

**The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript**  
**Episode 14**  
**#14 Romans, Part 4 (Rom 1:18-32)**  
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**Episode Summary:**

In this fourth installment of the Romans series, Matt guides listeners through the text of Romans 1:18-32, where Paul talks about the "wrath" of God. How should we think of divine wrath and judgment? Is the concept of divine wrath consistent with the idea that God is love? Matt addresses these and other questions in light of Greg Boyd's work on the subject -- particularly with respect to his idea of divine wrath as "aikido" and "divine withdrawal."

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**Transcript:**

0:00 Hey everyone. Welcome back to another episode of the Bible Unmuted. Thanks so much for joining today. I hope that you are doing well. In today's episode we are diving back into the book of Romans. This is our fourth installment through our journey through the letter to the Romans. I'm excited about today's topic because it's a topic that requires a lot of care. It's an important topic to be sure. If you've caught any of the previous episodes on Romans then you know I've been dropping some hints and little previews along the way about today's subject. In the first episode I talked about how we would be talking and discussing this concept of divine judgement and the wrath of God, because I knew it would be coming up in one of the first episodes here in Romans, chapter one. And in the last episode I gave us kind of a preview of what we would be talking about. Well today has arrived and we're going to be diving into that text Romans 1:18-32. And we're going to dive deep. We're going to read a lot of scripture and we're going to read a lot of text, and we're going to ask a lot of questions. Because, let's face it, when it comes to the subject of divine judgement, divine wrath...how are we supposed to make sense of it? I mean, God is love, and in Him there is no darkness at all. That's what scripture tells us. And so how do we square the fact that God is love with the fact that God does show judgement? And as I said, this is a very important topic that requires deep care, and attention; contemplation, deep prayer, and meditation. Because sadly, there's a lot of people out there who have a very wrong view of God. As I said in a previous episode, many people think God's default mode is anger and that He has to be convinced to show kindness and forgiveness. Unfortunately, just a lot of people have these unhealthy views of God for whatever reason. Maybe they've been taught wrong, maybe they've sat under bad preaching or bad teaching, or something. And the fact is, none of that is true. God's default mode is not anger. His default mode is compassion and kindness, and a desire for relationship with His people. So as I said, God is love. That is the biblical truth. The scripture says that God is slow to get angry. That's not his default mode (laughs). He's *slow* to get angry. He is *very* patient. And I want people to have that view of God. I want people to see the God as revealed through Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross becomes the throne of God, in a sense, because it is on that cross that Jesus rules and reigns and conquers evil. He pushes back the darkness on the cross. He shows us the love of God and therefore defeats the powers of darkness on the cross. The cross is the throne of God. And what does that teach us about God? It teaches us that He is a self-sacrificial, self-giving deity who loves us. He has not come to be served, but He has come to

serve; to wash our feet. I mean, my goodness! If that's not amazing news...if that's not comforting, I don't know what is. And I want people to see that view of God. I want them to know that they are deeply loved by God. I want to grow each and every day in that knowledge, that I am deeply loved by God. We all need to know that we are deeply loved by God. But how do you square that with these texts of scripture that speak of divine wrath and divine judgement? Well, that's kind of what we're going to be talking about today. Namely, how to make sense of these texts. And, that's why I kind of have been leading up to this – because I knew it would be an important episode. I knew that it would be something that we all need to think about more. And so today we're looking at Romans 1:18-32. This text that speaks about divine wrath. This is a section that I think is going to help us build a foundation for how to think about important things down the road. For example, when we get to Romans 9, we're going to need some foundation for how to think about election and reprobation. It's going to be super important that we have the groundwork *laid* for those subjects of election and divine hardening because Romans 9 through 11 requires that we understand those concepts. And Romans chapter one, the text we're looking at today, that's going to be a text that helps us build that foundation for later on. This text is also important for helping lay a foundation for thinking through the question of, what is God's relationship to people. Does God love everyone? Does God genuinely want everyone to be saved? And for the record, I think He does. I think He *genuinely* wants everyone to be saved. And I think He genuinely *loves* everyone. Okay, so again, how should we think about divine wrath in this text? Well, this is a text, Romans 1:18-32, is a text that is going to reveal a lot of answers in helping us to think through the ways in which God shows His wrath upon people who say "no" to Him. So, we're going to go into that today.

