

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

— A Study of Romans —


Lesson Two

Romans 1:18-23

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
Romans 1:18

Day 1

Pray:



Father, help me to understand the truths I read today in your word. Soften my heart to submit to your ways and open my eyes to see how your ways reflect your beauty and goodness.

Read: Romans 1:18-23. Read it again in another translation such as NLT.

Observe:

- Write key words and themes, repeated words or phrases. Circle on your Scripture pages any transition words (therefore, but, because, if/then etc.)
- Are there any commands to be obeyed, or truths to be trusted?
- What questions do you have about the text?

Day 2- Romans 1:18

This portion of Romans and continuing to 3:20, shows us our desperate need for the gospel. It is the bad news that makes the good news so brilliant. So, hang on, don't run quickly through these heavy truths— let yourself feel the weight of them.

Grappling with these truths is an important part of seeing the desperate reality of our need and the stunning glory of the gospel. Even though these verses are heavy they can serve to deepen and enrich your relationship with God as you surrender to the truth they reveal.

1. Look back to verse 17. What was revealed?

a. What is revealed in verse 18?

Wrath-*God's just and measured anger in response to sin.*

"God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil"¹

2. What do we learn about this wrath that is revealed in verse 18?

a. What clues do we have from verse 18 that this wrath is not like human wrath?

b. How are God's righteousness and his wrath connected? (Look back to the definition of God's righteousness in lesson one for help)

c. Why does God hate sin so much?

For Discussion

The phrase, *The wrath of God is revealed*, is in the present tense. It means that the wrath of God is **being** revealed—it is an ongoing action. How do you see this truth on display in our world?

Digging Deeper

God's wrath is being revealed in the present, but there will be a final day of wrath. How is that day of wrath described in the following verse?

Zephaniah 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

- What is present judgment for and why is God holding off on final judgment according to the verses below?

2 Peter 3:7-9 ⁷And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.⁸ But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. ⁹The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.(NLT)

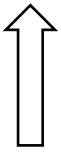


In Isaiah 51:17 the prophet speaks about God's wrath in a cup where every last drop would have to be swallowed down in judgment for sin. In God's frightful and breathtaking solution to that horror we see Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane asking God to take the dreaded cup away from him, but he humbly and

finally prays, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (Mat. 26:42) Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath on the cross where he was punished for our sin. There he took on every single sin his people ever committed in the history of the world past and present and God poured out his wrath against that wickedness. In exchange for our sin Jesus gave us his perfect record of righteousness when he rose from the dead so that we can be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God.

- ◆ How do you see both God's justice and mercy satisfied on the cross?

- ◆ If you have not trusted in the work of Jesus on the cross, you can trust him now to forgive you and put you in a right relationship with God by simply asking him. Repent of your sin and surrender your life to Jesus and you will have a new life in him. And then let someone know!



Father thank you for making a way for me to be rescued from the just punishment that I deserve. Thank you, Jesus, for bearing the wrath of God for me; for giving your perfect, loving self so that I could be right with God.

Day 3- Romans 1:18

1. Verse 18 is connected with verse 17 by the word *for*. In verse 17 we learn that we need a righteousness that is from God to be in a right relationship with him. According to verse 18, what is humanity's plight that shows why we need a righteousness that is not our own?

For Discussion

How do you feel when you see justice not served? Why do you feel this way? Why is it right and good that God respond to sin with wrath?

Scholar's Note: Ungodliness and unrighteousness: "The first speaks to a disregard of God's rights, a destruction of our vertical relationship with him. The second refers to a disregard of human rights to love, truth, justice etc., a destruction of horizontal relationships with those around us. It is a breaking of what Jesus said were the greatest two commandments: to love God, and to love our neighbor (Mark 12:29-31)."²

2. Ungodliness and unrighteousness are a way of saying sin. What does sin do according to verse 18?

For Discussion

What are examples of sin actively suppressing the truth?

Sin- "Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law."³

Digging Deeper

Where does sin come from and why do we sin according to the verses below?

Ephesians 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. (NIV 1984)*

Mark 7:21-23 ²¹ *For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder,* ²² *adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.*" (NLT)

Picture and Ponder

"Sin is any feeling or thought or speech or action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God over all other things. It is:

The glory of God not honored.
The holiness of God not revered.
The greatness of God not admired.
The power of God not praised.
The truth of God not sought.
The wisdom of God not esteemed.
The beauty of God not treasured.
The goodness of God not savored.
The faithfulness of God not trusted.
The promises of God not believed.
The commandments of God not obeyed.
The justice of God not respected.
The wrath of God not feared.
The grace of God not cherished.
The presence of God not prized.
The person of God not loved."⁴



It is surprising how many definitions of sin there are. On the surface it seems pretty straightforward. We usually think of sin in terms of wrongdoing, but it is so much more than that. The Bible teaches that we have a sin nature—sin is not just what we do, it's who we are in our nature, it's built into our DNA, inherited from Adam and Eve at the Fall. This is not a popular notion, but understanding sin accurately in this way shows us just how big our sin problem is.

