

God saves us for; God saves us from

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[0 : 00] Do you know, I can't read. I've just realized that we're going to do the Bible reading and then the message. So sorry about that. So sorry, lady. I'm confusing you at the back. Confusing me. Here we go. Romans chapter 1, but the second half of chapter 1 this morning.

So we're not going to read the whole chapter. We're going to pick it up at verse 18. We finished off in verse 17 last week. So verse 18. So Romans chapter 1, beginning at verse 18.

Now, if you were here last week, as I read this to you, remember the first half of the chapter, because the second half is, I mean, you'll see as we read through. Verse 18. Now hear God's word. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, and things that have been made, so that they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God, or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking, and foolish in their hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, and birds and animals and creepy things. Therefore, God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts, to impurity, to the dishonoring 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. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions, for their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up their natural relations with women, and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men, and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind, to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

[2 : 44] They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceitfulness, maliciousness. They are gossip, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

It's not really something you want to say amen to at the end, is it? So we'll leave the amen, but that is the word of God for this morning. Remember the gospel, though. We are going to stand and sing a misreading of the order of service. Ian wisely chose a very good hymn to follow the reading, because after a reading like that, you really do need to be pointed to Jesus. So with your Bibles, open them again to Romans 1, verse 18 onwards. The gospel. I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about the gospel, but the first thing that should come to your mind when you hear the gospel is it is very very good news. It is, in fact, good news. It is the good news. But here's the thing.

The news is so good, but it's a news that can only be appreciated by those who understand that what Jesus did, he did for you. In other words, if you don't understand that what Jesus did, did for you, you're not going to appreciate why this is such good news. It is precisely good news because Jesus did it for you.

Everything that Jesus did, he did for you. Died for us, crucified for us, resurrected for us. So your appreciation of the gospel is closely linked by your understanding that he did it for you.

Your love for the gospel will grow the more you take a good look at what he has actually done for you. So, as the song, it's all about Jesus. Get close to Jesus, and you'll get to see and appreciate

and love the gospel more than you currently do. Now, the second half of Romans chapter 1 is, of course, contrasted against the first half. The first half is not so sort of revealing about what the gospel saves us from, but rather what the gospel saves us for. The first thing is, it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. That's what the gospel is. It saves men and women, boys and girls of any age, anywhere. That's the power of the gospel. What else does it do? Well, Romans 1, or at least the first half, the first half says, this is what you're saved for. What am I saved for? Well, number one, a saved person is saved to obey God, verse five. Why does God save you? There's only one reason to obey him. Saved people obey God. It's the defining mark. In the same way, your fingerprints belong to you to tell you who you are, you know, in a criminal court or whatever it may be. Your obedience to God is the defining mark which shows you that you belong to God. What's the next thing? Well, verse 12, saved people encourage others who are saved to obey God. Okay, this is not a pat on the back on how you're going in your Christian life. No, it's a little bit more than that. You encourage one another to obey God,

[7:08] God. And there's a level of intimacy there between pastor and people and people. You know, I understand that, you know, some people may think it's intrusive. Leave me alone. You can't do anything about it. You know, it's me and my life. Well, while all those things might be true in their parts, a saved person will encourage another saved person to obey God. It's crucial.

What's the next thing? Well, the final thing is, is that the gospel is something that we speak to others, verse 15. In other words, you have been saved by the greatest news on earth. And with that news, with that knowledge, you now want to take it to others. If you're that type of person, you know how true salvation rings in your heart. So, saved people obey God. Saved people encourage other saved people to obey God. And saved people speak the gospel of God to unbelievers and to each other. That's the power of the gospel. In the second half of chapter one, however, it's concerned with what we're saved from. Not so much what we're saved for, but what we're saved from. In short, we're saved from disobeying God. We're saved from disobeying God. Now, the reason why the gospel is such good news is because it explains how we escape the judgment of God. That sounds like pretty good news, doesn't it? I can remember, you know, growing up and being tricked with the question, you know, what is the worst thing that Christians, you know, what is the biggest problem in the world?

You know, 10 out of 10 or 9 out of 10, most people are going to say, it's sin. It's not sin. The biggest problem is God's judgment upon sin. How do we escape that? You know, because we don't want to escape sin. How do we escape the judgment of God? The answer, the good news. The good news is telling you how to escape the judgment of God that comes upon us. That's good. I mean, that's more than good. That is really good. The gospel is good news also because it rescues people from continuing in sin.

Remember that. The gospel shows up in your life by telling you, stop sinning. And then it gives you the power to stop sinning. Yeah, do we have blips and bumps? Yeah, of course we do. But generally speaking, the trajectory is towards, I'm going to have a life where I'm going to stop sinning before God. So the first thing to notice here is, of course, the striking one, verse 18, the wrath of God. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness.

