

The Book Of Romans
The Gospel Of Christ 3 & The Wrath Of God 1
Session 12

Romans 1:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*

¹⁸ *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

We have been looking at the key words that Paul used to help the Roman Church understand salvation. We have looked at:

Power,

Salvation,

Faith,

And the last one is Righteousness.

And we will look at that this evening.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 1:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*

Paul uses this term, righteousness over thirty five times in the book of Romans alone. Faith activates the divine power that brings salvation, and in that sovereign act, **the righteousness of God is revealed.** A better rendering is *from God*, indicating that He imparts His own **righteousness** to those who believe.

It is not only revealed but *reckoned to those who believe in Christ.*

Romans 4:5 (NASB)

⁵ *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,*

Listen to these words;

Philippians 3:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,*

⁹ *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,*

Romans 3:21-24 (NASB)

²¹ *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

²² *even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;*

²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

²⁴ *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;*

The German pietist Count Zinzendorf wrote, in a profound hymn.

*Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

From faith to faith seems to parallel “everyone who believes” in the previous verse.

Is so, the idea is “from faith to faith to faith to faith,” as if Paul was singing out the faith of each individual believer. Salvation by His grace working through man’s faith was always God’s plan, as Paul here implies in quoting from Habakkuk;

Habakkuk 2:4 (NASB)

4 " But the righteous will live by his faith.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness;

There is emphasis here on the continuity of faith.

It is not a one-time act, but a way of life.

The true believer made righteous will live in faith all of his life.

In the Church this is called “*the perseverance of the saints*”:

Colossians 1:22-23 (NASB)

22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Hebrews 3:12-14 (NASB)

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Thus we have Paul laying out the words necessary for the Roman Church to not only examine their faith to see if it is real, but also to help them to speak of it with great authority and correctness.

You cannot tell someone else of the good news if you don’t have some understanding of it yourself. And the real understanding comes from the Holy Spirit opening up its truths to us over the course of our lifetime.

Now this is the positive side of Salvation, the positive side of the message that God gave us from heaven through His Son.

But there is another side, and Paul takes that on next. That is the Wrath of God.

THE WRATH OF GOD

Romans 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

As Paul unfolds the details of the gospel of God in which His righteousness is revealed, he presents an extended discussion of the condemnation of man that extends through chapter 3 and verse 20.

He starts with an unequivocal affirmation of God's righteous **wrath**.

The idea of a wrathful God goes against the wishful thinking of fallen human nature and is even a stumbling block to many Christians.

Much of contemporary evangelism talks only about abundant life in Christ, the joy and blessings of salvation, and the peace with God that faith in Christ brings.

And all of those benefits do result from true faith, but they are not the whole picture of God's plan of salvation. The eternal truth of God's judgment against sin and those who participate in it must also be heard.

For Paul, fear of eternal condemnation was the first motivation he offered for coming to Christ, it was the first pressure he applied to evil men.

He was determined that they understand the reality of being under God's wrath before he offered them the way of escape from it.

This approach makes both logical and theological sense.

A person cannot appreciate the wonder of God's grace until he knows about the perfect demands of God's law, and he cannot appreciate the fullness of God's love for him until he knows something about the fierceness of God's anger against his sinful failure to perfectly obey that law.

He cannot appreciate God's forgiveness until he knows about the eternal consequences of the sins that require a penalty and need forgiving.

The word here is *orge* (**wrath**) and it refers to a settled, determined indignation, not to the momentary, emotional, and often uncontrolled anger (*thumos*) to which human beings are prone.

God's attributes are balanced in divine perfection.

If He had no righteous anger and wrath, He would not be God, just as surely as He would not be God without His gracious love.

He perfectly hates just as He perfectly loves, perfectly loving righteousness and perfectly hating evil.

Psalm 45:7 (NASB)

⁷ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

Hebrews 1:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

⁹ "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

One of the great tragedies of modern Christianity, including much evangelicalism, is the failure to preach and teach the wrath of God and the condemnations it brings upon all with unforgiven sin.

The truncated sentimental gospel that is frequently presented today falls far short of the gospel that Jesus and the apostle Paul proclaimed.

If we would look through the psalter from the late nineteenth century, we would discover that many of the psalms in that hymnal emphasizes His wrath.

It is tragic that few hymns or other Christians songs today reflect that important biblical focus.

Scripture, New Testament as well as Old, consistently emphasizes God's righteous wrath.

Psalm 2:1-5 (NASB)

¹ Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury,

Psalm 2:12 (NASB)

¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Psalm 76:6-7 (NASB)

⁶ At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

⁷ You, even You, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

The Old testament is full of God's wrath against sinful man.

John 3:36 (NASB)

³⁶ "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Romans 9:22 (NASB)

²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

1 Corinthians 16:22 (NASB)

²² If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.

Ephesians 5:6 (NASB)

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

And there are many more references to God's righteous wrath. Here is one last final one we will use.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ *when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,*

⁸ *dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Listen, a disease has to be recognized and identified before seeking a cure.

In the same way and for the same reason, Scripture reveals the bad news before the good news.

God's righteous judgment against sin is proclaimed before His gracious forgiveness of sin is offered.

A person has no reason to seek salvation from sin if he does not know he is condemned by it.

He has no reason to want spiritual life unless he realizes he is spiritually dead.

With one exception of Jesus Christ, every human being since the Fall has been born condemned, because when Adam and Eve fell, the divine sentence against all sinners was passed.

Paul therefore declared to all the Romans,

Romans 3:23 (NASB)

²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

To the Ephesians he said;

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NASB)

¹ *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*

² *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

³ *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

In the brief scope of one verse (**Rom 1:18**), Paul presents six features that characterize God's wrath:

Its quality,

Its time,

Its source,

Its extent,

Its nature,

And its cause.

We will look at these going forward.