

TRINITY LECTURE 2 - Bible Study

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray. God, our Father, you have caused all Holy Scripture to be written to make us wise for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we pray tonight that you will fulfill that purpose of your word in us and for your glory. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

I don't believe in the wrath of God because God is love. In essence, that's what a fellow student said to me when I was studying at a theological college at Ridley College 20 or so years ago.

I should point out that the fellow student actually wasn't a student at Ridley, but was a student at another college in Melbourne. And we had combined theological discussions. That student went on to become a bishop, indeed an archbishop.

And he is indeed at the moment the primate of the Anglican Church of this country. I don't believe in the wrath of God because God is love.

[1 : 17] Well, it's true that God is love, of course. All loving, abounding in steadfast love. To the thousandth generation, God is full of steadfast love.

He welcomes sinners. He forgives sin. His steadfast mercy endures forever. God is love. And it's also true that there are many people who dismiss any notion of God's wrath or anger at all.

They think that wrath and love are mutually inconsistent. That they can't be held compatible within the one being or one person. Some say that wrath is just a primitive idea when applied in religious contexts.

It's unacceptable today because we've moved on to such sophisticated life and thinking. Or something that wrath or anger diminishes God if we were to apply that attribute to him.

That somehow God is bigger than such base emotions or feelings. For some, wrath is really fickle. More probably a reflection of their own expressions of wrath.

[2 : 31] It's temperamental and therefore perhaps ungodly. God could hardly be a God of wrath if wrath is such a fickle thing in somebody's psyche.

For many, wrath just doesn't fit their picture of God. As a benign, cuddly, grandfather type of figure in a rocking chair. If they're right, what an immoral God.

When children are murdered or women are gang raped. When bombs are dropped on civilians and children in Lebanon, but not just there.

When we see the atrocities in our own society as well as those around the world. If God's not angry at that. Then surely in the end he's immoral.

If God will not judge sin. Then surely he doesn't care. If God does not hate evil. Then he does not even love.

[3 : 39] And if God is not angry at sin and angry at evil. In this world which he created. Then in the end.

He is not righteous. And remember how the end of last night's passage. Was. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.

Through faith. For faith. God sits on a throne and not in a rocking chair. And yes of course he loves. God is love.

And his steadfast love endures forever. But not inconsistent with that. God is consistently. Angry.

And full of wrath. At the sin. The evil. And the wickedness. Which people do in this world. For wrath is not the opposite of love.

[4 : 38] Many respects it's a necessary expression of holy love. And God's wrath and anger in many ways. Or express some form of love.

To those who do wrong. The passage before us tonight. The second half of Romans 1. Is not an easy passage. It's controversial for various. Issues that it raises or touches on.

It's easy to read it and look out there. Out the window to the world out there. But this is a letter written to Christians. Remember. Christians who. As well as non-Christians. Still need to hear the gospel. So read it. To yourself. Not to those wicked people. Outside.

Last night's passage. Finished with verses 16 and 17. Paul said. I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone.

[5 : 41] Who has faith. To the Jew first. And also to the Greek. For in it. The righteousness of God is revealed through faith. For faith. As it is written.

The one who is righteous. Will live by faith. Why is this gospel needed? Why is Paul so concerned to declare that he's unashamed of this gospel?

Because. Because. As verse 18 goes on to say. Because. Or for. For this reason. The wrath of God. Is revealed from heaven.

Against all ungodliness and wickedness. Of those who by their wickedness. Suppress the truth. The gospel is needed.

Because of sin. And God's righteous anger. Against sin. Against wickedness. Against evil and ungodliness. Of those who suppress the truth.

[6 : 43] And therein lies in effect the essence of sin. The suppression of the truth. About God. And about God's gospel. Those who suppress the truth.

By their wickedness. That is the truth about God. About his gospel. And about his purpose. Through the gospel. To be glorified in his son.

What does Paul mean by this? He goes on in verses 19 and 20. To explain that a bit. For. Again. A purpose or reason.

