

THE WRATH OF GOD

Romans 1:18-32

One of the most touching scenes in Scripture is found in Acts 20 where the Apostle Paul met for the last time with the elders of the Ephesian church. You remember the circumstances there. He was in Miletus and he sent for the elders to come. It was there that he not only exhorted them concerning their own work in the future but he reviewed with them his own ministry among them. I don't think any pastor or missionary or Christian worker of any kind and for that matter any parent could set for himself a greater goal than to be able to say to our own people under whatever circumstances it might be what Paul said to these elders. I am referring to his words in verse 27 when he says, I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Perhaps we could paraphrase those words for today with these words. I have faithfully taught you every part of the Word of God. Earlier in that same chapter in the 20th and 21st verses he said this. I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have showed you and have taught you publically and from house to house testifying both to Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Now all of these words mean that Paul recognized that he had an obligation to God in his ministry and that he also had an obligation to people. But these two obligations are actually fulfilled in one ministry. He not only to preach and teach the Word of God but he was to teach and preach all of the Word of God. And every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is under the same commission today. When Paul wrote to Timothy in his last epistle Preach the Word, II Timothy 4:2 he obviously meant preach all the Word. Now this brings me to my subject for this morning. One of the subjects of Scripture that is taught most extensively throughout the Bible in the Old and the New Testament is the subject of the wrath of God. It's also called the anger of God, the fury of God, the judgement of God and there are other expressions that are used in Scripture too. And one writer has said that a study of the concordance will show that there are more references to the anger, fury and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness. And yet in spite of this another writer has made this observation. He asks this question, How often during

the past year did you hear or if you are a minister did you preach a sermon on the wrath of God? How long is it I wonder since a Christian spoke straight on this subject on radio or television or in one of those half column sermonettes that appear in some national dailys and magazines. And if a man did so how long would it be before he would be asked to speak or write again. The fact is that the subject of divine wrath has become taboo in our modern society and Christians by and large have accepted the taboo and conditioned themselves never to raise the matter. This same writer goes on to say to an age which has unashamedly sold itself to the gods of greed, pride, sex, and selfwill the church mumbles all about God's kindness and says virtually nothing about His judgement. Now there is no question but that we need to talk about the kindness of God, His love, His grace, His mercy, His lovingkindness. But if we are to be faithful to our calling we must also speak of the wrath of God. In a very real sense man cannot understand the kindness of God as he should if he does not understand something about the wrath of God. And so I want to speak on this subject this morning as we continue talking about the attributes of God. And I want you to see first of all something that is very obvious in the Word and yet I would like to review this with you this morning that there is such an attribute in God. Now in our Scripture reading this morning, the first verse that we read was this, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Now God is no less God because He is a God of wrath. Some have tried to come to some decision or conclusion as to why we hear so little about the wrath of God. And at least the suggestion has been made that it seems unbecoming to God to think of a God who gets angry. But when you see that the wrath of God, the anger of God is simply God's response in holiness and righteousness to the sin of men then you see that it would be hard to think of a God who is holy and righteous if He were not angered by the sin of men. Psalm 7:11 the later part of the verse says that God is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God our text says this morning is revealed, revealed in Scripture

and in many different ways. And I would like just to review some things that most of you know this morning, ways in which the wrath of God has been revealed in Scripture and once you begin to note this subject you see that if you were to take all the references to the wrath of God or the judgement of God out of Scripture you wouldn't have hardly anything left. The wrath of God is revealed first of all against the world generally and against particular nations, whole nations at specific times. Think for example at what happened in Noah's day. When the whole earth was destroyed with the exception of those who were with Noah in the ark. And you just go on a few pages in the book of Genesis and you come to that story of Sodom and Gomorrah where the wickedness of the city was so great that it had reached heaven itself and God moved against those cities in judgement. Perhaps we can't fully understand what God was doing when He delivered Israel from the land of Egypt but I am sure that if we had seen Israel in its power and glory in that day we would have been amazed to see how God humbled that nation and then as the Lord led His own people through the Red Sea how the Lord destroyed the power of the land of Egypt. Or think of Israel at Kadesh Barnea when the spies went into the land and ten of them came back and said we can't go into the land, the walls are too high, the people are too numerous, their armies are too great. Only two Caleb and Joshua said let's rise up and go into the land because God is able to give it to us. And because the nation believed the 10 spies instead of the two spies that whole generation died before God eventually led them into the land. Think of what God did to the Canaanite nations when under Joshua's leadership he led them into the land and the order was that they should utterly destroy man, woman, child, all of them because the wrath of God had been moved against them because of their ungodliness. Think of what God did to His own people when the Assyrians took Israel and then later the Babylonians took Judah. Something happened that the people of God never thought would happen and because they had despised God, because they had despised His Word. And then when you follow the story think of what happened to the Assyrians and then what happened to the Babylonians and what has happened to the great world empires that

