

Divine Wrath Revealed

Romans 1:18

What a privilege it is to look into the infallible record of the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts from it.

We continue our verse by verse study of Paul's epistle to the Romans this morning. We find ourselves in verse 18 of chapter one.

Romans one verse 18.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”¹

Bear in mind that as Paul wrote this letter to the saints in Rome, it was of enormous encouragement to them and what we find is that in the introduction, the first seven verses of chapter one, Paul gives an exhilarating synopsis of the entire gospel, the gospel of God that he will now expand upon in the remainder of his letter. Then in verses eight through 15 you will recall that he gives insight into what I would call five marks of a godly shepherd. He will have a Christ centered gratitude for the gospel proclamation, a disciplined prayer life, a selfless longing to strengthen the brethren, a humble desire to learn from others and a zeal for the lost without partiality. This was a standard for pastoral leadership that they needed to hear, they needed to really get a hold of to hold their future shepherds accountable.

Then, fully aware of his own sinfulness and the power of the gospel that saved him, he focuses on the theme of the epistle namely the gospel in verses 16 through 17. And there he explained why he is not ashamed of the gospel, the gospel of God at which the righteousness of God is revealed and how it is imputed to man, to sinful man, that we might be reconciled to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, beginning in verse 18 all the way through chapter three and verse 20 Paul is going to focus on why the gospel of God is, in fact, such exceedingly good news. Why is it such good news? Because sinful man stands guilty and therefore condemned before an infinitely holy, righteous God. And this is how we can be reconciled to him.

So for this reason he says, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”²

He begins with a message of condemnation. And, beloved, this is where we should all begin whenever we preach the gospel. Whenever we share the gospel with someone people must understand the bad news before they can appreciate the good news. So he begins with God's wrath.

The word “wrath” translates the Greek word *orge* (or-gay') and it really refers to anger or vengeance or a settled, determined indignation.

¹ Romans 1:18.

² Ibid.

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As human beings we tend to be ruled by our emotions, you know? Many times we explode in anger, often for the most ridiculous and embarrassing things. But not so with God. God's anger, his wrath is always a righteous indignation provoked only by sin.

Now because God is holy, because he is utterly righteous, he always acts justly even in his anger. In Exodus chapter 34 verses six through seven we have a description of how God's wrath is always in perfect harmony with his compassion, his mercy, his eagerness to forgive, his grace, his love, his faithfulness and so on.

There we read, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."³

Throughout the Old Testament we see many examples of God's wrath against sin. Although nine times in the Old Testament we are reminded also that God is slow to anger. I am so thankful for that. He is slow to anger.

For example, in Genesis six and seven we see the wrath of God in judgment against the entire world save Noah and his family, a time when the Bible says in Genesis 6:5, "The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."⁴

And in his wrath God brought the flood and judgment.

We saw his wrath again, for example, in Genesis 11 when only a few generations after Noah man's sin was so great, his rebellion against God was so great that he decides to build this idolatrous tower to heaven and in their honor and as a result God confounded their language and scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

We saw his wrath again, for example, in Genesis 18 and 19. You will recall in the days of Abraham he judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their unbridled perversion of homosexuality that defies restraint.

We saw it again in God's judgment upon the Egyptians and their persecution of Israel when he brought the 10 plagues and then later on drowned the Egyptian charioteers. His wrath was poured out many times upon the great wickedness of the Canaanites during the times of the conquest. He even poured out his judgment upon his own people for their rebellion. We saw his wrath in numerous situations in the Old Testament being unleashed upon pagan kings like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. And 17 times his Old Testament prophets warned of a coming day of the Lord when his fury upon sinful man will be fully expressed in divine judgment, a theme mentioned explicitly four times in the New Testament as well.

³ Exodus 34:6-7.

⁴ Genesis 6:5.

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In the New Testament God's wrath is ultimately linked to a final day of judgment at the end of the age. And as we will see in Romans one over the course of the next few weeks there is a sense in which the precursor of his final judgment is already at work. One day it will be unleashed against those who deliberately reject God who stubbornly refuse to repent, who mock the Lord Jesus Christ and his Word and those who, according to the apostle Paul in Romans two and verse three will not escape the judgment of God.

Those who, according to verse four think lightly of the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience not knowing that the kindness of God leads to repentance.