For what can be known about God. Is plain to them. Because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world. His eternal power. And divine nature.

Invisible though they are. Have been understood. And seen. Through the things he has made. So. They are without. Excuse. Paul is arguing.

[7 : 43] Paul is arguing. That the evidence. For God. Is clear. Plain. In what God has made. In its. Beauty. Or intricacy. In its interdependence. In its complexity. In its vastness. And power. And so on. He's not saying. That creation. Is sufficient evidence. For everything.

There is to know about God. God. But rather. Key things about God. Are still evident. From the creation. Something of God.

Is seen there. And sufficient of God. Is seen there. For the truth about God. To be known. The problem you see. Is not lack of evidence. The problem.

Is the. Suppression. Of the truth. The refusal. To accept the truth. Or the evidence. That God has paraded. Plainly. For every person.

[8 : 38] In the universe. That he's made. It's plain. Verse 19 says. But they've suppressed the truth. As verse 18 ends. And therefore. The logical result.

Of that is. They are without. Excuse. Verse 20's end. That is. It's our fault. Not God's. When people. Suppress the truth.

The truth is plain. The truth. The truth is there. For people to see. Their suppression of it. Is their fault. Not God's fault. Ignorance.

Is no excuse. I remember. When I was in year 10. Doing chemistry. And we came to the final. Examination. And I remember.

That one. Large section. Of the paper. Was on a topic. I don't remember the topic now. But it was a topic that. Our class had not even studied. And we were all.

[9 : 32] Quite aghast. Understandably. And. And for whatever this. One out of six topics. On the paper. Or whatever it was. Our class. Had no idea about. Later.

The. Teacher of our class. Admitted. That he. Overlooked the fact. That he should have taught that topic. And. We were. Sort of. Marked up accordingly. Or whatever. For in our case.

Ignorance. Was an excuse. Even on an exam. It wasn't our fault. But here. Ignorance. Is no excuse. People are at fault.

For suppressing the truth. And for ignoring the truth. And ignorance. Is not an excuse. But rather the. Initial.

Sin. Sin. That points. Reiterated. In verse 21. For though they knew God. They did not. Honor him. As God. Or give thanks to him.

[10:28] The basic sin. Is the suppression of truth. Which means. That we do not. Honor God. As God. Not that we should know. Everything about God. From the creation. Not at all. But sufficient. To honor God. As God. And by and large. People don't do that. Though there is enough. In creation. For that to be plain. That God is God. And we ought to honor him. As God. And remember. That's actually the purpose. Of the gospel. As we saw last night. That in a sense. The whole point. Of the gospel. Is for the sake. Of his name. The name of his son. At the at the end. Of verse 5. But ultimately. For the glory. And honor. Of the son of God. God made the world. So that he would be honored. As God. And he gave the gospel. So that his son. Would be honored. As the son of God. As divine. It's still God's. Consistent purpose. And the gospel.

[11:25] Seeks in effect. To overcome. That suppression. Of truth. That refusal. To honor God. As God. By humanity. So what's the result. Of refusing. To honor God. Well firstly. It's confused. Thinking. Verse 21. Goes on to say. They became. Futile. In their thinking. Their senseless minds. Were darkened. Claiming to be wise. They became fools. Certainly. The end of verse 21. Says the same thing. In different language. In many respects. Fairly vivid. And graphic language. They became. Futile. In their thinking. Their senseless minds. Were darkened. And as an illustration. Of that. Almost in a humorous sense. Verse 22. Elaborates. Claiming to be wise.

[12:23] They became fools. Isn't that true. Of so many today. So often. The wisest people. According to our society. Standards. Are actually. The most foolish. For they do not honor God. As God. They despise. The wisdom of God. They ignore it. And reject it. And despise it. They despise. The wisdom of the gospel. And the wisdom of the cross. And in our society. They may be lifted up. On pedestals. As wise people. To be honored. God. But as verse 22. Tells us very clearly. Claiming to be wise. They became fools. They consider. There's no need. For the gospel. There's no need. For the righteousness. Of God. Nor is there any need. To honor God. As God. And actually. They are fools. Even though. Our world. Applauds. Such people. They are self-righteous.

