

Romans 1:18-21 (NIV)
“Viewing world events”

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ⁽¹⁹⁾ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

“⁽²⁰⁾ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ⁽²¹⁾ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

These verses provide facts that enable a better understanding of world events.

It's easy to oversimplify matters.

So, first, we must destroy some myths.

Remember the old western movies?

The good guys wore white.

The bad guys donned black.

Those movies always portrayed Native Americans as bloodthirsty and ready to scalp.

Settlers were always innocent.

Life seems that simple to many people.

There's good.

There's bad.

The differences between them are clear.

The Lord lets us decide.

Choose right, you go to heaven.

Do evil, you burn in hell.

Something's wrong with that picture, correct?

That naive view is a first myth we must dispel.

Life choices rarely come that easily.

We've all seen situations where it seems we're

“damned if we do and damned if we don't.”

Today's text helps us gain better perspective on life's right and wrong.

But we may be forced to revise some thinking.



We referred to naively classifying good and bad people.

The Bible doesn't necessarily promote the idea that two distinct classes of folks exist.

In a sense, everyone belongs in the same class.

The truth is, no one is truly righteous.

During a Bible class I conducted in LA, we read Romans 3:23: **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

A woman about 20 years my senior retorted:

“I'm not a sinner. I was made in God's image, and he's perfect.”

She thought herself perfect, but she didn't perfectly control her anger at that moment.

Besides, many of the Greek words translated as *perfect* intimate completeness, not flawlessness.

God is perfect, and we were made in his image.¹

Being made in his image, though, means that we should reflect God's total goodness, and we frequently fail to do that.²

¹ Genesis 1:27

² See Colossians 3:1-10

Let's say that you have a great looking face.

You do a mirror-check of your appearance.

The mirror is smeared and blurry.

It doesn't reflect that winsome image you're accustomed to seeing.

Because we're smudged and tarnished, we don't reflect God well.

You might say that we're “bad glasses.”

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The Apostle Paul admitted, **“I know that nothing good lives in me.”³**

That's why we must be careful about pointing fingers at others; none of us is without sin.

Imagine trying to find a tire for your car, but the only tires available are used tires with 100,000 miles on them.

Some tires may look better than others because they haven't been scuffed against curbs.



³ Romans 7:18 NIV

Others may have been painted to hide flaws.

Un-scuffed appearance doesn't mean a better tire; that tire might have endured rocky roads and have breaks in its cords.

Some tires may have faulty beads.

Could you find a reliable tire out of that bunch?

In a sense, we all resemble tires that have traveled 100,000 miles.

Worse than that, sin affects all of us.

When we stop scrutinizing others and look inwardly, we see our own imperfections.

“I never looked into the heart of an evil man. I looked into the heart of a good man once, and I was shocked.”⁴

These truths confront us:

A) The more we try to hide our faults and pretend that we're OK, the more difficult it is to receive God's help.

B) **The harder it is to get along with others.**

⁴ I've forgotten the name of the perceptive person who said this.

The Bible compares our sin to an infectious disease that spreads quickly, but surely through the entire human race.

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”⁵

“Like the wind our sins sweep us away.”

Here's a second consideration.

This part of Romans references two apocalypses.

What is an apocalypse?

Popular writers and many ministers use apocalypse in the sense of a horrible ending—something like nuclear holocaust.

An apocalypse isn't necessarily bad.

It means simply to reveal or make something known.

Revelation 1:1(NIV) reads:

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.”



⁵ Isaiah 64:6 NIV

The word translated “revelation” here is the word “apocalypse” in Greek.

The *Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse)* reveals some very scary things, but it also makes known tremendous good news.

Suppose you go to work tomorrow morning and find the boss sitting at your desk.

The boss says, “I’ve got something to tell you.”

“What?” you ask.

“You won’t need this desk anymore.”

You’re nearing an apocalypse.

You know your boss is ready to disclose something to you.

It could be bad—you could be back down working in the mailroom.

