

The Book Of Romans
The Wrath Of God 2
Session 13

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,

In the brief scope of this one verse, Paul presents six features that characterize God's wrath:

Its quality,
 Its time,
 Its source,
 Its extent,
 Its nature,
 Its cause.

The first one is;

THE QUALITY OF GODS WRATH

Romans 1:18a (NASB)

¹⁸ "For the wrath of God"

The quality of this wrath is seen in the fact that it is divine, it is **of God**.
it is therefore unlike anything we know of in the present world.

God's wrath is not like human anger which is always tainted by sin. God's wrath is always and completely righteous. He never loses His temper.

The Puritan writer Thomas Watson said;

"Is God so infinitely holy? Then see how unlike to God sin is....no wonder, therefore, that God hates sin, being so unlike Him, so contrary to him; it strikes at His holiness"

Unable to reconcile the idea of God's wrath with his own ideas of goodness and righteousness, one liberal theologian made this claim;

"We cannot think with full consistency of God in terms of the highest human ideals of personality and yet attribute to Him the rational passion of anger"

Now listen, it is foolish, not to mention unbiblical, to measure God by human standards and to discount the idea of His wrath simply because human anger is always flawed by sin.

God's anger is not capricious, irrational rage but is the only response that a holy God could have toward evil. God could not be holy and not be angry at evil. Holiness cannot tolerate unholiness.

Habakkuk 1:13 (NASB)

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor

Paul declares, neither can love tolerate unholiness but refuses to;

1 Corinthians 13:6 (NASB)

⁶ *rejoice in unrighteousness,*

Jesus twice cleansed the Temple because He was incensed at the money changers and sacrifice sellers who made His **"Father's house a house of merchandise and "a robbers den". (John 2:14-16; Matt. 21:12-13)**

He was furious that His Father's house was flagrantly dishonored.

Speaking in place of the sinful inhabitants of Jerusalem, Jeremiah acknowledged the rightness of God's punishment of them;

Lamentations 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ *"The LORD is righteous; For I have rebelled against His command; Hear now, all peoples, And behold my pain; My virgins and my young men Have gone into captivity.*

In another place we see Achan confessing before Joshua that he had kept for himself some booty from Jericho that was to be reserved for the house of the Lord, he also acknowledged that the punishment he was about to receive was just and righteous (**Josh 7:20-25**)

Even in the warped and perverted societies of men, indignation against vice and crime is recognized as an essential element of human goodness.

We expect people to be outraged by gross injustice and cruelty.

The noted Greek exegete Richard Trench said:

"There can be no surer and sadder token of an utterly prostrate moral condition than not being able to be angry with sin and sinners" (Synonyms of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], p. 134).

God is perfectly so all the time, with a holy fury.

Next we have;

THE TIMING OF GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18b (NASB)

¹⁸ *"is revealed"*

The timing of God's wrath is seen in the fact that it is **revealed**, a better rendering being "constantly revealed."

God's wrath is continually being revealed, perpetually being manifested.

The word here is *Apokalupto (revealed)* has the basic meaning of uncovering, bringing to light, or making known. God's wrath has always been revealed to fallen mankind and is repeatedly illustrated throughout Scripture.

The first in the Garden of Eden resulting in a death sentence on them and all their descendants.

The second was revealed in the Flood, when God drowned the whole human race except for eight souls.

Then there was Sodom and Gomorrah, then the drowning of Pharaoh's army.

It was revealed in the curse of the law upon every transgression and in the institution of the sacrificial system of the Mosaic covenant.

And even the imperfect laws that men make to deter and punish wrongdoers reflect and thereby help to reveal the perfect and righteous wrath of God.

Then there is by far, the surpassing revelation of God's wrath when He placed His own Son on the cross, when Jesus took to Himself the sin of the world and bore the full divine force of God's fury as its penalty.

God hates sin so deeply and requires its penalty, so that He allowed His perfect, beloved Son to be put to death as the only means by which fallen mankind might be redeemed from sin's curse.

The British commentator Geoffrey B. Wilson wrote,

"God is no idle spectator of world events; He is dynamically active in human affairs. The conviction of sin is constantly punctuated by Divine judgment" (Romans: A Digest of Reformed Comment [London:Banner of Truth], p. 24)

We wonder sometimes then, why so many wicked people prosper, seemingly doing evil with utter impunity. But if God's wrath is delayed, His bowl of wrath is all the while filling up, increasing judgment for increased sin.

They are only storing up wrath for the coming day of wrath (**Rom 2:5**).

Donald Grey Barnhouse recounts the story of a group of godly farmers in a Midwest community being irritated one Sunday morning by a neighbor's plowing his field across from their church.

Noise from his tractor interrupted the worship service, and, as it turned out, the man had purposely chosen to plow that particular field on Sunday morning in order to make a point.

He wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper asserting that, although he did not respect the Lord or honor the Lord's Day, he had the highest yield per acre of any farm in the county.

He asked the editor how Christians could explain that.