have followed and were predicted in Scripture. All are illustrations of the way in which God moves against mighty nations and large numbers of people in judgement. And then if you and I are to take the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ and see the judgements that are yet to fall upon the earth when millions and millions of people will fall under the judging hand of God again we see that it has been revealed in Scripture, the wrath of God is revealed and in that book, the last book of the New Testament which has so much to say about the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ we have a book that speaks more than any other book about the awful judgements of God. But this is only a part of the Word of God and then I haven't said anything at all and I won't say anything at all this morning about all of the illustrations from history itself outside of Scripture where we have evidence of the fact that God is a God of wrath and a God of anger. But let me call your attention to the fact that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against individuals, against those who do not know the Lord but often against those who do know the Lord. And again all you have to do is to start thinking through the Word of God and as I mention these names each one of them will suggest to most of you I am sure the fact that God moves against individual people in judgement. Adam and Eve suffered a judgement that has affected the life of every person in this service this morning and every person who has ever lived on the earth except our Lord Jesus Christ. Cain fell into the judgement of God. Pharoah suffered divine judgement. Miriam became a leper because she had displeased God, Korah and Dathan and Abirham are names that go down in the history of Israel as men who came under divine judgement. Even Moses when he stood at the rock and God told him to speak to the rock and instead because of his anger toward the children of Israel he smote the rock twice and God closed the door on him from leading the children of Israel across the Jordan River into the promised land. Samsom was one who experienced the judgement of God. Saul fell under divine judgement. David, the man after God's heart who sinned so grievously on two occasions saw the judgement of God in a very tragic way in his own family. King Aziah who had been such a source of encouragement to the

prophet Isael was lifted up with pride in his own heart and become a leper unto the day of his death because of the way in which he displeased God. Nebucudneezzer was humiliated and became like an animal so that he might know that the most high God rules in the affairs of men. And Herod who refused to give God glory fell under the judgement. There was a man in John 5 who had been sick for 38 years and the Lord healed and you remember the Lord said to him sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee. And then as we get into the book of Acts really the first illustration of divine judgement comes with the story of Annanias and Saphirah. Now this list could be enlarged. And perhaps I haven't mentioned the names that you would mention. But this all teaches us that the wrath of God has been revealed against individuals and when we step outside of Scripture and look at every day life and we look at history in general then the illustrations are multiplied beyond what you and I can ever calculate. However, there is one example of divine judgement which goes beyond any other. The wrath of God against sin has been revealed in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God on the cross. He didn't die as you know for His own sins. He was the one person who has lived on the earth who did not deserve to die. But He fell under judgement because of your sins and my sins. Isaiah says all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Paul says for he hath made him to be sin who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And over and over again in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament we see that the wrath of God has been revealed in what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was because of the wrath of God and what the Lord Jesus Christ was experiencing on the cross when He cried out in the agony of His own soul, My God my God why hast thou forsaken me. This morning in just a few moments we are going to be observing the Lord's Supper and as you take the bread and you remember that it is symbolic of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was broken and as you drink of the cup and you are reminded of the fact that this represents His shed blood and remember that the one thing that the Lord has really

given us to remember and to remember again and again concerning Himself is reminiscent of the time when He fell under the wrath of a holy God in divine judgement for the sins of men. So there is no question when you turn to the Word of God that the wrath of God has been revealed. Now God doesn't always exercise His wrath in the same way. Sometimes wrath is delayed for many years as it was in the case of the Canaanite nations when God waited after Abraham's day for 400 more years before He moved against them in judgement. Psalm 73 you may remember deals with the struggle of the psalmist when he was raising questions like this, why is it that people who don't know the Lord don't seem to have as much sickness, they don't seem to have as many troubles, they seem to prosper financially even more and yet when you look at the child of God you see their lives are burdened down with difficulties and they seem to have more than their share. And he says I was greatly troubled about this until I went into the sanctuary then understood I their end. So judgement may be delayed sometimes. Sometimes it is swift and devastating. Sometimes the judgement of God is temporary in nature as was the case of the who had been sick for 38 years. Sometimes its permanent and with respect to the future the judgement of God as we heard in Dr. Lockwood's solo this morning the judgement upon God upon millions of people is going to be eternal. The Word of God teaches us that a day of wrath is coming in which there will be a further revelation of the righteous judgement of God. In which the Lord Himself will say depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church of that day to come he spoke of that time when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. I have been reading from II Thessalonians 1 verse 7-9. But let me spend the rest of the time this morning answering 2 questions. Why is it that God judges sin and secondly is there any way for man to escape from the eternal judgement of God? As I was preparing my message this week I ran across one statement

