

**Not Ashamed
(Week 4)
Romans 1:18-23
“The Wrath of God”**

Introduction

“Pay homage to the Son or He will be angry and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment. All who take refuge in Him are happy.”

Psalm 2:12

After his initial greeting Paul goes directly into what almost feels like a courtroom setting. Like a prosecuting attorney he opens his case with a list of the many crimes charged against humanity. He had stated previously that in the gospel the righteousness from God is revealed, and immediately following, he states that God's wrath is also being revealed against the sinfulness of man. The stark choice between the two is clear and of the utmost importance: Choose Christ and live; or choose sin and die. This is the foundational truth of mankind's existence. God has extended His grace to those who will accept it, but those who reject His grace will be subjected to the wrath of God.

Many preachers these days love to talk about God's mercy and grace, but an equally important aspect of God's character, one that should not be ignored, is His righteous anger directed toward our sin. In short, the wrath of God is equally important to the love of God. In fact, John, the very same disciple who wrote:

“The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:8

...is also the very same person who wrote the book of *Revelation*, which is all about the wrath of God. We would do well, therefore, to remember that God, Who loves to perfection, also hates sin with the same degree of perfection. God's love, as well as His wrath, are completely justified, because of His holy nature. Lest we should ever become complacent about our sins, we would do well to remember just how much Jesus was compelled to suffer for OUR sin. If you want to see how much God hates sin, then take a good look at the cross of Calvary, and you will have little remaining doubt.

Paul tells the church at Rome that “God's wrath is **being revealed** against all godlessness and unrighteousness...”. Let us consider this for a moment. Throughout the history of mankind, God has demonstrated his wrath against sinfulness. For example, Noah and the flood. God decided to put an end to the wickedness that was so prevalent in Noah's day. He extended His grace to one single family, while the rest of the inhabitants of earth were utterly destroyed. Later on, in the days of Abraham, He rained fire down on the cities of Sodom and Gomorra for their unrepentant wickedness. And, once again, only one family was spared.

God poured out His wrath upon His Son at Calvary, so that one family, the adopted children of God (The Church), could be spared from the final wrath that is to come. This day of wrath is called “The day of The LORD” in *The Old Testament*, and The Tribulation in *The New Testament*. God's wrath has been revealed in the past and will be revealed with fury in the future.

It is also important for us to understand that the Greek word that Paul uses for “wrath” (*Orge*, pronounced Or-gay) does not mean a sudden burst of anger, such as a temper tantrum, but rather, it is a word that is used to describe a carefully predetermined punishment for a criminal act. God doesn't “throw a fit”, when he reacts to sin. But His holy nature absolutely requires Him to punish it accordingly. Therefore, God will mete out punishment that fits the crimes of humanity, for those who reject His great salvation.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our LORD.”

Romans 6:23

So just who will be subjected to God's wrath? And will His wrath be poured out upon any who are innocent? These are the questions that, as a pastor, I have been asked countless times. Paul explains thoroughly for us in his letter to the Romans that everyone who will be subjected to the wrath of God is

most certainly deserving of it. He tells us three things that all lost people have in common that will bring God's wrath down upon them: Suppression of Truth, Senseless Thinking, and Substitution Theology.

Suppression of Truth

"For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse." **Romans 1:18-20**

Have you ever stopped to consider that the universe in which we live was specifically designed to cause you to search for its Creator? In other words, everything about the world we live in makes us long to know just Who it was that made it! I never cease to be amazed over the wondrous place in which we live. I have been blessed in my life to travel to many parts of the world, whether on hunting trips or mission trips, and every time I see a "new part" of the world, I am in awe of it. Which, in turn, causes me to be in awe of its Creator. In short, every time I see a sunset, a Rocky Mountain top, or a waterfall, I am inspired to praise God. Can I get a witness?

Paul makes it abundantly clear in his letter to the Romans, that to look around at the wonders of creation and not recognize The Creator God is actually impossible. Those who refuse to acknowledge a Creator actually have to go against what is natural to do so. Paul calls this willful blindness, "*suppression of the truth*". The word that he uses for "suppression" literally means to hold something down. What Paul is simply saying is rather than accept the obvious facts that are so prevalent around them, there are many who are so bent on living in sin that they purposely hold down the truth in order to keep from accepting it. They deny the obvious at the top of their lungs, so they may continue in their wickedness without conviction. This is the very reason that God says, that on the day of their judgment, they will be left without excuse. They refused to believe, because they worked so very hard not to believe.

There are many false teachers out there that would try and tell us that God is so full of grace and mercy that He could not possibly pour out His wrath on sinful mankind. They would lead us to believe that "wrath" is an "*Old Testament*" concept, and that Jesus' death on the cross provides salvation for the entire world, whether they accept it or not. But as far as I can see, Romans is in *The NEW TESTAMENT*! And here it is, speaking about God's wrath being poured out on those who suppress the truth. And what is the truth? The gospel of Jesus Christ! Those who embrace it will be saved, and those who suppress it will be condemned. Don't believe me? Then let's examine what Jesus said about the matter:

"For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." **John 3:16**

Most of us know this verse by heart. Those of us who were brought up in church memorized it at an early age. But what many do not know are the words that Christ said after this famous verse.

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is ALREADY CONDEMNED, because he has not believed in the Name of the one and only Son of God. This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." **John 3:17-19**

Now THAT is what it means to suppress the truth, to love one's sin above accepting the obvious. That is why those who reject the gospel are condemned already. God has surrounded us with a creation that prompts us to seek Him, and if we truly seek Him, He will reveal all of His truth to us. To love sin

more than the longing to find Him is to choose to live in spiritual blindness. It is to choose wrath over salvation. Hear the words of John The Baptist:

"The one who believes in The Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects The Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him." **John 3:36**

Those who suppress the truth have God's wrath upon them. They will spend an eternity in hell for rejecting what has been offered to save them. They are without excuse.

