

The Revelation of God's Wrath
Romans 1:16-18

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New Sermon series starts today, "The Wrath of God." You may wonder, "Why this subject?" Well, we just finished a series on Spiritual Warfare, so this topic is only logical.

Because when we look at the world, we can see this spiritual war being waged. Things like people cheering when a law in New York was passed allowing abortions up to the day of birth.

Or a state Governor advocating for post birth abortion (think about that for a minute).

Or biological men claiming they're female, which allows them to use any bathroom or locker room they choose, to include laws penalizing anyone who objects.

In just about every state in the union you can change your sex on your birth certificate or driver's license.

Many states even allow for an "X" to be entered in the space designated for gender on both, official birth certificates and driver's license.

That "X" stands for Non-Binary. Now, you may be thinking, Non-Binary??? What kind of gender is non-binary?

Well, a non-binary gender is an umbrella term for an individual who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Then think about the birth certificate option. How do the parents know that their child is neither entirely male nor female???

The State of New York recognizes 31 different genders. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Since our government is functionally atheistic, who's to say what's right or wrong, or that up is down and down is up?

I wonder if Isaiah understood how close to the mark he was when, by the Spirit of God he prophesied in Isaiah 5:20, *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

Woe to them indeed. Those who do so are under threat of God's judgment. But herein lies the problem. The world doesn't fear the judgement of God. They don't fear His wrath.

The world says that God is love, and a loving God would never send anyone to hell. Well, let me tell you. That's not true! God is holy. Anyone who's opposed to the holiness of God, faces His wrath.

Otherwise God would be tolerant of any and all sin, and forgiveness would just be a cheap gesture.

As we'll see in this series, God's wrath is not only es-cha-to-logical (meaning it will be displayed in the end of time), but it's also a present reality.

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In writing this letter to Rome, Paul looked forward to the day when he could be there in the capital city preaching the gospel.

Romans 1:15, *“That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.”*

Warren Wiersbe commented: *“Rome was a proud city, and the Gospel came from Jerusalem, the capital city of one of the little nations that Rome had conquered. The Christians in that day were not among the elite of society; they were common people and even slaves.*

Rome had known many great philosophers and philosophies; why pay any attention to a fable about a Jew who arose from the dead?"

Paul continues in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*

Paul wasn't ashamed of the Gospel. In fact, the Gospel is the theme of the book of Romans. The very word "Gospel" is mentioned no less than 4 or 5 times (depending on your translation) in the first 16 verses.

The Gospel of Christ is the answer, in one form or another, to all of mankind's problems. That's why Paul wasn't ashamed, even though he knew that through the eyes of world it was considered foolishness.

1 Corinthians 1:23, *"But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."*

Why wasn't Paul ashamed? *"For it is the power of God to salvation."* The Gospel, the good news about Jesus, is the very power of God, and Rome understood power.

To really hear the Gospel is to experience the very presence of God, and Paul knew the power of the message of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 2:4, *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power."*

You need to understand that God's power wasn't in Paul's ability to preach, but God's power was in the message of the Gospel.

The power of the Gospel gives an individual the power to believe, the power to have faith. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, *"...for everyone who believes."* No unbeliever can possess this power.

In the Greek, the word “believes” is tied closely to our word trust. For one to believe, is not just to know the Gospel, but it’s to trust the Gospel to salvation.

In the beginning, the Jews were given the first chance to accept the gospel, but they rejected it, and having rejected the gospel, it’s now available to all.

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It’s in and through the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the very righteousness of God is revealed.

Romans 1:17, *“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

True righteousness is God and only from God. There are three critical things to understand as to why it’s important to understand the righteousness of God.

First, it’s used to describe that characteristic of God by which He always does what is right, just, proper, and consistent with all His other attributes.

When we say that God is righteous, we mean that there is no wrong, dishonesty, or unfairness in Him.

Secondly, the righteousness of God can refer to His method of justifying ungodly sinners.

He can do this, and still be righteous, because Jesus as the sinless Substitute has satisfied all the claims of divine justice.

