

Our Suppression of God

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[0 : 0 0] You know, as we've been in this book of Romans, I have been more encouraged to think about those elements of evangelism as Paul writes this incredible book about salvation and who we are and who God is.

And it's kind of the impetus that led to the wall. But also what Dave talked about, if you're at a point in your life that you would want to know to share these truths of the magnificent glory of God, I would encourage you to sign up for the Engage training.

Even if you've had training in how to share the love of Jesus Christ and the gospel with someone. Rudy would love to host you. I'm excited that we're joining Combining Churches and we are all looking at this together in order to pray for the communities that are here.

So let's, getting back to the word of God here in Romans chapter 1, I'm going to begin in verse 16. Paul writes, Verse 4. I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith for faith as it is written. The righteous shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[1 : 2 9] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling the mortal man and birds and animals and creepy things.

As you know, we've just been a while in this book, getting back to this verse 18. And I want to spend some time in verse 18. And I want to draw in some aspects from the last few sermons before we launch into verse 19.

And I think it's important we have a fully orbbed understanding of what Paul is not only saying, but why he is saying these things. But this morning, what I want to zero in on is on verse 18, we see in that text, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[2 : 5 9] If you are a Gentile reader, that means if you are a non-Jew, you're back in the Roman days and you're reading this text, Paul has just told you that all of mankind is under the wrath of God.

But if you're a Gentile at that time, you're putting your hand up. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Like, that's not really fair. Why should we as Gentiles be judged by the same judgment that the Jewish brothers, and it's not like they're thinking lesser of their Jewish brothers, but their Jewish brothers, they had the word of God.

The Gentiles said, we didn't, we were ignorant. In fact, we were so ignorant. In Acts 17, it talks about Paul, when he gets to Greece, there's this plaque that essentially reads, to an unknown God.

Right? We didn't know who to worship. We didn't know what to do, what to say. They had men like Abraham, Moses, King David, Solomon. They had prophets.

They had kings. They even had a land. Not only that, they rejected Jesus. They killed Jesus.

[4 : 16] They killed the only son of God. And you mean to lump us in with them? We had nothing.

So really, is it fair to hold us to the same account as the Jews? Has anyone here ever asked themselves that question?

Perhaps you have thought about, what is it to be a missionary in a foreign land? And have you had those thoughts? Could God truly judge and hold people into account if they've never even heard the name of Jesus?

What about those people in the deepest parts of the jungle? Will God hold them accountable too? Well, Paul here in verse 18 tells us very simply, yes.

Yes, he does. Paul makes specific reference to all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth.

[5 : 34] As you know, this verse stands in stark contrast to verses 16 and 17. 16 and 17 is the great glorious news. If you remember at Christmas time, it is the, the, with the bow of the package that's unwrapped, that is presented, that God has given us his righteousness of Jesus Christ for us.

It's the ultimate Christmas gift. He provided that for us. And notice in verse 17, it's the same verbiage he uses in 18. For in the righteousness of God is revealed.

So is God's wrath revealed. what Paul has been reminding us is that this salvation is something that we all need.

That every man, every person, every woman of every age, of every race, of every nationality, tribe, and tongue needs to be rescued.

And there's only one person who rescues. And it is Jesus Christ. It is that God gives us his righteousness. If you remember a few weeks ago, I spoke, I used the analogy of like, we have this disease.

[6 : 55] A disease that will affect every single one of us. That this disease is attached to our DNA. And this epistle, this letter, is like Paul showing up at our door.

He's knocking and he brings us this medicine. And he says, if you take this medicine, you will be healed. Now what's really simple is some of us know we're sick.

We just grab that medicine and ah! You know, we know it. We want it. We want to hear this gospel. Salvation is easy. There's others who'll say, you know what, doctor?

I really appreciate you coming to my door. I really appreciate you caring for me. But I'll be honest with you, I feel fine. I feel great, right?

I only are organic. I eat about 4,000 oranges a day. I do weights in the morning. I run in the evening. I have never felt better in my life. Look, look at the guy across the street.

[7 : 58] He's overweight. Doesn't exercise. He thinks Halloween is a meal, right? Like, shouldn't you be talking to him? That's the guy.

And then, there are others that will simply say, doctor, you are right to be here. I am sick.

But will this medicine be strong enough for me? Like, I am so sick that anybody who comes in contact with me gets sick.

This is the person whose sickness has made other people sick and they've damaged other lives as well. And the shame clouds over them.

So, the question that they ask, is this pill that you offer strong enough for even me?

