

If You Don't Want God, God Will Give You What You Want

Romans 1:21-32

April 30, 2011

Scripture

Introduction

- Family therapist John Gray published a book in 1992 which went on to sell more than 14 million copies, rising quickly to the top of the New York Times Bestseller's list and becoming probably the bestselling book on relationships of all time.
 - His book, entitled "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" simply explained that men and women **think differently**. Often men think they are displaying understanding and consideration or affection to their wives only to find their wives react to their gestures as if they were from another planet!
 - We see this with gifts
 - Most men love to receive tools as gifts, they can rejoice in getting a new electrical tool, which will help him do things around the house he's always wanted to do...
 - And so, knowing how much he enjoys receiving tools as gifts, he excitedly and lovingly purchases his wife new cookware or maybe even a dishwasher for Christmas...for her
 - He means well, but his thinking is wrong...all his right thinking about what his wife wants will be wrong unless he can think like she does when it comes to gifts.
 - I had this problem for many years for many years because nothing gets me more excited than receiving books and so I buy everyone books and thus for many years bought Julie and Jason and Beanie books for Christmas without fail. And they were always disappointed and it finally stopped when they moved from disappointment to confusion!
 - The point though, is my thinking will always produce bad results if all my supposed right thinking is actually wrong; if all my thinking that I believe is right is actually wrong, then I am doomed to do wrong...all the time! My mental wiring is wrong!

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- Well, here's a basic principle we need to understand, namely that sin re-wires our spiritual thinking and it causes us to think wrongly even when we are convinced our thinking is right.
 - We see in this passage that sin has a profound impact on how we see ourselves, that sin shapes us, changes the way we think, and changes us to be remade into efficient and effective sinner, we then become advocates of sin.
 - Not only that, since Paul was **not** primarily addressing individual conduct here, but is explaining that the wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men, we see sin has a profound impact on our culture and society so that it becomes a fertile environment for sin to thrive and to be celebrated, even as God's righteous judgment is revealed against it.
 - Here stands the church
 - Living by faith, i.e. walking in God's saving righteousness...
 - In a sin-soaked world which advances values it maintains are virtuous and ethical with great conviction and nearly unanimous support
 - How does the church understand this world? How does it reach people in this world? How does it protect itself from this world?
 - We want to focus on the first and third question, which are directly and indirectly addressed from this passage; we want to look at 3 things
 - (1) How does thinking become spiritually corrupt [most of our time]
 - When thinking and acting drops to spiritual lows, (2) how does God respond
 - As I survey the landscape and observe the principles of God's response to corrupt spiritual thinking, (3) how should I, as a Christian, respond?
 - Repeat these 3 items...

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I. How Does Thinking Become Spiritually Corrupt

- Saints, here is an observation from redemptive history we must not lose: sin does not emerge from complete ignorance of God
 - Adam sinned knowing God
 - Cain sinned knowing God
 - Paul explains here that the Gentiles, all men, sinned not out of ignorance of God, but from within a knowledge of God
 - v.20, God's "eternal power and divine nature – [has] been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."
 - So in v.21, Paul says "they knew God"
 - Knowledge is not insulation from sin; knowledge is necessary for obedience, it is required for faithfulness, but possessing it does guarantee our resistance to sin...the Lord said very clearly, it is the one who obeys these words of his whose house is built on a firm foundation

- But mankind, and this is also true for individuals – we are addressing both here, moves from this knowledge into spiritual corruption by downward spiral that **begins first with...not "glorifying God as God"**, in other words, not honoring him, beginning to diminish him in our living
 - This might begin with ambition (think of the Tower of Babel)
 - This might simply be seen in self-absorption
 - But we are told that *whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we are to do it all to the glory of God...*
 - Yet, when what glorifies God is not a consideration in our life choices
 - Who to marry...or should I marry
 - Should I purchase this
 - Should I drink this or should I wear this
 - Starting businesses for material gain, wanting to be a pro athlete to be a big shot, etc.

