

The Wrath of God (*Part 2*)

Romans 1:18-20

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: God pours out His wrath on those who reject His truth and pursue a lifestyle of wickedness and sin.

In Romans 1:1-17 Paul presents the theme of his letter to the Romans: The Righteousness of God. A right relationship with God is provided through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as set forth in the Gospel of God. Beginning at 1:18 and going through 3:20, Paul declares that this Righteousness from God is desperately needed by humankind because we have all rebelled and sinned against God. We have all broken His laws and disobeyed His commands and, consequently, we all deserve to suffer His judgment and condemnation.

Verse 18 summarizes what follows in verses 19-32 where Paul describes what happens to us as individuals and as a society when we rebel against God and reject the truth of His self-revelation. Each of us must choose between the righteousness or the wrath that come from God; between His free gift of salvation through faith or His wrath as a consequence of our sin.

I. The Reality of God's Wrath (1:18a)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven...

- God's wrath is that terrifying manifestation of His holiness and righteousness in the fair and just judgment and punishment of those who sin and rebel against Him.
- When Man rejects God's offer of love and forgiveness, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of judgment, condemnation and death. (Cp. Hebrews 10:30-31)
- God's wrath has been revealed in the past; it will be revealed in the future; and it is a present reality for those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cp. John 3:36)
- The wrath of God manifests itself today in His progressive abandonment of those who reject Him to the full consequences of their own sins. (Romans 1:24-32)

II. The Recipients of God's Wrath (1:18b)

...against all the godlessness and wickedness of men...

- Godlessness (ungodliness, sinfulness)
 - God pours out His wrath on those who are ungodly in their character and sinful in their conduct.
 - Character manifests itself in conduct; ungodliness reveals itself in sinfulness.
 - In order to change our conduct, we have to change our character. Ultimately, this is only possible as we yield to and cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (Cp. Romans 8:12-14; Galatians 6:7-9)
 - Speaks of a lifestyle that has no place for God or the teachings of His Word.
 - Godlessness is a lack of reverence for God manifested in rebellion against Him.
- Wickedness (unrighteousness, evil)
 - From a word that speaks of "a violation of divine law."
 - Wickedness is living contrary to the character and Word of God.

- Taken together, godlessness and wickedness speak not only of the violation of God's rules for living as set forth in His Word, but of the utter rejection of God Himself—His deity, His authority over our lives and His very nature. (*Swindoll, Insights, p. 41*)
- God's wrath is poured out on those who live according to the lusts and evil desires of their earthly, sinful nature. (Cp. Ephesians 5:3-7; Colossians 3:5-9)
- As believers, we are to "put to death" and "rid ourselves" of those things which invite the wrath of God by "sowing to please the Spirit", not our "sinful nature."

III. The Reason for God's Wrath (1:18c)

...who suppress the truth by their wickedness...

- Truth – The truth *about* God and the truth that comes *from* God—what He has revealed to us in His world (general revelation) and Word (special revelation).
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 - People are deceived by Satan because they do not love the truth and they do not believe the truth which God has revealed; they are deluded because they delight in wickedness.
 - John 14:6 – they reject the truth that is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Suppress – to hinder, to hold down, to hold back; it means to refuse and to reject the truth in order to pursue and practice godlessness and wickedness.
 - "The word picture painted by 'suppressed' depicts a man struggling to keep the lid on a container closed so that whatever is inside cannot escape. The sin of humanity suppresses the will of God; sin keeps the world from working as God originally intended it to...The sin of people prevents the world from being better than it could otherwise be." (*Swindoll, Insights, p. 41*)
 - When bad things happen in life, we have a tendency to blame God. But the fact is, it is the wickedness and sinfulness of mankind that has brought all of the evil, pain and suffering that we experience.
 - When we reject God in our lives and expel Him from our society, only bad things can and will happen.
 - The suppression of God's truth has resulted in the deliberate, systematic, relentless removal of God and biblical values from our society: our educational systems, government and political system, the economy; the institutions of marriage and family; our religious institutions; our views and values in economics, the arts, the entertainment industry; the environment, health care and insurance; our military institutions, immigration, etc.
 - On every side in our society we are witnessing the wholesale rejection of the truth and the willful acceptance of lies and deceptions. (Power, Control, Money)

IV. The Reasonableness of God's Wrath (1:19-20)

...what may be know about God is plain to them...

- God has revealed Himself to man through General Revelation (Psalm 19:1-6) and Special Revelation (Psalm 19:7-11); through His creation and through His Word, both living (the Lord Jesus Christ) and written (the Bible). (Cp. Heb. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:14-17)
- Man is, therefore, "without excuse" (vs. 20).