

God's Wrath Revealed

Call to Worship: Psalm 46

1st Scripture: Habakkuk 3

2nd Scripture: Romans 1:16-32

Hymn #81- *A Mighty Fortress*

Hymn #574- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

Hymn #718- *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

Introduction

From the day that our first parents had disobeyed God back in the Garden of Eden, sin has been a gross, heinous and tragic curse that has infected every single human being (with the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ) since then. And it wouldn't take that long for Adam and Eve to realize the terrible extent to which the gravity of this curse would travel. None of us could probably even imagine what it felt like, when the first official murder had taken place, when Cain had murdered his brother Abel, in cold blood. What a tragic consequence for making what seemed to be such a quick decision, with such a short lived experience of any kind of felt joy. A taste of a piece of forbidden fruit in exchange for dwelling in the presence of God, leading to great marital hardship, labor pain, murder and every other wicked sin committed under the sun.

But sin has a way of becoming more and more sinful, doesn't it? The more you toy with it, the more your heart is hardened in the direction of giving yourself over to more and more sin, and this ultimately spills over into more heinous sins, which mount up an increase of greater condemnation and judgment in the end. The progression of sin to the point that even every thought and intention of the heart of mankind was continually wicked, during the time of Noah, was not something that came about in a short period of time. And Sodom and Gomorrah didn't become "Sodom and Gomorrah" over night. No, these kinds of utter moral collapses came gradually, over time, as God (as a form of judgment) had progressively delivered unrepentant, wicked men and women over to their own natural inclinations, leading them to commit all kinds of gross atrocities, to the point that their later destruction was all the more increased, intensified and final.

Now, this kind of a hardening process, which itself is, in fact, evidence of being under the fierce judgment of God (as we will see in our text, shortly), is frightening to read about. But brethren, it is far worse when you understand, that beyond the shadow of any doubt, we are

presently living under its cloud. You don't have to be a prophet to recognize the judgment of God upon a nation. You just have to look at the Scriptures, and understand something about the nature of God, the nature of man, and how God relates to man in any given natural context. Indeed, God expects us to do that. He expects us to be able to recognize revealed patterns in Scripture; templates as it were, which we can hold up over our own hearts, churches and nations, so as to make accurate assessment about what we can expect, going forward in life. And while God is incomprehensibly patient, we ought to be able to detect the general flow of His expressed blessing or curse, embrace or wrath upon a people.

I. The Prognosis

Before we consider some of the important factors found in our main text, let me share some thoughts about the evident prognosis of the spiritual condition of our country.

When I was a child, same sex attraction was obviously a reality, but it was, by and large, kept under wrap. It was present, but not even close to the way it has completely pervaded our society today. It was by no means celebrated. For the most part, it was kept quiet and behind closed doors. In fact, in my teen years, I will never forget that episode of Roseanne, where basically, for the first time on TV, a woman had kissed another women. And even that kiss was brief. But, that broke open a huge door into smothering the media with all kinds of pro-same sex shows....etc. And of course, it wasn't that many years ago now, when same-sex marriage became a reality, completely distorting and corrupting the glorious reality of God ordained, one women, one man, marriage, which was already taking a beating from increased rates of divorce.

A few weeks ago, we had received a magazine in the mail called "Parenting." Now, being the unobservant male that I am, I just threw it on the table with the rest of the mail, figuring my wife may have some interest in thumbing through the pages. Well, about one or two days later, one of my sons, holding up the magazine, says, "Dad, you know that this is bad right?" And it took him repeating himself a few times for me to actually register what was on the cover of the magazine. And then I noticed that it was a family containing two dads with a few children. This is how comfortable we have become with sin, in our day.

