

Men Hate God and Suppress the Truth

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Let me tell you something. Basically, I believe most of you folks in here, if asked, if somebody came along and said, "Well, what do you believe?" Somewhere in there you'd probably say, "Well, we believe the Bible." And that's my desire for our church, for these Bible studies, that we truly are looking at the Bible. We're really learning what the Bible has to say and not what men have to say. I'll be honest with you guys, I am not interested so much in what the Reformers had to say, or what the Puritans had to say. I'm really interested in what the Bible has to say because Reformers and Puritans can be wrong. And the thing is, we have to test everything. The thing is, we are a product. However we've gotten to where we are, we are a product. We're a product as a church. We're a product as individuals of a past, of traditions, of history.

And like I started out by saying, a couple of weeks back, a lot of times as much as we think we're biblical, we don't actually talk biblical. And remember I brought up the idea of "being saved" - our salvation is closer than when we first believed. You and I typically don't talk that way. We talk about being saved - past tense - which, by the way in the point I was trying to make back then, is yes the Bible does talk that way sometimes, but it is definitely in the minority. The majority of time, salvation is looked as a present or a future reality. So if we're really going to talk biblically, if we're going to talk balanced biblically, we're going to talk that way. But you know what? We don't talk that way. We talk about when we were saved - past tense. I don't think, other than when we quote these verses, that I heard anybody talk that way. Maybe I have, I just don't remember anybody talked about being saved or the fact that they will be saved, other than when they quote certain verses from the Scriptures. But you see, that shows right there that we are out of balance with the Scriptures. Why do I bring that up? Because I believe that what we're looking at right now is, if I'm trying to follow this Grudem Systematic Theology a little bit; and chapter 15, which is where we're at, deals with creation.

Well, what is there about creation that I'm leading to in all this that I think, probably, we're not as biblically balanced as we ought to be when it comes to creation? Well, let me tell you. Creation. Let's think about creation for a second. I want to start to hit on the importance of it. And I don't think we talk with the same level of intensity that the Bible talks when it comes to creation. Now just hear me out here. Think about this: Hebrews 11 basically says that creation is at the foundation of our faith. Now I realize our faith is focused on Jesus Christ; on what He accomplished for us. But isn't it interesting that the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 11 verse 1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it, the people of old received their commendation." And then what is it? What is the matter of faith, or the material that is to be believed, the truths that are to be believed by this faith that he hits at right off? "By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

Creation. Look, the attack that's coming on creation is demonic. And Satan attacks right at points that are crucial, right at points that the Bible emphasizes and puts great importance on. Those are the areas Satan attacks. And I'm going to show you, creation is not a minor matter.

It's not enough just to say, "Well, it doesn't really matter what we believe there. It doesn't really matter if I hold to theistic evolution and I sort of just deny what the Bible has to say about creation, and I just kind of spiritualize everything and kind of do away with it." It matters, folks, and I want to show you that.

The first thing: "By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the word of God." That is foundational to our faith according to the writer of Hebrews. I'll tell you this: When you come to the Bible, it starts with creation. "In the beginning...", you know the verse very well. But then you know what? When we come around to the end of the Bible, let's jump to the book of Revelation. Revelation 4:11. You don't really have to turn there. By the time you get there, I'm going to be to the next verse. So you can listen, maybe jot these down. If you want to try to keep up with me, it's going to be... You know what? There is a place in a few steps here that I'm going to have you turn to. And so, if you want to turn anywhere, you can turn to Romans 1 because that's what I'm going to hit on in just a second.

Everybody just kind of relax, kind of absorb this. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." Okay, we come to the end of the Bible. Revelation 4:11, "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power." Why? Why is the Lord in heaven praised as being worthy to receive glory and honor and power? For this reason: "You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created." Revelation 10:6, "Him - God is called Him - who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it." Revelation 14:7, "And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'"

Beginning of the Bible, end of the Bible. Creation is basically bookends. And it's not like it's just found at the ends, it's all over in the middle too. You find it in the Psalms. Psalms 136:3, "Give thanks to the Lord of lords, to Him who by understanding made the heavens; to Him who spread out the earth above the waters; to Him who made the great lights - the sun to rule over the day, the moon and stars to rule over the night, for His steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 102:25, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands." We've got creation in the Prophets. Isaiah said, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable." Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God, it is You who has made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."

Guess what, early church in the book of Acts, you guys remember how they prayed in Acts 4? "When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted up their voices together to God and said, 'Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.' In the book of Acts when they preached the gospel, listen to what they did in Acts 14. Remember this? 'Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles

Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature of you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.'" Again in Acts 17, "For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found an altar with this inscription, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man."