5:20 But let's set this aside for just a moment. I want to mention just a couple brief things. Thank you so much for those who are supporting on Patreon. I so appreciate that. I so appreciate your support for this ministry. I just can't thank you enough. Thank you so very much. And for all of you. Thank you for listening to the podcast, for sharing this podcast with your friends. I'll be honest with you. I'm not good at social media (laughs). I'm not good at promoting this sort of thing... it's just not my forte. I'm not a marketing guru. By no means am I a marketing guru. I am way to schooled for cool (laughs). I just don't know (laughs). I just learned Instagram not too long ago...I did my first Instagram reel yesterday. And I just don't know all that stuff. It doesn't come naturally. I need to ask my 5 year old how to turn on the TV sometimes, so (laughs)... If you would, if you find the content of this podcast helpful and encouraging, help me spread the word! Just like and share on your social media. Share it with your friends and you can rate it on iTunes, or wherever you're listening to this podcast. I really appreciate if you would do that. And like I said a moment ago, I have this deep passion for helping people know that they are loved by God. And today's episode is definitely going to get into some of the questions related to that. So anyway, thank you for your support. Thank you for sharing this with your friends. And also, I want to say too, that I want to hear from you. Go to my website – it's very simple – it's just my name, MatthewHalsted.com, and there's a contact form at the top. And I want to hear from you, I'd love to hear from you. Just feel free to reach out anytime. I'm *usually* pretty good about responding to emails, although this week is an exception – the past two weeks actually. So, if you have sent me something – I know I've got a few in my inbox. I'm just super swamped right now because I'm building a new class for the fall – or actually I'm revising an old class for the fall. So, most of my day has been spent working away on that stuff right now. But none the less, I will get to those emails and thank you for your patience. I really appreciate it. I *do* love hearing from folks...though, I should say this though...I'm not good at – I should say this, I'm not good at checking messages on social media so the best way to contact me is through email. Just do the contact form on my website and I'll reply back with an email. Okay with that introduction and first part of this podcast over, let's dive into today's text.

8:08 So, I'm starting in Romans 1 verse 18 and I'll read through verse 32. And I'll actually going to be reading from the English Standard Version today. Alright, Romans 1:18:

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can*

be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

**24** Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25** because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

**26** For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; **27** and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

**28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. **29** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. **32** Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Romans 1:18-32. So that's the text. Let's go through that text in chunks and make some comments along the way.

- 10:36 Okay, the first thing that I want to point out. The first observation here, is to say that Paul is talking like other Jews of that time period. This passage shows remarkable similarity to an old Jewish text called the Wisdom of Solomon. This is actually among the texts that Protestants would call the Apocrypha. And even if you're a Protestant, like me, don't be afraid of becoming familiar with these texts. Because the Apocrypha provides context for the New Testament. If you're not familiar with this specific text, "The Wisdom of Solomon", I want to share some specific information about it. It's called "The Wisdom of Solomon" and it was not written by King Solomon. There's definitely a pseudonymity to it, meaning the name that's given to this text is not actually written by the person. So there's some debate about why names of religious heroes, if you will, were ascribed to some of these texts. And probably it was because they wanted to communicate that they were writing, whoever wrote this, was communicating that they were writing a text within the same vein or tradition, as say, in this case as King Solomon's writings of Proverbs and so forth. Scholars tend to think that whoever wrote "The Wisdom of Solomon" was a Jew who was well acquainted with the Greek language. This Jewish person probably lived and operated and ministered in Alexandria. And with "The Wisdom of Solomon", when you read it; which you can go and read it online; it bears a remarkable similarity to other books like the Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. Interestingly, and this is sometimes surprising for Protestants, "The Wisdom of Solomon" was in the Greek Old Testament. So as you know the OT was originally written in Hebrew, but over time it was translated into Greek. And in some of the major Greek OT traditions, and texts, "The Wisdom of Solomon" is in those. So it's in the Septuagint – what we would call the Septuagint – the Greek OT. It was probably written somewhere between 30BC and 95AD. Now, there's a lot of scholarly discussion on this and if you are interested in learning a little bit more about that, I highly encourage you to check out the Lexham Bible Dictionary. They've got a little section on "The Wisdom of Solomon". Just as a side note here, I highly recommend that you check out the Apocrypha and read it because it's writing from the period in which the New Testament was written. And if you want to understand the NT *text*, you've got to understand the NT *context*. And that means becoming familiar with other writings from that period. And many of those other writings of that period are the Apocryphal text. So they are really very helpful in that

