

Romans Discussion Guide

Week 4 - The Wrath of God | Romans 1:18-25

Romans 1:18-25 introduces a difficult but essential truth: God has wrath. His wrath is not irrational, uncontrolled, or unjust. God is right to be angry at sin because He has made Himself known and humanity has suppressed the truth, exchanged His glory, and worshiped created things instead of the Creator. Yet even in judgment, God does not cease to act consistently with His love. When people insist on rejecting Him, He “gives them over” - allowing them to walk the path they have chosen. The passage should leave us not only sobered by God's wrath, but thankful for the Gospel through which He saves.

I Opening Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to give your group a clear and biblical view of God's character. Pray for humility to receive what Scripture says about God's wrath, honesty about the ways people suppress truth, and gratitude for the Gospel. Ask God to help each person see both the seriousness of rejecting Him and the depth of His love in pursuing sinners with salvation.

II Weekly Sermon Discussion

20-40 minutes

Read the Scriptures together and share what stands out. The insights and questions below are provided to help generate discussion; you do not need to answer every question. Keep your conversation focused on Scripture and how it applies to your life.

- What part of the sermon stood out to you, and why?

1. God Gets Angry - And He Is Allowed To

Read: Romans 1:18

Paul moves directly from the good news of the Gospel in verses 16-17 to the wrath of God in verse 18. Scripture does not apologize for the fact that God becomes angry at ungodliness and unrighteousness. Anger itself is not automatically sinful. Human beings experience anger too, but ours can be distorted by pride, selfishness, limited knowledge, or loss of control. God's wrath is different: it belongs to a perfectly holy and righteous God.

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “the wrath of God”? Where do those ideas come from?
- Why can people be comfortable talking about God's love but uncomfortable talking about His anger?
- What is the difference between sinful human anger and righteous anger?
- What would be missing from God's goodness if He were never angered by evil, injustice, cruelty, or sin?

2. God's Wrath Is Right: He Has Revealed Himself, but We Suppress the Truth

Read: Romans 1:18-21

Paul's argument is not that humanity had no opportunity to know anything about God. He says what can be known about God has been made plain, and that His invisible qualities are perceived through what He has made. The problem is not merely a lack of information. Paul describes humanity as “suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.” The picture is like trying to hold a beach ball beneath the water: the truth is there, but we push against it because we do not want it to rise to the surface.

“So that people are without excuse.” - Romans 1:20

- According to verses 19-20, what has God made known about Himself through creation?
- What do you think Paul means when he says people “suppress the truth” rather than simply saying they do not know it?
- How does the beach-ball picture help explain suppression? What does it communicate well about the tension in this passage?
- What does “without excuse” mean in the flow of Paul's argument? What excuse is Paul removing?
- Where do you see the human tendency to push away truth when accepting it would require repentance, surrender, or change?

The Downward Spiral of the Human Condition

Read: Romans 1:21-25

Paul describes a progression. Humanity knows something of God, refuses to honor or thank Him, becomes futile in thinking, experiences darkened hearts, claims wisdom while becoming foolish, and finally exchanges the glory and truth of God for created things. The movement is downward: suppression leads to exchange, and exchange reshapes worship and life.

- What stages of the downward movement do you see in verses 21-25?
- Why do you think Paul specifically mentions refusing to glorify God and refusing to give thanks?
- What is the significance of the repeated word “exchanged” in this passage?
- What created things are people most tempted to treat as ultimate - things that can become more important than the Creator?

- How can worshiping something other than God eventually affect the way a person thinks and lives?

3. God's Wrath Is Right: "God Gave Them Over"

Read: Romans 1:24-25

Verse 24 introduces one of the sobering expressions in this section: "God gave them over." God's wrath is not only pictured as something He may do to a person from the outside; it can also be seen in His willingness to let people pursue what they have persistently chosen. When humanity exchanges God for something else, God does not force Himself upon people as though love could be coerced.

- What do the words "God gave them over" communicate to you about judgment?
- How is being allowed to pursue what we demand different from God approving of what we choose?
- Why would forced love be a contradiction? What does genuine love require that coercion cannot produce?
- How does this passage challenge the idea that getting whatever we want is always a sign of freedom or blessing?
- Have you ever seen a wrong desire become more destructive when it was continually fed rather than confronted? What does that help you understand about this passage?

Wrath, Love, and the Gospel

Read: Romans 1:16-18; Romans 5:8-9

Romans does not introduce God's wrath apart from the Gospel. Immediately before verse 18, Paul has declared that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. Later he will say that God demonstrates His love for us in Christ and that, through Jesus, believers are saved from wrath. The seriousness of wrath helps us understand the magnitude of salvation: God is willing to do what is necessary to save people who have rejected Him.

- How does Romans 1:18 change the weight of Paul's statement in verse 16 that the Gospel is God's power for salvation?
- Why should the reality of God's wrath make the Gospel better news rather than worse news?
- What does Romans 5:8-9 show about the relationship between God's love and His wrath?
- How can we be thankful that God takes sin seriously while also being thankful that He provides salvation from judgment?
- What does the cross reveal about how seriously God takes both sin and saving sinners?

Bring It Together

Romans 1:18-25 does not describe a God who becomes angry without reason. It describes a holy God who has revealed Himself, a humanity that suppresses and exchanges the truth, and a judgment in which God may allow people to follow the path they insist upon. Against that backdrop, the Gospel shines more brightly.

- Which truth from this passage is hardest for you to understand or accept? Why?
- Where are you tempted to suppress something you know is true because obedience would cost you something?
- What created thing are you most tempted to elevate into a place that belongs only to God?
- After reading Romans 1:18-25, what are you most thankful the Gospel has rescued you from - or is rescuing you toward?

III Share and Prayer

20-40 minutes

Take off the mask and share honestly. Give one another room to talk about what is really happening, without feeling pressure to share more than you are ready to.

- How are you doing personally and spiritually? Share a challenge or victory, and name how you are feeling.
- Is there a truth from God that you have been tempted to push down, avoid, or delay responding to?
- Is there something created that has begun taking too much of your attention, affection, trust, or identity?
- Where do you need to respond to God's correction as an expression of His love rather than simply as restriction?
- How can your group pray for you as you respond to God this week?

Have someone, or everyone, close your time in prayer for one another. Thank God that His wrath is righteous, that He has made Himself known, and that He does not treat sin as though it does not matter. Thank Him even more for the Gospel - that while humanity rejected Him, He acted in Christ to save. Ask Him for hearts that do not suppress the truth, exchange the Creator for created things, or resist His loving correction.