[9 : 02] What this text is in verse 19 and going forward is the doctor essentially claiming, hey, for you who don't think you're sick, I'm going to show you how sick you are.

The one who says you're sick and you've spread it all over but you're not sure the medicine is strong enough for you, I'm going to assure you the medicine is strong enough for you.

And for those that have already taken the medicine, you didn't care about the science, I'm going to share it with you anyway and you are going to praise God for what's going on inside of you.

You see, verse 18 is the doctor's general statement about all mankind, the diseases in every one of us, it's in our DNA. There's no outrunning it, there's no out eating it.

You may not always see it, but it's there at the cellular level. It's always there. And because of that, there is a wrath that is coming against you.

[10 : 10] If you remember, that word wrath of God refers to a settled, determined, indignation that God has against sin. It's God's hatred of sin.

It is not a momentary, emotional, uncontrolled anger that somehow someone can escape with choice words or running away from someone's backhand.

the wrath of God is purposeful. The wrath of God is perfect. And the word of God is perfectly wrathful.

There's essentially three types of wrath. We've talked about this, and I know we're going over some turf, but there's some areas I want to call special attention to you. The first wrath of God that we see explored in the Bible is that future aspect of wrath.

It's that wrath that happens at the end of time where every man and woman stands before God. And those who have rejected God will experience God's wrath for eternity.

[11 : 23] That is not the wrath that Paul is talking about. There's a secondary type of wrath, and it is a judicial type of wrath. We have this in our world. This type of wrath is offered to us by the government.

We see it by judges, our justice system, police officers. We do things wrong. We are investigated. We are tried and found guilty. We are removed from society in prison.

It's not that type of wrath that we're talking about. It's not a judicial wrath. The present disclosure of God's wrath is what it says there.

It is a wrath that is being revealed from heaven. God's wrath. There are two types of wrath that is revealed by God.

The first one is when God personally intervenes in our lives and demonstrates his displeasure. The first instance we read in scripture is in the garden.

[12 : 23] Adam and Eve sinned against God and God removed them from the garden of Eden. God's second aspect of wrath there's plenty I'm just going to give you a few of them.

We also see it in the murder of Cain and Abel. Cain is put away from his people that is God's wrath against him. We know the story of the flood. Sodom and Gomorrah.

We know the destruction of Egypt's army. And there's this other instance and I'm going to share a little bit about you. It happens in the story of Joshua 7. And this is a story that always perplexed me as a child.

We all remember the city of Jericho. Do you remember the story of Jericho? When it stood it was a great and mighty city that stood against God's people. God essentially said what I want you to do is every day for a week I want to get you up with the band and you're going to play the music and you're going to go around and you're going to shout these words of praise unto God and you're just going to march around this city and on the seventh day it will fall and it fell.

And what's interesting is that he also said God said to Joshua everything from that city goes to my treasury.

[13 : 46] And if you know anything about life at that time when you went and you invaded a people you took the people you took their you took either the people as slaves or servants you took their gold their riches their cattle everything was now yours.

But God said you're not doing that with Jericho stuff. Jericho stuff is my stuff. but what had happened is there was a man who saw some of God's stuff and took some of God's stuff for himself and he buried it in his tent so the people wouldn't know.

His name was Achan. And what God had promised and you had to understand at that time God had promised God's people that I am for you.

I am behind you. With me as your Lord you follow me you will not lose. So right after Jericho there's another place that they need to overtake another kingdom and it's led by or it's called Ai which is Ai.

And it was seen as such an inferior foe that when Israel went and spied over the land they reported back to the king man these guys are so bad. These guys are so small.

[15 : 04] You just need we just need a couple thousand people. You know what just send a few of them they'll like ride over these people. So Israel went in.

Joshua 7 4 tells us that the Israelites fled before the men of Ai. The text tells us that 36 Israelite men were killed that day.

It also tells us that the hearts of the people of God were melted and became dead. water. Has that ever happened to any of you?

You're walking confidently in God's word then all of a sudden you start taking on the confidence rather than God and you walk in and it's something that you should succeed at but all of a sudden you're getting blown back and all of a sudden you start to doubt.

Is God really there? Did God really promise us that? God. So Joshua had to search out and he asked every man to testify before the Lord had they kept any of God's treasure.

[16 : 11] And Achan came forth and said he did. I buried it. Verse 23 Joshua 7 says and they took them out of the tent and brought them that's Achan and his family to Joshua and to all the people of Israel and they laid them down before the Lord and Joshua and all Israel with them took Achan the son of Zerah and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had.

