

## Romans Lesson 2

### The Wrath of God Revisited

Romans 1:18 makes clear the great need of the human race for the grace of God because the alternative is “the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”. God’s wrath is a recurring and dominant teaching throughout the Scriptures and in Romans it is the point where Paul begins his presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Believe it or not, a study of a concordance will show more references in Scripture to the anger and wrath of God than there are to His love. This is a far cry from the present day “prosperity gospel” which is so popular.

### Why are People so Offended at the Idea of the Wrath of God?

I can think of at least four reasons:

1. They think of wrath as emotional, malicious, capricious human anger. God’s wrath is not like that at all. It is God’s firm opposition to all wickedness. It is God’s righteous anger against all that contradicts His holiness.
2. People argue that wrath is unworthy of God. In fact, if God is holy, righteous, and just—the opposite of His nature should repulse Him, and as a righteous judge He is compelled to punish it.
3. People deny that we deserve God’s wrath. This is morally naïve, and is the objection Paul tackles in all of Romans 1-3.
4. They put wrath strictly in an “after death” category. The problem here is that Romans 1:18 is in the present tense—the wrath of God is currently being revealed.

### The Wrath of God in the Present Tense

In what way is the wrath of God currently being revealed? Charles Hodge says it is “the inherent tendency of moral evil to produce misery” and “the voice of a guilty conscience”. Robert Haldane says wrath was revealed “when God pronounced the sentence of death, the earth was cursed, and mankind was separated from God (spiritual death)”. Doug Moo says “virtually all that is evil or wrong in our world is a manifestation of God’s wrath”. I think Romans 1:24-28 is talking about what Hodge mentioned—THE TENDENCY OF MORAL EVIL TO PRODUCE MISERY. This happens when God abandons them. The worst thing you can do to children is abandon them. They will inevitably get deeper and deeper into trouble, and experience progressively more pain and suffering. Paul says this three different times in v24-28, “God gave them over”. By abandoning them, letting them go without restraint, rebellious people progress into perversion. Like the father of the Prodigal Son, He releases the rebellious child to supposed freedom, but in time the child wakes up in a self made hell on earth. God gives the rebellious human race over to the consequences of the sinful directions it has taken. Think of the irony of this—GOD PUNISHES YOU BY LETTING YOU DO WHAT YOU WANT. In time, the consequences of being abandoned build up to out right bondage to sin. Nevertheless, did the father of the Prodigal Son give up on him? No, in fact he kept a close watch out for him to return.

### The Current Relationship of the Estranged Human Race to God

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God “gave them over” to their “desires”, “degrading passions”, and “depraved mind”, but He hasn’t given up on the human race. If God had given up, why would He send His Son to die for us? Why would Paul be writing this letter to the Romans if God had given up? In the same way, we should not give up on the human race. This is why we are involved in evangelism, why we send missionaries out, and why we pray for people. This is the essence of the gospel—that Christ came to save sinners.

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