sense. So I just want to read a couple of passages here from “The Wisdom of Solomon” from chapter 13 because they’re pretty similar to what Paul has just said in Romans 1. So listen to “The Wisdom of Solomon” chapter 13:1

*13 For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works;*

This sounds fairly similar to the Romans 1 passage. Listen to verses 6-9 of “Wisdom of Solomon”, chapter 13.

*6 Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. 7 For while they live among his works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. 8 Yet again, not even they are to be excused; 9 for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?*

14:57 So again, this is pretty similar to what Paul is saying, that although they could perceive of God’s works, they didn’t acknowledge God or give thanks to God. That’s what Paul says. It’s pretty similar to here. So anyway, I just want to bring this up because it reveals to us that Paul, when he writes Romans 1 here, he’s not coming up with a new thought. He’s operating like other Second Temple Jewish people. It seems that what Paul is saying here was possibly a prevalent mindset among Jews. Particularly diaspora Jews; Jews who lived outside of what is now known as Palestine or Israel. And because again “Wisdom of Solomon” was probably written by a Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt. Of course Paul is not from Alexandria, but it just shows that among Jews in that time period, no matter where they lived, Paul in Tarsus and this Jew in Alexandria; there were similar thought patterns about what a person should be expected to come to believe in God about and from. By just looking at the world, they can see the Creator. And that sort of seems to be what Paul is saying here. And again, as a side note, this is an example of why it’s important to become familiar with these other texts written in around the first century. Because it allows for comparisons in the NT. And sometimes in the NT you’ll find similarities in other texts. Kind of what we looked at today. Sometimes there are differences between other texts and other writings and what the NT says. But either way, by becoming familiar with these other texts, it helps you situate the text of the NT in its world, in its ancient world. It kind of helps give it a voice again. Because we want to be careful not to impose upon the Bible our own modern assumptions. We want to get familiar with the Bible’s assumptions, and by familiarizing ourselves with those ancient texts, it helps us become more familiar with the NT’s horizon of understanding. That’s the first observation. Paul seems to be thinking along the same lines of some Jews of that same time period.

17:20 So, the second observation about this text is this... Paul offers invaluable insights into how we should think about divine wrath. To see how this is the case, let’s re-read the first part of that text again. We need to pay close attention to the details of the text to see this. So, let’s just dive into it. I’m going to read portions of that text again, and then I will stop and pause to make some comments along the way. And I’ll start by reading verses 18 through 23...

*18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

So this tell us who will experience the wrath of God. The wrath of God is for everyone who suppresses the truth by their unrighteousness. Next Paul is going to explain some reasons why this is the case. He’s going to elaborated just a little bit more. He goes on...

*19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have*



*been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

Now next Paul is going to elaborate a bit further. He's going to give us a little bit more detail. He continues...

**21** *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22* *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23* *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

Did you notice anything about that passage? We start off by hearing about God's wrath, but we don't really see God bring about God's wrath. All we read in this passage is really two things. The first is God shows wrath to rebellious people, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. And the second thing is that Paul tells us about what the rebellious people are doing to deserve it. Namely, they are not acknowledging God, they are not giving Him thanks, they are not showing Him gratitude; even though they know God is there and even though they know God deserves praise and gratitude. That's all Paul says so far. Nowhere in that text that we just read, do we see God do anything. In other words, we don't see God render any sort of judgment, we don't see Him perform judgement. Nowhere in the passage in verses 18 through 23, (the text that I just re-read), nowhere do we see God respond to the rebelliousness of the people. It's actually not until the very next verses, starting in verse 24 where we see God start to respond to the rebellious people. So let's read that passage and those verses. And I'll stop and I'll make a little comment. So it starts off here...it says:

**24** *Therefore God gave them up*

Let me just stop here for a minute. Pay close attention to that phrase. It's going to occur two more times in this passage.

