

Message #6

Romans 1:21-23

One of the arguments you will often hear to attack the character of God and the righteousness of God is the argument that goes something like this: “How could God be just and pour out His wrath on those poor natives who live in jungles who have never heard the gospel?” “How could God send those poor people who have never heard the gospel to hell?”

People say, “Isn’t that so sad that natives take off their clothes and run around a big bonfire and chant things in their worship of whatever they worship?” “Those people just don’t know any better.”

Did you ever stop to ask yourself this question: Where did those natives ever get the idea that they needed to worship something? Where did they get their religious superstitions? Did they ever know any better?

We are in a section in Romans in which the Apostle Paul is establishing the sin guilt of every human and God’s perfect righteousness in pouring out His wrath on God mocking, Christ rejecting, Bible hating humanity.

The verses here are very important because they answer one of the great questions of theology. God is perfectly righteous and just in pouring out His wrath on all people because He has given them enough intuitive knowledge and information to make them guilty and deserving of wrath.

As H. A. Ironside said, the heathen are without excuse. **Behind all of the idolatry of pagans is a rejection of the true God and a desire to worship something other than the true God.** These people aren’t confused. They are purposely worshipping something other than God and they do so because they have rejected the truth that God has put within them.

Paul is building a case for the guilt of every human. **Every human being, no matter who they are or where they live, is guilty and deserves God’s wrath.** By their works they prove they do not have God’s righteousness and deserve God’s wrath. So far he has built a strong case, but he is far from over:

- 1) People are guilty because they do ungodly and unrighteous things. 1:18a
- 2) People are guilty because they suppress the truth God gives them. 1:18b
- 3) People are guilty because they reject clear evident knowledge God put within them. 1:19
- 4) People are guilty because they reject His power and Deity in Creation. 1:20

Now as we come to these verses in Romans, what we see is this:

GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS PERFECTLY JUST IN POURING OUT HIS WRATH ON PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE REJECTED HIM AND DEMEANED HIM BY BRINGING HIM DOWN TO DETESTABLE LEVELS.

People have not just rejected God; they have demeaned God. They have invented their own concepts of a god they want to worship.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson really summed it up well years ago when he said concerning the development of man and his concepts of God that it is “one of retrogression, not progression; of devolution, not evolution; downward, not upward.”

Just recently I heard a sportscaster say that the best thing one could do on Sunday would be to go with dad to a baseball game. Not go to church, but to a baseball game. We are no better than heathens living in jungles.

Verse 21 begins with a conjunction “for” (dioti). This is a subordinate “causal” conjunction. These verses develop a series of reasons or causes that teach the fact that God is perfectly legitimate in pouring out His wrath on godless, heathen people. They also establish why these people are without excuse before God.

There are seven reasons why God’s righteousness is perfectly just in aiming His wrath at all, no matter who they are or no matter where they live:

REASON #1 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they do have knowledge of the truth of God. **1:21a**

Paul has already established the fact that God has put within every human the intuitive knowledge of His existence.

In this text, he makes it very clear that these people “knew the God.” The participle “know” is aorist, meaning God has put within every human a knowledge of Him and no matter how ungodly or unrighteous or heathenistic people act, they have walked away from that knowledge He gave them.

The tense of this participle used with the aorist tense verb “did not honor” means that the knowledge of God preceded their refusing to honor God.

Now when Paul says they “knew the God,” he does not mean they knew Him in the sense of having a personal relationship with Him. What he means is that through intuition and through creation, God gave every human this inborn knowledge of Himself and at some point they turned away from that knowledge of the only true God.

Where did the Zulus of South Africa come up with the idea that they needed to worship swamp reeds or a sky god or a river god? Where did the Islamist come up with the idea that they needed to sacrifice blood of an animal? Where did Buddhists get the idea they need to burn incense and offer sacrifices? Where do people get the idea they need to worship something?

The answer is they have knowledge of the true God. No matter who the person is or where the person lives, when they get before the true God, He will have a perfect, just right to pour out His wrath because deep down inside that person worshipped something other than Him.

According to Psalm 104, all people can see the greatness and glory of God in the sky, on the earth, in the water, in the vegetation, in the mountains and trees and animals, and even the insects. According to Psalm 139, all people can see the greatness and glory of God in the creation of humans who have been fearfully and wonderfully made. In fact, David said in that Psalm “my soul knows it very well.”

Don’t be fooled by the rhetoric of imbeciles. All people have knowledge of the true God of the Bible and they are without excuse.

REASON #2 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they do have knowledge of God, but they do not honor God. **1:21b**

People deserve God’s wrath because no matter how much God reveals to them, they will not honor Him.

That word “honor” (edoxasan) is one that emphasizes thinking and having an opinion that is high and exalted. It is thinking about something in a magnified glorious way that elevates to a glorious level of splendor (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 121).

God has put within every human an intuition of His power and glory and has given every human the realization that He is God and is to be worshipped as God. This knowledge is so put within every human that it leaves all without excuse.

J. Vernon McGee said the problem is man has certainly not moved upward in his opinion about God. Truth is, man does not like to elevate or honor God, he likes to elevate and honor himself.

Man hates God’s sovereignty and greatness. Man does not want to honor God or depend on God for anything. But the very breath of every human is dependent upon God and man is without excuse.

There are people in this world that will honor a baseball, football, basketball or hockey game more than God. There are people who will honor money more than God. There are people who honor a job more than God. There are people who honor a piece of wood more than God. When any person gets before God, they will be without excuse because they have done everything except honor God.

REASON #3 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they do have knowledge of God but they are not thankful toward God. **1:21c**

Ingratitude toward God is one of the great sins of our day. Most people today are not thankful for all God has done for them and given to them. They are unthankful and ungrateful. In Paul’s day, people offered all kinds of thanks to all kinds of deities they invented.

