

May 18, 2014

“The Bad News”

Romans 1:18-3:20 [1:18-25, 2: 1-8, 3:10, 19-20]

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen...

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness...

As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous— not even one..."

Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

We have look at the Good News (Romans 1:16-17), that is, the Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work saving everyone who believes. It is the Good News that tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This righteousness is accomplished by faith. Salvation is a gift offered by God to everyone and anyone so that we will not perish but have eternal life when we accept by faith the Good News of Christ and His sacrifice for sin.

Verse 18 begins with the word “but”. Ever notice how the smallest words in the Bible have big meaning. Paul is saying there is good news but there is also bad news.

(v18) But (“But” while God has offered this gift of salvation by faith) God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

AMP refers to this anger as, “God's [holy] wrath *and* indignation” (righteous anger)

Just as God makes us righteous by faith, so God shows His righteous anger to those who have turned away from the Creator. Every person without exception knows either God's saving power or God's holy wrath – His love or His displeasure, His forgiveness or His judgment.

That is what the Greek word for “anger” means here; justifiable wrath that implies punishment.

This anger of God is not a certain feeling or attitude of God toward us, but the effect of sin. It is the inevitable result of sin. In other places Paul warns...

Galatians 6:7-8

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as there is an effect of faith there is an effect of sin – the anger of God.

Martin Luther once wrote, “In Christ ‘God is love.’ Outside Christ, ‘Our God is a consuming fire.’”

“God has created a moral order in which sin is its own punishment and destruction... the divine wrath means that God gives men up to the consequences of their rebellion and misdeeds.” - William Greathouse

We would not and should not expect that a holy and just God would simply be a bystander and spectator while the people He created pile up and rejoice in their sins.

Because God is God, His wrath is a terrible reality. But wrath is not hate. Hate is unjust; God's anger is just. Hate seeks to destroy; wrath forgives. Wrath is the form love takes with those who oppose love. God is offering acquittal, but those who refuse to accept it are condemned, just as it would be in our court or judicial system.

Paul says that this righteous anger of God is being revealed from heaven against sin (the Greek word means morally, wrongfulness of character, life or act) and wickedness. While these can be distinguished from each other they are not separated from each other, since they both come from the refusal to glorify God as God. (Romans 1: 18-21)

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.

#### Psalms 19:1-4

The heavens proclaim the glory of God.  
The skies display his craftsmanship.  
Day after day they continue to speak;  
night after night they make him known.  
They speak without a sound or word;  
their voice is never heard.  
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,  
and their words to all the world.

The truth about God is obvious to every human being. God has given a general revelation of Himself through His creation, and every heart longs for God – though they may not put in to those words, every heart long to be filled. God's sovereignty implanted evidence of His own existence in the heart of every person. Therefore, all are without excuse. Yet, sinful people that we are we suppress this truth.

Paul announces this wrath upon sinners because he is laying the groundwork for declaring God's righteousness that he will present from 3:21- 8:39. In order to seek God help, it is not enough to know it is available; one must also be convinced that they desperately need it. Admitting sin that deserves punishment is the first phase of salvation, for only the one who knows they are lost, will turn to God for His grace to be saved. This is why Paul shares this bad news, for there would be no need for good news, if there were not bad news.

What is the reason for God's wrath... perhaps not what you think, for the reason God's righteous anger is poured out on sinful people is because they have refused the

knowledge of God offered to them by the Creator. Sin and wickedness can be traced back to one fundamental cause and it is not found in the field of morals but rather all perversion of life comes from a perversion of faith. (v20-21)

Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.

They can clearly see through creation God's invisible qualities:

1. His eternal power - People are aware of their dependence upon a Power which presides over their existence. And when they consider their temporary existence, this power they perceive is eternal.
2. His divine nature – this eternal power they perceive is God, that is, what is clearly seen is that God is God and not man. Creation does not provide the key to its own existence no matter how much time and money scientist spend trying to find it. Nevertheless, Paul is not attempting to prove God's existence. The point Paul goes on to make is that the sins he mentions in this chapter are not those of people who do not believe in God, but of those who refuse to honor God as God.

Yes, they knew God, [every person is conscious of God's existence, power, and divine nature by general revelation] but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. We were created for no other reason than to exalt God, but refused.

This is the root of our sinful predicament. There is no excuse for not knowing God. He is revealed in creation; Paul is not describing a knowledge through creation that can save, but a knowledge that simply recognizes the existence of God, but refuses to seek Him, worship Him or give Him thanks, denying God's existence.

“Paul portrays the inevitable downward spiral into sin. First people reject God; next they make up their own ideas of what a god should be and do; then they fall into sin - sexual sin, greed, hatred, envy, murder, fighting, lying, bitterness, gossip. Finally they grow to hate God and encourage others to do so. God does not cause this steady progression toward evil. Rather, when people reject Him, He allows them to live as they choose. God gives them up or commits them to experience the natural consequences of their sin. Once caught in the downward spiral, no one can pull himself or herself out. Sinners must trust Christ alone to put them on the path of escape.”

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This sin is not new it goes back to the original temptation and the first sin of the first human beings; and it is this: that we don't need to acknowledge or worship God we can be our own gods. We can make life work without God. [Kids section of Newsday this past Wednesday offered their suggestions on Parenting Books. One was called, “Growing Up Godless: A Parent's Guide To Raising Kids Without Religion.” The author and Texas mom Deborah Mitchell writes about how parents can raise ethical, intelligent,

children without prayer, houses of worship or a higher power. She also blogs about raising Children without religion.]

Suppressing the truth, refusing to acknowledge God, ambitious to make life work without God, and encouraging others to do the same just as Paul speaks about in our text today.

The consequences of this religious perversion is moral corruption. The righteous anger of God is evident in the havoc we see in this world or the havoc you see in your life; and it's because of the refusal to acknowledge God as God.

But Paul knew there would be those who would think, "Yeah, that's what those sinful worldly people are like, I'm glad I'm not like them. I'm not lost, nor do I need a Savior." So Paul writes this in [2:1-4](#) & [17-24](#)

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

By judging others you are just as bad and you prove you are without excuse, for judging proves you know what is right. Just as the person who, "Suppress the truth by their wickedness;" has "no excuse," so is the one who condemns others, yet does the same things. The sinfulness of the human heart is revealed in its tendency to condemn others for what it permits in itself. The self appointed judge is doing the same thing as the one he condemns, that is, "they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks.... Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools." (1:21-22)

Behind all other sins lies the sin of idolatry, which reveals the human ambition to put self in the place of God. That's what we do when we judge and condemn others. The Pharisee lurks in each of us:

Luke 18:11

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else.'

We have been given moral discernment not to judge others, but to judge ourselves, that we might turn from our sins, and turn back to God.

Romans 3:10

As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous— not even one."

Romans 3:19-20 THE MESSAGE

This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place! And it's clear enough, isn't it, that we're sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everybody else? Our involvement with God's revelation doesn't put us right with God. What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else's sin.

Everyone stands guilty before a holy God. Human nature is corrupt. Human motives are impure. The Greek word is translated "depraved" and means "not standing the test." The term was commonly used of metals in which refiners would find impurities. We are without excuse. We are incapable of saving ourselves. This "bad" news is a necessary part of the good news.