**24** *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25* *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

**26** *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27* *and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

**28** *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*

Okay, did you catch all that? This is how God responds to the unrighteousness of people. He gives them up. He gives them up to their sin. Now I think this is a helpful way of thinking *initially*, about thinking about God's wrath. Essential to way God's judgement works is by Him simply giving people over to their sins. When people choose a life without God, when they insist on "going it alone", when they insist on disregarding God, and refusing to acknowledging Him in their lives; and if they do this persistently, then eventually God is going to give them over to that. God is going to give them what they want. In other words, what God does is simply withdraw His grace and His protective presence from their lives and as a result of that they experience all they have left – sin. And that is a very dangerous place to be. Because when sin is allowed to do its own thing, without being restrained and held back, sin will implode. In other words, the end result of sin is death. The final consequence of sin is destruction. And so technically God doesn't have to do anything at all on people to render judgment. He simply has to remove His protective presence from people. Because when He does that, then the sin takes over, and the death becomes the result. Now I think this is Paul is saying here in Romans 1. He's saying that when people choose to

disregard God, when people say “no” to the Author of life, they are essentially signing up for destruction. And this isn’t because God is mean. This isn’t because God is vindictive. This situation is actually quite simpler than that. After all, when a person says “no” to the source of life, then they inherit the opposite of life. Namely death.

Let me give an example. If I say no to the nutriment of my body and if I purposely only say drink high fructose corn syrup, then I’m going to receive a life of non-nourishment. When I say no to healthy food, I get an unhealthy life by default. I don’t get unhealthy because the healthy food is mean. (Laughs) That has nothing to do with it. I simply reap what I sow. Likewise when sin grows into death, and a person reaps their decisions, their being destroyed is not due to God being mean. In a sense, God has nothing to do with it. As C.S. Lewis once said, *“Hell is locked from the inside.”*

24:10 One scholar who’s helped me think through this carefully is Greg Boyd. I think Greg has done the church a big service in this respect. I probably wouldn’t agree with Greg on everything he says about this topic, but when it comes to his overall idea, his general thesis, I think he hits the nail on the head. Now it’s been awhile since I read his book on the topic. The book is called, *“The Crucifixion of the Warrior God”*. It’s a two volume book. It’s a fun read. You should definitely pick it up. It’s been awhile since I read his book on the topic so I probably need to go back and get a refresher. But anyway, I found some old PowerPoint deck slides and some notes from my reading of that book. And so, I want to share some of that here on the podcast as we think through this topic of judgement. Be sure to check out this book for yourself. I highly recommend you check it out. It will help you raise questions... interpretively and hermeneutically, it’s going to help you think through some stuff you haven’t thought through before. Anyway, in his book, *“The Crucifixion of the Warrior God”*, Greg Boyd describes God’s judgment and God’s wrath as a sort of spiritual aikido (laughs). Okay...aikido...are you familiar with that word? I think that I’ve heard it before. Aikido is a form of martial arts and Greg uses this as an example, as an illustration for how to think through divine judgement. Before I read his book I hadn’t even thought of it like this. I think I’d heard the word before, I guess, but anyway, it’s a form of martial arts, but it’s a different *form* of other martial arts. It’s different from other types of martial arts. It’s different from Tai Kwando or Karate, or whatever. What makes it different...what makes aikido different, is that it’s essentially non-violent. Or, it’s non-offensive in orientation. It never really goes on the offense, in other words. Full disclosure – I’m no martial arts expert (laughs), but from my own understanding of this is basically is, what aikido does, is that it trains the person to take the aggressor’s violent and creatively turn it back on them. So here’s how Greg puts it in his book. This comes from page, for those who want to know, from page 767 through 768 of *“The Crucifixion of the Warrior God”*. So he says this,

*“Aikido is a martial arts technique that trains warriors to engage in non-resistant combat, turning the force of the aggressors back on themselves in order to neutralize their opponent and hopefully to enlighten them to the evil in their heart that fueled their aggression.”*

