

Romans 1:18-32

“God’s Wrath Revealed”

We’ve just come off of one of the summit peaks of scripture, though all scripture is inspired, insightful and exciting as a whole, there *are* various places that seem to engage us and impact us more than others, and certainly Romans Ch 1 vs 16-17 is one of those places. For it’s there that Paul declares, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’*” Rom 1:16-17 and As we began to tap into that last week we discovered that there’s enough insight there to keep us occupied for quite sometime, the gospel doesn’t *contain* the power of God, it isn’t a message *about* the power of God, it *is* the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. That is, believes in Jesus Christ and the work that He’s done on our behalf, for the forgiveness of sins. We find there that God’s *righteousness* is revealed in the gospel, from faith to faith. From beginning to end it’s all about faith, trusting in, believing upon Christ, as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

It’s just a powerfully impacting portion of scripture, and you’d think that having hit such a high note, that Paul would ride this thing out for awhile, exposit, expound on the fullness of what that means to you and to me. But the Holy Spirit is much wiser than that, absolutely the gospel is good news, but in order for the good news to take root, to be appreciated or sought after, you need to understand the bad news. It’s as if he begins with the teaser trailer, “What God has done for you in the person of Jesus Christ!” But then he immediately stops to illustrate, to demonstrate the *reason* we needed God to do that work and why it is we need to *respond* to that work. So as Paul reaches the summit he shifts gears, he immediately turns and plummets off the side of the cliff diving headlong into the depths of the depravity of man. 1st He took out the diamond of the gospel and God’s righteousness that’s revealed therein, and now he pulls out the black cloth of man’s sin to lay it up against.

I’d like to tell you that when vs 18-32 have been gone through we’ll be out of that section, but Paul continues hammering home his point, proving unequivocally the guilt of all of mankind before a holy and righteous God all the way through vs 20 of ch 3.! So for the next few weeks we’ll be swimming around in the toxic soup of the sin and unrighteousness of man. But by the time he’s finished it’s “Case Closed.” All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, there are none that are righteous, no not one, there are none who do good, there are none who seek after God, destruction and misery are in their ways and the way of peace they have not known. But don’t let that run you off, stick around and soak it up, and do me a favor don’t sit through these studies thinking, “I’m sure glad my husband came today!” Or, “Man I know someone who needs to hear this bad!” But rather receive what it is that God has for *you*, because in the end, an honest evaluation of what’s before us in the light of what Christ has *done* for us will cause you to love Jesus more. Because as we read through this list of sin towards the end of the ch, we’re all in there somewhere, that’s the point.

It's not just about what Christ *can do* for them, but what Christ *has done for you*. An honest concession/confession of that will translate into your life as a deeper love for Jesus, that's the principle that Jesus taught Simon the Pharisee there in Luke ch 7.

That the one who's forgiven much, loves much. and The idea there isn't that some have sinned more than others, but that some are more cognizant or aware of the sin that they've been forgiven. We are all sinners equally in the sight of God, but there are some who are more aware of their sin than others, Jesus said that the one who's aware of the magnitude of forgiveness that God has granted them in Christ, are the ones who love Him more.

So may God remind us of the magnitude of His forgiveness toward our lives over these next few weeks as we survey this portion of scripture, that we might get a flavor for the flow lets read through vs 25, then we'll come back.

