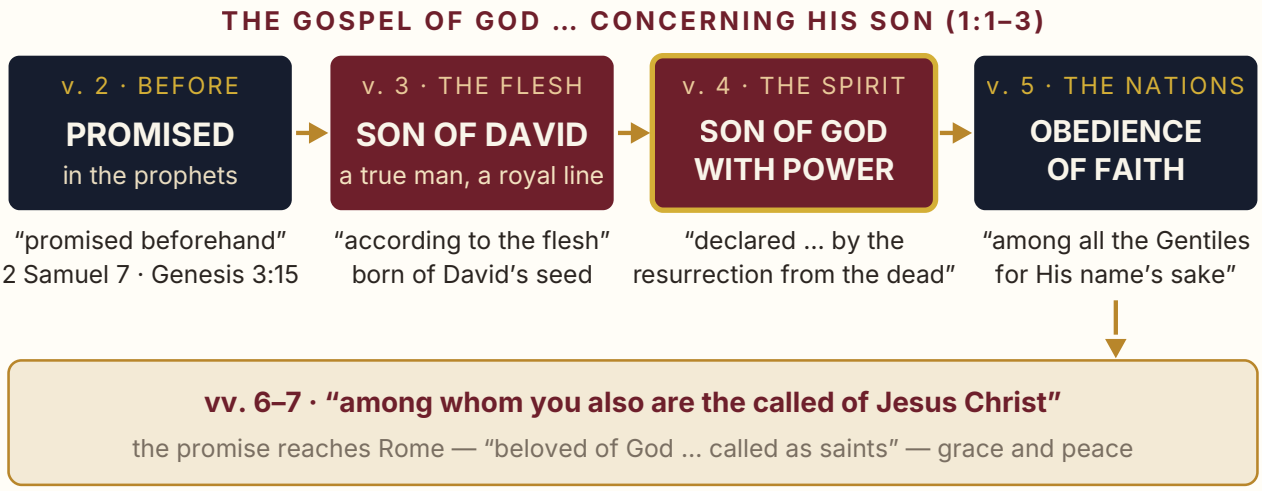
The Gospel of God Concerning His Son

A slave, a summons, a promise kept — the whole gospel folded into one long greeting

> *1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, △ set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He ☆ promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was △ declared the Son of God with power △ by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, ☆ called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
>
> ROMANS 1:1–7

> *"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."*
>
> 2 SAMUEL 7:12–13

FIGURE · THE SHAPE OF THE GOSPEL · 1:1–7



Read the greeting left to right: promised in the prophets, born David's son, declared God's Son with power by the resurrection, and sent to the nations for the obedience of faith — which is how the gospel reached Rome, and us.

δοῦλος

DOULOS · "SLAVE, BOND-SERVANT" · G1401

Paul's first word about himself. A *doulos* was not a hired servant but a slave, owned by his master; the word pairs naturally with *kyrios*, "Lord," which closes verse 4 ("Jesus Christ our Lord"). In the Old Testament "servant of the LORD" was an honor title — Moses, Joshua, David. Then three words of calling: *klētos*, "called" (G2822), *apostolos*, "one sent" (G652), and *aphōrismenos*, "set apart" (G873), a perfect participle — set apart once, and still set apart. KJV "a servant of Jesus Christ" follows the Textus Receptus order; NASB95 and SBLGNT read *Christou Iēsou*, "Christ Jesus."

ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει

HORISTHENTOS · "DECLARED, MARKED OUT" · G3724

Horizō gives English "horizon" — to mark a boundary, to define. Guzik notes the root idea "to bound, define, determine, or limit." The resurrection did not make Jesus the Son; it marked Him out publicly as what He already was. Paul chose a play on words: he himself was *aphorismenos*, "bounded off" for the gospel (v. 1); Christ was *horistheis*, "bounded out" as Son. The same verb is in Acts 17:31, God's Man "whom He has appointed," proved by "raising Him from the dead." *En dynamei*, "with power" (G1411), and *pneuma hagiōsynēs*, "Spirit of holiness" (G42), set the two halves side by side: according to the flesh, David's son; according to the Spirit, God's Son in power.

εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως

HYPAKOḒN PISTEŌS · "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH" · G5218 · G4102

Hypakoē is "hearing under" — obedience that begins by listening. "Of faith" can be read as the obedience that *is* faith (believing the gospel is the first obedience) or the obedience that *comes from* faith; Henry holds both together — the understanding submitting to God's revelation, the will to His commands. KJV renders it "obedience to the faith." Paul ends the letter with the same phrase (16:26), so the whole of Romans sits inside these two words, "among all the Gentiles" (*ethnesin*, G1484).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that "God" appears more often in Romans than in any other New Testament book — fittingly, since Paul calls it "the gospel of God" before he says a word about himself. On *doulos* he cites Morris: the word conveys "complete and utter devotion, not the abjectness which was the normal condition of the slave." On "declared" he cites Adam Clarke — "such a manifest and complete exhibition of the subject as to render it indubitable." Jesus has a human origin, born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and His deity is put beyond doubt by the resurrection. And Guzik reads verse 5 as purpose: one reason grace and apostleship were given was to produce obedience to the faith among the nations.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul opened his Romans series at St. Andrew's (October 16, 2005) by insisting that "servant" is too soft: a *doulos* was purchased and became his master's possession. "When Christ sets you free from slavery to the flesh, He calls you to the royal liberty of being a slave to Him." So Paul knew no dichotomy between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord. The gospel is "of God" — the genitive of ownership; God authors it and Paul only carries it — and it is not new, promised from the first gospel of Genesis 3:15. "Christ" is a title, not a surname. And the resurrection is God's public declaration of His Son; with Acts 17:30–31 behind him, Sproul warns that no one can plead lack of evidence.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his expositions of the chapter Spurgeon takes “separated unto the gospel” as a charge to every minister: “There are some brethren who in preaching are as timid as mice; but on a political platform they can roar like lions.” A man set apart for the gospel has one platform. He loves verse 2 — “All the gospel is in the Old Testament as well as in the New” — and verses 3–4 make him worship: “He was a man, therefore he died: but he rose again, for he was more than man.” “The called of Jesus Christ” is, he says, a sweet name for every truly converted man, called personally and effectually. And the beloved in Nero’s Rome remind him that “God has beloved ones in the darkest parts of the earth.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads the titles as Paul’s credentials. He is “a servant, a more immediate attendant, a steward in the house,” and he holds his office by a divine call, not by self-appointment. “Separated” suggests to Henry a play on the Pharisee’s name: once separated to the law, Paul is now “a gospel Pharisee, separated by the counsel of God.” The promises of the prophets were “the morning-beams that ushered in the sun of righteousness,” and verses 3–4 teach Christ’s two natures — David’s son by human descent, God’s Son declared by the resurrection. Faith itself is obedience, and saints are those called to holiness, not those who merely bear the name.

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 1:8–15

Debtor to Greeks and Barbarians

Thanks, unceasing prayer, a hindered journey, and a debt only the gospel can pay

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. 9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, 10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

ROMANS 1:8–15

ὀφειλέτης εἰμί

OPHEILETĒS · “DEBTOR, ONE UNDER OBLIGATION” · G3781

NASB “I am under obligation” renders a noun: “I am a debtor” (so KJV). The word is used of a man owing money (Matthew 18:24) and, in Paul, of an owed duty (8:12; Galatians 5:3). Paul had borrowed nothing from the Romans; the debt was laid on him by Christ’s commission, owed to everyone the gospel was meant for. He names them in pairs that cover the world: *Hellēsin te kai barbarois* — Greeks and barbarians (G1672, G915), the cultured and those who did not speak Greek — and the wise and the foolish.