So, from what I understand about aikido, this form of martial arts will cause the aggressor to experience pain only in proportion to the pain that they are seeking to inflict upon others. I think this is how aikido works. But either way, I am convinced something like this does in fact describe the way God’s judgment works. It does describe the way God’s judgment works, I think. I’m pretty convinced of that. One way to illustrate this is by looking at the way Christ suffered on the cross. How did God’s judgment work there? Here’s how Greg Boyd describes it:

*“God the Father did not act violently toward His son when the Son bore the judgement of our sin that we deserved. Rather, with a grieving heart, the Father simply withdrew His protective hand, thereby delivering His Son over to wicked humans and fallen powers that were already bent on destruction. Yet by abandoning His Son to suffer the destructive consequences of sin, that we deserved, the Father wisely turned the violent aggression of these evil doers back on themselves, causing evil to self-implode and thereby liberating creation.”*

That's from page 768. In essence, the basic idea is this: God's wrath, God's judgement, is simply God withdrawing his protective grace, and letting sin be sin. And once sin is allowed to be sin, death is the natural consequence. But in the case of Jesus's death on the cross, this divine withdrawal of protection was actually a way in which God could use the force of darkness's weapons against them. In their act of inflicting death upon Jesus, they themselves signed their own death warrant. The trap that they set for Jesus, became their own snare, and that's the way the powers of darkness, that's the way the enemy - the devil - was defeated.

28:52 I'm a hermeneutics guy. And there's a lot to say in this regard. At first I think that Greg's larger thesis is fairly persuasive. I mean, it's been sometime, like I said a moment ago, since I've read his book on this, but from I can remember, his larger thesis goes like this: We should interpret scriptural text that talk about God's wrath in light of what we see on the cross. In other words, the cross of Jesus is the hermeneutic lens through which we interpret everything else. And Greg calls it a cruciform hermeneutic. I don't have a problem *at all* with a cruciform hermeneutic. Now I might squabble with Greg a little bit with the way the hermeneutic may be applied. But that's for a subject for another episode. You have to understand, Bible scholars disagree with each other all the time (laughs). So since I'm a hermeneutics guy, I'm always hesitant to sign on completely with what everybody else says, or what another person says, because I want to reserve an area of my theology where I can say "Hey...I'm not too sure..." Because I just don't think we can understand everything one hundred percent perfectly. All that aside. Put that aside for a moment.

Also as a hermeneutics guy, I'm just hesitant to jump on bandwagons. I'm hesitant to go with the latest fads. I'm just more interested in asking the right questions. And in finding the right questions to ask. So I think in this case, I want to ask a fairly obvious question. Does Greg's idea of wrath as aikido - does it have scriptural precedent? In other words, are there scriptural texts that support his idea that God's wrath is a lot like aikido? And as I recall, Greg's thesis that God's divine wrath is basically, God simply withdrawing His protective grace from people....that idea, it assumes one underlying principal. And that principle is this: Sin and its consequence, they have an intrinsic relationship with each other. In other words, death is just a natural consequence to rejecting God. Put it like this, all God has to do, is simply withdraw His protective grace to let sin bloom into something hideous. And this act of God withdrawing His protective grace to letting sin bloom just into something hideous; that is what we mean by God's wrath. So Greg defines the terms like this: He says,

*"Extrinsic punishment is sort that is imposed by a judicial authority. As when a judge sentences a burglar to time in prison. It's called extrinsic because there is no inherent relationship between the crime one commits and the punishment one receives. And he goes on. He says, "Intrinsic punishment is the sort that follows as a natural consequence of a person's behavior. As when an alcoholic suffers liver disease as a result of their incessant alcohol abuse. The destructive consequences of alcohol abuse are intrinsic to the abuse, which is why no judicial authority is needed to impose it."*

And this comes from page 832 and 833. Just a recap. Extrinsic punishment is different from intrinsic punishment because intrinsic punishment is just basically where the sin's consequence comes naturally from the sin. You don't have to go and find a consequence and attach it to the sin. It just follows from the sin. That's the idea. And he thinks that God's judgement operates on this idea of an intrinsic punishment. That there is an inherent relationship between sin and consequence. And so the question I want to ask is, are there scriptural texts that support that view? In Greg's book, he lines up a number of texts - we won't get into all of them - but he lines up a bunch of texts, that, in my mind at least, I think helps answer that question in the affirmative. I think there are scriptural texts...I do think scripture seems to support this view. So let's take a look at some of those texts.

