

Paul considered himself a debtor to preach the gospel especially to the Gentiles. That was the special specific commission the Lord gave him.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

This was confirmed by Peter and James who declared their mission was to the Jews.

Galatians 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

God had saved him in spite of his national and religious pride and misdirected zeal. Now he, the most loyal Jewish Jew, was sent to the Gentiles long despised by the Jew. And not only to the “civilized” Gentiles but to the Barbarians, to the wise and unwise. The Greeks prided themselves in their philosophical reasonings, their “wisdom.” They looked down on other civilizations, as did the Jews upon the Greeks and Romans. But the Gospel Paul was given to bring them was superior to all religions and philosophies, suited for all nationalities and cultures. And Paul was not ashamed of it. Not ashamed to tell it despite opposition, ridicule, and persecution. And, more importantly, not ashamed of it for it is totally adequate to meet mans’ need. It is as true and sure as God. No one will ever be able to say “the Gospel sounded so good but it wasn’t true after all.” Paul would never be ashamed because God let him down. Nor will any other believer. For the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all that will come. Why? Because it reveals something he calls the righteousness of God. A righteousness given and conferred upon undeserving people who accept it by faith instead of resting upon their own righteousness, their own way. It is granted to those who by faith accept the offer. An offer based upon the principle of faith (not works). Not only a righteous standing before God but power to live a righteous life, and ultimately to be made wholly righteous for eternity. What grace! But it is righteous grace. He does not overlook our sins but has laid them on His own Son, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul fills out the facts on the righteousness of God in this epistle.

But there is something else. Wrath! Furious anger! God’s furious anger! Revealed from heaven! The wrath of God! Against what? Ungodliness of men. Unrighteousness of men. Men who hold (restrain) the truth in unrighteousness. They not only do their own thing, go their own way, independently of God, they restrain the flow of

God’s truth, the Gospel, by their attitude and actions, their lawlessness.

The gospel is good news because it is for people who need it. People who are sinners. People who need to be rescued from perishing. Rescued from the wrath of Almighty God. The offer of rescue is sweet to one who is drowning or one trapped in a burning house. Salvation. Many others are in grave danger but are oblivious to it. An offer of rescue sounds like foolishness to one who is a strong confident swimmer. He restrains the truth of his need by his reliance upon his own strength and abilities.

God has not hidden Himself and His nature from men. It is manifest in them. In them? How do we take that? We all have been born with hearts that need the Creator. This Creator has taken great pains to make His being known to mankind through His Creation. The invisible things of the Invisible are there for all to see in the created world around us. Look! Look and see! The very fabric of the Creation bears witness to His Triune being. The interactive unity of the whole Creation bears witness to His Divine Oneness, His Unity. A Tri-unity. His eternal power and His divinity are both there to see by faith. They truly are without excuse! Then we have the historical context that witnesses as well. The story of decline and departure from God, not development and progress for Mankind.

Paul goes on to outline the sad and sordid story of the decline and fall of the Human race. Twice! Once before the Flood and then again repeated after the worldwide destruction by the Deluge and a restart by Noah’s descendants. All today are descended from three couples. The description of man’s condition is not hard to believe for we see it vividly displayed in every form of media today. It is so commonplace and public, and hearts are so hardened, that it is considered normal by many in society in the western world. Not that the rest of the world is any better. How ironic that the radical Muslims hate the United States, “the great Satan,” because of the corruption displayed in our media. Shameful.

Yet corruption has infiltrated the professed Church as well. Some congregations are enthusiastically welcoming people who openly practice the very vices named here in Romans 1. Thankfully some are attempting to hold the line and being mocked for it. Note the startling similarities between the list here and that in 2 Tim 3. That list speaks of professing Christendom. Paul forecast the present situation in his last letter. WOW! Not that we have suddenly gone bad. No, the end times began shortly after Paul’s execution, taking many forms and twists and turns. But the professing Church never recovered despite numerous revivals and the work of faithful godly men raised up by God down through the centuries. But here we are, obviously not to be engaged in the so called “life styles” described here.

Note the downward progression in evil is not simple,

riotous, unbridled lust but philosophical thinking and conscious choices are involved.

1. when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,
2. neither were thankful;
3. but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
4. professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
5. [they] changed the glory of the un-corruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

6. Wherefore God also gave them up to

7. uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies. . . . :
8. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

9. For this cause God gave them up unto

10. vile affections: . . .
11. that which is against nature
12. leaving the natural use of . . .
13. working that which is unseemly,
14. and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.
15. they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,
16. **God gave them over to a reprobate mind,**
17. to do those things which are not convenient; [fitting, becoming, proper, seemly]

People forsook God and departed further and further from the created functions intended for blessing and good. As they did, instead of striking them dead, God gave them over to the thinking, the mind, that they desired, and simply let them reap the consequences. This mercy left an out for any who might wake up and repent.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Three times God in His longsuffering **gives them over** to their own way. Uncleanness, then a vile mind, then a reprobate mind (“reprobate” is to be rejected, unapproved, by God or others). But it is a merciful act, not vindictive. He will come to judge the world soon enough.

Then there is the list. Look at it. It includes some acts that some might not consider to be so serious, or even to be wrong at all. But there it is. Worthy of death.

1. unrighteousness,
2. fornication,
3. wickedness,
4. covetousness,

5. maliciousness;
6. full of envy,
7. murder,
8. debate,
9. deceit,
10. malignity;
11. whisperers,
12. backbiters,
13. haters of God,
14. spiteful,
15. proud,
16. boasters,
17. inventors of evil things,
18. disobedient to parents,
19. without understanding,
20. covenant breakers,
21. without natural affection,
22. implacable,
23. unmerciful.

32 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.

What? Those that imitate these people and do the same unwittingly are also worthy of death.

And even those who have pleasure in them that do them are worthy of death?

Those who idolize people in the entertainment world? Those who follow their lives and escapades thereby living out their frustrations by proxy? Are those who read adult novels, watch adult rated movies, plays, TV, play such computer games, watch and follow “soaps”etc., etc., worthy of death? What about immoral business ventures and practices?

This is a severe Creator God indeed!

But this is what the gospel is about. We need the bad news before we will accept the good news. There is God’s righteous salvation available to faith. What grace and mercy is ours.

But there is more! Paul has spoken to the godless. Next in chapter 2, he speaks to those who are conscious of right and wrong. Then he speaks to the religious, summing up in chapter 3.

“for all have sinned“
and [all] “fall short of the glory of God.“
That is where this is headed. Then Paul will reveal God’s solution.

Read ahead if you are curious.

By Ron Canner, July 11, 2007