He goes on to say, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."⁵

Today God restrains his ultimate and final wrath and, instead, we experience his grace, his longsuffering. He offers forgiveness. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁶ But he also went on to add, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already."⁷ And then verse 36 of John three we read, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."⁸

Dear friend, I am sure that some in this sanctuary and some within the sound of my voice has the wrath of God abiding on you. It is a frightening thing. Paul warned the Colossians about God's judgment upon sin that because of immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed which amounts to idolatry, the wrath of God will come, Colossians three verses five and six.

And in Ephesians chapter five and verse six he warns, "Let no one deceive you with empty words."⁹ "Empty words" refers to just the hollow apologies for sin, all of the excuses, all of the justifications that we can come up with, all of the rationalizations.

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things,"¹⁰ referring to sinful acts of rebellion, "the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."¹¹

Dear friend, apart from the grace of God all believers would still be slaves of sin and remain under the wrath of God.

⁵ Romans 2:5.

⁶ John 3:16.

⁷ John 3:18.

⁸ John 3:36.

⁹ Ephesians 5:6.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid.

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Paul makes this clear in his words to the Ephesians in chapter two verses one through three.

Prior to salvation he says we are all formerly ones who lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath.

Dear friend, I ask you. Can there be any mistake that God is a holy God, that he will one day punish sin, that he will one day pour out his wrath upon the wicked? Is there any confusion about this in the Word of God? Is this not a clear—and I might add—constant theme from Scripture?

Yet this is a concept that the majority of liberal evangelical churches around the world today utterly despise and therefore avoid. To insinuate that our God of love is also one that is so angry with sin, that is so repulsed by sin that it might evoke his wrath against sinners is to suggest that both our sin and God's righteousness are far greater than we wish to believe. We love to elevate ourselves while at the same time diminish God in his holiness.

You see, that message simply doesn't sell. It simply doesn't sell. People aren't going to come to a church where you preach that type of a thing, are they? Who would ever respond to that kind of a message? Jesus answered that. He said, "The few, not the many," Matthew seven. The few, the few who will enter through the narrow gate that leads to life, rather than the many who will choose the wide gate that leads to destruction.

Now people today are no different than the people in Paul's day who refused to see the blackness of their depravity against the white light of God's holiness.

You see, again, people cannot conceive of a God that would judge sin because that is not the God that we have invented. That is not the kind of God we like.

They hate words like those of the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians where he brought comfort to those persecuted saints by promising that, quote, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels and flaming fire, he will deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thessalonians verses seven and eight.

Ah, but retribution. Oh, that is way too offensive. Consumers don't like to buy that kind of a message. So we need to tone that down. In fact, many preachers refuse to even touch the book of Revelation, Jesus' revelation of himself and of his glory, the very last book of the canon of Scripture where he promises to return in chapter 19 and verse 15 and, quote, "treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty."¹²

Beloved, today, as in Paul's day, because of self righteousness, because of deliberate idolatry, man is utterly blind to his sin. His very nature has blinded him. We know from Scripture that Satan double blinds man and man has, instead, created a very different kind

¹² Revelation 19:15.

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of God, a God that is much more akin to Santa Clause or to the little smiley face that we see on television, a God that will wink at our sin, but let's don't call it sin. Let's call it mistakes. A God that will wink at our mistakes and respond to our every need whenever we snap our fingers.

Dear friends, this is not the God of the Bible. This is not the one true God.

Now, because of these issues, I want you to understand that Paul now must begin to explain the fact that sinful man stands guilty and condemned before a holy God, a righteous God. That is the bad news that man resents with a seething indignation.

Now before we examine this text a little more closely this morning, I wish to give you an example of how subtly this deception has infiltrated mainstream evangelicalism even in our day. I fear that perhaps even some of you have been deceived by this deadly scam.

A few years ago I turned on the television. Actually I think it was the day after I had gone with some of our dear friends to hear the *Messiah*, my favorite oratorio. I was blessed immensely. The next day I turned on the television and Fox News television network had a person on that they called America's pastor, a best selling author, Rick Warren delivering a special Christmas message entitled, "The Purpose of Christmas." Maybe some of you heard it.

And it was interesting. I listened very carefully. Later on I got the transcript. He skillfully presented a very delicious version of the gospel centering on the Christmas story found in the Bible. Unfortunately, it bore little resemblance to the gospel that Jesus preached.

I wish to quote some from a book that I am just finishing on sin and the savior. It is entitled *Our Sin and the Savior: Rediscovering the Transcendence of the Gospel of God*. And I use this as an example. I want to share some of this with you to sharpen your discernment, certainly not to demean any person or any church, but to help you see the danger and the subtlety of somehow mitigating the seriousness and the consequences of sin and the wrath of God and what Jesus came to bear in his body, namely that wrath on our behalf.