Vs18-25

So as you can see in vs 18 Paul takes a dynamic turn in a different direction and sort of pulls back the curtain in such a way as to show us a side of God that perhaps we didn't want to see and certainly don't like to talk about. We'd prefer to think of God as nothing but nice, looking down on the earth with an ever present smile with respect to everything that's going on. We'd prefer to think that God's motto isn't "Holiness unto the Lord" but rather "Kay syrah syrah" "Whatever will be will be." We like to think that we can live however we want and in the end we all go to Heaven, that God winks at sin as if to say, "Hey everybody makes mistakes, so go ahead and do what you need to do it's all going to work out." But that isn't the God of the bible, perhaps we wish it were, but all the wishing in the world isn't going to change the reality that God is not only a God of grace, and mercy, and love, but that He's also a Holy God, a God who judges sin, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. A very simple yet sobering thought, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the human race, and quite frankly we deserve it. People sometimes want to think of the God of the OT as a God of wrath, but the God of the NT is a God of grace, but here's the news flash, there's only one God. and His love for man and attitude towards sin has never changed, we read in Mal 3:6, "*I am the LORD, I do not change;*" The NT equivalent is found in Heb 13:8 "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" So God has *always* loved mankind, and *always* hated sin, and the wrath of God is simply the natural disposition of God against sin, someone once described God's wrath as "Holiness stirred into action." God's holiness demands a reaction to the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Now sometimes we struggle with the idea of God's wrath because we liken it to human anger. Perhaps you remember speaking of the fact that we can sometimes begin to think of God as egotistical when we think of how He desires our praise, or our worship. But that's because we're projecting our fallen humanity on a perfect and holy God whose very nature is other's oriented. But because our ego swells when someone speaks highly of us we think God's must as well, faulty logic. Same thing as it pertains to the wrath of God, because *our* wrath, or our anger would be motivated by a vindictive self-centered motives, we project those same intentions upon God. Not so, God's wrath isn't a momentary emotional uncontrolled outburst, a "venting" such as you and I are prone to, His attributes are balanced in Divine perfection, and just as perfect as is His love, so to His hatred, perfectly loving righteousness, perfectly hating evil/sin. and If God doesn't deal with the sin issue, He can't be Holy and righteous. So to grasp the full orb of the gospel man needs to know, born in sin we're under the heavy hand of condemnation, but the good news is that the gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.

Now we see 2 terms here in vs 18, similar in one respect, but distinctly different in another, so that if only one term is used, it includes by default the other. I can't be godly, yet be unrighteous, nor can I be truly righteous but simultaneously be ungodly. So in that respect they overlap one another. But there *is* a difference between ungodliness and unrighteousness. When Moses came down from Mt Sinai he had in his hand 2 tablets of stone, upon them written the 10 commandments, on the one tablet was law pertaining to man's relationship to God. I.E. "You shall have no other gods before Me" "You shall not make any carved images to bow down to them." "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy."

Now we realize that Christ is our perpetual Sabbath and we find rest in Him so that the NT releases us from the literal keeping of the Sabbath. But to violate my relationship with God constitutes ungodliness. On the other tablet was law pertaining to man's relationship to his fellow man. I.E. "Honor your father and your mother" "You shall not commit murder" "You shall not commit adultery" "You shall not steal" "You shall not bear false witness" "You shall not covet" when I violate my relationship with my fellow man, that constitutes unrighteousness. Both of which (ungodliness, and unrighteousness) invoke God's wrath, and these 2 things cover the full gambit of our sin. We sin against God, and we sin against people, remember Jesus boiled down the whole of the law in 2 commandments. A lawyer came to Him one day and asked Him which commandment was the greatest; Jesus responded to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" *This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*" Matt 22:37-40

The order is significant because my relationship with God dictates my relationship to man, if I'm rightly related to God, I'll treat people properly, if I'm not right with God I won't

respect mankind, or be rightly related to mankind. So the essence of all the problems we see around us scream to us of the fact that as a society we're not right with God. If we were right with God this portion of Romans wouldn't exist, there'd be no murder, no rape, no selfish ambitions, violence, maliciousness, immorality and the like. But because we as humanity are not right with God, we're don't have proper perspective towards one another.