Brethren, here's the thing. It's everywhere. It's everywhere. I mean, if you just go search all the scriptures that deal with God being the Creator. Just search 'create', 'creator', 'created'. Search 'heaven and earth'. It's amazing. It's everywhere. The Bible does not make this a small matter of importance. It's huge. And let me tell you this. We dealt with this last week but I'm going to come back to it again. And I want you to hear this. Romans 1:18. I'll tell you what my message has to do with today. You know I realize we can kind of just sit back and say, "Okay, we're going to deal with creation. Let's think about whether this is long day, short day. Was there death before Adam and Eve fell into sin? Was there not..?" And those might be important questions to answer, but let me tell you this, I'm convinced of this: Creation is fundamental to the gospel. And that's what I want to do with it. That's what I want to show you. And it's fundamental to the gospel because the gospel is good news. And the gospel is not good news unless it's good. And it's not good unless there's something bad. Not that it's bad in and of itself, but it certainly is bad to us, and for our own good. And what is that? The wrath of God.

Folks, you need to know the wrath of God before you can realize what good news the gospel is. And let me tell you what Romans 1 says: The wrath of God is tied, inseparably, to creation. And if you can see and make in your mind that connection: Gospel - wrath - creation. This is not an artificial connection, folks. It's here, and I'm going to show it to you. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." So we looked at this. We looked at this last week, but I want to develop it further. What does man do? Man suppresses the truth. In his unrighteousness, man suppresses the truth. God's wrath burns against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And in their unrighteousness, they suppress truth. What truth? "For what can be known about God is plain to them." Where is it plain to them? "Because God has shown it to them." Where has He shown it to them? "For His invisible attributes - His characteristics, who He is, what He is, how He reveals Himself - His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived." Now watch that. They have been clearly perceived. It doesn't say they haven't been. Man sees and suppresses.

It's not like he's totally blind and can't see anything. God is saying he has perceived, and man blinds himself. Man, willingly, will not see. Whatever he can see, he does not want to see. When he clearly perceived it, ever since the creation of the world. Folks, ever since the creation of the world, man has perceived something of the eternal power and divine attributes of God, enough to make him without excuse. What was it that happened way back in creation that he was able to perceive, that now leaves him without excuse? Well, it says, "Ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Man looks at a little worm. A little worm, a caterpillar, got all these little stripes on it - red, or not red but rather yellow, and black, and white. And the thing crawls up and it chews on a milkweed. And then it makes this little green cocoon that hangs off the bottom of the milkweed leaf. And then several weeks later, a monarch butterfly hangs off that thing, crawls out with its wings perfectly folded and perfectly wet. And then they hang, and dry, and stiffen. And that thing flies all the way from Canada, or Minnesota, or Michigan, all the way to Mexico. A brainless little butterfly knows exactly where to fly to pine trees in Mexico, where literally millions and maybe billions of other butterflies, all of them somehow knew to get there. And some of these butterflies fly across the Gulf of Mexico. I've seen pictures of oil rigs covered with these butterflies because a storm was coming, and they took shelter on it. They're out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, not in sight of land, and they know where to go. A worm becomes a flying thing and knows how to get to the same trees every year that its ancestors have gone to ever since God created them. And man looks at that, and says, "There is no God. It evolved. It came out of some... Primordial Soup made that thing." And it says for these very reasons the wrath of God is revealed. For these reasons.

Man hates what's clearly perceived in the things that have been made. And I say, why? Why does man hate it? I'll tell you why. Because you know what he sees in the creation? You know what it really speaks to him? I'll tell you what it says to him. Man looks, he sees a caterpillar chewing. I mean, it's a white caterpillar with some black, yellow stripes on it. It chews on a green leaf with white syrup, and it turns into an orangeous red butterfly. A worm turns into something, it goes into a cocoon, and it turns into something that can fly. And man looks at that, and he says, "I hate what that tells me and I'm going to suppress it." Why does man hate it so much? I'll tell you why he hates it. Because man is stuck on himself. Man's primary problem is self-worship. It's pride. He loves himself and he hates God.

Look, if Darwin is right, man is god. As long as he's got his little day here on this earth, he's not eternal, but he's god while he's here because he's the smartest one here in his estimation. But when he looks at that butterfly, immediately he's confronted by something. I'll tell you what he's confronted by. He's confronted by the glory of God. And he doesn't like the glory of God because he likes his own glory. And when he sees the glory there, he realizes that outshines his glory because he can't make a worm fly. And he can't make a little butterfly figure out where to go down there. And he realizes there's something in this creation that tells him that there's somebody smarter than he is. And there is glory revealed in the creation. Doesn't it say, "Worthy are You," in Revelation 4:11? "Worthy — why? — to receive glory and honor and power for You created all things. You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power."