[10:20] The truth. There's two things that you ought to notice about that. Number one, the wrath of God is something you can't do anything about.

You're not clever enough. You're not smart enough. You're not strong enough. You're not wise enough. It is a problem that you alone cannot escape from. The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness. And it shows up in people who suppress the truth about God. They're deciding not to believe certain things that are evident to them. Well, that's the first thing. The other issue is, is the actual suppressing of truth itself.

The moment you come face to faith with the claims of God, the first thing that you want to do is not even listen to them to work out whether or not they're true. It's just to reject them. That's the suppression there.

So the gospel comes. People don't want to hear it. They suppress it immediately. They don't want to listen or any claim about God. The first thing that they want to do is not be reasonable, not be sort of, you know, cautious. They suppress it. That's not for me. I don't want to listen.

[11:36] Leave me alone. Well, that's someone living under sin. Sin makes us say no to God. In short, sin makes us say no to God. I don't want to listen to you. And so there are two things here.

We've got something that we have to deal with that we can't do anything about, the wrath of God. And the second thing is, we've got something that we live with that we don't want to do anything about, our sin. We've got something to deal with that we can't do anything about, the wrath of God, and something to live with that we don't want to do anything about, sin.

People are quite happy to live in sin. But before you get too disheartened, remember the first half of Romans 1. God saves. The gospel is good news. And it has to be good news when you consider just how bad things really are. Verse 18 reminds me of the eight-year-old child. The eight-year-old child who says to his dad, mom's telling me off for no reason. Dad's telling me off for no reason. Mom's telling me off for no reason. I didn't do anything. Verse 18. Is it really for no reason? Come on. Let's have a little bit of honesty here. Here's the question. Is God angry with sinners for no reason? Is God's wrath revealed from heaven for no reason? Or does God have the right to be angry? That's the question here in the second half of chapter one, isn't it? Does God have the right to be angry at sin and the person committing it? Now, remember the first half. Despite his wrath upon sin, the gospel saves. But the question is, does God have the right to be angry at sin? Does God reveal his wrath for no reason? No. Here's the second thing to notice. The wrath of God is not the judgment of God. The wrath of God here is revealed from heaven in the here and now. Now, most of us get these two confused. We think verse 18 is speaking about the judgment of God to come.

[14:09] It isn't. Verse 18. The wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness is in the here and now. The question is, what does the wrath of God look like now? What does it actually look like in the lives of people? Well, Romans chapter one, the second half, explains what it looks like. Verse 18.

Men and women, boys and girls, want to suppress the truth. They don't want to listen. In other words, they just want to put it away. Why? It's not an intellectual problem. It's a moral problem. Okay? It's not that you can't understand what's being said. It's that morally, you don't want to listen to what's being said. They suppress the truth. Not because it's hard to understand, but because... This is making me feel really uncomfortable. Okay. It's a moral problem.

Verse 21. People don't honor God. The world contains enough knowledge about God, which can clearly be known and seen, but people don't honor God. We don't want to do any of that. We don't want to give God any honor for anything. Verse 23. Instead, we exchange the glory of God for other things.

Okay. What does sin make you do? Well, sin makes you leave God and follow someone else.

[15:40] Sin makes you want something else other than God. You exchange the glory of God for other things. People would much rather have a zodiac sign that doesn't challenge them. You know, they pick up the newspaper and they read this rubbish. Don't tell me you're some of those people that read zodiac signs.

Come and see me afterwards. And they read these things as though some kind of what is speaking to you. I just don't know. I don't even want to think about it. But here's why people would rather choose that kind of revelation into their life, that kind of guidance into that, because it doesn't challenge them.

It doesn't demand anything. So people exchange the glory of God, the God who really is going to be quite demanding, quite personal with you for other things. Why? For this very simple reason, God gets personal and all these other things don't. That's the issue at hand here. Verse 25.

You then exchange sin, you then exchange the truth about God for a lie. Did God really say? Let's go back to the beginning. You know, did God say that? You know, or is there something else here that we can, you know, we exchange all the truth about God for a lie.

Verse 28. Not a single person then saw fit to acknowledge God. And verse 32. Sort of the worst for last rather than the best for last. We give approval to others when they sin, even when we know it's wrong. What is that being contrasted against? Well, the gospel in a person's life, first half, is that we encourage others to obey God. Here, verse 32, okay, people who don't want to be picked up on their sin will encourage other people who live in their sin, you're doing nothing wrong.

[17:37] God is gracious. God is merciful. God's wrath is revealed also from heaven. Let's, let's, you know, let's tell the whole story. Is that a problem? Well, I think it's a massive problem if you're telling people that, you know, they're doing nothing wrong and it's a sin. Because that in itself, telling them is, is a sin before God. So the question is, you know, is God angry for no reason?

