**“WITHOUT EXCUSE”**

*The Wrath of God*

Romans is the longest and among the latest epistles written Paul, during the time he was in Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey, (where he planted churches in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and other places) before he went back to Jerusalem to be persecuted by the Jews and imprisoned by the Romans.

**Romans 15:23 “**But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, … I have been longing for many years to visit you.

He had not yet been to Rome when he wrote this letter, he only got there at the end of his life on a Roman prison ship (and as far as we know, never made it to Spain). He was well acquainted with many of the people who made up the Roman church however (see chapter 16), and was very familiar with the welfare of the church in Rome through his close friends Aquilla and Priscilla who had just moved from Rome to Corinth and shared a home and business with Paul. They had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman Emperor Claudius in the year 49. (After this the church in Rome was predominantly Gentile, which is why Paul addresses it this way in the letter.)

Interesting to note that even though the Roman Coliseum had not yet been built (80AD), Rome was still the largest and most advanced city in the world. It was a decadent society on every level, engaging in all kinds of perversions including constant, gruesome executions for sport and entertainment of whomever they decided to kill. This is the setting of the church in Rome as they began to meet, and when they received this letter from Paul.

The book of Romans is the clearest and most comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine in the New Testament. The book is a thorough, comprehensive exposition that presents Paul’s teaching and questions on important subjects and clearly answers and interprets them throughout the letter.

Last week:

**Romans 1:16-17“**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. **17**For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

### The second half of Chapter 1 is about God’s Wrath Against Sinful Humanity

### Paul writes to them about “the wrath of God”.

### What is the wrath of God?

*Wrath* is defined as “the emotional response to perceived wrong and injustice,”

Both humans and God express wrath. But there is vast difference between the wrath of God and the wrath of man. God’s wrath is holy and always justified; man’s is never holy and rarely justified.

***DEFINITION -*** *God’s wrath, in perfect harmony with all of his divine attributes, is the holy action of retributive justice towards persons whose actions deserve condemnation.*

### How is the wrath of God consistent with the Love of God?

Wrath can only take place in a situation where someone really cares about a situation involving something or someone else.

The fact that God loves, is the very reason for His wrath. If someone does not care about anyone or anything, they are not likely to respond to anything in wrath, but would be completely indifferent.

God loves us, and cares about everything that we do, and what takes place around us. Because He cares and because He loves.

### TEXT:

### Romans 1:18-32

**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, **19**since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20For *since the creation of the world* God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are *without excuse.***

WITHOUT EXCUSE

What does this mean?

How are people expected to know about God if they’ve never learned the Bible. What about if they grew up in a culture that was atheistic, polytheistic or had a different understanding of the origin of the universe?

Basically, Paul is saying that human beings, ever since the time of Adam and Eve, could easily know at least *some* things about God by looking at the earth and all of creation. We should look at what is visible around us in nature, what God has made, and arrive at some obvious conclusions about what is not visible. we should understand from nature that God has *eternal power and a divine nature.*

This is hard for us to imagine because of the age we live in. Everything we know of God we’ve learned from the Bible. Before we knew God, we had no real knowledge of right and wrong, correct?

Paul tells us that this isn’t true. Even those who have no Bibles (or written law) have God’s laws *written on their hearts* and they are judged by their conscience.

**Romans 2:12-15“**When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God’s written law. And the Jews, who *do* have God’s law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. **13**For merely listening to the law doesn’t make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. **14**Even Gentiles, who do not have God’s written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. **15**They demonstrate that *God’s* *law is written in their hearts*, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.”

The argument, that *“if you don’t know you’re sinning, you are not guilty of sin”* is no excuse. Mankind stands condemned for sin, that’s why we need the Word of God that exposes sin, but also shows us the way to be free from sin.

In other words, *ignorantia juris non excusat* (Latin for "ignorance of the law is no excuse"). This is true in most legal systems, and it’s definitely true of God’s law.

**21**For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22**Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

### During the time Paul wrote Romans (49AD), The Roman empire was not only the most powerful empire in the world, but Rome was the most advanced city in the world, technologically, politically and (because of what they stole from the Greeks) philosophically as well (which included their pagan religions).

### They completely disregarded the One True God, instead, they worshipped the emperors as gods and bowed to pagan idols and statues of people, animals and birds. Roman religions involved idol worship. Each god needed an image – usually a statue or relief in stone or bronze – and an altar or temple at which to offer prayers and sacrifices. In fact the symbol for the Roman empire was an *“aquila”* a bronze eagle that was carried on a pole of a Roman legion.

**24**Therefore *God gave them over* in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25**They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

**26**Because of this, *God gave them over* to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. **27**In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with *women and were inflamed with lust for one another.* *Men committed shameful acts with other men*, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

### They showed open disregard to any form of morality or ethics in every area of depravity; homosexuality, licentiousness, violence, pride, and greed. Anyone who spoke the truth about God or practiced godliness was persecuted, ordered to leave, or put to death.

### Paul understood that this was not isolated only to Rome, the entire world was filled with this type of evil, but the worst of it was heavily concentrated in Rome where this church was, and where these people lived their lives. He lets them know that God is well aware of the ungodliness of this world and he is *not indifferent* toward it.

**28**Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so *God gave them over* to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. **29**They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, **30**slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; **31**they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. **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. <>

Three times he says; “*God gave them over”* to their own sin and destruction, which produced the worst fate possible. The Romans destroyed themselves from within. One emperor after another killed each other and also the families of the previous leader. They were infested with envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice, and as a result, all of the consequences of sin and ungodliness filled their lives.

For many generations Rome operated as a *living hell* for both citizens and subjects of Rome because of their detestable practices, until it was destroyed by its own moral decay from within. It became vulnerable and weak and eventually was conquered by internal and external forces.

This is not unlike our society today. There are many studies both religious and secular that show moral decay in society usually precedes weakness that leads to collapse.

The worst outcomes that can happen to an evil and immoral society is when it is “left to its own devices”.

The only hope our world has to escape God’s wrath is to know the will of God, repent, and obey it. This why it is so important to speak the truth about God’s word and His love even to a sinful generation that openly rejects God.

**Romans 5:8-9 “**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

What about *our* sin. Does God just give up on us when we continue in sin, and *give us over* to our own depravity and leave us to our own devices? Thankfully not!

No, the Lord loves us, so He disciplines us.

**Hebrews 12:5-11** “have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
    and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
**6**because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
    and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”(Proverbs 3:11-12)

**7**Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? **8**If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. **9**Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! **10**They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11**No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a *harvest of righteousness and peace* for those who have been trained by it.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God is our Father, and disciplines us for our good so that we may share in His holiness.

As Parents:

Disciplining young children: Depending on the level of disobedience, is the level of consequences. (Being messy with food was not as punishable as wandering out into the road.)

As older children or teens: Take away privileges, raise my voice, or worse A SPEECH

In some rare cases, I turn them over to the consequences of their own actions or inactions, but only enough that they would learn and remember for next time.

WHY?

Why do I care at all?

Why am I not just simply indifferent and oblivious to whatever they do?

It’s because I love them, a deeply care about their lives.

Our Heavenly Father is the same way.

He disciplines us because He loves us.

His desire is not to continually pour wrath upon us.

He is a Father who wants to dwell with us and us with Him.

To fellowship with us, and welcome us into His presence.

Yes, He wants us to repent, and turn from or sin. But that it no longer separates us from Him. Because the only thing that can hinder our relationship, communion, and fellowship with God, is sin.

**Rev. 3:19“**Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. **20**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

Pray…

**1st John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” # # #