Revelation 14:7, "And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God." In the end he says, "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water." You know Psalm 19 probably very well, "The heavens declare the glory of the LORD." You know what man realizes? He realizes, "If there's a God behind this, I'm going to have to worship Him. But I hate Him and I want to worship me. So I'm going to suppress that truth and I'm going to convince myself Darwin is right." Brethren, when Paul wrote this, Darwin wasn't even heard of. Man has been thinking this way before Darwin came along. Man has been suppressing the truth that he knows about God.

If anything is unbelievable, is it not unbelievable, unbelievable, what the Jews did? Is that not unbelievable? I mean, you would have a king in Israel, or a king in Judah, and they would go out and they would conquer an enemy, and take the god of the conquered enemy and bring it back and worship it. Unbelievable! Unbelievable!! Their God gave them victory. The god of those pagans didn't. So bent on idolatry. It's just unbelievable how often they ran to the idols. It's unbelievable. God accuses Israel right at that point: "You have done what no others have ever done! None of the other nations forsake their god. Those that bow down to Baal, or to Molech, or Dagon, they didn't forsake them. But you people forsake Me. You've hewn out for yourself broken cisterns." Unbelievable.

But it is believable, because that's how wicked man is. And that's how he is. He will turn from the true God because if he accepts that true God, what you have right there, "They declare His glory. They tell us that we need to worship Him." But I'll tell you what else they tell us. Listen to this verse. Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." You know what that verse says? That verse tells us that if you make it, you own it. Right? You see, there is where man's problem is. He looks and he sees there is a glory in this. "There is a designer behind this. There are attributes of power and divine nature that I can see in this. But if I accept that that glory belongs to God, that means I'm bound to worship Him, and that means He owns me." Did you not read? Did you not hear that? "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof." He created it. He owns it. If He owns it, He owns you. If He owns you, He's got the right to tell you what to do and how to live.

And man says, "No! I want to live the way I want to live, and I don't want any God telling me how to live. And so I'm going to suppress what I see of His glory. And I'm going to convince myself that He is not real, that this all evolved, that it came from anywhere and everywhere but from Him." And man will come up with the most ludicrous, idiotic assumptions and theories in order to deny God. And I'll tell you what else. He realizes, "If there is a God like that, and that God owns me, that God has a right for my worship, He's got a right to tell me what to do, (and somewhere in this, God has built this right into the conscience of man, and he knows,) then that God also has a right to punish me if I don't do what He says. In it God's wrath is declared. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." And you cannot get away from this. The truth they suppress has to do with His divine attributes, His divine power that's revealed in creation. You cannot get away from the fact that His wrath is directly related to a truth that is suppressed that involves creation.

What's this? Folks, for one, I think we need to talk more about the Sovereign LORD who created heaven and earth. I wonder, when is the last time you referred to God as He who created the heavens and the earth? I see that the prophets said that. I see that the psalmist said that. I see that the church in the book of Acts spoke that way, and prayed that way, and preached that way. But when do we talk like that? Brethren, are we a product of our age, a product of our tradition? You know one thing we've become a product to? We've become a product of Christian lingo. We talk a certain talk, but we need to talk biblically.

Now think with me here. I've taken creation and shown you how the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And their

unrighteousness reveals itself in their suppressing the truth - the truth that has to do with what creation reveals about God. But how does that tie to the gospel? Folks, Romans 1:18 starts with a very interesting 3-letter word. Does anybody see what that is? What is it? "For". Can I tell you something? In verses 16 and 17, Paul basically introduces his major topic, his thesis. It's the gospel. The book of Romans is the most complete, the most in-depth single presentation of the gospel in the Scriptures. That is what he is going to lay down for us. He presents a gospel of which he is not ashamed. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

So what's the connection? Folks, when Paul wants to give the most extensive treatment of the gospel that he gives in any of his epistles, he starts with wrath. Now look, you heard several weeks ago Craig was talking about evangelism in the Sunday School. And he was talking about the fact that a lot of us are going to get to see a lot of relatives, family members, friends; and that you don't want to walk in, and the first thing you say to aunt Sally is: "Hi aunt Sally, you're going to hell." Remember he said that. I would concur with brother Craig. That's not a good way to start the conversation at the Christmas dinner. But let me tell you something, and I know where Craig was going with that and I definitely agree with him. But lest you come away from that, thinking there's no place for wrath in your gospel message, listen to me. Paul starts with wrath.

