

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 3:07 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 2

In Romans 2 the Apostle Paul continues the theme he began in Romans 1:18-19 about the wretchedness of the human heart and the divine wrath that rebellion brings! In last week's lesson, covering Romans 1:18-32, Paul first focused on the sinfulness of "those immoral pagans" who, the way Douglas Moo describes it, "put aside the truth God has revealed in nature (through "general revelation") and put in place their own perverted notions and activities"! Romans 1:25 says they "exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator"! Sin that was so repugnant to God that He "gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...and degrading passions...and depraved minds to do those things which are not proper"!

But then, in 1:29-32, Paul lists 20 or so other less blatant (but much overlooked!) sins that should have convicted all his readers (and all of us as well!)--and must have made them wonder where Paul was going with this stuff!

And then, in last nite's lesson (in Romans 2), Paul really starts to "meddle"! He presents his case against the "religious moralists"--including the Jews--who loved to judge others (but didn't practice what they preached!), who thought themselves to superior to others, and prided themselves on keeping the "letter of the law," and "thought lightly" of the "kindness and tolerance and patience" of God! And they were "self-righteous"--minimizing God's moral standard by emphasizing "externals," and underestimating the depth of their own sinfulness!

Paul's "diatribe" against these "moralists" was not unlike what Jesus said in His "sermon on the mount," in Matthew 5, giving new meaning and setting a new standard for obeying God's law--and doing it from the heart! Among other things He equated "anger against a brother" as equivalent to murder, and "looking at a women with lust" as "already committing adultery with her in his heart"! And He told his listeners that unless their righteousness "surpassed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," they could not enter the kingdom of heaven!

The bottom line, according to Paul (and Jesus!) is that we're all sinners--Jews and Gentiles alike--and "fall short" of God's standard--and are in need of serious help! Their only hope, in effect, was an "out of court settlement"! Paul sums it up this way: "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law"! (Rom. 2:12)

But Paul's not finished! He specifically zeroes in on the moralist Jews in verses 17-29--noting that neither their heritage, nor their knowledge, nor would their ceremonies (and specifically "circumcision" protect them from God's judgment! And that a "true Jew" was one who was "one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not of the letter"! (2:29) and this is the way it was meant right from the beginning, when it was given! Deuteronomy 10:16 says: "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer!"

But then it's always been an issue of the heart! Jeremiah long ago wrote that the heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! Who can know it?" But the same Jeremiah

later wrote that "days are coming...when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ...and I will put My Law within them, and on their heart I will write it...For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more!" (Jeremiah 31:31-34) As Moo notes, while circumcision was indeed the seal of God's promise, inward faith alone was the source!

And that brings us to our memory verse for this lesson: Hebrews 10:1--"For the Law since it was only the shadow of things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer constantly year by year, make perfect those who draw near!"

In this lesson, like the one last week, and one more to come (2 weeks from now), Paul is "setting the stage" for the revelation of God's righteousness--which is imputed to us in Christ--by delineating the human dilemma! The sin problem! All people, Jews and Gentiles alike, need God's righteousness because of sin! And that's the "good news to come"! God's grace!

And that's also the "good news" of the Reformation, which we'll be celebrating next week--the 500th anniversary--on Halloween, ironically! Dr. Nigel Azer will be giving his take! And I'm sure we'll hear all about it from Jesse on this coming Sunday as well!

May God bless your week, men!

Lowell