

**“No Excuses:
an inconvenient truth” Part 1”**
- Romans 1:18 - 32

**by Pastor Tim Dodson
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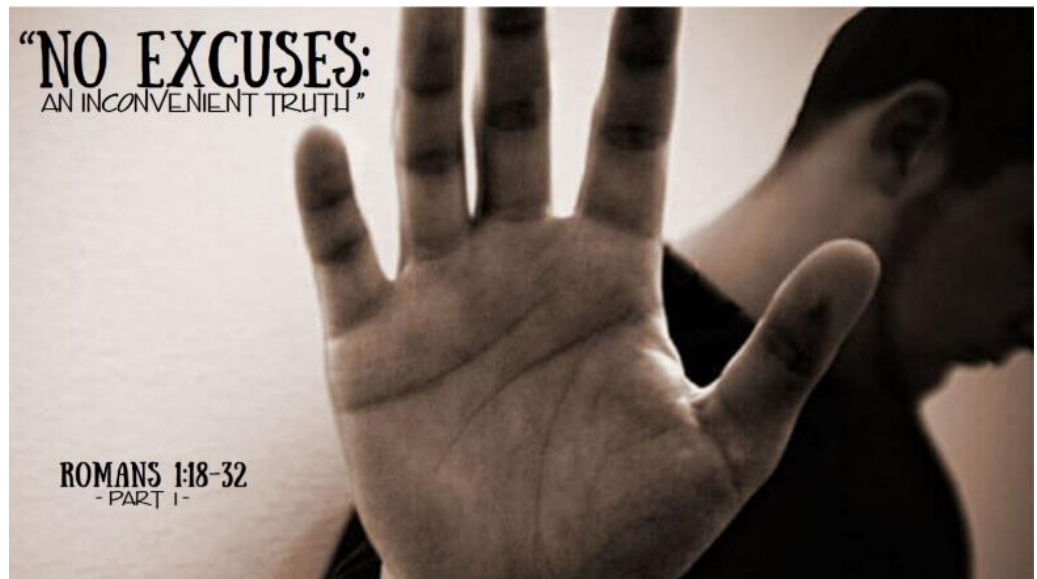
Romans 1:18-32 *But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. 20 For*

ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. 21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. 22 Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. 23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. 25 They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. 26 That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. 27 And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved. 28 Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. 29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. 30 They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. 31 They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. 32 They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

We began the book of Romans last week with a celebration of who we are in Christ. His grace...His personal involvement in our lives both individually as well as corporately as a church...His righteousness flowing through our life walk. But we need to know that as surely as God's righteousness is revealed in this world, so will His wrath.

It seems today that most believers tend to embrace just one side of God's nature at the exemption of the others. Many just want the Jesus “meek and mild.” The one that just wants us to be happy and thus looks the other way when we sin. Then there are those that see God only as an angry deity...wrathful and destructive. A God just waiting to slap us around for falling short. Both of these views...while having elements of truth, are extreme and rather skewed in their understanding of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ as presented in scripture as well as His manifest in our world and history.

We need to know that our God is indeed immentantly merciful and compassionate. His love is boundless and all-encompassing. But it would be a mistake to think he looks the other way when we sin, or that He is fine moving over for the idols we tend to place before Him. His love *has already* been poured out upon this, *his creation*. And his wrath *will be* poured out at the *end of days* ...either corporately experienced in the tribulation, or individually at each unredeemed individuals personal judgement day. In many cases...whether we want to admit it or not, His wrath is *already* being meted out albeit in measured doses. It is poured out not only against overt evil, “*all ungodliness and unrighteousness,*” but even against those who *suppress* the truth from coming forth. These folks come in all “shades and colors.” From the overt to the subtle, they move to keep the truth of God from “going public.”



We know the world does it, but the wider church today can be just as guilty! For we have the new “modern” movement of the church today. User-friendly churches that gloss over the sin of mankind and fail to teach the *whole* gospel, leaving out such important issues such as the need for repentance and the demand for a holy disciplined life!

And how we love to play ignorant of these things. We think an “out-of-sight/out-of-mind” approach will cover our tracks, but the problem is God is omniscient. Omniscient means “having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight, possessed by universal or complete knowledge.” Which is another way of saying “He knows.” And Paul is presenting his case in this passage, that despite our feigned naiveté, *we know too*... Verse 19: “*They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.*”

Certainly it is hard to have grown up in the West without having crossed paths with Jesus Christ and Christianity. After all, the Bible is the bestselling book in history! But Paul is stating that even those who have never heard of Jehovah God are without excuse, for God has placed in all of us the innate knowledge of His existence. How often the question comes up, “Will God judge the innocent heathen who has never heard about Jesus?” The answer is, ***there are no innocent heathen.*** All have sinned against the light that they have received and scripture tells us that they all will be judged accordingly.