[13:19] Fools. They claim. To be wise. They boast. About their wisdom. That is. But the reality is. They are fools. We're not dealing here. With simple atheists. Either. By the way. Remember. What we saw last night. This is about. Getting the gospel. Right. And so. It's not just. For those who. Say there is no God. It's for those. Who. Say there is some. Other God. Than the God. Of the gospel. So we're not just. Talking here. About atheists. We're talking about. Those who worship. Other gods. Including those. Who worship. Perversions. Of the living God. Under the name. Of Jesus Christ. What happens then? Their minds are dark. And they're futile. In their thinking. All their cleverness. Comes to nothing. That is. They're actually fools. And then. Verse 23. They exchanged. The glory.

[14:14] Of the immortal God. For images. Resembling. A mortal. Human being. Or birds. Or four-footed animals. Or reptiles. That is. They commit. Idolatry. They worship. The creator. The creature. Not the creator. Idolatry. Is. Anything. Other than. God. But put in. The position. Of God. It may not. Necessarily. Of course. Be a statue. That you bow down to. But whatever. Drives a person. Whether it's their lust. For money. Or power. Or fame. Or maybe the worship. Of some other. Perversion of God. Or some other idol. Or some other. God. Of some religion. In effect. That's idolatry. And that's what darkened. Minds do. Something has to go. On the pedestal. And if it's not God. It's idolatry. And it's the language here.

[15:12] Of an exchange. There's a sense of. Oddness. Almost mockery. In the language. That's used. As though somehow. You've exchanged. The image. Or exchanged. The glory. Of the immortal God. For an image. Of something. Even like a reptile. And there's a. Going down. Descent.

In verse 23. For images. Resembling. A mortal. Human being. Or maybe then. Birds. Or four-footed animals. Or even reptiles. What an odd exchange.

I remember. A few years ago. I was. Traveling in Cambodia. And in Phnom Penh. I. Had with me. Thai baht. The currency of Thailand. And I. Went to exchange some.

For. American dollars. Which was. The best sort of currency. In Cambodia. And I remember. Going to a money changer. And. Changing it over. And counting it all.

[16:07] Very carefully. And being sure. That I'd had the right amount. Of money. Only to find. A little bit later. As I tried to use. Some of that money. That. It was actually. A dud note. It was a counterfeit note.

I'd exchanged. Perfectly good currency. For rubbish. And that's in effect. The exchange. That's being described. Here in verse 23. 23. I was ripped off.

I ought to have. Been more careful. I suppose. But that's what people are like. Without God. They exchange. God. For rubbish.

In the end. For idols. And there. For. They are fools. They claim to be wise. But their foolishness. Is seen in the. Bad exchange rate. That they get. When they exchange. The glory of the immortal God. For just idols. And in response.

[17:05] God vents his wrath. He doesn't sit back. And. Be unconcerned. About. Such exchange. He vents his wrath. We might expect.

A furia. We might expect. An earthquake. We might expect. Somebody to. To be punished. With plagues. Or boils. Or locusts. To infest their field. Or something like that.

We might expect. Some catastrophic illness. Or job loss. As God's punishment. We might expect. That. Foot. That comes down. At the beginning.

Of Monty Python. And squashes everything. Underneath it. I don't know. Whether you've ever. Watched Monty Python. I used that illustration. Just the other day. When I was in India. Teaching. And none of them. Knew Monty Python at all.

I felt very silly. Trying to then. Explain the illustration. But at the beginning. Of Monty Python.

They've got all these. People living happy lives. And in the end. To end it all. Down comes his big foot. From heaven.

[17:57] And squashes it. And somehow. We often think. Of the judgment of God. As a bit like that. Something catastrophic. Will happen. A great big spludge. And the end. But surprisingly.

No. The judgment. That's described. In the verses. That follow. Is not like that. Sort of. Cataclysmic. Intervention. A great big smack.