And they brought them up to the valley of Achor. And Joshua said why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today.

And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. God's wrath came upon Achan and his family.

I remember reading that as a young man and I was like can't they forgive him? He came clean when they asked him. When they asked him when you testify before the Lord did you do this? But is it really a heartless wrath?

They had a warning. The Lord told them. They knew the law. But let's just say the people of God or Joshua said you know what Achan we forgive you.

[17 : 41] Go on your way. What do you think would have happened to the 36 wives whose husbands all died because of Achan's sin?

What do you say to the 36 families, their children, if they let Achan off the hook?

Yes, he could have earthly forgiveness or heavenly forgiveness but there was earthly consequences, is there not?

And to have allowed Achan to live and his family to prosper would have sown these seeds of bitterness and people would have begun questioning, is our God truly a God of justice?

He knew what was wrong yet he still did it. So that's the first way of God's revealed will, wrath.

[18 : 46] The second way we see God's wrath being realized today is through God's moral order. The fact of the matter is when God made the world, God built in certain moral and physical laws that govern its operation.

If you jump after a, off a high building, it does not matter how much you pray, does not matter how much incense you burn, or any other incantation, when you hit that pavement, you will die.

There is nothing in the regular laws of this universe will prevent death from occurring. There are other actions that we do which incur this wrath.

If you are unfaithful to your spouse, you will eventually destroy your family. If you forget to pay your, or neglect to pay your taxes, the government will come after you, and the government doesn't give very nice interest rates.

If you steal, you physically hurt someone, or you murder someone, you go to prison. The fact of the matter is we get all that. We get that if you pursue the lust of your life, whether it be the lust of the flesh or the lust of your eyes, or even pursuing the riches of this world, bad things will happen.

[20 : 16] We get that. We get that there are consequences. But do you want to know something? Destructive sin doesn't have to be glorious sin.

Do you know that? How do lazy people do in life? How do gossipers do in life? How do people who are not trusted at work, when you go into work and you're not respected by your coworkers, you feel lonely, friendless, despair?

What happens if you poorly manage your money? Did you know that more divorces occur not because of infidelity of marriage, but over finances? You know, those are the things, we don't think of those as the big ticket destructive sins, but those are all sins that run account of God's wrath.

He has set a moral order, and when we disobey that order, there are consequences. We always think that God's wrath has to happen as a lightning bolt or an earthquake opens up and swallows us, right?

So we've committed that sin, we've done something we know we haven't done, we're looking, we're looking, didn't happen, I don't need to change, right?

[21 : 40] It didn't happen, my wife didn't find out. Sooner or later, it will get you. I remember one family, the husband had been stealing money from his own family for years, and it wasn't until they updated this bank, this software that found all these secret accounts where he was hiding money from his kids, and it was so bad for them that they didn't have enough money that they were having to put diesel fuel in his oil tank because they couldn't even afford to heat their home over the winter.

Their sin found them out. See, but what's interesting about God's wrath that he describes here in Romans 1, and we're going to see this in the next few weeks, is that the wrath of God does not come from God intervening in people's lives.

The wrath of God is that God quits intervening in people's lives. You get that? God pulls himself away from you.

He allows the natural consequences of your decisions to be the wrath. God gives men and women over to the rebellion.

That God abandons self-seeking stubborn sinners to their own self-centeredness. My friends, this is a scary place to be. To pray and to not have God be there to listen to you.

[23 : 19] verses 24, 26, and 28 actually explain the stages of God's wrath as God gives sinners over to their sinful degeneracy.

Now let's take a look at verse 18 again. It says, God's wrath is being poured out against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Note, it doesn't say just against Jewish ungodliness and Jewish unrighteousness of men, but all men.

We remember that word ungodliness refers to a lack of reverence for God. It is a lack of devotion of God. It is a matter of not worshiping God. It is about not giving God proper glory.

And the unrighteousness always follows ungodliness. Once God is pushed out of the picture, all sorts of immorality happens to man.

Sin first attacks God's majesty, then sin attacks God's law. The fact is, men do not act righteously because they are not rightly related to God, who is the only measure and source of righteousness.

[24 : 38] If I cut God out of the picture, how do I even know what righteousness is? How do I even know what morality is? You see, because man's relationship to God is wrong, the relationship to fellow man will be wrong.

My friends, that is why there is so much war. There is enmity between us. That's why there are things called racism, sexism, classism. As Dostoevsky stated, if God is dead, then all is permitted.