Romans tells us that we need only to look around us and we see His proof. “*Things that are made*” is the Greek word “*poiema*,” where we get the word “poem.” We are God’s poem, His “*work of art.*” Creation that was the direct handiwork of God, with a built-in acknowledgement and realization of our Creator. It seems He clearly signed His name on all of His works of art! Although there is more than abundant evidence of an all-powerful Creator, evolutionists cling to the absurd idea that everything came out of nothing. At the root of their belief is not science, but immorality. They, as verse 18 says, “*suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*”

The word “suppress” means to “*hold on to,*” or “*to hold down,*” which is the idea here. The point is that men knew the truth, but they want to “hold it down” so that they can pursue their sins. Whether it is evolution, denying God as the Sovereign Creator, philosophy speculating that we cannot really know God at all, or psychology telling us that we are not responsible for our problems (psychologists don’t like the word “sin!”), these are all ways of pushing God away from us so that we can be our own lord.

“So that they are without excuse.” Meaning “sinners cannot plead ignorance as an excuse.” God has posted huge warning signs with flashing lights! If people drive past them over the cliff, they only have themselves to blame.

This is why there is no such thing as an atheist or even an agnostic, only those who try so very hard to deny Him, ignore Him, or resist Him. Verse 20: “*For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*”

Thus every man and woman on earth is “without excuse.” They know...*we all know*, that He is there! It is true that we may not know how to get to Him, or of the Saviors love which bridged the gap between us, but we inexplicably know He’s out there and that He is trying to get through to us. The details...the ‘gap’ between God and man is a great motivator in the believer’s mission...*our* call to take that answer to the streets. But God? We know He’s there. (Perhaps that would explain why the flood story is nearly universal throughout every culture around the world?) Jesus said in John 15:22 “*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*”

Verse 21: “*Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.*” Paul begins this verse by again affirming that man “*knew God.*” Paul was not living under some sort of modern ideal of an “ignorance of God.” For planted inside of each of us is the knowledge that there is indeed a God. *Knowing that he is there* is not the issue. *Acknowledging* He is there however is another matter!

For to understand that there *is* a God, and to *glorify* Him with our lives is two different things! “*Glorify*” means: “to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate and honor.” All of these require positive action on our part. A *response* to our mental and verbal awareness and even our heartfelt compassion for the Lord. This is what God is looking for, a *response* to His love, a “reply” to His salvation! A mere acknowledgment is not enough, for that is what *every man* gives in his heart according to Paul’s text.

What separates these two groups of humanity? The chasm of eternity! For one *believes of* and the other *believes in* Jesus Christ and His salvation! The difference between the two is vast! The word “*knew*” in verse 21 comes from the word “*gnosko*” which means to “*know by experience.*” God was not short-tempered or unfair. There was and is no overt “3 strikes and you’re out” rule being played out here. We have had a *long time* to acknowledge His reality!

However man allowed his thoughts to atrophy. To become “vain”: meaning “*fruitless and without positive result.*” Thus the lives of men became empty and without purpose. And the further they went away from God, the “darker” their hearts became. Without the ordained road map, we lost our way. Without the instructional manual, we have forgotten how to operate full and successful lives. And we seem loath to admit that we don’t know what we are doing...we’re just pushing buttons and throwing levers as all hell is breaking loose around us. As a church...as a pastor I’m going “hey...can I give you a hand with that?” and so often I just get back... “no, no...I got this...” while the flames and smoke and the sound of grinding gears fill the air.

Verse 22: “*Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.*” Oh the magnitude of the truth of that verse!

This verse speaks volumes as to the state of mankind today! We believe we are so very smart and together! We are proud of our achievements in science, medicine, and the arts. Thus the journey of self-deification marches on day after day. And yet mental health spirals away into the sewer as mass shootings and “drive by’s” become a nearly daily occurrence. But we just blame the guns. Sexual abuses and sexual transmitted diseases, marital infidelity and its subsequent splintering of families, suicide is rampant, alcoholism and drug addictions plague us, violence in the homes and in the streets, all as the state of mental health hits rock bottom.