33:12 Think of the flood. If there ever was a passage that depicted the wrath of God, it would be the flood story. But what were the mechanics of it all? What did God do to bring about the flood? The answer is that God

simply removed the boundaries that held back the flood waters so that the flood could unleash its chaotic fury on the earth. And you have to know the creation story and the way it works. You have to know the whole narrative to understand this, right? So for example, in Genesis chapter 1, we see God subdue the flood waters. He sets boundaries to create a functional earth. But in the flood story, the waters are no longer held back. The boundaries are broken. The boundaries burst forth and the chaos returns to the earth. If Genesis 1 is the creation story, the flood becomes the un-creation story. The creation is overturned. Why? Because of sin. But notice, God didn't really do much. All He did was simply remove His protective grace – the grace that He imposed on creation in Genesis 1. This is divine withdrawal.

Now next, let's think of the way James in the NT describes sin. He says, in James 1:15... this comes from the ESV, He says

*"Then desire, when it is conceived gives birth to sin. And sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

This, no doubt, describes the inherent relationship between sin and its consequence. Sin grows into death. Why? It's not because God is mean, the reason is because sin is by definition, anti-God. Another way to say it is this: Sin is anti-life. Death is a logical result of sin. So if you have sin, you have anti-life. Well, if you have anti-life, you don't have life. You have death. Again, it's not because God is mean. It just the way the intrinsic relationship between sin and consequence – it's just the way it works.

So let's look at some other texts. 2 Chronical 15:1-2...and all these text will come from the NRSV

*The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. 2 He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you."*

Notice there in that text that God's response to the rebelliousness of people in this section here, is just to respond back with what they respond to Him with. If they abandon Him, well then they get what they want...abandonment, right? Look, it's not really because God is being mean. It's just they've left God. And so if you leave God, you don't have God. He allows for that. Again, if you abandon Him, He will abandon you. So it's always a proportional response.... 2 Chronicles 24:20

*Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, "Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has also forsaken you."*

Notice there that the response is directly proportionate to the actions of the people. Forsaking the Lord means that you don't have the Lord. And the Lord allows you to have that and He walks away too. It's directly proportional and it's always response. He doesn't forsake first. By no means. That's just not the way it works. It's always proportional to the sin committed. Okay, 2 Kings 17:18

*18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone.*

37:28 Notice here that the anger of God is paired with God removing the people out of His sight. Now you have to understand that in the OT, that there's kind of a constant refrain that appears. And it's this idea that when God causes His face or His presence to shine on people, then they will be blessed. And when God removes His face from them, when He removes them from out of His sight, then they are not blessed. They are cursed. And the reason is actually quite simple. When you have the presence of the Author of Life in your life, you have life. But when the Author or Life removes His presence from you, then you don't



have life. It's kind of like sunshine. If you don't have sunshine upon a plant, you don't get photosynthesis, you don't get all that, because there's a dependent relationship that the creation has upon the Creator. You have to have the sunlight. And that's why in the text in the OT you see this constantly, you know, God's face shining upon people and that brings blessing. Just like in Numbers 6:24-27

**24** The LORD bless you and keep you;  
**25** the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
**26** the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.  
**(27** So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.)

