Lecture 175. Background Information

Basic Information

DATE: In the winter of 57/58 from Corinth (55/56 in the Revisionist Chronology).
To: God’s beloved in Rome, where Paul had never been but had friends.
AUTHENTICITY: Not seriously disputed. ("Authenticity" = Did Paul write it?)
UNITY: A very small minority posits the joining of two separate letters;
a larger minority maintains that chap. 16 was added later.
INTEGRITY: Besides chap. 16 (or the doxology in 16:25–27), a few have rejected chaps. 9–11 as not truly Pauline.

FORMAL DIVISION:
A. Opening Formula: 1:1–7
B. Thanksgiving: 1:8–10
C. Body: 1:11–15:13

Fitzmyer’s Outline of Romans

Introduction. (1:1-15)
I. Doctrinal Section: God’s Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord (1:16-11:36)
   A. Uprightness of God is Reveal as Justifying People through Faith (1:16-4:25)
      Theme: The Gospel is God's Power for the Salvation of All, Disclosing God's Uprightness (1:16-17)
      Negative Explanation: All Humans Under God’s Wrath (1:18-3:20)
      Positive Explanation: God’s Uprightness Manifested to Sinners through Faith (3:21-31)
      Illustration from Law: Abraham Justified by Faith, not Deeds (4:1-25)
   B. Love of God Assures Salvation to Those Justified by Faith (chapters 5-8)
      Justified Christians, Reconciled to God, Hope for Risen Life (5:1-21)
      Freedom from Self through Union with Christ (6:1-23)
      Freedom from the Law (7:1-25)
      Christian Life & the Spirit of God (8:1-39)
   C. Justification, Salvation through Faith Do Not Contradict OT Promises (chapters 9-11)
      Israel’s Failure, Not Contrary to God’s Direction of History (9:1-29)
      Israel’s Failure, Derived from Its Own Refusal (9:30-10:21)
      Israel’s Failure Is Partial and Temporary (11:1-36)
II. Hortatory Section: The Demands of Upright Life in Christ (12:1-15:13)
   A. Spirit-Guided Christian Life, Worship Paid to God (12 & 13)
      Life in Christian Community (12:1-21)
      Christians and Civil Authorities (13:1-7 )
      Love Fulfills the Law (13:8-10 )
      Exhortation to Vigilance (13:11-14)
   B. Duty of the Strong to Love the Weak in the Community (14:1-15:13)
      Christian Solidarity: Extent & Limits (14:1-12)
      Marks of Christ’s Rule in the Community (14:13-23)
      Christ, Our Model in All Conduct (15:1-6)
      Welcome All (Jew & Gentile) Who Turn to Christ (15:7-13 )
III. Paul’s Plans, Coming Task, Request for Prayers (15:14-33)
IV. Conclusion: Recommendation of Phoebe, Greetings, Doxology (16:1-27)

2 This outline is a simplified version of the one given by Fitzmyer, Romans, Anchor Bible, vol. 33, pp. 98-101.
Lecture 176. Address and Greeting. Rom 1:1-7

Translation of the Greek with Outline

1:1 Paul
I. Sender
da slave of Christ Jesus
called "apostle"
set apart for the gospel of God
which he promised previously
through his prophets
in sacred writings
concerning his son
who came-to-be
from the seed of David
according to (the) flesh
who was designated son-of-God-in-power
according to a spirit of holiness
from resurrection of (the) dead-ones
Jesus Christ
our Lord
through whom we received grace and apostleship
for (the) obedience of faith
among all the Gentiles
for the sake of his name
among whom are you yourselves
called "Jesus Christ's"

To all those being in Rome
beloved of God
called "holy-ones"
Grace to you and peace
from God our Father
and [from] (the) Lord Jesus Christ

II. Recipients

Grace to you and peace
from God our Father
and [from] (the) Lord Jesus Christ

III. Greeting

Overview of 3-Part Structure

I. The Sender II. Recipients III. Greeting
The longest of all of Paul's Address-Greetings. He is writing to a Church he did not found, and has not yet visited.

V. 1, Paul
No co-sender(s). Paul is the only sender of this letter. Only time this happens in his undisputed epistles.

This Roman name is the only evidence from Paul that he could have been a Roman citizen

Paul himself never makes this claim. It is found only in acts.
The "we" in verse 5 is an "editorial" we. Paul is not referring there to co-senders.

Slave, doulos
OT Background, 'ebed. High royal officials were "slaves of the king."

2nd-Isaiah writes of a mysterious "Servant" who suffers. Moses is the servant of the LORD. The LXX often translates 'ebed by pais, rather than doulos. English translations, especially American: "servant"

Christ Jesus
Cranfield thinks that the order stresses the "titular" nature of "Christ," rather than it being simply a name.

Fitzmyer regards it as a variation "without significance."

Called "Apostle." That is called by God.
Paul often insists on his apostleship. I think there is an "edge" on his words here.
In insisting on his apostolate in this letter, Paul is undoubtedly echoing the struggle that he had to be recognized as *apostolos* among Christians ... Recall the reluctance of Luke, who makes Paul the hero of the second part of Acts, to give him this title—it occurs only in Acts 14:4, 14, and probably as part of a pre-Lucan source.

Fitzmyer is here referring to the fact that Paul does not meet the Lucan definition of an apostle (Acts 1:21-22). Most translations insert "to be." To me that sounds too much like the song from *Superstar*

> Always hoped I'd be an apostle / knew that I would make it if I tried ...

