

The Book Of Romans
Reasons For The Wrath Of God Part 1
Session 14

Romans 1:19-21 (NASB)

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

²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

²¹ *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

The head of the department of evangelism for a major denomination in America said;

"We don't need to evangelize the people of the world who have never heard the message of salvation,. We only need to announce to them that they're already saved."

That leader reflects the rising tide of universalism, the belief that, because God is too loving and gracious to send anyone to hell, everyone ultimately will go to heaven.

If that were true, there obviously would be no place for judgment in the proclamation of the gospel. Just as obviously there would be no place for biblical evangelism, as the person just quoted contends.

Some years ago, an article in the Times of London reported that fourteen church study groups in Woodford looked at the Old Testament psalms and concluded that eighty four of them were not fit for Christians sing, ("Psalms Chosen from New Testament" [23 August 1962]. Sec. 1. P. 10).

They reasoned that the wrath and vengeance reflected in those psalms was not compatible with the Christian gospel of love and grace.

But Scripture makes clear that justice, wrath, and judgment are as much divine attributes as are love, mercy, and grace. In chapters 27-28 of Deuteronomy, more than fifty verses detail God's judgment on those who violate His commandments.

In response to Jeremiah's plea for vengeance against His enemies, God Said,

Jeremiah 19:3-7 (NASB)

³ *and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.*

⁴ *"Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent*

⁵ *and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;*

⁶ *therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.*

⁷ *"I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.*

Isaiah said;

Isaiah 13:9 (NASB)

⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

Nahum Testified;

Nahum 1:2-3 (NASB)

² A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.

³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

In the last chapter we studied we mentioned that there are those who believe that God's wrath and judgment are primarily Old Testament concepts, it should be noted that the New Testament has equally vivid portrayals of those divine attributes.

When a group of Pharisees and Sadducees came to John the Baptist for baptism, he dismissed them with these scathing words;

Matthew 3:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

⁸ "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

A short while later John said of Jesus;

Matthew 3:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹² "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

On a later occasion John told some enquiring Jews;

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."

Jesus was God incarnate and therefore love incarnate, but He spoke more about judgment and hell than anyone else in Scripture.

He actually spoke more about those truths than everyone else in the New Testament combined.

The sermon on the mount is replete with warnings about divine wrath and judgment.

Matthew 5:22 (NASB)

²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Matthew 5:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the

parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰ *"If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.*

Matthew 8:12 (NASB)

¹² *but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Paul declared;

2 Corinthians 5:11 (NASB)

¹¹ *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.*

In other words, it is because of God's fearful judgment on unbelieving mankind that we should be motivated to witness to God's provision of escape through Jesus Christ.

Bible teacher R. A. Torrey wisely wrote; *"Shallow views of sin and of God' holiness, and of the glory of Jesus Christ and His claims upon us, lie at the bottom of weak theories of the doom of the impenitent.*

When we see sin in all its hideousness and enormity, the Holiness of God in all its perfection, and the glory of Jesus Christ in all its infinity, nothing but a doctrine that those who persist in the choice of sin, who love darkness rather than light, and who persist in the rejection of the Son of God, shall endure everlasting anguish, will satisfy the demands of our own moral intuitions.

The more closely men walk with God and the more devoted they become to His service, the more likely they are to believe this doctrine" (What the Bible Teaches [New York: Revell, 1898], pp. 311-13).

Throughout the history of the Church, faithful men of God have understood and proclaimed the biblical truths that God is a God of justice and judgment and that His wrath is against all unbelief and ungodliness.

That knowledge was the great motivation for their tireless service in winning the lost.

John Knox pleaded before God, "Give me Scotland or I die."

As the young Hudson Taylor contemplated the fate of the unreached multitudes of China, he earnestly prayed, "I feel that I cannot go on living unless I do something for China."

Upon landing in India, Henry Martyn said, "Here I am in the midst of heather midnight and savage oppression. Now, my dear Lord, let me burn out for Thee."

Adoniram Judson, the famed missionary to Burma, spent long tiresome years translating the Bible for that people. He was eventually put in prison because of his work, and while there his wife died. After being released, he contracted a serious disease that sapped what little energy he had left. Nevertheless he prayed; "Lord, let me finish my work. Spare me long enough to put the saving Word into the hands of the people."

