

Sunday, May 17, 2009

Living Hope EFC

Art Smith

The Wrath of God is against all who Reject Him: Rom.1:18-24

INTRO

Scanner theory of cancer causation: - *Deliver us from Evil*, 64-65

This theory states that an incurable cancer is **not ultimately** caused by the cancer itself as much as by a detection system that has broken down.

- According to the theory, healthy cells in the body routinely become cancerous. But built into the body is a **system of detection** and a mechanism that identifies the cancerous cells and destroys them **before** they take over.
- **It is not the cancer but the breakdown of the detection system that ultimately proves fatal.** *The same is true for man morally/ spiritually.*
- **Sin is to man's eternal life, what cancer is to man's physical life.**

The Bible says that sin resides naturally within every person. Rom.3:23.

- Sin, like cancer, will prove fatal if not destroyed – **Rom.6:23.**
- But God has given man a system of detection & destruction of sin.
- *Conscience* & God's Word are designed by God to identify sin, and cause guilt and shame so that man runs to God for forgiveness.
- **It is when man ignores God's detection system that sin proves fatal.**
- When man denies God's existence & God's moral truth & his own conscience (*God's detection system*) - sin proves fatal, and man perishes under the wrath of God into eternal darkness and death.

In Rom.1:16 Paul has stated that the gospel is God's power for man's salvation – for the destruction of sin in man – before it becomes fatal!

NOW – Paul goes on to explain man's precarious condition– as a sinner.

Luther: "There is no use telling men that they must be saved until they feel a need for salvation."

In Romans 1:18-3:9 Paul declares that men are under the wrath of God because of sin. It will destroy them if sin is not detected and destroyed!

Chap.1:18-32 – He address people who do not have the Bible.

Chap.2 – He addresses people who do have the Bible.

Chap.3 – He concludes: The human race, all are under sin's penalty.

Rom.1:18-24: Mankind is under the wrath of God because they've re- jected God, suppressed His truth, and set themselves up in God's place.

1: Gods wrath is revealed against the sinfulness of man: 1:18

(1) **God's wrath** is continually revealed against man's sin (pres.pass.ind.).

- Paul is not just referring to a special demonstration of God's judgment, such as against Adam, the flood, but a **general principle**.

• His context is history "**since creation**" –vs.20. **Sin requires wrath.**

EXAMPLES: 1-Gen.3, Adam expelled. 2- **Eph.2:3**. 3- **John 3:36**.

4- Rom.2:5. 5- Christ on the cross: "My God, my God, why ... ?"

- **Man needs a real Savior, because he has real guilt & under real wrath.**

(2) We cannot explain away the wrath of God by appealing to His love.

- Wrath is a complement of the love of God.
- God cannot love good without hating its opposite, and judging evil.

ILLUS: Even sinful men, made in God's image, must judge evil & sin.

- Whenever we read of child abuse, a rape, burglary – we know that for a community to be protected, crime must be punished.

(3) Notice: "**From heaven.**" God in heaven is not passive toward sin.

- He is not aloof, removed or unconcerned, as deism would claim.
- "**Against all:**" No exceptions. Nothing is overlooked or hidden.

(4) Men **suppress the truth** by their wickedness.

- Those who practice evil, hide the truth about God & man's moral responsibility to serve and obey Him.
- Name the sinful practice, men justify it by suppressing the truth!
- All sin is judgment worthy. God seems to address a class of people who **purposefully** suppress truth – by their rebellion – vs.19-23.

2: God has revealed Himself to all men 1:19-20.

(1) The *knowable* about God is plain, clear & evident **to all!** – **vs.19a**

- $\mu\epsilon\nu$: **Externally**, vs.20, creation itself reveals God.
- $\delta\epsilon$: **Internally**, God has made man with a conscience, **2:14-15**.

Schaeffer: That which is known of God is obvious, **even to the person without the Bible** – for God has shown it to them...through conscience.

*How can we be sure that **all men** know about the true God?*

(2) God has personally made Himself known to them – **vs.19b**.

- Man can *never* say, "I didn't know you really existed!" On judgment day. There can be no miscommunication – when God speaks.
- Man has a conscience, he is created in God's image, he is not a monkey or a machine, & he knows he is not the person he should be.

(3) God's divine nature/ Person is clearly revealed in Creation itself –**v.20**

- **Paul is saying that, "In nature we see nature's God."**
- God's attributes/ nature, power, perfection, complexity, goodness, omnipotence, uniqueness – are **clearly seen & understood** by man.

Psalm 19:1-4! Acts 14:15-17.

- God has left His **fingerprint** on all that he has created!
- ILLUS:** A chair! *What do we know about its maker by observing it?*
- ILLUS:** Human **ear**, 77. **Ecosystem** balance, 95. *Evolution of a Creationist.*
- Man should know there is a God simply by observing what is!
- Creation communicates knowledge to rational man, **even though** he is a rebel and fallen. He still knows there is a God.
- And this knowledge is **universally** known to **ALL**, since creation!