If God calls somebody an apostle, that is the "gold standard." It does not matter what anyone else thinks!

### Gospel of God

This could be: 1) the good news about God OR 2) the good news from God.

There is virtual unanimity among commentators that the 2nd is correct.

### Set Apart

The Hebrew word for "Pharisee" means "one set apart". Commentators differ on whether or not Paul is referring to his Pharisaic past. Cranfield says absolutely not! Fitzmyer thinks it is possible.

### V. 3, Son

In the OT, Israel is the "collective" son of God. "Say to Pharaoh . . ." (Exod 4:22)

A righteous person was regarded as a "son of God"

> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called *sons of God.* (Matt 5:9 RSV)

> Sirach 4 (someone who is good to widows & orphans)

> See also Wisdom 2:16 where the righteous person claims that God is his Father.

Kings were called "son of God" in a special way on the day of their enthronement. (Psalm 2)

**LECTURE WENT LONG. DIVIDED AT THIS POINT.**

Fitzmyer's interpretation is extremely cautious!

Käsemann . . . goes too far in saying that “no NT author understood the unique divine sonship of Jesus otherwise than in a metaphysical sense.” That, however, is precisely what has to be shown because, though Paul implies by the title a significant relationship, one should be reluctant to load it with all of the metaphysical connotation of later patristic writers. Although Paul never speaks of Jesus as an incarnate Son (cf. John 1:14–18), his use of *huios* may imply some sort of preexistent filiation.

In some of his earlier writings Fitzmyer was less reserved in his assertions of Pauline belief in a pre-existent Christ. By contrast to Fitzmyer, Cranfield sees here an absolutely clear teaching that Christ is pre-existent.

### Four Things About Son

1) Davidic Descent -- nowhere else claimed by Paul -- Almost certainly he is quoting an early creedal statement

2) Resurrection

3) Name & Title: Jesus Christ our Lord

4) Son's Relationship to Paul -- that is how Paul can claim his apostleship

**came-to-be (was born?)**

The verb is *ginomai,* "to become" or "to come into being," "to be made."

> It is exactly what the Creed says did not happen, "begotten not made."

For this reason some scribes have changed the verb to a form of *gennaō,* "to be born"

*Ginomai* can mean "to be born" if the context demands it. Perhaps Paul is using it in that sense here. Rather than import later theology into Paul, I translated the Greek as literally as possible.

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"Seed" of David
Fitzmyer is correct that "from the stock of David" gets the meaning. Paul is not using sperma in the literal sense of "sperm." However, I think it is highly unlikely that anyone who believed in a virginal conception would use the word "seed." Paul is not denying the virginal conception of Jesus. "Seed of David" is evidence that he has never heard of that doctrine.

According to (the) flesh
There is nothing pejorative about "flesh" here (as often in Paul). Fitzmyer translates it idiomatically, "by natural descent." It mere expresses Jesus' human condition & existence.

V. 4, Son-of-God-in-power
This is in contrast to his pre-resurrection status. For Paul, Jesus was already God's Son before the resurrection. But the resurrected Jesus does "make a difference." Paul is not thinking here of an inner-trinitarian relationship of Father and Son, but only of the unique relation of Jesus Christ as Son to God the Father in the salvific process. For Paul the resurrection made a difference in that process, but it did not make Christ the Son of God.
Dunn notes that this is "two-step" Christology. "Son of God," in an OT sense before the resurrection, and "Son of God" in a unique NT sense after the resurrection.

In Power. Fitzmyer interprets "in power" as meaning "as a source of power"

A spirit of holiness
The phrase is not "holy Spirit." I agree with Fitzmyer that Paul is not thinking of the Trinity here. He is probably thinking in terms of OT stories that regard God's spirit as an expression of his awesome power.

My favorite ones are those about Samson in the book of Judges.

There the "spirit of YHWH" is like Popeye's spinach!

Post-Lecture Note: "From Resurrection of (the) Dead-Ones"
Most translations say "resurrection from the dead." The word "the" does not appear in the Greek, but is required by English usage. However the word "from" (ek) is not used immediately before "dead ones" (as in 4:24; 8:11; 10:9.) Fitzmyer states that the meaning is the same.

There is a difference of opinion between Fitzmyer and Dunn. Fitzmyer translates: "as of his resurrection from the dead." Dunn argues that the reference is to the beginning of the general resurrection, and so the better translation is: "as of the resurrection of the dead." Fitzmyer regards this idea as "strange." In fact, neither word -- "his" or "the" -- is in the Greek. Passages referring to the general resurrection, and not containing "from" (ek) include Matt 22:31 [but ek is found in the, Luke 20:35], Acts 17:32; 23:6; 24:21; 1 Cor 15:12, 13, 21, 42; Heb 6:2. These all express the idea with the genitive case "of the dead," without the use of the preposition ek. From the dead." I think Dunn may be onto something! Perhaps the pre-Pauline early Christian creed was thinking about the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the general resurrection (see the strange story in Matt 27:51-53). Whether or not Paul himself was also thinking in these terms seems to me to be a different question -- because Paul uses "from the dead elsewhere." My literal translation shows that Dunn's position is possible.

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5 Ibid., 236.
6 Dunn, Romans 1-8, p. 14.
7 The phrase ek tōn nekron (with "the") occurs only in the deuto Pauline Eph 5:24 and Col 1:18, and possibly in 1 Thess 1:10, where the manuscripts vary, some having "the" and others leaving it out. By contrast the phrase ek nekron occurs 44 times in the NT.
8 Fitzmyer, Romans 236-237.
V. 5, Received (not "Took!")
This is the verb in the Philippians hymn that many translate "taking the form of a slave."
I think a better translation there would be "having received the form of a slave"
i.e., accepting the limitations of his humanity, in contrast to Adam who wanted to "be like God."