I say this. With numerous Scripture passages used out of context or completely misinterpreted, this popular version of the gospel places hardly any emphasis on man's sinful condition before a holy God. But instead is anchored in the premise that man is the center of God's universe, that God created us to love us although he is helpless to do so unless we let him, although he is with everybody all the time, we will not experience him in our life unless we are willing to be become aware of his presence and get connected to him through faith. When this happens we discover that God is not only with us, eliminating all our fears and loneliness, but he is also for us? He wants us to be winners and succeed in life. The emphasis on a man centered rather than a God centered theology could not be more evident.

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Here is an excerpt of what he said, quote, “First, God loves us. The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16 says, ‘God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal or everlasting life.’ That is the good news. God so loved the world. That is why he sent Jesus. He was sent on a message of love. Christmas is saying to you... God says, ‘I love you.’ The Bible says, ‘God is love.’ It doesn’t say he has love. It says he is love. It is his nature. God is love and God created the entire universe just so he could create this planet, just so he could create the human race, just so he could create you, just so he could love you. The reason you are alive is you were created as an object of God’s love. God made you to love you. It is the only reason you are alive.”

He goes on to say, “Not only does God love you, but he is with you. You may not feel it, but he has... but it has nothing to do with your feelings. He is with you all the time. The Bible says Jesus’ name was to be called Emmanuel. That means God is with us. God says in the Bible, ‘I will never leave you and I will never abandon you.’”

He went on to add, “He is not only loving you and he is not only with you, but the Bible says God is for you. He is on your side. He wants you to win. He wants you to succeed. In fact, Jesus said this. ‘God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.’

“So many people are afraid of God. You may be afraid of God. Maybe you get nervous when people start talking about God. Do you know why? It is guilt. Guilt separates us from God. You think, if I get close to God he is going to scold me. He is going to remind me of all of the things I have done wrong. He is going to tell me the bad stuff. The Bible says God didn’t come to condemn the world. He came to save it. He says, ‘I didn’t come to scold you. I came to save you. That is the good news. I am not only with you. I not only love you. I am for you.’ And if God is for us, who can be against us?” end quote.

Well, let me pause here and say while it is true that God loved the world so much that he sent his Son, please understand it is all together misleading to suggest that he is to be praised for the magnitude of his love for the entirety of the world. That is not the issue. The issue in that text is he is to be praised for the mystery of his love for a world that is so exceedingly wicked. That is the point of that text. It is because of the world’s rebellion against God that people will perish if they do not believe the Son as John went on to warn.

This sentimentalized notion of the love of God leads the sinner with no appreciation of the offended holiness of God. Sinners are not warned, as John went on to say in verse 36 of John three that, “He that does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”¹³

People need to be told that. But I fear those listeners were never warned that God has adjudicated their life and pronounced his verdict of guilty. And therefore we have a gospel that induces no fear of God, no fear of impending judgment. No one would hear

¹³ John 3:36.

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that message and be struck with their desperate need to be delivered from divine wrath. All they would hear is how special they are, how loved they are, how desperately God wants to have them on their team which just fuels our pride. Isn't that what we all want to hear?

He went on to say, quote, "When God sent Jesus Christ to earth, Jesus later, as he grew to a man, stretched his arms out on a cross to die for your sins and he was saying at that point, 'I love you this much, this much. I love you so much it hurts. I love you so much I would rather die than live without you,'" end quote.

But we must ask: Was that the point of Jesus' death, to communicate his love for us? I mean, certainly that is included. But was that the primary purpose for which Jesus died?

Jesus was not saying, "I love you so much I would rather die than live without you." But rather he was saying, "You must love me or you will die in your sin and live without me forever in an eternal hell."

We must understand that emphasizing the love of God apart from the context of his just wrath upon sinners is a distorted gospel. The point of Jesus' death was not solely because he loved us so much, but rather he died because we had to have a substitute. He was the only one, the one that God provided. Jesus came to save sinners from divine wrath. We read this in 1 John 4:9-10.

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.¹⁴

You see, Jesus' death was the propitiation of divine wrath, the satisfaction for that wrath, the appeasement of that wrath, the placation of that wrath. God cannot exchange his wrath for love unless his justice has been satisfied.

