

# The Vision of God in the World We See

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us 3*, October 5, 2014

## Romans 1:16-23 (ESV adapted)

- <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel,  
for it is **God's power** for salvation  
to **everyone who believes**, to the **Jew** first and also to the **Greek**.
- <sup>17</sup> For in it **God's righteousness** is revealed  
from **faithfulness into faith**,  
as it is written, "*The righteous from faith shall live.*" [Hab. 2:4]
- <sup>18</sup> For **God's wrath** is revealed from heaven  
against **all godlessness** and **injustice** of humans,  
who by their **injustice suppress** the **truth**.
- <sup>19</sup> Because **what can be known about God** is plain to them, for God has shown it to them.  
<sup>20</sup> For his **invisible attributes**, namely, his **eternal power** and **divine nature**,  
have been clearly **seen**, since the **creation** of the world,  
being perceived in the **things that have been made**,  
so that they may be without excuse.
- <sup>21</sup> Because, although **they knew God**,  
they did not **honor him as God** or **give thanks** to him,  
but they became **futile in their thinking**, and their **foolish hearts** were **darkened**.
- <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be **wise**, they became **foolish**,  
<sup>23</sup> and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God**  
for a **likeness** of an **image** of a **mortal human** –  
and of birds and animals and creeping things!
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## Romans 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup>...God's proclamation of good news, <sup>2</sup> which he **promised** through his **prophets** in the holy **Scriptures**,  
<sup>3</sup> **concerning his Son**, who was **from David's seed** according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and declared to be **Son of God**  
**in power** according to the **Spirit of holiness** by his **resurrection** from the dead, **Jesus Messiah our Lord**.

## Genesis 1:26

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "**Let us make the human in our image**, after **our likeness**. And let them have dominion  
over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth  
and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

## Psalms 106:19-21

<sup>19</sup> They made a calf in Horeb | and worshiped a metal image. | <sup>20</sup> They **exchanged the glory of God** | for  
the **image of an ox** that eats grass. | <sup>21</sup> They forgot God, their Savior, | who had done great things in Egypt.

## Wisdom 13:1

<sup>1</sup> For all who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and were unable from the good things that  
are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works.

## Acts 17:31

<sup>31</sup> (God)... has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has  
appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

## Romans 2:5

<sup>5</sup> But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on **the day of  
wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed**.

## Revealing God – The Dark and Light

Paul is unfolding the Gospel – God’s proclamation of good news – what He has done in Jesus that has opened a new era in his relation with his creation, revealed his righteous faithfulness to his promises, and opened salvation for all who trust Jesus Messiah as Lord.

Paul digs deeper: ‘*for...for...because.*’ The gospel reveals God’s righteousness as power to save people (16-17). But that is based on ‘God’s wrath’ being revealed. Wrath? Anger? Why anger? Because the whole history is God’s long work to overcome human evil, sin, brokenness, corruption. All that alienates humans from God. To bring reconciliation, life.

God’s wrath is an old story, a fundamental theme of Israel’s story, from Eden to Exile. It hits Israel and Pagan oppressors. God’s final judgment will ultimately come against all evil that corrupts his creation. But now that final judgment has been brought into view in Jesus crucifixion and resurrection. The future becomes present. The Lord of judgment is the crucified God. That complicates things. It reveals both the nature and depth of evil, that could bring such a death, and the faithful love of the God who still brings salvation.

The cause of wrath goes deep: godlessness/ungodliness (*asebeia*) and unrighteousness/injustice/wickedness (*adikia*) when human life loses touch with, suppresses reality/truth.

## Seeing God in His Creation

The paradox of human brokenness is that it is the breaking of God’s greatest gift. God created the whole universe, and here gave only humans the self-consciousness, freedom, and moral capability to enter a relationship with God. But that meant real freedom.

God shows himself everywhere, but never in a way that forces us. Paul’s language draws on well-known arguments among Jews of his day that continue in renewed forms today. As perception expands the causes for wonder and reflection expand on every level.

If one thinks of origins and causes, our cosmology goes back to a ‘big bang.’ Where did that astonishing singularity come from? How did a mindless universe decide on ‘inflation’ or the four forces (now five) that order everything from quarks to galaxies? Who came up with the Higgs boson? What mindlessness wrote the encyclopedia of DNA in every cell?

Think of our inner life: How are we conscious in an unconscious universe full of wonders? Are we the smartest things that exist? If our minds, philosophy, scientific understanding, morality are nothing but electrical impulses in essentially mindless brain cells determined by physical causality, why should we trust our best science or moral outrage at atrocities?

Everywhere there are signs of God: creator, artist, physicist, mathematician, poet; his love of physical and moral order, his willingness to grant freedom and creativity to his creation.

## From Distorting Idolatry to Deep Relationship

Paul says that the deep problem in human life is not an inability to know God. Rather it is that we humans don’t want a limit on us represented by the real and living God. If God is real, with real love, real wrath, real intentions, real relationship, a real creator, real judgment, then we have responsibility as creatures to our creator. Our lives are gifts not fully our own.

Paul says that our common human tactic is not to get rid of God but to substitute for him, to replace him with an idol, from a golden calf to the modern trinity: money, sex, & power. We live in a world of idols. Power, the great father: violence, oppression, manipulation. Money, the son who makes all things possible, worshiped in a thousand temples. Sex ...! The church itself has often in history been a temple of those idols in all their variations.

In creation, humans were to be the image of God, reflecting God’s glory and care into his world, joining with God as his regents in caring for and directing his creation. To know and honor God as God, to realize the gift with gratitude is the start of real relationship.