Now, all of that said, that kind of progression is probably not overly surprising to any of us, although it is a very clear sign of God's judgment upon a people. But, let me say this. It was absolutely, beyond the shadow of any doubt, unheard of, when I was growing up (and I spent my whole life in the public school arena) to find another classmate or friend, or virtually anyone, whatsoever, who had considered even the possibility that they were a gender other than the natural gender that was assigned them from the Creator, based upon the evident revealed physiological differences found on boys and girls. That was absolutely unheard of. And to consider a third or fourth or any other number of genders would have been beyond the realm of even most Sci-fi movies for that matter. It was just non-existent. If a boy went into a girl's bathroom, it wasn't to state the fact that he believed he was a girl. It was to be a peeping Tom.

But today, amazingly enough, it is not only possible or even common; it is popular for kids to decide that they can be a different gender from the one which they were naturally designated at birth (my kids know some of these individuals). Now, when evolution is your go to source for origins, "Why not?" There's no designer, after all. And so, the body could have simply evolved contrary to the felt gender. And furthermore, teenagers, against their parents wishes (or even unbeknownst to their parents) can start receiving hormone shots, surgical mastectomies and sex changes, in accordance with their desired gender. Young girls are making decisions that will affect them for the rest of their lives, preventing them from having children one day, because of what modern day psychology has determined to be a proper accepting of "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria." Indeed, New York State, as of January 1, has added an additional "x" gender option on our birth certificates, allowing for parents to choose a different gender than male or female for their infants.

You can hardly take a breath without hearing some news surrounding transgender activities involving lawsuits, bathroom exchanges, child strippers, forced contradictory pronoun usage, reading books to little children...etc, as this type of a depraved culture seeks to force a seat, not only of normalcy, but of cognizant acceptance, into our society. It's not enough to allow it. We all must accept, embrace and applaud it...or else, suffer the consequences of failing to step in line. And sadly, many so-called evangelical liberal churches have already willingly folded, strengthening the hatred label that is being cast upon the rest of us. It is already illegal, in New

York State, to counsel a teenager or adolescent against embracing same sex desires, to which, they are physically being drawn.

Time would not permit me to speak on the horrible atrocity of abortion, which is a wicked act at any stage of development, but which has also become the compelling political drive for Governor Cuomo and Hillary Clinton, to see it permitted even up to the day of birth. And this past Tuesday, on the 46th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, that bill has passed into law. (Note: Elizabeth Warren compared having an abortion to getting your tonsils out. Women are taught by multi-media moguls to “Shout their abortions without apology.” It’s not even a debate about life or non-life anymore. They don’t care. It’s in your face today).

All in all, brethren, there is an evident progression/regression into more and more gross forms of evil, as former forms have already settled comfortably down into a state of normalcy. Heck, there was a time when promiscuity was even kept in the closet, to some degree. Now, you can’t watch a *clean* TV show, without finding people out of wedlock shacking up together. In fact, it is abnormal to remain chaste unto marriage. And things that we might now consider impossible to comfortably enter into our culture and society, such as pedophilia, are already on the horizon and in the workings. When the gates of natural design have already been broken down; when children are given the authority and power to choose their gender, whose to say that a consenting child cannot engage in sexual acts with an adult? And you can throw bestiality and incest into that package as well. Everything will ultimately topple, when we are governed by the type of principles and logic (or lack thereof, I should say) that has allowed every other distortion of God’s design to find a welcome mat in our culture.

All of this to say, brethren, that the progression toward grosser and grosser forms of evil is beyond evident in our country, and you would have to literally bury your head deep into the sand to deny this tremendous cultural regression. The prognosis is not very good, at all.

And we, as a church, and as God’s people, have to come to the place where we are prepared to address this matter, biblically. And we need to do this now, before it comes to us...and it will, probably sooner than we think or realize. But first, we have to recognize the true root of the problem, which is not physical, but rather spiritual. If we don’t get the root right, we will never address it properly, and that will only serve to leave us crippled in the battle. You can

attack a rotten apple tree, by swinging at rotten apples, but that will never deal with the real problem, which lies at the root. Get to the root, and the fruit will change.

