

Well, we're still in the "tough-going" part of Paul's letter to the Romans.

To fully appreciate the **Good** News of the Gospel, first we have to understand the "**bad** news", of the very real trouble, we humans are in (without Jesus). And so in this section of Romans, Paul is relentless, in telling us all about the "**bad** news". And so as I said a couple of weeks ago, "*For the next few weeks, it's going to be like going through a long, dark tunnel... But my, how much brighter the light of the Gospel is going to be, when we come out on the other side.*"

And today, we're continuing that journey, down the long dark tunnel.

2 weeks ago, we began hearing about the downwards spiral, of Godlessness and unrighteousness, that humanity (all of humanity) are caught up in.

And so we heard that the wrath of God, is being revealed. And the wrath of God, has 2 aspects to it. *Just like a saucepan can be simmering away on a stove, but then the heat gets turned up a bit, and it boils over,,,,* God's wrath is like that. God's wrath is currently simmering away. It is present, and active in the world today. But there is a day (which the Bible calls "the day of The Lord", and in the reading today, it is called "**the day of wrath**"), when God's wrath will suddenly boil over, in His judgment of the world.

And so, God's wrath, **is** being revealed (right now – today). And 2 weeks ago, we talked about "**Why** God's wrath is being revealed". God's wrath is being revealed, because people

have turned their backs on God. They have become godlessness, or turned to idolatry.

And so the sin, is the rejection of God. And because of godlessness, the wrath of God is being revealed. (That was 2 weeks ago)

Last week, then, we began to investigate “Well, what **is** the wrath of God? If the wrath of God is being revealed, **what** does it look like?” And it might’ve been a bit of a surprise for some of us, to discover, what the wrath of God actually **is**...

God handed them over, to all sorts of unrighteousness.

- Homosexuality was the key example
- And it includes all sorts of sexual perversions

And then it went on – God handed them over, or God gave them up, to all sorts of evil

Romans 1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

And the wrath of God is this: God gave them up, to all of these things, and to a debased mind – a worthless mind. Our society have so rejected God, that God handed them over, so

they can no longer even tell right from wrong. And so unrighteousness increases.

And the absolutely lowest of the low, is that even if it's not a personal temptation for someone, although they know that God says it's wrong, they approve of, and encourage, those who are tempted by the sin.....

Now, all of that terrible list of sins, that are getting a go-on in our society, **ARE** the wrath of God. When **we** reject God, and when we harden our hearts against God, **God** hardens our hearts even more. And so our society descends deeper and deeper into unrighteousness – that's the wrath of God.

OK, so the wrath of God (the general simmering of God's wrath) is being revealed.... And now today, in Romans Ch2, we get a little glimpse, of when the wrath of God will boil over (in judgment).

The Lord our God, has a date marked on His calendar – “The Day of The Lord” or “The Day of Wrath” ... It's a day of judgment...

Our society are caught up in this downwards spiral of Godlessness and unrighteousness. The simmering wrath of God is being revealed, by the **increase**, of all of this unrighteousness in our world.

And the thing is, most of the godless, are actually pretty happy about it – they don't mind at all, the simmering wrath of God being revealed – they've become ‘quite at home with it’ ...

They've been given up to a debased mind – they have the incapacity to tell right from wrong – good from evil – morality from immorality. And to them, it's like “Hey, it's party time!!”.... Unrighteousness gives a level of satisfaction and enjoyment, to a debased mind – that's why they do it...

And there may seem to be some minor consequences for their sin, but they're willing to live with those... *They're on the highway to hell, with the pedal to the metal, and that's alright by them.* Because they feel, they're not accountable to anyone.

But here's the bad news that they don't want to hear. There is a day of judgment, and the Lord our God, **will** require a reckoning.

V6 says, ⁶ **He will render to each one according to his works.**

There's actually a bit of a ‘fad’ at the moment, in some churches, that “we have to repent of our good deeds”. How did that lie of the Devil, ever get incorporated into the Gospel message????

The Lord loves it when we do good, and He hates it when we do bad. V7 says: ⁷ **to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life;** And again in V10, he says that there will be **glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good.**

Alright, if we continue on, doing good, God loves that, when we do good. Don't let anybody ever tell you, that you need to repent of doing good deeds – what a load of rubbish that is...

I think of Cornelius. He was what was known as a “God-fearer”. He was a Greek man, who saw truth in the Jewish God. He prayed, and he was generous to the poor (he gave alms)... And an angel came to him and said, “Your prayers and your alms (your generosity to the poor) have ascended as a memorial before God...” God was pleased with Cornelius for being a good man and doing good things. It was like the Law of God, was written on His heart... (even though he wasn't one of the chosen people – he was a Greek – not a Jew)

But....

Never think, that because you've done some good things (which God loves), you're so good that don't need to repent of the bad things (which God hates).

You see, V8 says, ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do **not** obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. And again in v9, it says: There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil.

There are very few people, who are so completely evil, that they never do any good.

But **none** of us, are so completely good, that we never do any evil.

Let me say that again:

There are very few people, who are so completely evil, that they never do any good.

But **none** of us, are so completely good, that we never do any evil.

Jesus is the only one who is that perfect; and good; and righteous.

