

THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

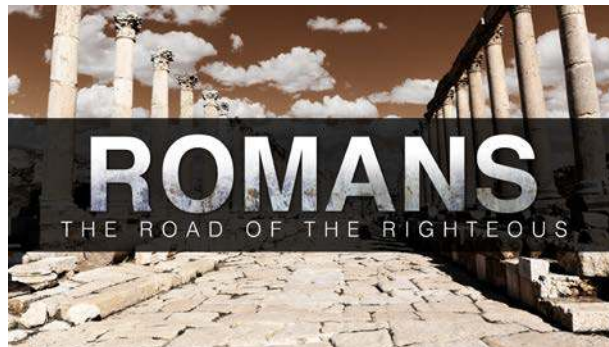
Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 1:18

Written By

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As a young pastor, a parishioner who happened to be a farmer dropped by my office unannounced for a visit. I welcomed him and invited him to sit down so we could talk. Dressed in freshly soiled work overalls, and sporting shoes with gunk cake on the sides of them, he slowly positioned himself in a comfortable chair. But no sooner had he taken a seat that I began to notice this unbelievable, offensive odor coming from his direction.

I politely did not say anything, but I sat there amazed at the intensity of the foul odor. After a few minutes of conversation, he told me he had been feeding his pigs that morning, and obviously he had some of the pigpen on his clothing and shoes. The funny thing about the whole situation was this: he never knew he smelled like a combination of the city sewer treatment plant and the County waste disposal site. He was completely unaware of the noxious fumes his body emitted, especially in a closed room.

In a way, everyone who has yet to trust Jesus as their Savior is just like this farmer in a spiritual way. They, too, have a stench about them because they are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; however, they fail to smell it. In fact, spiritually they believe they smell pretty good, but to God they reek of a foul smell of sin that only the cross of Christ can clean up. Unfortunately, the problem I possessed of not desiring to talk about the odor for fear of embarrassing the man in question or myself is applicable to many Christians in spiritual encounters with people who are spiritually dead. Translated, some are afraid to say anything.

Enter the apostle Paul. He was never afraid to speak specifically and directly about sin so sinners could see their need of the gospel of the Savior. Romans chapter 1 verses 18 through 31 are

a case study in Paul's honesty, transparency, and compassion for those who have spiritual death about them. Here is how he begins this much needed discussion:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, . . . (Rom. 1).

Mark well Paul's balance here. He just spoke positively about the power of the gospel to save sinners (vv. 16-17), but now he minces no words as to the unrepentant sinner's current spiritual situation. In a word, the sinner is under the judgment and wrath of a completely holy God.

In case you have an issue with Paul's method, then I counsel you to consider the evangelistic method of your Lord. He anterior to Paul demonstrated the need to give those disease-ridden by sin the stark facts of their situation followed by words of life, hope, and forgiveness. Christ's method is clearly represented in passages like John 5:

²² For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5)

And if you happen to think Jesus did not address sin in a pointed, pin prick fashion, then perhaps you need to go back to the gospels and study His conversations more closely. True, He, at times, spoke kindly and nicely to sinners (John 4). Sometimes, conversely, He fired intellectual and theological salvos at hard core sinners (Luke 11:45-54). Further, His conversations were not always friendly, but sometimes thorny, provocative, and highly negative (Matt. 23). And who can overlook the fact that His words about eternal judgment could not have been more explicit and eye-brow raising (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 11:22-24; 12:36; 18:9; 23:15; 23:33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 20:45-47)?

So, if you emotionally feel like taking issue with Paul's approach here in Romans 1, please stop and realize he is merely walking in the sandals of the Savior in his quest to guide the unbeliever to see his need of Christ and the true gospel. Put differently, Paul will mince no words about the wrath of God regarding sin and sinners because it is one of the main motivating forces behind the deliverance of said gospel. Contextually, it represents the fourth reason for believers, like the ancient Romans, to be Christ's witnesses to their culturally, doctrinally, and spiritually compromised worlds.

What Are The Reasons To Be Motivated To Share The Gospel? (Romans 1:16-17)

As I've stated, three causal clauses denoted by the use of "for" (γάρ) give us the reasons for being evangelistic to the lost in our lives. To these three, Paul adds one more in Romans 1, verse 18. Let's review:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness . . . (Romans 1).