You see, one cannot be saved apart from this understanding. Herein is the immense danger of mitigating the seriousness and the consequences of sin. I fear that those listeners left without ever understanding perhaps the greatest truth of all and that is that both the love of God and the wrath of God converge at the cross. Love in that God himself provided the only sacrifice that could pay the penalty for sin and reconcile sinners unto himself. And wrath in that the soul of the man of sorrows bore the infinite weight of the justice of God in his body for sinners who will believe.

I went on to say in this light, quote, "Like so many modern day pastors bent on attracting seekers, the preacher defined sin in such a way that virtually no one could be offended. The essence of his definition was that sin includes all those things we think and do that rob us of fellowship with God and steal away the happiness he wants us to enjoy. The good news of the gospel is then reduced to nothing more than God loving us so much that

¹⁴ 1 John 4:9-10.

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he sent his Son to save us from our unhappiness. Describing sin apart from the offended righteousness of God is not just irresponsible. It is heretical. Apart from an understanding of man's condemnation that evokes the wrath of God, the gospel is no gospel at all. Yet this is precisely what the preacher does."

He went on to define sin this way, quote, "Sin is an attitude. It is not something you do. It is an attitude. Every one of your problems is caused by sin, that separation from God. Every single one of them, sin causes confusion in your life. It causes guilt. It causes shame. It causes regret. It causes bitterness, resentment, grudges. It causes worry. It causes fear. It causes anxiety. Sin causes depression. It causes discouragement. It causes emptiness. It causes despair. It causes conflict between you and other people. Every single one of your problems is caused because you are not connected to God. You are separated by your own sin. I am going to do my own thing."

Now I would pause to say that what he failed to say is that sin also causes the wrath of God to be poured out upon you, that sin will cause hell unless you repent.

He went on to say, "As a result of that Jesus said, 'I want to set you free. I want to release you. I want to save you.' From what? First, from the burden of guilt. Do you know that God doesn't want you to go around carrying guilt? That is why Jesus came to pay for it all so you can be forgiven. He doesn't want you to go around feeling guilty all the time. Not from God. He wants to set you free from the pain of bitterness. When you hate other people, when you resent others, when you hold that in your heart, it is like cancer in your heart. It is going to eat you alive. He wants to set you free from the expectations of other people where your worry. What could other people think? He wants to set you free from the fear of death. He wants to set you free from the burden of worry and anxiety and stress. God doesn't want you wandering around with stress all the time. He says, I want to set you free," end quote.

Nowhere in this Christmas discourse did the preacher ever proclaim the very clear teaching of Scripture that sin is lawlessness, 1 John 3:4, that it is the violation of God's law, a failure to conform to his character, a failure to obey the foremost commandment, that is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

It was never defined in such a way that they would understand that sin is the defining character of our very nature, that all we are, all we do is fundamentally offensive to a holy God rendering us guilty before his bar of justice and damned to an eternal hell.

But I would argue without an accurate definition of sin the work of the Savior would be profoundly diminished. This is evident in the preacher's reasoning for salvation. He went on to say, quote, "God wants to save you. Jesus Christ wants to save you from your hurts. He wants to save you from your habits. He wants to save you from your hangups. He wants to save you for his purpose and he wants to save you by his grace. But you have got to quit trying to do it yourself. You have got to relax. Just take a deep breath right now. Just relax. You need to relax. You need to let go and let God be God. Here is

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a good stress reliever. God is God and you are not. Whenever you start acting like God you are going to get under stress. When Jesus Christ came to earth he came as a baby. But he didn't stay a baby. He grew up and became a man and he died for our sins. That is why we celebrate because he sent a Savior," end quote.

In his closing invitation further illustrates this diminished view of sin and a man centered theology. He says this. He asked people to pray this prayer. Quote, "Dear God, I am scared. But I don't want to... to get to know you, but I do want to get to know you. I don't understand it at all. But I thank you that you love me. I thank you that you are with me ever when I didn't recognize it. I thank you that you are for me, that you didn't send Jesus to condemn me, but to save me. I admit I never realized I needed a Savior. But today I want to receive your Christmas gift of your Son. I ask you to save me from my past, from my regrets, from my mistakes, from my sins, from my habits and my hurts and my hangups that mess up my life. Save me from myself. I ask you to save me for your purpose. I want to know why you put me on this planet. And I want to be what you want me to be. I want to fulfill what you made me to do. I want to love you and to trust you and have a relationship with you. I need peace with you, God. And I need you to put the peace of God in my heart, to take away that stress and to fill me with yourself and your love. Help me to be a peacemaker to help others find the peace with you and with each other. In your name I pray. Amen," end quote.

And then he asked for all of those who prayed that prayer to raise their hand and he welcomed them into the family of God and everyone applauded.

