

Understanding and Defending the Reasons of our Faith in a World Gone Mad

Session #4

1. Review – No neutrality:

- Romans 1:18-23 and the call to repentance.

The unbeliever is not indifferent to God; he is rebellious even if he thinks otherwise. His claim to indifference is a claim to neutrality which is really a claim of autonomy. He sees himself as independent, but he lives in God's world. He cannot step outside of it but must live in keeping with it while often vehemently protesting that he is doing no such thing.

- We are talking about a matter of "belief": the command is "believe!"

Much (all?) of the argumentation against Christianity has the veneer of rationality, but it is really nothing more than *dislike or emotivism*. People are unwilling to receive God as He is and unwilling to allow him to rule as He wills because at the core they do not like it or do not FEEL it is right. Their argument is not really about the rationality of His existence but about the **morality** of His ways. His rule offends them. It offends the morality that they have created for themselves that is catered to themselves, especially in respect to their sense of self and what they perceive as well being. It reduces to a morality based in personal preference. [Rousseau, Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, etc. have all made claims against the "morality" of God as key elements of their rejection of Him.]

2. Romans 1:21-32: What are the fruits of disbelief?

- a. Dishonor
- b. Ingratitude
- c. Futility
- d. Darkness
- e. Foolishness
- f. Idolatry
- g. Immorality
- h. "De-naturing" of humanity
- i. Progressive depravity

3. Branches of philosophy and overlapping Christian doctrine:

- a. Metaphysics (Study of the fundamental nature of reality) vs. the created order.
- b. Epistemology (Study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge) vs. revelation, illumination, and perspicuity (clarity).
Westminster Confession on Perspicuity: "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all. Yet, those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or another, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (1.7).

Question: Can we come to a knowledge of God apart from His revelation to us?

- c. Axiology/value theory (Study of the nature of value and valuation) vs. holiness/goodness
 - i. Ethics (Study of what is right and wrong in human behavior) vs. morality
 - ii. Aesthetics (Study of beauty and taste) vs. worship/delight/goodness

4. Some overlapping questions of concern:

The World	Christianity
Origins: where did we come from?	Creation: God created all things.
Purpose/meaning: why are we here? what to do?	Imago Deo: We serve and represent God.
Problems/evil: what is evil? what causes it?	Fall: all creation is corrupt including human nature
Solutions: how do we improve people/the world?	Salvation/Redemption: God saves and sanctifies us.
History: how do we understand the past? where are we going?	His-story/Eschatology: God has been at work and has an end in mind.

5. Christian Epistemology: Knowledge and wisdom are founded on God alone and begin with revelation.
 - a. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).
Fear is a disposition of the heart.
 - b. All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (Colossians 2:3-8).
 - c. The fool says in his heart “there is no God” (Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:21).

Though people can know many things well, nothing can be *properly* learned apart from the “fear of the Lord”, and we should not seek to know anything apart from God or without reference to Him. This is **not** to say that subjects must be studied with the Bible open or by developing the specific subject matter from theological propositions, but that God must be acknowledged and conclusions must comport with what we know to be true from His Word.