

Rom. 1:16-32 -Pt2- the Wrath of God

by Charles Leiter

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and the wrath of God is His holy, white-hot hatred of sin and evil.

Duration: 35:42

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Habakkuk 2:4, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:15-18

Topics: "Gods Wrath", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, W. Tozer discusses the current state of the world and how it is in need of the Gospel. He criticizes the approach of some churches and college campuses that focus on making Christianity fun and appealing to people's desires. Tozer emphasizes the importance of speaking about the concept of wrath and the consequences of sin in order to bring about true repentance and salvation. He highlights the imbalance in the world's moral order and asserts that God will eventually bring justice and punishment to those who do not turn to Him.

Transcript

Father, we come before you this evening. Lord, I come to you, and I'm sorry for not going farther in the Christian life than what I've gone all these years of knowing you. Lord, I thank you for the blood of Jesus.

And I confess that I want to go to higher ground. And I pray that you'd forgive me for my sins and fill me this evening. Lord, I know I'm not worthy, we're not worthy for you to visit with us, but we ask you to visit with us by your Holy Spirit and help.

Lord, what a shame. I know what it is to share the precious truths of your Word in a way that doesn't glorify you. And I ask you for help this evening.

Lord, would you be glorified? Would you teach us about yourself? Help, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, let's open our Bibles again to Romans chapter 1. And we'll read three verses, verses 16 to 18.

In verse 15, Paul has told the Romans that he's eager to go up there and preach the Gospel. And he explains why in verse 16, he says, For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Why not? For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

How can it be so powerful? For something is revealed in the Gospel. In it, therein, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous, the just, shall live by faith.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold, or really hold down, suppress the truth in unrighteousness. We began last night to look at this last half of the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. And we saw that Paul starts out in verse 16 by giving us a negative.

He says, I'm not ashamed. Why? Why would he start with a negative? Well, because there is a great temptation to be ashamed of the true Gospel. The Gospel message is considered to be foolishness.

It's an offense. Men hate it. And we like to be liked.

And we like to be respected. So there is a temptation to soften things and to try to make them a little less offensive or even attractive to the flesh. And that pressure is upon us to try to make it even to look like the Gospel offers the same thing that the world does, just a better form of it.

A. W. Tozer, in his article, *The Old Cross and the New*, written years ago, he said, whatever the sin-mad world is clamoring after is cleverly shown to be the very thing the Gospel offers, only in a better form, a purer form. And we have that all around us in our day. These so-called mega-churches go out and canvas a community to find out what people want, and then do that.

On college campuses, the emphasis is on fun. It's fun. It's fun to be a Christian.

It's fun. We're going to have a lot of fun. I was talking to one of these young men who was in a campus group, and I was telling him about our time in Romania a year or so ago, and his response was, that sounds like fun.

I said, no, it wasn't fun. I guarantee you that. It wasn't fun.

But it was a great blessing. But there's totally different. I don't know very much that's fun about anything that has anything very deep and serious in the things of God.

That's not the word that comes to describe it. There's a magazine, I think it's a college campus magazine, so-called Christian magazine, called *Potential*. And one of these others, I don't know if it was back to the Bible or who it was, they changed their name, and the title of the magazine is *Confident Living*.

I said, no, there's no offense in that. Everybody wants confident living. You want to maximize your potential.

See, that's the kind of thing we're talking about, and it's very subtle. You want to get across to people the idea that we're smart, or we've got it all together, or something like that. And that will not work, and have the true gospel at the same time.

That's not going to work. Well, Paul was not ashamed of this gospel. Why not? Well, first of all, because it's the very power of God.

Not just a great power, but an absolute infinite power. The very power of God all the way to salvation, full salvation. To everyone, anybody, no matter who it is, to everyone who believes, who just gives up and casts themselves upon Christ.

Well, why is the gospel so powerful? Because there's something revealed in it. And the thing that is revealed in it is the righteousness of God. Not the righteousness of God in the sense of His justice, although the justice of God is revealed in the gospel.

