

## **Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 2/18) The World's Need for the Gospel**

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** *What is one rhythm in your life that helps you to daily be reminded of and rejoice in the gospel?*

#### **Warm-Up**

1. Have you ever received a medical diagnosis that wasn't good? How did it make you feel?
2. To quickly recap, what *good news* did Paul share in verse 16-17?

#### **Read Romans 1:18-25**

3. What does "wrath" mean? Whose is it? What is it directed towards?
4. What does "godlessness" and "wickedness" mean?
5. Does God despise humanity? Why is it a good thing that God's anger is directed towards godlessness and wickedness? What would it be like if God wasn't angry against evil?
6. How has God made himself known? How has he made himself known in humanity and in creation?
7. Is this revelation sufficient for salvation? Why or why not?
8. Look at verses 21-23. In light of knowing God, what actions did people do?
9. Why is it tragic and almost comical that people traded the immortal God for images/idols?
10. How do people relate to images and idols?
11. What type of idols and ideals do you see people worshipping? Which things (or when) are you more susceptible to have your heart and allegiance set on?
12. What helps you to keep your heart ultimately set on God?

#### **Read Romans 1:26-32**

13. Whose desires did God give us up to? How many times is this repeated?
14. What is the result of getting what we want?
15. What are some examples of how sin is a breaking down of the order that God created, in how we relate to him and relate to each other? Try to find more than one.
16. What is the fruit of creation rebelling against the Creator? Why do you think we have a pattern of doing this?
17. Where can you see the result of sin in our world, in our community, and in your family?
18. How do we contribute to the sin in the world? What can we do to fix it?
19. How does Jesus respond to our sin? How can you grow in your awareness of your sin Jesus willingly took to his death? How can that strengthen your assurance of salvation?

**Apply** *Spend some time confessing how you have rejected God and giving thanks for his rescue in Jesus. You might find reading through Psalm 51 slowly helpful.*

**Pray** *Gracious Father, as we come to your Word please may the Spirit show us our need for your saving work in Christ. Thank you that because Jesus died for us we are not condemned, but that we are saved. Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 2/18) The World's Need for the Gospel**

### Small Group Discussion Questions


#### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*How would people on your frontlines know that you belong to Jesus?*






#### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

#### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* “Good News starts with Bad News” by Vaughan Roberts:  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/good-news-starts-with-bad-news/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “A Normality that is Lethal” by Hugh Palmer:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=101795&show\\_file=111579](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=101795&show_file=111579)
- *Listen (sermon):* “The Heart of Darkness” by Tim Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-heart-of-darkness/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Romans: God’s Wrath” by Adam Lowe:  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermons/romans-gods-wrath>
- *Read (article):* “Skydiver’s Bravery Saves Aussie’s Life” by Sydney Morning Herald:  
<https://www.smh.com.au/national/skydivers-bravery-saves-aussies-life-20060802-gdo3b1.html>
- *Read (chapter):* Chapter 4 *Paul’s Jewish View of Sexuality in Romans 1:26-27* in “Sexegesis” by Michael Bird & Sarah Harris 

#### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* “Strengthened by the Gospel” by Brian Rosner. 
- *Read:* “The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans” by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* “Into the Heart of Romans” by N. T. Wright. 
- *Read:* “Epistle of Paul to the Romans” by F. F. Bruce. 
- *Read:* “The Message of Romans” by John Stott. 
- *Read:* “The Epistle to the Romans” by Leon Morris. 
- *Watch:* “Romans” by the Bible Project:  
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

## ROMANS (STRENGTHENED BY THE GOSPEL)

*Week 02/18 "The World's Need for the Gospel"*  
*by Amy Norman (03/05/2026)*

세상은 복음이 필요합니다 | 世界所需要的福音 | உலகத்தன் சவிசேஷ தேவை

*Bible Passage: Romans 1:18-32*

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*Gracious Father, as we come to your Word,  
please may the Spirit show us our need  
for your saving work in Christ.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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One of my very *least favourite* activities is going to the doctor.  
I just don't like the whole process of *quickly* recounting all your symptoms,  
not knowing if you mentioned the right things, hoping the doctor can fill in the gaps,  
and trusting that they have enough information to work out what is wrong.  
I don't really like getting the diagnosis, and then the time I spend Googling to work out  
how bad it *really is!*