- ◆ Oswald Chambers says that "sin is a fundamental relationship; it is not wrong doing it is *wrong being*, deliberate and emphatic independence of God."⁵ How would you explain wrong-being compared to wrong-doing?

- ◆ When you think of sin in the terms of the statements in the Picture and Ponder above, how does that impact you?

- ◆ Do you see your sin the way God does? How is hatred for sin in your life evident?

- ◆ If you don't see your sin as that serious, spend some time talking to God about it, ask him to help you hate your sin the way he does.

Day 4- Romans 1:19-20

1. Summarize what God has done according to verse 19.

2. Where is this made plain according to verse 20?
 - a. What does verse 20 say we can know from creation?



The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.
Psalm 19:1-4 (NLT)

- ◆ What about God have you personally seen revealed in his creation? Share this with your group.

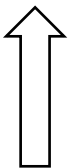
◆ Spend time in prayer praising God for how he has revealed himself in what he has created.

3. How are *clearly perceived* in verse 20 and *suppress the truth* in verse 18 connected?

4. What is the effect of God making himself known in creation, according to the end of verse 20?

For Discussion

Can people come to a *saving* knowledge of God through his revelation in creation? Why or why not? What are the implications of this?



God thank you for taking the initiative and showing who you are through your creation! Help me always to see and enjoy who you are in the beauty and wonder of your world.

Day 5- Romans 1:21-23

1. What should knowing God through his creation evoke according to verse 21?

2. What is the downward progression from suppressing the truth, stated in verse 21-22?

- a. In your own words describe these consequences of ignoring the most basic reality—the truth that there is a powerful Creator:

Futile in thinking-

Foolish hearts darkened-

3. Verse 21 says, *although they **knew** God*. How do verses 19-20 help us figure out in what way people who suppress the truth “knew” God?

- a. How is this kind of knowledge different than a saving knowledge of God?

- b. Why does this make them without excuse if it is not a saving knowledge? (What have they failed to do?)

For Discussion:

How do you see those who turn away from God, denying the truth about him, claiming to be wise?

4. How is futility, darkness and foolishness displayed in verse 23?

For Discussion:

We don't worship carved images today in our culture, but what do we worship in our culture? What is at the root of humankind's desire to worship something other than God?



Worship is something everyone does whether they realize it or not. We were created to worship; we were made to live for something bigger than ourselves. Romans teaches that those who suppress the truth about God just exchange one form of worship for another—a supremely foolish exchange that rejects the Creator for the created. But even as believers who worship the One True God, we still struggle with hearts that are easily drawn away to worship idols.

- ◆ An idol is anything that is functionally more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your thoughts, attention and affection, anything you look to other than God for comfort, security, joy, strength, acceptance, significance, or purpose. Reflect on these questions to help you determine what idols you may have in your heart:

-What do I worry about most?

-What, keeps me going? What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live?

-What do I rely on or comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?

-What do I think most easily about? What does my mind go to when I am free? What preoccupies me?

-What prayer, unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?

-What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I proudest of?

-What do I really want and expect out of life? ⁶

-What happens to my relationship with God when my life is going the way I want it to?

- ◆ Pray and ask God forgiveness for looking to something other than Jesus for your needs. Rejoice in your identity in Christ that you belong to him, are beloved by him and set apart to live for him.

One Thing:

What is one thing from this week's study that God has impressed on your heart, or convicted you about; is there something new that you learned or is there a verse you want to ponder and meditate on?

Praise God for this and thank him for the work he is doing in your life. Ask him to help you remember this and live it out for his glory.

¹ Packer, J.I. Knowing God. P. 151

² Keller, Timothy. Romans 1-7 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word For You - Romans Series) (p. 26). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

³ Newcitycatechism.com

⁴ Piper, John. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-sin-the-essence-and-root-of-all-sinning>

⁵ Chambers, Oswald as quoted in Newcitycatechism.com

⁶ Keller, Timothy. Romans 1-7 For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God's Word For You - Romans Series) (pp. 203-204). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.