On the backside. Of boils. And plagues. And job loss. And so on. God's wrath. Actually is described. In the following verses. More as. Non-intervention. Than intervention.

There's an element. To which God. Actually takes human freedom. Seriously. It's not a total freedom. Of course. He lets people. Pursue their own course. And that actually.

Is an act of. Judgment. Sin's destruction. Is quite complete. When God actually sits back. And lets people.

[18:52] Take. The wrong path. And that's his. Judgment and punishment. More often than not. So there's nothing. More severe. Than what's described. In verse 24. And 26.

And 28. God gave them up. In their sin. To. To its course. In effect. He lets the consequences. Of that sin. Be. In effect.

Its own punishment. To an extent. And what I think. Is behind that. Is that. Very often. We sin. And the foot. Doesn't come down. On top of us.

We don't lose our jobs. Or our family. Or our houses. And we think. Well I got away with that. I can. I can do it again. God's actually not watching. It doesn't actually matter.

I've got wrong. His moral standards. And what happens of course. Is that God in his.

Non-interventionist. Judgment. Let's us keep walking down.

[19:47] The path. To hell. And he doesn't. Jump. Jump in the way. To stop us. But we become. Hardened. As we keep sinning.

As it becomes. More habitual. And further. And further. And further. From the truth. And as we walk. Down that path. We've suppressed. The truth. Time and time.

Again. Foolish people. Who think that God is not angry. He is. But he's not.

Yeah. His anger is expressed in. Non-intervention. Holding back. So that we're hardened in sin. That we deny God's judgment.

And even in the end. Perhaps deny God. Plenty of Christians have gone down that path. Which is why Paul's writing these words.

[20 : 40] To Christians. As much as to non-Christians. This is terrifying wrath indeed. The darkened minds fail to see what God is doing.

Or. We could say what God is not doing. You see God doing nothing. Is judgment indeed. And God doing nothing is the worst thing that God can do.

In our minds that is. For our lives. See how it works in verse 24 and 5. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity. To the degrading of their bodies among themselves.

Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie. And worshipped and served the creature.

Rather than the creator. Who is blessed forever. Amen. God gave them up. He let them pursue that course of foolish exchange.

The basic sin is not honoring God. It's exchanging the glory of the immortal God for idols. And God sits back and lets them do it. And so they move.

[21 : 42] From the path of the exchange to idolatry. The next step is immorality. And so that's why verse 24 talks about the lusts of their hearts and impurity.

Because you take the step from honoring God as God into idolatry. And inevitably you end up in the steps of immorality. And God lets them go down that path.

You see immoral lives are often the reflection of the wrath of God. Not its cause so much. The basic sin is not so much immorality.

As the suppression of truth. That leads to idolatry. That leads to immorality. There's a sense in which that's illustrated in German history. Where Nietzsche the German philosopher argued that God is dead.

He doesn't exist. He exchanged the glory of the immortal God for idolatry. And a generation or so later. We end up with the holocaust of Hitler in Germany.

[22 : 43] The patterns repeated in the next two verses. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural. And in the same way also the men giving up natural intercourse with women.

Were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men. And received in their own persons. The due penalty for their error. The consequence of idolatry.

And of not honoring God. Is wrong sexual practice. Specifically in this example. Homosexual practice. Now of course this is such a contentious topic.

These days a lot could be said about it. And a lot has been said about it. In all sorts of things. What we're trying to do is see the flow of Romans 1 here. Rather than deal with this topic.

But here is just one of many manifestations. In effect of immorality that comes from idolatry. If God made human beings male and female in the image of God.

[23 : 42] Then in a sense the way Paul has argued the point here. This is a natural way of describing immoral practices. That is when the relationships of male and female.

Which God had created in the image of God. And to be good relationships back in Genesis 1. The exchange of God for idols will be seen in the exchange in a sense. Into bad sexual practices as well.

From heterosexual practices to homosexual practices. The issue here is the activity. Not the inclination. Homosexual practice expresses foolishness and idolatry.

