

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans  
TITLE: Wrath Revealed

SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:18-32

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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The church in Rome had an interesting story. There weren't outright fights, but there were definitely tensions between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) in the church. There were theological, political, social, and practical issues that Paul is writing to address. Their need for greater unity was directly tied to their need to better understand the gospel.

However, Paul starts in an unusual place. He begins the bulk of the letter to the Romans by talking about the bad news rather than the good news. He talks about how "the wrath of God is revealed" against human sinfulness. This isn't good news, but it's unifying news that helps him get to the good news of the gospel. But how is the bad news unifying?

Paul wants his friends in Rome to know that they aren't each other's biggest enemy. The Roman empire isn't the biggest enemy. They themselves are their own worst enemies. This is the effect of human sinfulness—that we begin to think that our main problem is outside of us when it's really within us. Because of this, God's wrath is revealed.

And if we understand Romans 1:18-32 correctly, we will see that it is all about how the human condition is set on unraveling God's good design of creation. We have chosen to "worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator." Meaning, wrath is revealed because things aren't the way they should be. We have exchanged God's beautiful and glorious design to do our own thing. We have rejected and rebelled against his good intentions, and therefore we are now deserving recipients of his wrath.

But, Romans doesn't end after chapter 1. Romans 1:18-32 is a single and distinct literary section, and the first line before it and the first line after it are both about God's righteousness being revealed. Meaning, wrath—revealed is sandwiched by righteousness—revealed, and God's justice and righteousness revealed are about how God has made away for his just anger to be diverted. Jesus takes the chaos and rebellion of humanity upon himself. He is bringing new creation to bear upon our unraveling of creation. He is the Second Adam, righting the wrongs of the first Adam.

All of the chaos in our souls, all of the death we live in, all of the separation we deserve, all of the guilt and shame that weigh us down... Jesus took it all upon himself at the cross. He was exiled that we might be brought home. He was the way, the truth, and the life that we suppressed to death. He came to take away our bad and give us his good. This is the gospel.

So, how should we respond to this good news that wrath–revealed is bookended by righteousness–revealed? Here are four suggestions...

1. Think regularly about your personal unworthiness. Doing this forces us to come before God humbly and empty-handed and totally dependent.
2. Think regularly about the infinite worth of Jesus. If he truly took all of our wrath–deserving sin upon himself to bring us new life, then we should daily see him as ultimately worthy and valuable.
3. Quit thinking you're better than other people. Romans 1:18-32 unifies all humanity by putting us all on even ground before the cross. Because of this, we should be filled with, not judgment, but compassion for others.
4. Seek for opportunities to tell people about Jesus. This message is truly good news. Jesus is the only one who can give peace and hope that can't be shaken. He's the only one who can redeem the mess we've made of God's good world. We must, therefore, pray for opportunities to extend this good news to others.

*For Discussion ...*

1. Which of the four suggested responses is the most difficult for you? Why?
2. What from the message stood out to you personally?
3. Is it hard for you to think about God as both wrathful and loving? Why or why not?
4. How should these ideas in light of the gospel prod you to humility? Gratitude?
5. Who do you know that you could begin praying for who might need to hear about the good news of Jesus?