

## THE WRATH OF GOD IS BEING REVEALED

Romans 1:18-32

Key Verse 18

*“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness...”*

We live in a godless world where the majority of people openly rebel against God. They worship ancestors.....They bow down to many man made idols. Men and women shamelessly sleep around with one another..... homosexuality is not only prevalent among us today but has become a way of life that we are forced to accept as natural.....as normal. People around us are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. And although they know that it is wrong to live in this way, they not only continue to do these very things but also encourage others to do the same!

How do you feel when you see these things around you? I am sure, like me you are troubled, right?! Even discouraged!! We wonder how God can allow these people to so freely live in these shameless and depraved ways!! But this is the wrong way of looking at the situation! In today’s passage we will learn to look at the godless and wicked ways of people.....with new eyes.....and new understanding. For the extremity of the godlessness and wickedness of people vividly reveals that God has already passed judgement on them. For in His wrath God has handed people over to the sinful desires of their hearts! And there is nothing....except the grace of God.....that can save them from utter depravity and eternal destruction.

I sincerely pray that through this message God will help you and me to look with new eyes at the godlessness and wickedness of people around us. May God reveal His wrath in our hearts today! Amen.

Look at verses 19-20. God has revealed Himself to people in creation, since the creation of the world. We call this “natural revelation of God.” Of course, we cannot know everything about God based on what we see in creation. To know God more perfectly we also need special revelation; that is why God has given us His word. Nevertheless, in creation, every single person can see that God exists. For in creation people has seen God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. (20) When they see it they understood that God created the heavens the earth. Therefore they know they must worship God and give thanks to Him.

That is exactly what Carl Boberg, a Swedish man, did when he once observed God’s creation. Listen to what he wrote in his diary: *“It was that time of year when everything seemed to be in its richest colouring; the birds were singing in trees and everywhere. It was very warm; a thunderstorm appeared on the horizon and soon there was thunder and lightning. We had to hurry to shelter. But the storm was soon over and the clear sky appeared..... That evening, he burst into praise and wrote the famous hymn: “How Great Thou Art.”<sup>1</sup> Do you know it?*

*“O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art!!!”*

This is the right way to respond when we see God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature - in creation. We should praise and thank God! But not everyone do so! Instead, despite factual

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Boberg, quoted in Michael Ireland, "Velikiy Bog: How Great is Our God! The story behind how a thunderstorm in Sweden prompted the writing of How Great Thou Art, one of Christianity’s greatest and much-loved hymns" ASSIST News Service (2007).

proof of God's existence in creation, they deny that God exists. They say He is not real! Why!!!!?? It is because they deliberately suppress the truth. (18b) For although they see God's invisible qualities in creation and understood that He exists....., they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. (21) Instead, by their wickedness they say: "we will not worship God nor will we give thanks to Him." Then they deny God's existence by saying that the world was formed by an accidental "big-bang" and that over millions of years man has evolved from a baboon to the sophisticated beings we are today. **This is godlessness!!!** For in saying this, people deliberately reject God as God. To live without Him.....as if He does not exist. They say they do not know God! But Paul said, they are without excuse. For they can see from creation that God does exist! Yet they suppress this truth. These are godless people!

Then what is God's response to this godlessness of people? Look again at verse 18. Let's all read it together. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness. People's godlessness provokes the wrath of God. Naturally, when we hear the words "wrath of God" our hearts are shaken, right! But what is the wrath of God? Most people misunderstand it. They think it is like human anger by which God suddenly explodes uncontrollably with rage. Whereas, the wrath of God is the total opposite. The original Greek word for the word "wrath" in verse 18 (orgé) means "settled anger." The wrath of God is settled because it is fixed....it is steadfast..... and it is controlled. At the same time it is **HOT WITH PASSION!!!** Passion that vehemently condemns the godlessness of people. God hates godlessness just as.....He hates sin.....and absolutely condemns godlessness with all His being.....How do we know this? Look again at verse 18. It says the wrath of God is..... being revealed..... from heaven..... against the godlessness of people! But how? Do you see the wrath of God being revealed from heaven? Have you lately seen fiery sulfur raining down from heaven..... as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah? No we have not! Then how is the wrath of God revealed? **It is revealed through a number of quiet..... invincible .....yet DEVASTATING..... RESULTS..... within people.**