to the affect that if you were to say everything that could be said about the wrath of God and the anger of God and the judgement of God you would have to reproduce the Bible. Obviously we don't have the time for that this morning and so I want to say these things from Scripture in the hope that the Lord will use this in the lives of those of you who may be here this morning without the Lord Jesus Christ and yet it is good for those of us who have fled from the wrath to come to know why it is that God judges sin and what the means of escape is. Now why do we have all of these examples of the wrath of God revealed. The first answer that you could give to that question is that God judges sin for His own glory. Now this not only means that He shows through His wrath that He is righteous and that He is sovereign in the affairs of men but it even shows that He is, that He exists and that there is such a one as He is. Let me go back for just a moment to what I said a moment ago about Egypt at the time of the exodus. There is hardly any evidence at all that the Egyptians paid any serious attention to the God of Israel until they began to be judged with the ten plagues. And if you remember the early chapters of the book of Exodus you remember that you read over and over again that the reason that God was bringing those judgements was not primarily to get Israel out of Egypt but that Pharaoh and the Egyptians as well as all of the Israelites might know that He was the Lord. And the expression, the name that is used for God there is Jehovah which means that He is a living God. That He is an unchanging God and that He was not only the God of Israel but He was the God of heaven and earth, He was the God of all of the nations of the earth. And all of the nations were ultimately accountable to Him. So that God in His righteousness, God in His holiness, God in His sovereign power exercises judgement that men may recognize that He is and that He is the God to whom they are accountable. If we were to have a tragedy that would touch our city today and I trust in the grace of God such a thing will not take place but if that were the case you would find all of a sudden that on the lips of the people of Portland there would be a lot of serious talk about God. Somehow we are so made that God has to move against men in some way to

awaken them to the fact that they are mere human beings corrupted by their own sin and that we are accountable to a living eternal sovereign God. But you go out on the streets of Portland today and the only thing that you hear about God usually is the name of our wonderful Lord used in blasphemy by men and women unfortunately and often young people and children who don't have the slightest idea who He is or what their responsibility to Him is or what God has done in order to meet the needs of sinful men. Isn't it going to be wonderful that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns as Paul wrote to the Phillipian church every knee shall bow of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. So the Lord is working for His own glory. And in order to bring the world to that place He is exercising judgement and will continue to exercise judgement to the very end. But God judges sin also so that you and I will see exactly what sin is and the consequences of sin. God as I have said has many ways of judging sin. I am not going to deal with that in detail this morning. But I do want to call your attention to our Scripture reading. And you can see in our Scripture reading how God's wrath is displayed at least in the instances sighted in this passage of Scripture. This passage has one extremely solemn message and I don't want you to miss it. And that is that God often judges sinners by giving them over to their sin. So that they sin more and more and more and reap the tragic results of their sin. Three times in the passage this morning we read that God gives men and women up to their sins or over to their sins to go deeper and deeper into sin and to reap these tragic results. Perhaps one reason that we are hesitant to speak about the wrath of God is because it forces us to speak out against the way of life which has become generally accepted in our generation. Could any passage be more descriptive of life in America than Romans 1. Isn't it amazing that we have politicians these days who speak in defense of the very sins that are spoken of here in chapter 1 as being utterly and completely displeasing to God and does it not tell us that we as a nation right now are under the judgement of God because the Word of God indicates that

when men exclude God and don't want to have anything to do with Him or His Word then God gives them over to the lusts of their heart and you find men going down into the depths of sin, the sins that are described in this chapter and the sins that we know that are prevalent even in our own city. How can a person in his right mind want to pursue the course that we have taken as a nation when we can all see the results that it has produced. I don't know of a time when people have been freer to sin then they are today and yet neither has there been a time in the history of our nation when there has been so much unhappiness, so much grief, so much tragedy, so much crime and all that goes with it in the things that we see taking place in our nation today. One of my teachers in seminary helped me a great deal with regard to sin because he said you can learn the truth about sin in the Bible that you will never see while you are experiencing sin because if we give ourselves to sin we are blinded to its nature, we are blinded to its results and you will see I was talking to a young man last night and perhaps this illustrates it in a place of business and as I went in there was a drunk coming out and I didn't know what he had been doing in this particular place but this young man said to me by way of explanation he says that man comes in here all the time and everytime he comes in he's in exactly the same condition that you saw him in tonight. Men become slaves to their sin and bondage to their sin but you see this is the reason the wrath of God has been revealed in Scripture because Scripture doesn't excuse sin, Scripture exposes sin, Scripture shows us what sin is and Scripture shows us what sin will do in your life and my life. The wrath of God has been revealed so that you and I will recognize what sin actually is. And then I want to link this for just a moment even with this second question that I have asked because you can see from this passage that God judges sin so that men will recognize the need for salvation. Did you ever stop to think that you would not really know the meaning of salvation if it were not for the term that we have in Scripture the wrath of God or the anger of God. Perhaps when you talk to people about salvation if you just introduce the word maybe by asking them are you saved, they may come back at

