

The Vengeance of the Lord

Revelation 18:9-24

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Well, if you look in your bulletin, it says the scripture reading was Romans 2. And that was my mistake too. Not that Romans 2 isn't a good passage. We're going to be turning to Romans 2 here in a moment. But I wanted Robert to read that passage in Revelation 18, which is our text on the subject, the vengeance of the Lord, because I wanted you to get an idea of this context here, which is very negative as you saw. A cause for much anguish, much sorrow, negative things, destruction. But what this The passage is relating is the vengeance of the Lord, His vengeance against those who spend their lives connected and tied to this world so much that they refuse to seek the Lord, to seek His truth, to seek righteousness. You remember Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, don't worry so much about what you have, what you wear, what you eat, **but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.** And so we see an example here of God's vengeance. And you know the word vengeance, you know what it's talking about, it's talking about revenge. In the book of Romans chapter 12, God instructs us by the Apostle Paul as believers to not seek personal revenge, even against those who do us wrongly. And you know why? Number one, vengeance belongs to God. And when we seek personal revenge, we're in essence trying to rob God of something that belongs to him alone. Now think about that. Will a man rob God? You know, people, they go back to, I think it's the book of Malachi or Micah, I can't remember which one. Will a man rob God? And they talk about tithing and stuff like that. My friend, if you don't know Christ, if you don't know how God saves sinners through Christ and are well-versed in God's mercy and grace towards you in Christ, Your whole life is an attempt to rob God, even in your religion.

And what we have here in this passage from verse nine, I'm not gonna go through and read all these things again. Robert did a good job with it. What it's talking about is the things that men and women by nature are tied to and connected with by which they gain comfort and peace and ultimately think that God is blessing them. All of these things. And they're symbolic. I mean, you can talk about every one of these in a spiritual aspect. Merchants, he talks about. They buy and they sell and they get gain. And usually, based upon natural reasoning, ungodly reasoning, Like the man in Luke chapter 12, oh, the Lord's really blessing me. I put \$100 in the stock market and I made \$10,000. What they don't realize, none of us now by nature, what we don't realize is that without Christ, without salvation by God's grace, without glorifying God, what we see as blessings will end up being nothing but curses. and they'll be removed. All these are symbolic of the merchandise and the treasures of works based free will religion which will end in death. You may fare sumptuously like the rich man in hell on this earth. But my friend, without a righteousness that answers the demands of God's law and justice, you will be a subject of his vengeance. Justly so. Another reason God forbids us to take personal vengeance is because our vengeance is usually selfish and sinful and unfair. But God always judges according to truth and righteousness. His vengeance is not just God throwing a temper tantrum. It's not God in emotional anger getting back at people. It is His justice. Turn to Romans chapter 2. And look at this passage. Verse 1. I'll just read a few verses here. It says, **therefore**, and what happens here is the Apostle Paul is acting like a good prosecuting attorney who's bringing evidence against natural man who deserves nothing but God's justice and wrath and hatred. And when

men and women judge themselves to be good or to be righteous apart from Christ, God requires righteousness. Well, where's righteousness to be found? Only in Christ. Nowhere else. You're not going to make it in God's court of justice based on your works. Now you may think that you're working hard and doing good and God's blessing you, but without a perfect righteousness that can only be found in Christ, his righteousness imputed, the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, all you will receive is the vengeance of the Lord, wrath of God.

And so he says in verse one of Romans two, **therefore thou art an inexcusable old man, whosoever thou art that judges**. When you look at any other person and you make this statement, I want you to listen to me. When you look at another individual, whoever it is, and you say, well, that person is an evil person and deserves to go to hell. Unless you're found before God in Christ, you have just judged yourself worthy of damnation. Did you know that? Now think about that when you think of the vengeance of the Lord. You know why? You may say, well, I'm not as bad as that guy or that lady, but you're still a sinner. And the only way you're gonna pass judgment is to be found before God washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ. Standing before God in His righteousness, not your own. So you're inexcusable **whosoever thou art that judges**. Now, I know a lot of people will tell you they don't judge. Well, they're lying. We judge everything. The problem is, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit giving us a new heart and bringing us to faith in Christ, all our judgments are from a deceptive, wicked heart. He says, **for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself**. If you say that somebody's going to hell because they're a sinner, you've just condemned yourself because you're a sinner too. If you judge that somebody's going to heaven because of their works, you've just condemned yourself because they're not gonna make it by their works and neither can you. **For thou that judgest doest the same things**. Now you may not do the same thing exactly on earth, that another person does, but you're still a sinner. I'm a sinner. And what do sinners need? We need God's grace. We need mercy.