The gospel takes place totally in the context of God's justice. But that's not what saves me. The thing that saves me is this righteousness of God, that God gives to me that justifies me in the sight of His law.

Men are unjust. And when we use that terminology, we usually think of what they are on the inside. They've got a bad heart.

But when God says that we're unjust, it's more than just I've got a bad heart. I've got a bad record in the eyes of His law. I'm unjust in the sense that I am condemned.

And I need to have a righteousness given to me. I'm not talking about regeneration. I'm talking about justification.

Somebody has to bear my sins and work out a perfect righteousness and merit life in the eyes of God's law and give that to me. And that someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

Not that He personally became defiled, but our sins were placed on Him so that we might be made the righteousness of God. There's that phrase again. Not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but the righteousness that comes down from above through faith in Christ given to me.

That's why the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Well, that's good news. I can have perfect righteousness as a gift from God.

The apostle Paul knew God a lot better than we do. But he was not one bit more justified in the eyes of God's law than we are. Because we all have the same righteousness and that's one that's been given to us and it's an absolute perfect righteousness.

It's the very righteousness of Christ. Well, we saw last night that immediately in verse 17, Paul goes on to show that this is not some new thing. It's something that was taught all along.

In the Old Testament, God said, The righteous shall live by faith. It's something no man has ever been saved any other way than by righteousness being given to him through faith. Well, suppose you go out and start telling people, Hallelujah, there's a way that you can have righteousness from God.

You can be righteous in God's sight. And they'll say, that's wonderful. I've been waiting for that all my life.

Is that what they'll say? Some of them will be apathetic and some of them will be outright hostile. That's the response. Listen to it, Matthew 22, But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm and another to his business.

That's apathy. And the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. That's absolute hostility, isn't it? Now what was that in response to? An invitation to come to a wedding feast of the king's son.

Isn't that unbelievable? You go out with a message and you say, Come, there's a feast that's prepared. You get to come to the king's own son's wedding feast. And they say, let's kill this guy.

That's unbelievable. That's what Jesus said is the response to the Gospel. Absolutely incredible.

You come saying, well, look, you can be righteous. You can have a righteousness from God. They say, what do I need that for? I'm a good person, just as good as you are or anybody else.

What do I need? Righteousness from God. Why do men need this righteousness? Well, that's what Paul gets into in verse 18, isn't it? Four, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down, suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The reason that all men need this righteousness of God so desperately is that they are under the wrath of God.

Now isn't this an amazing thing? And it ought to shock us every now and then. We get used to this like so many of these other truths. And I was so blessed by Brother Josue this afternoon talking about Jesus being the bread of life.

I mean, that is so wonderful. And we get used to these things. But it ought to shock us.

We believe in a God who is mad. We believe in a God who is angry. Not only is He angry, but the Bible says He is angry literally all the time.

What does it say there in the Psalms? God is angry. It is in the Authorized Version. God is angry with the wicked every day.

And the phrase, with the wicked, is supplied. If you leave that out, it just says, God is angry every day. Now it is with the wicked.

But get the point here. We have got a God who is mad all the time. Now when you first hear about that, that doesn't sound too appealing.

I mean, to know a God like that. But that comes, the reason we feel that way is because we don't understand what it means that He is mad all the time, that He is angry all the time. And when you do understand it, you see that it is a wonderful thing, that God is angry all the time.

How are we to understand this? What does it mean that God is angry? What is the wrath of God? Well, the first thing that we need to understand is that the wrath of God is not like the vast majority of all the anger that you have ever experienced in your whole life. It is not like that. Most of the anger that you have experienced is not the kind of anger that God has.

Because almost all the anger we experience is sinful type anger. That is not the way the wrath of God is. God's wrath is not a temporary loss of self-control.

It is not a childish tantrum or a selfish fit of emotion. It is not the result of any kind of frustration or exasperation. That is not what His wrath is.

It is not a display of peevishness. The wrath of God is holy and good. It is terrifying.

But beloved, I hope I can show you here, the wrath of God is lovely. It is lovely. That is a fearful thing, but I have chosen that word because it is true.