What Paul has received
grace and apostleship -- hendiadys, literally "one [idea] through two [words]"
i.e., this is the equivalent of "the grace of apostleship." Paul attributes his apostleship to his call from the risen Christ

Obedience of faith
This could mean "the obedience (to God) which has its source in faith.
I think it is mostly likely an "epexegetical genitive," i.e., "the obedience which is faith."
Like "the city of New Orleans"
See my additional remarks in the next lecture.

V. 7, The addressees/recipients
called "holy ones"
similarly in the previous v. 6, called "Jesus' Christ's" If God says you belong to Jesus, you do!

The Greeting: Grace & peace
Some have suggested that this is a mixture of Greek & Hebrew?
"Grace" charis is close to chaire, literally "rejoice!" idiomatically "hello!"
"Peace" would be from the Hebrew shalom.
Fitzmyer admits this is possible, but considers it just as likely that Paul is referring to the "priestly blessing."
May the LORD be gracious and bless us . . . let his face shine upon us and grant us his peace.

Grammatical Ambiguity. From God our Father and [from] (the) Lord Jesus Christ
From God our Father, and [Father of] the Lord Jesus Christ also grammatically possible
in other letters where the grammar is not ambiguous it is obvious that the first is what Paul means.
Paul places the Lord Jesus on the side of God in this transaction.
He does not have a doctrine of "divine nature."
Based on such decisions of Paul, later theologians will develop such a doctrine.

Lecture 177. Thanksgiving & Desire to Come to Rome Rom 1:8-15

My analysis of Structure
8 Thanksgiving  9-15 Desire to Come to Rome

Translation of the Greek with Outline
8 First of all, on the one hand,
I thank my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you because your faith is announced in all the world

9 No grammatical ambiguity in 1 Thess 3:11. Of course, Paul can refer to Goad as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Cor11:31.
Paul's Desire to Come to Rome

9 For God is my witness whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his son how without-ceasing I make remembrance of you always in my prayers beseeching if somehow at last I will be made successful in the will of God to come to you.

10 For I desire to see you in order that I might share with you a spiritual gift in order to strengthen you -- that is to be mutually exhorted among you through the faith within each other yours, and mine as well

11 For I do not want you to be ignorant brothers-and-sisters that many times I intended to come to you --and I have been prevented up to the present-- in order that I might have some fruit among you just as among the rest of the Gentiles

12 To Greeks as well as Barbarians all Gentiles To (the) wise as well as to (the) unlearned all human beings

13 I am a debtor

14 Hence the eagerness on my part to evangelize you in Rome as well.

V. 8, First. Fitzmyer thinks this means only "at the outset."
Cranfield thinks that Paul meant to go on to "second," but got distracted and forgot what he was going to say.
I think the "on the one hand" (men) but Paul never gets to "the other hand" (de).

your faith / fidelity

Paul engages in some moderate flattery to obtain the good will of his audience (captatio benevolentiae)
Fitzmyer notes "What he calls pistis [faith/fidelity] he will call hyakoē [obedience] in 16:19
This lends support to my interpretation of "the obedience of faith" in verse 6.

V. 9, For. Some commentator has pointed out that Paul uses "for" more than anybody else in the NT.
It is a characteristic of his "oral style" of dictation.
"Actually" A professor for the Teaching Company (Is there Life in the Universe) uses this word excessively
"So" Of I use this word when my eye has not found the place on the page yet!
Cranfield thinks it is important to give all of Paul's "connectives" their full weight if we are to understand him.
I'm not sure! I think it is good to try to find the logical connection, but not to "force it" if it is not there.
Hence in my outline I did not subordinate verse 9 or verse 13 to the previous verse.
"For God is my witness" is not the reason Paul thanks God in verse 8.
"For I do not want you to be ignorant" is not the reason for something in verse 9, 10, 11, or 12.

God is my witness. This is an oath.
Because he is talking about his internal desires, this cannot be "fact checked" by the Romans. Hence the oath.
Cranfield discusses the relationship of this to the teaching to avoid oaths found in the sermon on the mount.
He concludes that teachings is not as absolute as many think.
Whom I serve in my spirit. Paul does not mean that he serves God only inwardly. 

Latreuō is normally used of "cultic service" by priests in a Temple. Here Paul uses the word analogously. It refers to his "service" of God in [preaching] the gospel of God's son.

V. 13, I do not want you to be ignorant.

A "revelatory" formula. Paul uses it to introduce important ideas. E.g. in 1st Thessalonians ("about those who have fallen asleep"); 1 Cor 10:20 (what is sacrificed to idols is sacrificed to demons) Here: the purpose Paul's desire to visit -- to share a spiritual gift.

Diplomatic Correction. Paul is conscious that he is not the founding apostle. Rephrases in terms of "mutual exhortation," he will receive as well as give. Leads to final reflections on his ministry (14-15)

Greek & Barbarians. All the Gentile World.


Wise & Unlearned. This is the whole world, not just the Gentile World, so a "larger group" than "Greeks & Barbarians"

Paul as "Debtor."

1) He has learned from all. 2) God has made him a "debtor" to them by appointing him as their missionary.

