

Subject: *Reasons for God's Wrath*

Scripture: *Romans 1:18-25*

In this message I want to answer some questions:

- Is it right to think of God as being angry?
- Why is God angry?
- Is it fair for God to be angry with people who worship other gods?
- How can we escape God's anger?

We can find answers to these questions in the Bible. A good place to look is Romans 1. In this first chapter of Romans Paul introduces his main theme: the gospel.

Vs. 1 – the gospel of God

Vs. 9 – the gospel of His Son

Vs. 15 – Paul is ready to preach the gospel in Rome

Vs. 16 – Paul is not ashamed of the gospel

Vs. 17 – the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel

Then in verse 18, Paul mentions the wrath of God. What does that have to do with the gospel? To appreciate the good news of salvation in Christ we must first understand the bad news of sin and the wrath of God against sin. So beginning in verse 18 through Romans 3, Paul describes the terrible plague of sin and how it has affected every person in the world. First, Paul shows that all Gentiles or heathen people are sinners who deserve His wrath. Next, Paul shows that all Jewish people are sinners who deserve His wrath. Finally, in Romans 3 Paul concludes that all people everywhere are sinners who deserve God's wrath.

In the Middle Ages there was a terrible plague called the Black Death. It swept through the continent of Europe so that in just three years (1348-1350), more than one third of the population died. There is a plague far worse that has infected our planet. It is the plague of sin, and Paul begins by telling us the bad news that all people have sinned and deserve the wrath of God. People today don't want to hear this. They never have.

One of the leading voices of liberal Christianity in the 1900s was Harry Emerson Fosdick. He wrote a book about the Bible in which he stated his views: "Primitive man had a devilish view of God. Noah's God destroyed the earth with a flood. Abraham's God was a bloodthirsty God who wanted human sacrifice. The God of Moses was the horrible God of volcanic fire, speaking to him from Mt. Sinai. Little by little man has advanced as the centuries rolled on. David began to have high ethical thoughts of God, but they were mixed with the terrible imprecatory psalms that call down wrath upon the enemy. By the time of the prophets, God was really improving. He now hated unrighteousness and spoke out against the crimes committed by man. When Jesus came along, the idea of God took on the marvelous concepts of fatherhood and brotherhood, but Jesus also had the repugnant idea of Hell." Fosdick's words reflect much of the thinking of the modern world, both inside and outside of the church: a loving God cannot be a God of judgment or Hell. Enlightened man is now discarding these backward ideas.

This same kind of thinking came from the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, who wrote a book, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, in which he stated:

“There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ’s moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.”

The Bible speaks of the wrath or anger of God. The word wrath does not mean uncontrolled rage or temper. It is the Greek word *orge*, which means a settled, controlled, consistent attitude of hatred and outrage against sin. The wrath of God is the counterpart of the righteousness of God (vs. 17). God’s wrath is directed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God’s wrath is perfectly compatible with who God is. He is the perfectly holy and righteous God who cannot hate sin and must punish it.

Paul gives three reasons why God has a right to be angry:

- 1) The truth about God has been revealed
- 2) The truth about God has been rejected
- 3) The truth about God has been replaced.

1. The truth about God has been revealed

***Psalms 19:1-3**¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.³ There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

God reveals the truth about Himself through His creation. He reveals His eternal power and His divine nature. This message about God is available to everyone everywhere on the planet.

In verses 19-20, Paul said that God has given us clear truth about Himself since the week of creation. God is invisible, but we can understand Him from the visible world around us.

2. The truth about God has been rejected

Verse 18 states that ungodly people suppress or hold down the truth about God. This refers to the continual and aggressive striving against the truth.

Although God reveals Himself in creation, people refuse to glorify Him and thank Him. People reject what they could know about God and their foolish hearts are darkened. This is a terrifying reality. God gives us the light of truth, but when we reject that truth, we have greater darkness. People profess that they are wise, but they are fools (from Greek, *moros*, from which we get our word moron). It is not a mental problem, but a moral problem. In the beginning man had the light of truth, but he rejected it and plunged into darkness. Contrary to what most people believe, man was not originally in darkness and gradually became more enlightened with knowledge about God. Since the days of Adam and Eve all people have known some truth about the one true God.

3. The truth about God has been replaced

Verse 23 says they changed (exchanged) the glory of the incorruptible God into an image (like a man, a bird, an animal, or reptile). This is the history of idolatry from ancient times until the present day. Verse 25 says they changed (exchanged) the truth of God (truth about God) into a lie (false idea about God). They worshiped and served the creature rather than the

Creator. Verse 20 says that people who reject what God has revealed about Himself and then replace the one true God with idols are “without excuse.”

When people reject God and replace Him with gods of their own making then that leads to a perverted lifestyle. In the last part of Romans 1, we see this phrase three times: “God gave them up (over).” That refers to the consequences of sin or what we might call the results of God’s wrath. We will look at that next time.

Now I want to answer the question I mentioned at the beginning:

How can we escape God’s anger?

Romans 3:23-25 ²³ *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* ²⁴ *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:* ²⁵ *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*

Propitiation means a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God and turns His wrath away from sinners.

Romans 5:9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*