II. What Happened? (Romans 1)

And so, as we seek to address the root, asking the questions, “What happened?” and “How did we get here?,” we come now to consider a summary of our text here in Romans 1. And brethren, the short form is this: We are presently under the judgment of God, and we are being fattened for the slaughter. We are in the midst of a severe hardening process, whereby God has been giving us over to more and more atrocities and lusts, so that, as we have rejected God and His grace and patience, we will be struck down in accordance with the ever growing mountain of our wicked offenses. Our text clearly diagnoses this for us.

Notice, the author, Paul, in explaining the universal condemnation of mankind, reveals to us the template and pattern, which God utilizes as a means of bringing judgment upon a people. And at the very root of that judgment is our *willful, conscious* rejection of God; our *willful conscious* failure to acknowledge our God as Creator. And it’s not that we don’t have or know the truth. Even though God Himself is unseen, we can’t plea ignorance, because the reality of God is obvious, both, from what we see around us, and because God has installed His signature in us. Rather, we willfully suppress the truth of God; we hold it down (like a basketball in water). And this suppression leads us, therefore, to be unthankful to Him for His kind providences of life and the enjoyment of every earthly pleasure that He has given us. And rather than worship God and give Him thanks then, which are His proper due and right, we have worshipped created things instead [Read verses 18-23].

And so, the willful, arrogant, denial and rejection of the true and living God (while substituting idols in His place) is at the root of our becoming the objects of His divine wrath. And this then, in turn, provokes God to give us over to even further depths of depravity, as a just penalty for our rebellion, such that, in accordance with our foolish rejection of our God and Designer, we do unthinkably, unnatural things, which are undeniably contrary to the way in which we were designed. Note the progression of God’s judgment, brethren. [Read verses 24 - 25, 26 - 27 and 28 - 32]. [See also 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12]

Now, when we consider our present condition as a country, brethren, what then is at the root of our regression, deeper and deeper into depravity? Clearly, it is our national turning away from God and unto idols. But, we must also recognize something very important here, as well, brethren. As “born again” Christians, graciously given life and sight in Christ, when we view the insanity of our present depravity, while it should bring grief to our hearts, we ought not to be surprised by what we see. And, it is too easy to look at the rotten fruit of blatant disregard for design, and to think that we can attack this problem at the level of the fruit, which is more of a political form of attack than a biblical one. And honestly, I have been guilty of this, myself. Appealing to logic, mocking, shaming and even stating the obvious about the distortion of mankind that we are seeing, will ultimately be ineffective in this battle. It’s like bringing a pea shooter to a nuclear war. Addressing this problem with political weapons and insults, will only exacerbate it and make it worse. Because it’s not a problem of ignorance. It’s a moral problem. And brethren, we have to remember that as ridiculously insane as things may seem, God is the One who has given us over to this kind of hardness. Professing to be wise; boasting in our own power and glory, while rejecting God, led us to become absolute fools. And God has given us over to such depravity as a consequence of our root rejection of Him.

And so, how then do we address this problem, which will lead, and is leading to utter destruction? Is there any hope of pulling out of this vicious regression into further hardness and depravity?

III. The Solution

1) Again, abandon all worldly means of seeking to resolve the problem. You can’t ultimately fix a spiritual problem with worldly ideas and physical tools. Now, I’m not saying don’t expose sin or don’t vote or just abandon all use of politics altogether...etc. For righteousness sake, we must stand on the truth and do what we can to expose and deal with ungodliness. But, don’t see that as a cure to the problem, and certainly don’t place your hope there. At best, it will increase the judgment of those who fail to repent, and it might serve to deter things for a time.

