

“The Revelation of God’s Wrath against Man’s Rejection of Him” **Romans 1:18-23**

I. The Revelation of God’s Righteousness

- A. The need for God’s gift of righteousness that is revealed in the gospel will be demonstrated in this first major section dealing with the unrighteousness of all men.
1. 1:16-17 gave us the theme of God’s power to save in the gospel because it supplies the free gift of righteousness to those who will receive it by faith.
 2. 1:18-5:21 deals with justification by faith alone in Christ alone and 1:18-3:20 shows that justification before God will not be achieved by any other way.
 - a. Though the section is showing the unrighteousness of both Gentile and Jew, the emphasis is laid against the Jew, for many of them wrongly thought they could be justified by God through their observance of the law. If one can not be justified by keeping God’s law, then no one can be justified!
 - b. 3:9-10, 19-20 shows the point Paul is trying to make in this section: all are guilty before God!
 3. **DISCUSSION:** Since every other religion on the face of the earth is about man being good enough to earn his way to “heaven,” what is this section going to show us about the validity of all other religions?
- B. Our understanding of the saving work of Christ will only be as good as our understanding of our sin and what it merits.
1. When we recognize that we are completely unable to contribute anything to our salvation, we will rightly recognize that salvation is completely from God, as Romans 1:16 made clear when it said that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation.”
 2. The more we realize how bad our sin is and what it deserves the more we will love God for the free forgiveness and righteousness that he has given us in Christ (cf. Luke 7:47).

II. The Revelation of God’s Wrath, 1:18.

- A. God’s reaction to sin is not passive indifference but just wrath, 1:18a.
1. The need for righteousness is seen in the fact that God’s wrath is against unrighteousness.
 2. God’s wrath is revealed in the present by his allowing men to pursue their unrighteousness (1:24, 26, 28), and it will be revealed in the future by fierce eternal punishment (2:5-8).
 - a. “From heaven” = This highlights the utter seriousness of God’s anger against sin.
 3. Many deny that God acts in wrath but he could not be just or loving otherwise!
 - a. “*Wrath in God must not be conceived of in terms of the fitful passion with which anger is frequently associated with... Wrath is the holy revulsion of God’s being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness.*” --- John Murray
 - b. “*The wrath of God is the wrath of Him who is perfectly loving, perfectly good.*” --- C.B. Cranfield
 4. **DISCUSSION:** How do people try to avoid thinking about the wrath of God?
- B. God’s wrath is not against some sins but every sin, 1:18b.
1. God does not show partiality in his reaction to sin (2:11); all sin must be punished, and all will be after all has been said and done. Christians will have had their sin punished in Christ and those who reject Christ will experience the punishment for every one of their sins in an eternal hell.
 2. **DISCUSSION:** Even for those who have experienced God’s forgiveness in Christ, how should this affect our attitude towards sin in our own life?
- C. Man’s sin is summarized by the fact that he suppresses the truth, 1:18c.
1. Man is not committing his sin in total ignorance, for he knows that God is to be worshipped and served and that God will punish those who do not (1:32), but he suppresses this truth so that he can pursue his own wicked desires (cf. John 3:19-20).
 2. This is not just as the level of the will but even the mind. Man’s mind is so corrupted by sin that he can fervently deny that he knows the truth and even believe such a lie!
 - a. This is why the Reformed tradition speaks of the “total depravity” of man. This term simply means that every faculty of man has been affected by sin.

III. The Revelation of God’s Being, 1:19-20.

- A. The truth about God’s being is clear to men because God has made it clear, 1:19.
1. Man’s ability to know who God is does not depend on varying abilities inherent in some men and not in others, for God is the One who has made it clear to all men.
- B. God’s revelation of his being and character is revealed in all of creation, 1:20a.
1. This seems like an oxymoronic statement, for God is invisible but he has made himself visible!
 - a. The way God is “seen” is in the understanding of him that is delivered through the beauty, grandeur, and intricacy of the created order (cf. Psalm 19:1-6).

