

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Lesson 2: The Predicament

Lost Humanity

In our first lesson we examined the Gospel – the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. (Romans 1:16) We emphasized that in some contexts, as in Romans 1:16, the Gospel in view is the comprehensive good news not only about how to become a Christian but about transformation. In this lesson we seek to understand the predicament of humanity apart from God. In order to understand the “salvation” in view in Romans 1:16, we need to understand what we are being saved or rescued from. And notably, that is where Paul started in Romans after briefly introducing the Gospel. He wanted them to understand where people are apart from the power of the Gospel in their lives. This sets the context for the rest of the book of Romans. The theological focus of Romans 1-8 explains God’s solution to the predicament of lost humanity described in Romans 1-3. We need to understand just how “lost” humanity is apart from God, and how this affects the whole person – how they think within themselves as well as how they live out what is in their hearts.

1. **The Romans Road:** Romans 1:18-32 is a key passage for our consideration as it shows the **progression** from knowing God (1:21) to a reprobate mind (1:28) that manifests in a lifestyle filled with unrighteousness (1:29) that not only sins but takes pleasure in seeing others sin (1:32). The progression brings people to increasingly focus on the material, including worshiping idols and indulging in sensual sins, as **God turns them over to the increasing control of their sinful nature.**

— God’s **wrath** is presently poured out on ungodliness and unrighteousness (1:18-20) [Note Paul seems to focus here on Gentiles, but in Romans 2 argues the Jews are guilty of the same despite having the Law as guide]

— From some knowledge of God to not acknowledging God and thinking nonsense so that their **foolish hearts were darkened**, which results in worshiping idols (1:21-23)

— IN RESPONSE God turns them over to their own sin nature — **the lusts of their own hearts** — with the result that they dishonor their bodies among themselves (1:24) and exchange the truth of God for lies as they worship the creation and not the creator (1:25)

— IN RESPONSE God further turns them over to their own dishonorable passions (1:26) resulting in corrupt sexual practices (1:26-27)

— IN RESPONSE God further turns them over to a **depraved mind** (1:28), with the result that they engage in all kinds of sin (1:29-31) and promote sin in others (1:32)

— CONCLUSION all people (apart from God) are **under sin and no amount of human effort will fix it** (3:10-23) and because of sin death reigns (5:12-17)

— Also see Ephesians 4:17-24.

2. **Solution:** The “salvation” available must deal with the **predicament** of lost humanity. This is NOT ABOUT BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT. We have a sin problem that results in **wrath** and affects **body, heart and mind**. The solution must deliver us from God’s wrath but also deal with our foolish hearts and depraved mind from which our actions (that deserve wrath) flow. The solution must walk back the bleak pictures (Romans Road) of Romans 1:18-32. In our next lesson we will begin to unravel this salvation beginning with **justification** — God’s declaration we are righteous in Christ and therefore no longer subject to wrath. (**Romans 5:9**)