“Apart From The Grace of God”

10/29/2017

Nahum 1:1-9

Please find with me the first chapter of the Book of Romans.

There are two primary worldviews. They are two widely contrasting views. And, by a worldview, I mean this. A worldview is “*a set of presuppositions (assumptions which* *may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently)* *about the basic make-up of our world.”* [James Sire in “The Universe Next Door”].

This is what they look like. One, the mindset of faith, which is this; the acceptance of truth. Two, the mindset of unbelief, which is this; the suppression of truth. And both are seen most vividly in the matter of creation.

Let me show you what I mean. Hebrews 11:3 says this. *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”*

In essence, God was the first Carpenter. When anything is framed, it’s orderly. It’s designed and then it’s built. In the case of the universe with its structure, its time and its principles; its matter; it was designed and built by the words that came forth from God’s mouth.

So, can you see the mindset of faith here? Hebrews 11:3 *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”* All the things that you *can* see in the Creation around you were made out of things that your eyes *can’t* see. That’s the mindset of faith. We accept the simple truth that every single design has a Designer and every single thing that is made has a Maker. That Designer and Maker is the LORD.

Do you remember the name Johanne Gutenberg? Did you know that Gutenberg is the name associated with moveable text which enabled the first books to be type-written instead of hand-written? Now, why do you attach Gutenberg’s name to the Gutenberg Press? Simple. Because Gutenberg invented it.

Now, apply that same logic to the universe around you. Whose name is attached to it? Everything everywhere has God’s name attached to it.

Today I want to direct you to the unspoken message that the Creation speaks every minute of the day. It’s right here in Romans chapter one.

I’ve titled today’s message “Apart From the Grace of God.” Shall we pray?

Romans, remember is a letter. In the old days it was called an epistle. And it was written by the Apostle Paul. And Paul had not been to Rome before he wrote this letter. So, in advance of his arrival there, he, in 56 A.D, probably some six years before getting to Rome, Paul wrote this epistle.

And what is Romans? It’s what you could call a “Christian’s Foundations” epistle. And to lay a foundation, you need to dig deep. Paul digs quite deep in this first chapter.

Here’s what I mean.

The Bible, as you know, is our clearest revelation of God. But, there are three other ways in which the LORD has revealed Himself to mankind. He’s revealed Himself.

One, through His Word

Two, through His Son

Three, through your conscience

Four, through His creation

Romans chapter one is the simplest explanation you will ever find on the matter of God being the Creator. But alongside that is that face that people are sinners and they need a Savior.

Here in this first chapter of Romans one we find the two worldviews. One, the worldview of faith. And two, the worldview of unbelief. Let me show them to you.

“Apart From the Grace of God.”

Now, how has He revealed Himself? Please look with me at Romans 1:16 *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For* ***therein is the righteousness of God revealed*** *from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”*

*(18) For* ***the wrath of God is revealed*** *from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; …”*

Can you see the two ways God has revealed Himself to us? Do you see what Paul is saying here about the LORD’s revealing Himself? He says that God’s righteous character is revealed in the Gospel. And he says that God’s wrath is revealed against all ungodliness.

So, it’s His righteousness and His wrath that He’s revealed. He’s shown us what He’s like. He’s righteous and He must judge all who are unrighteous and ungodly.

Paul’s point here is that people can see. We all can see something about God. And we can hear Him. He’s not silent. A revelation means this “something is obvious.” God hasn’t hidden Himself from mankind.

When a sinner hears the Gospel, he or she gets a message from the LORD. His righteousness is revealed in the Gospel. There’s a reason why we need the Gospel of Christ. It’s because by nature and by habit and by practice and by choice, we are sinners. We’re sinners and God is not. So, we need the Gospel. The Gospel, then, reveals the righteousness of God. We need a means of getting rid of our sins. And that means is the Good News that Jesus died as a Substitutionary Sacrifice for you and for me.

And, Paul says, there’s a second revelation. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who do something to the truth that surrounds them in creation.

First, God has revealed Himself to us.

How? In the Gospel. And how else? God’s wrath is revealed. Romans 1:18 *“For* ***the wrath of God is revealed*** *from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; …”*

What does the word “hold” mean? They *“hold the truth in unrighteousness…”* This term “hold” is our modern word “suppress.” Evolutionists, for example, suppress the truth.

I spoke with a man this week who was born into a Hindu home. We talked about how easily science and faith cooperate. And we talked about DNA and the beginning of the world. And I got, not only to give him my personal testimony of salvation; I also got to present the Gospel to Him. And as we spoke I noticed two things. One, he refused to accept the things I said about how to become righteous or to be forgiven. He understood righteousness as something we try to do in order to get accepted by God. And he was convinced that when he did right things that he was righteous.

