

# Why is God Angry?

Romans 1:18-23

*Pastor Paul Anthes*

**Introduction:** The Romans like all men were a product of the world and culture that they lived in. There are no exceptions to this axiom. Humans are born able to interface with it. The world provides the oxygen we breath, the food that we eat, the love and standing we crave. Our physical needs and desires are all fulfilled by this world. This is who we are, pure and simple. It is normal and natural. But there are some things about our world that everyman needs to face:

**The world will end!** Now... even if you don't believe that statement and many do not...It will end for you! Every human will die. This is why men fear death so much. It signals the end to the fulfillment of every desire they have. It doesn't matter if the world ends or you do, the result is exactly the same.

**1 John 2:17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**The world cannot ultimately give meaning to life!** No matter what you acquire it is lost to you. No matter what pleasures you discover; they will end. No matter what you achieve in life; it will be lost. The man who pursues the world may have a wonderful time, but in eternity he has nothing he desires because he must.....like all men.....leave this world behind.

**Matthew 16:26** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

**The world is not necessarily bad....It is just not enough!** When men were hungry Jesus fed them, but at the same time He taught them that physical food is not enough. There is a hunger of your God given soul that cannot be satisfied by the world. In fact only Christ can satisfy it.

**John 6:27** "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

**The world has its own standard of righteousness!** It differs outwardly from place to place and time to time, but it always has the same characteristics. Practicing your religion, being moral [as you define it] and being better than others in your own mind. All men practice this form of righteousness. They can always find someone who does not and that allows them to justify themselves. This is the righteousness of mankind. BUT, as we learned last time....

**Romans 1:16-17** <sup>16</sup> ..... the gospel, ..... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,..... <sup>17</sup> For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed

**The world's righteousness opposes the righteousness of God!** This is what the quarrel has been about for the last 2,000 years. Gospel preachers insist that God will not accept the righteousness of man no matter what form it takes because man is fundamentally flawed from conception. He is born separated from God and he acts almost entirely in his own interest. And even when he does not, the good he does can never nullify or take away all the sin he constantly commits toward God and others.

But the problem goes infinitely deeper than that. Humanity dislikes God and the entire idea of God. Adam and Eve set the stage for this when they rejected God's righteousness and chose their own course. They and their children became hopelessly separated from God by their choice. But...God made certain that it would not be their choice to return.

**Genesis 3:24** <sup>24</sup> So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Humanity is entirely dependent on creation [the world] to live. We need oxygen and we cannot create it ourselves. We don't even know where it came from. We need water that God gives in the form of rain through a process of desalinization that has been in effect since the beginning of time. He gets his food from the earth and takes all the pleasures of life from this world and yet will not acknowledge God or give thanks. He wants to pick up his paycheck everyday but will not even acknowledge the one who has given everything for him to live.

**ILL:** He is like an employee, who defies his boss and refuses to do what he is told to do. The boss fires him, but he returns each Friday and asks for his paycheck. In other words he wants the benefits, but will not do anything his boss wants.

In fact, all the evidence supporting the conclusion that God made the world and everything in it and gave life to men is systematically ignored and when it cannot be ignored it is suppressed by humankind and by individual human beings. God, the life giver, who is infinitely good and loving, is deliberately hidden from man, even shunned by man himself. This is why God is angry. And this is a key element in the Gospel. God and men are not alright with one another. They are angry with one another. Modern Christianity wants to pussyfoot around this but should not. Let me read our text....

**Romans 1:18-23** <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

- God is actively opposing those who oppose Him. [18]
- God is known to all men [19]

- God reveals Himself to all men through Creation [20]
- God is not honored or appreciated by men who know He exists [21]
- God is deliberately hidden or misrepresented by men [22-23]

## **God is actively opposing Those who oppose Him. [18]**

**Romans 1:18** <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

**The wrath of God:** This is not a popular thought in our day. God is love! That is all there is to it! NO! That is not all there is. God is love, but He is not some sappy old man who never gets mad and puts up with all the outrageous evil that men and women spill on one another every hour and minute of the day. AND...Wrath is not the opposite of love! Hate is the opposite of love. Parents can be angry with their children and not hate them. Certainly God should be able to do as much. BUT...God can be and is offended by us and He is about to tell us why and to what extent. God is not just generally angry.

“God’s righteous anger never rises, never abates: it is always at flood tide in the presence of sin because He is unchangeable and inflexibly righteous.” *George Rodgers*

**Is revealed from heaven:** God is in the process [present tense] of revealing His anger and He is doing it from heaven. If you want to know what it will be like when He does it from the earth, then you should read Revelation. For now it is revealed from heaven. His wrath is “uncovered” or “exposed.” Humanity has not discovered how angry God is toward them! God has revealed it...from heaven. I have seen evangelical Christians sneer at the idea that God would bring things on humanity specifically to show His anger, but let me ask you...

