

Romans Chapter 1F

One of the benefits of growing up in the City of Philadelphia, receiving an education in the Philadelphia Public School System was the great access that it provided to all of the wonderful museums and historic sites that were spread throughout the city.

- I remember my first visit to the Franklyn Institute where I encountered that massive 4 ton, 5,000 square foot, engine of life exhibit featuring a walk-through human heart. (which first opened in 1954)
- As a second grader, having very little understanding of human anatomy that massive heart seemed more like a haunted house than a part of my body and the teacher had to literally push me through the exhibit.
- Inside the heart it was dark and eerie, and the sound of blood flowing along with that constant beating made me close my eyes and hang on to another student for dear life! Friends, that was a traumatic experience.

This morning as we turn the page in our study of the Book of Romans to the 18th verse of the 1st chapter we come to a new section, a new division, a new topic in our Study.

- Much like my visit to the Franklyn Institute this portion of Paul's letter to the Romans contains a tour of the human heart and to be honest, it's just as frightening as when I was in second grade.
- Remember the words of the Prophet Jeremiah who said:

Jeremiah 17:9 **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?** Paul would agree with Jeremiah; the heart is deceitfully wicked!

Looking at the context of Romans One:

After explaining the glory of the Gospel and God's gracious Gift of righteousness in verses 16 – 17, Paul moves on to expose the sinful heart of man and the resultant wrath of God in Romans 1:18 all the way through Chapter 3 verse 20.

- Beginning here in Verse 18, running through the end of Ch. 1 Paul speaks of the sinful condition of the Gentiles.
- Then in Romans 2:1–3:8, Paul explains that the condition of the Jews is no better than that of the Gentiles. They are both wholly given over to sin.

Finally in Chapter 3:9–10 Paul draws a conclusion when he says: **“What then? Are we [Jews] better than the gentiles? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one.’”**

My Friends, that's the point of Romans 1:18–3:20, All of humanity stands guilty of rebellion against God their gracious creator.

As we will see in the weeks to come Paul wraps up this important section on the sinful condition, or depravity of man with a summary in Romans 3:19:

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

- The evidence that Paul lays out for the sinful condition of man in these next two chapters is so powerfully convicting that there can literally be no rebuttal. All of mankind is lost, in the bondage of sin.
- Now, before we move on and dig into the text, I want you to know that:

The topic of sin is not popular today, even in the church. People blatantly reject the Biblical truth that they're sinners. ANY supposed malady within man is not his fault, instead, we are convinced that Man is simply the product of His environment.

- If only he Could have a better education, If only he had better parents, If only he would have grown up in a different neighborhood, He wouldn't have these problems.

But Friends, Rather than being the Root Cause of man's problems, the deterioration of the family, the failure of education and the corruption of society are the Fruit and not the Root of man's depraved condition. From a Biblical point of view, the continual rise of violence and the decline in morals serve as evidence of God's just and holy wrath that is being revealed in a Christ rejecting world. BUT:

- When God in his mercy, uncovers the corruption of the heart and the deep infection of sin that has inflamed the soul, WHEN the Gospel reaches deep into the heart of a man, it brings a cleansing, a healing that brings new life.

Let me give you an illustration: Remember a few months ago I fell on the steps leading up to the platform on a Sunday morning and had to be taken to the hospital.

- After they x-rayed my knee and made sure there were no broken bones the doctor proceeded to open the wound in order to remove the fibers from the rug and wash it thoroughly so that it wouldn't become infected.
- I am thankful for the wonderful anesthetics that I received that day.
- Certainly, the cleansing of a deep wound is a painful experience. Nevertheless the pain of digging, scrubbing and debriding the wound was worth the outcome.
- My knee never got infected.
- In a similar way the Word of God reaches deep into the soul of man exposing and cleansing every trace of sin, applying the healing balm of Christ. 2 - soul

As we open our Bibles to Romans 1:18 the first thing I would like you to consider is the Connection between verses 17 and 18. Verse 18 begins with the word "FOR." That little word connects God's gracious gift of righteousness with man's depraved condition and desperate need. Let's read it:

Romans 1: 17 **For in it (in the Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."** 18 **For the wrath of God is**

revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Everything Paul is going to say about sin in 1:18 through 3:20 is meant to support the gospel that he summarized for us in Vs 16-17 and to exalt God's gracious gift of righteousness.

Teaching this portion of Romans John Piper said:

“Paul does not mention the gospel for the sake of sin. He deals with sin for the sake of the gospel. Understanding sin is the foundation that upholds the preciousness of the gospel, not vice versa. His main aim is not to lead us from gospel to sin, but from sin to gospel.”

We need the gospel OF Romans 1:16–17, we need the revelation of God's righteousness, because the wrath of God is even now being revealed it is being poured out on the world of ungodliness and unrighteousness.

