

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Wrath of God Revealed

Romans 11:18-32

2000

Introduction

A disease or illness has to be diagnosed before an appropriate cure can be administered.

Illustration: Johnny and Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP)

In the same way, a person must be convinced of his guilt before God before he will be interested in God's forgiveness. He must be aware of his danger before he will be interested in the way of escape. He must understand the wrath of God before he can appreciate the salvation of God.

Paul, without apology, describes the depth of our wickedness and our deserved punishment before he reveals the soaring heights of the grace of God.

1. Man knows the truth - But we reject it
 - a. We are without excuse
2. Man knows God - But we reject Him
 - a. We will suffer the consequences
3. Man knows God's decrees - But we violate them
 - a. We deserve death

The point of 1:18-32 is to show that we are all guilty of sin.

Rom 3:23 "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Rom 3:19 "... so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

I The Focus of God's Wrath

A. The wrath of God is being revealed

Wrath = Orge = "A settled, determined indignation

versus

Thumos = "Momentary, uncontrolled emotional anger"

God's wrath is not some irrational passion, but to his settled hatred for sin expressed or continually **revealed**.

Reveal = Apokalupto = "To take off the cover, to disclose, to unveil"

In this context = "Continually being revealed"

The ultimate expression of God's wrath was demonstrated at the cross when Jesus took upon Himself the fullness of the Father's hatred for sin when He bore the full force of God's divine fury on the cross.

1. Against all **godlessness**; Our character

Jude 1:18-19 "They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

What is godlessness? It isn't necessarily atheism (the belief that God doesn't exist). Godlessness is *acting* as though he doesn't exist, disregarding God. Sound familiar?

2. Against all **wickedness**; Our behavior

Notice the order of this -- godlessness and then wickedness. The order is never reversed. It is the godless attitude that produces the wicked actions.

Nahum 1:3 "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished."

II The Reason For God's Wrath

A. Man's suppression of the **truth**

This could be translated, "who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by steadfastly holding to their sin."

God's truth has been made abundantly clear through what He has made.

But we are busy covering it up, hiding it, suppressing it, keeping it from being prominent and dominant in our thinking.

II Thess 2:10-12 "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

1. God has made Himself known through creation

There are two dimensions of God's revelation:

1. General revelation: Creation
2. Special revelation: The Word (spoken and written)

a. His eternal power

Ps 19:1-4 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice

goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

b. His **divine** nature

Ps 19:7-11 "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

Ecl 3:11 "He has also set eternity in the hearts of men"

Illustration: Helen Keller

Anne Sullivan helped Helen overcome her lack of hearing, sight and speech. When Anne began to communicate to Helen the existence and nature of God, Helen's response was that she already knew about Him -- she just didn't know His name.

2. Men are without **excuse**

Every person, no matter how isolated from God's written Word or the clear proclamation of His gospel, has enough divine truth evident through His creation to know and be reconciled to God. Yet multiplied millions refuse to acknowledge Him. And for this offense, they are without excuse.

John 15:22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin."

B. Man's rejection of God

1. They refused to:

a. **Glorify** Him as God

Ps 10:4 "In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God."

b. Give **thanks** to Him

In spite of the fact that "every good and perfect gift is from above, (James 1:17), man not only fails to acknowledge His existence -- but is not even willing to thank Him for His gifts.

Illustration: Our country's effort to silence the believers

No Christmas carols mentioning Jesus

No prayer at public gatherings or in government buildings

No reading of the Bible in the schools
No posting of the Ten Commandments
No one wants to admit that there is a God. They do not glorify him as God, neither do they give him thanks.

2. The results:

a. Their thinking became **futile**

Eph 4:17-18 "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."

b. Their foolish hearts were darkened

People think they can be free by rejecting God. Instead, their lives become marked by spiritual darkness and enslavement to sin.

Isa 60:2 "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you."

c. They claimed to be wise but became **fools**

The greatest fool in all the world is the person who exchanges God's wisdom of truth and light for man's wisdom of deceit and darkness.

Ps 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good."

d. They exchanged God for created images

The concept of "exchanging" links verse 26 with verse 25 and verse 23 where the same idea is found. People refused to accept the truth about God so they exchanged it for a lie in order to accommodate their sinful desires and lifestyles.

Quote: A.W. Tozer

"Idolatry begins in the mind when we pervert or exchange the idea of God for something other than what He really is."