Senseless Thinking

"For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened." **Romans 1:21**

Not only is there external reminders that point us to God, but internal ones as well. Within every person, there is a realization of the existence of God, as well as, a desire to know Him. It is how we were designed. For example, most of us know the story of Helen Keller.

When Keller was 19 months old she contracted a disease (most likely scarlet fever or meningitis) that left her both deaf and blind. Her disabilities callously placed her within a world of isolation, where communication was extremely limited. Anne Sullivan, Helen's teacher, began to work with the child to teach her the sign language that would enable her to communicate. Afterward, the child was able to find her way and connect with the outside world. When she had progressed far enough to be able to comprehend the deeper subjects, her teacher began to tell Helen about God. As she described Him to the child, the little girl exclaimed, *"I always knew Him. I just didn't know His Name."* So you see, each of us are designed to know our Creator. So, in order to deny Him, we must deny all that is around us, as well as, within us. Listen again to the words of Paul:

"For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude."

So, you see, those who have denied God have made the conscious decision to do so. And, as a result, their thinking has become corrupted. They have so desperately desired to live a life without accountability to God, that they have convinced themselves to believe that He isn't there. Think about the absurdity of this for a moment. Is it any wonder that God has no choice but to condemn such people?

This is the reason that so many reject the gospel. It isn't because they don't believe it. It is because they don't want it! There are many out there who need to hear the story of Jesus. And so many are like Helen Keller, knowing that there is a God, but not knowing His name. It is incumbent upon us, as The Church of Jesus Christ, to proclaim His good news. But always remember, that there are those who would rather have their sin, than accept the truth.

I had an occasion just this week to run into to such a person. I have repeatedly tried to show him the love of Christ, and he knows that I am telling him the truth, but quite honestly, he would rather go on living in his sins than to be washed clean by the blood of Christ. Until he changes his senseless thinking, there is nothing that I can do to help him. But this doesn't mean that I will stop trying. I do fear that he may have reached the point of no return, but only God knows for certain.

It is senseless thinking to know the truth, and yet, to set your mind against believing it. The natural progression of the one, who has denied the existence of The One True God due to senseless thinking, is to find a substitute for Him that is more to their liking.

Substitute Theology

"Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles."
Romans 1:22-23

Idolatry. It is exchanging the truth that we do not want to accept, for a lie that we like better. Simple as that. It is to substitute false theology in place of true theology. In the days of the *Old Testament*, people would actually carve for themselves a god out of wood or stone and then invent ways to placate it. What a pathetic, not to mention demonic, substitute for the God of the universe! This practice continued even into Paul's day, for Rome was filled with many pagan gods that were faithfully worshipped by their deluded followers.

Paul states that those who choose to do this proclaim themselves to be wise, but in truth, they are "fools". The word that he uses here is the origin of our word "*moron*". Only a moron would substitute what is false for that which is real. But people do it every day.

In modern times, there is less "carving" of idols, but idolatry is ever increasing nonetheless. People have substituted their own greed, for example, rather than serving God, as well as, countless other sensual pleasures. Idolatry has always been, and shall always be, about one thing, and one thing only...SELF. People reject the God of scripture for one that is more to their own liking. They worship the idol that most agrees with how they want to live their lives.

Another way that idolatry has advanced into the 21st century is through various cults and false religions. Scientology, Mormonism, The Jehovah's Witness, Islam, Buddhism, and even Satan worship, have found their way into the hearts of the deceived. There are so many false gods out there to choose from. And in every case, it is because a theology has been invented that is more to the liking of its followers. We must share the truth with any who will listen, for it is only the truth that can set men free and save them from the coming wrath.

And finally, the ultimate in senseless reasoning and substitute theology; the theory of evolution, which basically teaches that everything we see, touch, hear, taste and smell for that matter, is a result of some cosmic accident. First there was nothing, and then... IT exploded, creating everything in the universe. What a perfect example of those "claiming to be wise" actually becoming fools. Seriously, it takes more faith to believe that nonsense than to believe the truth. This is just one of many replacement theologies that are invented by those who suppress the truth, so that they can feel free to live as they choose.

Finally, have you ever thought about why Jesus died and rose again in the spring of the year? Think about it. This planet is designed so that everything dies in the winter and comes to life again in the springtime. Even the seasons are a constant reminder of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ! For it is Jesus, and His gospel, that are the only hope for mankind.

Have you ever stopped to think about the moon? It is perfectly placed so that it controls the tides, and even in ancient days, people could use its cycles to measure time. Evolutionists will tell us that this perfectly placed creation that orbits our planet was a result of some random explosion of matter. How is that possible? Do you know why the moon is lightly colored with grayish sand? So that it can reflect the rays of the sun and give light in the darkness. Did you realize that this is a picture of what The Church is to the darkened world around us? We are to reflect the "light of The Son" to a lost and dying world that is in perpetual darkness. The moon gets all its light from the sun, just as we get all of ours from The SON. So you see, God has placed around us, and within us, what we need to seek and find Him, if we are only willing to accept the truth. The question is... do you believe? If you will only place your faith in Jesus, then you will be spared the wrath that is coming upon the disobedient. Reject Him, and you are condemned already, and God's wrath remains upon you. You will stand before God having no excuse for your unbelief. Do not turn away from the truth! Surrender yourself to Christ and see the righteousness of God being revealed... in you!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!