Do you think God created the planet so defectively that it has to shake itself apart every 20 years or so? Or that He has no control over the weather so we just have to endure horrible droughts and famine all the time. What about torrential floods, tornados and hurricanes that destroy whole communities in hours. Or diseases that kill millions. No... this is pushback against evil and it is going on now. It keeps humanity from doing all the evil it is capable and willing to do because it has to pick itself up and try to survive on a regular basis. It is inconceivable what mankind will do to itself and one another without this restraint. It is spiritual in nature as well. You yourself have not done all the sinful things you have thought about have you? It reveals our hearts, but thankfully God is pushing back against the evil of mankind....both physically and spiritually. At the height of man’s wickedness before the flood God said...

**Genesis 6:3** Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal;

When He stops wickedness will explode and march over the whole earth! Scripture says....

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-8** <sup>6</sup> ..... you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

**Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:** God's anger has a specific target. Ungodliness describes sin against God while "unrighteousness" sin against other humans. Because men are so opposed to God their behavior is unrighteous toward one another. You cannot even say, "You shall not commit murder" or "You shall not lie." Why? Because they are commands of GOD! Banning the ten commandments has become a daily occurrence in our day, but it is ungodly because they are ONLY banned because they came from God. This comes under the heading of "all ungodliness." You should not think that God has no issue with your sin because it is small. He has focused opposition to **all** the ungodliness of men.

**Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness:** Truth here is not the truth of the Gospel but the truth about the universe. The way things are. They suppress that along with anything that can be known about God Himself. In fact that is really the key point here. God is revealing not only His anger but also Himself and men are hiding that truth. Suppress means to bind up or push down or restrain the truth about God and what He made.

## **God is known to all men [19]**

**Romans 1:19** <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

**Because that which is known about God is evident within them:** No less an authority than God says that there are things that can be known about God and they know them. This is a sweeping indictment of the excuse...."I didn't know there was a God." He is not referring to the Gospel or Salvation. That is not what is in play here.

Paul is writing to show exactly why the Gospel is the only hope of men. He has not gotten to the Gospel yet, but is writing [under inspiration] to show that all men universally are aware that there is a God and they have rejected Him.

**God made it evident to them:** How do we know for sure that this basic knowledge of the existence of God is in all men? Because God Himself has given and continues to give enough light to every human being to know there is a God. This level of knowledge does not depend on men being exposed to the Bible or preaching. All men have the evidence in their own selves. Morris says...

"Nobody can say, "I did not know." Our condemnation in each case lies in the fact that we have sinned against the light we have, not against the light we have never received. Thus, though the Gentiles did not receive the full revelation in the law of the Old Testament, they did receive enough illumination to know that what was right And they followed the wrong." *Leon Morris*

## **God reveals Himself to all men through Creation [20]**

**Romans 1:20** <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

**Since the creation of the world:** So...how long has God been revealing Himself this way to man? Since the creation of the world!

**His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen:** Here is where we see that Paul is not talking about salvation. At first glance Paul appears to mention three things that are revealed about God, but Eternal power and divine nature are likely descriptions of “His invisible attributes.” In other words, The invisible attributes of Eternal Power and Divinity have been clearly seen. If you are not asleep you should be asking how something that is invisible can be seen. Scripture has set us up for the answer....

**Being understood through what has been made:** They are seen in the physical universe which God created.

**So that they are without excuse:** This is God’s answer to the often asked question “Are the Heathen Really Lost?” That answer is yes, because God has revealed Himself to all men with enough specificity for them to reject Him....which they do! This is also true of modern Americans and civilized people around the world. It is true for the redneck and the PHD. This is why Christ left the side of the Father in heaven and humbled Himself...becoming a human man and lived a life without sin for you and died on the cross...for you and invites you to trust only in Him for eternal life. We in this room are all without excuse.

“That Paul teaches the reality of a revelation of God in nature to all people, this text makes clear. But it is equally obvious that this revelation is universally rejected, as people turn from knowledge of God to gods of their own making. Why this is so, Paul will explain elsewhere,. But it is vital if we are to understand Paul’s gospel and his urgency in preaching it to realize that natural revelation leads not to salvation but to demonstration that God’s condemnation is just; people are “without excuse,” 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” *Douglas Moo*

## **God is not honored or appreciated by men who know He exists [21]**

**Romans 1:21** <sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**Even though they knew God:** This is another is another indictment of humanities ability and desire to respond to God. It explains further why they are “without excuse.”

‘Knew’ is often used of intimate relationships with God, but this knowledge was clearly not intimate because....

**They did not honor Him as God:** To have an intimate spiritual knowledge of God and Christ does not produce this attitude. In fact it produces the exact opposite of these things. When God reveals His existence and divinity to men....any men they respond by refusing to honor Him or be grateful to Him. Going to church is not honoring God. Obeying Him out of love and respect is honoring God. Obedience for religious or moral duty is what the Pharisees did. To them Jesus said...

