

Over the Line

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Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

- I. Did you ever wonder why God did not send the children of Israel into the promised land with the mission to convert the heathen of the land?
 - A. Their mission was to kill them all – not to preach to them or try to convert them to believers.
 - B. The skeptics and non-thinkers simply attribute that fact to God’s arbitrary will and believe that God did the people of the land a great injustice.
 - C. But God in heaven is a just God and longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance.
 1. God never changes, so He has always been this way.
 2. He was longsuffering with those people and only sentenced them to die when there was no longer any possibility of making them understand and turn to God.
 - D. The same is true of the world before the flood.
 - E. The same is true of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain.
 1. Even though Jesus said this:

Matthew 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

2. We have to understand that God would have spared that city if there had been 10 people there that could be called righteous – which was the number of people in Lot’s immediate family.
 3. If they could have seen the works that Jesus did, with the knowledge they had of the God of Israel, they would have believed.
 4. But the sodomites of the city would not have repented because they were beyond the reach of the light.
- II. All this teaches us something very important – there is a boundary where the grace of God ends and there is no longer any hope of return.
 - A. This is not because God cannot reach them, but because they have made it impossible for themselves to understand.
 - B. There is a point where the mind becomes so corrupted with lies and twisted thinking that it is impossible to see the light of God.
 - C. Noah preached righteousness for 120 years while the ark was being prepared and not one single soul in the entire world believed him except his immediate family.
- III. The roadmap to this reprobate and depraved state of mind and heart is plainly laid out in the Bible.

Romans 1:21-22 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

- A. These are the people who claim to know God but do not glorify Him as God, but begin to imagine God to be more like themselves.

2 Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

- B. The previous verses in this chapter show us that these same people practice a “sinning religion” where they have all the fleshly traits of a sinner, but yet claim to be a child of God.
- C. They also “profess themselves to be wise” and cannot be corrected or instructed from the Bible or any other source – including God himself.
- D. They do not “walk after the Spirit” but “after the flesh.”
- E. But they are sure they are saved and on their way to heaven and they support one another in their delusion and exclude, ostracize, and persecute anyone who disagrees with them.

Romans 1:24-25 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, ...

- F. People with this kind of mind and heart and attitude God gives up.
- G. They have changed the truth of God into a lie...
 - 1. In their mind, the truth is a lie and their lies are the truth.
 - 2. They call evil good and good evil now and that is how they understand and judge everything and everyone else.
 - 3. No one, including God, can now reason with them about truth and righteousness and even the nature and attributes of God.
 - 4. Everything is upside down and backwards with them.
 - 5. The foundations are destroyed and there is no place to meet with them to reason or discuss anything pertaining to these matters.
 - 6. Anything you say to them concerning sin, judgment, and righteousness is understood by them entirely backwards and upside down.
- H. God gives them up to uncleanness and stops reasoning and dealing with them – and their foolish heart is darkened – no more light and whatever they ingest from that point on is done in darkness, without God and wide open to devils.

Romans 1:26-27 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

- I. When God gives them up they are given to vile affections.
 - 1. This is unnatural affections, which include sodomy and all other kinds of sexual perversions.
 - 2. Because their affections are not on God or holy things they set their affections on things of this world without any limits or restraints.
 - 3. This leads quickly to the complete madness which we are seeing in our world right now.

Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

- J. They refuse to retain God in their knowledge – they want to pretend that He does not even exist and then act accordingly.
 - 1. These people are unreachable – they are lost and condemned and have put themselves beyond the reach of God’s grace.
 - 2. The grace of God has appeared to them, but they have rejected it and spit upon it.
 - 3. They have cut off and blockaded every avenue by which God can speak to their heart and mind.
 - 4. So God steps away from them and gives them over to their own stubborn, selfish, deceived, reprobate mind that will lead them to swift self-destruction.
- K. And remember, that all this started with a “sinning religion” which made it possible to continue in sin, or be under the dominion of sin, and still claim to be righteous in the sight of God.

IV. Now the important issue for the true Christian is this: we cannot know for sure who has crossed this line and who has not.

- A. We can only look at the outward appearance and listen to the words that come out of their mouths, but we cannot see what is in their deepest heart or what is really going on in their mind.
- B. They may display all the evidence of being a total reprobate, but there may still be a spark in there somewhere that we cannot see.
- C. Surely we have all known sinners that we thought to be hopeless cases, but we have seen them come to the light and be gloriously saved and living for God and soldiers of the cross.
- D. So it is not our business to judge who is a reprobate and who is not, but to preach the Gospel to every creature until the day Jesus takes us home.
- E. But we do know that it is a fact that there are people who are reprobates and that there is no reasoning with them and no reaching them for God.
 - 1. However, knowing this fact does not give us the liberty or authority to pick and choose who we reach out to with the word of life.
 - 2. It simply explains to us why some will not ever listen and will never be saved.
- F. It is also a solemn warning to all about the danger of being lost and beyond the reach of the light of God.
 - 1. It should be something that we warn sinners about – that if they fool around too long and cross too many boundaries in their stubborn, selfish pursuit of their sin they could find themselves in the darkness from which there is no escape.

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

- G. The way God deals with the hearts of men is way above our heads.

Romans 11:33-34 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

- H. Our duty is to just occupy until He comes and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, to hold forth the word of life, and be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, preach the gospel, be instant in season and out of season, to strengthen the things that remain, and having done all to stand.
- I. Our duty is not to try to figure out who is a reprobate and who is not.
 - 1. That is why the next chapter - Romans 2, begins with instructions not to judge people this way - because there is no respect of persons with God. (v. 11)

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2. In other words, God shows no favoritism and is willing to forgive whosoever will come to Him.