

May 15, 2015

The Extent and Nature of God's Wrath

Romans 1:18d (NASB), **“against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...”**

The fourth and fifth features of God's wrath involve both the extent of His wrath and the nature of His wrath.

God's wrath is universal. It says here at the beginning of this phrase that His wrath is **“against all.”** What this means practically is that no amount of good will or good works will erase God's wrath. No matter how much or how often you give to the poor, no matter how helpful you are to others, no matter how much you tithe, no matter how much you serve God none of that excludes you from God's wrath. Romans 3:9 says, **“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.”** Romans 3:23 says, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** While it is true that some people are indeed morally better than others, even the most morally upright person falls well short of God's standard of perfect righteousness.

Every morning when I go running part of my route takes me to one of the most elevated parts of town. When I look off to the east I can see Mt. Werner at Steamboat Springs and on a cloudless morning I can see the ski runs very clearly. Now I could stop and pick up a rock and throw it but it wouldn't even begin to get close to Mt. Werner. Even a great NFL quarterback like Peyton Manning, while he no doubt would throw it further than me, wouldn't even get close to the mountain. You see our good works and good deeds are just like that, they don't even begin to get us close to God. The most moral person has as little chance of achieving God's righteousness in his own power just as one of the best quarterbacks in the NFL has of throwing that rock to Steamboat Springs.

The second emphasis of this phrase is on the nature of God's wrath. His wrath is not like that of a madman who runs into a public place and indiscriminately kills or injures. Nor is His wrath like our sin-tainted anger when we are seeking to avenge a wrong that may have been done to us. God's wrath is reserved for and directed towards sin. **“Ungodliness”** and **“unrighteousness”** are synonyms. The first stresses a faulty relationship to God. God is angered because sinful men are His enemies. Romans 5:10 says, **“For if while we were enemies...”** In Ephesians 2:3 we are referred to as **“children of wrath.”**

“Ungodliness” refers to a lack of reverence for, devotion to, and worship of the true God. This then inevitably leads to some form of false worship. In Jude 14-15 we learn of Enoch the righteous descendent of Adam who prophesied about God's coming. **“It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’”** Four times in

that passage Jude uses the word **“ungodly”** to describe the focus of God’s wrath upon sinful mankind.

“Unrighteousness” encompasses the idea of **“ungodliness”** but focuses on its result. Sin first attacks God’s majesty and then His law. Men do not act righteously because they are not rightly related to God, who is the only measure and source of righteousness. **“Ungodliness”** always leads to **“unrighteousness.”** Why? Because our relationship to God is wrong and therefore our relationship to our fellow man is wrong as well. People treat other people the way they do because they treat God the way they do. Mankind’s enmity with their fellow man originates with his enmity with God.

Sin is the only thing God hates. He does not hate poor people or rich people. He does not hate those with low intelligence or those who are highly intelligent. He does not hate the highly skilled or the untalented. God only hates one thing and that is the sin that all people naturally practice. And this sin inevitably leads to God’s wrath.