

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-4-16 PM NOTES
“What Does Christmas Have to Do with the Wrath of God?”
Romans 2:5
Non-Series Message

*Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus to Thee be all glory given;*

Word of the father, now in flesh appearing!

*O come let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

—John Francis Wade (1743)

*Christ by highest heaven adored, **Christ the everlasting Lord:**
Late in time behold Him come, **off-spring of a virgin's womb.***

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity!

*Pleased as man with men to dwell, **Jesus our Emanuel.***

—Charles Wesley (1739)

*Shepherds in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,*

God with man is now residing,

Yonder shines the infant's light:

Come and worship, come and worship,

*Worship the **Christ the newborn King!***

—James Montgomery (1816)

“Jesus came to earth, of course, to reveal God to mankind. He came to teach truth. He came to fulfill the law. He came to offer His kingdom. He came to show us how to live. He came to reveal God’s love. He came to bring peace. He came to heal the sick. He came to minister to the needy. But all those reasons are incidental to His ultimate purpose. He could have done them all without being born as a human. He could have simply appeared—like the angel of the Lord often did in the Old Testament—and accomplished everything in the above list, without literally becoming a man. But He had one more reason for coming: He came to die.” —John MacArthur

Romans 3:10-12 “as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.’”

I. The Wrath of God (v. 5)

Thomas Watson in his classic book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, said, “Repentance is a grace of God’s Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.” Watson then compares repentance to a medicine with six ingredients:

- **Sight of Sin**

“A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is, and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it.” (p. 18)

- **Sorrow for Sin**

Psalms 38:18 (ESV) “I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.”

Psalms 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

- **Confession of Sin**

- **Shame for Sin**

Ezekiel 43:10a “son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities...”

“Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing.”

—Thomas Watson

- **Hatred of Sin**

“Christ is never loved till sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for till sin be loathed.”

—Thomas Watson

- **Turning from Sin**

A. The Heart Is Hardened (v. 5a)

Sklerotes—to harden

Hebrews 4:7b “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

B. The Heart is Unrepentant (v. 5b)

C. Wrath Is Stored Up (v. 5c)

“For if you do not come – the conclusion is now expressed with great simplicity – you become a hoarder of wrath against the day of God’s wrath. The figure of speech is most striking. The picture is that of a miser who saves odds and ends of wrath, and who tucks all of his collection away, unwilling to comprehend that he is like a man who is collecting eggs of serpents, bringing them into a warm room where they will someday hatch at the same moment and destroy him.” —Donald Barnhouse

Revelation 20:11-15 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

II. Christmas

Romans 5:9 “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

A. He Took Our Sins and the Wrath They Deserved

Isaiah 53:6 “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

Isaiah 53:10 “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.”

Romans 3:25 “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed”.

B. He Gave Us His Righteousness That We Might Have the Standing His Righteousness Deserves

2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Philippians 3:9 “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

First Baptist Church Powell 12-4-16 PM
What Does Christmas Have to Do with The Wrath of God?
Romans 2:5
Non-Series Message

There are some things that just don't seem to go together: spinach and ice cream, opera and mixed martial arts, root canals and a fun day, and Christmas and the wrath of God. I would agree with the first 3, but Christmas has everything to do with the wrath of God!

The really important thing about what is often called "The Christmas Story" is *who* this child was and *why* He came. Certainly we must first go to the Scriptures to answer those questions of who He was and why He came, but we learn a lot of the truth that Scripture gives in some of the songs we sing at Christmas. Consider these words:

*Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the father, now in flesh appearing!
O come let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

- John Francis Wade (1743)

*Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord:
Late in time behold Him come, off-spring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emanuel.*

- Charles Wesley (1739)

*Shepherds in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infants light:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship the Christ the newborn King!*

- James Montgomery (1816)

From just those three carols, we see that He is "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing," "Christ (Messiah) the everlasting Lord," the "offspring of a virgin's womb," God the Son veiled in flesh, "incarnate deity," "Jesus our Emanuel" (God with us), "God with man now residing." That's only a small sampling!

What I want to do is to focus on one of the lesser known and taught reasons why He came. We hear often that He came to save us from our sins, to bring us into right relationship with God, and to take us to Heaven when we die. But in this message, we are going to see that He came to deliver us from the wrath and righteous judgment of God. Two of the key phrases in Romans 2:5 are "day of wrath" and "righteous judgment of God." The reason Jesus came is tied up in those phrases. He came to save us from the day of wrath and the righteous judgment of God. This salvation required Him to die. There is no salvation from wrath and judgment through His birth, His sinless life, His example, and even His teaching.