No. He's given seven reasons for why his anger is righteous and just and real. Seven reasons we've read out. So is his anger for no reason? No. Does God have the right to reveal his wrath in the here and now against all unrighteousness and all ungodliness? Yes, he does. Yes, he does. The answer then, if you've answered yes to the second one, guess what? You're no longer suppressing the truth.

However hard the truth is to accept, you're now accepting it. Why? Because you know deep down that God has the right to be angry at sin. But remember, the first half of Romans 1, that despite God's anger and despite the fact that God's wrath is revealed from heaven, God saves. What you're being, what picture you're being painted here is the type of world that God saves people out of, and the type of people God saves, idlers, you know, all types of people that can be described by all types of sin. That's the people that God goes after and redeems.

We move on then to what is it for the wrath of God to be revealed from heaven? And it's found in one striking phrase, God gave them up. This is why I'm so frightened about the second half of Romans 1. The judgment, the future judgment hasn't come yet. The wrath, however, upon sin has come.

In other words, when God sees a sinner do something wrong, he doesn't stay back and say, well, I'll discipline it later. Now, he's a good parent. He jumps on it immediately. Yes, there's grace.

[19:57] Yes, there's mercy. But he doesn't let it go. He deals with it immediately. And so three times, verse 24, verse 26, and verse 28, we reveal or we know how God reveals his wrath from heaven.

And it's found in the phrase, God gave them up. God gave them up. Here's the question then. Do people get away with living in sin? The answer is, they think they do.

But the real answer is, no, it's actually much worse than that. I mean, it's actually much, much worse than that. God actually gives them over to their sin.

If you're living a life before God this morning, and you think that you are getting away with your sin, that God hasn't done anything about it, guess what? He has. He's actually given you over to your sin.

You've chosen that instead of me? Have it. You're under the wrath of God. God has given such a person over. So, you know, is that a bad sign for the future? Yeah, because wrath leads to the future judgment. The biggest problem is now is that, why don't you want to turn away from your sin?

[21:24] Well, the answer is, you can't, because God's given you over to it. That's why you don't want to turn back to him. God isn't just saying, I'm going to let you go. You go your own way. It's much more shocking than that. God actually gives you over to your sin. He's gone, have it. Pushes you in that direction. He doesn't just let you walk off away from him. God gave them up. He gives you over to your sin. That is how the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. Verse 28, and since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Okay?

Why can't you get through to some people? Answer, because God has given them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Ecclesiastes says, you know, you can't make straight what God made crooked. Okay? You can't reverse what God is doing. You know, why can't you get through to some people?

Well, verse 28, God's given them up to a debased mind so that they do what ought not to be done. It's not that they're just choosing it anymore. God has chosen that for them under the wrath of God. God has given them up. And so it may be tempting to think that when a person sins and they're not being dealt with by God, that it looks like they're getting away with it.

I certainly did. I certainly thought that for a long time. If I'm sinning and I'm getting away with it, there's no fire coming down from heaven. Nobody knows. You know? Then I get to Romans 1. Oh, actually, this is not a good sign. Why not? Because if God leaves you alone, I'm not his.

Hebrews. The father disciplines his own children. He has nothing to do with the next door neighbor's children. Yeah, if God deals with you in your sin, constantly convicting you so that you're no longer continuing that sin, guess what? You belong to him. But if God has given you over and you're now longer, you know, you've got that sort of niggles in the back of your mind, but you're now doing what ought not to be done continually, then God has given you over to your sin. That's why I find this second half of Romans 2 just so frightening. Hence why we need the gospel. Why do we need the gospel? Well, because it is the only power of God that can change the power of God.

That's what makes the gospel such good news. These very people who have been handled by God

in such a way can only be reversed from that way if God intervenes with the power of the gospel. Why? Because without it, these people will continue to do what ought not to be done. Just like we did before we were saved. We continued to do what ought not to be done. What reverses that? What stops that? Jesus does. He comes in and redeems us out of continuing to do what ought not to be done. And so, you know, the message is really clear here.

[24 : 51] Don't mess around with God. You know, God saves, but God also deals with sin. Okay? God saves, but God also deals... Don't mess around. And certainly don't give approval to your own sin or to anybody else to sin. You know, just don't do that. Go back to the gospel. Go back and see what God has done for you in the state that you're in. Put yourself under the... Even if you don't want to, put yourself under the gospel. When God gives his people over to sin, it says he gives them up to the sinful lusts of their heart, verse 24, to dishonorable passions, verse 26, to a debased mind, verse 28. Which means that the only solution for God giving you over to your sin is for God to take you out of your sin. That's the gospel. That's the gospel. Look at what God is going to do. So, the gospel. Now do you see why it's such good news? Now do you see why it's the best news in the world? Because it deals with the two very serious issues, the wrath of God and your sin. God deals with both, and he deals with it by setting you free from both. So, yeah, God saves us from our sin, but he saves us to obey God. Remember what you're saved for. You're saved to obey God, not to continue in sin. Now you've got to remember, just in case you think that this is a message for the outside world, Romans is a letter to a church.

