

“Rescued from Wrath”
Romans 1:18-20

Introduction

Tombstone After Wyatt Earp’s brother is killed he catches a couple cowboys trying to sneak up on the rest of his family. He kills one with a shotgun and, after toying with the other for a while, he lets him go and tells him, “**You called down the thunder, boy. You tell the others! You tell ’em I’m comin’! AND HELL’S COMIN’ WITH ME! HELL’S COMIN’ WITH ME!**”

That is wrath—the subject of today’s text.

However, you can’t really understand today’s text unless you realize that it is part of a dialogue Paul is having that began last week.

You see, when Paul writes letters to the churches, he often anticipates the response that someone will have to what he’s said, so he answers it as he’s going along.

Paul's "dialogue:"

Begins with last passage: Righteous shall live by faith

Q: Why do we need this righteousness?

A: *Because the wrath of God is being revealed... (v. 18)*

Q: Why is His wrath being revealed?

A: *Two reasons—*

- *Ungodliness and unrighteousness*
- *Men suppress the truth*

Q: How do you know all men have knowledge of the truth?

A: *Because what can be known about God...[He] has shown it to them. (v. 19)*

Q: How has he shown it to them?

A: *...in the things that have been made (v. 20)*

Today, we'll look at three things...

1. *The Reality of Wrath*
2. *The Reasons for Wrath*
3. *Our Rescue from Wrath*

I. The Reality of Wrath

- A. To understand wrath, first you’ve got to understand anger. **What is anger?**
1. Getting something you thought you didn’t deserve; or
 2. Not getting something you did deserve
 - a) In God's case, both are true

B. What is "**wrath**"?

1. Wrath is NOT simply anger, but rather the *consequence* of it.
 - a) In other words, wrath is either **punishment** or **vengeance** as a **manifestation** of anger.
 - i. God's anger manifests itself (that is, is being revealed) now (and will be in the future).

C. Revealed against **whom**?

1. Answer is "easy:" ALL unrighteousness; ALL ungodliness.
 - a) Christian.
 - i. Maybe you tend to think "all" refers mostly to those sins that we mistakenly think happen "outside" the church (sexual; major crimes; etc.).
 - b) Non-Christian
 - i. Maybe you think "all" really refers to the sins of religious people: namely hypocrisy for denying all the sins they think you are guilty of.
 - c) Bad news for both.
 - i. The problem of sin is like the problem of **ectoparasites**.
"Body Beasts," National Geographic, Dec. 1998
—The more you try to get rid of them the more they multiply.
—The only way to destroy them would be to completely destroy the host.
—Sin is the same.

II. The Reasons for Wrath

A. Not just the fact that we sin, but that we deny it...

1. To act as if you're not guilty of any offense against God is the second, and equally important, reason for the manifestation of wrath.

The Maintenance Light

This week, I took my new car in for its first oil change. It went quickly, but as soon as I drove off the lot, the "maintenance required" light came on in my dashboard. It drove me crazy all the way home.

First thing Friday morning, I took my car back and the mechanic attached a gauge that said I was "okay." He then reached up under my dash, pressed a button, and "viola" the light went off. He said, "There you go."

I stopped him and said, "Hey, what'd you do there?" He showed me and said, "Yeah, whenever that light comes on, you can just press that button while starting up and it will go off until next time."

I thought, "This is beautiful. I never have to do maintenance again! I can just turn out that light every time it reminds me and I'm golden!"

That's ridiculous, isn't it? That's what we do every time we feel a spark of conscience and suppress it.

You've got to ask yourself—am I a truth-suppressor? Christian? Non-Christian?

2. Remember Paul's dialogue?

a) "*How are we supposed to know all this truth?*"

b) vv. 19-20

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 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.

B. Theologians call this "general revelation."

1. In short, general revelation tells us

a) There is a God.

b) Things are not the way they are supposed to be.

i. They are not the way they are supposed to be inside you.

ii. They are definitely not the way they are supposed to be outside you.

2. *General Revelation* doesn't tell us how to fix the problem or how to move from knowing of God to know him personally.

a) For this we need something else.

i. Special Revelation (The Bible)

That brings us to the next point...

III. Our Rescue from Wrath

A. The only way we can escape this wrath; this manifestation of God's anger toward sin is if someone else bears it on our behalf.

1. Who is it that would bear the wrath of God on our behalf?

a) Later in this book, Paul gives the answer.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

B. We are often taught that when Jesus was on the cross and cried out, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me!*", that he said that because "God turned his back on the Son."

1. That may be true. However, the reason might be better explained when we understand that, in that moment, instead of turning his back on the Son, he turned *toward him* with all the fury of his wrath and punishment for sin.

C. Sgt. Allen story re: carrying my rucksack.