Translation of the Greek with Outline

16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel
for it is the power of God
unto salvation
for everyone who believes
to (the) Jew first
and to (the) Greek as well
17 For the uprightness of God is revealed
in it
from fidelity unto faith
just as it-is-written
"And the righteous one from faith will live"

16 Not ashamed. Litotes, = "I am proud."

Also, there would have been a tendency to be ashamed of the cross, which Paul strenuously resists, e.g., cf. 1 Cor.

Everyone who believes. My personal project: pistis Christou = "faith of Christ," or "faith in Christ"

The faith which Jesus had / Our faith in Jesus

Here Paul is clearly referring to the faith of believers.
### “Righteousness of God”—Options for Interpretation

Young Luther, 16th-century Catholicism  
A1b. “covenant faithfulness” God's faithfulness to his promises  
N. T. Wright\(^{12}\) |
|---|---|---|
|  | A2. Righteousness as God’s salvation-creating power (“of God” as a subjective genitive)  
[God’s activity]  
| A2a. acts of covenant faithfulness actions embodying God's faithfulness  
N. T. Wright\(^{13}\)  
A2b. non-covenantal, world-defeating actions  
Ernst Käsemann \(^{14}\) |
[a status, a “legal fiction”]  
Protestant Luther  
2 Cor 5:21\(^{15}\)  
B1b. “imparted righteousness”  
[a quality]  
John Wesley\(^{16}\) |
|  | B2. Righteousness as a quality “which counts before God” or “avails with God” (“of God” as an objective genitive) | B2a. a natural quality recognized by God  
Noah?\(^{17}\)  
James 2:21?\(^{18}\)  
B2b. a special gift from God, then recognized as such |

#### Comments on the Chart from N. T. Wright on "Righteousness of God"

**Two main Divisions, A & B:** God's own righteousness OR Something he gives to humans.  
**B. Something God gives to humans -- very popular among Evangelicals.**

**B1. Righteousness from God.**

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 103.  
\(^{13}\) . . . our neat grammatical distinction here . . . does not quite do justice to what Paul is getting at here, and . . . we should probably erase the line that separates these two senses. Ibid.  
\(^{14}\) Käsemann deliberately splits this meaning off from anything 'covenantal,' since he wants to emphasize that God's salvation-creating power addresses – indeed conquers – the whole world, not just Israel. Ibid.  
\(^{15}\) Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 258) argues that in 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul is indeed speaking of imputed righteousness, “righteousness of God” as a gift from God to humanity, but that Paul never uses the phrase in this sense in Romans – or anywhere else than 2 Corinthians.  
\(^{17}\) Is this what the author of Genesis was thinking when he wrote: ’But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. 9 . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God (Gen 6:8-9 RSV)?  
\(^{18}\) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? (RSV)
B1a. **Imputed Righteousness.** A "legal fiction." Protestant Luther.

B1b. **Imparted Righteousness.** A real change takes place. John Wesley.

B2a. **Righteousness that counts with God.** A natural quality recognized by God.

B2b. Like B2a, but **first** given by as a gift, and **then** recognized as such.


A1a. **Distributive Justice.** Young, Catholic Luther, based on the Vulgate's use of *Justitia.*

A1b. **Quality Covenant Faithfulness.** N.T. Wright (very similar to the next one).

A2a. **Acts of Covenant Faithfulness.** N.T. Wright (very similar to the previous one).

A2b. **Non-Covenantal Saving Acts.** Ernst Käsemann.

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**Quote from Habakkuk 2:4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>The righteous shall live by &quot;his faith&quot;</th>
<th>emunato</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>The righteous shall live by &quot;my faith&quot;</td>
<td>emunati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>The righteous shall live by faith</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Meaning of Paul's Quote?**

- The one righteous-from-faith will live
- The one who is righteous-from-faith will live
- The one who is righteous will live from faith
- The Righteous One [Jesus] from fidelity [because of his own fidelity] will live [will be raised from the dead]
- The Righteous One [Jesus] from fidelity [because of God's fidelity] will live [will be raised from the dead]
- The righteous one (Christian) from fidelity [because of Jesus' fidelity] will live [in the world to come]
- The righteous one (Christian) from fidelity [because of God's fidelity] will live [in the world to come]

**From Faith to Faith.**

Origen: From OT faith to NT faith. From **beginning** to believe to **continuing** to believe.

From fidelity [i.e., the fidelity of Jesus] unto faith (i.e., our faith who believed God was at work through Jesus).

**Final Remarks.** There is so much "up in the air," that it is difficult to lecture on Paul.

Great scholars disagree. I will try to give you the range of scholarly opinions.

I give you my opinions. But I do not claim the gift of infallibility. I greatly admire the humility of C. E. B. Cranfield.

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**Lecture 179. More Thoughts about the Righteousness of God**

**Greek word dikaiosune**

Usually rendered into English as "righteousness" or "justice." Fitzmyer likes "uprightness."

**Traditional Catholic Thought**

Catholic Commentators traditionally have seen the "righteousness / justice of God" as a quality of God. They usually see this in a **legal** context of "being fair," rewarding the good, punishing the evil.
Traditional Protestant Thought
Protestant Commentators also traditionally have seen the "righteousness / justice of God" in a legal context. However they generally view it in terms of something that God imputes to one who is on trial.