This idea of God's face shining upon people, is the idea of blessing people. It's the idea of blessing people. It's just what happens when you are standing in all-consuming light. You receive light and you receive life. You receive abundance and you thrive. Okay, Deuteronomy 23:14

*14 Because the LORD your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.*

Again, this idea is that if God turns away from you, then you are outside of his presence. You are not benefiting from His life-giving presence. And so this captures that idea of divine withdrawal – God just removing His protective grace. Okay, Deuteronomy 31:17-18

*17 My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. In that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?' 18 On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods.*

So, it says right there that God hides His face on account of, or because of the evil they have done. God is always responding proportionally when he determines...well, that's what judgement is. Is when God responds proportionally...when the people turn to other gods, they're by default saying that they don't want the True God, and so God turns His face from them...in other words, He just gives them what they want. They are not seeking His face, and He honors that decision. And that's a way of describing God's anger. My anger will be kindled against them...How so? Well, when I turn my face from them. And again, He's just withdrawing His protective grace; it's defined withdrawal. That's Greg's thesis. Okay, Isaiah 59:1-2

*1 See, the LORD's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. 2 Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*

Okay so we get a little deeper here and into a little bit more detail here. What causes God to hide His face from us? Our sins. It's not because God isn't capable of saving us or listening...no! Our sins separate us from God. Because sin, by definition, is saying no to the presence of God. And assuming that God gives us some sort of significant free will – which I think He does. When we say 'yes' to sin, we say 'no' to God, and God honors the decision. He gives us what we want. And, my goodness, that's a bad place to be, is for God to give you what you want. But notice again the theme. Your sins have hidden His face from you. Okay, your sins have done that. Psalm 89:46

*46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?*

This is a fascinating passage. I think it really proves the point here. 'How long will your wrath burn like fire?' Well, what is God's wrath? Well, God hiding Himself. Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? This burning fire of God's wrath is just Him removing His presence, hiding His face. Divine withdrawal. Okay, Psalm 104:29-30. Listen to this,

*29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.*

42:38 Did you catch that? 'When you hide your face, they are dismayed.' Because again, when the sunlight is taken away from plants, from vegetation, the vegetation goes into destruction mode. It withers away. Same with people. We have to have the presence of God. We have to have His protective grace. And when our sins...when we say 'yes' to sin, we're saying 'no' to God's protective grace. And He just withdraws, and when God withdraws, those boundaries that He set up, those gracious protections, they are removed, and then chaos ensues. That's divine wrath. Galatians 6:7 I think really captures, I think, this intrinsic nature of sin and judgement, and sin and consequence.

*7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.*

I think that really does capture the idea. Proverbs 26:27 does as well.

*27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling.*

I think this passage really captures that aikido idea. You know, aikido just returns the aggressor's force upon the aggressor. And however much the aggressor is plotting against his victim, is the amount of force that they will have rebound upon them. So if you dig a pit, you're gonna fall into the pit. How far will you fall? Well, it depends on how big you've dug it, right? If you've dug a ten foot pit for your enemy, well *you're* going to fall ten foot down into that pit. It just depends on how deep you've dug it. Proverbs 22:8

*8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail.*

Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity. I like this metaphor of...it's a farming metaphor. You know, you put a seed of injustice in the ground and you let that grow, destruction or calamity will be the result. Its fruit. That really captures the intrinsic of sin and consequence. Proverbs 8:36

*36 but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death."*

Yeah. That's a pretty good example here. Okay so....Hosea 8:7

*7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads, it shall yield no meal; if it were to yield, foreigners would devour it.*

This idea of sowing and reaping once more is really prevalent in the text of scripture. Here's one, Hosea 10:13

*13 You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your power and in the multitude of your warriors,*

Okay. Let's jump to Psalm 7...yeah, 7:12-16

*12 If one does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and strung his bow;*

**13** he has prepared his deadly weapons,  
making his arrows fiery shafts.  
**14** See how they conceive evil,  
and are pregnant with mischief,  
and bring forth lies.  
**15** They make a pit, digging it out,  
and fall into the hole that they have made.  
**16** Their mischief returns upon their own heads,  
and on their own heads their violence descends.

That last line really captures it. 'Their mischief returns upon their own heads, and on their own heads their violence descends.' Okay, this is that aikido idea. Jeremiah 2:17-19. I'm just going to read a few more verses here. Um...Jeremiah 2:17-19

**17** Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, while he led you in the way? **18** What then do you gain by going to Egypt, to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria, to drink the waters of the Euphrates? **19** Your wickedness will punish you, and your apostasies will convict you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Did you catch that line? 'Your wickedness will punish you?' Sin is its own punishment, if you think about it. Because again, James is correct; 'sin, when it's fully grown brings forth death.' Sin becomes its own punishment. And when God hands you over to your own sin, like Paul talks about in Romans 1; handing you over, then the result is catastrophe. Isaiah 33:11-12

**11** You conceive chaff, you bring forth stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you.  
**12** And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."

