

Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God (34)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 06/19/16)

A. God's Case Against All Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men: Why God Shows Wrath, [Romans 1:18-23](#)

([Romans 1:18-3:20](#)) **DIVISION OVERVIEW**: the teaching of this whole passage can be summarized into **three points**.

1. Men who sin bring upon themselves the judgment of God and they need God's righteousness ([Romans 1:18-2:16](#)).
2. Men without the law, the heathen, are taught by nature and conscience. However, they have sinned by falling short of the standard of righteousness given to them ([Romans 1:18-32](#)). Similarly, the moralist and self-righteous who have the law have sinned by falling short of their standard of righteousness, that is, the law ([Romans 2:1-3:8](#)).
3. Therefore, all the world becomes guilty before God ([Romans 3:19](#)) and needs God's righteousness ([Romans 3:9-20](#)).

As Paul begins to unfold the details of the gospel of God in which His righteousness is revealed (see [vv. 16-17](#)), he presents an extended discussion of the condemnation of man that extends through [chapter 3](#) and [verse 20](#). He starts with an unequivocal affirmation of God's righteous "**wrath**."

The idea of a wrathful God goes against the wishful thinking of fallen human nature and is even a stumbling block to many Christians. Much contemporary evangelism talks only about abundant life in Christ, the joy and blessings of salvation, and the peace with God that faith in Christ brings. All of those benefits do result from true faith, but they are not the whole picture of God's plan of salvation. The corollary truth of God's judgment against sin and those who participate in it must also be heard.

For Paul, fear of eternal condemnation was the **first motivation** he offered for coming to Christ, the first pressure he applied to evil men. He was determined that they understand the reality of being under God's wrath before he offered them the way of escape from it. That approach makes both logical and theological sense. A person cannot appreciate the wonder of God's grace until he knows about the perfect demands of God's law and he cannot appreciate the fullness of God's love for him until he knows something about the fierceness of God's anger against his sinful failure to perfectly obey that law. He cannot appreciate God's

07-03-16

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forgiveness until he knows about the eternal consequences of the sins that require a penalty and need forgiving.

Orgē (wrath) refers to a settled, determined indignation, not to the momentary, emotional, and often **uncontrolled anger (thumos)** to which human beings are prone. God's attributes are balanced in divine perfection. If He had no righteous anger and wrath, He would not be God, just as surely as He would not be God without His gracious love. He perfectly hates just as He perfectly loves, perfectly loving righteousness and perfectly hating evil ([Psalm 45:7](#); [Hebrews 1:9](#)).

[Psalm 45:7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

[Hebrews 1:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹“YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE, GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”

One of the great tragedies of modern Christianity, including much of evangelicalism, is the failure to preach and teach the wrath of God and the condemnation it brings upon all with unforgiven sin. The truncated, sentimental gospel that is frequently presented today falls far short of the gospel that Jesus and the apostle Paul proclaimed.

In glancing through a psalter from the late nineteenth century, I discovered that many of the psalms in that hymnal emphasize the wrath of God, just as much of the book of Psalms itself emphasizes His “**wrath.**” It is tragic that few hymns or other Christian songs today reflect that important biblical focus.

Scripture, New Testament as well as Old, consistently emphasizes God's righteous “**wrath.**” Against those who scoff at Him, God “**will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury.**”

[Psalm 2:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵“Then He will speak to them in His Anger And terrify them in His fury, saying.”

The psalmist goes on to admonish, “**Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!**” ([Psalm 2:12 NASB](#)).

Asaph wrote,

[Psalm 76:6-7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

⁷ You, even You, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

07-03-16

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Another psalmist reminded unfaithful Israel of what God had done to the defiant Egyptians who refused to let His people leave:

[Psalm 78:49-51 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁹ He sent upon them His burning anger, Fury and indignation and trouble, A band of destroying angels.

⁵⁰ He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave over their life to the plague,

⁵¹ And smote all the firstborn in Egypt, The first *issue* of their virility in the tents of Ham.

Speaking in behalf of Israel, Moses lamented,

[Psalm 90:7-9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ For we have been consumed by Your anger And by Your wrath we have been dismayed.

