

Romans Series, 9.3.06

God's Wrath, pt.1

Romans 1.18–32

Intro

- Quote in Hughes from B.Russell, p.32
- God's wrath is one of those subjects that repulses the mind of both believer & non-believer. It acts a huge stumbling block for some who haven't placed their faith in Christ; for believers it's like an embarrassing character flaw in friend...you try to overlook it and hope your other friends don't ask you about it...you shake your head in shame.
- Context: 1.18 – 3.20, Paul is bringing a huge indictment against all humanity that we are sinners. Paul's desire is to preach the Gospel/Good News. (Compare 1.17 & 3.21...1.18–3.20 is a paranthesis...there's a righteousness from God through faith, but there's also a wrath from God due to sin). The gospel isn't good news until you know the bad news. It is essential that people understand their need for Jesus shed blood is due to their sins...People must come to Jesus with a recognition they need forgiveness of their sin. Wanting to go to Heaven, finding purpose & experiencing God's love are all good reasons to be saved, but the reason Jesus died was b/c of our sin...we tend to share the good news w/o emphasizing the bad news.
- Context: He begins with the Gentiles, moves to the moralizers, then the self-confident Jews & finally to the whole human race. We all have a sin issue and fall under God's wrath.
- Read Text – 1.18
- “the wrath of God” – it isn't like our volatile temper...it isn't unreasonable anger...impulsive response...the word means a settled and abiding condition...controlled. It is a directed at “all godlessness & wickedness.”
 - How God directs His wrath – active & passive. The destruction of Ninevah (Nahum) is God's active wrath. Understand God

never does anything w/o giving warning & people ample time to repent (the history of Israel; New Orleans).

- Passive – “He gives them over” – 1.24, 26, 28. It’s God allowing sin & Satan to work themselves out in a person’s or country’s life...God says, “I’ll let you experience the fruit of your sin and maybe that will bring you to repentance.”
 - David & Bethsheba is an example of both God’s active & passive wrath/discipline. David committed coveted another man’s wife, committed adultery, & murdered the husband. He experienced the bitter fruit of passive wrath...God gave him over to his desires. Then, God sent a prophet who confronted David. David’s illegitimate son died and there was division in David’s house. He experienced God’s active wrath.
 - The story of the Prodigal Son is a story of passive wrath/discipline...the father wasn’t creating the pain, but his son’s sins were...it’s all for the purpose of bringing us back to God.
 - In essence, God removes the grace barrier around from God (Illustrate– it’s like you have anti–virus software; when you step outside & begin sinning the bubble burst/no anti–virus software...).
 - Passive wrath means He doesn’t intervene...he lets the natural course of events transpire w/o lifting a finger. Grace is God’s intentional intervention. Whereas, passive wrath is His intentional non–intervention.
 - His wrath (active & passive) has a purpose...to bring you back to Himself. It’s more than to show you who’s boss, but to cause you to repent...God’s always waiting to see if we repent...

The Foundation of God’s Wrath/Why God gives people/cultures over (these aren’t sequential & don’t all have to be in place)

- **Suppressing the truth – 1.18. “I don’t want to hear it!”**

- NLT: “Push the truth away”
- The idea of intentionally trying to keep something away; holding it down; it’s the idea of continual, aggressive striving against the truth. It’s a resistance against what is right.
- The person or country knows the truth but continues to embrace the wrong – abortion. Over 40 million.
 - Could it be that a reason there is an increase in the # of sexual predators is b/c we don’t protect the unborn. Could it be that God is saying, “Since you don’t protect your children – born & unborn – I won’t protect your born.”? In other word, God is allowing societal sin to run its course. In the hope, it will bring us to our knees.
 - Many other applications.
- **Knowing God but not honoring or thanking Him – 1.19–21. “I don’t care/big deal.”**
 - NLT: For the truth about God is known to them instinctively.^[b] God has put this knowledge in their hearts. 20From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.
 - This is the answer to the age old question, “How can God allow anyone to go to Hell if they haven’t heard of the Good News?”
 - People know it in their hearts. God has placed a sense of ...right & wrong; knowledge of God.
 - They can tell from nature – use simple example of pennies in my pocket (P.34 in Hughes)
 - Just as an artist reveals herself in what she paints, so the Divine Artist reveals himself in creation
 - The person/culture clearly sees God, but doesn’t put God in the place of honor, nor thanks Him for His goodness & mercy.
 - Like the neighbor that takes a neighbor’s child to the county fair. He pays for the child’s ticket, food and all his entertainment. The child never thanks him, but rather takes

advantage of the neighbor's goodness and constantly complains about the things the neighbor won't let him do – drink alcohol, ride a wild bull, stand behind a horse, etc. ...

