

Is There Any Hope for US?

The last year has been really: (though the same and more could certainly said by others regarding their own experiences and perspectives, these are mine)

- **Odd/weird-** D and I have spent more time *together* than any year of our 35.5 year marriage, and during the same 12 months have spent more time *apart* than any year of our 35.5 year marriage;
- **Different-** With the possible exception of 2004 (the year I had cancer), I've spent more time *at home* than ever before in my adult life; also, though one lesson I've done has been broadcast on a local-origination television station, and several have been available on YouTube since about 2014, I never dreamed I would do a weekly online bible class for half a year!
- **Difficult-** It's hard to "preach" to computer without a live audience; it's not easy to teach a bible class to a (Facebook Live) audience that you cannot see; it's hard to worship at home, even when you have D's beautiful voice and talent to sing with you; it's hard to "stay home" when you're not used to it; and it's hard to be at home alone sick with Covid for three weeks (again, others have had an immensely more difficult time- these have been MY experiences);
- **Scary-** "Our church" (the Southport congregation) has been scary- not the people or assembling, but how everything would affect our future and souls? "Our city" (meaning Indy) has been scary- would the violence and devastation downtown spread to Southport and Greenwood? "Our nation" has been scary (not the whole "toilet paper debacle")- what's happened to our country (and the world)... what will happen? And certainly, "politics" has gotten very scary! Would/will the election and its results trigger more violence? Open, armed rebellion, or even civil "war"? "What is to become of America?" is a scary question!

"Why has this all happened?" may not be an *odd* question to ask under these circumstances, but it may be a *different*, *difficult*, and *scary* question to ask. I suppose the various answers given would equal the number of those asked. I don't pretend to be smart enough to answer it, but perhaps an honest look at Rom.1 will provide some clues. What happened there to those who:

- 1) *Suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness and ungodliness, vv.18-19?*
- 2) *Ignore and refuse what can be plainly seen and understood about God since the creation, v.20?*
- 3) *Refuse to honor God or give thanks to Him, preferring instead the foolish darkness of their own hearts and futile speculations, vv.21-22?*
- 4) *Exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in form of corruptible man, birds, animals, and creatures, v.23?*
- 5) *Swapped the truth of God for the lie(s) of humanity, and worshipped the creature(s) He created rather than Him as the Creator, v.25?*
- 6) *Exchange the natural (and divine) functions of human sexuality for that which unnatural, degrading, and indecent, vv.26-27?*
- 7) *Do not see fit to acknowledge God anymore, preferring depravity and impropriety, v.28?*
- 8) *Are filled with unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, gossip, slander, hatred (of God and man), insolence, arrogance, boasting, inventors of evil (and perversion), rebellion to parents (and other lawful authority), and without understanding, truthfulness, love, and mercy, vv.29-31?*

You tell me: **What happened to those people depicted in Rom.1?**

- a) God **gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored, v.24;
- b) God **gave them over** them over to degrading passions, v.26;
- c) God **gave them over** to depraved minds, v.28; and,
- d) **The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them** that such are **worthy of death** (physical and eternal), vv.18,32.

Brethren, this is not only true of our *world*, it is true of our *country!* And as such a country in and of such a world as ours, we ought to be terrified of God's wrath both in the *here and now* and in the *hereafter!* On a *national* and *international* scale, "*Thou art the man!*" (cf. 2Sam.12:7, KJV)

But (and thankfully, there is one!), read the so-called "Minor Prophets." They are filled with the spiritual "rap sheet" of men's sins (both Israel's and other nation's). They also make plain the consequences of such- both in the then present (or not too distant future) and eternal senses. But in almost every message of "gloom and doom," which directly resulted from man's physical and spiritual debauchery, there was included a "**glimmer of hope**" section- sometimes of only a verse or two. That for the righteous, and those willing to heed and repent, eternal destruction (at least) could be avoided.

This lesson is intended to provide the same "glimmer of hope" for us today. As confused, disheartened, troubled, and even scared as we may be, there is *hope*. **There is a way forward.** If what we have experienced in the past year is *of God* (and I believe God has *given over* the world and the US for the same reasons and in the same way that Rom.1:18-31 outlines), **there are still reasons for hope...**

- 1) For the *faithful*, it doesn't matter who is in the White House, or on Capitol Hill (or on any other *seat of government* anywhere in the world), **Jesus is STILL on the throne, 1Cor.15:24-26; 1Tim.6:13-16.**
- 2) The *perfect law of liberty* **still** stands (Jas.1:25), and **always will (1Pet.1:23)**, and is **STILL the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes and obeys it, Rom.1:16; Matt.7:21-27.**
- 3) The *eyes of the Lord* are **STILL on the righteous**, and **His ears still attend to their prayers, 1Pet.3:12; Jas.5:16-18.**
- 4) God **STILL seeks and accepts worship** from those who worship Him *in spirit and in truth, John 4:23-24.*
- 5) God has always and **STILL knows those who are His** and has always and is **STILL unwilling to sweep away the righteous with the wicked, Gen.18:23ff; Rev.3:1-5.**

Given these things, what should we do?

- a) Put your *trust* in Him who sits on the throne in heaven, ruling the kingdoms of men, rather than any man or woman upon any *human* throne.
- b) Put your *hope* in God's law over any constitution authored by humanity.
- c) Be among *the righteous* that God still *watches over* and *hears*.
- d) Worship *in spirit* and *in truth* Him who *seeks and accepts* such. And,
- e) Be *known* and *counted* as God's *elect* to avoid being *swept away with the unrighteous*.