In the argument of this chapter. And then in verses 28 and 29. Or 28 at least. Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God. God gave them up.

Third time that expression is used. This time to a debased mind. And to things that should not be done. Literally. They did not see fit to acknowledge God.

[24 : 52] And he gave them up to an unfit mind. That is. If they decide to exchange a fit mind for an unfit one. God gives them up to that. And says. I'll let you go.

That's his judgment. And his wrath. Against such an exchange. And the consequence of such idolatry. Is again immorality. This shocking long list from verse 29.

A list of 21 evil things that stem from idolatry. It begins with four general descriptions of human sin. The beginning of verse 29.

They're filled with every kind of wickedness. Evil. Covetousness. Malice. Four general terms to describe. Immoral practices. Then follow five full of's.

Which shows the strength of commitment to such immorality. They are full of envy. Full of murder. Full of strife. Full of deceit.

[25 : 52] Full of craftiness. Not just occasional dabblers in those five things. But they've become full of those things. And then 12 things that such people are.

They are. Gossips. Slanderers. God haters. Insolent. Haughty. Boastful. Inventors. Inventors of evil. Not just people who reluctantly do it.

But actually. They make up new ways of doing it. Rebellious towards parents. And foolish. 12 things. That these people are.

Things that destroy relationships. Things that destroy people. Many of them expressing pride and self-righteousness. And then comes a climax to this list in verse 31.

Faithless. Sorry. Foolish. Faithless. Heartless. And ruthless. Or as some translations say. Senseless. Faithless. Loveless.

[26 : 54] Merciless. Or as someone has said. People who are without. Brains. Honor. Love. Or pity. The conclusion climaxes.

This section. They know God's decree. That those who practice such things deserve to die. Yet. They not only do them. But they even applaud others.

Who practice them. The path is. Begun. With. Refusing to. Admit the truth of God. The honoring of God as God.

The suppression of that truth. Leads to an exchange. From the worship of God to idols. Which leads to immorality. And so dark and senseless to the minds become.

That their whole moral standards are actually totally. Inverted and perverted. So what they think. Is good. Is in fact evil. And they applaud those who do evil.

[27 : 53] Thinking that is good. And they think they are wise. But they are in fact fools. There are people I know. Who are awaiting. Who are awaiting. Doctors appointments.

For a diagnosis. Of various ailments. Problems and pains. That they have been suffering. For a while. They need to see a doctor. To get a correct diagnosis. Before the treatment.

Of course can be administered. The accurate diagnosis. The accurate diagnosis of this world. Is not in the end. An educational one. Or an economic one. Or a racial one.

Or a sociological one. Or a political one. Or environmental. See at its heart. The diagnosis that is right. About our world. Is a theological one. And at heart.

It's the refusal of humanity. To honor God. As God. We are without excuse. Each and every person.

[28 : 49] There is sufficient of God. Known in this universe. So that we. Are without excuse. God made us. To bear his glory. Made us in his image.

But from Adam. Not the next lecturer. But the first person in the garden. We have refused. To give God. The glory he deserves. The purpose of God's gospel.

Is to restore the glory. And honor of God. In his son. That's why the gospel is here. It's why Paul expounds it. In Romans. In this great letter.

So that instead of. Degrading bodies. As we've seen. The gospel will lead us. To offer our bodies. As living sacrifices. Instead of having darkened.

And debased minds. The gospel is to transform. Our minds. And renew. Our minds. Instead of refusing God. The gospel is so that we will do.

[29 : 50] The will of God. The perfect. And acceptable. Will of God. God. That's where this letter. Is driving towards. Those great verses. At the beginning. Of Romans chapter 12.

In effect. Chapters 1 to 11. Are the preliminary. For that. I appeal to you. Therefore brothers and sisters. By the mercies of God. To present your bodies.

As a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God. Which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world. But be transformed. By the renewing of your minds.

So that you may discern. What is the will of God. What is good and acceptable. And perfect. Perfect. That's why Paul wrote Romans. So that we may respond.

To God's glorious gospel. Like that. Amen.