- There is a second connection between Verse 17 and Verse 18 which can be found in the word “**Revealed.**”
- Through the proclamation of the Gospel the gift of God's righteousness is being revealed from faith for faith.
- But there is another revelation, that Paul points out here in verse 18, it is a revelation of God's wrath coming from heaven into the lives of those who reject the truth in unrighteousness.

And I would like you to See that the revelation of God's righteousness and the revelation of God's wrath share a few things in common.

- First, the full realization of God's righteousness and the full measure of His wrath are awaiting the final day when Christ shall return in glory.
- Nevertheless, there is a present-day revelation, an ongoing realization of God's righteousness in the lives of the redeemed who are being changed into his image.
- In the same way there is a present-day experience of, an ongoing realization of God's wrath which is taking place in the lives of the unbelieving.

In a similar way that the redeemed children of God are being transformed into the image of God, the reprobate, those who reject the Gospel are also being transformed but their change is moving in the opposite direction. Paul tells us that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven and that wrath is working in the reprobate a growing distortion of the image of God.

Here in Romans 1:18-20 we find three important concepts that explain WHY the wrath of God that is presently being revealed is justified.

- IN vs 18 Paul tells us that the wrath of God is justified because men are ungodly and unrighteous.

- Then Paul Validates the wrath of God by pointing to the wicked way that men suppress the truth of God.
- Finally, to be clear, the truth that is suppressed by sinful men is the revelation of God that he has provided through creation.

I think it may be helpful for us to study these concepts in the reverse order. God has revealed himself to man in such a way that man should respond in worship and adoration. However, instead of honoring God as the creator, sinful men resist or suppress the truth of God and refuse to give him glory. This willful and immoral suppression of the truth results in the wrath of God being visited upon man.

1. Revelation
2. Suppression
3. Wrath

Revelation

Paul tells us that God is justified in his wrath against sinful men because he has clearly revealed himself, his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, to all men through the things He has made.

- IN a similar way that A Magnificently Designed Building stands as a testimony to the existence and brilliance of the architect, so the Majesty of God's Creation effectively communicates the existence and the glory of our divine creator.
- Now I want you to understand that the revelation of God in creation is part of what we call general revelation.

Theologians separate the revelation of God into two categories, we know them as General and Special Revelation.

- Here in Romans 1 Paul refers to General revelation.
- And general revelation is exactly that, it is general. It is general in its scope; that is, it reaches to all people; It is general in geography; that is, it encompasses the entire globe It is general in its methodology; that is, it employs universal means like the wonder of creation and the pangs of conscience to reveal God's invisible attributes and His divine nature to every man.
- But Special Revelation is that clear and concise revelation of God that comes to us by the Holy Spirit, through the pages of Scripture.
- Again, the revelation that Paul is speaking of here in Romans 1 is General revelation. Let's read verses 19-20.

Romans 1: 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

- When Paul says, “*What CAN be known about God*” it could be rendered “That which is knowable” obviously finite man cannot know everything there is to know about the infinite God. Paul’s Point is that which we Can know about God Apart from special revelation is clearly known by all men.
- Paul tells us that, through his creation God made plain His invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature. They have been Clearly Perceived, Literally they are understood, they apprehend by all men through the things that God has made.
- When we look for supporting Scriptures, we turn to Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* 2 *Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.* 3 *There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.*

- The witness of the solar system IS constantly before us, ever communicating, continually pointing us toward its divine architect.

David tells us that the voice of God in creation is pervasive.

4 *Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun,* 5 *which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.* 6 *Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

IN verse 20 Paul tells us: Because God has made himself known through the material creation, Man is without excuse. IN essence He is saying there is no such thing as a true agnostic! When someone tells you he is an Agnostic, You can respectfully tell him that’s not possible!

- Every human being has been given a knowledge of God that is sufficient to comprehend certain aspects of his divine being.
- Consider the vastness of the universe, the uniqueness of earth’s atmosphere specifically designed to support the life of men who were created in the image of God.
- Then consider the intricacies of molecular structure, the design of DNA. The Complex Design of the material creation demands a divine architect.

You may encounter a few Whitty individuals As you attempt to share the Gospel who ask:

“What happens to those poor innocent natives in Africa? And what about the man on the island who has never heard of Jesus Christ? Surely God will not send those poor people who have never heard the Gospel to hell.

- When that happens, you can point them (carefully, lovingly) to Romans 1:
- And show them that according to Paul every human being possesses a knowledge of God through the things He has created and every man has a conscience. Therefore every man who has ever lived is accountable to God.

The question is this; what do men do with the revelation of God that he has provided through creation and conscience??

- The answer is found in Vs 18 and that brings us to our 2nd point.

2nd Point Suppression.