Recently, in the depth of their great wisdom, India spent 145 million dollars in a failed attempt to land on the moon, while poverty and disease ravage the people on their streets. Instead of dealing with issues like leprosy and TB, they run after some moon rocks! “*Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.*” Our advancements have had a plethora of “secondary effects”: crime, pollution, disease, starvation, social upheaval, unbridled lust, stress and mental breakdowns. This is what our “wisdom” has brought us. Ironically, the word “wise” in the original text means “skilled, expert.” Can you imagine anything being further from the truth?

Verse 23: “*And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.*” Paul hit the nail on the head with this verse. Throughout the world we manifest this truth! America chases the “New Age” and of course themselves. India worships the “monkey god” and the rat, Native Americans bow before the heavens and created nature, China finds solace in a statue of a little fat man...all to replace the glory of the incorruptible God...the only *real* God in the midst of a whole list of pretenders.

Wrath. It’s an incredibly uncomfortable word. Even many who claim to be believers object to and minimize any mention of God’s wrath. They may *say* that they believe it because it’s in the Bible, but they’re embarrassed by it, and will take every opportunity to sweep it under the rug. I often come across professing Christians who say, “I believe in a God of love, not a God of wrath,” as if the magic words “**I** believe...” negate scripture and thousands of years of God’s actually manifest. There are those who will attempt to sell the idea that the God of the Old Testament was a God of wrath, but by the New Testament, He had really mellowed out to be a nice old guy! I’ve heard those say that Jesus was always loving and never judgmental. I always want to ask such people, “When was the last time you actually read the New Testament?”

Part of the issue is that when we think about God’s wrath, we picture someone with a bad temper who flies off the handle and punches you in the nose. But God’s wrath is a part of His holy nature. A nature that is settled, determined, and active against all sin. If God loves righteousness, He also must hate evil. If God were all love (especially as the world defines it) and no wrath, then He would not be God at all, because He would be unrighteous.

Two words are used for wrath in the New Testament. The first describes a rage: an intense feeling and a sudden flare up of passion. This word is used only in Revelation to describe God's wrath – which makes sense as God pours out a terrible wrath at the end times. The second form of the word describes a wrath that builds up over time. This term is used in the other cases describing God's wrath. The wrath described therein is a slow build up that is growing ripe.

Probably the most famous sermon ever preached in America was Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," preached at Enfield, Connecticut, July 8th, 1741. While we pastors are impressed at the response Edwards received from that message, we would seldom if ever attempt to imitate his approach. We think that if we did we would chase every individual right out of our churches! The premise being that times have changed...sensibilities have evolved. Indeed. Our fragile 2019 egos and prideful hearts would seldom sit still for such correction! There would be "tar and feathers..."

Instead, churches today will **do** just about anything, **say** just about anything, if it puts butts in the pews: "*God loves you. He offers you an abundant life full of peace, joy, and love. He will help you with your problems. He wants you to be happy. Won't you invite Him into your heart?*" Often it sounds like we are selling vitamins or an investment/retirement plan...

Theologian Richard Niebuhr...speaking of such modern approaches to God once remarked: (*The Kingdom of God in America*, p. 193, cited by Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* [Image Books, 1975], 2:249), "*A God without wrath ...brought men without sin ...into a kingdom without judgment ...through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross.*"

We want so badly to believe that God is ok with us just the way we are. We cling to the mantra that "God loves me just as I am!" Indeed he does! He loves you so much right now just as you sit...saint and sinner alike! However He loves you so much that He will not...He *cannot*, leave you that way!

J. I. Packer (*Knowing God* [IVP], pp. 134-135) said, "*One of the most striking things about the Bible is the vigor with which both Testaments emphasize the reality and terror of God's wrath.*" A. W. Pink (*The Attributes of God* [Baker], p. 82) wrote, "*A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness.*" So we cannot shove God's wrath into the closet! R. W. Dale observed (cited by R. C. Sproul, *The Cross of Christ Study Guide* [Ligonier Ministries], p. 35), "*It is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath, that we do not believe that sin provokes the wrath of God.*"

"People did not glorify God or give thanks." This is the root of sin: Although people know about God, they do not give Him His proper glory and they do not express thanks to Him for His many undeserved blessings. It's easy to sit here and shake our heads at the heathen, who have no concept of glorifying God or giving thanks. But do **I** glorify God for His goodness and mercy and grace? Do **I** give thanks to God for His many blessings that He showers on me every day?

What excuses do I have to explain **my** marginalized faith?