2) Recognize that the only One who can ultimately remove the hardness, stop the bleeding and reverse things, is God. God has removed His restraining grace, God has righteously hardened us, and is in no way obligated to reverse this hardness, but if anything is going to improve in any sense whatsoever, God must remove the blinders. He must choose to be gracious. We are at the complete mercy of God. And so, we must recognize that only the gracious intervention of God can save this country. Now, generally speaking, historically, such a reversal never comes without some means of a divine smackdown. When God reverses the effects of His hardening judgment, generally, the first sign of the evidence of His working to that end, is when He brings a proud nation to its knees. And the process of bringing a nation to its knees usually requires some form of severe blow (9/11 brought some humility for a very short time. We saw that we are vulnerable and penetrable, but we have long since hardened ourselves against that reality).

And so, we can expect to have the rug pulled out from underneath us, to some severe extent, if we are going to be compelled to look up. Otherwise, temporal relief that doesn't lead us to repentance, will only, ultimately lead to further hardness and greater incurred judgment. In essence, God must bring us to repentance, brethren. Suffice it to say, that we will not be able to be useful unto bringing about the desperate change that is needed in our country, unless we first recognize that God alone can fix this.

3) Recognizing that God alone can reverse this hardness, will then drive us to seek to use those biblical means that can lead us to, at least, reach toward the only solution in two key ways:

I- We must be a people of prayer, brethren. We must intercede on behalf of our nation. We must pray, and we must pray often, and if possible, we must pray together more, as a church. If God alone can save us, and if all we can appeal to, is His grace to save us, then we must do everything on our part to make that appeal, and to do so often. This might not guarantee that God will reverse things, and He is under no obligation to do so, and His patience with us is already beyond comprehension...but nonetheless, it is our only avenue of hope. And brethren, when we look at the Scriptures, when we see God sparing Nineveh and the profound patience that He has shown Israel over and over again, and when we behold the amazing grace of God toward sinners (such as us) in Christ, we can at least know that there is hope. And if God

chooses not to reverse things, we can at least be certain that we have done what is right, best and in accordance with His will.

II- We need to preach the gospel, brethren. We need to overcome our fear of man, and convey to others the only message, which God empowers to change people from the inside out. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. It alone can change the hearts and minds of men. And so, as we pray, and as we seek the aide of the Holy Spirit by prayer, we must speak God's truth to these dead, very dry bones that surround us. That is the only hope for this nation, brethren. And we all can do this! We all can present Christ as the only hope of forgiveness for all sin, and reconciliation with God.

Our text makes it very clear. Deep inside, everyone knows that God exists, and that there is a coming judgment. They suppress this truth willfully, but it is hardwired in them, nonetheless. We have to appeal to their consciences, and hope and pray that the Spirit will give new life to the dead.

All in all, we have no guarantee, brethren. But, we do know that this is the only way to true and lasting change. And we also know that God is inclined to be gracious. And it might be that we have to just accept and endure utter destruction in this nation. It might be a situation similar to what Habakkuk was facing, where we have to buckle down, remain faithful and endure whatever judgment God brings. But, at least we are doing what we know to be right and well pleasing in God's sight. And at least, we can hope and believe that *some* will be saved. And so, let's pray and let's preach.

And let's be ready to minister to a generation that is far far gone. Let us be prepared to minister to people who have regretted sex changes, and who have ruined their bodies and their capabilities of physically functioning properly, by offering them the Gospel, which can save their never dying souls. Same sex dilemmas, transgender dilemmas, abortion dilemmas and all kinds of other dilemmas, which will come as the fruit of this national hardening, will enter into these doors, soon enough. And we will have to take a stand on the truth, which may one day get us fined, locked up or even worse. But, by the grace of God, we must count the costs, and let God be true and every man a liar. We will be called bigots, racists, liars, evil, haters and much much

more, even by other compromising churches. But, may God give us the grace to always cling to the fact that if we remain faithful, we will one day be called, “Good and faithful servants.”

And so, let us pray, let us proclaim the gospel, let us stand firm in our faith without compromise, and let us be prepared to minister to a very broken, confused and lost generation, that desperately needs the healing touch of our Lord Jesus Christ!

[The Gospel; the hardening process...etc]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Hebrews 12:1-2