It tells us something about how good He is. That is what the wrath of God tells us about. What is God's wrath? God's wrath is His holy, white-hot hatred of sin and of evil.

He hates it. It is His reaction and revulsion against all that is evil. His holy nature reacting and recoiling.

You take God and bring sin up against Him, you have got God's wrath. He hates it because of who He is. In other words, God's wrath has to do with His absolute moral purity.

You say, I don't believe a God like that. I believe God is love. Well, if God loves, He must hate.

If you love children, you are going to hate child abuse. And the worse the abuse is, the more you are going to recoil from it in revulsion against it. His wrath has to do with His absolute moral purity.

I have stood a couple of times in one of the concentration camps there in Germany at Dachau. I never did visit Auschwitz. But they said that at Auschwitz there was something like 14,000 pounds of human hair that they took and used it to make sacks out of.

And I think of those women going in there, having their beautiful hair cut off, and the abuse that they went through. Those men went home at night and listened to classical music. Now, what kind of person can view some horrible atrocity and walk away from it and say, oh hum, I wonder what we are going to have for supper tonight? That is what you are asking for if you ask for a God without wrath.

It is a God who would not be worth worshipping or having. And every time we begin to get in our heads this idea that wrath, somehow wrath in God is something to be ashamed of, God forbid that we should ever be ashamed of the wrath of God. It is part of His loveliness that He hates sin the way He does.

The wrath of God is one of His greatest glories. You see, the problem in our day is that there is no outrage against sin. We are soft on sin.

Our whole society, our whole culture minimizes and excuses and justifies sin. Nowadays, the victim of the crime is made to appear guilty, and the criminal is justified and made an object of pity. Here is a guy who brutally murders his wife.

Well, she probably egged him on. Poor guy, no telling what he had to put up with that drove him to that. Have you heard that kind of thing? That is what it is.

She is the one that is guilty and he is the one that is the victim. That is the thinking that we have got and it has permeated us a lot more than we realize. Beloved, in general, we do not hate sin like we ought to.

I am seeing it in my own life more and more. We ought to hate this thing. It is evil.

It is just as evil and destructive and we see it in its extreme forms and we recognize it for what it is. But then these so-called little things, yeah, they are not little things, they are subtle things, that is all they are. Deceptive things.

Hebrews 1, talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ had joy more than any other person, because He hated sin more than any other person.

There was a brother from Canada that used to minister to us there in Kirksville years ago, Keith McLeod, who had been used of God. We were sitting one morning in the car, praying, and he said, ever since I became a Christian, I have hated sin. He said, I hate sin.

And he said it in such a way that chills just went down my back. With such holy vehemence and hatred, I felt like I got a little glimpse of what God is like. Beloved, it is a great glory to hate sin.

It is a great glory that God hates sin. He does not hate it just a little bit, He hates it a whole lot. White-hot hatred, burning, fiery hatred for sin.

He hates it with a fiery, burning, consuming hatred. Our God is a consuming fire. Well, the wrath of God has to do with His absolute moral purity, but it also has to do with His absolute justice.

That verse in Psalm 711, in the marginal reading, you will see, God is a righteous judge. He is angry with the wicked every day. You see, it has to do with His righteous judgment.

That is what it has to do with. The fact that He is a righteous judge is part of the reason for His wrath. Again, let me give you one more verse, Romans 4.15. This is one of the most important verses in the Bible on wrath.

Paul says, The law worketh wrath. Wrath has to do with unsatisfied justice. It has to do with these scales being out of balance.

The law worketh wrath, but where no law is, there is no transgression. Wrath has to do with broken law. It has to do with God's righteous determination to punish every sin and to balance the scales of justice.

That is God's wrath. He is going to make every wrong right. And when sin is punished and justice is satisfied, wrath subsides.

Now, beloved, right now in this world, the scales are very far unbalanced. Right now, it looks like you can break God's law and never be punished. And I will tell you this, if you are not a Christian right now tonight, the scales are very unbalanced in your life right now.