You know what man doesn't like? Man doesn't like wrath! Man looks at that caterpillar, and he says, "I am going to suppress this truth because I don't want to worship this God. I don't like to think that this God has glory, I want to think I have glory. I don't want to be accountable to Him. I don't want to think anybody owns me. I don't want to think there's anybody I owe an account to. And I don't want to think there is a judgment day, because the fact is I want to go fornicate, and I want to get drunk." And listen, some of these guys will come right out and say it. "If I admit there is a God, then it kind of puts a damper on my sex life." You can find that, folks. There are atheists willing to say that.

The wrath of God. And Paul says, "Look, we can't talk about good news until you folks know the bad news." And I'll tell you what, he spends from Romans 1:18 all the way through Romans 3:20 dealing with wrath, sin, the state we're in. God's wrath. Let's think about God's wrath. You know, so often this is not a subject you hear. People don't preach on wrath. You go back several hundred years, songs were about wrath; preaching was about wrath. You don't hear it today. Where is it? Paul thinks it's critical in our gospel to begin there, and to spend Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 right there. What happens so often today? People want to talk to people about "God's mercy, God's love, God's grace, God's compassion, God is love, Look how much He loves you, God has a wonderful plan for your life". And I'm not saying that for the child of God, that God doesn't have a wonderful plan for your life, amazing plan for your life. I'm not going to say that God isn't love, and that God doesn't have unspeakable mercy and grace. The Bible obviously teaches us this. But if we don't know wrath, we don't know how good this good news is. And as much as the Bible talks about creation, and the God of creation, and the God who made all these things, the Bible speaks about wrath.

I just listened to a message by Charles Leiter the other day. He told me he went through and searched on a search engine, some kind of Bible software, and he came up with 15 pages, single spaced, number 10 font, of verses from the Bible that deal with God's wrath. The wrath of

God. Can I tell you something? That's a word that sounds rather intimidating. Wrath. We were just talking about the King James Bible. The King James Bible spoke about "the fierceness of His wrath". In those places, I think the ESV uses "the fury of His wrath". That's a fearsome, that's an alarming concept. Man doesn't want to deal with that. "The fierceness of God's wrath? Please! I can't sleep well at night. I can't fornicate with my neighbor's wife and sleep well at night when I think about the fierceness of God's wrath. And so, when I look at a bird fly, or a baby born, or metamorphosis of a caterpillar; if I'm going to sleep well at night, I better convince myself that there is no God like this. And so, despite all the evidence, I love darkness. And I need to hide myself from the truth." And God says, "It's right there that My wrath burns against the unrighteousness of man." It burns. Because what it says there in Romans 1 is, "They do not give God honor, and they do not give God thanks."

What is "giving God thanks"? You know what "giving God thanks" is? It's saying, "This bowl of chili I'm eating, God it came from plants You grow, and from animals You created. It comes from You, and I acknowledge that every good gift and every perfect gift is from You." Thanks means that I'm acknowledging that God is the giver of everything, and I am dependent on Him, and that I can't produce it. And man says, "No! I am not going to do that. Because then, I can't drink freely, and I can't enjoy my sin freely, and I can't worship my money freely, because I know that there is a God that I have to give an account to in the end of this." And I've told you this before. I worked with an atheist when I was an engineer in the engineering group; the mechanical engineer in that group. Dan staunchly laughed mockingly at me. It was easy for him to do that when we were in a group. But I got him alone one day at lunch; very arrogant, very haughty. But I said, "Dan, what if I'm right?" He said, "Well, I guess I'm in trouble."

Do you think a man is in trouble when the Bible speaks about the fierceness of His wrath? God has a fierce hatred. And let me tell you something: His hatred is for sin, and His hatred is towards the one who sins. And if you ever tell people that God does not have fierce wrath towards the sinner, not just the sin but towards the sinner, then you are lying to them; because I don't find verses that speak and show God to pour out wrath on sin. What's that? How do you pour out wrath on sin? Where is it? Listen to this: I'm just going to give you five verses that deal with God's wrath; you tell me who the recipients of the wrath are. Exodus 22:22, "You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry, and My wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword." Leviticus 26:27, "But if in spite of this you will not listen to Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury."

2 Kings 22:13, "For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this Book, and do according to all that is written concerning us." Ezra 8:22, "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek Him, and the power of His wrath is against all who forsake Him." Psalm 21:8, "Your hand will find out all Your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate You. You will make them as a blazing oven when You appear. The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them." Folks, His wrath is directed against sinners, not just sin.