With considerable insight and wisdom, the editor printed the letter and followed it with the simple comment, "God does not settle all His accounts in the month of October. (*Man's Ruin: Romans 1:1-32* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1952], p. 220).

And then there is:

THE SOURCE OF GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18c (NASB)
¹⁸ "from heaven"

God's wrath is rendered **from heaven**.

Despite Satan's present power as prince of the air and of this world, the earth is ultimately dominated by **heaven**, the throne of God, from which His wrath is constantly and dynamically manifested in the world of men.

Heaven reveals God's wrath in two ways, through His moral order and through His personal intervention.

When God made the world, He built in certain moral as well as physical laws that have since governed its operation.

Just as a person falls to the ground when he jumps from a high building, so does he fall into God's judgment when he deviates from God's moral law.

That is built in wrath.

When a person sins, there is a built-in consequence that inexorably works.

In this sense God is not specifically intervening, but is letting the law of moral cause and effect work.

The second way in which God reveals His wrath is through His direct and personal intervention.

He is not an impersonal cosmic force that set the universe in motion to run its own course.

God's wrath is executed exactly according to His divine will.

Whether the cause and effect wrath or the personal fury of God is meted out, **the wrath originates in heaven.**

Then;

THE EXTENT OF GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18d (NASB)

¹⁸ *"against all"*

As to the extent of God's wrath as we read here it extends to **all**. It is universal, being discharged **against all** who deserve it.

No amount of good will, giving to the poor, helpfulness to others or even service to God can exclude a person from the **all** Paul mentions here.

He later explains that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

Romans 3:9 (NASB)

⁹ *"for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;"*

Romans 3:23 (NASB)

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

Now obviously, some people are morally better than others, but even the most moral and upright person falls far short of God's standard of perfect righteousness. **So no one escapes.**

Then;

THE NATURE OF GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18e (NASB)

¹⁸ *"ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"*

God's wrath is not like the wrath of a madman who strikes out indiscriminately, not caring who is injured or killed. Nor is it like the sin tainted anger of a person who seeks to avenge a wrong done to him.

God's wrath is reserved for and justly directed at sin.

Asebia (ungodliness) and *adikia (unrighteousness)* are synonyms, the first stressing a faulty personal relationship to God.

God is angered because sinful men are His enemies and therefore **"children of wrath"**

Romans 5:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Ephesians 2:3 (NASB)

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.*

The second, ungodliness refers to a lack of reverence for, devotion to, and worship of the true God, a failure that inevitably leads to some form of false worship.

Although the details and circumstances are not revealed, Jude reports that Enoch, the righteous seventh generation descendant of Adam, prophesied about God's coming;

Jude 1:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ *It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,*

¹⁵ *to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Unrighteousness encompasses the idea of ungodliness but focuses on its result. Sin first attacks God's majesty and then His law.

Men do not act righteously because they are not rightly related to God who is the only measure and source of righteousness.

Ungodliness unavoidably leads to **unrighteousness**.

Because men's relation to God is wrong, their relation to their fellow men is wrong.

Men treat other men the way they do because they treat God the way they do.

Mans' enmity with his fellow man originates with his being at enmity with God.

Sin is the only thing God hates. He does not hate poor people or rich people, dumb people or smart people, untalented people or highly skilled people. He only hates sin that those people, and all others, naturally practice, and sin inevitably brings His wrath.

And Last;

THE CAUSE OF GOD'S WRATH

Romans 1:18f (NASB)

¹⁸ *"who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"*

Now the question comes to mind, how can God hold everyone responsible for moral and spiritual failure, and be so angry when some people have so much less opportunity than others to hearing the gospel and of coming to know God?

The answer is that because of his sinful disposition, every person is naturally inclined to follow sin and resist God.

This phrase could be rendered, *"who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by steadfastly holding to their sin"*

Unrighteousness is so much a part of man's nature that every person has a built in, natural, compelling desire to suppress and oppose God's truth.

As Paul declares in the following verse;

Romans 1:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ *because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.*

His point is that all people, regardless of their relative opportunities to know God's Word and hear His gospel, have internal, God-given evidence of His existence and nature, but are universally inclined to resist and assault that evidence.

No matter how little spiritual light he may have, God guarantees that any person who sincerely seeks Him will find Him.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)

¹³ *~'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.*

But men are not naturally inclined to seek God. That truth was proved conclusively in earthly ministry of Christ. Even when face to face with God incarnate, the Light of the world, *"men loved darkness rather than the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed (John 3:19-20)*

David proclaimed hundreds of years earlier;

Psalms 14:1 (NASB)

¹ *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.*

Sinful men oppose the idea of a holy God because they innately realize that such a God would hold them accountable for the sins they love and do not want to relinquish.

Every person, no matter how isolated from God's written Word or the clear proclamation of His gospel, has enough divine truth evident both within and around him to enable him to know and be reconciled to God if his desire is genuine.

It is because men refuse to respond to that evidence that they are under God's wrath and condemnation.

John 3:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ *"This is the judgment" Jesus said, "that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.*

Thus God is angry with the wicked every day;

Psalms 7:11 (NASB)

¹¹ *God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.*