Look at verses 21b. their thinking became futile The first place where the wrath of God is quietly revealed..... is in **the thinking**..... of godless people. When God created man, He gave him the ability to think soberly and accurately about God. However, when man suppressed the truth by denying that God exists, God in His wrath removed this ability. Then their thinking about God became futile. No matter how much they try think about God, the reasoning of godless people about Him will always be **fundamentally flawed.....resulting in them moving further and further away from God**. I am not sure what is worse: being visibly burned up with sulphur from heaven or have my ability to meet God in my thinking taken away! For think about it: if your ability to think about God is fundamentally flawed.....you will drift further and further away from God.....and NEVER MEET HIM! This is devastating!! We can understand that there are severe consequences both in this world and the next; right!? Is God upset about the godlessness of people? You bet He is!! For we see the wrath of God being **revealed through the quiet..... invincible .....yet devastating..... result.....WITHIN.... people** ..... where their thinking becoming futile.

The second place where the wrath of God is quietly revealed is in the hearts of godless people. Look again at verse 21b: their foolish hearts were darkened. When God created man, He gave him the ability to accept simple truths about God. For example in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This is the simplest yet the foundational truth of our existence!! However, when man suppressed this truth, by denying that God is the Creator of the universe.....God in His wrath also removed man's ability to accept any truth of God. For their foolish hearts become darkened. No matter how much a godless person hear the truth of God, he simply cannot accept it in their hearts. For his heart became darkened and therefore naturally reject the word of God. Again, I am not sure what is worse: being visibly burned up with sulphur from heaven or have my ability to accept the word of God taken away from me!! For think about it: if your ability to accept the word of God taken

away.....you can never accept the gospel and be saved! Moreover, you will NEVER meet God! This is horrific; right!? So is God upset about the godlessness of people? Yes He is!! For we see the wrath of God being **revealed through the quiet..... invincible .....yet devastating..... result.....WITHIN..... people.....** where their foolish hearts were darkened.

Look at verse 22. Ironically, godless people claim to be wise. Yet, the truth is, they became fools. (22) For why else would you worship idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.....instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God. (23,25) Only a fool would do this, right?! In the Greco-Roman world, many gods were worshipped, such as Jupiter, Diana, Apollo, Mars, Venus, and even Portunus - the god of keys, ports and livestock. The emperor was also worshipped as a god. In addition, animals, birds and reptiles - such as elephants, cows, monkeys, pigs, wolves, hawks, beetles, and even snakes - were worshipped. **(How foolish right!!)** Roman families also worshipped household gods, including part beast, and part human. Only someone whose thinking has become futile whose heart is darkened can begin to understand why they would do such a thing!.....But this is not just an ancient story. **In our times, people likewise worship all kinds of idols. They especially bow down before the ancestors, right? But they also worship celebrities, money, power and even demons! When we see this we are easily discouraged. Sometimes we are even tempted to join them!! But we must know that IDOL WORSHIPPING IS FOR GODLESS FOOLS WHO EXCHANGE THE GLORY OF God for lifeless and powerless things. They worship idols because their thinking is futile and their foolish hearts darkened. Whereas we have the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts to help us glorify God and give thanks to God. Amen.**

There is a third way the wrath of God is quietly revealed within people. Look at verse 24. (Read) Sinful desires are desires that makes people long for things that is contrary to ways of God. As believers, we all still have these sinful desires. For they originate from our fallen nature. Yet, with the help of the Holy Spirt.....and by the power of Jesus' blood.....we can still resist these sinful desires of our hearts and do what is right in God's eyes! This is not true for godless people. For in His wrath God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts. **This means that God** removed from a godless person's heart any restraint against sin so that he cannot resist sin or do what is right. But instead freely.....and without hindrance.....only follow the sinful desires of his heart.