τὸ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ πρόθυμον

PROTHYMON · "EAGER, READY, WILLING" · G4289

Pro-thymos, "forward in spirit" — the same word Jesus used in Gethsemane: "the spirit is willing" (Matthew 26:41). *To kat' emē* is "as far as it lies with me": NASB "for my part," KJV "as much as in me is." Paul could not control the hindrances (v. 13, KJV "was let hitherto," old English for "prevented"); he could control his readiness. Verse 11 adds his aim — that they might be "established" (*stērichthēnai*, G4741), the verb he returns to in his closing doxology, "to Him who is able to establish you" (16:25).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik stresses that Paul had not founded this church and had never seen it; it seems to have grown up spontaneously as believers — perhaps Roman visitors at Pentecost (Acts 2:10) — came to the capital. Paul's "prevented" may hint at a charge his opponents made, that he was afraid to preach in the empire's great city. His debt Guzik reads in light of Rome itself: Rome had given the world peace, order, a common culture and good roads, which Paul used, and he would repay it with the gospel. Guzik cites Spurgeon on Paul's readiness — "Oh, it is grand to find a man so little entangled that he can go where God would have him go" — and notes the irony that Paul finally reached Rome as a prisoner.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Just Shall Live by Faith" (October 23, 2005) Sproul notes that "the whole world" meant the known Mediterranean world, and that "God is my witness" is a solemn oath — not the casual swearing Jesus forbade, but the kind the Westminster Confession allows on weighty occasions. Paul longs not only to strengthen the Romans but to be encouraged by them, and Sproul applies it plainly: "Pastors are human." The debt to Greeks and barbarians is a moral obligation laid on Paul by his calling, and it reaches every person a Christian meets. Paul's eagerness is a rebuke to preachers who lose their zeal when they are discouraged.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached a whole sermon on two words of verse 15, "I am ready" (No. 2285): "We had once a Saxon king called Ethelred the Unready; here we have an apostle who might be called Paul the Ready." He traces the readiness through Paul's life — ready to preach at Rome, to suffer at Jerusalem, to do unpleasant discipline, to die — and finds its root in a firm conviction that the gospel is true. But there was a limit: "The apostle was ready to go anywhere with the gospel, but he was not ready to preach another gospel." In his exposition of the hindered journey he adds, "This man, Paul, did a great deal by prayer" — the delay was answered in a way no one planned.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

"It is a desirable thing to be famous for faith," Henry writes on verse 8, and he traces Paul's love for a church he had never seen. Paul prays for them without ceasing and longs to come for three reasons: to impart a gift that would establish them, to be comforted together with them by mutual faith, and to have fruit among them. Paul's gifts were not his own: "His receivings made him a debtor; for they were talents he was entrusted with to trade for his Master's honour." Gifts received are debts owed. Henry, writing as a Protestant, pauses to lament that the church once famous for faith did not stay so.

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 1:16–17

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

The thesis of Romans — power for salvation, righteousness revealed, life by faith

> 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.* 17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*
>
> ROMANS 1:16–17

> *"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith."*
>
> HABAKKUK 2:4

οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι

EPAISCHYNOMAI · "TO BE ASHAMED OF" · G1870

A strengthened form of *aischynomai* — to be ashamed *of* something, to disown it. Jesus used it: "whoever is ashamed of Me and My words" (Mark 8:38); Paul told Timothy, "do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8). The negative is understatement: Paul means he glories in it. KJV "the gospel of Christ" follows the later manuscripts; NASB95 and SBLGNT read simply "the gospel." Then the reason: *dynamis gar theou estin* — it *is* God's power (G1411), not a report about power; and it is *eis sōtērian* (G4991), aimed at salvation, "to everyone who believes" (*pisteuonti*, G4100).

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἀποκαλύπτεται

DIKAIOSYNĒ THEOU · "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD" · G1343 · G601

The key phrase of the letter (also 3:21, 22; 10:3). Luther first read it as the righteousness by which God punishes sinners, and hated it; he came to see it as the righteousness God gives — "from God," as Paul puts it in Philippians 3:9. All four of our teachers read it that way; some modern scholars stress instead God's own saving faithfulness, and the phrase has room for God being righteous as He makes sinners righteous (3:26). *Apokalyptetai* is present tense — it is being unveiled wherever the gospel is preached.

ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν · ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται

EK PISTEŌS EIS PISTIN · "FROM FAITH TO FAITH" · G4102 · G2198

"Out of faith into faith" — an idiom of fullness (compare "from death to death … from life to life," 2 Corinthians 2:16): faith from first to last. Then Habakkuk 2:4. The Hebrew and NASB95 of Habakkuk read "by his faith," the steady trust of a righteous man waiting on God while Babylon came; Paul quotes it without the pronoun, as he does again in Galatians 3:11. *Ho dikaios* (G1342), "the righteous," *zēsetai*, "shall live" — the whole of chapters 1–8 has been read as unpacking those words: who is righteous by faith, and how he lives.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls these verses the thesis of the letter. In Rome a gospel centered on a crucified Jewish Savior was an embarrassment — "but Paul is not ashamed." With Morris he insists the gospel is not advice but power: "It is power. It lifts them up." The righteousness of God here is "the God-kind of righteousness that is given to the sinner who puts their trust in Jesus Christ" — not the standard that condemns us but the gift that saves us; Barclay's line, that God treats the sinner as if he had never sinned, describes justification. "From faith to faith" means "by faith from beginning to end," and with Harrison he adds that justifying faith is the start of the Christian life, not the whole of it — fulfilling Habakkuk 2:4: the justified ones shall live by faith.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul calls the gospel God's chosen instrument of power. Recalling Luther's last sermon, he notes how people hunt for power in relics, experiences and spectacle, while God has invested His power in the preached Word. The righteousness revealed is not the righteousness by which God is righteous but the justifying righteousness He gives — Luther's "alien righteousness," discovered through Augustine — and Sproul tells how it freed a monk tormented by the law. Habakkuk 2:4 comes from a prophet told to wait for God's promise, so to live by faith is not merely to believe God exists but to trust what He says: "Why would you not trust God?"

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his exposition Spurgeon notes why the temptation was real: to many the gospel was too plain, without mystery or worldly wisdom — "Many other people were ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Not Paul: "This is the sweet story of the cross, of which Paul was not ashamed." Spurgeon sets the law and the gospel side by side — the law says the man who does these things shall live by them; the gospel says the just shall live by faith. And in *Paul the Ready* he locates the source of Paul's boldness exactly where verse 16 does: a man who is sure the gospel is true is not ashamed to preach it anywhere.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry treats the verses as Paul's first discourse on justification. Many despised the gospel, "yet Paul was not ashamed to own it," because it is God's power to save — but only "to every one that believeth": "The medicine prepared will not cure the patient if it be not taken." It goes to the Jew first and then to the Gentile, a common salvation. The righteousness it reveals is received by faith, and not only at the start, "but it is all along from faith to faith," just as the prophet said, "the just shall live by faith" (KJV).

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 1:18–23

Truth Suppressed, Glory Exchanged

Wrath revealed from heaven against a world that knew God and would not honor Him

18 *For ⚠ the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who ⚠ suppress the truth in unrighteousness,* 19 *because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.* 20 *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, △ His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are ⚠ without excuse.* 21 *For even though they knew God, ⚠ they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they*

> *became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* [22] *⚠ Professing to be wise, they became fools,* [23] *and 🔁 exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*
>
> ROMANS 1:18–23

> *"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."*
>
> PSALM 19:1

> *"Thus they exchanged their glory For the image of an ox that eats grass."*
>
> PSALM 106:20

FIGURE · TWO REVELATIONS, ONE VERB · 1:17–18

1:17 · IN THE GOSPEL

the righteousness of God is revealed

from faith to faith — the righteous shall live

=

1:18 · FROM HEAVEN

the wrath of God is revealed

against all ungodliness — men who suppress the truth

ἀποκαλύπτεται · apokalyptetai (G601) — "is being revealed," present tense, in both verses

the "For" at the start of v. 18 ties them: the wrath is the reason the righteousness is needed

The same present-tense verb sits in both verses: God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel, and His wrath is being revealed from heaven — the second is why the first is good news.

ὀργὴ θεοῦ · κατεχόντων

ORGĒ · "WRATH" · G3709 · KATECHONTŌN · "SUPPRESS" · G2722

Orgē is God's settled, holy opposition to evil — not a fit of temper. It falls on *asebeia* (G763), "ungodliness," and *adikia* (G93), "unrighteousness" — sin against God and sin against men, or (Sproul) two names for one sin. The charge is in the participle *katechontōn*: to hold down, hold back, restrain (the same verb as the "restrainer" of 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7). KJV "hold the truth" means hold it down. Truth is not missing; it is pinned.

ἀναπολογήτους

ANAPOLOGĒTOUS · "WITHOUT EXCUSE" · G379

From *apologia*, a legal defense: "without a defense," no case to plead. What leaves them defenseless is visible: *ta aorata* (G517), His invisible attributes, "clearly seen" through what has been made — *aidios dynamis* (G126), eternal power, and *theiotēs* (G2305), divine nature (KJV "Godhead"). Paul uses the same word of the moralist in 2:1: "you have no excuse." Verse 21 gives the failure two names — they did not glorify (*edoxasan*, G1392) nor give thanks (*eucharistēsan*, G2168) — and two results: they became futile (*emataiōthēsan*, G3154) in their reasonings (*dialogismois*, G1261), and fools (*emōranthēsan*, G3471).

ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν … ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος

ḗllaxan · "they exchanged" · G236 · eikōn · "image" · G1504

Allassō, to change one thing for another. The phrasing is borrowed from Psalm 106:20 — Israel at Sinai "exchanged their glory For the image of an ox" — and Jeremiah 2:11. The list runs downhill — man, birds, four-footed animals, crawling creatures — each step closer to the dust; the glory of the *aphthartos* (G862), incorruptible, God is traded for a likeness of what rots. Verses 25 and 26 will use the compound *metallassō* for the second and third exchanges.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls wrath the greatest peril facing the human race, and with John Murray defines it: "Wrath is the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness." This wrath is seen in the facts of human experience. "Mankind does in fact suppress the truth of God." God's witness in creation is universal and clear, which leaves man without excuse; our problem is not ignorance but refusal to glorify Him or give thanks. "Our rejection of God's general revelation does not make us smarter or better." Then the images: "We can't seem to resist the temptation to create God into our own corrupt image, or even in an image beneath us" — and people become like the gods they serve.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "God's Wrath" (October 30, 2005) Sproul says God "is not merely irritated": *orgē* is passionate opposition to evil, the response of a good judge. "The single sin that provokes God's wrath against the whole human race is the sin of suppressing truth" — pressing it down like a coiled spring that keeps pushing back. The revelation is manifest to everyone, not an elite, so no one is innocent, and the agnostic has no safe harbor: "Your problem is not an intellectual problem." Against Kant, he holds that the invisible God is clearly seen; he distinguishes this knowledge from saving knowledge. Fallen people would never invent a holy God (against Freud); they exchange Him for one they can manage.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached "Inexcusable Irreverence and Ingratitude" (No. 2257) on verses 20–21: "They knew that there was a God — they never denied His existence — but they had no reverence for His name." He lists the want of reverence (rarely thinking of God, mean thoughts of Him, outward religion, no prayer) and the want of gratitude (His law despised, His Book unread, His Son refused) and asks, "Shall the great God be made a lackey to our lusts?" In his exposition he hears "a gospel of the sea, and of the heavens, of the stars, and of the sun," warns, "When you and the truth quarrel, you had better end your fighting soon," and sums up verse 22: "The way to be a fool is to pretend to be wise."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry sees the wrath revealed against men who keep truth prisoner: "An unrighteous wicked heart is the dungeon in which many a good truth is detained and buried." The Gentiles had real, though limited, knowledge of God from creation, whose order and design point to an eternal Maker — "The workman is known by his work" — so they are left without excuse. Their idolatry was not from want of light but from pride, ingratitude and vain reasoning, and their claim to wisdom made the folly worse. He names its forms: images of God, honor given to creatures, and the truth of God turned into a lie.