That's the gist of what Paul is dealing with here, ungodliness Vs18-25, unrighteousness Vs 26-32. But before we move on you need to see this other phrase here in vs 18 in regards to all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Notice that they, "Suppress the truth in unrighteousness." That word "Suppress" or "hold" is very important, used of a helmsman who is steering a boat against the current. What that means is that the current is naturally wanting to take the boat a certain direction. But not wanting to follow that direction the helmsman suppresses, or holds the rudder in such a way as to force the boat against the current so that he might go the direction *he* desires rather than the way he would go if he just allowed the current to take him there. So what this is saying is that the wrath of God is revealed against those who purpose and are determined to go their own way as opposed to what they know to be true. and What Paul is developing here is the fact that all of mankind knows there's a God by both an interior and an exterior witness that you have to purpose to go against to go your own direction, therefore all of mankind stands accountable before God for going their own way as opposed to the way they know to be true.

Vs19

Now the words "in them" might be also translated "among them" but either way it holds true, God has placed a witness of Himself in the *conscience* of every man and even if this isn't referring to that here, ch 2 will cover that aspect. The other aspect of God's witness of Himself to man is found in *creation*, so through both the *conscience of* man and the *creation around* man, God has made Himself known *to* man, notice.

Vs20-21

You have to forcefully turn a blind eye to the enormity, creativity, and complexity of the world around you to come to the conclusion that there's no God. Creation itself cries out, testifying at least 2 things about our Creator, see them there in vs 20, #1 His power, #2 His person, His invisible attributes are clearly seen (I love that paradox,) it's like the words "Bittersweet" "Invisible attributes, clearly seen."

How? Through creation, creation around you clearly portrays the power of God, and the *person* of God. John MacArthur says at this point, "God's natural revelation of Himself is not obscure or selective, observable only by a few perceptive souls who are specially gifted. His revelation of Himself through creation can be **clearly seen** by everyone, **being understood through what has been made.**"

Time will forbid us to get into the enormity of creation, or the complexities of creation, or the creativity, the unique creatures that have been created. But consider this briefly, "The US. Natural Museum has determined that there are at least 10 million species of insects, including

some 2,500 varieties of ants. There are about 5 billion birds in the United States, among which some species are able to fly 500 miles non-stop across the Gulf of Mexico. Mallard ducks can fly 60 miles an hour, eagles 100 miles an hour, and falcons can dive at speeds of 180 miles an hour. The earth is 25,000 miles in circumference, weighs 6 septillion, 588 sextillion tons, and hangs unsupported in space. It spins at 1,000 miles per hour with absolute precision and careens through space around the sun at the speed of 1,000 miles per minute in an orbit 580 million miles long. The head of a comet may be from 10,000 to 1,000,000 miles long, have a tail 100,000,000 miles long, and travel at a speed of 350 miles per second. If the sun's radiated energy could be converted into horsepower, it would be the equivalent of 500 million, million, billion horsepower. Each second it consumes some 4 million tons of matter. To travel at the speed of light (ca. 186,281 miles per second) across the Milky Way, the galaxy in which our solar system is located, would take 125,000 years. And our galaxy is but one of millions." MacArthur pg 80 Roman's 1-8 Is it any wonder that David said, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.*" Ps 19:1-4

Of course the pinnacle of God's creation is man himself, created in the very image of God, and you don't have to get too far into the complexities of the human frame to come to the point where you have to forcibly turn a blind eye to the impossibility of existence outside of the carefully calculated precision work of an omnipotent, omniscient Creator. God's not hiding Himself from mankind; He's revealing Himself *to* mankind everywhere. and You can't miss it, unless you're *trying* to, and that's what Paul is saying here, and that's the tragedy of fallen man, we *try* to miss it, we work very hard at *not* seeing it.