At first, this does not sound so bad, right!? However, this is the worst thing that can happen to a person. Without any restraint, there is nothing that can stop him from descending into utter depravity and corruption. It is like a man hanging on a rope from a one kilometre high bridge. As long as the rope holds fast, the man has a chance of being pulled up to safety. However, when the rope is cut, the man will freefall to his death on the ground. At first, it may seem like fun. But ultimately, as the man picks up speed and comes closer and closer the ground, he will cry out in panic. Yet there is nothing to save him. Until he hits the ground and die a painful death. It is no different with people when God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts. Because they suppress the truth about Him.....and refuse to worship and give thanks to Him.....God in His wrath cut the rope.....allowing man the freedom to gratify every single sinful desire of his godless heart.....until all that remains of him is depravity and eternal condemnation. This is shocking, right!? And so it should be! For God does not play around with godless people! His righteous wrath demands their punishment and condemnation!

So what happened when God gave godless people over in the sinful desires of their hearts? Yes, they went all out! Look again at verse 24. Firstly, people began to indulge in sexual impurity. Sex is a beautiful gift from God, to be enjoyed only in marriage. But godless people pervert this gift and abuse it in all kinds of awful ways. Men and woman freely sleep around with countless partners. They also commit shameful acts of fornication. Sometimes out of desperation (either for gratification or remuneration) they engage in prostitution. And they do so freely and sometimes even shamelessly!

As if it is normal.....even enjoyable! But nothing can be further from the truth! Look again at verse 24. In committing acts of sexual impurity, they degrade their bodies with one another. Here the Greek word for degrade<sup>2</sup>, means to treat one's body dishonourably, shamefully and with **INDignity**. As if it has no value. Whereas it is the precious temple of God!! So through sexual impurity people over time degrade their bodies from being the holy temple of God..... to the lowest of lowly prostitution house. This too is alarming! What is even more alarming is that even if a godless person wants to stop, they simply cannot for in His wrath God **made them to be slaves to sexual immorality and depravity. We should never envy those who are slaves of sexual immorality. For they are godless people who not only** endlessly degrade their bodies with one another. But also people **through whom the wrath of God is being revealed.**

But some people did not stop at sexual impurity. They went even further in gratifying the sinful desires of their hearts. Look at verses 26-27. (Read) Here the word shameful lust is a strong sexual desire that is not guided by God. We call this homosexuality. No matter what the world tells us..... according to these verses: homosexuality is not only a shameful sin. But also reveals the wrath of God. Listen again to the language Paul uses. (Quietly follow with me as I read verses 26b-27) women exchanged ..... natural.....sexual relations for..... unnatural ones..... In the same way the men also abandoned..... natural relations..... with women and were inflamed with..... homosexual lust.....for one another. Men committed.....shameful acts..... with other men. God's word cannot be clearer on homosexuality. God has created sexual relations to be enjoyed between a married man and a woman. This is the natural way. Homosexuality is unnatural.....it is a perversion of what God created and are therefore shameful acts. (Gen. 1:28; 2:24)

Now in their foolishness, homosexuals will boast about their unnatural sexual orientation. Claiming that they were born this way and that they enjoy it. However, look again at verse 27b. It says they received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (84 NIV) Simply put, as they freefall in their unnatural sins..... they suffer physical, emotional, mental and spiritual misery. For God did not create us to enjoy homosexual relations. Again I wonder what is worse: being visibly burned up with sulphur from heaven or being handed over to such shameful lusts within my sinful heart! I think to be enslaved by homosexual desires is worst. It is just so shamefully unnatural! And a perversion of how God made a man and a woman. **During the orientation week many of us saw openly gay men shamelessly walking around in women's clothing. We were all shocked to say the least! Once I went into a bookstore to inquire about a certain book. When the lady at the counter turned to help me, I quickly realised that it is not a lady but a man. Dressed in woman's clothing. I was so shocked that I even forgot what I wanted to ask. Afterwards, I was upset to have to be exposed to such perversion! However, through preparing this message, I have realised that I have to look at homosexual people (even transgender) from a biblical point of view. For in them I now vividly see the wrath of God being revealed against their godlessness! Now, I have pity on them and pray God may save them as He saved me.**