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 1:24–32

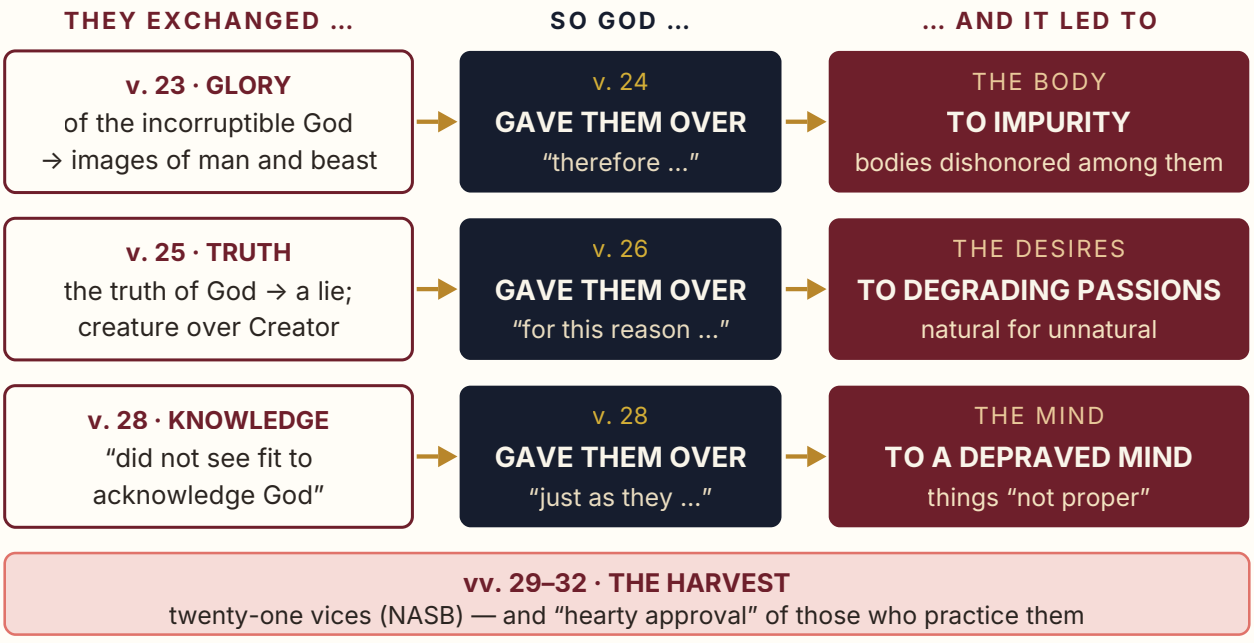
God Gave Them Over

Three exchanges, three handings-over, and a harvest of sin applauded

[24] Therefore God ⟳ gave them over ⚠ in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. [25] For they ⟳ exchanged ⚠ the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than △ the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. [26] For this reason God ⟳ gave them over to ⚠ degrading passions; for their women ⟳ exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, [27] and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. [28] And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God ⟳ gave them over to ⚠ a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, [29] being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; [32] and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also ⚠ give hearty approval to those who practice them.

ROMANS 1:24–32

FIGURE · EXCHANGED, SO GIVEN OVER · 1:23–32



Same verb, παραδίδωμι: the Father "delivered Him over for us all" (8:32) — the Son given over for the given-over.

Each row reads left to right: what people exchanged, God's answer ("gave them over"), and where it led — the body, the desires, the mind — until the harvest of verses 29–32. The same verb is used of the Father giving up His Son.

παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς

PAREDŌKEN · "GAVE OVER, HANDED OVER" · G3860

Paradidōmi is to hand over into another's custody — the word for handing a prisoner to the jailer (Matthew 5:25) or Jesus to Pilate (Mark 15:1). Three times God hands people over: to impurity (*akatharsia*, G167, v. 24), to passions of dishonor (*pathē atimias*, G3806, G819, v. 26), and to a depraved mind (v. 28). The custodian is what they chose. KJV renders the first two "gave them up," the third "gave them over." Paul will use the same verb of the gospel's answer: Christ "was delivered over because of our transgressions" (4:25), and God "delivered Him over for us all" (8:32).

οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν … εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν

EDOKIMASAN · ADOKIMON · "SAW FIT · DEPRAVED" · G1381 · G96

A play on words that NASB and KJV can only partly show. *Dokimazō* is to test and approve, as metal is assayed: they did not *approve* of keeping God in their knowledge (*epignōsis*, G1922). So God gave them over to an *a-dokimos* mind — unapproved, failed the test, like a rejected coin (KJV "reprobate"). A mind that rejected God becomes a mind God rejects as a guide. Verse 25's *metallassō* (G3337) adds that they exchanged the truth "for the lie" (*en tō pseudei*, G5579 — Greek has the article).