Romans 1: 18 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.**

What attracts God's wrath, what draws his just and righteous anger is the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

- This term "**Ungodliness**" depicts a lack of reverence or a disregard for God.
- And the term "**Unrighteousness**" refers to the blatant contempt for our fellow man who was created in the image of God.
- These two terms should remind us of the two tablets of the Law which describe man's vertical relationship with God and the corresponding horizontal relationships with his fellow man.
- In essence this points to the fact that sin is lawlessness. Those who are given to ungodliness and unrighteousness are those who break the two great commandments. To love God and to love our neighbor. (Mark 12:29-31)

This dynamic duo of lawlessness in sinful man, this love for darkness causes men to suppress the truth OF God that is revealed in creation and conscience.

- This Greek the word that is translated "**Suppress**" can mean to hold, to hold fast, to hold back to restrain or repress.
- IN a positive sense Paul exhorts the believers in Philippi to, "**Hold fast to the word of life.**"
- BUT Here in a negative sense the word means to suppress, to press or hold down the revealed truth of God.

The general revelation of God imposes a certain pressure on man, His conscience is painfully aware of that pressure and either consciously or subconsciously He begins to push back, His sinful nature resists the revelation of God because He loves darkness rather than light.

Charles Hodges writes: "*It is not of a mere external revelation of which the apostle is speaking, but of that evidence of the being and perfections of God which every man has in the constitution of his own nature, and in virtue of what he is competent to apprehend the manifestation of God in his work.*"

John Calvin "*We are blind to God's revelation but Not So Blind that we can plead ignorance without being convicted of perversity.*"

Think about this: Suppose you are driving down the street and you come to a sign that says, “**Detour – Turn Left.**” BUT you ignore the sign and keep on driving. Well it just so happens that a Police officer is following you down the street and he saw you blow past the Detour sign. He gets out of the car and asks, “**Didn’t you see that large Orange and Yellow sign that said “Detour?”**”

- You saw the sign, but you decided to suppress the truth in knowledge.
- NOW if you are like me, even if there wasn’t an officer present, the moment you passed the sign there would be a heavy weight of conviction that you would be forced to resist with an equal and opposing force of rebellion.

You see, whenever the truth begins to exert itself in the mind or conscience of a man, making him feel uneasy, he has to forcefully resist the truth in unrighteousness.

- My friend, if you are going to be honest with yourself, you have to admit, this practice of resisting the truth of God is an ongoing part of your sinful flesh.
- And because of this, the wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven.

Final Point – Let’s try to understand the Wrath of God

Some of the more modern paraphrases of the Bible use the word “**Anger**” here in verse 18 but a better translation of the original word is Wrath.

- God’s Righteous Response to sinful man’s suppression of the truth is not the anger of an emotional person, rather it is the just and necessary response of a Holy God to the Sin of Man.
- The word that is translated wrath is “Orge” and it refers to a settled, determined indignation and not to the momentary, emotional, out of control anger that we human beings are so prone to express.
- God’s wrath is always righteous, his judgments are always true. He doesn’t fly off the handle in a moment like we do.
- All of God’s Divine attributes exist together in a unity of perfection. If God had no righteous anger or wrath he would not be God, just as surely as he would not be God without his gracious love. His love for righteousness and hatred of evil are both essential aspects of his divine nature.
- The Scripture both the Old and New Testaments provide continual warnings with regard to the wrath of God. Let’s look at Psalm 2

Psalm 2:1 **Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 6 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."**

- God's righteous response to the pride and rebellion of man is one of wrath and yet as you can see in Vs 6, even IN wrath He still points sinful men to Christ the King and redeemer.
- The fear of God should bring wisdom and the reality of his wrath should drive us to Christ. Look at verse 11 of Psalm 2.

Psalm 2: 11 **Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.** 12 **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

- As we bring our time together to a close this morning let me ask you one more question: Is Wrath God's only response to the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?
- The answer to that question is: NO — neither in the case of unbelievers or believers.
- Take the case of unbelievers. Wrath in this present age is mingled with mercy. Jump ahead to Romans 2:

Romans 2: 4 **Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?** 5 **But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**

- It is an amazing expression of God's mercy that sinners, like me and you aren't immediately consumed by the Wrath of God in the moment of our rebellion.
- God is Patient BUT we should not presume upon His patience. Our continued hardness of heart is storing up wrath like the waters of a mighty river being held back by a powerful dam.
- The question is this, How long can the dam hold???
- The mercy and patience of God is meant to lead you to repentance.

Acts 17: 30 **The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,** 31 **because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."**

As we continue studying Ch 1 next week YOU will see how God's wrath is, even now being revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

- If you are here this morning and you have never repented of your sins and trusted in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the full and complete payment for your sins, I would urge you to fall on your face before him today and cry out for the cleansing, the washing that only HE can provide.
- Don't suppose that the mercy you are presently experiencing will go on forever.