you with a question that will really suggest the issue because the question that they ought to come back with is this, saved from what? What are we being saved from? Why is this word that God is doing in our hearts if we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior why is it called salvation. Now perhaps this is the reason that the world has so little interest in salvation because they have heard so little about judgement, about the wrath of God and about an eternal hell and you know in our own day and I have run across it in several instances recently there is an upsurge of teaching that you find every once in a while in the history of the church where evangelical Christians, many of them are denying that there is any such place as eternal hell or any such thing as eternal judgement. Yet it is plainly taught in the Word of God. Now look at our reading this morning and let me go back just a couple of verses where Paul says in verse 16 in that verse which many feel is the key verse of the book of Romans, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written the just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Now you see the order of the passage. The wrath of God has been revealed and the wrath of God has been revealed because we are dealing with a God of righteousness. The righteousness of God has been revealed and this leads me back to the Gospel of our salvation and the Apostle Paul who knew that in the city of Rome there were people who were just taken up as they are in Portland and every other major city in the country with making a living and having a good time and doing the things that they want to do and then confronted with all of the problems that sin brings and the hopelessness and despair and he can say to that Roman church on behalf of their ministry in the city of Rome you never need to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because Christ is the only one who can possibly solve the question of sin and the affects of sin that you see in the lives of people. I trust that you and I believe that. We are hearing today a lot about problems and about needs in our families in

our individual lives, in our homes, in our businesses and our nation: And there is only one answer and that's the answer that you and I find in the Word, the answer that points us to our Lord Jesus Christ. Now in a sense I have already given you the answer to my last question but I want to deal with it in just a few minutes that remain. Thank God there is hope of escape from the judgement of God. But let me say very clearly this morning that there is only one hope. There is only one way of escape. You can go out in our nation and you can hear about hundreds of professed ways but I have no doubt in my mind this morning that there is only one and it's in the Gospel of the Lord Jēsus Christ. There are many verses that we could talk about this morning but let me give you just one. A verse which contains words which the Lord Jesus gave which answer our question this morning perfectly. It's a verse which I am sure many of you know John 5:24. Verily, verily which is the Lord's way of introducing something that was not only very important but something that was absolutely true, no question about it, you don't need to have any reservations about this statement, listen, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation or a better translation would be and shall not come into judgement but is past from death unto life. Now the Lord Jēsus said that. He who hears my word believes on him that sent me hath everlasting life. Why was the Lord Jesus Christ sent in the world. The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world the Scriptures say. He came to provide salvation from our sin and from the consequences of our sin. Paul wrote to Timothy and he told Timothy Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and you see that's exactly what we are. He came to deliver sinners so that if you are trusting in Christ you are saved. You will never come into judgement. If you are not then you are under the judgement of God. You are under the wrath of God and eternal wrath which means eternal judgement in hell is the only thing that awaits you as long as Jesus Christ is not your Savior. The Lord Jesus said if you believe not that I am he you shall die in your sins. He told the Pharisees in John 9:41 your sin remaineth and I want to add to these statements the words of Paul in

Ephesians 5:6 and you have practically the same thing in Colossians 3:6 where after mentioning a long list of sins he declares for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. So men have only one of two alternatives. Either we receive Christ and are delivered from the wrath of God because of His sacrifice for us on the cross when He bore the sins of men or you face God with the full responsibility of your sins plus the fact that you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. I have been speaking of a very solemn subject this morning. There isn't any subject that is more solemn than this is but it's the truth and I trust that any of you who are here this morning who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior will recognize that God has provided a way of escape that this way of escape is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that there is no other way. It's either Christ or an eternity without Christ and without God under the eternal wrath and judgement of an almighty God. And I trust that the Spirit of God will use what I have said this morning to bring any of you who are without Christ not only to the recognition that you need salvation but that in His wonderful grace this morning right where you sit you will open your heart and put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. And as we come to the Lord's table I trust that these words will linger in each one of our hearts and as we take the bread and as we take the cup those of us who know the Lord will lift our hearts in thanksgiving and praise to God that in spite of our sin and in spite of the fact we had nothing to offer to God except hearts that need to be cleansed from sin. God in His wonderful grace has made known the Gospel to us that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from our sin and by His wonderful grace we have trusted Him all the glory and honor and praise belongs to Him.