- Many don't thank God, but only complain about all the restrictions.
- **Having a disdainful or flippant attitude toward God – 1.28. "I'm not afraid."**
 - "they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" – NLT: they refused to acknowledge God.
 - They did not consider God worthy of attention...He's not even in their thinking...He's not deemed worthy of consideration...it's not b/c they forgot or even intentionally trying not to consider Him, but they are so far from God he doesn't even have a place in their life.
 - Being raised with a group of friends 1st – 6th grades. You move away and don't see each other for 20 years...when you do you see the hardness of person b/c of sin...the tenderness & joy is replaced with hardness & indifference...they don't even want to talk about the past b/c it doesn't mean anything to them...who cares?
 - A calloused, "I'm not afraid of him" attitude.
- **Continuing in your sin and normalizing it – 1.32. "You're the one with the problem."**
 - NLT: They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.
 - I BELIEVE: This is the height of the unfolding of God's wrath...the full measure of sin running its course. The person knows the truth, but enjoys the sin & encourages others to give in.
 - Legalizing sin...recent CA legislative action

The “Giving over” Aspects of God’s Wrath/What God’s Passive Wrath Looks Like/When God allows sin to take its course

- Futile thinking & a darkened heart – 1.21
 - NLT: The result was that their minds became dark and confused.
 - The heart denotes the center of all moral & spiritual understanding and will...it’s the core...all moral judgment, intellect & reasoning power...
 - Haven’t you said to yourself after certain legislation, judges decisions, people’s personal choices, etc., “What were they thinking?...that doesn’t even make sense...”
 - An extreme example is John Mark Karr, who confessed to killing the Jon Benet Ramsey & yet it proved to be false
 - FBI’s #1 wanted suspect...the polygamist – Warren Jeffs.
 - President of Iran wanting to finish the job that Hitler started in exterminating the Jews.
 - Some of you are in close relationships with people that do some of the most bizarre, counter intuitive, self destructive things...
 - God gave them over to sin...
 - I hear people say all the time, “Where did common sense go...why can’t say this is right & this is wrong...? Where did common sense go? It was crowded out of the room by a darkened heart. It wasn’t accidental...it’s a form of ;God’s passive wrath.
 - Look at the beginning of v.21. Because we as a nation have not glorified God (placed him in the rightful place of honor & reverence...which is different than acknowledging him) nor thanked God (sincerely grateful attitude like that of a child to his parent) God is giving this nation over to a darkened heart. We’re unable to make morally & spiritually right decisions.
 - When we (individually & nationally) revolt against the light, we naturally drift into darkness.

- This is a big reason we must elect leaders who are morally & spiritually balanced...also pray for them.leaders the inability to make wise & right choices.
- This is also why we must be on the offensive in renewing our minds with God's truth...
- Worship the creation rather than the Creator – 1.22–23, 25
 - You don't know God as He really is b/c your heart is darkened.
 - Reduce God to our image and/or our understanding. Since He isn't to be feared, we form Him in our own image.
 - Many people grow far more attached to the creation rather than the Creator. For many God is boring and dry toast, but athletics, intellectual pursuits, relationships, work, false spirituality, etc. are fascinating & enthralling.
 - The creation usurps the Creator.
- All forms of sexual immorality – 1.24, 26–27
 - Paul is speaking in plain language about all form of sexual impurity – Heterosexual (v.24) & Homosexual (v.26).
 - God's all for proper sexual/physical relations
 - Wherever you see an ongoing increase in sexual immorality (individually/nationally) that is a clear sign that God is giving over a person/nation to their sin. The long term increase of homosexuality, fornication, pornography, legalized prostitution, child pornography, other forms of sexual immorality is a precise indicator of a culture given over by God.
 - Here is what I believe is happening in America. The cumulative effect of a nation that knows the truth (there is a God; He has told us what is right & wrong; he is to be worshipped; we are to follow His truth) yet doesn't glorify God is perversion (truth is twisted). These sins open the door for perversion – truth being twisted.
 - The reason that homosexuality is legitimized is b/c of the cumulative effect of suppressing the truth, not glorifying God, knowing the truth and doing nothing with it, etc. Mass

- sin opens the door for mass perversion (you don't see things straight).
- Severe consequences – we don't know what it is, but it seems obvious a part of it are std's.
 - A depraved mind – 1.28–31
 - Play on words: Since they did not see fit to honor God, God gave them an unfit mind.
 - Depraved – a mind corrupted so that is an untrustworthy guide.
 - “They have become filled” – means their actions had become permanent character traits; the listed sins are not deeds of impulse, but the sins of a long formed character.
 - All sorts of destructive behavior borne out of a depraved mind...again we see the importance of a renewed mind.

Summary: Let there be no doubt, God's wrath is upon America. BUT, don't equate God turning us over is the same as God turning away...God has not turned away...God turns us over to our sin, so we'll turn away from our sin & turn to Him.

God's wrath isn't like an angry father chasing a rebellious child & shouting at the top of his lungs, “I'm going to get you because you make me so mad.” But rather, it's like a loving father chasing a wayward child & declaring with deep affection, “I am going to get you because I love you so much.”

The Way Out/So What Do We Do?

- There is so much, but I want to simplify it to Jesus' words – Matt.5.13–16. In all your relationships and by your very existence, “Be salt & Be light.”
- In the natural, just by their very existence, salt & light are fulfilling their purpose. To every Christian, senior adult, invalid who is living a life that is honoring to God, your very existence is redeeming this culture...even to every Christian a vegetative state, their very

existence is redeeming the culture. When a follower of Christ's life ends, a light ceases to burn and a grain of salt is removed.

- Quote, p.41 in Hughes
- To those of you –
 - Who suppress the truth;
 - Know there is a God, but don't honor or thank him
 - Flippant attitude towards God
 - Those enjoying your sin & encouraging others to participate...the Lord says repent
 - Repentance is a change of mind...you change your mind, you'll change your actions...it's also filling your mind with God's truth...
 - This is the word for our nation too!
- You can't enjoy the full extent of the Good News, until you know the full extent of the Bad News!