Finally, the righteousness of God refers to the perfect standing which God provides for those who believe on His Son.

Those who are not in themselves righteous are treated as if they were righteous because God sees them in all the perfection of Christ. Righteousness is imputed to their account.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

And that righteousness is revealed, as Romans 1:17 said, *“faith from first to last”* or other translations say, *“from faith to faith.”* This is a Greek idiom or expression meaning from start to finish.

Belief, trust, and faith are all interlinked as written in Habakkuk 2:4b, *“But the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.”* Or, to say it another way, those that are justified (made righteous) by faith shall live.

In the Old Testament, righteousness came by keeping the law, which was shown to be impossible. In the New Testament, righteousness came by way of faith.

Righteousness is graciously given by faith in Jesus and recognizing what He did on the cross.

Ephesians 2:8–9, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

That’s how God’s righteousness is revealed, through the gospel by faith. Now let’s see how God’s wrath is revealed.

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Romans 1:18, *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”*

We just noted that in the Gospel, God's righteousness is revealed through those who have been made righteous by faith. In like manner, God's wrath is revealed in man's unrighteousness.

Paul started his letter talking about the Gospel. Now, from this verse and for the next several chapters, Paul goes into detail about the wrath of God and His judgement of sin. Why is that?

Douglas Moo, a Bible commentator makes this comment: *"He knows that we cannot appreciate the good news until we thoroughly understand the bad news. Only when we have really come to grips with the extent of the human dilemma will we be able to respond as we should to the answer to that dilemma found in the good news about Jesus... getting people to take the gospel seriously will often require us first to get people to take their own dilemma seriously. This is Paul's strategy in Romans."*

The wrath of God is an expression of His righteousness. God never condemns without cause. His wrath is revealed in the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

What's the definition of unrighteousness? It's wickedness! God is high and holy.

Ungodliness is a lack of proper respect and reverence for God. It's an attack on the holiness and righteousness of God.

Colossians 3:5–6, *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming."*

Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Who are these sons of disobedience? Those that are without Jesus.

John 3:36, *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”*

And that wrath is coming! It’s described in the Bible as the “Day of Judgement” or the “Day of Wrath” and it will be terrible for those whom God directs His wrath.

Revelation 6:15–17, *“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”*

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Conclusion

But there’s also a present reality of His wrath. This reality is expressed throughout the Bible.

God cast Adam and Eve from the Garden. God cursed Cain after he killed Able. Because of man’s wickedness on the earth, God destroyed the earth with a flood in the days of Noah.

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. God’s wrath was seen in the 10 plagues He cast on the Egyptians.

And God’s displeasure was evident when the people of Israel were sent into captivity. The list goes on.

So, how does God reveal His wrath today? We can make a case for earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and other natural disasters.

We can even make the argument about His allowing various terrorist attacks around the globe. But what we'll be looking at in a few weeks is something more terrible than these.

In man's unrighteous and wickedness, verse 18 tells us that man has suppressed the truth by his wickedness: *"who suppress the truth by their wickedness."*

The truth is the truth. It can't be changed, but it can be suppressed, held down, or hidden.

We'll look at the truth next week, but the truth has already been made known to all. In fact, the meaning of wickedness and unrighteousness is to suppress the truth.

Romans 1:25a, *"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie."*

To turn from God is to move from the light into the dark. In the dark, truth is hidden, and blindness is self-imposed.

John 3:19, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."*

Men suppress the truth about God by their wickedness and ungodliness. This answers the question "Why do people need the Gospel?"

And the fact is, all men who are apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ stand condemned and are under the wrath of God. God's wrath is a response to the opposition to His holiness.

We'll begin to fully appreciate the power of God to salvation as we more fully understand our fallen condition and our being subject to God's wrath.

Romans 5:9, *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him.”*

As we look toward Easter, we begin to grasp God’s great love for us. God is Holy and Just. God’s wrath was satisfied by Jesus’ costly payment on the cross in our place.