¹⁶ Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι. ¹⁷ δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. ¹⁸ Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων . . . (Rom. 1).

What are those reasons? Good question.

- Reason #1: The Gospel Is Pre-eminent (Romans 1:16a). It is THE gospel from God and there is no other. There is no gospel like it.
- Reason #2: The Gospel Is Powerful (Romans 1:16b). It alone has the power to give spiritual life to the spiritually dead (Rom. 6:4, 13; Eph. 2:1, 5).
- Reason #3: The Gospel Is Purifying (Romans 1:17). It takes the unrighteous person and gives them the righteousness of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30), which results in them moving from spiritual putrefaction to spiritual purification. To this Paul adds one more reason:

Reason #4: The Gospel is Protective (Romans 1:18a).

Let me illustrate.

I have a friend in California who used to be a fire jumper. His job was as simple as it was dangerous: to board a helicopter with other specially trained firemen and be lowered by ropes into hard to get areas of wilderness fires. Talk about bravery.

After he returned from fighting one major fire in the Sierra's, I asked him what they did if the massive and hungry wall of fire happened to shift on his team. I didn't expect his reply, "Well, Mr. Baker, we carry what we call *Shake N Bake* tents. If a given fire happens to turn suddenly back on us, we pull out or flame retardant pop up tents, climb quickly inside them, zip them up and

then we, well, shake and bake. Once the fire blows over our position, then we are free to come out and get back to work.”

As a pastor, I couldn't help but think of the practical application to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it does this but on a much larger scale in a more profound fashion. What does the gospel do for a sinner who repents and turns to Christ in trusting faith? Christ's blood, which has cleansed the sinner from sin, acts as the ultimate protective barrier from the Holy Trinity's all-consuming reaction to sin. Before we continue, I must ask you the logical question: Is your life protected from God's judgment of your sin by means of His pre-eminent, powerful, and purifying gospel?

Since Paul digs deep into the concept of God's wrath against sin, we, too, must follow his lead so we are equipped to properly and effectively reach our respective worlds for Christ. Regarding God's wrath, five supportive points readily emerge from this powerful verse.

God's Wrath Defined (Rom. 1:18a). As Paul teaches,

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven . . .”

The opening conjunction “for” grammatically gives us the reason for the preceding verse. Translated, this means the reason why man needs the righteousness of Jesus which only comes through the gospel is because sinful man is exposed to the wrath of God Almighty. Obviously, the key word here is the word “wrath,” *orgay* (ὀργή). Hence to understand this passage in Paul's argument we must understand the meaning of this particular Greek word. True, God is love (1 John 4:7-8), but His love must be in perfect balance with His holiness, which, in turn, is in perfect balance with his wrath, which is activated by his perfect hatred of sin. God loves us (John 3:16). The cross Jesus died on is proof of this unequivocally. We must also realize that divine wrath was poured out on the cross as God judged our sin in the person of His sinless Son (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Those who reject His love now, both in the present and in the future, do arouse, challenge, and incur His wrath against their sin.

Interestingly enough, the phrase, “the wrath of God” (ὀργή θεοῦ) only occurs in two other places in the New Testament: Colossians 3:6 and Ephesians 5:6. But as we shall see, this particular word for wrath in Greek is one Paul frequently uses with a specific message and meaning in mind. Even though Greek might not mean much to you, it behooves you to understand the finer point of this particular word because of its impact on your theological understanding of your Lord and Savior. So, let us get into the lexical meaning of this pivotal word

In Greek there are two words for “anger:” *orgay* (ὀργή) and *thumos* (θυμός). Paul could have used either in referring to God's emotion towards seven, but *orgay* was chosen for good reason. Why did Paul employ this particular word? *Thumos* denotes a quick, explosive, all-consuming

anger,¹ while *orgay* speaks of an anger which takes more to arouse.² I think Paul chose *orgay* because it shows that God's anger is tempered by His love and patience. To understand the lexical nuance of this particular word we must look in two distinct textual areas.