So, 'you conceive chaff, you bring forth stubble, your breath is a fire that will consume you.' Again, that rebound effect, that aikido idea. Last verse here...Isaiah 9:18-20

**18** For wickedness burned like a fire, consuming briars and thorns; it kindled the thickets of the forest, and they swirled upward in a column of smoke. **19** Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land was burned, and the people became like fuel for the fire; no one spared another. **20** They gorged on the right, but still were hungry, and they devoured on the left, but were not satisfied; they devoured the flesh of their own kindred;

Greg Boyd actually makes some comments on this passage. He says,

*"It is evident that the wrath of the Lord spoken of, (in that verse 19), is nothing other than God allowing wickedness to do what wickedness naturally does, namely burn itself up and consume itself"*

So all of these are consistent with the way Paul describes the wrath of God in Romans chapter one. It's simply God giving people over to their sin. And the payment of sin is death, Paul says. And this makes sense. You are paid a wage that is directly proportional to the content of the work you produce. And that's how Paul can call death the wage of sin. And to be handed over to your sin, is to fall deeper into that spiral of sin. Because in the end, it just sadly leads to nowhere good. Sin when it fully develops, when it fully matures, it just simply brings forth death.

49:19 Okay, so let's close up with a few conclusions. The first thing I would say is that, a careful reflection on wrath helps us see that God is not an angry tyrant. God's wrath cannot be

reduced down to that. In fact, what it seems to be the case, especially in those texts that we just looked at, is God just handing people over to what they have chosen. And you get that sense that God is grieved by this. God doesn't like this. God doesn't like what people have chosen. But He hands it over – He hands their choices over to them. And that would make sense because if we say that God has given us significant free will, then that means He has to allow us to reap the benefits of our own choices. If He was always saving you from your consequences, then do you really have free choice? And that's something that Greg and others have mentioned too, when it comes to free will. And the answer is 'no'. I mean, if God saves you from your consequences, then you're never allowed to experience the results of your choices, and you don't really have free will at that point. But, if God has given us significant free will, then – you know allowing us to experience consequences of our choices, whether good or bad – it's just something that has to follow. But in no case, is God an angry tyrant. God, if anything, He's a grieving parent who doesn't like what His children decide to do in many cases. But, suffice it to say, He is a God who grieves, He is a God who I think looks down upon people, upon us and is thinking '*What are you doing? Don't you know that sin brings forth your own destruction?*' Yeah - so, I think this is the best way to think of wrath.

The second thing I would say is, God's not mean. He's just, and He gives people what they choose. It's just simply impossible for a person to have a thriving life, if they live without God. I mean, one might as well say that, two plus two equals seventeen. God is the Author of Life. And if you say 'no' to God, then you say 'no' to life. And God wants us to say 'yes' to Him. But it seems to me that God will eventually just give people what they want. He will allow us to have a final 'no'.

Third thing here is really the last thing. Is that, we've talked a lot about judgement. But again, I don't want us to forget about the context of all of this. Don't forget the most important thing here...is that God has a plan of redemption. Humanity, indeed may be in a dire situation. Humanity might be unfaithful. Humanity may have chosen not to stay in allegiance to God. But, God is faithful. And when He promised that He would use Abraham's family to bless the nations, He meant it. God will carry through with His promise. And even if Abraham's family ends up being like everybody else – unfaithful, God is always faithful. And even if there is no one righteous - not even one person. Not a Jewish person or not a gentile person; even if that's the case...well, God is going to find a faithful Israelite to rescue the world. He *will* find a Son of Abraham to rescue the sons and daughters of Adam. And we're going to be getting into that in the next few episodes. I'm really excited about that because that's the direction Paul is taking us. He's going to show the dire situation of humanity, but he's also going to show the magnificent grace of the Almighty.

53:18 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.