Or filling out an unemployment application.

But then you could be sitting at a new desk in a bigger office with twice the pay.

Either way is an *apocalypse*; the word simply means to reveal something not previously known.



Here’s the first of the two apocalypses the *Book of Romans* makes known:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,”

Two things anger God and are the root of sin.

“They neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him . . .”

All other sin results from these two conditions, says the Bible:

A) We don’t glorify God and (B), we’re not thankful.

Do you glorify God?

If you interview 1000 people asking them, “What is your greatest responsibility in life?” what percent would say,

“My chief responsibility is to glorify God”?

If you asked 1000 Christians, the same question, how many would answer, “My greatest responsibility is to glorify God”?

We wonder why life gets so confused, hectic, and frustrating.

We tend to miss this principle.

The chief purpose of every human life is to glorify God.

When Norma and I first moved to LA, it was so frustrating to drive the freeways.



Take the wrong turnoff (exit) and it might take hours to find your way back.

My cousin Ray warned us about taking the Pasadena Freeway.

He said, “If you take a wrong turn on it, you’ll be lost for hours.

He was right.

When we don’t first glorify God, we’ll always be lost and looking for directions.

Nearly all the troubled people I’ve counseled over the years could have saved themselves lots of grief had they made glorifying God their first priority.

Does God just selfishly want things his way?

Not at all.

God created life, He knows completely about life, and He knows what we need.

Every person who has played team sports knows that the coach starts with a game plan.

If players don’t follow the game plan, they mess up good plays the coach has designed.

I heard the great UCLA basketball coach John Wooden yell at Bill Walton when Walton was trying to dribble the ball down court, “Walton, you’re not supposed to be dribbling!”

In other words, the game plan was for the 7’ center to get down under the basket and let the guards bring the ball down court.

There’s a reason Coach Wooden became known as the “Wizard of Westwood.”

He knew basketball and he knew how to win.

Players did things his way or found themselves sitting on the bench.

Did coach Wooden unreasonably insist on his way?

Was he merely selfish in his demand that players “honor” him by following his plan?

Few who know basketball would think so.

Coach Wooden knew how to win and he wanted his players to win.

Neither is God unreasonable when he requires us to glorify him.

If we want to win in life, we begin by exalting God and honoring Him.

Consider another important part of our relationship with God

Are you grateful to God or bitter toward him and toward people?

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. (21) And he has given us this command:



Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”⁶

We can’t talk about loving God until we love all of his creatures.

A few years ago a certain politician was openly despised by many so-called Christians.

They wrongly carried that spite.

Many so-called Christians now hate the President.

That is just as improper.

Someone said,

“I love everybody. It’s people I can’t stand.”

Let’s reread what God’s Word says:

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”

Hate of any kind darkens our hearts and cuts us off from God’s love.

God’s righteous anger will someday be revealed against those who hate.

⁶ 1 John 4:20 NIV

**“The wrath of God is being revealed
(*apocalypse*) from heaven against all the
godlessness and wickedness of men who
suppress the truth by their wickedness.”**

God will reveal his anger toward those who do
evil and who suppress the truth about him.

We’re all sinners.

We must glorify God and be grateful to him

Let’s look briefly at one more *apocalypse* in
Romans 1:17 (NIV):

**“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is
revealed (*apocalypse*), a righteousness
that is by faith from first to last . . .”**

The Lord understands our struggle and knows
that we are sin-filled.

That’s why he sent Jesus
who is/was perfect love.

Jesus completely knows the way and he
fully understands the game-plan.

Do you want a model of true justice and right?

Check out Jesus.

Believe in him; follow his truth and love.
You’ll find life.

**Rejecting him and neglecting him
lead to darkness and frustration.**

Jesus also freely gives us his
righteousness because ours
isn’t worth a dime.

**“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is
revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from
first to last.”**

I pray that you’ll give your life fully
to Jesus, the Son of God.



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