Let me tell you something else about His wrath: It's fearful. There's no other way to put it. It is infinitely dreadful. So often, it is likened to fire. I find various times it's likened to drinking a cup, even the dregs of the cup, which I think is where we get the picture that Christ uses when

He's in the garden. If it was possible, He was praying to His Father, that He would be delivered from that cup - a cup of wrath. But more times than anything else in the Bible, you tell me; you listen to this, you hear what this wrath is likened to. Exodus 15:7, "You send out Your fury; it consumes them like stubble." 2 Kings 53:26, "The burning of His great wrath." Psalm 21:9, "You will make them as a blazing oven when You appear. The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, and fire will consume them." Isaiah 66:15, "For, behold, the LORD will come in fire, and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger in fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire."

Jeremiah 4:4, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest My wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds." Ezekiel 21:31, "I will blow upon you with the fire of My wrath." Ezekiel 38:19, "My blazing wrath." Jeremiah 17:4, "In My anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever." Isaiah 30:30, "In furious anger and a flame of devouring fire." Deuteronomy 32:22, "For a fire is kindled by My anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains." Deuteronomy 29:20, "The anger of the LORD and His jealousy will smoke against that man."

Folks, this is one of the most fearful verses that I have ever read in the Bible. Ezekiel 22:20, "As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it." You know what? Man wants to ignore it; he wants to forget it; he wants to suppress it. And man likes to think, "Oh, my sin isn't that bad. And God isn't that angry." And man somehow thinks somehow, somehow, "Well, even if hell is real, I'm going to be down there with all my friends." "I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it." Man thinks he's going to stand up to it. But I'll tell you, when God blows upon him with the wrath of His vengeance, with the fires, a smoke, a blaze, man will yield immediately. There will be no fight in him. He will succumb to that wrath. Folks, the wrath of God is fearful. And I'll tell you this, nothing but sin brings out this characteristic of God. Wrath is the way a holy God does respond to the wickedness of men.

And I'll tell you a third thing about this wrath: It's righteous. Listen to this, this is in Romans 2:5, "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." You know what most men feel? They feel that the wrath of God, if it's as bad as the Bible says it is, (and the Bible says it's terrific, it's terrifying to the uttermost), if it's that bad, man looks at it and says, "Wait a second! If it's that bad, this is excessive! God has gone overboard here." Man cannot conceive of God having such a massive reaction on God's part to our little sins. So they think, "This can't be. This is overkill." I'll tell you what, the problem is not that God is excessive. It's not that He's extreme. It's not that He's disproportionate. The Bible says His judgment is righteous.

Folks, the problem is, we underestimate the degree of our crime. Our guilt is on a level that we know not. The problem lies not in our assessment of His wrath, the problem lies in our assessment of the excessiveness of our sin. That's where it lies. God's wrath shouldn't make us think of an overreacting God, it should make us think of underestimating foolish men. God's wrath is reasonable if we understand our sin. Let me tell you this: God's wrath is distressing. Again, Romans 2, "But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey

unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil." Can I tell you this, God's wrath is to be escaped at all cost because of the distress it will cause to you.

Listen, when we come across God's wrath in the Scriptures, such words are connected with it like these: punishment, destruction, pain, agony, suffering, weeping. These are words connected with wrath. You know what I'm getting at? People feel God's wrath. It's not like God's wrath burns, you know, well, it means that the scenery is bad, or there's loud shouts of anger by God, or something like that. The horrifying aspect to God's wrath for us is that people feel the anguish that results when God vents His wrath. It's righteous. It's fearful beyond measure. It's against sin. It's against the sinner who commits the sin. And I'll tell you, this is another verse that is absolutely terrifying: Ezekiel 8:18, "Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

Let me tell you, when a sinner falls out of this life into a Christless eternity, and they fall into the hands of the living God, the God who is a consuming fire, when God pours out that wrath of His blast furnace upon that wretched soul, they will yield, they will be in absolute and utter distress. And when God beholds the absolute, incomprehensible extremity of the case of that sinner, and He sees that their torment is entirely disproportionate to their ability to hold up under it, and that they yield away, they give way, they have no strength; He sees that that poor soul is crushed and annihilated (and, by annihilated, I don't mean 'out of existence', I mean destroyed,) with such destruction and such wretchedness as only the wrath of God can bear down upon one who has sinned against God Almighty, as that soul sinks down into that infinite gloom. Folks, when you're in distress here, when you're in pity or when you're in pain, when you're in sorrow, if you're sick, if you're injured, there's always hopes of pity. But God will not hear. And He will see you swallowed up in that infinite gloom with a weight of wrath laid upon you that you cannot bear up under, and you are crushed.