**Matthew 23:15** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Morris says this about the word honor..."This means a little more than that they did not honor God. They knew enough about him to know that "glory" was his due, but they withheld it from Him. They may perhaps have said polite things about him, but they did not ascribe to Him the glory that was his due. They did not act on the knowledge of God they had, but preferred their own way." *Leon Morris*

**Or give thanks:** Gratitude is a rare quality in human beings because it requires humility which is the most rare of all human traits. True gratitude to God implies dependence and we know it. We needed Him, for life and especially for our salvation. All we enjoy in this life, the food, the love, the family, the hope the joy.....all gifts from God. This is gratitude and it is never seen in men apart from the Gospel.

**Psalm 33:1-9** Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright. <sup>2</sup> Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. <sup>3</sup> Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy. <sup>4</sup> For the word of the LORD is upright, And all His work is *done* in faithfulness. <sup>5</sup> He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. <sup>7</sup> He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. <sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. <sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

**They became futile in their speculations:** Refusal to acknowledge what they knew to be true about God requires futile speculations to explain everything that Creation throws in man's face. "Futile" means empty or worthless and "speculations" are the Greek word for thoughts. Men who reject God must find some explanation for the existence of so much order and wonder in the universe. Someone has said..."If you reject the truth than any lie will do." This is true of man's endless speculations on the origin of the universe and the explanations of its splendor.

Their foolish heart was darkened: God is light. In Him is no darkness at all, but those who reject God descend into a darkness of the mind and inner man. They may be brilliant engineers or students, but they live in a world of shadows. The truth is elusive because they have rejected the source of truth.

Are such people held accountable by God? YES! That is the whole point. They are accountable because they knowingly started down that slippery slope in their quest to escape God. It is the same as the drunk driver who kills a family. Did he know what he was doing at the time? NO! But he did when he started to drink himself into oblivion! He is still accountable. All men are accountable as they descend into darkness.

## **God is deliberately hidden and misrepresented by men [22-23]**

**Romans 1:22-23** <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

**Professing to be wise, they became fools:** So this is the tactic. Believers are fools but unbelievers are wise. I have lost track of how many times I have been called a fool for believing in a six day creation by and Eternally Existing God. But God has a different take on this...

**Psalm 14:1** The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Because he has to explain the creation with foolish theories. Mankind has gladly traded The Glory of the Living God for anything else they could come up with.

**Exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures:** Science has nothing to do with evolution. It springs from the desire of men to come from anything but God. To belong to anyone other than the God of Creation. To those who have jettisoned God and all thought of Him, it is so much more satisfying to think that we descended from cave men who descended from other animals who themselves once crawled up out of the primordial slime of some billion year old pit.

The world says, "Only a fool would believe that an eternally existing God would make a creature in His own image and love him." But God sees it the other way around!

**CONCLUSION:** If you had children who you gave life to, who lived in your house, who you clothed and fed and educated and loved, but they refused to use your last name, acknowledge that they know you or especially own you as their parents, would you increase their allowance or their share in the inheritance? I thought not. God is in heaven and He is angry and offended by human beings consistently spiting in His face. We should be able to understand that. He is revealing it to us by the mess our world and lives are in most of the time. God is pushing back against the wickedness of men and women who know He exists but prefer to take a path into empty, dark godless thinking. It would be even worse if God was not resisting the intentions of men's foolish hearts.

This is not a description of unbelievers! It is a description of humanity. Are you human? This is God's evaluation and explanation of your condition apart from Christ. It is Christ who rescues men from such a fate.

If you believe God on this all spiritual pride is banished. It is also stupidity. Furthermore knowledge of this is intended to move us to compassion for sinner and not condemnation. We are not fit to condemn anyone. We ourselves had to be rescued by the Gospel work of Jesus on the Cross.

So what does this mean to you: **It means** that Christ has loved you and set His affection on you and He has died for you and He has brought you to faith and life in Him. Such knowledge is intended to increase our love for Jesus. **It means** you should not be discouraged over the lost condition of friends and family. It is a work of God to save and yours to pray and give glory to Christ. **It means** that God is absolutely righteous in all His judgments of men. Satan lies when he says that God is unjust. He is NOT! Finally, **it means** that you should rest in the Greatness of your Lord. He is your source for all you desire in this life and Eternity to come. Isaiah, the gospel of the Old Testament said this....

**Isaiah 40:21-31** <sup>21</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? <sup>22</sup> It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. <sup>23</sup> He *it is* who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. <sup>24</sup> Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble. <sup>25</sup> "To whom then will you liken Me That I would be *his* equal?" says the Holy One. <sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these *stars*, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, Not one *of them* is missing. <sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"? <sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power. <sup>30</sup> Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, <sup>31</sup> Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.