

Sent: 10/18/2017 9:58:59 PM Eastern Standard Time
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 1:18-32

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them! For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood what has been made, so that they are without excuse!"

Thus, begins the text of (and memory verses for) our lesson last nite! So why, one might ask, do these words--about the wrath of God-- follow what was an exceptionally positive message, last week, about the "good news" of the gospel of God? After stating the "gist" of his message in 1:1-17--that a righteous God is able to make sinners righteous before God through faith (a message that will he will deal with in more detail in 3:21-5:21) --Paul expounds (with 62 verses!) on the wretchedness of the human heart, and the divine wrath that rebellion brings! And by the time he's finished with his divine indictment (in 3:19-20), he claims that "every mouth will be closed and all the world may be accountable to God..."! Wow!

This message of God's wrath is not entirely new to Paul's Jewish readers! Moses is believed to have been the composer of the prayer of Psalm 90 which includes these words: "Lord, we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed (i.e., terrified!). You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence! For our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years with a sigh!"

And in our lesson last nite, the "sin problem" for all of mankind is seen as so serious that--three times, in Romans 1:23-28--Paul writes that God has "given them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...and degrading passions...and depraved minds to do that which is not proper..."! Human beings "putting aside the truth God has revealed in nature and putting in place their own perverted notions and activities," says Moo! Romans 1:24 says they "exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator"!

Paul specifically zeroes in on sexual sins, noting "women exchanging the natural function for that which is unnatural...and men burning in their desire for one another... committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error"! Could it be more graphic or speak more directly to the culture of our times?

Douglas Moo notes that Paul "sees in homosexual activity a particularly striking manifestation of the way in which human beings have twisted God's created intention into something quite different from what God ever intended"! And that the "fall into sin affects not just our affections and or actions but our thinking as well! Human beings now have minds that are incapable of consistently thinking about divine things in an accurate way," he asserts!

And yet there are 20 or so other less "notorious" or conspicuous sins that are listed in verses 29-31--that convict all of us, and that "ought not to be done"! And Paul seems to give equal or more condemnation to those who "give hearty approval to those who practice such things"!

And so, are we being too negative? Are we using "scare tactics"? Shouldn't we be more positive, and tolerant? Are we just giving ourselves--and God--a bad name, with "bad news"?

Well, not according to the apostle Paul! It's only through the recognition of our sin that we seek forgiveness and reconciliation with God! And it's only from hearing the "bad news"--in the Word of God--that we can fully understand, and appreciate, and live with the "good news"!

You all may be aware of a man named Jonathan Edwards, regarded as one of America's greatest preachers and philosophers--and his legendary sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"! He came from the line of Puritans and played a critical role in the "Great Awakening" that swept across Europe and America in the mid 1700's. It was the Great Awakening that "pulled away from ritual, ceremony, sacramentalism, and hierarchy...making Christianity intensely personal to the average person by fostering a deep sense of spiritual conviction, redemption, and by increasing introspection and a commitment to a new standard of personal morality"! (And these are not my words but, believe it or not, words taken from Wikipedia!)

Maybe we need a new "great awakening" today--in our lives, churches, and country!

Paul's writings make it clear that just as creation and the natural world reveals the "glory of God," it also reveals the reality of sin and depravity of mankind--and the resulting wrath of God! But there is more to the story...as we'll be getting into in the lessons ahead! Next week: Romans 2:1-29.

Have a great week, men!

Lowell