Why, because ever since the fall we try to hide ourselves from God, just like Adam and Eve, but here's the deal, turning a blind eye *to* God, doesn't alleviate our accountability *before* God. We can pretend He doesn't exist all we like, that won't change the facts. Ever play hide and seek with a toddler? You know how they do it, they don't go anywhere, they just cover their face, they can't see *you*, you can't see *them*, that's their logic. But just because they don't see you, that doesn't change the fact, you see it all and you're still right there to be reckoned with. But that's what humanity is doing with God; "We're closing our eyes before You, now we don't have to give an account *unto* You." But that doesn't change the fact that He's right there, and *will* still be reckoned with. Notice those words there in vs 20 "with out excuse" those are terrifying words aren't they. It's the Greek word "Anapologe'tous" like unto our word apologetics or "Defense" so that it literally means "with out defense" all of mankind will stand before God apart from Jesus Christ with out defense. Because God has revealed Himself *to man*, but man has sought to suppress that truth and turn away *from God*. That's what vs 21 tells us (read)

So it's not that fallen mankind doesn't know God, or isn't aware of the existence *of* God, it's that we suppress that truth and refuse to glorify Him *as* God, nor is fallen man thankful *to* God for His gracious provision for our lives and desire to have a relationship with us, providing

redemption *for* us, so they become futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened. (I'm not going to expound on this but I'd have you see it here), notice the connection between man's mind and his heart, "Futile thoughts, foolish heart." We're to be transformed how?

By the renewing of our minds, the bible says as believers we've been given the *mind* of Christ, what I *believe* determines how I *behave*. Man turned away from God, became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Now Jesus is the light of the world, "*And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*" John 3:19 The foolishness and folly of mankind.

Vs22

Came up with alternate theories like evolution, or the "The Big Bang" "From the goo to the zoo, to you" and all these absurd and foolish fairy tales that take much more faith to believe than the fact that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But when you reject the wisdom and reality of God, you've no choice but to become a fool, Ps 14:1 "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'*" and Again, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.*" Ps 111:10 So to reject the Lord, or have no fear of the Lord is to invite foolishness to rule your heart and life.

But it's not so much the idea of God that man has such difficulty with, it's the *kind* of God He is, Holy, righteous, perfect and without sin. That makes man uncomfortable, but there's within man a desire, a drive to worship (which should testify of the reality of God in and of itself) but rather than worshipping our creator God, we created our own God more suitable to our fallen nature, notice.

Vs23

Notice the downward spiral of man, evolution teaches that primitive man was not much more than a monkey and that we've over the years evolved into sophisticated human beings. The bible teaches that we were created at the pinnacle of who we were meant to be and have been spiraling ever downward from there. The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics basically teaches that things left naturally to themselves go from order to chaos, my kids rooms follow the 2nd law of Thermodynamics, you leave this building to itself, come back in 50 yrs, from order to chaos. But evolution teaches that things go from chaos to order, given enough time. But there's nothing in the universe (except what they can fabricate in their own minds) that follows that pattern. Everything is breaking down, degenerating, and disintegrating apart from outside influence.

Even in our concept of God, when man rebels against God, creates for himself his own God and what do you know, that god looks shockingly, surprisingly...like me! Eyes, nose, hands feet, incredibly handsome... Exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man. and The worship of an image of man is one thing, heinous and sinful to be sure, but man was created in the image of God, but man not content to stop there grew even

more perverted and debased in his concept of God. Worshipping the birds, lower levels of creation, animals, and lower still, creeping things, the ancient Egyptians worshipping the Scarab Beetle, worshipping cats, dogs, Hindus worshipping the cow, or any of it's over 3million gods, the American Indian's thunderbird, various totems and all. Things that we're way too sophisticated for right? (As we bow down before our money, the god of capitalism and material gain, or political position, or power in the work place, fame) Or if you're a sports fan you still might worship certain "Falcons" or "Bears" perhaps "Jaguars" or no telling what...;)0) But the idea here is that of an ever deepening epidemic of idolatry, placing other things in the place that God alone deserves.