First we must consider the Old Testament usage of this word, which would have been quite familiar to Paul as a rabbinical scholar. The common Hebrew word used to translate the Greek *orgay* is the word *aph* (אֵפ).³ This particular word speaks of figurative smoke which blasts out of a person's nostrils when they are angry. As such, it is not unusual to find it used in reference to God's reaction against sin. Here is one case in point. While enemies surrounded David in an attempt to destroy him and his godly, counter-culture leadership, the king, by way of divine inspiration notes:

¹ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 463-462: ② a state of intense displeasure, **anger, wrath, rage, indignation** Rv 12:12 (θυμὸν ἔχειν as Theognis 748 Bergk). ὁ οἶνος τ. θυμοῦ τ. θεοῦ *the wine of God's wrath or indignation* (s. ἄκρατος) 14:10; cp. vs. 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1 (the figure of the outpouring of wrath freq. in OT). If this mng. holds true for all the Rv pass., the combination of genitives of θυμός and ὀργή in 16:19; 19:15 is to be taken as a strengthening of the thought (cp. Ex 32:12; Jer 32:37; 37:24; La 2:3; CD 10, 9; En 5:9; PsSol 2:23; Ath. 21, 1), and in 14:8; 18:3 we have a complex metaphor (cp. Pind., P. 10, 51-54 and BGildersleeve's comment on 'telescoped' metaphor [Pindar: The Olympian and Pythian Odes 1885, 355]): the wine of harlotry, w. which Babylon intoxicates the nations, becomes the wine of God's wrath for them.—In the other occurrences of θ. in our lit., the same mng. is indicated: of God (w. ὀργή; both words are oft. used together thus in the LXX) Ro 2:8; 1 Cl 50:4. Of humans Hb 11:27; (w. ὀργή, as Aelian, VH 15, 54; Ael. Aristid. 35, 10 K.-9 p. 101 D.; Herodian 8, 4, 1; Sir 45:18; Jos., Bell. 2, 135, Ant. 20, 108) Col 3:8; (w. πικρία and ὀργή) Eph 4:31; cp. Hm 5, 2, 4 and Js 3:11 P⁷⁴. ἐξερῖσαι εἰς τοσοῦτο θυμοῦ *reach such a pitch of fury* 1 Cl 45:7; ἀκατάσχετος θ. MPol 12:2. πλησθῆναι θυμοῦ *be filled w. anger* Lk 4:28; cp. Ac 19:28.—Pl. θυμοί (Herm. Wr. 12, 4; Philo, Rer. Div. Her. 64; Jos., Bell. 4, 314) *outbursts of anger* 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; 1 Cl 46:5.—Jlmscher, Götterzorn bei Homer '50. SSullivan, Glotta, '81, 147-55 (Hesiod and Gk. lyric poets). B. 1087; 1134. DELG. M-M. TW.¹

² Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 130-132.

