

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 6TH - 7TH, 2020 // BOOK OF ROMANS

THE WRATH OF GOD (ROMANS 1:18-20)

No one can fully appreciate the "good news" (gospel) as good except for those who understand its necessity.

- The good news is the power of God for salvation - but from what are we saved?
- "The wrath of God...revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (vs. 18)
- God's wrath is directed towards humanity.

TWO WORDS FOR WRATH IN GREEK

- Thumos (explosive, impulsive, irrational rage of irritation or annoyance)
- Orge (literally means, "to grow ripe"; something that builds up over a long period of time and is directed towards something intentionally)
- God doesn't lose His temper in an irrational rage; He has a firm, settled, hostility towards sin and directs His perfect justice towards evil.
- What have we done to incur God's wrath?

Simply put, we have suppress the truth of God (vs. 18-20).

- God has put His stamp in us and His workmanship around us.
- What can be known of God is plain, but the problem is we don't want it to be true because it would require us to repent and worship.
- So we "suppress the truth."

God is revealed in our world - "...there is no avoiding the conclusion that the world looks as if it has been tailored for life; it appears to have been designed." - Michael Denton

- God is revealed in the cosmos - for something to come into existence, there must be something else that already exists to bring it into existence.
- God is revealed in our own consciences-the fact that we an inner sense of right & wrong reveals that we were created in the image of a lawgiver.

But we have suppressed the truth - it's not that there is insufficient evidence to convince people that there is a God.

- It is that if God does exist, He'll probably have a say in how we are to live our lives.
- So instead of acknowledging God as our Creator and King, we have developed a modern "enlightened" scientific worldview that states that no-one + nothing = everything.

CHARGES AGAINST HUMANITY (ROMANS 1:21-23)

WE HAVE FAILED TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD (VS. 21)

The word Paul uses for "know" denotes a deep down, intimate, almost subconscious knowledge of God we all have.

- Although we know about God, we refuse to honor or give thanks to Him- we don't want to obey His rules or give Him credit for His gifts.
- The fundamental sin of humanity is the sin of rejecting God's rule and refusing to honor Him.

When we fail to acknowledge, honor, and thank God, our "thinking becomes futile" - we come up with all manner of absurd ideas and educate ourselves into imbecility to explain how life, truth, and meaning is possible without God.

- Our "foolish hearts are darkened"- our affections and moral judgments become tainted, distorted, and confused.

WE HAVE CONSIDERED OURSELVES SMARTER THAN GOD (VS. 22)

It's not an accident that intelligent design, creationism, and religion are viewed as laughable while atheism, agnosticism, and universalism are seen as the pinnacles of enlightenment in the halls of academia.

- We have claimed a certain kind of wisdom, intellect, and intelligence that is completely absent of a belief in Creator God.

In our pride and arrogance, we have considered ourselves as wise even though the epitome of foolishness is to ignore the most basic cause of all existence - God.

- It's not just that we ignore the existence of God - anytime we view the commands, precepts, and directions of God as antiquated, irrelevant, or dense, we're doing the same thing!

WE HAVE WORSHIPED FALSE GODS (VS. 23)

Having held down God's truth and refusing to acknowledge God's glory, humanity is left without a god.

- But we were created to worship, and if we refuse to worship the true God, we will worship false gods, even if we must manufacture them ourselves.
- The first on the list of false gods is ourselves.

We have set ourselves, our desires, our intellect, and our own will at the center of our universe.

- From there we've descended so low as to worship "birds, animals, and creeping things".
- The human heart is an idol factory - we are capable of trying to find ultimate meaning, worth, and attributing all value to all sorts of things besides God.

AMERICAN IDOLS.

- Money, success, and lifestyle.
- Entertainment.
- Sexuality & romance.
- Fame, popularity, and celebrity.
- Government & politics.
- Guns? Food? College football? Toys? Hobbies?

WHAT ARE MY IDOLS?

The test of time and attention - how much time and money go into my worship of this thing at the expense of other things?

- The test of my willingness to question & evaluate - am I ever willing to step back and question my loyalty?
- The test of spiritual/ethical fruit - what behaviors follow from my worship of this thing?

When we publicly advertise our allegiance to and testify of the power and worth of something in our lives, we're worshipping it.

- We are all guilty of exchanging the glory of God for the worship of idols.
- Anything we must consult before we obey and honor God in our lives is an idol.
- God is worthy of all worship, honor, and glory - yet we give it primarily to unworthy things.

THE SENTENCE (ROMANS 1:24-32)

THREE MAIN WAYS GOD'S WRATH IS EXECUTED

1. Final wrath (Great white throne of judgment, day of the Lord, hell and lake of fire, Rev. 20)
2. Provisional wrath (God's wrath executed through the legal/judicial system, Rom. 13:4, God using human government and natural consequences to execute His justice & wrath)
3. Permissible wrath (God gives you what you want as an act of judgment, Rom. 1:24)

"God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity..." (vs. 24)

- How is that an act of judgment? The worst thing that can happen to a sinner is for God to hand them over to the sins that they love so they can keep on sinning.
- Sin blinds us, hardens our heart, and leads us to proudly and willingly abandon what is honorable, dignified, and holy.

Why does God practice this judicial abandonment, where He gives us up to our sin?

- Because we have exchanged the truth of God for a lie - the lie that God isn't worthy of our allegiance, obedience & worship and that we know better than Him.
- When we do this, we're serving the creature (ourselves & our idols) rather than the Creator (vs. 25).

3 POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR VS. 26-27

1. Paul was homophobic & this is simply his own intolerance; we should skip passages like this.
2. Paul wasn't talking about monogamous, loving, committed same-sex couples; he wasn't aware of such relationships when he wrote this.
3. Paul refers to homosexuality as an example of humanity prioritizing desire over God's design.

Don't let this example sidetrack you- Paul is saying that humanity is guilty of rejecting God, suppressing His truth, and prioritizing our desires over His will and design.

- Homosexuality is cited not because it's a worse sin than all others, but because it's the clearest evidence of a rejection of God's order in creation.
- Human sexuality was designed by God, but when we prioritize our desires over God's design, we care less about what the Creator wants and more about what our desires want.

For most folks with same sex attraction, they feel like they didn't choose their desires.

- Most Christians struggling with this issue deal with feelings of deep shame and unanswered prayer.
- First and foremost, these conversations need to happen with compassion, understanding, and love.
- The curse of sin has brought upon humanity corruption - we're all afflicted by different dimensions of it, therefore we don't always choose our weaknesses and struggles.

The central sin is that we have rejected God's rule and declared ourselves, our intellect, and our desires to be god in our lives.

- This central sin will manifest in different people differently, which means none of us can stand in judgment over those with different sins.
- Look at the other corruptions Paul lists in verses 29 - 31 all of us will have different manifestations of the same central problem, and that is that we want our way, desires, and will over God's.

Because humanity does not want to even acknowledge God, God gave them over to a "debased mind" - which means a mind that cannot even form right judgments and is completely abandoned to sin.

- Humanity not only willingly and proudly commits sin that they know to be wrong (vs. 32a), they encourage, applaud, and give approval to others that also live sinful lives.

This is the "wrath of God revealed from heaven."

- Because humanity has suppressed the truth of God, failed to acknowledge Him, considered ourselves smarter than Him, worshiped false gods, and declared ourselves to be in charge, God has given us over to what we want.
- And in our natural state, what we want isn't God - we want ourselves, our sin, our will, our ideas, and our idols.