

# FROM WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE SAVED?

Romans 1:18-32

When our children were little and we were out in public, they would wander. Despite our instructions to stay with us, they would wander off. A few times I just let them; I could always see them, but they couldn't see me. They thought it was great; they didn't realize I was disciplining them by letting them wander off. They were having a great time free to go wherever they pleased until after a little while it dawned on them they were alone, they couldn't see us, they didn't know how to find us...

We are like my toddlers.

God is punishing us and we don't even know it.

God is punishing us because He is angry with us as a race.

Why is God angry with us?

Because we reject Him. God has made Himself known to every human being through Creation, but since the Fall, we deny God's clear revelation.

That's why God is angry with the human race. That's why God's wrath is being poured out on us right now (1:18) and why His wrath will be poured out on us in the future (2:5).

We need to be saved from God and His wrath. Thankfully God has made a way for us to be delivered from His wrath through Jesus. The way of salvation is explained in the Gospel.

As we observed in our previous studies, the Apostle Paul wrote the letter of Romans in 57AD. Having never been to Rome, Paul introduced himself, his gospel and his plans in hopes that he would be welcomed by the Roman church and helped in his quest to spread the Gospel to the west. He concluded his introduction by stating his eagerness to preach the Gospel in Rome.

Romans 1:15-17 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

We discovered that more often than not, when Paul preached the Gospel he suffered rejection and physical violence. Yet he remained eager to preach for three reasons: he knew from personal experience that God powerfully transforms lives through the Gospel (v.16). Second, he was convinced that the only way sinners can be brought into a right relationship with God is through the Gospel (v.17). The third reason for his eagerness is the subject of 1:18-3:19; God is angry with all humanity and the only way to be saved from His *present* wrath as well as His *future* wrath is through faith in Jesus. The Gospel not only delivers us from the future penalty of sin at the Great White Throne Judgment, it delivers us from sin as the *present punishment* of God upon unbelieving humanity.

Romans 1:18-32 establishes the fact that God is angry with all humanity and is revealing His wrath upon us now. In these verses Paul indicts both Jews and Gentiles. God is angry because we reject His revelation.

## I. God Is Angry Because We Reject His Revelation (1:18-23, 32)

Romans 1:18-23 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their

thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

<sup>32</sup> Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Paul references two forms of God's revelation: Creation (vv.18-23) and the Law (v.32). In both cases God is angry because humanity rejects His revelations.

Creation reveals God's *eternal power* and His *divine nature*. Creation reveals these attributes of God to all humanity; from the winners of the Nobel Prize to the headhunters of the Amazon jungle. Here is how Creation reveals God's *eternal power* and His *divine nature*:

- The physical universe had a beginning.
- Whoever made the physical universe had to exist before its creation, therefore must be *eternal*.
- Whoever made the physical universe had to possess incomprehensible *power*.
- Whoever made the physical universe must be an intelligent being as the source of the information, design and beauty we see in creation, but cannot Himself be part of the creation, therefore must be *divine*.

The proper response is to give awestruck worship to the Creator.

The proper response is to give heartfelt thanks to the Creator.

But what has our Creator received from our race?

We deny His existence; worship what He made; worship ourselves!

Even when God gives us explicit revelation in the Law, we reject what He reveals. That is Paul's point in 1:32 and that is why I think Paul is including the Jews (to whom God gave the Law) in this universal indictment of rejecting God's revelation. The Hebrew prophets constantly confronted the ungodly, wicked behavior of the Israelites who had God's Law, but refused to follow it.

<sup>32</sup> Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

God is angry with all humanity because we reject both His revelation in Creation and in the Law.

## II. God Is Presently Punishing Humanity (1:18, 24-32)

According to verse 18, God is presently revealing His wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. This means God is *presently punishing humanity* for our ungodliness and unrighteousness. We tend to think of God's punishment as only future at the Great White Throne Judgment. But Paul reveals that not only is God's judgment future, it is present.

How is God presently punishing us?

By giving us over to our ungodliness and unrighteousness.

God gives us over to indulge our *natural lusts* (1:24-25).

Romans 1:24-25 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

God gives us over to indulge in *unnatural lusts* (1:26-27).

Romans 1:26-27 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

God gives us over to a *debased mind* and its consequences (1:28-32).

Romans 1:28–32 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

We should never envy non-believers who are “free” to sin. Sin is God's present means of punishing humanity. Remember always what your life was like before Christ when you were “free to sin”. If it was such a great life, why become a Christian? Rejoice that you have been delivered from God's wrath to live a righteous life, a blessed life.

This might be why God is using sin as His means of punishing us in the present – that we might become so miserable we turn to Him finally wanting Him to be the God of our lives. This is a major difference between God's present wrath and His future wrath; though we are suffering God's wrath now, we can be saved out of it through faith in Christ. If we find ourselves under God's wrath at the Great White Throne Judgment, there will be no escape.

Can you be angry with and punish a person you deeply love?

Even as Romans 1:18-32 declares God's anger so also Romans 5:8 declares God's great love.

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God is revealing all this to you because He loves you. Trust in Christ today and be saved from God's wrath now and in the future.

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#### QUESTIONS:

- This passage lists a variety of sinful behaviors and attitudes, but what is the core problem?
- Should the focus of our conversations with unbelievers be on behavior or something else?

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**NEXT WEEK:** Romans 2:1-29