³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Lafayette: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1981), 60-61: I. אָפ S^{637, 638, 639} TWOT^{133a, 142, 2597} GK^{677, 678, 277} **n.m.** Gn 30:2 nostril, nose, face, anger (Assyrian *appu*, *face* Floodⁱⁱⁱ. 27, 29 cf. Hpt KAT^{Gloss}, Arabic أُنْف ('*anfun*), Ethiopic አንፍ ('*anf*) *nose*; Aramaic ܐܦܝܢ ('*ape*), אֵפִינִי *face*)—abs. ψ 78:21 +; cstr. Gn 27:45 +; sf. אָפִי Ex 22:23 +, etc.; du. אָפִים Pr 14:17 +; אָפִי Gn 2:7 + etc.;—In Hex JE (Jos 7:1 P? 23:16 D?). **1.** *nostril*, as organ of breathing Gn 2:7; 7:22; Jb 27:3 cf. Nu 11:20; 2 S 22:9 = ψ 18:9 cf. Is 65:5; Is 2:22; La 4:20; Ez 38:18 (del. Co) Am 4:10; אָפִי רִיחַ (of 'י) i.e. wind Ex 15:8; cf. אָפִי רִיחַ מִתְּשֻׁמֶת 2 S 22:16 = ψ 18:16 (vid. also sub 3); *nose* sg. Ct 7:5, 9; Ez 8:17; 23:25; Pr 30:33 (where play upon diff. meaning of אָפִי & אָפִים): (a) as organ of smelling Dt 33:10 ψ 115:6; (b) as place of ring for ornament Gn 24:47; Is 3:21 Ez 16:12; (c) as place of ring or hook for captive 2 K 19:28 = Is 37:29; for beasts, e.g. swine Pr 11:22; hippopot. Jb 40:24; crocod. v 26. **2.** *Du face* (especially in phrase אָפִים אָרְצָה Gn 19:1; 42:6; 48:12 Nu 22:31; 1 S 20:41; 24:9; 25:41; 28:14; 2 S 14:4, 33; 18:28; 24:20; 1 K 1:23, 31; Is 49:23; 1 Ch 21:21; 2 Ch 7:3; 20:18; Ne 8:6 also Gn 3:19; אָפִי גְבוּהַ *pride of his countenance* ψ 10:4; אָפִי לְפָנַי *before*, loc. sense (cf. לִפְנֵי) 1 S 25:23; אָפִים 1 S 1:5 read אָפֶס 6 We Dr (q.v.) **3.** mostly *anger*, human Gn 27:45; 49:6, 7 + (45 times); oftener divine Ex 32:12; Dt 9:19; 2 K 24:20 + (177 times); often subj. תָּרַה (וְיָתַר) etc.) *his anger was kindled* Gn 30:2; 39:19; Ex 4:14; 22:23; 32:10, 11 +; in various combinations, especially אָפִי חָרוֹן *fierceness of anger* Ex 32:12; Nu 25:4; 32:14 +; cf. אָפִי חָרוֹן 1 S 20:34; אָפִי חָרוֹן Pr 22:24 *given to anger*; אָפִים אָרְצָה *slow to anger* Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; Ne 9:17 + 7 times of God; Pr 14:29; 15:18; 16:32 of man; אָפִי אָרְצָה 25:15.³

⁴ The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.

⁵ The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me. ⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears. ⁷ Then the earth shook and quaked; and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry. ⁸ Smoke went up out of His nostrils, and fire from His mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. (Psa. 18).

When the godly are assailed by the godless around them, when truth is trashed, God does not sit idly by in the heavens. His holiness is challenged, therefore, He is roused to wrath, eventually. Why do I say eventually? Because the Old Testament is quite clear that God is “slow to anger” (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Psa. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). God’s word through the mouth of the prophet Nahum, who wrote a book of divine judgment, evidences the nuance of this particular Hebrew/Greek word for anger when he writes,

³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet. (Nah. 1:3).

Just as it takes time for fire to become a raging fire, so it is with God’s wrath. His love tempers His wrath, leaving room for the sinner to repent. Nevertheless, there does come the time when His wrath moves from evidencing itself in small fashion to bursting forth. Such is the nature of the Greek word for wrath, viz., *orgay*, which is represented in the Greek Septuagint by the Hebrew, *aph* (אָפּ).

We see this nuance of God’s wrath played out in His response to the Israelites sin with the golden calf. When Moses did not come down from Mount Sinai quickly, the people resorted to false worship under the leadership of Aaron (Note how quickly we gravitate toward sinful activity, all while we attempt to rationalize it):

⁷ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. ⁸ They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!' ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. ¹⁰ Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation (Ex. 32).

For Greek and Hebrew students among u, you can see both the Hebrew and Greek word for *anger* in verse 10:

¹⁰ καὶ νῦν ἕασόν με καὶ θυμωθεὶς ὀργῆ εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐκτρίψω αὐτοὺς καὶ ποιήσω
σὲ εἰς ἔθνος μέγα

לְעַתְּהָהּ הַגִּיתָהּ לִי וְיִחַרְרֶ-אֶפְי בָּהֶם וְאַכְלָם וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל¹⁰

What sadder thing could have happened to a spiritual leader and shepherd like Moses? He was on the mount in God's presence receiving the holy law (Ex. 24:18), and because the process took forty days the people grew impatient and motivated their second spiritual leader in command to help them worship by constructing a golden calf fashion from their confiscated Egyptian jewelry. No wonder God's anger burned against them, but it took forty days for God's anger to build up. Ostensibly, are you not thankful God's anger has to build up?

In the New Testament *orgay* is also employed to denote anger which takes time to build up. We see it in various places. Here are a couple of instances:

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath (ὀργῆ) for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2).

¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath (ὀργῆ) of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord (Rom. 12).

¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath (ὀργῆ) to come (1 Thess. 1).

The future facet of God's total wrath is denoted here, but we must not forget, however, there is always a "now" facet as well. We see this from what Jesus says,

³⁶He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3).

Just as a parent will respond negatively and in disciplinary fashion to a disobedient child in the present, should the child continue their rebellion over month and years eventually there comes the day when parental anger reaches its consummation. Such is a reflection of God's anger. It is tempered by His love and patience, but that does not mean He does not react in some fashion in the here and now, nor does it lessen the fact that His wrath will, in fact, reach its consummation in eternity toward those who have only lived to shake their unrepentant fist in His holy face.

God's wrath dissected (Rom. 1:18b). Paul says in and Romans one verse 18 that God's wrath "is revealed." What does he mean by this? He means it was poured out in the Old Testament against unrepentant sinners, it is poured out in a limited sense in the New Testament age, and it

will be poured out as we have discussed, in the future when the Messiah appears (Rom. 2:5; 1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 6:16-16,etc.).

You cannot really Old Testament without seeing God's wrath in action against sin. The may jog your memory:

1. In Numbers 11:33-34 we learn that God sent a severe plague to kill this people who had merely griped about his food provisions all they were in the wilderness on the way to the holy land. Gulp.
2. In Numbers 12:1-10 we see Miriam, the sister of Moses, stricken immediately with leprosy because she dared question Moses leadership decisions.
3. In Numbers 13-14 God vowed to kill everyone 20 years old and upward because they failed to believe the report of the spies concerning the wonder of the Promised Land.
4. In Numbers 16:1-50 God removed Korah and his followers after they attacked Moses leadership. And he removed them in a spectacular, never to be forgotten fashion by causing localized earthquake to tear the earth under their feet and swallow them.
5. In Numbers 21:4-9 God sent fiery serpents among the Israelites to take out those who disobeyed Him.
6. In 1 Samuel 2:22ff God prophesied the removal of the High Priest, Eli, because he failed to govern his godless, carnal-craving sons.
7. In 1 Samuel 12, after David committed his multiple sins with Bathsheba, his life quickly and literally fell apart as God removed His blessing.

I could go on but I'm sure you get the point. If you challenge the natural and revealed laws of God, there will always be a divinely appointed unraveling, discipline, and judgment. Always.

- Disrespect your parents, and there ultimately will be a price pay.
- Loosen sexual mores, and there ultimately will be a price pay.
- Cut a corner here and there in your business, and there ultimately will be a price to pay.
- Lie and deceive people get ahead or place yourself in a greater like, and there ultimately will be a price to pay.
- Do immoral things behind your mate's back, and there ultimately will be a price to pay.
- Allow yourself to be dominated by an addiction, and there ultimately will be a price to pay. Be not deceived.

Sin arouses the jealousy and anger of holy God, who wants you to follow Him and live a righteous, holy life. To challenge the natural law and spiritual laws He has given to us is to flirt with His wrath both in the here and now, and in the hereafter. This is just the way God has constructed our world in light of who He is and what He desires from us.

If the Old Testament was about anything, was a revelation of the righteous judgment of God against those who refuse to listen and obey Him. To overlook this premise is to live a foolish

life. Page after page, from God's judgment of mankind at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) to the judgment with pestilence against Israel for David's arrogant numbering of his army (2 Sam. 24:1-25), the Lord demonstrates His holy hatred and ultimate reaction against sin and sinners.

The principles we glean from a cursory sampling of the Old Testament are clear:

- Divine wrath cleanses the land from sin which pollutes the land.
- Divine wrath could have been averted through repentance and obedience to God's law.
- Divine wrath was eventually swift and harsh when it came.
- Divine wrath as disclosed in the first 39 books of the Bible show us how we are to think about sin.

In a world is calling for *toleration*, we must call for *transformation* at the feet of God. His wrath is revealed to serve as motivational points for us in the present. God hasn't changed nor has His hatred of sin been altered (Mal. 3:6). The sooner we realize this the sooner we will embrace His gospel and find true life and peace.

One more item concerning God's wrath needs our attention.

God's wrath directed (Rom. 1:18c). At whom specifically? Let's restate Paul's words here:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . .”