Now, I also want you to pay attention to this next verse, or the same verse. It says, God's wrath is not simply against godliness and unrighteousness, but notice it says it's against the godliness and unrighteousness of those who suppress the truth.

Now, next week, we're going to look at how all those people know the truth, but I want to focus in this morning on how we suppress the truth, the idea behind that word.

That godlessness and unrighteousness just doesn't come out of nowhere. There is a truth that is known, and that word suppress means to hold it back, to suppress, to push it down.

[25 : 57] And what that means is it's already there. Do you understand? In order to hinder something or to hide something, it has to be there in the first place in order to hide it.

You get that? It's not like it's unknown. The truth is known. You're trying to ignore it, to hide it, to not let it be seen or known.

You know it's there. But man, it just seems to be under this illusion that if it can kill God, I will no longer need a conscience that makes me feel bad. If I can kill God, I will not have to experience shame that hinders me.

If I can kill God, I will have no guilt and therefore will not be depressed. And then I will be free. See, it's the lie that Satan says that once God is dead, I can live however I want.

But there's a void. Man needs to worship something. And who does man always worship? Himself. What he likes.

[27 : 07] What she likes. The best thing is to worship me. Even to make up a God that has my values, my beliefs, and affirms my righteousness.

We give the glory that rightfully belongs to God. And we ultimately give it to ourselves. Today, we don't see a lot of idols out there that are dedicated to some foreign God.

But there's no shortage of worship of money. Sex, achievement, notoriety. That seems to be the big one of the day, right? I want to be an influencer. I want to be an influencer.

Is your worship to see how many people like your picture on Facebook, Instagram, or some other dead social media network? work. But here's the thing.

You cannot suppress forever. The truth will give way. There will be consequences. There will be damages. And that spring, that giant spring that you've been trying to hold down is going to pop up and you're going to get hurt.

[28 : 16] This brings me back to my original question. How can God hold everyone responsible for moral and spiritual failure and be so angry when some people have so much less opportunity than others for hearing the gospel and coming to know God?

What about that innocent native who lives in the deepest parts of the jungle? The answer is, we all have a sinful disposition and every person is naturally inclined to follow sin and resist God.

It's part of our DNA. If I could rewrite the phrase, I would say we who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by steadfastly holding to our sin.

It's our nature. It's our core desire from the very moment we've been born to suppress and oppose God's truth.

So how do we suppress the truth? The fact of the matter is, there's no shortage of legal ways to do it. Some people find a way to best way to escape God's shame is alcohol.

[29 : 38] Now the government has legalized all sorts of drugs. In fact, the government pushes drugs on us so we don't have to think about the consequences of our lives. We can act like God doesn't exist, but the consequences are so clear to see.

Even we Christians, we do it when we're confronted by someone who loves us, confronts us in love. We don't want to show up at church or avoid Bible study or maybe avoid that person for a couple of weeks.

So what's interesting is that all too often we meet people who want Jesus to show himself more to us. You ever meet those people? I'll believe it if God would just intervene. If he can intervene with his wrath, he can intervene with his presence.

Problem is, God did that. He came and they killed him. What more could you want? One of the saddest stories that I've ever read in Scripture, and this is the one I'll share with you very briefly, is the story of Adam and Eve who walked with God in the cool of the day, who had a perfect relationship with the perfect God.

They were challenged that God was a liar and a deceiver. Satan said, did God actually say? They ate of the fruit, became spiritually dead. You know what their response was?

[31 : 08] They took a couple of fig leaves to cover up their nakedness. Think about that for a second. They've walked with God.

They know God sees all. They know God hears all. They've known God. They also know how rich God is in love, in mercy, in justice, all the wonderful things.

And the best thing they can think of is to take these big leaves and cover themselves. Like that somehow covers them from God.

Two weeks ago, I preached to you a sermon here called, Where in the World Are We? I highlighted some of the reasons why this world looks so crazy. In fact, this world looks so crazy that scientists, philosophers, and politicians cannot make sense of this world.

Just even in the last year, and I brought this up before, a U.S. Supreme Court nomination was simply asked the question, what is a woman? And she could not answer. But yet, when she was nominated, they celebrated her as being the first black woman to become a Supreme Court judge.

[32 : 22] They can't define women, but why can they all of a sudden define what a woman is? You see, we're just as silly to think the conclusions we come up with to make up our own righteousness without God are any more clever as that.

Anything that we do is not as clever as Adam and Eve hiding themselves from God with fig leaves. But I want to share something with you.