Very few were thankful when it came to the true God of the Bible. Things have not changed. Most are not thankful. People get raises, promotions, achieve successes and rarely thank God who gave them the skills and abilities.

All good things come from God: life, health, food, income, jobs, shelter, family, friends, church, and salvation. Humans should be the most thankful people on the face of God's earth. But instead of thanking God, they mock God, deny God and curse God.

People whine and complain all over the world. It is too hot. It is too cold. It is too dry. It is too wet. This world is filled with unthankful people and God has every right to condemn all humanity for that.

We love our pets. We love our horses, dogs, cats. Every day we do chores for those animals. We see to it they have food and water. We see to it that they have shelter and medicine. We go to great expense to make sure they have a good life. Not one time does an animal say thank you, because they can't. But they let you know they love you and appreciate what you do.

When it comes to God, humans don't. In fact, humans are worse than animals. Not only don't they thank God, they don't even acknowledge God. When God pours out His wrath, people will deserve every bit of it.

REASON #4 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God's wrath because they do have knowledge of God and invent futile speculations about God. **1:21d**

The actual Greek word for "futile speculations" is one that literally means moronic and foolish reasonings or thoughts. When it comes to people thinking about God, they are morons filled with idiotic speculations.

What could be more moronic than to think that a big bang explosion created the beauty of the world? What could be more moronic than to think that man evolved from some amoeba or tad pole? What could be more moronic than to think after you die you come back as a reincarnated animal or tree?

On December 4, 1995, Time Magazine published an article in what they claimed was the New Exciting Theory of Evolution "Evolution's Big Bang."

- 1) Earth was formed 4.6 billion years ago.
- 2) First evidence of life was a blue/green algae 3.5 billion years ago.
- 3) First official cell with a nucleus was 2 billion years ago.
- 4) First multi-celled algae was 1.7 billion years ago.
- 5) Cambrian Explosion caused an amoeba to form 543 million years ago.
- 6) Amoeba became a tadpole who jumped in and out of water for many years.
- 7) Finally through exposure to the sun it progressed into an animal that could climb a tree.
- 8) Eventually it became a human.

You have got to be kidding me. That is one of the most moronic and stupid things I have ever read. People think this is scholarly. We have permitted these “intellectual crazies” to take God out of schools, prayer out of schools and the Bible out of schools so we can teach this kind of idiotic nonsense and insanity to children. When God decides to pour out His wrath on this world, this world will deserve every bit of it. They have made up crazy speculations that mock God and His word.

REASON #5 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they have knowledge of God but they have darkened their foolish hearts against God.

1:21d

These people darken their own hearts with their foolishness to another level of depravity. They actually take their stupidity and foolishness to another lower level. God has put knowledge of Himself within their hearts and they replace that with their foolish darkness and speculations that are worthless. Move away from God and His word and your heart will become dark and your dark heart will take you straight to the judgment of God.

A heart can become so dark that it blocks out all the light God has shined in it. People proudly think they have arrived at some level of real mental sophistication and in God’s mind they have arrived to the lowest level of stupidity.

What could be more foolish than the stupidity of atheism or agnosticism? Atheism says we don’t believe in any God and agnosticism says we don’t know if you can really know if there is a God. God has already put within the heart of man the knowledge of Himself so to reach a level where you actually believe atheism or agnosticism, your heart is foolishly dark. This is why the writer of Psalms says only a fool has said in his heart there is no God (Ps. 14:1).

No human will ever get before God and be able to say, “We did not know.” “We did not know you were there.” “We did not know you really existed.” God will say, but I put that within your heart to know this. Your problem is you became dark and through your foolishness you drifted from truth.

REASON #6 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they have knowledge of God but have become fools. **1:22**

Verse 22 is so accurate. People, who are fools, when it comes to God, pretend to be so wise and smart. They profess something they aren’t. People who do not acknowledge God think they are so smart, when in all reality they are fools.

These people walk around as if they are scholars, when in fact they are morons. The present tense of the participle “professing” means these people continually and habitually pretend they are really smart scholars. These people continually assert and affirm that they are very wise, smart people (*Ibid.*, p. 467).

God says they are literally morons.

You will find many of these morons teaching in colleges and universities. You will find many of these ignoramus fools and simpletons teaching in high schools. You will find them in religious schools and even churches.

People pretend to be so scholarly in their thinking and they are foolish lunatics.

REASON #7 – Ungodly and unrighteous people deserve God’s wrath because they have knowledge of God but have changed the glory of God. **1:23**

God is to be honored and worshipped His way, not our way. God will not ever share His glory with another. He will not share it with anyone or anything. He is God and there is none like Him. He is majestic. He is Holy. He is the blessed, glorious God.

It is an absolute disgrace for some created finite man to invent or devise his own deity that he thinks is equal to the God of the Bible. But it gets worse than that. Not only do people invent their own deities, they worship them.

They actually invent a “god” in their own mind or make a “god” with their own hands and worship it.

For example, Hindus and some Muslims worship cows and bring them offerings.

Many worship a Buddha made by the hands of men.

In India many worship a cobra.

Salt Lake City Mormons worship the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Indians worship a totem pole they have carved out of wood.

We are supposedly the most sophisticated, civilized, educated generation that has ever lived and we are one spiritual mental disorder that is spiritually insane believing like morons.

You give finite sinful man the freedom of religion and you will end up with religious insanity. If you don’t base what you believe about God on the Bible, you are a fool and you deserve God’s wrath.

We all need the righteousness of God found by faith in Jesus Christ. Don’t let your proud, foolish, rebellious mind keep you from asking Jesus Christ to be your Savior. Because if you don’t you are heading to the wrath of God.