And two, here’s what he said about the world. *“No one knows how the world began.”* So, of course, I took him back to Genesis chapter one. But, this was his mindset. *“No one knows how the world began.”*

Don’t allow yourself to be swallowed up by the thinking that says that people don’t know there’s a God, or they can’t see God in His creation. Folks, science and faith are perfectly united. And, by the way, evolutionary thinking is evolving as we speak. Here’s a book called “God Is Watching You.” It was written by evolutionist Dominic Johnson, published in 2015. Professor Johnson is a biology professor at the University of Oxford, in Oxford, England.

Here’s what Professor Johnson writes. *“When we do something selfish or wrong, even if we are alone and could never be found out, we nevertheless find it hard to shake a sense that somehow our actions are observed and disapproved of by someone or something.*

*It's not logical. It's not rational. But it turns out that such a belief is common to religious and nonreligious people alike. In fact, it seems to be ubiquitous across history and across cultures—part of human nature.”* [Found on [www.answersingenesis](http://www.answersingenesis) “Did Fear of God Lead To Evolution?” by Ken Ham].

So, even an evolutionist will sometimes tell you that it’s “…*hard to shake a sense that somehow our actions are observed and disapproved of by someone or something.”* We know that He sees us and knows us very well.

Now, what is God’s wrath?

One writer defines it this way. *“The wrath of God is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin.”* (A. W. Pink).

And here’s another. *“God’s wrath is His authentic authority exercises upon your personal sins.”*

Oftentimes when you read about the LORD’s wrath, it’s third person. But folks, His wrath is extremely personal. For example, what are your sins? Lying? Cheating? Immorality? Resentment? Worry? Sins of the tongue? Sins of the heart that no one knows about? And what about those sins which beset just you? Which sins are they that are always tempting you?

And here’s why it’s so personal. The LORD deals with each of us one-on-one. Your sins stir something up in God. But, do they stir up anything in you? Is God’s wrath some-thing that other people will face; but not you? And it’s also very practical. You see, if you don’t see yourself as deserving of God’s wrath, you will never see yourself in need of the Cross of Christ.

There is a judgment to come. And each time you hear about God being angry at sin and God being a God of wrath, you conscience agrees. He is Who He says He is.

So, the LORD must display His wrath. And here’s the reason. When you see all you see in the creation around you; all that He has designed and made; and you reject the truth of what it tells you, you suppress the truth in unbelief.

Look again at Paul’s words. Romans 1:18 *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; … (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

*(20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: …”*

Take a moment to examine the creation around you. What do you see? You see that God exists. You see His eternal power. You see that He’s the Creator.

And how have you often responded? How do so many respond to the LORD’s revelation of Himself in His creation? Romans 1:21 *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

*(24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

Paul says *“the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made …”*

So, can you see how the LORD has revealed Himself through His creation? Here’s a passage on the magnificence of God as seen in His creation. It’s from Job 26:7 *“He stretcheth out the north [***direction***] over the empty place [***outer space***], and hangeth the earth upon nothing [***gravity***]. (8) He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds [***evaporation and condensation***]; and the cloud is not rent under them.*

*(9) He holdeth back the face of his throne [***the invisible realm***], and spreadeth his cloud upon it. (10) He hath compassed the waters with bounds [***the seashore***], until the day and night come to an end [***rotation of the earth***]. (11) The pillars of heaven tremble [***thunder and lightning***] and are astonished at his reproof.*

*(12) He divideth the sea with his power [***winds and waves***], and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. (13) By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens [***solar system***]; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent [***the constellations***].*

*(14) Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?”*

Outer space, gravity and centrifugal force, rain clouds, the seashore, thunder and lightning, the winds and the waves on the ocean, the solar system, the constellations; and our *lack of a full understanding* of the universe is what Job is speaking about here.

God’s wisdom is obvious. His power is obvious. His intelligence. His constant supervision of the universe. These things are all evident for anyone who is willing to accept it. So, creation all around you every minute speaks to you about the Person of God.

And, we hold all this in our hearts by faith. Hebrews 11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

Science and faith are not contradictory in any sense.

And how have we responded? Look again with me at Romans 1 and verse twenty-one.

v. 21 – when we knew Him, we refused to glorify Him.

When you glorify someone, you boast about Him.

v. 21 – we became ungrateful.

v. 23 – we changed the glory of God into images. What kind of images? Images of humans; images of birds; images of beasts; images of reptiles and insects.

v. 24 – we dishonored our bodies between ourselves.

v. 25 – we changed the truth of God into a lie.

v. 26 – we changed the natural use of our bodies to what is against nature.

v. 27 – we burned in lust; men for men and women for women.

v. 28 – we didn’t like to keep the knowledge of God.

v. 29 – we became filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, and twenty more evil things; verse 29.