When we consider the story of Adam and Eve, the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Egypt's army, even the story of Achan and Joshua 7, the horrible wraths that these people experienced, God always gave them a warning.

You know that? God always gave them instructions. God always showed patience. My friend, if there's two qualities that I love God for is his patience and long-suffering.

My friends, maybe there is someone here today who needs to be warned. Perhaps you are pursuing a relationship that you know will cause destruction. Perhaps your relationship with the church is mediocre at best.

[33 : 49] Perhaps your family has pleaded with you to forgo a certain habit that you have been living in secret with. But maybe today is the day that you hear that warning.

That you finally admit that suppressing the truth is doing you no good. Maybe nobody is warning you, but you are tired. You are tired.

You have been trying to keep the truth away from you for so long. You know you are living this life in despair. The spring that you attempt to hold down is wearing you out.

But somehow you are fearful. Can God ever forgive you? But this is it.

And this is why God's wrath is so glorious. The same wrath that he met it out on man, he met it out on his son, Jesus Christ. That same wrath 2,000 years ago, he poured out on all his son.

[34 : 54] And we're talking the combined wrath of the entire world in all of history. His son took on for you. So anybody to say, is the blood of Jesus Christ somehow not red enough to cover up my sins?

Oh, what a foolish, prideful place to be. There is no sin that cannot be blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Amen? All we need to do is we need to confess, to repent right here, right now, before the time comes when your heart is hardened.

And give thanks for the wrath of God. Because it was the wrath of God that paid the price for God's righteousness for you. Let me encourage you with the simple word that Paul offers us.

In 1 Thessalonians 1. He's talking to these brothers and he says, For they themselves report, and this church Paul absolutely loved, he says, They concerning us, the kind of reception we had among you.

[36 : 06] And he says, How you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. But he's talking like these guys were in the wicked of the wickedest category.

And then he says, And to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. That is the purpose of the wrath being poured out of Jesus, so that he can deliver us from God's wrath.

Reality is, perhaps you've experienced a wrath on earth, in which it can't be corrected anymore. Perhaps it's a relationship that you can no longer mend.

But I can tell you right here, right now, that you can have that relationship mended with the most important relationship on this earth, and that is the relationship with God in heaven.

It is the relationship that is eternal. There is nothing that Jesus cannot forgive you of. The fact is, here on earth, we may experience partial forgiveness against some of the people we've heard.

[37 : 21] And we know there's been people we've heard that say, I can no longer trust you anymore. And we can just humbly say, thank you for forgiving me. And I pray that one day you will embrace me as a brother or sister.

But with God, we can experience true and everlasting forgiveness right here, right now. Amen? And thus, you too can be saved from the wrath to come.

Let me pray for you. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, just as we struggle through with our understanding of wrath and how we suppress this truth, Father, I prepare that you work in our hearts that we may not, may we not fear or be discouraged by our own failings.

I just think about God's people in Joshua 6, how they had just seen God literally bring down the walls of a city without them even touching it.

They saw how God answered God's own promise that if they did this, this city would be theirs. But with a simple defeat by an inferior enemy, their hearts and wills melted before you.

[38 : 50] That is such our condition, O God. And then we go into defensive mode. We let shame come in. We do things to escape the memories of those things that we've done wrong.

We try to escape your wrath by making excuses, by avoiding certain people. Or we just try to deaden the pain with alcohol or drugs or some other vice that we can have, just believing that we are not good enough for the love of God.

The truth of the matter is, none of us are good enough for the love of God. There is no separation between any person that is in this room that is somehow more loved than any other.

Because the fact of the matter is, our love is based on God's love for us. God's love is based on his exponentially incredible love that he put his son on a cross for us.

And the fact is, he did it while we were yet sinners, we were enemies, we were against God. God, and yet he did all that so we could become friends of God, family of God, to be recognized as children of God, as Ephesians so wonderfully spells out for us.

[40 : 21] What an amazing thing is that we can be known from or by God. Father, I pray that no one would be as foolish as Adam and Eve to think that they can just simply hide with a fig leaf.

There is no escaping God's wrath. There is no escaping the consequences of this world that God has put into place. But we can experience, instead of wrath, we can experience love, God's justice, God's mercy.

We can allow God to make us whole again, to allow God to bring peace in the relationships of our family members that we can't fix, only God can. Father, the only one here with dominion over our lives is you.

And Father, I pray as God's people, we'd be down on our knees, asking you to have full dominion over every aspect of our life. I ask these things in your gracious and glorious name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.