

Romans 1:18-20  
The Justness of God's Wrath

**Introduction:** Having established his right to speak (1:1) and his reasons for (1:14) speaking and having announced that the gospel concerns “the righteousness of God” (1:16–17), Paul now exposes the unrighteousness of human beings. (LCC)

**1) What is the ACTIVITY concerning this wrath?—1:18**

- a) *For [ga,r] the wrath of God is revealed [pres. pass. ind. avpokalu,ptw]*
  - i) The meaning of *revealed*:
    - (1) **Negatively:** This wrath could not be discovered by humanity.
    - (2) **Positively:** This wrath had to be disclosed by God Himself.
  - ii) The repetition of *revealed* from 1:17.
  - iii) The reality of *revealed*. It is an ongoing activity.
- b) This explains why salvation is available only by faith. Because of this verdict against us by a holy God, we must cast ourselves on Christ alone to be brought into a right standing with God.

**2) What is the SOURCE of this wrath?**

- a) From God's **person**: *the wrath of God*
  - i) This wrath is not from some inanimate or impersonal force.
- b) From God's **throne**: *from [avpo,] heaven*
  - i) Where there is no sin, where God's will is always done.

**3) What is the NATURE of this wrath [ovrgh,]?**

- a) Stated **Negatively**:
  - i) This is not simply an impulsive, emotional, knee-jerk response
- b) Stated **Positively**:
  - i) This is His settled anger.
  - ii) Wrath is the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness. (J. Murray)

**4) Who are the OBJECTS of this wrath?**

- a) All people—*against [evpi,] all ... of men*
  - i) *ungodliness [avse,beia]* (lack of reverence toward God)
  - ii) *and unrighteousness [avdiki,a]* (lack of conformity to God's standard)
- b) Sinful, active rebels—*who by their unrighteousness [avdiki,a]* (attempt to) *suppress [pres. act. ptc. kate,cw] the truth [avlh,qeia]* (reality about God revealed in nature)
  - i) Deliberate attempts of suppressing the truth assume a knowledge of the truth. People hold down what truth they know in their desire to live as they please. (Magill)
  - ii) The history of the human race discloses a determined effort to oppose the will of God. (E. A. Blum)

- c) This is a self-imposed blindness. God's truth is replaced with idolatry. (cf. 1:21-23)

**5) What is the CAUSE of this wrath?—1:19-20** (natural/general revelation)

- This substantiates the claim that people suppress knowledge about God.
- a) Real knowledge about the real God—*For [dio,ti] what can be known [gnwsto,j] about God is plain* (clear, obvious, visible) [*fanero,j*] *to them*
  - This is not saving knowledge.
  - i) God is **deliberate**: *For [ga,r] God has shown it [aor. act. ind. fanero,w] to them*
    - (1) God has taken the initiative to make Himself known.
  - ii) God is **knowable**, yet that knowledge is limited: *For [ga,r] his invisible [avo,ratoj] attributes, namely, His eternal [avi,?dioj] power [du,namij] and divine nature* (Godhood, Godness) [*qeio,thj*], *have been clearly perceived [noe,w kaqora,w], ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.*
    - (1) “Clearly perceived” indicates that they have thought about this truth.
    - (2) Psalm 19:1-6
  - iii) Those who suppress the truth deny what is made obvious about God through creation (vv. 19–20) and do not acknowledge God as sovereign Creator. (FSB)
- b) Indefensible before God: *So [eivj] they are without excuse [avnapolo,ghtoij]*
  - i) They are unable to defend themselves in God's court of law.
  - ii) No one responds correctly to God's revelation in creation on their own.
  - iii) Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they have. (BKC)
  - iv) This addresses the question: what about those who have never heard about the person and work of Christ?

**6) Things we need to remember:**

- a) Note how Paul paints this picture of humanity against the background of God's wrath.
- b) Until men are persuaded of their lost condition, they are not likely to be concerned about deliverance. (E.F. Harrison)
- c) Natural revelation is sufficient to make people responsible, but is not by itself sufficient to accomplish his salvation. (E. F. Harrison)
  - i) No one can honestly say, “I did not know.”
- d) People are still human; we are not animals or machines. We have a conscience and we can understand God's natural revelation. What we do with that knowledge is up to us.
- e) That verdict stands over the people we meet every day just as much as over the people Paul rubbed shoulders with in the first century, and our urgency in communicating the gospel should be as great as Paul's. (D. Moo)
  - i) The problem is for fallen humans, each at the center of his or her own universe, to acknowledge that they need a Savior. They will quickly acknowledge that they need a guide, that they need help, that they need

greater technical expertise. But Paul wants them to see that they need a Savior. (F. Schaeffer)

Next time: Romans 1:21-32