συνευδοκοῦσιν

SYNEUDOKOUSIN · "GIVE HEARTY APPROVAL" · G4909

Syn-eu-dokeō — to be well pleased together with. Luke uses it of Saul at Stephen's stoning: he "was in hearty agreement with putting him to death" (Acts 8:1). The list ends here, not with the worst act but with the worst attitude. They know "the ordinance of God" (*dikaiōma*, G1345) that such things are "worthy of death" (*axioi thanatou*, G514); they do them anyway and cheer others on. NASB lists twenty-one vices in verses 29–31; KJV has twenty-three, adding "fornication" and "implacable" from the later manuscripts.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears verse 24's "gave them up" beside Hosea 4:17 — Ephraim joined to idols, let him alone. "We make a mistake when we think that it is God's mercy or kindness that allows man to continue in sin. It is actually His wrath that allows us to go on destroying ourselves with sin." We exchange the truth of God for "the lie of our own choosing." Writing from Corinth, where idolatry and immorality were common, Paul names same-sex conduct among women and men alike, and the "penalty" is built into the sin itself. The list mixes respectable sins — covetousness, an itch for more; envy, which handed Jesus to Pilate (Matthew 27:18); pride — with murder. "Debased" originally meant "that which has not stood the test": they did not approve God, so they got an unapproved mind.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "God's Wrath on Unrighteousness" (November 6, 2005) begins, "The passage I have just read is one of the grimmest we find anywhere in sacred Scripture." "Gave them up" is judicial abandonment — God withdrawing His restraint from the impenitent, much as the church excommunicates — and it means that "most of the time, when we sin, we are working out God's punishment for our sin." Paul uses same-sex behavior as the clearest picture of depravity, against nature "as God has created it," though "Sex is a beautiful thing, a divine creation." The vice list is only representative — compare the day's news — and the deepest move is approving others, seeking allies to dull our guilt. He prays God would never abandon us to our sin.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon opened *Inexcusable Irreverence and Ingratitude* by calling this a dreadful passage — "Read it at home, and be startled at the awful vices of the Gentile world" — and then refused to leave it in the ancient world: London was guilty of the same sins, and so were hearers who knew God and did not honor Him. In his exposition of verses 23–24 he draws the line from idol to conduct, with Egypt's animal gods in view: "It is very easy to make a beast of yourself" once you have made a beast your god. He applies verse 25 to preachers who exalt man above the Creator, and points the guilty to the brazen serpent: look to Jesus and live.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

"Those who dishonoured God were given up to dishonour themselves," Henry writes. "God gave them up, in a way of righteous judgment, as the just punishment of their idolatry" — withdrawing restraining grace and letting their lusts rule; the judgment matches the sin. Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, they were given a mind that cannot tell right from wrong, and a long course of sin dulls the conscience until it no longer feels. He sorts the catalogue by the two tables of the law — sins against God and against neighbor — and calls approving others' sins a deeper sin, because it defends wickedness and spreads it. No Gentile, he concludes, could be justified by his own works.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The Son promised and raised, the righteous by faith, and the given-over mind

> *"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,"*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 2:8

> *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*
>
> ACTS 17:30–31

> *"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

> *"Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'"*
>
> GALATIANS 3:11

> *“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;”*
>
> ROMANS 3:21–22

> *“So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.”*
>
> PSALM 81:12

> *“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”*
>
> EPHESIANS 4:17–19

> *“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;”*
>
> ROMANS 16:25–26

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul calls Romans 1:18–32 “preparatory”: the gospel registers as good news only against the background of universal guilt, and “the only refuge from guilt is forgiveness.” Acts 17:30–31 is the bridge he uses from the opening verses: the same God who marked out His Son by the resurrection has fixed a day of judgment by that Man, and commands all people everywhere to repent.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads the chapter’s end as the first step of a proof. If the Gentiles, with the light of creation and conscience, held the truth in unrighteousness, then none of them could be justified by his own works — and chapter 2 will show the Jew no better. The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel is therefore not one option among several; it is the only righteousness there is for anyone.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four men read the same chapter. Guzik walks it phrase by phrase with the commentators at his elbow; Sproul presses each word for its doctrine and its challenge to modern unbelief; Spurgeon turns it into a summons to readiness and repentance; Henry gathers it into plain counsel. They agree on the main lines — a given righteousness, a real wrath, an inexcusable world — and differ mostly in emphasis.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The greeting (1–7)	Doulos as utter devotion; "declared" = put beyond doubt; grace given for obedience of faith.	Slave, not servant; no Savior-without-Lord; the gospel God owns; the resurrection leaves no excuse.	Set apart from politics to the gospel; all the gospel in the Old Testament; more than man.	Servant and steward; a gospel Pharisee; morning-beams of the Sun; faith as obedience.
II · Rome (8–15)	Church not founded by Paul; Rome's roads and peace repaid with the gospel.	A lawful oath; pastors need encouragement too; the debt reaches everyone we meet.	Paul the Ready — ready to preach, suffer, discipline and die, never to preach another gospel.	Famous for faith; his receivings made him a debtor; more grace, more owed.
III · The thesis (16–17)	The gospel is power; the God-kind of righteousness given; by faith from beginning to end.	God's power in the preached Word; alien righteousness; trust what God has said.	Many were ashamed of its plainness; the sweet story of the cross; law versus faith.	Medicine must be taken; Jew first, then Gentile; all along from faith to faith.
IV · Wrath (18–23)	Wrath as holy revulsion; suppression; rejecting God makes no one smarter; gods in our image.	Not merely irritated; truth held down like a spring; a moral, not intellectual, problem.	They knew God but gave no reverence or thanks; a gospel of the stars; fools pretend to be wise.	The heart a dungeon for truth; the workman known by his work; pride, not want of light.
V · Given over (24–32)	Wrath, not kindness, lets sin run; respectable sins beside murder; an unapproved mind.	Judicial abandonment; sin as punishment for sin; approval seeks allies against guilt.	A beast of yourself; London as guilty as Rome; look to Jesus and live.	Dishonoring God, dishonored themselves; restraint withdrawn; approval a deeper sin.

