

(E)

THE WRATH OF GOD

Romans 1:18-23

You have heard it said many times that God is Love. But...we can also say...God is Hate! Romans 1:18 says:

18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;"

God is Hate! God hates sin!

Saying "God is Love" is easy. You don't have to be a Christian to say it. In fact, "God is Love" has been said so many times that it has become a meaningless cliché to most people. But, saying "God is Hate" is not easy.

Back in the early sixties, I delivered mail for the Post Office. Suppose I had gone in to the Postmaster and told him, "I have a problem, Boss. My personal psychology is such that I can't stand the sight of unhappiness. So I'll be glad to deliver any mail about happy things like love letters or about people getting promotions or winning prizes. But I can't deliver any mail about unhappy things like deaths in the family or people getting fired from their jobs or anything like that. You'll have to get somebody else to deliver those kind of things." -- The Postmaster was a nice guy. He would have been very polite as he gave me directions to the unemployment office!

Those who deliver the mail have to deliver all the mail no matter how unpleasant that mail may be. In the same way, those who preach the Word of God must preach the whole Word of God, even the unpleasant parts. Paul is doing that in this passage of scripture. Paul made sure his listeners heard everything that God had to say. In Acts 20:27, upon his farewell to the Ephesian church, Paul declared, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

And so we see that God is Hate. God hates sin. The wrath of God is revealed.... But.... Wait a minute.... The wrath of God is revealed? Where? I don't see it. Evil permeates the entire world. II Peter 3:4 says, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

The greek for wrath in verse 18 is orga. It signifies an indignation that has risen gradually. Hoover Dam is one of the most magnificent manmade structures on Earth. It was constructed across the Colorado River and backed that river up many miles. The waters penetrate to every little cove

and valley. And, this is an example of the way the wrath of God has been stored up. When the first sin was committed, the wrath of God was stored up against that sin. As more men lived on the Earth, and as their hearts grew more wicked and the outbreaks of their sin grew more violent, the store of wrath grew greater and greater. It was only held back by the patience of God which lies across the valley of His judgment like Hoover Dam lies across the valley of the Colorado River.

Thank God for His patience! II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The CROSS is the revelation of God's wrath: the revelation that He really does mean business about this question of sin. We are trapped in the valley at the foot of the dam. The day is coming when the dam is going to burst. Woe to us if we are not covered over and protected by the blood of Jesus Christ on the day that God's wrath bursts forth!

When we see evil men apparently getting away with evil deeds, we must remember Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And, Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Nobody's really getting away with anything. We just don't always see the sword fall.

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The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

There is no excuse for not seeking out and finding God. All men can see His eternal power and Godhead revealed throughout all creation. Sure: He is invisible. But both He and His power can be readily deduced from things

we see every day.

If I am walking along the street and am suddenly knocked to the ground without seeing or hearing anything: If I am then rushed to a hospital where the doctors clean and dress a bullet wound in my shoulder; I can readily deduce that somebody fired a gun at me even though I never saw or heard him.

When I was fourteen, I was hit in the leg by a spent 22 caliber bullet. It had been fired from so far away that it didn't even break the skin. It just stung and then fell to the ground. Did I start considering various cosmological theories that might explain the sudden appearance of a bullet out of nowhere? I did not! I told myself, "Some idiot out there is shooting at me!", and I ran into the house as quick as I could.

The light in this room comes to us courtesy of the Commonwealth Edison Company. Much of Edison's electricity is generated in nuclear reactors. No-one has ever seen the actual nuclear reaction in the nucleus of an atom: it's too small. But the reaction exists! Hiroshima and Nagasaki testify that it exists! The light in this room testifies that it exists!

Suppose a student in a nuclear physics class in college flunks his final exam because he says, "I will not believe that nuclear reactions exist, because I can't see them." When he tries to talk his professor out of flunking him, the professor just paraphrases Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of nuclear energy are clearly seen, being understood by the effects that are manifested, so that the student is without excuse." There is no excuse for not searching out and laying hold on God's grace!

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But Romans 1:21 tells us that when God revealed Himself to men, men rejected Him and denied the revelation:

21. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Man is a religious animal. Even the most ardent athiest makes some gesture toward powers that are outside him and beyond his control. This is because man began high: knowing God, and is still vaguely aware of where he has fallen

from. But, without God's Word, the awareness remains vague because man is ruined and cannot perceive the things of God.

But the awareness is painful. Man tries to suppress it, to deny it. He refuses to listen to God's Word. Man invents all manner of lies to help himself deny the truth that he is nothing but the wreckage of something that was once great. He tries to turn the facts around completely.

Darwin said, "Man is developed from an ovule about 1/125 of an inch in diameter which differs in no respect from the ovules of other animals." Sounds plausible, doesn't it? Darwin built his theory of evolution on this and other "plausible" thoughts like it. But the thought, as plausible as it may sound, is really quite ignorant and foolish. It reveals that Darwin had absolutely no knowledge of genetics. The thought is as invalid as saying that California's Giant Redwoods are the same thing as ragweed because the redwood seed differs in no respect from the ragweed seed.

Suppose you came upon the wreckage of a 747^{AIRPLANE} one day and examined it thoroughly. Then suppose you examined a complete 747 at the airport. After a complete comparison of all the various nuts, bolts, turbine parts, and other components, you would, of course, be forced to conclude that the complete 747 had "evolved" from the lowly parts. You would have to exclaim, "How fascinating! This fabulous machine with its ability to fly still bears on its bodily frame the indelible stamp of its lowly origin." Hogwash!

Man today is not the culmination of an evolutionary climb out of the primordial ooze. Man today is the wreckage of the original great creation of God. We were great in Adam before the fall. Genesis 1:31 says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Before the fall, man was very good! Man is now the wreckage of what God created. Man is ruined in sin!

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Those who reject God's revelation of Himself; those who refuse to thank Him for all His wonderful gifts, call themselves wise, but they are actually fools who quickly fall into the idiocy of idolatry:

22. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

23. "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."

Idolatry is much worse today than it used to be. When Elijah stood for God against the prophets of Baal, those prophets were foolishly worshipping a statue. A statue has no power at all. But...as long as they were worshipping something outside of themselves, there was a possibility that they might learn that the statue had no power. Then they might turn to the real God.

But idolatry is much worse today! Today, man worships himself: mankind as a whole is now the idol. This is much worse because man does have some power. Men are not as likely to realize that they are worshipping a false god because their idol is no longer totally without power.

When men realized that they could not control their destinies themselves, and turned for help to idols made of wood or stone, they were extremely foolish. But at least they recognized their own inabilities and might have been led to God.

But now men refuse to admit that they cannot control their own destinies. They believe that the brotherhood of man can meet any challenge. They don't need any God outside of themselves!

Men today are worse idolators than were the prophets of Baal: worse in the sense that the chances of escape from modern idolatry are much slimmer!

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Thank God that we have been delivered from God's wrath. Jesus paid the price! Jesus paid it all! And, thank God that ~~He~~ ^{God HIMSELF} confirmed our salvation for all to see when He raised Christ from the dead!

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Hallelujah! Amen!

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