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- The first sign of drift away from the desire to glorify God above all things is a fixation with **liberties** and **my rights**, when these dominate my concerns you can be sure that not glorifying God is not far behind!
- I may first ask, “what’s wrong with...”
- Or I may more boldly claim, “no one can tell me...”

- Once I cease to glorify God in my living, as sure as night follows day, I will soon lose a sense of thanksgiving, and this is the second thing Paul calls out in this passage.
 - Cartoon character Bart Simpson, during a scene where the Simpson family was having Thanksgiving dinner, was asked to say the grace for the meal, and he famously said: "Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing."
 - This is the mindset that emerges when living for God is minimized, there is a self-sufficiency, that not excludes God from my all of my considerations, but that does not honor him and does not thank him.

- When this is the mindset of our culture, if this is my personal mindset, something happens to us and then our behavior is severely impact by the changes that happen in us
 - Once as a culture even as a race, we stopped honoring God and no longer were thankful to him
 - Their thinking **became futile**, i.e. spiritually
 - Ineffective
 - Useless
 - We are on a different planet in our thinking from God's...all of our thinking is a spiritual waste
 - You ever look very closely at I Cor. 2:14?

*The man without the Spirit **does not accept** the things that come from the Spirit of God, for **they are foolishness to him** and he cannot **understand them**, because they are spiritually discerned.*

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- Our consciences will not allow us to accept foolishness, and if mine looks at the things of God and sees “nonsense”...how can I hope to live right
 - Their foolish hearts became darkened, and thereby what spiritual light they had was turned down, what delighted their heart was **becoming more and more sinful**
 - And in all this they were completely confident! [reflect my work with data team at HSN]
- And then it happens, we see it in **verse 23**: I have all that God is and all of his glory in my hands, if you will, and yet all my thinking and feeling is opposed to him, I think to myself, I'll just put him aside and make something I like that I'm comfortable with
 - Just as the children of Israel said of the golden calf, this idol has delivered us from Egypt...
 - Today we have crafted a god called evolution that says, nothing and no one, only pure chance has raised us up from nothing. Life emerged with no help or agency from God, it was pure luck and perfect conditions that led to all we see before us today

This is the crowning moment of spiritual corruption: **when I exchange God and his glory for worthless idols, it's at that point that I am undone:**

- Three times we see this theme
 - They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...[v.22]
 - They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served them rather than God...[v.25]
 - They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God...[v.28]
 - Until finally all this erupted into unrestrained sinful desires in their hearts; their hearts are just bursting with the desire for sinful sexual fulfillment of all kinds, but Paul chooses to underscore that it has even reached to the point of unnatural desires that go directly counter to God's created purpose and order for sex

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- Degrading of their bodies with one another
- Shameful lusts: homosexuality

2. God's Response:

- Undoubtedly, God is going to judge this kind of rejection of him and delighting in sin, even unnatural sin
 - His wrath is being revealed from heaven
 - An here we see its revelation
- What is the judgment?
 - God gives them over to the sin they so greatly desire, and thereby increasing their condemnation!
 - They desire degrading sexuality, God grants it
 - They desire homosexuality, God grants it
 - This is an active "handing over", this is what Paul means in 27b, *Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*
- How do we recognize this?
 - An indifference, even an impossibility to repent
 - Aside: Sometimes we are accused of things we did not do, we don't want to accept wrong when we are not guilty...
 - But an inability to see where one has done wrong, and therefore not being repentant, is a bad place to be spiritually, and in itself, is judgment
 - Look at Isaiah 6:9-13

3. How Should I Respond As a Christian

- I live in a world given over to depraved thinking
 - Norms
 - Values
 - Priorities

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- So, my thinking needs to change, because my natural thinking will take me down the same spiral we see. Look at Romans 12:2
- The, we need to guard against sins attempt to regain ground in our thinking: Hebrews 3:12-13

Conclusion

How should I respond if I am **not** a Christian?

I want to say to you, that God made another way than your being washed away in the in the torrents of your sin and going over the water fall of God's judgment

- In the gospel, we see God's righteous justice was poured out on his Son so that his righteous salvation could be poured out on you.
- We were all followers of the ways of this world...and so we were objects of God's wrath