Most of us, do some good, and all of us do at least some evil. And the thing is, our good deeds, can never pay, the cost of our bad deeds. *Which is why, when God sent that angel to Cornelius, He was preparing him (a good man) for the Gospel. Because you're a good man Cornelius, but you're not good enough. And so, God sent Peter to Cornelius, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ – that all those who believe in Jesus, will receive forgiveness in His name. And the Holy Spirit was doing a work in Cornelius, and he received Christ, and he was baptised into the Name of Jesus.*

And so, today's reading, is telling us that none of us have an excuse. **None** of us, are good enough. We **all** need Jesus.

Do you remember the story that Jesus told, about the man who was trying to get the speck out of someone else's eye, but the whole time, he had a big old log, in his own eye... It's easy to become that man, isn't it? It's really easy to see everybody else's faults, and everybody else's sins... But it's not so easy sometimes, to recognise them in ourselves. We come up with

all sorts of excuses to try and justify ourselves. But before God, we can't justify ourselves.

We have no excuse. If we are able to recognise sin and unrighteousness in somebody else, then there's no excuse for not recognising it in ourselves.

And that's how Chapter 2 began: **Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.**

And : ² **We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.**

Therefore, it is right for God to judge **our** unrighteousness.

Do you see the dilemma? We look at that list of sins there, and we **know** that those who do these things, will be judged by God – that it's **right** for them to be judged by God. But we also know, that we've done (and we do) some of those things ourselves. We've actually done them. We've cherished the thought about doing them in our hearts...

Do we think, that we'll escape the judgment of God? You know, many people do:

1. The Godless: Well they've exchanged the truth about God for a lie... They reckon God has 'left the building', and He doesn't care – He doesn't exist... And so they reckon they'll

escape the judgment of God, simply because “He doesn’t exist”... Won’t they get a surprise.

2. The self-righteous: Well, they’re confident that they’ve lived a good life – they reckon their good deeds have outweighed their bad deeds, and so they reckon they’ll escape the judgment of God.

3. The religious: Well, there’s all sorts of categories of ‘the religious’.

- Some feel, that because they’ve gone to church, they will escape the judgment of God.
- Or for the Jew, because they have the Law, and are God’s chosen people, they believe they’ll escape the judgment of God.
- Some believe that because Jesus died on the cross, they’ll escape the judgment of God.
- Some believe that because they’ve said a sinners prayer (at some stage of their life), they’ll escape the judgment of God.
- Some of the religious, reckon they know a little bit about God – that He is kind and loving – and they choose to believe that ‘a loving God would never judge them’

And so they’re convinced that they will escape the judgment of God...

But you know what? There is only one way, to escape the judgment of God – And that, is to repent and believe.

^{v3} Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

The Lord, is patient. Some of us may feel, that He should step in, and judge the world, right now... Some of us may wonder, why He didn't do it years, or centuries ago.

I'll tell you why:

In His mercy, in God's patience and kindness, He's been putting up with us. He's made Himself known through creation. He's made Himself known, through His Son. He's revealing His simmering wrath to the world – all so that we might sit up and take notice.

And some take this kindness for granted. Some hear of the grace and mercy of God, and come to the conclusion that they don't need to repent....

But all of this – God's kindness – God holding off, His Day of Wrath – is meant to lead us to repentance.

What is repentance? We've talked about this often enough. In the classical Greek, it means to change your mind. But in the Bible, it means a change of the whole man (or woman).

- It means to turn from sin, to righteousness

- It means to turn from Godlessness, to worshipping YHWH, our God
- It means to turn from **self**-righteousness, to depending on the righteousness of God
- It means a change of mind, **and** a change of actions.
- Repentance, is both a gift that God gives to us, and a command we are to obeyⁱ
- It means to stop living for yourself, and to start living for Jesus
- In fact, it means, to be ready to die for Jesus
- It means to change our path, from the wide, easy road that leads to destruction, and to walk the difficult, narrow road, of being a disciple of Jesus
- It means so much more than becoming a believer – it is to **so** believe, that everything about you and your life, is submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

God's kindness – His forbearance, is intended to lead us to repentance. That's the only way to escape the judgment of God.

So, what happens, if one doesn't repent? Well, it's pretty scary: V5: ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment **will** be revealed.

When someone's heart, is hardened against God – When they refuse to repent of their sin, and all of their unrighteous deeds, God's simmering wrath, is being stored up, against them...

You know when you have a saucepan on the stove – maybe a saucepan of milk – and it's simmering away, and you put the lid on it... What happens? The heat builds up, and it boils over.

Well, if we harden our hearts against God, and refuse to repent, it's like putting the lid on that saucepan... God's wrath, gets stored up, and one day, that wrath **will** boil over, on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Well, once again, I've given you some little glimpses, of what the light is like at the end of the dark tunnel. Paul has told us the way to get out of the tunnel – repentance. But we've still got another message to come yet, in the dark tunnel (of the bad news).

But I know most of you already know the Good news. Hearing the bad news, does that help you to appreciate the Good News more? I hope so.

Questions?

ⁱ *It is a possibility given to man by God as an eschatological gift of grace, and it is also a duty required of him.* (NIDNTTE)