Look at verse two. **But we're sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things**. God doesn't lie. When God makes a judgment, it's always according to straight truth. We can't always say that about our human courts, can we? People are accused and excused for political reasons, for social reasons, whatever. But in God's court of justice, it's always according to truth. So that when God brings judgment down upon these who follow, hold your finger there at Romans too, because I'm coming back to it. But listen to verse nine of Revelation 18, **the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and live deliciously with her**. Who's the her there? That's the great harlot, Babylon, false religion. And it says, they **shall bewail her, lament for her when they shall see the smoke of her burning**. She's gonna burn up in the vengeance of the Lord. Verse 10, **standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, alas, alas, that great city Babylon**. False religion. Works-based religion, free will religion. That's what it is. **For in one hour is thy judgment come**. Verse 11, **the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her**. They made money off of her. There's big money in that, see? Because it's so popular. **For no man buyeth their merchandise anymore**. Nobody's gonna buy what they're selling. In this day, now what day is he talking about? He's talking about the day of the coming of the Lord for vengeance. This is when Christ is going to come in the cloud, and that day, everything is going to be exposed and revealed for what it is. There'll be no lies, there'll be no deception. It'll all be out there in the open. Those who are buying into false religion today, they won't buy into it anymore, because they'll see it's worthless. It's worthless. **The merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn**, verse 11, **over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore**. And then it goes down through and describes her merchandise as the things that draw people's

affections. Gold, silver, precious stones, silk, all of these, ivory, brass, marble, cinnamon, odors, ointments, things that smell good to man, but are stench in the nostrils of God. You know, in the tabernacle there was a great picture of Christ in the coals that burned in the altar, of the smoke going up, and that represented Christ and his merits and his prayers going up for the people of God, and it was a sweet-smelling savor to God. But false religion is a stench in his nostrils. Why? Because it doesn't glorify and honor him. And it says here, ***what she and her followers had brought them pleasure on earth is now departed***. That's what it is, verse 14. ***The fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all***. Gone. And so what follows now is sorrow and tears. Their hope has gone up in smoke.

Look back at Romans 2, look at verse 3. ***Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*** Now here's the fact. If God ever gave any of us What we deserve and what we've earned, it would be his vengeance, his justice, damnation. And so we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, again washed clean from all of our sins by his blood, standing before God in His righteousness imputed, so that God will not lay anything to our charge, the Bible says. ***Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It's God that justifies. Who can condemn us? It's Christ that died***. We who are described in those scriptures, we're to live our lives in thanksgiving and gratitude for the mercy and the grace and the unconditional love that God has shown to us. Because I look at those who are lost in their sins, who are deceived, and I say like the old guy said, I can't remember his name, and I don't even know if he was a believer. But he made this statement, and it's the right statement. There but for the grace of God, Go I. Do you understand that? Do you really believe that?

Well, look at verse four of Romans two. ***Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance***. False religion and these merchants and these kings who follow the great harlot, Babylon, They think they're partaking of the goodness of God with their material blessings and their religious thoughts and ideas. They really do. They think, well, God's really being good to me. Well, my friend, unless you see the reality of God's justice, the reality of our sins and what we deserve and what we've earned, and the reality of God's free grace of salvation in Christ, you haven't even come close to seeing the goodness of the Lord. Because if you do, That's a revelation from God by the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel that will bring you to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. And it's the goodness of God that leads you to repentance. It's not God's vengeance. You know, they won't repent under God's vengeance. We're gonna see that in the last chapters of Revelation. There'll be no repentance. Now they will bow. They'll bow because they're forced to bow. But the kind of repentance that God brings His children to, they don't come to. Because that kind of repentance is gospel repentance. That's the repentance that causes us to look to Christ and Him alone and see Him as precious in our sights. Precious. Under you therefore which believe, Peter, Christ is precious. Oh, my soul. Don't you wanna cling to Christ for salvation? He's your only refuge.

That sermon that Robert was talking about at nine o'clock, that was the TV sermon. It was from Isaiah 28. It's called Christ, Our Sure Refuge, Our Sure Foundation. But that's what that passage in Isaiah 28. He's talking about the unbelievers in Judah, the southern kingdom, who had made lies their refuge. And that's what people do by nature. They'll make lies their refuge. They'll have assurance of salvation in their profession, in their baptism, in their aisle walking, in their decision making, all of these things. Their religion, their tithing, And all of that's

a refuge of lies. And that's what he's saying over here in Revelation 18. Everything that they depended upon and sought as being good and holy and righteous, it's a lie. Oh, but the goodness of God.

Look at verse five of Romans 2. ***But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurous unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*** That's God's vengeance that's described in Revelation 18. And it says in verse six, ***who will render to every man according to his deeds.*** Who's he talking about there? You mean God's gonna give me according to my deeds? No, because I'm a sinner saved by grace. He's talking about those who are deceived, who have made refuge their lives and he says to them that ***who by patient Continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality eternal life.*** Here's what he's saying. Here If you're seeking righteousness by the law by your works You will gain it if you keep the law perfectly. But do you keep the law perfectly? Do I? Do any of us? Well, doesn't the Bible say that ***all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,*** Romans 3:23? Yes, it does. Salvation's for sinners. If you can keep the law perfectly, I'm gonna tell you something, you don't need salvation, you don't need grace, you don't need Christ if you can keep the law perfectly. But you can't. And you won't, neither will I. Verse eight, ***but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath.*** Now that's us by nature, right there. How are we going to be delivered from that, see? Verse 9, ***tribulation, trouble, anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, the Jew first, also the Gentile, but glory and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for there's no respect of persons with God.*** So that's the bottom line on all of this. The Bible says in the book of Galatians three and verse 10. ***For as many as are of the works of the law,*** Now that means a person who's trying to be saved, trying to be forgiven, trying to be righteous based upon their law keeping. ***For as many as are of the works of law are under the curse.*** Why? ***For it's written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in All things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*** If you're of the works of the law, trying to be saved by your works, thinking salvation's conditioned on you, you have got it all to do. But let me tell you something. If you tried to start today, you're already in the negative.