Vs24-25

3 Very sad and tragic words back in vs 24 that confirm the condemned state of humanity apart from Jesus Christ Did you see them there? Look closely, underline these words, "God, gave, up" Sad and tragic is the day that God gives up. There is eminent danger in rejecting the reality of God and our responsibility to God, because eventually He'll give us over to our own destructive desires.

That's the way God's wrath is revealed against man in the here and now. In giving people up to their own destructive desires and the penalty thereof. We read in Ps 81:11-12 "*But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.*" and Again, "*Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone.*" Hos 4:17

This phrase about exchanging the truth of God for the lie in vs 25... That's the natural result, what choice was there? Anything outside of the truth is a lie, so to reject our Creator is to receive a lie, and there's no limit to the absurdities that man will believe once he rejects the truth.

But worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, whether it's the worship of ourselves, putting ourselves in the place of God, that was the lie that Eve bought "You'll be like God." Or worshipping a god who approves of and encourages the sin in my life, idolatry is the basic lie, exchanging the 1 true living God for that which is not God and worshipping something, or someone other than God.

Vs 26-27

Vs 26 we see those words again, "God gave up" and Paul uses homosexuality in particular as an example of God giving someone up to uncleanness. Some would say that the bible nowhere condemns homosexuality, but that's not true, amongst other places the Holy Spirit tells us very clearly here that homosexuality, lesbianism is a sin condemned before God, as is any

other sin. Paul calls it a “vile passion” “committing that which is shameful,” (going against nature). It’s not natural, it violates the natural order, reproductively and otherwise, and it carries with in itself a penalty. Sometimes that penalty is disease, or further rebellion, spiritual emptiness. I ran across some statistics while I was preparing for this that I don’t have time to share that would blow your mind with respect to the epidemic of hazardous patterns that accommodate the homosexual lifestyle. Now having said that, immorality of any kind is sin just the same, or any of these other things we’re preparing to read and homosexuality is no more condemned than is any other sin. God’s not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, but the bible is very clear that homosexuality is sin.

Vs28

Don’t want God to be apart of your knowledge base, fine, God gives you over than to a debased, or reprobate mind, a further revealing of His wrath is people coming to that place where that which is disgraceful, shameful, vile and the like are readily accepted and approved. I.E. abortion, homosexual marriages, he goes on here to give us a whole list of things that people do which aren’t fitting, man’s unrighteous behavior, not related right to God, not related right to one another.

Vs29-32

Not only are they apart of shameful, sinful, problematic patterns, but they condone them in the lives of others. This list sounds like the evening news doesn’t it? and Don’t think that this is an all-inclusive fully exhaustive list of sin, no list is. “Well he didn’t say anything about getting drunk so I’m in the clear, nothing about stealing so my klepto habits have been cleared, nothing about getting high there so I guess I can roll a big joint later!” No, this is simply a sample of sin, just as Gal 5 and 1st Cor 6. The idea here is that these and other like characteristics are the tendencies of fallen man that can only be remedied in Christ. Thank God that Christ came and took all our sin upon Himself, becoming sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. We’re all in this list somewhere, maybe next time we’ll backtrack just a bit to look at it a little closer. But for now lets rejoice *in*, and love *on* Jesus for the rescuing work of the cross. and If you need to get out of this list or something similar to it, and in Christ, than lets do it today, get your relationship right with God by giving your heart to Jesus Christ Our Creator, the 1 true living God.

Prayer Points:

Jesus we realize that this list or something like unto it finds us in the depravity of our own hearts apart from You. Yet in Your love and out of Your grace You’ve rescued us from our own pursuits our own perversions and we thank You for that. Now would You help us to be the

light You would have us to be to those lost and living in Darkness around us with a desperate need for Your grace to get a grip on their hearts.

If you've never made that commitment to Christ and today Jesus is calling you out, than respond in obedience, surrender to Him let Him forgive your sin, give you the mind of Christ, and right heart, and a right relationship with God, your sin may be as scarlet, but He'll wash you white as snow, as far as the east is from the west, just ask.