And because His holy righteousness, His pristine judgment, demands such for the execution, the punishment that you deserve, (God will never reward a man beyond what his sins deserve,) what your sins deserve you cannot hold up under. It is disproportionate to your strength. It is a blast furnace that you cannot tolerate. And as you're sucked up and absorbed in that, your cries, there's no pity.

God offers you pity now. But that man who suppresses that truth, and that man who will not have Christ, that man who will not take Christ on His own terms, that man who will not humble himself, that man who will not repent, that man who refuses to come to Christ and submit to His lordship, will know nothing and can expect nothing but the fiery indignation of God, and there will be no pity. None. He will never forbear the executions. He will never lighten His grip on you at all. Never. No moderation. No mercy. Right now you can cry, and there is mercy to be had. But brethren, the infinite loneliness of the damned, who, in the most pathetic cries for mercy, will never, throughout the endless ages, know any.

Let me tell you something about this wrath. Again, Paul says in Romans, "What if God, desiring to show His wrath," Romans 9:22, "and make known His power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction..." Focus in on these words: "What if God, desiring to show His wrath". Not many want to admit this truth today. God desires to show His wrath. Why? To make known His power. His wrath is glorious. We never want to think about

God's wrath as something that is less than glorious. Listen to this: Exodus 15:6, "Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of Your majesty You overthrow Your adversaries; You send out Your fury; it consumes them like stubble." The fury of God, as it consumes the adversaries like stubble. It's called the greatness of Majesty.

Can I tell you something? What I'm telling you now is fearful beyond words; but it is also glorious beyond words. And for those of us that will have refuge in Christ, to see God work forth His wrath will be a case and cause for our worship and our adoration. He will amaze us. We will find Him in His wrath all the more to be worshiped, all the more to be bowed down before. You know what that tells us? (Again, what man does not want to come face-to-face with.) It tells us man is not central in God's thoughts. Yes, God loves men. But I can tell you this: God loves His glory. And He will not share it with another. And God loves His glory to the point where He desires to show His wrath, that His glory might shine forth, so that those who are vessels of mercy will all the more be filled with the glories of the revelation of God. I'll tell you this, such doctrine as the wrath of God shows us man is not central to God's thoughts. God is central to God's thoughts.

You and I know this full well: Man has no problem with heaven. Men have no problem with man going to a paradise, going to a place of eternal happiness. But they have a problem with wrath. Men don't like it. The God people want to have today, the God people speak about today, is the God that lives strictly and solely for man's benefit. Men don't like wrath. It tells them that sin is serious. It tells them sin is damnable in God's eyes. It tells them that their sin is more serious and more terrible than they've ever wanted to imagine. Man likes to view God from his own man-centered perspective. He likes to view a God who doesn't think much of his sin. And God's wrath tells us, my sin is big. So man likes to make God small, and he likes to make his own sin small. And he likes to make God such who orbits around man; who lives for man's purposes; who lives to solve man's problems; to make man happy; lives for man's benefit, answer our prayers, heal us, help us; hurry to our aid and comfort. You know what wrath does? Wrath speaks to us of a God that man just cannot ignore. Man can't minimize Him, manipulate Him. People don't want a God like that. But I'll tell you that is what God is like.

Folks, Paul wants to start his gospel. So he says, "Okay, I'm going to tell the world about the gospel. Let's start off by bringing creation in, and show man how unrighteous he is. And that when he sees what can be known about God in that creation, he suppresses it. And let's show them what fierceness of God's wrath is aimed at them for doing so. Let's condemn all men under that wrath. And then, when they've all concluded 'under sin', then I'm going to show them that they can escape the wrath of God if they will flee to Jesus Christ."

I'll tell you this, I don't advise that you go in the door and tell aunt Salie, "Hi aunt Salie, you're going to hell," but I advise you to tell aunt Salie what I just told you. Because if you don't tell sinners this part, then the gospel isn't good news. You go to the average sinner and you start telling them about the cross, that's not good news. They look at that, and they say, "Certainly. I expected that God so loved me He'd put His Son on a cross, because I so love me I would put God's Son on the cross for me. Of course, I expect Him to do that." Man looks at the cross and says, "I love me that much, I expect God to love me that much." You see, they have no comprehension that God's world does not rotate around men; and that God is fiercely angry with

the sin and sinner behind that sin. And the day is coming quickly when Jesus Christ is going to descend from Glory, and He is going to take vengeance on those who did not honor God and worship God and obey the truth.