Salvation from wrath and judgment came through His death, his shed blood. John MacArthur said it well:

Jesus came to earth, of course, to reveal God to mankind. He came to teach truth. He came to fulfill the law. He came to offer His kingdom. He came to show us how to live. He came to reveal God's love. He came to bring peace. He came to heal the sick. He came to minister to the needy. But all those reasons are incidental to His ultimate purpose. He could have done them all without being born as a human. He could have simply appeared – like the angel of the Lord often did in the Old Testament – and accomplished everything in the above list, without literally becoming a man. But He had one more reason for coming: He came to die.

[John MacArthur, *The Miracle of Christmas*, page 116]

His death, His cross is the center piece of the Gospel.

Let me set the context of the text in Romans. This verse is a part of a bleak, dark, negative, but necessary section of the book of Romans that includes Romans 1:18-3:20. The theme of this dark but necessary passage is summarized in Romans 3:10-12: “as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.’”

In this section Paul proves conclusively that all mankind is without excuse and stands guilty before God deserving the wrath of God. It is not a “Happy, happy, joy, joy” section of the book. However, we cannot fully appreciate the coming of the Savior and His deliverance until we understand the wrath of God that we were saved from through Christ and His cross. In this message, we are going to tie together the wrath of God and Christmas.

I. The Wrath of God (v 5)

We can't really understand this verse apart from seeing it in context – especially in context with verse four. The message of verse four is that all mankind (immoral Gentiles, moral Gentiles, and Jews) have been recipients of the rich “common grace” of God. That common grace is manifested in His kindness in providing physical life and the food and shelter to sustain that life, family, health, and a host of other temporal blessings. In addition to His kindness, there is the common grace of His tolerance (“forbearance” NKJV). That word refers to the holding back of the wrath and judgment that all mankind deserves. It is only the tolerance of God that explains why we are all not in hell tonight.

In addition, there is the common grace of His patience. His patience speaks of His withholding what we deserve and His tolerance or longsuffering points to how long He has withheld what we deserve. The way that man has despised those riches of God's common grace is that they have refused to repent. The whole purpose of the kindness, tolerance, and patience of God is to lead us to repentance. I think that the best definition of repentance I've ever seen is from the Puritan Thomas Watson in his classic book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, (page 18): “Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.” Watson then compares repentance to a medicine with six ingredients:

- Sight of Sin – Before there can be repentance, the sinner must be aware of his sin. Watson said, “A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is, and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it.” [page 18] That is what the Holy Spirit accomplishes when He opens spiritual eyes that were blinded by pride.
- Sorrow for Sin – Psalms 38:18 (ESV): “I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin.” Sorrow over sin is not repentance, but it is one of the ingredients of repentance. This sorrow is not a shallow thing. It is an agonizing over sin. It is called a broken and contrite heart in Psalms 51:17: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”
- Confession of Sin – The response of that Godly sorrow and a broken and contrite heart is to agree with God (confess) our sin. It is a sincere confession without an excuse attached. Much confession is insincere in that it is not radical enough. Augustine said that before he was converted, he confessed sin and pleaded for power against it, but deep in his heart, there was the whisper, “Not yet, Lord.” True confession involves a hatred of sin and a radical “whatever it takes” mindset to turn from it.
- Shame for Sin – Ezekiel 43:10a: “son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities...” Watson said, “Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing.”
- Hatred of Sin – If there is no hatred for our sin there will be no genuine turning from our sin. Watson said, “Christ is never loved till sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for till sin be loathed.” [page 45]
- Turning from Sin – Genuine repentance always results in a turning from sin and if there is no turning from sin it is evidence that the repentance has been counterfeit.

