

INTRODUCTION

- twin-track preaching (reflecting both Word and Spirit, the written and the prophetic)
- last week – ‘fear of man’
- the previous week – ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel’ (1:16)
- Romans 1:18 – 3:18 highlights a number of sacred cows the Church has tended to avoid for fear of man –
 - wrath / judgment / sin
 - creation
 - human sexuality
 - radical worship
 - negative heritage (a once-sacred tradition now no longer valid – circumcision then, what now?)
- these will challenge our commitment to the first key, ‘OPENNESS’ (Open to God, to one another, to the world)
- to be open to God is to be willing to take his Word seriously

The Five Keys

- Openness
- Radical worship
- Breaking of heritage
- Christ likeness (release of identity and purpose)
- Vision

‘God offends the mind in order to reveal the heart’ (Bill Johnson)

WRATH, JUDGMENT, SIN (1:18-23, 28-32, 2:5-11)

Q Why is the gospel so desperately needed?

A Because the human race is diseased

What is the disease?

- rebellion
- human beings reject God and embrace corruption

What are the signs of this disease?

- distorted thinking (1:21)
- darkened hearts (1:21)
- failure to worship (1:18-25)
- darkened behaviour (1:28-32)

What is the consequence of the disease?

- God’s anger or wrath (1:18, 25-7)
- we must not think of God’s wrath as we usually think of human anger
- note what Paul says about God in 2:4

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

- 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' – how much does fear of man prevent you being open about what you believe with your friends?
- 'God offends the mind in order to reveal the heart' (Bill Johnson) – what was said about this? Can you recall a time in your life where God did this with you? Share that memory with the group if you can
- How readily do we accept that the human race is profoundly diseased? In what ways do we resist the bible's teaching about this?
- 'The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart' (CS Lewis). Discuss!
- In what ways does rebellion play out in your life, in your family, in your workplace, in our church?
- Where can we identify distorted thinking in our world today?
- Paul identifies a failure to worship God as one of the key indicators of humanity gone wrong. Discuss the 2nd key – 'radical worship' – and what that implies for you and for us as a church family
- Paul (the vicar, not the saint) argued that God could not be a good God if he were not one day going to set the world to rights. How can judgment be part of the good news?

Spend some time praying more about issues surrounding 'fear of man', and about our willingness to be open to the challenges of God's Word.

Pray for those who preach as they seek to be faithful both to God's written word and the moving of his Holy Spirit week by week. We are moving into some challenging teaching over the coming weeks and months, and the Enemy of our souls would love to derail some of us during the process.

Pray against his schemes, using these scriptures to encourage you

- *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. John 17:15*
- *If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven – if there was anything to forgive – I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:10-12)*
- *Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (Ephesians 6:11)*
- *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Ephesians 6:16)*
- *But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)*
- *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. (James 4:7)*
- *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*
- *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (1 Peter 5:8-10)*