James Chalmers, a Scottish missionary to the South Sea Islands, was so burdened for the lost that someone wrote of him, "In Christ's service he endured hardness, hunger, shipwreck and exhausting toil, and did it all joyfully. He risked his life a thousand times and finally was clubbed to death, beheaded, and eaten by men whose friend he was and whom he sought to enlighten."

Although he was unable to go overseas, Robert Arthington enabled countless others to go. By working hard and living frugally he managed to give over \$500,000 to the work of foreign missions. He testified, "Gladly would I make the floor

my bed, a box my chair, and another box my table, rather than that men should perish for want of the knowledge of Christ."

These faithful saints, and many others like them, have clearly understood the wrath and the judgment of God and the consequent horror of men dying without Christ.

Without such an understanding there is no basis for evangelism.

If men are not lost, hopeless, and incapable of glorifying God apart from Christ, then there is no reason for them to be saved by Him.

The biblical order in any gospel presentation is always first the warning of danger and then the way of escape, first the judgment on sin and then the means of pardon, first the message of condemnation and then of the offer of forgiveness, first the bad news of guilt and then the good news of grace.

The whole message and purpose of the loving, redeeming grace of God offering eternal life through Jesus Christ rests upon the reality of man's universal guilt of abandoning God and there by being under His sentence of eternal condemnation and death.

Consistent with the approach, the main body of Romans begins with **1:18**, a clear affirmation of God's wrath, "***against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.***"

As the apostle points out in his Ephesian letter, all unbelievers are "***by nature the children of wrath***" (***Eph 2:3***) they are born unto God's wrath as their natural inheritance in fallen mankind.

With the Fall, God's smile turned to a frown. Moses rhetorically asked God,

Psalm 90:11 (NASB)

11 Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?

Paul is determined for us to know that before we can understand the grace of God we must first understand His wrath, that before we can understand the meaning of the death of Christ we must first understand why man's sin made that death necessary, that before we can begin to comprehend how loving, merciful, and gracious God is, we must first see how rebellious, sinful, and guilty, unbelieving mankind is.

Tragically, even many evangelicals have come to soft-pedal the theme of God's wrath and judgment.

Even so much as a minimum mention of hell has been quietly removed from much preaching.

Wrath, when mentioned at all, is frequently depersonalized, as if somehow it is worked out automatically by some deistic operation in which God Himself is not directly involved.

Many are inclined to wonder if man really deserves such a harsh fate. After all, no person asks to be born.

Why, then, they surmise, should a person who had nothing to do with his own birth spend eternity in hell for being born sinful?

The question, "***why is everyone born under God's wrath and condemnation?***" deserves attention. It is those very questions that Paul answers in ***Romans 1:19-23***, where he explains why God is justified in His wrath against all sinful men.

Some people, even some pagans, have recognized God's right to be angry at man's sin.

During the priesthood of Eli, while the young Samuel still served under him in the Temple, Israel had reached a low spiritual level.

There was religious tokenism but little genuine faith or obedience.

Thinking of using the ark of the covenant much as a magic charm to assure their victory, Israel took it into battle against the Philistines.

But Israel not only lost 30,000 men in the battle but also lost the ark of the covenant to the enemy.

After suffering numerous disastrous and embarrassing experiences with the ark, the Philistines decided to return it to Israel.

When they returned it, they sent along a guilt offering to appease the anger of God against them. Although their understanding of Israel's God was faulty and the offering they presented to Him was thoroughly pagan, they nevertheless recognized His power and His right to judge and punish them as being faulty of violating His honor **(1Sam 4-6)**

When Achan stole some of the booty from Jericho, all of which was to be given to the Tabernacle treasury, his sin caused Israel to be defeated at Ai.

When his disobedience was exposed, he readily confessed, saying, ***"Truly, I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel (Josh 7:20)***

God is absolutely just, never condemning unless condemnation is deserved.

Achan knew God's law given through Moses and he knew of God's special ban on taking the spoil from Jericho for personal use.

The Philistines, on the other hand , knew only of God's tremendous power.

But Achan and the Philistines both knew they were guilty before God and deserved His wrath.

In **Romans 1:19-23**, Paul gives four reasons why they, and every person born except Jesus Christ, fully deserve to be under God's wrath. They are as follows:

God's Revelation,

Man's rejection,

Man's rationalization,

And Man's religion.

We will get into these in the next study.