That is the wide gate, dear friends, that the many will enter. Sadly, the average unbeliever will hear that sanitized version of the gospel and never grasp the dreadful reality of their spiritual condition before a holy God, the eternal wrath that would be their fate unless they repent. Instead, they will hear that definition of the gospel and respond as follows and I put it this way.

Yeah, if God is real I suppose I am guilty of not giving him glory. I don't even think about God very much and I have lots of things... I love lots of things more than God. So to that extent I suppose I am living in prideful rebellion. And yes, I have fallen just like the whole Satan analogy. Just look at all the junk in my life. Relationships are messed up. My marriage is boring. My finances are a wreck. I hate my job. I basically feel as though my life is going nowhere fast. For sure I need to be saved from all this stuff. Maybe God is the answer to my unhappiness, my lack of success, my negative emotions, my lack of purpose and direction in life. I am just glad God loves me just the way I am. I am not really sure why Jesus had to come and to die for me, but I am glad he did. I suppose he was trying to demonstrate what selfless love was all about. Anyway, I want to take advantage of anything God may have to offer to make my life better. So I think I will accept Jesus as my personal Savior.

Beloved, what a radically different response than the tax collector in Luke 18 when he was confronted with Jesus, confronted with his sin. He was so overwhelmed with his guilt, so overwhelmed with his unworthiness. The Bible says that he was not willing to

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lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast saying, “God, be merciful to me the sinner.”

Now with that long introduction, let’s go back to Romans one and verse 18 where, once again, Paul in an effort to set forth clearly the essence of the gospel of God and why it is such incredibly good news is now going to spend the next 64 verses discussing the condemnation of man that makes him subject to the wrath of God, the very topic America’s pastor along with many others so skillfully avoid.

Paul begins without apology.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”¹⁵

How I wish that would have been the opening statement for that Christmas sermon.

I would draw your attention to three things in this text: the nature of divine wrath, the origin of divine wrath and the object of divine wrath.

First the nature. It says, “For the wrath of God is revealed...”¹⁶

In other words, the anger, the settled, determined righteous indignation of God is revealed. It comes from that Greek word ἀποκαλύπτω {ap-ok-al-oo’-to) which means to unveil or to disclose, to make known. What has been veiled is uncovered. And grammatically it is saying that it is constantly revealed. His wrath is being perpetually manifested.

Now, you must understand God’s wrath is revealed in two ways. One, through his moral order.

Sometimes we fail to remember that God has created both a physical order as well as a moral order. In the physical order we know that there are fixed, inexorable laws that he has set into motion. They never change. The speed of light, the speed of sound, laws of thermodynamics, laws of motion, of gravitation. We know, for example, that gravitation accelerates all objects at the same rate. Falling objects, we also know, accelerate at a rate of 32.2 feet per second per second they accelerate. We know these things. It is never going to change.

But so, too, God has established a moral order in his universe. That is the law of cause and effect, that you will reap what you sow. Whenever a man sins there exists a built in consequence. It is just a matter of time. It is a fixed, inexorable law.

Now from the first sin in the garden, God cursed man and all of his creation. And every descendant from Adam has experienced some measure of the wrath of God that is

¹⁵ Romans 1:18.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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constantly being revealed. Think about it. Every tear, every pain that you experience, every disappointment, every death there is a tiny example of divine wrath against sin. All of the miseries of life are a perpetual reminder of the hideous consequences of sin and the condemnation, the curse that we are under causing us to hopefully cry out for mercy, to cry out for forgiveness that is available only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But God's wrath is not only revealed through his moral order, but also through his personal intervention. We have seen this down through history, have we not, and his righteousness judgments against the wicked. Everything from the great flood in the days of Noah to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, all of these things consistent with God's divine will.

Yet all of these combined, dear friends, will not hold a candle to his fury at the end of the age when his wrath will explode upon an unbelieving world during tribulation judgments culminating in his Second Coming, a time when those who have rejected Christ will say, according to Revelation six and verse 16, "Fall on us," talking to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"¹⁷

But I would add that the most stunning display of God's wrath to date was when Jesus bore that wrath in his body for all who will believe, when Christ who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, when he became a curse for us according to Galatians 3:13, causing him to cry out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"¹⁸

I cannot fathom what Christ rejecters will one day face when they are required to endure the full wrath of God, the full force of his divine fury. Those who are storing up wrath for the coming day of wrath as Paul speaks about in Romans two and verse five.