An Effort to Bridge the Gap
Since the last decades of the 20th century there has been an effort to look more closely at the OT background. Often, the context is more covenantal / interpersonal than forensic legal.
In Wright's table that we looked at in the previous lecture this results in a meaning of either the quality of God's covenant faithfulness (A1b) or the concrete acts by which God demonstrates his covenant faithfulness (A2a).
Speaking of the usage in Romans, N. T. Wright states:
If you give to any of the occurrences of the phrase dikaiosunē theou in this passage a meaning other than some combination of A1b and A2a (as many translations do), the whole thing will get muddled. If you leave it clearly referring to these senses throughout, everything becomes clear.19

OT Examples 20

Lot Speaks to the Angels
since thy servant has found mercy before thee, and thou hast magnified thy righteousness, in what thou doest towards me that my soul may live, --but I shall not be able to escape to the mountain, lest perhaps the calamity overtake me and I die. (Gen 19:19)

Abraham, about Sarah
And it came to pass when God brought me forth out of the house of my father, that I said to her, This righteousness thou shalt perform to me, in every place into which we may enter, say of me, He is my brother. (Gen 20:13)
Obviously the "righteousness" is some act of kindness.

Abraham's Servant Meets Rebecca
and said, Blessed be the Lord the God of my master Abraam, who has not suffered his righteousness to fail, nor his truth from my master, and the Lord has brought me prosperously to the house of the brother of my lord. (Gen 24:27)

Abraham's Servant Speaks to Laban, Rebecca's Brother
If then ye will do mercy and justice with my lord, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left. (Gen 24:29) 21

Jacob, to God, before meeting Esau
Let there be to me a sufficiency of all the justice and all the truth which thou hast wrought with thy servant; for with this my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two camps (Gen 32:11)
"Truth" has the Hebrew sense of "fidelity, being true to."

Song of Moses
Thou hast guided in thy righteousness this thy people whom thou hast redeemed by thy strength thou hast called them into thy holy resting-place. (Exod 15:13)

20 A search on the Greek word dikaiosunē ("righteousness") in the LXX using BibleWorks. The English is the 19th century translation of the LXX by Sir Lancelot Brenton, also through BibleWorks. The word highlighted in yellow is the English for dikaiosunē. Words highlighted in blue are synonyms. See http://www.ecmarsh.com/lxx/. A better translation is NETS, New English Translation of the Septuagint http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/.
21 I have modified the translation to make it more literal.
Characteristics of YHWH (theophany to Moses)

The Lord passed by before his face, and proclaimed, The Lord God, pitiful and merciful, longsuffering and very compassionate, and true. 7 and keeping justice and mercy for thousands, taking away iniquity, and unrighteousness, and sins (Exod 34:6-7a).

Psalm 36:10 (Hebrew 35:10)
Extend thy mercy to them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

Psalm 71:2 (Hebrew 70:2)
In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me: incline thine ear to me, and save me.

Psalm 85:11-13 (Hebrew 84:10-12)
10 Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 Truth has sprung out of the earth; and righteousness has looked down from heaven.
12 For the Lord will give goodness; and our land shall yield her fruit.

Psalm 98:2 (Hebrew 97:2)
The Lord has made known his salvation, he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Isaiah 51:5a
My righteousness speedily draws nigh, and my salvation shall go forth as light,

Isaiah 51:8
For as a garment will be devoured by time, and as wool will be devoured by a moth, so shall they be consumed; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation for all generations.

Lecture 180. Pagan Idolatry, the "Big Lie." Rom 1:18-23

Fitzmyer's Outline (Modified & Expanded)22

I. Doctrinal Section: God's Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord (1:16-11:36)

A. Uprightness of God is Revealed as Justifying People through Faith (1:16-4:25)

Theme: Gospel, God's Power for Salvation of All, Disclosing God's Uprightness (1:16-17)  
Lectures 177, 178

1. Negative Explanation: All Humans Under God’s Wrath (1:18-3:20)
   a. God's Wrath Manifested against the Pagans (1:18-32)
      1) Pagan Idolatry, "the Big Lie" (1:18-23)  
      2) Pagan Idolatry Leads to Moral Degradation (1:24-27)  
      3) Vice Catalogue (1:28-32)  
   b. God's Judgment vs. Jews; Indeed vs. All Humanity (2:1-3:20)

2. Positive Explanation: God’s Uprightness Manifested to Sinners through Faith (3:21-31)


B. Love of God Assures Salvation to Those Justified by Faith (chapters 5-8)

C. Justification, Salvation through Faith Do Not Contradict OT Promises (chapters 9-11)

22 Fitzmyer's Arabic numerals run consecutively from 1-60 throughout his commentary. They do not always mark the same "level of importance." I have tried to make this more consistent. When I expand his outline, I will try to remember to use a blue font.

23 These three subdivisions come from Fitzmyer's paragraphing, p. 269, which he explains on p. 271.
Translation of the Greek with Outline

For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of humans the ones "holding down" the truth in unrighteousness.

because what is knowable of God is manifest among them for God manifested [it] to them.

for his invisible things are perceived [as] being-known by his works from (since) the creation of the cosmos, [namely] both his eternal power and deity with the result that they are without-excuse;

because knowing God they did not glorify or thank [him] as God

but they-were-made-futile in their reasonings and their senseless hearts were-darkened

and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of a corruptible human and of birds, and four-footed-ones, and reptiles

Wrath of God, Fitzmyer's Comments

The Wrath of God. ὀργή θεοῦ is another divine quality inherited by Paul from the OT . . . . It expresses not an irrational or irresponsible outburst of rage, a capricious or arbitrary anger against human beings; nor is it to be associated with the Greek idea of angry deities who have to be placated. Rather it denotes the expected divine reaction to human sin and evil. It is linked to monotheism and to the covenantal relationship of God with Israel, expressing the justifiable reaction of a loving and faithful God toward his disobedient people and their proneness to idolatry, to evil, and to sinful conduct. It denotes God’s steadfast attitude as a judge of Israel’s breach of the covenant.