So look at verse 11 of Galatians 3. ***But that no man is justified by the law in God's sight, it's evident.*** Don't you see that? To be justified, to be forgiven of all our sins on that just ground, to be declared righteous by my law keeping, well, that's evident. Look at me. Look at you. You say, well, I'm not as bad as some. Well, that's OK. I'm glad you're not. But you're still not going to be justified by deeds of the law. It says, ***the just shall live by faith.*** Now what does that mean? Does that mean that my believing justifies me? No. What is it to live by faith? It's to live by the grace of God in Christ, who is our justification, who is our righteousness, who is our forgiveness. That's the whole thing.

Now go back to Revelation 18. Now he's going through here, he lists all of these things about how riches come to naught, what man seeks for in building his great cities comes to naught. Verse 19, ***they cast dust on their heads and cried weeping and wailing, saying, alas, alas, that great city wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness. For in one hour,*** doesn't take long, does it? ***One hour, she's made desolate.*** When God's vengeance comes, it won't take long. But look at verse 20. Now here's something. In all of this negative, description of sorrow and destruction and vengeance, look at what he says in verse 20. ***Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.*** Isn't that something? Now vengeance belongs

to God. The destruction of Babylon, which is such a source of sorrow and horror for the kings and merchants of the earth at this time, is cause for great rejoicing for the people of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they're symbolized by the holy apostles and prophets symbolizing the whole church and the truth. As Babylon spent much time and effort in building herself up with the riches of ungodly governments and false religion, she also spent a whole lot of time persecuting the true church. The holy apostles and prophets, men of God called and gifted to preach His word of grace in Christ, and by which called out and established his church, for God hath avenged you on her. Babylon's destruction is only God's just wrath against her sin, but also God's just vengeance upon her for her evil and her cruel treatment of the witness of Christ on this earth. Their testimony of Christ as the one and only true salvation from sin and from the wrath of God. The light of the gospel that reveals and exposes the deeds and the works of Babylon as being evil deeds. And we preach Christ the only ark of safety from the flood of God's vengeance. That's an affront to Babylon. That's an affront to her, she hates it. But oh my soul, let's be thankful for His grace towards His people, safe in Christ. And it's not telling people when it says rejoice, that we're gonna be happy over the destruction of people. It's telling us that we're going to give glory to God. God has a right to do this, folks. And God, not only does He have a right to do it, He is right in doing it. Can you get a hold of that? And so he goes on talking about Babylon being thrown with a great millstone cast into the sea. All of it, the light of her candle.

Look at verse 23. ***The light of a candle shall shine no more at all.*** Whatever light she had is gone. It's all darkness. But look at verse 24, he says, ***and in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*** The blood of prophets. What does that mean? She hated the truth. The truth is something she despised. Christ told his disciples, ***marvel not if the world hates you. It hated me before it hated you.*** You know why they hated the Lord? Because he told the truth. That's why. It wasn't because he healed people or fed people. It was because he told the truth. He told them this. Think about it. Here's Babylon, the Israel sought after righteousness by works of the law. She didn't find it because she sought it not by faith but by works of the law. To seek it by faith is to seek it in Christ. So there's Babylon. Christ came along and he told the people, he says, don't follow them. It's a road that leads to destruction. There's a lot of people on it now. Don't follow them unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you won't make it into heaven.

And then he went on to prove how the law that they trusted in would be their condemnation. That's the case. He said they're the blind leading the blind. They'll all fall in the ditch together. Get off the road that is broad that leads to destruction. And they hated it. So the blood of the prophets, they actually shed blood, physical blood here. Just about every one of the prophets were martyred. And you know the apostles were martyred. ***and of saints***, who are saints? Sinners saved by grace, sanctified by God in his grace through Christ, ***and all of them that were slain upon the earth.*** Well, Christ is the only hope of salvation for any sinner. It's his substitutionary work on the cross and the shedding of his precious blood as he bore the sins of God's chosen people in his own body on the tree. He took the vengeance of God for God's elect. Every bit of it now, not just part of it. He drank damnation dry. That cup of wrath. And he provided a complete payment for all the sins of his sheep and brought forth a perfect righteousness in which there is no flaw for his sheep. To reject him is to reject what he did. And it leaves the rejecter with no hope of salvation, no hope of forgiveness, no hope of righteousness, no hope of eternal life, only the vengeance of God. Vengeance belongs unto the Lord and he will do right. May the Lord bless his word to our hearts.