ROMANS 1:1–32 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The first word is "slave."** Before "apostle," Paul calls himself a *doulos* of Christ Jesus — and the greeting closes on "Jesus Christ our Lord." There is no Savior who is not also Lord. SPROUL
- **The resurrection marked Him out; it did not make Him Son.** *Horizō* means to mark a boundary. Paul was "bounded off" for the gospel (v. 1); Christ was "bounded out" as Son with power (v. 4). Acts 17:31 uses the same verb. THE GREEK
- **"Obedience of faith" is the frame of the letter.** It stands at 1:5 and again at 16:26, with the prophets, the gospel and the nations in both places. Romans begins and ends by calling faith obedience. THE TEXT
- **Paul the Ready.** Ready to preach at Rome, to suffer at Jerusalem, to die — but "not ready to preach another gospel." Readiness grows out of conviction. SPURGEON
- **The gospel is power, not advice.** "It is power. It lifts them up" (Morris, in Guzik). God put His power in the message, not in relics or spectacle. GUZIK
- **A given righteousness.** Luther hated "the righteousness of God" until he saw it was a gift; Sproul calls it "alien righteousness" — not ours, credited to us, received by faith from beginning to end. SPROUL

- **Two revelations, one verb.** Righteousness "is revealed" in the gospel (v. 17); wrath "is revealed" from heaven (v. 18). The second is why the first is good news. THE TEXT
- **Truth is not missing; it is held down.** *Katechō*: the world's problem is suppression, not ignorance. "The workman is known by his work," and the heart becomes "the dungeon" where truth is buried. HENRY
- **The first sin named is ingratitude.** "They did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (v. 21). Spurgeon: knowledge of God without reverence and thanks only increases the guilt. SPURGEON
- **God gives us what we insist on — and then gives His Son.** "Gave them over" three times (vv. 24, 26, 28) is wrath, not kindness; but the same verb says the Father "delivered Him over for us all" (8:32). THE GREEK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Paul's first word about himself is "bond-servant." If someone described you by what owns you, what would they say — and what would Paul want them to say?**

Sproul: Christ frees us from sin to "the royal liberty of being a slave to Him."

1:1; 6:17–18

2 **Paul said, "I am under obligation" to people he had never met. Who are your Greeks and barbarians — the people God has put you in debt to with the gospel?**

Henry: the more grace received, the more is owed.

1:14–15; 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16

3 **Where are you most tempted to be ashamed of the gospel — at work, with family, inside, online? What would "not ashamed" look like there this week?**

The cure for shame is confidence in what the gospel is: the power of God for salvation.

1:16; 2 TIMOTHY 1:8

4 **Paul says the deepest sin is suppressing truth we already know. What truth about God or yourself have you been holding down?**

Spurgeon: when you and the truth quarrel, end the fight soon.

1:18–21; JOHN 3:19–21

5 **Verse 21 makes ingratitude the first step down. What happens in your heart when you stop thanking God?**

Thankfulness keeps God as God; ingratitude starts the exchange.

1:21; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

6 **"God gave them over" — He let them have what they wanted. Have you ever gotten what you insisted on and found it was a judgment? How does 8:32 change the story?**

The Father handed His Son over so the handed-over could be brought back.

1:24–28; 4:25; 8:32

Romans opens with a slave announcing a King and ends its first chapter with a world handed over to what it chose. Between them stands one sentence: the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Paul was not ashamed of it, and the righteous still live by it.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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