Fitzmyer: "Protological" Thinking

This is an example of protological thinking that Paul has also inherited from the OT. In such thinking, God is considered responsible for all that happens to his people and his creation, good or evil. For instance, Deutero-Isaiah depicts Yahweh declaring, “I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things” (45:7). Or, again, Amos says, “If evil comes upon a city, has not the Lord done it?” (3:6). In this way the inevitable retribution of human sin is ascribed to God’s “wrath.”

A Later Theological Distinction

The theological distinction between God’s absolute will and his permissive will had not yet entered the history of ideas; it was to wait for the time of Augustine. Meanwhile neither the OT nor much of the NT has corrected this way of thinking. For the beginning of the correction, see Jas 1:13.

V. 22, Hearts "Were darkened," a Divine Passive

I. e. God darkened their minds, just as he "hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Exod 4:21; 7:3; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8). Paul regards this futility of thinking and misguided conduct as manifestations of the wrath of God, not provocations of it. He realizes that only the apocalyptic light of the gospel can penetrate such darkness.

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25 Fitzmyer Romans, 108.
26 Fitzmyer, Romans, 283.
Reasonings "Were Made Futile." I see this as another "divine passive." That is, it means "God made their minds futile." This is another example of "protological thinking" which applies everything, good & evil to God.

Protological Thinking is Everywhere!
Protological thinking is much more common than Joe & Mary Catholic think. It can be found in the thought of Jesus. The difficult petition in the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" makes no sense at all unless one actually thinks that God really might tempt us!

Other languages "translate this difficulty away."
French: Do not allow us to succumb to temptation (ne nous laisse pas succomber . . .)
Spanish: Do not allow us to fall in temptation (no nos dejes caer . . .)

The English preserves the difficulty of the protological thinking of the original.

V. 21, inexcusable
... contrast this Pauline statement about pagans’ knowledge of God with what the Lucan Paul declares in Acts 17:23, “As I passed along and observed your objects of worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What then you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”

Striking Difference between Luke's Version of Paul and Paul as we find him in his own letters!

The difference is striking. ... Worship of an unknown God would imply some knowledge of God, a knowledge that has to be purified, corrected, and expanded, but in Acts the pagans are in no way considered to be inexcusable, as Paul says in v 20. “This means that the natural theology has an utterly different function in Rom. 1 and in Acts 17, in the former passage it functions as an aid to the demonstration of human responsibility and is thereafter immediately dropped. in the latter passage it is evaluated positively and employed in missionary pedagogy as a forerunner to faith” (Vielhauer., "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts" 36).


Translation of the Greek with Outline

24 Therefore God handed them over in the desires of their hearts unto uncleanness to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 23 those-who exchanged the truth of God into a lie and honored and worshipped the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen

25 On account of this God handed them over unto passions of dishonor for their women exchanged (the) natural intercourse for that apart-from nature likewise also the males, departing from (the) natural intercourse with women were-set-on-fire in their desire for one another, males with males doing what-is-shameful and receiving-back the recompense which was fitting for their wandering-astray.

27 Fitzmyer, Romans, 281–282.
Triple "handed them over" (24, 26, 28)

He seeks thereby to establish an intrinsic connection between sin and punishment; impiety brings its own retribution (see Wis 11:15–16, “... that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins”...). “Paul paradoxically reverses the cause and the consequence: Moral perversion is the result of God’s wrath, not the reason for it” (Käsemann, Commentary, 47). Thus Paul ascribes the punishment protologically to God’s wrath... 28

This is another example of the "protological thinking" I discussed in the previous lecture.

27, Were set on fire. I take this literal passive as a "divine passive." That is, "God set them on fire." I regard it as yet another example of "protological thinking." Many translations "translate this difficulty away."

Background: Josephus 29

But then, what are our laws about marriage? That law owns no other mixture of sexes but that which nature has appointed, of a man with his wife, and that this be used only for the procreation of children. But it abhors the mixture of a male with a male; and if anyone does that, death is its punishment.

This is very close to the traditional "natural law" understanding of Catholicism.

This type of Jewish thinking appears to be what underlies much of Paul's critique of pagan morality.

V. 26, "Nature" (physis) in the OT

The word physis, "nature" entered Jewish thought relatively late. It is never found in the Greek translation of the Hebrew books of the OT. Rather it is found only the books that Catholics call "deutero-canonical" or "apocryphal"

| Book of Wisdom | 3x | written about 75 B.C. Last book of Catholic OT to be written. |
| 3 Maccabees | 1x |
| 4 Maccabees | 8x |

"Nature" (physis) in the NT. 11 times

| Romans | 5x | 1:26, 2:14,27; 11:21,24 |
| 1 Corinthians | 1x | 11:14 (I will comment on this below) |
| Galatians | 2x | 2:15; 4:8 |
| James | 1x | 3:7 (contrasts the "nature" of beasts with "human nature") |
| 2 Peter | 1x | 1:4 (ca. 120 A.D. only reference in the bible to "divine nature.") |

Paul's Use of Nature

Hays... rightly notes that Boswell’s position, which claims that Paul regards homosexual acts as “extraordinary, peculiar,” but not “morally reprehensible”... ignores “the plain sense of the text, which places its explicit reference” to homosexual activity “in direct parallelism with the ‘base mind and improper conduct’ which the vice list of 1:29–31 elaborates.”... While that is true, Paul’s use of physis in 1 Cor 11:14 creates a problem, when he asks, “Does not nature itself teach us that if a man lets his hair grow long, it is a disgrace to him?” In this instance, physis hardly refers to the natural order of things, but to social convention... Yet what is meant there has little relevance for this context in Romans. [???PJM] 30

Too good to pass up!