And I want to tell you this, God will put you in hell or the entire moral order of the universe would collapse. He cannot allow these scales to be like this forever. He will allow it for a while, but He is not going to allow it forever.

As sure as anything is right and wrong, it is going to happen. He is going to judge and balance the scales. The Bible has a lot to say about this wrath of God.

I spoke on the wrath of God last fall at a conference. And while I was preparing, I printed out just the verses that specifically talk about the wrath or anger of God, directly in connection with God. I printed out those verses just to look over them and read them and meditate on them.

Fifteen pages, single space, ten point font. Fifteen pages about God's anger burning and smoking and consuming. It is amazing how much is said, how we should thank God for it, how we should love a God who hates sin the way God hates it, and how we should tremble being in the state that all of us are in, where we are alienated from such a God.

And how we should thank God that He made a way Himself for those sins to be paid for and those scales to be balanced in the Lord Jesus Christ. How great is the wrath of God? Well, just ask yourself this question, how righteous is God? How much does God hate sin? How great is the offense of man against an infinite and infinitely good Creator? That's how much the wrath of God is. In other words, the wrath of God is beyond our imagination in its intensity and its power, beyond our imagination.

Now, the psalmist brought up this question in Psalm 90. He said, who understands how great God's wrath is? Let me just read some of that to you. This is what he said, For thou dost turn man back into dust, and dost say, return, O children of men, for a thousand years in thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by her as a watch in the night.

Thou hast swept them away like a flood. They fall asleep in the morning. They are like grass which sprouts anew in the morning.

It flourishes and sprouts anew. Towards evening it fades and withers. For we have been consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath we have been dismayed.

Thou hast placed our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy presence. For all our days have declined in thy fury. We have finished our years like a sigh.

Then verse 11, skipping on now, Who understands the power of thine anger and thy fury according to the fear that is due thee? You see, he is talking about the generation after generation that has been swept away and returned to the dust and been destroyed and died. And so he says, death itself in the world is a little glimpse of the greatness of God's wrath. So you want to get a little taste.

How great is the wrath of God? How much does God hate sin? Go out and look at all the cemeteries in all the world and all the mountains of bodies and bones and piles of people that have died as a result of sin coming into the world. That is how much God hates sin. That is what the psalmist is saying here.

He is saying, you look at what has happened one generation after another, wave upon wave of men dying. It is a result of the wrath of God. Now that brings me to the next thing I want us to get here.

We live in an abnormal world. The Bible teaches that something has gone wrong. Sin has entered the world.

And because of that, God has withdrawn in His wrath. You see, His smile has withdrawn and wrath has come upon the world. And because of that, you have death and disease and suffering and war and all these wicked things that are taking place.

That is a result of the wrath of God. We live in an abnormal world. And beloved, we need to realize this ourselves and we need to teach this to our children.

Teach them to realize this world is abnormal. The Bible teaches something has happened. Sin has come in and the fall has come in.

You say, I don't like that idea of the fall and Adam's sin, you know, being imputed and so on. I'll tell you what, try figuring things out without believing it. All the other religions have to start with the world as being normal right now.

Now, you try to make sense out of that. Look at this world the way it is and say, this is the way it ought to be and this is the way it has always been. And try to make sense out of that.

You see, there is no other answer. And how we should thank God that He has given us the answer. We live in an abnormal world.

And as a result, all the death and sorrow and heartache that has come upon the world. Well, from this, back to Romans 1, from this it follows, that if we love men, we must speak to them about wrath. We have to be negative.

Nobody wants to be negative in our day. But it is the only hope for lost men. Here is a man dying of cancer.

Or let's say, Gann Green. It is a criminal act for you to tell that man that he is going to be better by taking an aspirin. If you know that the only way to save him is to cut off his leg, you see that? That is a criminal act.

You have not told that man the truth. And as a result, he perishes. You know, there are false prophets in the medical profession.

There are false prophet dentists and false prophet carpet layers and false prophet plumbers. No, peace, peace. They say it is all going to be alright.

They lie to you. You like dealing with those kind of people? Eventually, you have got to get a true prophet in there and tear everything out. And get it done right.