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- Now of course, any diagnosis is going to be on a spectrum,  
from things that are normal and not to worry about, to that which is very serious.  
The spectrum goes from what is treatable, to that which is not.
- In a way, the beginning of Romans is Paul laying out a diagnosis!  
Not just for me, or for you, but for all of humanity.  
Paul spells out where we're at without any intervention.
- So the good news is we're all in the same boat!  
The bad news is that the boat is sinking.
- Of course this diagnosis in these verses can still be uncomfortable and challenging to hear.  
But Paul doesn't say this to crush us or condemn us,  
but wants us to understand *our need* for a solution,  
he wants us to know the world's need for the gospel.
- In his introduction, Paul gave us a spoiler.

He has already told us about the solution through God's son Jesus, but over the coming few chapters (and weeks) we will be spending time looking at how Paul sets out the problem of sin, judgement to be faced, and the universality of sin.

- Paul brings it close. This is not just a problem for people *out there*, but it is our diagnosis too.
- And what we will see is that *without God* our condition is hopeless and fatal. It is not one we can treat by ourselves.
- As we come face to face with our desperate need, it sets the stage for us to see the power of God's salvation.
- Here we see the world's need for the gospel. Romans chapter 1 shows us: **God's Wrath, Our Sin, and The Result.**

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## GOD'S WRATH | VERSES 18-20

하나님의 진노 | 神的忿怒 | தேவனின் கடும் கோபம்

First, Paul spells out **God's wrath**. *Verse 18 ...*

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The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. *Romans 1:18-20*

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- The wrath of God might bring to mind all sorts of images. Wrath is another way of saying anger. It is not out of control rage, but it is anger *that has a direction and focus*.
- You might find it surprising, maybe even incompatible with your understanding of God, that God could be angry.
- But *if you* have ever been angry at an injustice, then you're getting a glimpse of how situations can provoke God's righteous anger. Yet unlike our anger which is rarely objective, and spills out in all sorts of unhelpful ways, God's wrath is perfectly righteous. It is perfectly justified.

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- And we see that by *where* God's anger is directed.
- His anger is *directed against* our godlessness and wickedness.  
God is angry because of human rebellion and sin.  
God is not angry because he despises humanity, but he is angry at sin which fractures our relationship *with* God (vertically), and sin which harms other people (horizontally).
- As Michael Bird puts it, divine wrath is "the response of God's holiness to moral evil."
- It is a good thing that God is against evil.  
Just imagine if God wasn't, if he didn't care about what happened in the world.  
If God wasn't angry against evil, then we'd have no hope that there would ever be justice, and that things would ever be put right.
- Here the origin of their *godlessness* and *wickedness* is a rejection of God.  
We can even understand this in the words that are used.
- *Godlessness* points to idolatry, being without God, worshipping anything other than God.  
And *wickedness* is another way of saying *injustice*, acting opposite to the way of God's justice.
- Both reference God.
- And so God's anger is fair, because God has made himself plain to people. >

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And because God has made himself known, people are without excuse.

- The ways God has made himself known to the whole world are through his qualities (his eternal power and divine nature), being revealed through what he has made.
- Now there is some debate *exactly how* God has made himself known in creation, but two aspects seem to capture what Paul is referring to.
- First, as humans are made in the image of God by God, we are hardwired to look for and respond to the one who made us.  
We can see this God-seeking feature, the defining *who or what* is to be worshipped, in all human societies.
- Second, the creation of God reveals his majesty, beauty, and order.  
As Psalm 19 announces:

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The heavens *declare* the glory of God;  
the skies *proclaim* the work of his hands. *Psalm 19:1*

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- Paul says, that this revelation of God, means that no one is without excuse.
- As God has generally revealed himself to us, our yearning for God should not be ignored.
- That's why for Christians, we should share and introduce others to Jesus, >

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so that people have an opportunity to see where their yearning for someone greater than themselves is pointing to.

