

Romans 2 Articles

Eyes Are Not the Key to Seeing God *T*he nineteenth-century evangelist Dwight L. Moody, attending a meeting in London, was struck by the power and earnestness of the speaker to whom he was listening. He was all the more intrigued when he discovered the speaker was blind. Moody met the man after the service to learn his story: “He told me that he had been stricken blind when very young. His mother took him to a doctor and asked him about her son’s sight. ‘You must give up all hope,’ the doctor said. ‘Your boy is blind, and will be forever.’ The mother took her boy to her bosom and cried, ‘Oh, my boy, who will take care of you when I am gone? Who will look after you?’ forgetting the faithfulness of the God she had taught him to love.

“This blind man became a servant of the Lord, and was permitted to print the Bible in twelve different languages, printed in the raised letters, so that all blind people could read the Scriptures themselves. He had a congregation, my friends, of 3,000,000 people [the estimated number of blind worldwide in Moody’s day] and I think that blind man was one of the happiest beings in all London. He was naturally blind, but he had eyes to his soul, and could see a bright eternity in the future. We pity those who have not their natural sight; but how you should pity yourself if you are spiritually blind” (*Heritage*, p. 1018).

Moody’s encounter with a blind saint illustrates perfectly the point to be made by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:18–32—eyes are not the key to seeing. Paul will demonstrate in this section of his letter to the church at Rome that people with perfectly good eyesight have looked all around the world and never seen what is plainly evident—the signs pointing to the existence of God. Creation boldly declares the glory of God, as the psalmist puts it (Ps. 19:1), through what God has made—and yet the natural human tendency is to look at the evidence and suppress it, offering the excuse that he never saw it at all.

The logical question the believers in Rome might ask is, “**Why does the righteousness of God need to be revealed?**” Paul’s answer will be, “**Because the wrath of God has already been revealed against those who have suppressed his glory.** Proclaiming his own righteousness is God’s response to his wrath.”

As noted by John Stott, Paul works with four “revelations” in making the transition from Romans 1:1–17 to Romans 1:18–32 (Stott, pp. 70–71).

- First, God reveals his glory in creation (which mankind suppresses; Rom. 1:18–20)
- Next, God reveals his wrath toward mankind (because of man’s suppression of his glory; Rom. 1:18).
- Next, he reveals his righteousness in the gospel (as an act of grace and mercy to provide escape from his wrath; Rom. 1:17)
- Finally, he reveals his power in the gospel (to save those among humanity who deserve his wrath but who are willing to receive his grace; Rom. 1:16).

The church in Rome was surrounded by a paradox. On the one hand, the Roman Empire, and the capital city of Rome specifically, was among the most sophisticated cultures in the world. On the other hand, it was one of the most depraved cultures as well. If Hellenism had elevated the spirit of man, then Rome had elevated the soul of man. Rome was rank humanism at its worst. Every appetite was fulfilled, no desire was left unmet, and no sin was left uncommitted. What Paul is about to write to the church in Rome will clearly demonstrate that suppressing the knowledge of God and elevating the knowledge of sin does not spare man from the wrath of God. His letter will allow believers to recognize that their ability to “see” God was not because they did not deserve God’s wrath, but because they believed the gospel—the power of God for salvation.¹

¹ Boa, K., & Kruidenier, W. (2000). *Romans* (Vol. 6, pp. 45–46). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.