In the spiritual realm, the equivalent of aspirin for Gann Green is a smiley face. Now, I am glad that thing has kind of passed a little bit. The smile, God loves you, smiley face.

Brother Conrad had that track, What's Wrong With This Picture? You know, with the ark and the smiley faces on there. Picture Jonah going down the streets of Nineveh. Smile, Nineveh, God loves you.

Smile, Nineveh, God loves you. You see, it was a message of a false prophet. But God did have love for those Ninevites or He would not have sent Jonah anyway.

But that message is not the message they need. And by giving them that message, you are in effect being a false prophet to them. You know, you can be a false prophet by saying a true thing to a person at the wrong time.

And not saying, a false prophet is known by what he does not say. In many cases. The men of the Bible did not do that, did they? John the Baptist came on the scene, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The Lord Jesus Christ, repent and believe the gospel. Peter on the day of Pentecost, repent and be baptized. Paul in the book of Acts, repent and store God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am so thankful that the one who died for us is the one who spoke more about hell and weeping and gnashing of teeth and worms that don't die than anybody else. You can trust Him on it. And that is part of why God gave the law.

And that revelation is even clearer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And in Christ, that is brought to bear upon sinners. They see their need.

The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. I remember, stayed with me for 35 years, years ago, old B.B. Caldwell. Somebody came up at a series of meetings, said, are you getting anybody saved? He said, I'm not trying to get anybody saved.

Trying to get them lost. If they ever get lost, they will get saved. We have to be negative.

Not only do we have to be negative, but the negative must logically come before the positive. You've got this infection full of pus. You've got to get the pus out first.

You can't say, we'll just not worry about that pus right now, maybe later we'll get it out. You know, maybe later you can accept Jesus as Lord. We're dealing with a positively corrupt situation, so you've got to have the negative before the positive.

There's no option here. You see that in the way the Lord dealt with people. Here's a woman at the well.

She says, sir, give me that water. I want that water you're talking about. Well, bow your head and pray this prayer.

No. He knew there was no depth to it. So he tells her the one thing she didn't want to hear.

Go call your husband. Deal with the big problem. You see, he always comes in, he deals with that hardest thing.

Here's a rich young ruler. I've never had this happen to me. Maybe some of you have.

A guy comes running up in the street and falls down on the ground and says, how can I have eternal life? And what did the Lord do? He loved him. And He put His finger on the big idol. Go sell everything you have.

And He didn't say, be willing. He said, go sell everything you have. Now, He didn't tell the woman at the well, go sell everything you have.

That wasn't her God. And He didn't tell the rich young ruler, go call your wife. He's getting to that pussy.

He's lancing it. There's a story that I read several years ago that has meant so much to me. I think it's a wonderful illustration.

They say that on the great lakes, eagles will come down and catch these fish in their claws. And they'll pull that fish up out of there. And sometimes the eagle will get a fish that's too big for it to carry.

And they'll start back to the nest with it, and they'll start getting weaker and weaker. And they'll come down. And they find a dead eagle on the shore still holding a dead fish.

Now, beloved, I don't know what's going on with a lot of you. I don't know some of you young people. You may be holding on to some fish.

And it's going to take you down to hell if you don't let go of it. And God is not going to hear your prayers, and He will not be your God until you let go of that other God. One thing that God does insist on when He saves somebody, I will be their God! And I will not have anything else be your God.

And you're going to have to let go of it and cry out to Him for mercy. And if you will, He'll hear you. And He'll be your God.

Well, Paul says in verse 18, The wrath of God is resting upon all men for their sins. Immediately that brings up a problem. What about the man who doesn't know any better? What about the man who's never

heard of God? The man without the Bible, he's never heard of the Ten Commandments.

What about him? Why would he be condemned? This is what you get on the college campuses. What about the heathen? What about the heathen? They don't know anything. They've never heard about God.

They've never seen a Bible. They've never heard the Ten Commandments one time. What about them? Why are they condemned? That's the thing Paul's going to answer next.

And Lord willing, that's what we'll look at tomorrow night.

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