- The problem that Paul is outlining is not that people have simply ignored God, but they have *suppressed* the truth, and *replaced* God, who they knew, with other things.
- God's anger is rightly directed against sin, for how humans have nurtured it, desired it, and wielded it against God and against each other.

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## OUR SIN | VERSES 21-25

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Second, the world is in desperate need for the gospel because of **our sin**. *Verse 21 ...*

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For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator ... *verses 21-25a*

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- Paul doesn't just label humans as sinners, but he shows us how we got here.
- He describes actions of people: *not* glorifying God, *not* giving thanks to him, *thinking* which is futile, *claiming* to be wise, and finally *exchanging* God for images and idols.
- What begins as not honouring God and not giving thanks to him *escalates* with humans thinking we actually know better than God, and even *replacing* him!
- How people replace God is both tragic and (almost) comical if it wasn't so dire. >

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The immortal God *created* human beings,  
gave flight to birds, and designed all the intricacies of animals.  
And yet humans have traded the Creator, the source of all life,  
*for* second-rate life-less images of what he made.

- It is like the very worst form of copying and claiming the credit, when you didn't copy it that well and you still failed.
- This pattern of exchange has been on repeat across the history of God's people. God rescued his people from Egypt in an obvious and very visible way (parting the sea), but they were *very quick* to make a golden calf, and claim that the lifeless image of the calf is what really saved them.
- We might think that we are not at risk of making physical idols, but this same propensity to look to, depend on, and worship *anything* other than God, is still a problem for us today.
- We still have a fundamental issue of how we relate to God and honour God. As we've seen, God has made himself known, but it is how we've responded to God that is the root of our sin.
- Our rejection of God as the creator and sustainer of life condemns us. /
- And we're very creative in all of the ways that we seek to replace God. As the theologian Michael Gorman puts it "When we abandon and dismiss God, someone

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or something happily moves in and becomes our god."

- We can readily replace God, and serve and worship all sorts of things. We can serve and worship our career, reserve our greatest sacrifices for relationships or to build up our investments, or dedicate all our time and thoughts to guarding and securing our own freedom.
- It's not that any of these things - work, family, relationships, money, boundaries, rest, or planning for the future - are necessarily bad. They *can be* good things given by God. But we shouldn't be *naive to* assume that we can't turn good things into idols. And that there aren't things *now* which we serve and worship more than God.
- Michael Gorman explains that making an idol (like success or money) can be a process of small decisions and compromises, that create ways of thinking, that form habits and practices.
- In a slow and subtle way, you can end up in idolatry, having your heart and allegiance given to an idea or an identity *rather* than to God.
- In our life, a golden calf would be far more obvious to identify! But often our idols today are far more insidious and less physical, and we might not even notice them, for they can masquerade as things celebrated in our society.

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- A good litmus test for idols is to ask the question *where* does my ultimate satisfaction and meaning come from?

If you're not sure, you could go through things one by one, and imagine they were taken away. (e.g., your home, your health, your family, your success).

If the thought of losing *any* of those is despairingly crushing (more than just grief), then that might indicate something you are holding onto closer than you are holding onto the Lord. /

- These verses in Romans are a sharp and accurate analysis of humanity.  
People *have* replaced God.  
People *have* rejected their Creator, and turned and worshipped other things.
- Paul doesn't give us any space to think we are not included or exempt from this state of affairs.  
Later in chapter 3 he summarises,

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... *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... *Romans 3:23*

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- So now we come to the destructive *consequences* of our sin.

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## THE RESULT | VERSES 26-32

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Finally, Paul spells out **the result** of our sin. *Verse 28 ...*

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Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. *verses 28-31*

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- Here is a melting pot of all the worst parts of humanity.  
The list of 21 actions and characteristics is sobering and a bit scary.
- But what stands is this is the *outcome* of what we want.  
Three times Paul repeats that *God gave them over* to their desires:
  - Verse 24: "God gave them over in the sinful desire of their hearts ..."
  - Verse 26: "God gave them over to shameful lusts ..."
  - Verse 28: "God gave them over to a depraved mind ..."
- This list of evil actions and intent *is a result* of what we want.  
Notice how comprehensive it is. Not in terms of the types of sin.  
But how comprehensively sin has taken a grip on every aspect of our being.