Remember that. Paul is speaking these words to supposedly believers. Why? Got to be clear. You've got to be certain. So now, because of the gospel, you are no longer a people who suppress the truth. You're no longer a people who dishonor God. You honor him. You love him. Instead of being a person who exchanges God for something else or someone else, as the song said, you want God more than anything else. You desire Jesus above everything else. Now you begin to see the gospel.

The gospel is good news because it transforms you. The gospel is good news because it saves you from where you were, from where you are, not to keep you there. The gospel transforms a person completely. Is it a slow process? Yeah, but the initial transformation is real and tangible, and we know it deep in our heart to be true. Here's the exhortation then as we sort of bring it to a close. Number one, never underestimate what God has done for you.

Never underestimate what God has done for you. Never underestimate the power of the good news and why the good news is good news. You are God's people because God has made you his people through the power of the gospel. Yeah, you have to be told what you're saved from or else you'll probably think it's no big deal. No, it's a real big deal to be saved, a huge deal.

[28 : 30] But also understand what you're saved for. Did you know that in the whole of the New Testament, a believer is never called a sinner saved by grace? How many times in Christian circles do we say, you know, SBG? Sinners saved by grace. Do you know what? In the New Testament, it never calls you a sinner.

The moment you get saved, you're called children, sons, daughters, saints, holy ones. That's quite shocking, isn't it? I mean, looking at you, you'd never think that.

Looking at me as well, you'd never think that. You know, it works both ways. Remember, I preach this sermon for a whole week to myself long before it ever gets to you, long before it ever reaches your ears. I have to live with it every day. I'm comfortable.

But not once does God call you a sinner after you've been saved. Because your children, loved ones, holy ones, saints. Why? Because God has decided to remember your sin no more. That's what God's like. No more. Never brings it up again. Never brings it up again.

I've often said this, and I think it's probably worth saying it again and again and again. You know, some of you don't need to repent of the sin that you committed 10 years ago.

[30 : 05] Because you repented of it back then. What you need to repent of today is your unbelief that God has forgiven you for that sin two years ago, or four years ago, or 10 years ago. How many of us still carry around the guilt and the sin of 10? Listen, I speak as one who knows how many of us carried around, and how many of us have to repent today, not of those past sins because we've already come clean before God, but of our unbelief that God has actually forgiven us.

God doesn't remember your sin. Why? Not because he's forgetful, but because he purposely chooses to remember it no more. So don't live in it. Don't remind yourself of sin by going back into that kind of life. Just leave it behind you. Is it going to be difficult? Yeah, of course it's going to be

difficult. Okay? It wouldn't be worth it if it wasn't difficult. So remember, does God have the right to reveal his wrath from heaven? Does God have the right to be angry? And the answer is, yeah, he does.

You know, he really does, because he's a just God. But look what else he does. He gives his son. Did he have the right not to? Yeah, he did. Did the son have the right not to come? Yeah, he did. But God gave you himself. Why? To bring you to himself. Why? How? Look at the cross. What do you see at the cross? I think you see two things. Number one, God loves you. There's no way of escaping that. God absolutely loves you.

[32 : 09] Number two, God hates sin. And he judges it. And so as you look at the cross, you're reminded of Romans 1 in its entirety.

The gospel saves. And what does it say is from? Well, the ugliness of sin and the wrath of God from heaven.

So don't be content with your understanding of the gospel. Don't think I know enough. Rather, come back to the gospel again and again. Eagerness to learn more and more. Why?

Here's why. Because you need to know how much God loves you. And the only way you can know how much God loves you, if you get back to the gospel. And if you don't, you'll forget how much God loves you. You'll send yourself on a guilt trip for a sin you committed four years ago that God has already forgiven you of.

Remember how much God loves you. How can I do that? Get back to the gospel. Understand what God has saved you for and understand also what God has saved you from.

[33 : 19] Go away from here this morning knowing that the reason why the gospel is good news to you is because it is good news concerning you. What Jesus did, he did for you.

It only makes sense if you understand that. that what Jesus did, he did for you. And never again, I mean, I mean never. Okay? Never.

Never underestimate the change and the power that God has changed in your life. Never underestimate what God has done in your life. Why?

Because we will quickly forget just what kind of condition we were in. Don't read Romans 2 to remind yourself how sinful you were.

Read Romans 1 to remind you what God has saved you from and what God has saved you for.

Remember, the gospel. It is good news.

[34 : 18] Why? Because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Amen.