

WEEK 3 | ROMANS 1:18-25

ROMANS | THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S POWER

OTHER HELPFUL PASSAGES.

The following passages may be helpful to you as you consider this text.

- Deuteronomy 9:6-8 – Sin provokes the anger of God.
- Ephesians 4:17-32 – this is a positive call for God's people to reject sin and walk in faithfulness
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 – this passage contrasts Godly wisdom and worldly wisdom.

THEMES.

The overarching theme of Romans is the gospel—salvation through Jesus Christ. That is important to remember and keep in front of your group, because the letter is a theological masterpiece. But as with any work of art, each brush stroke's true beauty is best seen when the piece as a whole is realized. To that end, we will deal with many sub-themes, but remember that each one weaves together to give the “fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament.”¹

1. God has revealed himself to humanity through creation (general revelation); therefore, no man can claim ignorance of him as an excuse for sin. (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1-6; Jer. 5:21-22)
2. All men and women are born with a sin nature, actively oppose God, and need salvation. (Rom. 1:19-23; Ps. 51:5; John 3:1-15; Rom. 3:23-24; Rom. 5:12-14; Eph. 2:1-3)
3. God's wrath—present and future—is his holy and just punishment of sin. It expresses “his ‘deeply personal abhorrence’ of evil.”² (Rom. 1:18, 24-25; Deut. 9:6-8; Col. 3:6; Heb. 1:9)

QUESTIONS.

Feel free use any, all, or none of these questions as you facilitate your group. Their purpose is to be an aid to you as you consider how to teach the implications of the week's Scriptures.

1. Did the Holy Spirit use last week's passage or sermon to challenge or encourage you in any way? Did he use it to confirm or answer a prayer in any way? If you're willing, share with the group.
2. In vv. 18-20, Paul says that truth about God “is made plain” and is able to be “clearly perceived” by all because “God has shown it to them.” How has he done so? And what does Paul mean that humanity *suppresses* that truth?
3. Do you struggle with the idea of God's wrath? Why or why not?

Note: Encourage honest and open conversation. Many think of God's wrath and love as incompatible.

4. When was the last time you experienced or witnessed a wrongdoing (in person or on the news) that caused you to look for justice? Why did you respond that way? Was your anger an expression of your love? How?

Note: What I'd like the group to understand is that punishment for wrongdoing is just; in other words, “anger against wrong is not the antithesis of love, it is necessary for love.”³ This introduces the next two questions and concepts: (1) God is *right* to pour out his wrath on sin, and (2) God's wrath is evidence of his *love*.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's good news for the world*. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 19.

² Ibid.

³ J. Ligon Duncan. “Romans: We Have No Excuse.” *First Presbyterian Church | Jackson, MS*, April 30, 2000, Retrieved from <https://fpcjackson>

5. Read vv. 18-23. Why is God's wrath *right* in this passage? Read vv. 24-25. How is it *loving*?

Hint #1: It's *right* because it's the appropriate response toward sin. Among other things, Paul says those who reject God practice idolatry, a practice that is both futile ("What else can be said of offering worship to what one's own hands have made?"⁴) and revolting. On this point, Greg Gilbert writes, "For human beings to consider their Creator and then decide that a wooden or metal image of a frog or a bird or even *themselves* is more glorious, more satisfying, and more valuable is the height of insult and rebellion against God. It is the root and essence of sin, and its results are nothing short of horrific."⁵

Hint #2: His wrathful response to wrongdoing is an expression of his *love* for himself and his creation. His wrath exposes the devastating end of sinful futility. God doesn't condone, enable, or excuse sin; for the "alternative to 'wrath' is not 'love' but 'neutrality' in the moral conflict. And God is not neutral."⁶

6. How does the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross demonstrate both God's love and wrath? (Rom. 5:8-9)

7. Consider the opposite of the example found in Romans 1:18-25. What does it mean to receive truth of God rather than suppress it? What are some characteristics of the man or woman to receives the truth?

Consider following this pattern throughout: those who suppress the truth *do not honor him as God or give thanks to him* (v. 21), but those who receive truth of God by faith honor him and give thanks to him continually.

8. Personalize question 7 a little more. How are you asking the Lord to transform you today?

PRAY TO CLOSE.

Here are a few prayer points to posture your heart as you close.

- Allow a place for confession in the group, and pray for one another.
 - It's probably good to do this in a gender-specific groups.
- Thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—the clearest display of God's love and justice intertwined.
- Thank God for the ways he's demonstrated his love toward you: salvation, financial provision, friends, etc.
- Ask the Lord to answer your prayer requests. Do you need healing? Ask. Do you need wisdom? Ask.

.org/resource-library/sermons/we-have-no-excuse/.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 84.

⁵ Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 29.

⁶ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 72.