Folks, we live in a world that is denying the reality of the creation. They are suppressing the truth. And let me just tell you something: In case you didn't catch this, it says, "For the wrath of God IS revealed." John 3:18, it's amazing how often people love to quote John 3:16, but they don't seem to get to verse 18, "If you have not believed in the Son of God, you are condemned already." The wrath of God abides upon you presently. And let this truth grip you: there is nothing that keeps you out of hell but the goodness of God right this second, if you're outside of Christ in this room. Nothing keeps you out of hell but God's good pleasure to keep you out. Because I'll guarantee you this: it isn't as though God's fierce wrath must get to a certain point before He drops you into hell. Now what I mean by that, yes we fill up the measure of our sin; yes it gets to the place where the wrath of God bursts forth upon the sinner who is outside of Christ. But I'll tell you this, there are people who have fallen into the pit of hell who have committed less sins than some of you here, which tells me there are people less guilty in hell now than some of you here who are outside of Christ. And what that tells me is, God has fierce wrath towards you that is greater than the wrath He has towards them, though they are in hell. The only difference is you're still here. There is still grace extended to you, and God is still in kindness - the kindness of God, still, is meant to bring you to repentance. But there is nothing that holds you back but God's good pleasure. Nothing. The condemnation of God is upon you already. And Scripture says, "Today is the day of salvation," and you know not whether you have another day.

Brethren, don't toy with false professions. Your eternal soul and body are at stake. Don't play a game just to be received by Christians. Don't play a game just to be able to join a church. If you are not saved, come clean and flee to Christ. Folks, if you're wrong, you are wrong. And it's going to cost you dearly. But God in love, right now, right now, if you cry to Him, He promises (He's put His very promise, His own word, at stake.) "If you call, if you seek Him, you'll find Him." If you call upon Him, He'll save you. If you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there's salvation to be had. If you cry now, [Jesus says,] "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." But once death seizes you, it's done. Amen.

(from the room) What this picture that you have described...

Tim: For one, let me just say this: Christ knew the truths behind these verses I've read in a way you and I don't. As He was confronted by the cross in the garden, and literally sweating drops of blood, and pleading with His Father in a way you will not find Him plead any other place, asking that something He knew was the Father's will; where, before, so gladly carrying out the will of His Father; here, He knew the will of His Father, and yet was compelled to ask. Still resigned to His Father, there was no rebellion there. But in sheer recoil of terror that gripped Him - He said He was in distress until it be accomplished. He recoiled. He saw what was coming on that cross. He saw what it would be to be poured out like water. He saw it coming what it would be to be stricken, and smitten, and afflicted of God; to be crushed under the wrath of the Almighty. And yet He went. He went to the cross to bear it for a people.

Brethren, we have no idea what gratitude we owe to the Lord. He drank the cup. He drank the dregs. He drank it to the last drop - the wrath of God. And that wrath, look, a sin is

such that it can never be paid for. It is a crime of infinite intensity. We must suffer hell forever if we die lost, because it is such an aggravated crime that it can never be paid for, even with God's wrath being poured out as it will be upon the damned. But I'll tell you what Isaiah 53 says: When Jesus Christ was stricken of God, the Father was satisfied. God will never be satisfied, ever. That's why the sinner must be punished forever and ever. That's one thing that these people that talk about annihilation don't understand. It's an infinite crime demanding an infinite punishment from an infinitely holy God, who has been infinitely insulted by our infinite crime and rebellion against Him. No sinner will ever pay. The payment will always be outstanding, except upon God's elect.

Christ fully drank our wrath. That's what propitiation is all about. It's gone. What Christ did on the cross; look, because He drank the last drop, it is finished. He was forsaken in our place. There is no remaining wrath. God has no wrath towards me. None. He is satisfied.

(from the room) Amen. Because you are in Him.

Tim: That's right.

(from the room) To be in Christ is to already have suffered the wrath. (

Tim: There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. No one can bring a charge against us. It's settled.

(from the room) I remember walking through [Huntsville] on a prison trip we took. They had just gotten back from chewing the guy up. I was walking by his cell. He said, "Yeah yeah, I know," sometimes you have Moslems that scream out and they start mocking. And he said, "Yeah yeah, I know Jesus loves me." I went back and I said, "Who told you that?" He says, "You all say that Jesus loves me." And he quoted John 3:16. And I said, "Did you eat breakfast this morning?" He said, "Yes." "Did you eat lunch?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Yeah, He does love you. But you believe in hell?" He said, "Yes I do." "Could you tell somebody in hell that Jesus loves them?" And he says, "Well, no." I said, "That's right, but you can always tell somebody in hell that God is being holy towards them, because it is because of His holiness that they have to suffer that infinite punishment. Their crimes are against an infinitely holy God, and that, of necessity, He has to respond with wrath towards sin." And I was thinking and just imagining. I know the angels understood the enormity of sin because of hell, after the angels in heaven fell, and it's Lucifer. But I can just imagine how their concept and their perspective of the enormity of sin must have changed when they saw the Son of God going to a cross and suffer that wrath for us, because of our sin.