Only modern eisegesis could read these words of Paul and understand them as referring to female contraception. See J. C. Ford and G. Kelly, Contemporary Moral Theology, ... who regard Paul’s words as possibly an implicit revelation of the condemnation of contraception! 31

28 Fitzmyer, Romans, 284.
29 Against Apion, 2.199, Whiston's 1829 English Translation, accessed via BibleWorks.
30 Fitzmyer, Romans, 286–287.
31 Fitzmyer, Romans, 287.
Eisegesis (reading one's own ideas into the text) is the opposite of exegesis (reading meaning out of the text.)

LECTURE WENT LONG. DIVIDED AT THIS POINT.


All statements by human beings, including those in the Bible, are limited by the worldview of those who uttered them. Our attention has been focused on what Paul was condemning in the 1st century. A different but essential question is how binding the Pauline condemnation is for Christians of today. . . .

Comments: Theological Method

The difference between Catholic theology and Evangelical Theology.

After I finish reading & commenting on Brown, this same issue will come up in the next quote from Matera. He calls it the "more difficult . . . hermeneutical issue."

Brown Continues

An outlook based on the revelation of God’s will in creation itself would not be easily changed. Scholarly discussion of the issue will continue, challenging Paul’s outlook on the “unnatural.” Nevertheless, in insisting on the sexual limits imposed by the divinely commanded state of marriage between a man and a woman, Paul and indeed, Jesus himself, walking among us in our times, would not be frightened by being considered sexually and politically “incorrect,” any more than they minded being considered overly demanding in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of their times. 32

Christological Comments

Brown does not here raise the question of how binding the ideas of Jesus are for Christians today.

If we take the incarnation seriously, Brown's first sentence, highlighted in yellow above, applies also to Jesus' words. We have seen that "protological thinking" can be found in the words of Jesus.

Yet we do not consider such protological thinking normative for later generations.

Brown Continues

An outlook based on the revelation of God’s will in creation itself would not be easily changed. Scholarly discussion of the issue will continue, challenging Paul’s outlook on the “unnatural.” Nevertheless, in insisting on the sexual limits imposed by the divinely commanded state of marriage between a man and a woman, Paul and indeed, Jesus himself, walking among us in our times, would not be frightened by being considered sexually and politically “incorrect,” any more than they minded being considered overly demanding in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of their times. 32

Reflections on Homosexual Behavior, Matera (2010)

It is obvious that Paul condemns homosexual behavior as against God's law.

The more difficult question today is the hermeneutical issue: What is the authority of Paul's remarks about such relations? For some this is not an issue. For others, the text raises questions about a phenomenon whose biological and social origins are not fully understood. In my view, further discussion will do well to recognize the following.

Four Considerations

First, Paul's own position about same-sex relations is clear. [He condemned them in the name of God. PJM] Second, the example of these same-sex relations plays a rhetorical role in Paul's argument in Roman, and his discussion of such relations is not the main point of the passage. [He uses them as an obvious example of wicked human behavior apart from God. PJM]. Third, while Paul opposed such relationships, they do not otherwise play a significant role in his writings. [The only other letter where they come up is 1 Corinthians, PJM.] Other forms of behavior such as greed and strife are condemned more regularly. Fourth, Paul's discussion of same-sex relations occurs in a context that emphasizes that all are under the power of sin and have fallen short of God's glory (3:9, 23).

Matera's Conclusion
Consequently, no one is in a position to condemn others, for all are in need of God's saving grace. The most prudent course of action in the present time, then, is to treat all with compassion, aware that only God is in a position to judge another person.  

33 Frank J. Matera, Romans (Paideia Commentaries on the NT; Baker Academic, 2010) 56.

Church History: Taking Interest
Taking any interest whatsoever was condemned as mortally sinful by several ecumenical councils and popes.

Church History: Slavery
150 years ago the majority of Christians in the South, and many in the North, regarded slavery as biblically justified. Many Catholic missionaries to North & South America held slaves.

The last Catholic author to argue that slavery was acceptable to God wrote in the 1950's. He was not censured by Rome.

Church History: Religious Liberty
The most hotly debated issue of Vatican II was religious liberty.

The decree was not passed until the final session.

The conservative minority almost succeeded in preventing the passage through parliamentary maneuvers.

Catholic teaching before 1960 was "error has no rights."

A Catholic ruler who gave freedom of religion to Protestants, Jews, Moslems or pagans was sinful.

John Courtney Murray, who argued that religious liberty was a basic human right was censured by Rome.

Personal Reflections
Because of these -- and other! -- examples from Church history

I think we need to be cautious whenever we think our current understanding of morality is in accord with "divine law" whether that is based on our understanding of scripture or our understanding of God's law as revealed in nature or our understanding of God's law that comes from other parts of Church Tradition.

Last night I heard an interesting comment on the "original context" of the remark of Pope Francis "Who am I to judge?" (We can talk about this during the break, if you like.) End of Lecture.

[Contemporary Jewish Thought – Rabbi Jacob Milgrom. Omit from Lecture to Save Time.]
"Who Says Homosexuality is a Sin?" and "How Not to Read the Bible."  