Hold it right there. What does this word “ungodly” mean? The word in Greek is *aseveia* (**ἀσεβεία**) and it was used in Paul's day to denote someone who was not loyal. In fact, and Grecian times if someone was not faithful to obey the pantheon of gods they were called “aseveian,” and if they were obedient they were called “euseveian.” Hence, the bottom line emphasis of this word has to do with loyalty (1 Tim. 6:3).

The Old Testament counterpart for this word is *pasha*, which speaks of rebellion (Isa. 48:8; Psa. 5:19; 64:3; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; Mic. 1:5; 3:8). Rebellion points to one who knows what is required of them, but who goes out and does the opposite to fulfill their own desires. This is a dangerous form of sin and one which met with God's wrath. Fortunately, we see it graphically illustrated in our society, daily. When our Federal and State leaders chose to obey and disobey rules and laws which do not support their ideology or political platform, when they chose to defy the Constitution, or to re-write laws they find inconvenient, this is rebellion at its best. They, who should know better, they who know the law(s), play fast and loose with those lost for personal and political expediency, and to disregard law is to disregard the God of Law. Rebellion is a terrible thing at any level and it is like a contagion, and please note that Paul says God actively opposes all ungodliness/rebellion. It's a memo our carnal, Christless culture is choosing to throw to the wind to their own detriment.

Paul also adds that God and against “all unrighteousness of men.” The word here *adikian*

(ἀδικίαν). Friberg's Analytical Greek Lexicon defines it well:

[Fri] **ἀδικία, ας, ἡ** generally *disregard for what is right*; (1) as disregard for divine law *unrighteousness, wrongdoing* (HE 8.12), correlated with ἀνομία (*lawlessness, wickedness*) and opposite δικαιοσύνη (*righteousness, uprightness*); (2) as disregard for human rights *injustice, unrighteousness, violation of justice* (RO 1.18); (3) as disregard for the respect and obedience due to God *wickedness, unrighteousness, wrongdoing* (1J 1.9), correlated with ἁμαρτία (*sin*); (4) as disregard for truth *wrong, evil* (1C 13.6), opposite ἀλήθεια (*truth*).⁴

Adikian is like the guy who pulled up to a newly placed “No Dumping Sign” near a home I lived in once in California and dumped a pick-up full of trash at the base of the sign. Lexically, the word is synonymous with the Hebrew word for iniquity which means to willfully twist, bend, or deviate from the way (2 Sam. 3:8; Neh. 4:5; Josh. 22:17). Paul uses it frequently in Romans because he realized man's propensity to twist the truth of God so he could validate his immoral lifestyle and provide himself the vehicle for a supposedly clean conscience. I don't think I need to spend any time giving you illustrations of how twisted our world is, at all levels from the universities to the talk around the water coolers on breaks. You name it and it is being twisted and transformed into “light.” God is not fooled and His wrath is being unleashed, when it could be His blessing if we'd only embrace His gospel and allow it to transform us into His likeness.

Dr. Donald Barnhouse tells the story which will help us appreciate what we studied in this sobering little verse from Paul's pen. As the story goes, a bunch of Christian farmers pulled up to their church one Sunday morning, only to find a farmer, who was a devout skeptic, plowing his field near the church. People in the worship service could hear the deafening rumble of the tractor as it made its methodical passes from one end of the field to the other.

The next Sunday, the farmer finished the job of plowing, and then through the rest of the season he disked, harrowed, dragged, fertilized, and cultivated his field . . . all on Sunday and on purpose. At the end of the season, he harvested his crop and then wrote a snobbish letter to the local newspaper stating he had the highest yield in the area and that he had done all his work on Sunday. He then asked the editor how Christians could explain this. The editor wisely replied with words reminiscent of Romans 1:18, “God does not settle His accounts in the month of October.”

The day of accounting is coming, though, and only your acceptance of Jesus' gospel will prepare you for the day. If I were you, I would not get back on that tractor of life tomorrow until I had settled this spiritual issue once and for all at the feet of the Savior.

⁴Friberg, Timothy, and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament* (GNM), 2nd ed. n.p.: Timothy and Barbara Friberg, 1994. <BibleWorks, v.8.>