Here we have the desired result of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience. It is that mankind would see their sin, have a sorrow for their sin, confess their sin, have a sense of shame for their sin, hate their sin with a holy hatred, and finally turn from their sin. Verse 5 gives us the consequences of despising God's goodness by failing to repent. Here are the consequences:

A. The Heart Is Hardened (v 5a)

That word stubbornness is translated “hardness” in the NKJV version. The Greek word is *sklerotes*. It means to harden. We use it in medicine when we speak of “arteriosclerosis” which is commonly called “hardening of the arteries.” Sclerosis of the liver is a hardening of the liver. When one despises the kindness, tolerance, and patience of God he gets “cardio-sclerosis,” a hardened spiritual heart. Hardening of the arteries may take a person to the grave, but the hardening of the spiritual heart will take him to hell [*MacArthur Commentary*, page 120]

This condition of a hardened heart is warned about several times in Scripture. Hebrews 4:7b: “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” When the light of God’s truth and especially the ultimate light of the hearing of the Gospel are given to a person, either their heart will soften to the truth and they will believe the Gospel or they will be hardened. That is why both the proclaiming and listening to the gospel carry tremendous responsibility.

B. The Heart is Unrepentant (v 5b)

The picture is that of a heart so hard that it cannot repent.

C. Wrath Is Stored Up (v 5c)

Donald Barnhouse gives a good word picture of what this passage is saying: “For if you do not come – the conclusion is now expressed with great simplicity – you become a hoarder of wrath against the day of God’s wrath. The figure of speech is most striking. The picture is that of a miser who saves odds and ends of wrath, and who tucks all of his collection away, unwilling to comprehend that he is like a man who is collecting eggs of serpents, bringing them into a warm room where they will someday hatch at the same moment and destroy him” [Donald Barnhouse, *Romans*, page 31]

The picture here is that an unrepentant person will be rich in wrath. When a person refuses to respond to the riches of God’s kindness, he gets the *riches* of God’s wrath. Let me point out the obvious here. The sins of the lost will be punished according to their accumulation. Hell won’t be the same for everyone. That’s why we see in numerous verses in the Scripture that each person will be judged according to their works. No one is saved by their works, but the wrath of God is in accordance with works. In eternity, every sin will be punished with the degree of severity that sin deserves. God’s wrath is proportionate to the unrepentant person’s sin. The more truth a lost person is exposed to and then rejects, the greater God’s wrath. Notice that the wrath is culminated on a day.

The wrath of God is ongoing as He gives people over to their sin, but there is coming a day when the books are finally tallied. I believe that day is the day spoken of in Revelation 20 called the Great White Throne of Judgment. Understand that this is not a determination of who is saved and who is lost; it is applying the wrath of God to works of sin. Revelation 20:11-15:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

II. Christmas

What does Christmas have to do with the wrath of God? Christmas has everything to do with the wrath of God! At Christmas we celebrate the coming of God the Son, deity incarnate, the Word become flesh. In the introduction we looked at why He came, but I like the way it is stated in Romans 5:9: “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

The coming, the birth of Christ has everything to do with the wrath of God! Here is the question: How did His coming save us from the wrath of God?

A. He Took Our Sins and the Wrath They Deserved

Oh what a glorious truth. As our substitute, He took every sin on Himself of every person who would repent and trust completely in Him. On the cross, the Father poured out His wrath for sin – all the wrath that those sins had stored up (v 5 “you are storing up wrath for yourself”) – and He poured it out, not on us, but on His only begotten Son. He abandoned His own Son as He turned His face away from Him to the cries of Jesus, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

Isaiah prophesied what was going to happen 700 years earlier. Isaiah 53:6: “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” Isaiah 53:10: “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.”

His poured out blood satisfied the Father’s wrath. The theological word for that is “propitiation.” It means to satisfy or appease. Romans 3:25: “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” The forbearance calls us back to verse 4 of Romans 2. Now the sins are paid for.

The Puritan, John Owen, said it best in the 1600’s: “If He fulfilled not justice, I must; if He underwent not wrath, I must to eternity.” Because He came and fulfilled justice and underwent the wrath I deserved, I stand Justified before God and my wrath account that outside of Christ I would be treasuring up is empty. Each sin that stored up wrath is marked, “Paid in full.”

B. He Gave Us His Righteousness That We Might Have the Standing His Righteousness Deserves

When we come to him in repentance and faith, His righteousness is imputed to our account. 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Philippians 3:9: “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.” In Christ we can stand in His righteousness before a Holy God and are accepted, forgiven, and welcomed into the family.

Conclusion

Do you see that Christmas and the wrath of God do go together? He was born to die as a substitute and to save those who come to him from the treasured up wrath that we deserve. I can’t think of any better words than the words of P. P. Bliss:

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood –
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*