There is a fourth way the wrath of God is quietly revealed within people. Look at verse 28. Furthermore, just as godless people did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God in His wrath gave them over to a..... depraved mind. A depraved mind is a mind that is totally corrupt. It is the lowest level a person can reach for it enables any kind of evil action..... so that someone does what ought not to be done. Look at verse 29. (Read) Can you imagine your mind being filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. This is torture, right!! How can a person live with all this evil within them?!!! What about being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. If this is your reality then you would want to harm every single person around you all the time!! There can be no love.....no peace.....no compassion in your heart. How miserable! How devastating it must

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<sup>2</sup> atimázō

be. And to make matters even worse is no matter what you do, you cannot escape your depravity.....for in His wrath God cut the rope.....He has handed you over to your depraved mind to suffer the consequences of your godlessness.

It doesn't stop there. The degradation goes deeper!! Look at verses 30-31. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (NIV 84 Translation) That sounds like the description of people in the mafia, right!? Yet this is not only the fate of gangsters but of every single godless person..... who despite knowing God, refuse to glorify God or give thanks to Him. (21) Their wickedness knows no end!

Look at verse 32. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. The final step down in human degradation is people's promotion of wickedness. It is bad to practice these things, but it is even worse to encourage others to practice them. In such cases not only is the voice of conscience silenced, but the mind has become absolutely numb regarding the moral degradation and ruin of others, and actually takes pleasure in sinfulness. In this way, ungodly people form an ungodly culture.

In conclusion: In this passage we unequivocally learned that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the godlessness of people in **a number of quiet..... invincible .....yet devastating..... results..... WITHIN people and society.** The question is, as believers, how should we respond to this?

Firstly, as believers, we must adopt a biblical view of the godlessness and wickedness of people around us. When Paul saw all unrestrained evil and depravity in people, he was not discouraged.....nor tempted for a moment to join them. Instead, he was even more determined to live uprightly before God and preach the gospel! For in the godlessness and wickedness of people.....Paul saw the wrath of God being revealed! This is the biblical view of how we also should look at the world around us! For if we do it will change so much about how we see ourselves and others in this world.

Once you and I were as godless as those people who Paul described in this passage. We were the ones hanging on a rope from God, rejecting God and eagerly wanting to be free from Him to live according to our sinful desires! The truth is, in His wrath, God cut the rope and allowed us to freefall, like any other godless person. The difference for us who are saved is, however, God in His grace..... stretched out His merciful hand to catch us and bring us safely back up to Him. He did so through the gospel which is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes in Jesus. Does this mean you and I are any better than those who are still falling deeper and deeper in sin? Not at all!! For there is no one who does good...not even one. We are all equally sinful! It is only by the one sided grace of God that He chose you and me to be His precious children.

Then how should we respond to the wrath of God that is being revealed all around us in godless people? Firstly, we must glorify God as God and give thanks to Him for His wonderful grace of saving a terrible sinner like you and me. Secondly, we must not be ashamed of the gospel but earnestly preach it to godless people. For when they hear it and God helps them to believe it, then like you and me, through faith God will save them from His wrath and give them a righteousness from God.....by which they will be known as the children of God.

Yes, the depravity in people on campus and at work is extreme! Yet, I pray it may no longer discourage you. But rather strengthen your faith in God, to live uprightly before Him with thanksgiving in your heart.....and spur you on to not be ashamed of the gospel. But earnestly preached it so that God may save His people from His wrath.