But he speaks also in this text of the origin of divine wrath. Notice he says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven."¹⁹

Now heaven is synonymous for the throne of God. Isaiah 66 verse one.

"Thus says the LORD, 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.'"²⁰

God's wrath emanates from his throne. That is the point where he rules his creation, where he rules in absolute, unassailable sovereignty. You will recall in Revelation chapter four John is allowed to see the celestial court of our holy God and it is a scene of this ineffable grandeur where the Father is pictured seated, seated there with dazzling white light mingled with fiery red emanating from his glorious person. And there is a

¹⁷ Revelation 6:16-17.

¹⁸ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

¹⁹ Romans 1:18.

²⁰ Isaiah 66:1.

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rainbow of glistening emeralds around the throne. And in the foreground of the throne is an indescribably beautiful deep blue expanse that looks like a vast sea of clear and dazzling crystal.

And then as you read that text, immediately before the throne is the Holy Spirit pictured as a blazing torch ready to go into battle as a consuming fire. And then emanating from the throne John says flashes of lightning and sounds and peels of thunder, all of which symbolize the judgment that is about to proceed from the almighty, reminiscent of what happened at Mount Sinai at the giving of the law. And there John witnessed a preview of the righteous judgment of God that will soon go forth from his presence.

And then in the innermost circle in and around the throne you will recall there are the four amazing angels that guard his holiness. They are ever vigilant to carry out his will. And then in chapter five the second member of the triune godhead, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb who bore our sins, who bore the wrath of God suddenly appears. He is the only one who is worthy to take the seven sealed scroll from the Father's hand, a scroll that contains the specific judgments that God has decreed to consummate the redemption of his people and the restoration of his kingdom when he will come and establish himself as King of kings.

So make no mistake, dear friends. As Paul said, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,"²¹ from heaven where God is seated upon his throne.

Ezekiel saw the same scroll, by the way, in the hand of God who was seated upon his heavenly throne. The scroll of divine wrath was spread out and it was given to the prophet and here is what he said in Ezekiel two verse nine.

Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.²²

So Paul here speaks not only of the nature of divine wrath and its origin, but, finally, the object of divine wrath. Notice he says, "[It] s revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."²³

Ungodliness is a term that describes those who do not worship the one true God, those who worship false gods, idolaters, even hypocrites that claim to worship the one true God, those phonies who dream up some Santa Clause god, some smiley face god and worship him, this god that many have recreated according to their own liking. He is saying here that this wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. And they would include those people.

²¹ Romans 1:18.

²² Ezekiel 2:9-10.

²³ Romans 1:18.

Divine Wrath Revealed

Romans 1:18

Jude warns of this in verses 14 and 15 where he spoke of Enoch's prophecy when God will one day, quote, "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."²⁴

Pretty clear.

But it is not only against the ungodly, but also against what you might say is a really a synonym of ungodliness and that is it is a revealed also against unrighteousness of men. And this further describes both the nature of sinful man, but also the lifestyle of the ungodly, those who suppress the truth in ungodliness, *katēcw* (kat-ekh'-o) in the original language, suppress. It means literally to restrain or to hinder the course or progress of something. And here it could be rendered people who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.

As Paul will go on to describe, although God gives irrefutable evidence of who he is and how we should respond to him through reason and through conscience, those in rebellion to God continue to do all they can to suppress the truth, who he is and how we are to respond to him in faith and in obedience.

You see, the very nature of the unregenerate who is opposed to God, preferring their sin rather than worshipping him.

And it is for this reason that wrath of God abides on them. For this reason David said in Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"²⁵ He goes on to add, "They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good."²⁶

Dear friends, if this describes you today, the wrath of God abides on you. And I would humbly plead with you to humble yourself before the cross, before the Lord Jesus Christ. Cry out for mercy knowing that if you do, he will save you from your sins and he will deliver you from the wrath to come.

Will you join me in prayer?

Father, I pray that these truths will resonate within our hearts in such a way as to cause us to not only rejoice in your grace, rejoice in your deliverance and in the ransom that was paid on our behalf, to rejoice in our redemption, but, Lord, also that it would cause us to have discernment especially as we share the good news of the gospel of God with others. Lord, may we be bold, but therefore biblical in beginning with the offended law, with the holiness of God, with the wrath to come, with the truth of who we are as sinners, with the truth of man being under condemnation, that people will understand clearly the

²⁴ Jude 15.

²⁵ Psalm 14:1.

²⁶ Ibid.

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hideous seriousness and consequences of their sin and the glorious reality of the Savior who bore them. For it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell's messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

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