1. Mortal man; Self-worship

Col 3:5 "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

2. Birds; Eagle (Rome); Stork and Hawk (Egypt)

3. Animals; Bull, cat, hippo, dung beetle, and flies (Egypt)

4. Reptiles; Snakes

It's interesting to note the downward progression of humanistic worship. The first creature man substitutes for God is himself. But in the end, it eventually leads to the worship of almost anything but God.

Illustration:

Hindus have 330 million gods that they worship including most animals and insects, because of their belief that these creatures may be either deities or human beings who are in another cycle of reincarnation.

Deut 4:15-19 "Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars-- all the heavenly array-- do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven."

III The Wrath of God Revealed

A. God gave them over:

If people really want their sinful lifestyles, then the terrible reality is God will give them over to it.

C. S. Lewis said, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in hell chose it." (C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*)

How does God give people over?

1. Indirectly

By withdrawing His protective hand, God allows the consequences of sin to take their inevitable, destructive course.

Sin degrades man and strips him of dignity, peace of mind, and a clear conscience. It destroys personal relationships, marriages, families, cities, and nations. It leads to the loneliness, frustration, meaninglessness, and despair that are so prevalent today.

2. Directly

By punishing mankind with specific and clear acts of judgment:

The sentence of death passed on Adam and Eve - Gen

The destruction of mankind during the Flood - Gen 6-7

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen 18-19
The destruction of Pharaoh and his army - Ex 14

These were not natural consequences of sin but are examples of God's supernatural intervention in judging the world.

1. To **sexual** impurity

Impurity = Uncleaness and often used of decaying matter.

As a moral term, it usually referred to sexual immorality.

Intercourse outside of monogamous marriage.

Eph 4:18-19 "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."

a. Degrading their bodies with one another

1Thes 4:3-6 "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you."

2. To **false** worship

a. They **exchanged** God's truth for a lie

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."

b. They worshipped the **creation** vs. the Creator

Acts 7:40-42 "They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt-- we don't know what has happened to him!' That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies."

Isa 50:11 "...This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment."

B. God gave them over:

1. To shameful **lusts**
 - a. Female homosexuality
 - b. **Male** homosexuality

In the first century, homosexuality was commonplace. Men like Socrates, and other great names of Greek philosophy and politics were homosexuals. Out of the first 15 Roman emperors, 14 were homosexuals.

"Inflamed with lust for one another"

The men and boys of Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen 19:1-11

The Bible consistently condemns homosexuality (Lev 18:22). Under the Old Covenant, it was punishable by death (Lev 20:13). And in the New Testament we are told that those who persist in this lifestyle will be excluded from heaven (1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; Jude 7)

Illustration:

One of the greatest lies is that homosexuality is genetic.

We are all born in sin and have certain tendencies and temptations. But no one is born a homosexual anymore than one is born a thief or a murderer.

Homosexuality is a sin, like other sins, that can be forgiven and from which a person can be delivered and freed by the power and grace of Jesus Christ.

2. The consequence:
 - a. The due **penalty** for their perversion
Prov 11:21 "Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished."

The terrible consequences of the homosexual lifestyle are visible evidence of God's righteous condemnation of this lifestyle. I believe that AIDS is a frightening consequence of the fatal promise we have here in Romans.

C. God gave them over:

1. To a **depraved** mind

Depraved = "Something that failed to stand the test"

It was commonly used to describe metals that were rejected by the refiner because of impurities.

Jer 6:30 "They are called rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them."

a. To do what shouldn't be done

2. To every kind of **sin**

This list of sin is not exhaustive, but merely representative of the virtually endless number of ways that man can express his sinful rebellion against God.

2 Tim 3:2-5 "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

IV Man's Response to God's Forewarned Wrath

A. They continue to **practice** sin

I Jn 3:6-10 "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him ... This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

B. They **approve** of those who practice sin

They not only continue to practice sin themselves, but they even encourage and applaud these sins of others.

They invade the field of education; they dominate the media; they seek legal status for their wickedness and defy all attempts by others to encourage self-governance.

Even the most moral and ethical societies you will find a small percentage of the population who choose perversity and wickedness over godliness. But a society that openly condones sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, or the murder of innocent millions through abortion and goes so far as to approve of those who practice such sin is truly corrupt and will incur the wrath of God.

2 Chr 19:2 "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you."

Conclusion

We have a clear choice:

1. The revelation of a righteousness from God that is by faith
2. The revelation of the righteous wrath of God against ungodliness and wickedness.

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”