

61 "Thinking themselves wise"

In the first chapter of Romans the Holy Spirit speaks through Paul with a certain bluntness! - words which remain as timely today as when they were first written.

We read (verse 18) of God's wrath being revealed against the godlessness and wickedness of men who deliberately suppress God's truth. The particular aspects of that truth mentioned here concern God's very existence (verses 19-20), and His status as our powerful, divine Creator (verses 20 and 25). As our Creator, the Lord God is clearly entitled to receive from us His creatures glory and thanksgiving, worship and service (verses 21 and 25).

Wicked men have no excuse for their rejection of God (verse 20), but have pressed on with their own ideas - better ideas as far as they are concerned. In their human cleverness they have replaced the immortal God with an array of mere idols and images - giving to these all that is rightly due to the Lord God Himself (verse 22).

Such behaviour is not only plain wrong, it is also deeply foolish (verse 22), and will lead to its inevitable conclusion (verse 32).

For God does not just stand by, helpless and idle. He loves His creation, He cares for it, and in His Son He has paid an appalling price to win it back. No wonder then that there comes a time when He says, "OK then - have things your own way. THY will be done". The rebels no doubt shout with glee at such a prospect - before the consequences of their behaviour become all too apparent.

The "Thy-will-be-done" consequences listed in Romans 1 have a familiar ring to them: idolatry in many guises, some blatant and some less obvious (verses 22-24); sexual malpractice in various forms - "shameful lusts", unnatural relations, indecency, perversion (verses 24, 26-27); and "depraved minds", leading to a grim list of unpleasant, sinful behaviour (verses 28-31).

That is how things were in Paul's time, and all too often that is how they are today. The existence of the Creator is widely ignored in the corridors of power. Our true Creator has been replaced by human reason, rationalism, evolutionism, etc, etc - all the supposedly clever human justifications for turning our backs on the One who made us, who gives us everything that we have, and to whom we owe everything that we do have.

By way of a recent example, in the dreadful storms and floods afflicting the British Isles over the past couple of months, the possible role of Almighty God in all these events has been acknowledged, as far as I know, by not one senior politician or even by one senior bishop. Truly indeed, "thinking themselves wise, they became fools" (verse 22).

Yet, the way back, which the Lord graciously provides, is still open. The Lord's words to Solomon under His earlier covenant still apply to us all today, now under the new covenant based on our faith in Christ: " - if my people who are called by

my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7.14).

No nation these days can claim to be, of itself, "God's people", not even Israel, but *within* all nations the Lord God has millions of His own, Christ-redeemed people. So it is people like us who are the ambassadors of Christ today (II Corinthians 5.20). We are the Christ-salt and the Christ-lights (Matthew 5.13-16). Like Ezekiel, we are appointed as the watchmen and the trumpet-blowers, to hear the Lord's words and give warning (Ezekiel 3.17 and 33.1-6). If people like us do not serve the Lord in these ways, rest assured, nobody else will!

So we are summoned to pray, earnestly, in repentance and intercession for all those in authority, since too many of their decisions, across the political spectrum and across the decades, have been taken in blatant defiance of the Lord God our Creator. It is no wonder that so many of our societies are in such a mess.

Alongside our prayers let us be frequently in touch with those in positions of power - especially with those serving in politics, education and the media. It is right both to commend their good, God-aligned decisions, and to object most strongly to their bad, God-defying decisions.

And on what grounds do we object and urge these people to change their minds? Because they are making the old, old mistake, of blotting the Creator out of their thinking, and replacing Him with the fancy idols of human cleverness and pride - never a wise thing to do.

It is time for those trumpets.

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