POINT: There has never been a time, a tribe, a people or place in which God has not made Himself known to all men.

- Enough is known –**even to the man without the Bible**– that “**men are without excuse.**” There will be **no defense** on the day of judgment.
- Man knows he has an obligation to love and worship Him.
- **SIN** will be **fatal** resulting in eternal death if not admitted & destroyed

3: Man has knowingly rejected God & replaced Him 1:21-23.

*Here we have man's response to God's revelation about Himself.
Surely mankind MUST acknowledge their Creator!*

(1) **Vs.21a**- Man responds **exactly contrary** to his knowledge of God.

- It is man's response to God that is so damning, the cause of his peril.
- Paul says that mankind knows God, but flat-out rejects Him.
- *“What seems as if it would be unthinkable to any rational creature is in fact the history of mankind!”*

(2) **FOUR RESULTS OF REFUSING TO BELIEVE IN GOD –v.21b:**

1- Their reasoning/ thinking/ became futile/ worthless.

2- Their foolish (undiscerning) hearts became darkened.

3- Vs.22 –Self-deception: Asserting themselves to be wise, they became **fools**. –**Psalm 14:1; Prov.1:7; 9:10. Here is the divine assessment!**

Summary: Man knows God is, but rejects him, and in doing so rejects absolute truth and reality. **As a consequence** = his thinking has no base of objectivity and truth, and becomes worthless and filled with error.

- Man becomes a fool, but thinks he is smart, wise, intellectual!

4- V.23- They exchange the true, glorious God–for idols, sticks, creatures

- The summit of man's foolishness is that he substitutes creatures for the Creator, false for the true, and worships them.

Morris: “All too often in the history of mankind a high level of philosophy has been found consistent with all the degradation of polytheism,” 85.

Godet: “All the labor of the sages did not prevent the most civilized nations; Egyptians, Greeks, Romans – from being at the same time the most idolatrous of antiquity.”

- Look at Athens, **Acts 17**. Full of philosophers, and full of idols!

(3) NOTE the origin of false worship/ religions!

- False religion/ philosophies spring from a rejection of the knowledge of the true God. **Man begins with truth, & devolves into foolishness.**
- Far from being a preparatory stage in man's quest **for** God, false religions represent a **descent from** the truth (a de-evolution), and are evidence of man's deepest corruption! **Man devolves, not evolves.**
- We are tempted to think: "Surely those who worship in some way, even though not in the Christian way, their imperfect forms of worship count for something??"
- **FACT IS = Idolatry is a degenerative stage of man's moving away from God, not toward Him.**
- False worship is NOT an attempt of man to find God, it is man's making God in his own fallen image.
- And it is this "suppressing the truth through ungodly idolatry" that dams man to the wrath of God.

4: God gives man over to his own corrupt desires & behavior-1:24

- Rejection of God > futile reasoning > darkness of heart > development of false philosophies & religions > impurity and sinful acts.

SEVERAL APPLICATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS CAN BE MADE

1- We live in a day in America that has rejected God's moral & spiritual detection system that warns against sin, & sin will become fatal to us.

- When man denies God's existence & God's moral truth & his own conscience (*God's detection system*) - sin proves fatal.

Secularism, the primary religion of our day, seeks to replace God and His absolute truth with man and relativism (man's opinion about good & bad)

- It asserts that life is to be conducted without reference to God.
- There is no "absolute" moral truth to be imposed upon man.
- Man himself (relativism) is the measure for morality.
- Right & wrong are debated & finally legislated by gov't.
- The individual is not responsible to any transcendent authority.
- **Guilt & shame** are a hangover of an antiquated religious worldview.

THE AFFECTS:

Upon our culture: The loss of shame gives rise to evil in its most vial & violent forms. **With no conscience of absolute truth & morality,**

man is left to perpetrate unspeakable evil, and to pursue unbridled passions. (**Rom.1:26f**)

Shame, meant by God to protect us, no longer does its job.

Upon the individual: Man is left under the wrath of God and isn't even aware of his condition. He serves god s created in his image.

2- When man devalues God, he will devalue himself and others.

- Man's significance & identity & moral compass are all found in the divine Creator. When we reject Him, we have no basis of worth.

3- Man needs a Savior from sin, not merely a change in direction.

- Man is guilty of sin because he has rejected God, his Creator.
- Man's mind, heart and behavior are sinful – due to his rebellion, **v28**.
- All sins & human problems flow from our choice not to put God at the center of His universe.
- While sociologists & criminologists seek to help society, they are treating the *symptoms*, not the *disease*.
- The disease, rebellion against God, can only be cured by turning around and glorifying God.
– Schaeffer, 39-40

[The Good News is – you can turn around today!](#)

It is to these people Paul will offer forgiveness and righteousness from God through Christ's substitutionary payment of their sin & rebellion.