Romans 1:29 *“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, (30)* *Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

*(31)**Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: (32)**who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

Now, knowing what you know about these specific sins listed by the Holy Spirit in Romans chapter one, what do you think about the need for the wrath of God to be revealed to people? The answer is this. Apart from the grace of God, we would be very deeply under His wrath and rightfully deserving of it.

Does anyone here wonder why there is a Hell? How many people do you know who dismiss the simplicity of the creation and suppress the truth? Folks, when you suppress something so evident as the Genius of God begin behind everything you see, then you are holding a mindset of unbelief.

It’s so obvious when you read Romans chapter one that we need to receive these two main messages from God. One, the message that He is the Creator, which we hear and see all around us in His creation. And two, the message that He is righteous and we are not.

Not only are you and I surrounded by the revelation of God in His creation, we are also given an even greater revelation in the Gospel of Christ. In it, says Paul, are the revelations of God’s righteousness and the revelation of His wrath. Both are revelations and both are evident.

And the only escape you have from your sinful condition is to have God’s righteousness applied to you. His righteous-ness is revealed in the Gospel. Practically speaking, there is no escape from your condition as a sinner. There is nothing apart from the grace of God that you can do to stop being unrighteous.

And that’s where the Gospel becomes the only answer for your unrighteous life style.

You see, the salvation God provides is *His* paying a debt you earned; but could never pay off. Jesus Christ came into this world so pay your sin debt. And then, by simple faith in His death, you can become the recipient of His righteousness.

In conclusion, go back with me to the Governor of Judea. His name was Antonius Marcus Felix. And one day he invited the Apostle Paul into his court to have a conversation with him. And Paul took the opportunity to tell him the simple truths of the Gospel. Now, can you remember how Felix responded?

Acts 24:24 *“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. (25) And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”*

So, are you responding to what you know about the LORD by saying “when I have a convenient season”? How have you responded to the knowledge that God is righteous and that He is a God of wrath? Have you believed on Christ? If not, why not?

Like everyone around you, you’ve broken every one of God’s Ten Commandments and you are in dire need of God’s offer of a free gift; the gift of righteousness. I am offering that free gift to you today. If you will repent of your sin and believe on Jesus Christ today, you will be rescued; and rescued for eternity.

Today is the day of salvation. Today, you need to deal with yourself, your sins, and the Savior today. What do you need to do? You need to Repent and to Believe.

* To Repent = I change my mind about God, Christ, my sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = I simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for my sins.

Here’s the Salvation Prayer*. “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and deserve judgment for my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place on the Cross to remove that judgment. Please save me and give me that gift of righteousness. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Now let’s sing Hymn # 347 “And Can It Be?”

Something more to think about.

First, a man named Jan Hus. Born in a country called Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia), Hus became both a priest and a professor in the University of Prague (Switzerland) in 1396. Then, he discovered the Bible and began to both read it and teach it. He came to reject the divine origin of the Roman Catholic Church and the authority of the Pope. He also came to some conclusions regarding the priests he associated with. He said this regarding then. They are *“worldly, proud, mercenary, pleasure-loving, and hypocritical…. They do not regard their sins as such, do not allow themselves to be reproved, and persecute the saintly preachers. There is no doubt that if Jesus lived among such people, they would be the first to put him to death.”* [Found on [www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com) “Jan Hus”].

Hus met his untimely end tied to a stake and burned to death. In the end, Jan Hus sang a hymn as he was being burned at the stake in 1415.

Second, John Calvin. Have you ever heard the name John Calvin? The most important Pastor and Theologian of Protestant Reformation came from France. John, his brother, his sister and two friends had to flee Catholic persecution in 1536.

You see, in the fifteenth century, Johanne Gutenberg invented moveable type and printed a Bible for the common people. John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English for the common people to read. And a man named Jan Hus was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church for preaching the message of John Wycliffe. Hus Then a German named Martin Luther was charged by the Catholic Church with heresy because he promoted the teachings of Jan Hus. Hus, as you know was burned at the stake. So, by 1536, it was quite common for Christians to be persecuted in France; John Calvin, his family and his friends were among them.

He once wrote *“Preaching is the public exposition of Scripture by the man sent from God, in which God Himself is present in judgment and in grace.”*

Here’s the Apostle Paul on God’s wrath. Romans 3:5 *“Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?”*

I Thessalonians 1:10 *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

Here’s the Apostle Peter. II Peter 3:7 *“**But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”*

Here’s Jude 1:7 *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”*

Here’s Paul preaching in Athens, Greece. Acts 17:31 *“**Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*

And here’s Jesus. Matthew 3:7 *“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”*

John 3:36 *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

Matthew 7:13 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: …”*

Matthew 8:12 *“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*