**The Distorted Image of God**

***Romans 1:18-32***

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Introduction: Could you imagine this article appearing in the Bangor Daily News” “The town of Hampden has issued subpoenas demanding a group of pastors to turn over any sermons dealing with homosexuality, gender identity, or the sexual identity of local politicians. And those ministers who fail to comply could be held in contempt of court.” Though seemingly far-fetched, consider this real article from Fox News, found at: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/10/14/city-houston-demands-pastors-turn-over-sermons/>. If I were a pastor in Houston, I might well be subject to such a subpoena for preaching a message like this one tonight. We have previously seen that the theme of Romans is the righteousness of God. Chapters 1-3 speak of the need of righteousness for both Gentiles (ch. 1) & Jews (ch. 2), with a summary in chapter 3. Note with me tonight in our text how the image of God has been marred because of the fall as seen in the condemnation of the Gentiles as it is declared, deserved, & demonstrated.

 I. The image of God marred > Condemnation of the Gentiles **declared** (:18)

 A. The revelation of God’s wrath:

 1. His anger is “the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin”

 (MacArthur).

 2. His anger is “the response of His holiness to wickedness & rebellion” (Bruce).

 B. The recipients of God’s wrath:

 1. Those characterized by *“ungodliness”* – impiety toward God (lack of reverence for or

 devotion to God; refusing to worship Him).

 2. Those characterized by *“unrighteousness”* – injustice toward men (lack of

 conformity to the character of God).

 Summary: These people *“hold the truth in unrighteousness.”* The word *“hold”* means “to

 hold down, to suppress.” To suppress something implies that these people have had access

 to the truth, but they have not responded properly to it (see :19-23).

 II. The image of God marred > Condemnation of the Gentiles **deserved** (:19-23, 25, 28)

 A. Man’s sins of omission (:19-21)

 1. He has no thankfulness or praise for God’s work.

 2. He has no reception of God’s revelation but rather rejection of it.

 Note: Are the heathen, who have never heard the Gospel, really lost? Yes, because they

 have rejected the light they have been given – God’s revelation of His power & Godhead

 in His creation. They deny that there is an all-powerful Creator.

 B. Man’s sins of commission (:23, 25, 28)

 1. He has *“changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to*

 *corruptible man…”* (:23). The substance of reality (*“glory”* – God’s) replaced by

 the shadow of reality (*“image”*).

 2. He has *“changed the truth of God into a lie…”* (:25). Literally, “the lie” – the denial

 of God’s existence & His right to be obeyed & glorified.

 3. He has refused to *“retain God in their knowledge…”* (:28). “Men have developed an

 aversion to having God in their knowledge. This means that they do not consider

 Him to be worthy of their considerations” (Minnick).

III. The image of God marred > Condemnation of the Gentiles **demonstrated** (:21, 24, 26-32)

 [Because of :21, God *“gave them up”* (24, 26, 28) – a judicial term referring to handing over

 a prisoner to his sentence. God permits men to go on in their sins & reap the sad conse-

 quences. This is the result of their idolatry.]

 A. God abandoned man to *uncleanness* (:24) > the essence of man’s sinfulness:

 1. *“Uncleanness”* is a word often used of decaying matter (corpse, etc.).

 2. Here the word refers to sexual immorality (cf. Eph. 5:3 & I Thess. 4:7).

 B. God abandoned man to *vile affections* (:26-27) > the expression of man’s sinfulness:

 1. *“Vile affections”* can be translated “dishonorable passions.”

 2. Here the specific perversion is homosexuality:

 a. This sin is condemned in Gen. 19; Lev. 18:22; I Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3-5; I Tim.

 1:9, 10; & Jude 7.

 b. “Paul mentions women first to show the extent of debauchery under the wrath of

 abandonment, because in most cultures women are the last to be affected by moral

 collapse” (MacArthur).

 Note vs. 27 > *“Leaving the natural use of the woman”* speaks of that which is against

 nature, “unnatural.” The phrase *“recompence of their error which was meet”* speaks of

 the due penalty of their sin [“it is fitting for them to be abandoned to moral perversion

 equally heinous to their religious perversion” (Minnick)].

 Summary: It should be pointed out that sexual perversion is “the evidence of God’s wrath

 revealed. It is not just that God’s judgment is coming, God’s judgment is upon us” (Minnick).

 “Both lesbian & homosexual activities are condemned in these verses. God only approves of

 monogamous, heterosexual relationships in marriage, condemning adultery before marriage &

 within marriage” (Ryrie).

 C. God abandoned man to a *reprobate mind* (:28-32) > the extent of man’s sinfulness:

 1. *“Reprobate”* means “not passing the test” or debased.

 2. “This is a mind that has lost its ability to discern between right & wrong. The result

 of having such a mind is the practice of a multitude of sins without any regret or

 conviction of conscience” (Minnick).

 Summary: Paul continues with a depravity catalog of 23 sins which are the result of a reprobate

 mind. Note particularly *“without natural affection”* – the absence of normal family love. Con-

 sider abortion, divorce, incest, child abuse, etc.

Conclusion: Man was created in God’s image & for God’s glory. But Genesis 3 reports the Fall. Man’s rejection of God results in idolatry, immorality, & impenitence. Verse 32 is the final stage of man’s depravity. “It is the posture of fully knowing that sin is punishable by death yet continuing not only to practice it but to enjoy & approve of others engaging in it” (Minnick). Those who not only sin but encourage & vicariously enjoy the sins of others. Paul seems to say that those who approve of sinners are just as guilty as those who sin. “He is implying that people who label sin as good or natural or noble are doing great damage to the morals of a society, for eventually it becomes an acceptable behavior & people are no longer conscious of their sin” (Moo). It is obvious that the heathen are in desperate need of the righteousness of God. The book of Romans is written to explain how man can be made right with God. Next week we will see how that image of God in which man was created can be restored. We have been entrusted with the glorious Gospel of Christ. Are you a faithful ambassador for the Lord?