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God gave us over to desires in our hearts, to lusts, and to what was on our mind.

- This is not meant to portray humanity as worthless, but it is a clear accounting of what happens when we reject the Creator, of what the outcome and result of our sin *really is*, of where sin leads us to and how it forms us.
- Paul is clear - the natural consequence of God giving us over to sin is: evil, greed, murder, deceit, malice, arrogance, becoming inventors of evil, without love, without mercy - *just to name a few*.
- God designed humanity to flourish. But the consequences of sin works against that, destroying and defiling the flourishing that God intended.
  
- The result of sin is a comprehensive breaking down of the order that God created. Both of his intentions for us, but also how we relate to him.
- That's probably why Paul zooms in on the example of sexual expression. It's not that Paul is creating a hierarchy of sin, but that it is prototypical of how sin works. When Paul says in verse 24, that people were given over to the desires of their heart, even — in the example of women lusting after women and men after men, the image here is a breaking down of the order which God has set things up, and a pursuit of a different order that we try to impose and assert on God's world.

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- We're not only usurping the one who Created, but his intentions for what he created.
- But that isn't the only example. Of course not!
- Strife, deceit, slander, and murder all examples of the breakdown between people, a direct contradiction of the command to love your neighbour as yourself.
- It might be tempting to think we know better now. That God is not needed to direct our relationships and direct how we live.
- But the warning of Romans is that as we reject God and promote ourselves to his place, it is creation rebelling against the Creator. And that is a recipe for chaos! //
- We don't need to look too far to see the results of rejecting God's way and God's rule. We can identify so many of these features *listed* in our world today.
- We can see it across history, with whole nations inventing ways of doing evil, we can see it in the world today, with places full of strife and without mercy, and we see the fruit of evil and sin in our workplaces, in our communities, and even in our families.
- But we would also be deluded to think that we are not *also* part of the problem. Rejection of God, rebellion against his ways - *also starts with us*.
- Without God intervening, we are part of the crowd who suppress the truth about God, and we add to the sin in the world *and* are harmed by the sin in the world.

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## CONCLUSION

- So what do we do about that?  
Do we start a self-improvement program, getting the whole world onboard?  
Clamp down on any kind of arrogance or greed?  
Ignore the problem and hope it'll go away?
- Well, of course we should seek to do away with sin, but the problem is:  
Not only is our situation perilous — ignoring will not fix it,  
but Paul says, there is nothing we can do *on our own* to avert the trajectory we are on.

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In 2006, a plane took off with a group of skydivers. But even before anyone jumped out of the plane, the plane itself malfunctioned and began to fall out of the sky. Quickly, a 22 year old instructor clipped himself to one of the guests, moved close, embraced her, and explained how she needed to brace against him. The plane crashed, the instructor took the impact, and she was the only one who survived.

Soon after, her sister told the media: “He met Kimberley, as far as I know, that day. I would do that for her but I can't believe that a stranger who just met her would knowingly give up his life for her.”

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- Paul's diagnosis is that we're all freefalling without a parachute and we need someone to rescue us. Not just stop us from the freefall, but to take the impact of *the fall*.
  - And that's what Christ has done for us.  
We're going to explore the beauty of that good news throughout the coming weeks.

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But first we need to see how much we *need* God and the *depth of what* he took on himself.

- If you weren't aware of the effects of gravity,  
then freefalling might feel pretty exhilarating.  
Without knowledge of gravity - and the ground approaching - you could be blissfully unaware! At least for a bit.
- But ignoring gravity is a bit like ignoring what sin does.  
We can be like a skydiver not realising that *we need* a parachute.
- The amazing thing is that whilst that instructor hardly knew who he was saving,  
if they were good or bad, worthy or unworthy, God knows us.  
He knows the depth of our sin and he still doesn't hesitate to take our place.
- Our sin is a rejection of him,  
and yet Christ still died for us.
- Paul doesn't give us the diagnosis of sin to crush us.  
But to alert us to reality,  
in order that we would cling to the only one who saves.

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