Lev 20:13. Those opposed to homosexual rights, in general, and to professing gays and lesbians in the military, in particular, have resorted to the biblical interdiction of their practice on pain of death. In an op-ed piece, James Michener provides this rebuttal:

Two other verses from the same chapter of Leviticus bring into question the relevance of these edicts today. Verse 9 warns: “For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death” Would we be willing to require the death sentence for boys who in a fit of rage oppose their parents? How many of us would have been guilty of that act at some point in our upbringing?

Just as perplexing is verse 10: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife … the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” Can you imagine the holocaust that would ensue if that law were enforced today?… We do not kill young people who oppose their parents or execute adulterers. (New York Times, March 30, 1993)

As Michener notes, the biblical ban on homosexual acts must be considered in the context of all the other forbidden behaviors of Leviticus 18 and 20. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that these regulations were binding only in
Israel (and its resident aliens, 18:26), not in other countries. Thus prima facie it is illegitimate to apply these prohibitions on a universal scale. Note that lesbianism, though prevalent and known, was not banned (contrast Rom 1:26).35

Lecture 182. Vice Catalogue. Rom 1:128-32

Translation of the Greek with Outline

28 And just as they did not behave-fittingly (dokimazoā) to hold God in consciousness to do (the) things unacceptable

God handed them over

unto an unfitting (a-dokimos) mind

to do (the) things unacceptable

3rd of 3 occurrences

29 filled-with every unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil full-of envy, murder, strife, deceit, bad-habits whisperers,

35 bad-mouthers, God-haters, full-of-hubris, arrogant, boasters, inventors of evils disobedient to parents,

in apposition to them

31 without-understanding, without-trust, without-affection, without-mercy modifies them

who, not-recognizing the righteous-judgments of God that those-doing (the) things of this sort are worthy of death

begins clause modifying them

32 who, not only do those things but even approve of those doing [them].

1st conclusion of clause

2nd conclusion of clause

The difficulty of Verse 32

The verse appears to regard approving of evil deeds as worse than actually doing them.

This seems to be counter intuitive. I found the thoughts of Cranfield insightful.

Cranfield's Comments

Often the one who does evil is under pressure, e.g., acting from passion.

The one who approves the evil normally has the chance to reflect calmly on it.

. . . there is also the fact that those who condone and applaud the vicious actions of others are actually making a deliberate contribution to the setting up of a public opinion favourable to vice, and so to the corruption of an indefinite number of other people. So, for example, to excuse or gloss over the use of torture by security forces or the cruel injustices of racial discrimination and oppression, while not being involved in them directly, is to help to cloak monstrous evil with an appearance of respectability and so to contribute most effectively to its firmer entrenchment36

Current Examples of Monstrous Evil

School of the Americas in Georgia. How many Americans approve torture?

Many do not see this as "monstrous evil." They see it as virtue!

It's very easy to condemn sexual evils. By focusing on them, we avoid focusing on our own "monstrous evils."


Worthy of Death / Deserves to Die

That the reference of θανάτου is to this ultimate penalty of sin in God’s creation, and not to death as a penalty for particular wrong-doings according to an actual code of law, is surely clear; for—for one thing—many of the things listed in vv. 29–31 could not conceivably carry a death penalty in any code.37

Disobedient to parents, boasters, being without understanding, etc.

Is Paul Exaggerating?

The question is often asked—not unnaturally—whether the extremely dark picture of human life which is presented here is not grossly unfair. Certainly, if we read this section as an historian’s assessment of the moral condition of his contemporaries made on the same sort of basis as is normally used when one is attempting a relative evaluation, and so go on to compare it with other people’s moral assessments of other epochs, the result will be thoroughly unfair to Paul’s contemporaries.

Paul is not giving an "historical assessment!"

But the truth is that Paul is not attempting to give an assessment of this sort at all. . . . In other words, it is not Paul’s judgment of his contemporaries that we have here, but the gospel’s judgment of men, that is, of all men, the judgment the gospel itself pronounces, which Paul has heard and to which he has himself submitted. The section depicts man as he appears in the light of the cross of Christ. It is not a description of specially bad men only, but the innermost truth of all of us, as we are in ourselves.38

The Viewpoint of the Prophet

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom!
Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (Isa 1:10, RSV)

Isaiah was speaking to his contemporaries! Not to Sodom & Gomorrah -- they had been destroyed 1,000 years ago! How would Congress react if their chaplain began a session with a prayer like this.

The Standard of Comparison. Usually we can compare with others, and come off "pretty good."
Examples: Our family, our Catholic Church, our country/ our government

The Experience of the Prophet

Isaiah's vision: He hears the angels in heaven: "Holy, Holy, Holy . . ." Isaiah's response: "Woe is me!"

Remarks from Matera.39 Paul's sweeping indictment is offputting.

Matera Quotes Käsemann. "Prior to the gospel man does not know what sin is . . ."
The revelation of the cross reveals there is something "monstrously wrong" with humanity.

Concluding Remarks about "Classical" Liberalism
The world is getting "better and better." (very popular in late 19th century).
Humanity is basically good. Yes, we have problems, but nothing we cannot solve.
What happened? World War I! The "mythological language" of the NT expresses a very deep truth about humanity.

Christianity vs. Pop Psychology
I'm okay. You're okay.
I'm not okay. You're not okay. But that's okay.
Because the "justice of God" (saving justice) is being revealed.

37 Cranfield., 134.
38 Cranfield, 104.
39 Matera, Romans, 54-55.