Tim: They long to look into these things. They're learning about God as well. His workings with man are teaching them lots of things they never understood. Okay. Any other questions or comments?

(from the room) I heard John Piper one time preach that the wrath of God also demonstrates the magnitude of the love of God because of the fact that when He placed Christ on that cross, He saved all of His wrath. So one thing he said about ministering and using that as a witness - the wrath of God ultimately demonstrates truly the ultimate love of God that He has for us.

Tim: Well, that's exactly right. And I was trying to allude to that, that when we just walk up and say, "God loves you," which is the approach a lot of folks take, just like I said before, if you go up and say, "God loves you; God has a wonderful plan for your life; God loves you so

much that He sent His Son to the cross," those kinds of things, if that's where we start with, the typical self-loving, self-absorbed, self-worshiping person in this world looks at that and say, "Well, of course He does. Why wouldn't He do that?" It's kinda like the Moslem guy in the prison there: "Well, Jesus loves me." You know, there's just that mindset: "Of course He loves me. They don't even think that a verse like Psalm 5, God hating workers of iniquity, could even... You know, what's that? That kind of alarms people. "I didn't know that was in the Bible." But they expect that. "Well, I love me, so I expect God loves me. I would give Christ for me, so I expect..."

But when we begin to realize God's wrath, God's holiness, God's love for His Son, God's glory; that this whole thing does not revolve around man; when we begin to realize what our sin deserves, we begin to realize something of the greatness and the glory, the holiness of God. And then, we begin to realize who Christ is. Do you know one word in John 3:16 that most people don't even hear when you say it? it's a little word. Two letters. It's the word "so". They don't even hear it, because the gospel has been so cheapened, and wrath has been forgotten, and the magnitude of sin has been forgotten that people don't even understand it. So - God so loved the world. "So" means let me show you how He loved the world. He so loved, He loved this way: He gave His Son. You see, if the magnitude of that little two-letter word gets a hold of us, we begin to realize, "Wow. What God did in sending His Son to the cross is unspeakable." In love. It is a love that is incomprehensible. He sacrificed a Person of such worthiness, and glory, and honor; Whom He infinitely loved and adored, and eternally was in fellowship with. Unbelievable magnitude of love.

(from the room) Often though, the person you're trying to reach will not have a grasp of their sin. And if they're in that condition, nothing you can tell them will give them an understanding of the gravity of their sin. But as you bring them to Christ, I've noticed that they begin to say, "I couldn't believe my sin, until I began to realize what He did."

Tim: Well, we definitely bring them to Christ. We also can bring them to the Law, which is what Christ did. Basically, the Law is meant to show... the Law brings wrath. The Law shows that we haven't kept the Law. The Law shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And you know, when the self-righteous people came along, Christ was at times in a place to bring the Law out. But even Christ, when we think about it, you have the rich, young ruler. He said, "Keep the commandments." There were other times, you know, "Do this and live." The woman at the well, He would deal with her, "Go call your husband." Look, bottomline is people aren't going to come to Christ to be saved, unless they know themselves sick and in need of a physician. Well people - people who think they're well - there are none who really are, but if they think they are, they don't go to Christ. But the Law can be effective. God give us wisdom. But I guarantee you, today we have a gospel that is largely devoid of wrath. And we have a gospel today that is largely producing false converts, because it's not a complete gospel.

Paul thought it necessary to condemn all men - Jew and Gentile alike - and show them all under sin. None righteous. None that does good. None that seeks for God. He condemns them all. Then, and only then, does he come back to the righteousness of God, which he started with in chapter 1 verse 16 and 17. In it, in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. And once he gets through Romans 3:20, condemning all men under the wrath of God, he then comes back to the gospel, and to the righteousness of God, which is at the heart of justification.

Anything else? Okay. Always sobering. But remember, 15 pages, single-spaced, number 10 font. That's just the number of verses Charles Leiter was able to find in the Bible when he wanted to study the topic. The Bible says a lot about God's wrath.

Father, we pray, I pray, Lord that there would be no lost soul in our midst, that would be like the son-in-laws of Lot, who would just hear my words like they were just a fairy tale. I pray that we would all be gripped with this reality. I pray that those of us that are saved will be gripped by this reality, that we might be more grateful. Gripped by this reality that we might be more evangelistic. And may those that are lost be gripped by it in a righteous fear. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. And I pray that at all cost, they would flee from the wrath to come; find safety in the arms of Christ. It's in His name we pray. Amen.