⁸ You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence.

⁹ For all our days have declined in Your fury; We have finished our years like a sigh.

The prophets spoke much of God's "**wrath**." Isaiah declared,

[Isaiah 9:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire; No man spares his brother."

Jeremiah proclaimed,

[Jeremiah 7:20 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched."

Through Ezekiel, God warned His people that:

[Ezekiel 7:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will become an abhorrent thing; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetite nor can they fill their stomachs, for their iniquity has become an occasion of stumbling.

In many well-known ways God expressed His "**wrath**" against sinful mankind in past ages. In the days of Noah, He destroyed all mankind in the Flood, except for eight people ([Genesis 6-7](#)).

07-03-16

Series: The Book of Romans

Several generations after Noah, He confounded men's language and scattered them around the earth for trying to build an idolatrous tower to heaven ([Genesis 11:1-9](#)).

Genesis 11:1-9 (NASB)

¹ Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

² It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

³ They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

⁴ They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

⁵ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

⁶ The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them."

⁷ "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

In the days of Abraham, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, with only Lot and his family escaping ([Genesis 18-19](#)). He destroyed Pharaoh and his army in the sea as they vainly pursued the Israelites to bring them back to Egypt ([Exodus 14](#)). He poured out His wrath against pagan kings such as Sennacherib ([2 Kings 18-19](#)), Nebuchadnezzar ([Daniel 4](#)), and Belshazzar ([Daniel 5](#)).

He even poured out His wrath against some of His own people—"Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. ²⁶ He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin" ([1 Kings 15:25-26 NASB](#)).

And against Aaron and Miriam, Moses' brother and sister, for questioning Moses' revelations from Him ([Numbers 12:1-10](#)).

Numbers 12:1-10 (NASB)

¹ Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman);

² and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the LORD heard it.

³ (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

⁴ Suddenly the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out.

07-03-16

Series: The Book of Romans

⁵ Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward,

⁶ He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream.”

⁷ “Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household;

⁸ With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?”

⁹ So the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed.

¹⁰ But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as *white as snow*. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous.

God’s “**wrath**” is just as clearly exhibited in the New Testament, both in reference to what He has already done and to what He will yet do at the end of the age. The gospel of John, which speaks so eloquently of God’s love and graciousness, also speaks powerfully of His anger and wrath. The comforting words:

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

John 3:36 (NASB)

³⁶ “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Later in his epistle to the Romans, Paul focuses again on God’s “**wrath**,” declaring,

Romans 9:22 (NASB)

²² “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?”

The apostle warned the Corinthians that anyone who did not love the Lord Jesus was to be eternally cursed (**1 Corinthians 16:22**).

1 Corinthians 16:22 (NASB)

²² “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is **to be accursed**. Maranatha.”

He said to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 5:6 (NASB)

⁶ “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the **wrath of God** comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

He warned the Colossians that because of “immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry,... the wrath of God will come” (**Colossians 3:5-6**).

Colossians 3:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to

07-03-16

Series: [The Book of Romans](#)

immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.

He assured the persecuted Thessalonian believers that God would one day give them relief and that:

[2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷“And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

⁸dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

A disease has to be recognized and identified before seeking a cure means anything. In the same way and for the same reason, Scripture reveals the bad news before the good news. God’s righteous judgment against sin is proclaimed before His gracious forgiveness of sin is offered. A person has no reason to seek salvation from sin if he does not know he is condemned by it. He has no reason to want spiritual life unless he realizes he is spiritually dead.

With the one exception of Jesus Christ, every human being since the Fall has been born condemned, because when Adam and Eve fell, the divine sentence against all sinners was passed. Paul therefore declared to the Romans that **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** ([Romans 3:23 NASB](#)).

He reminded the Ephesians:

[Ephesians 2:1-3 \(NASB\)](#)

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

In the brief scope of one verse ([Romans 1:18](#)), Paul presents **six features** that characterize God’s wrath: 1) **its quality**, 2) **its time**, 3) **its source**, 4) **its extent** 5) **nature**, and 6) **its cause**.