

## EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

### Message #6

### Romans 1:18-20

When it comes to God, most people want a God who is happy and loving. In fact, most people want a Gospel that is happy and loving. Many people want a God that will just overlook sin and be a big happy God who will love everyone and let everyone live with Him. However, this is not a true picture of the God of the Bible and it is certainly not a true perspective of the Gospel of God. In fact, as Dr. Arthur Pink observed, "...there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness" (*The Attributes of God*, p. 82).

When Paul begins his discussion concerning the Gospel of God, he begins with a discussion of the wrath of God. This is anything but a love Gospel. The first pressure Paul puts on lost humanity is the pressure of God's wrath. The threat of eternal damnation and condemnation is the first reason Paul presents for people to come to Christ. True preaching of the Gospel of God will proclaim the wrath of God.

Now you will notice that **verse 18** begins with a conjunction "for" (gar). This conjunction really presents the reason why men had better believe on Jesus Christ to receive the righteousness of God because if they don't, they will face the fierce wrath of God.

In Greek, there are two words (θυμος, οργη) used in connection with the wrath of God. The difference between the two seems to be that one is more passionate and emotional (θυμος) and the other is more volitional and dispositional in that it intentionally inclines itself to wrath (οργη). The one used here is the second word (οργη) which means if you do not have the righteousness of God that is found by faith in Jesus Christ, God's calculated thought toward you is an intentional wrath. His disposition against you is one of wrath (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 210, 322). Paul's point is this:

**IN ORDER FOR ANY SINNER TO BE SAVED FROM GOD'S WRATH, HE MUST RECEIVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THAT IS ONLY FOUND BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.**

**Verse 18** begins a section in Romans that runs from 1:18-3:20. The theme of this section is very unpopular - namely "all mankind stands guilty and condemned before God."

Donald Grey Barnhouse called this section, "...the charge of the prosecution in the case against man."

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson entitled his exposition on this section, "All mankind on Death Row."

In this section, God is the judge and jury and according to Him, every human being stands guilty and condemned and is heading toward His wrath. It makes no difference if one is moral or immoral, religious or non-religious, Jew or Gentile - all are guilty and all are heading for His wrath.

**WRATH TRUTH #1** – God’s wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. **1:18a**

The word “ungodliness” is one that refers to an impiety that is profane and ungodly (Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 63). The word “unrighteousness” refers to wicked acts that are unrighteous (Ibid., p. 9). We have all done ungodly wicked things.

Because of this, Paul is saying, God’s wrath is aimed straight at every human being. The present, passive verb indicates God’s wrath is continually being revealed by God. How? Does this mean God’s wrath is continually being revealed to the ungodly person’s mind? Or does this mean God’s wrath is continually being revealed in history?

There is not a person on this earth who deep in his mind and heart does not know he is heading for the judgment of God. There is no question that ungodly and unrighteous people know deep down inside they are heading to a judgment of God. In fact, there have been documented instances where some of the worst God-mockers who ever lived still knew they were heading to the judgment of God. William Pope who died in 1797, who is said to have been a leader of God-mockers who used to kick the Bible and tear it up in mockery, died crying in mockery and terror. He said: “I have no contrition. I cannot repent. God will damn me. Nothing for me but hell.” He tried to dismiss God from all of his thinking all of his life but he still knew in the end that he was heading to the wrath of God (Herbert Lockyer, *Last Words of Saints and Sinners*, p. 132).

Make no mistake about it - God has “fixed a day in which He will judge the world” (Acts 17:31). God is a God who will “inflict wrath” (Romans 3:5).

**WRATH TRUTH #2** – God’s wrath is revealed against all who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. **1:18b**

The word “suppress” means to restrain or suppress. There are those who sense they will face the wrath of God, who continue to hold fast to their sin and suppress the reality of God’s judgment (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 241). What is “the truth” they suppress? The truth that they are an ungodly, unrighteous sinner who is heading to God’s deserved wrath.

Unrighteousness can have such a hold on man that he has the tendency to suppress the convicting truth of God and hold on to his unrighteousness.

**WRATH TRUTH #3** – God’s wrath is known by all people because God has made it evident to them. **1:19**

The word “manifest” lets us know that God has made visible and clear to every human that He is God and He will judge and He will send His wrath. Now you will carefully notice that God has made this evident “within” them and “to” them.

God has revealed specific knowledge of Himself to the mind and conscience and heart of every human being. It is the most natural thing in all of the world to acknowledge God.

**What this means is that an atheist is not an atheist because he lacks knowledge of God, but because he doesn't want to think about future judgment. In all reality, he is trying to dismiss the thought of judgment from his mind because knowledge of God is already in his mind. But you may know that every atheist about to die will have God on his mind.**

Inside every human being is the knowledge of God and the knowledge of some future coming judgment .

Now **verse 20** further explains (explanatory conjunction “for”) what God has put within man. God has made evident certain things about Himself that leave men with absolutely no excuse for not acknowledging Him.

It is not that the wrath of God is only stored up for the future , but it is revealed in the present :

**(Reality #1) - God reveals knowledge of His coming judgment . 1:18-19**

As we have already observed, deep in the hearts and minds of every human being is the knowledge of future judgment . Even the worst heathens know deep in their hearts that they will face God .

Every time you read an obituary or attend a funeral you come face to face with the reality of the judgment of God because death is a judgment penalty for sin, and since all have sinned, no one escapes it.

**(Reality #2) - God reveals knowledge of His eternal power . 1:20a**

This is a reference to God's omnipotence , God's might and God's strength . God has demonstrated His eternal power since the creation of the world. **God exists, man knows it, and creation proves it.** James Montgomery Boice said, “There is enough evidence in a flower to lead a child and a scientist to worship Him” (*Romans*, Vol. 1, p. 143).

**(Reality #3) - God reveals knowledge of His deity . 1:20b**

God has placed within every human being a sense of His divine nature, perfection, and ability. **Notice carefully from this text, knowledge of God is not just seen, it is “clearly seen” by every human in their minds.** The Greek means every human has clear discernment of God (Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 224).

The present tense of the participle “being understood” indicates that man lives with a continual awareness of the existence of a powerful, invisible God. Look at the intricacy of the human body, the atmosphere, laws of physics and nature. Do these not testify of the Divine Nature of God? Who programmed your brain?

It makes no difference if the person is a brilliant scholar or an uneducated native; no person will be able to say, “I had no knowledge of God.”

God has put within every human a knowledge of His power and His existence and His judgment. He has given enough knowledge to every human being that “they are without . excuse.”

The words “without excuse” is a forensic term which means when a human being gets before God, God has given enough intuitive knowledge within that human being to judicially condemn him for not responding.

There is only one way that you can escape God’s wrath on the day you face Him and that is to have a moment in your life when you believed totally on Jesus Christ for your salvation. You cannot ever be right with God by your works. Man can only be justified by faith - “The just shall live by faith.”

It has been said that one fragment of a verse of Scripture ripped into the soul of John Wesley. The verse was Zechariah 3:2, which says, “Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” Unless you have the righteousness of God, you are heading to the eternal fire of God. There is only one Person who can give you the righteousness of God that will keep you from the fire and that Person is Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and you shall be saved from God’s wrath!