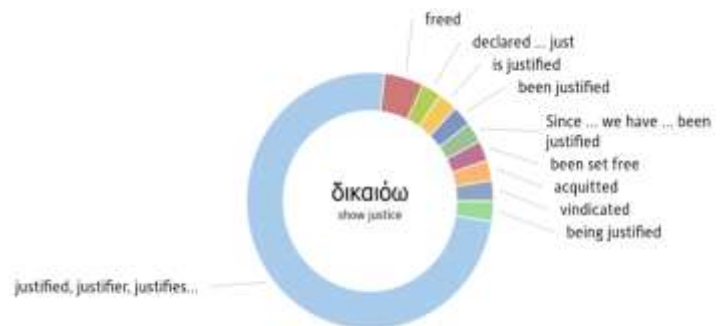


A World Under God's Wrath

Romans 1

1. Introduction
2. Study Romans 1:1-7
 - ✓ Standard letter form:
Paul, to Romans: Greetings!
 - ✓ Compare to Ro 1:1-7:
Can you detect the same basic elements?
How are they different?
 - ✓ Why did Paul “break the mold” here?
 - ✓ A/G: since we live in a very skeptical age, it is impossible to approach people claiming authority, the way Paul does here.
3. Study Romans 1:1-17; focus on “the gospel”
 - ✓ From these verses alone, what can you tell me about Paul’s gospel?
What characteristics does it have?



In using this word, Paul makes it clear that he is working in this entire section from one basic concept. All Jews had the firm belief, rooted in the Scriptures, that God was going to judge the world. On the last day, all the nations of the world would be gathered before him and their lives would be examined. God, the Judge, would then pass sentence: either guilty” or “not guilty.” Righteousness here refers to God’s saving activity of pronouncing people “not guilty” because of what Jesus has done, as revealed in the gospel message.

4. Romans 1:16-17 can be viewed as the theme of the book. All these ideas Paul is going to explain more fully as he develops this theme. A key word to understand is “righteousness.” Though there are many different ways this word is translated in English, underneath it lies one basic Greek word root as shown in the next column:
5. Read Romans 1:18-32: Beginning here and continuing all the way to 3:20, Paul explains why God’s saving righteousness is so necessary. The simple fact is that all people are by nature unrighteous, guilty sinners. There are so many important and powerful ideas here, we cannot hope to discuss them all. On the reverse side, I have listed some of them. Glance over the list. Add some of your own. Decide which of these you would want to comment on or to discuss more in class.

1. Notice the expression 'God's wrath': "His righteous reaction to evil, his implacable hostility to it, his refusal to condone it, and his punishments upon it." God is a personal God, and he takes sin (a violation of his will) personally.
2. Paul's focus seems to be on the Gentile world. Note his emphasis on:
 - ✓ What we can "naturally" come to know about God from observing his creation (see vv. 19-20) and how Gentiles abused this knowledge by their gross idolatry (vv.21-23, 25).
 - ✓ Natural sexual relations and how Gentiles abused this gift by unnatural, shameful passions, as witnessed by their lesbianism and homosexuality (vv.24, 26-27)
3. Notice how God's universal judgment (see v. 18: a wrath revealed from heaven against all human godlessness and wickedness) is even now being carried out. God "gives people up" (vv. 24, 26, 28). He lets them go their own way so that they plunge themselves ever more deeply into sin. In this way, God punishes sin with sin.
4. Notice how Paul shifts from the open, obvious sins of idolatry and homosexuality into sins of thought and word as well as deed (vv.29-32). Not content with a mere outward conformity to his will, God expects pure hearts and pure motives as well.
5. Notice how the ultimate end of a "depraved mind" (v. 28) is that people call evil good and good, evil ("they approve of those who do such [wicked] things"—v. 32).
6. Notice how Paul sees no hope for Gentiles being declared "not guilty" on the basis of what they do. The verdict is a foregone conclusion, "They are without excuse" (v. 20), or "They have no defense, no case to make."
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

For next time: read through Ro 3:8. Paul zeroes in on the Jewish community's claim to righteousness.