

Oak Mountain Informer

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Thinking Correctly About God

It is interesting the way people go from one extreme to another. We go from not addressing a problem at all to throwing millions of dollars at it without giving the matter adequate thought. When we realize that our efforts to spend our way to a solution have only created another set of problems, we deal with them in the same sort of knee-jerk manner. Sometimes what is needed is a good dose of common sense. But then, as someone has observed, common sense is a most uncommon trait.

A similar thing holds true when it comes to the way people think about God. There was a time when God was portrayed as the God of all damnation. He was described as one who watched our every move, ready to pounce on us at the slightest indication of sin. You might remember the sermon by Jonathon Edward's entitled "Sinner In The Hands Of An Angry God" in which sinful human beings were compared to spiders being dangled by a strand of spider's web over a flame. While it is true that God will judge sin, it is not true that He is gleeful over it. This is a distorted picture of God.

Today we have gone to the other extreme. People have altogether rejected the notion of judgment for the idea that God is a loving old grandfather. One author has captured the sentiment well by saying, "Access to {the cross'} saving power is open to everyone who believes, but a vital part of this belief is the recognition that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, and not just lonely, isolated people who are looking for a hug from God." People today don't want to be challenged by God. They want a hug from Him. They want to feel like God will take us into His arms, hug our neck, pat

us on the head and say, "That's all right. Everybody makes mistakes. Deep down I know you're a good person. Just keep saying to yourself, 'I'm smart enough. I good enough. And I like me.'"

It's important that we think correctly about God. Otherwise two things will follow. In the first place we will not worship God properly, and then we will not be able to discern good from evil. Paul tells us that when the Gentiles "refused to have God in their knowledge" they changed the glory of the incorruptible God" for idols, and they sank deeper and deeper into immorality (Romans 1:18-32). If we don't appreciate the judgment of God we will not take sin seriously. If we fail to understand the love of God, He will be a God only to be feared and not approached.

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The truth is that God is both a God of judgment and grace. God will indeed judge sin. The Bible is very clear about this. "The wrath of god is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5). "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil" (Romans 2:9).

On the other hand, "But God demonstrates His

own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Romans 5:8-9). “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived ... But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us...” (Titus 3:3-4). “See how great a love the Father has bestowed

on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are” (1 John 3:1).

We need to hold both of these ideas together without distorting either one of them. The knowledge that God will judge our sin motivates us to live righteous lives. Understanding that God loves us and wants to accept us as a father accepts his children gives us confidence to come before Him and “cast our care on Him.” Holding these two characteristics of God

The Slippery Slope

Since our house has pine trees around it, pine needles accumulate on our roof. A few days ago I climbed onto the roof to clean them off, but when I got up there I realized that the roof was not the place I wanted to be. I could just see myself slipping, unable to stop myself, tumbling off the roof to the ground and being injured. I got down off the roof and left the pine needles up there. If you have ever slipped down a slippery slope, perhaps you can understand the feeling.

The phrase “slippery slope” has come to be used to refer to any danger which is difficult to stop once it gets started. Sin is a slippery slope. Once we start giving in to temptation it is quite difficult to stop the decline. We often end up going much farther than we ever thought we would.

The story of Samson illustrates the principle well. Samson had been set apart to God from his birth. He was not to drink wine, eat anything unclean, or cut his hair for the length of his life. As a result, God would bless Samson with great strength. Do you remember the rest of the story? Samson’s wife, Delilah, helped the Philistines, Israel’s enemy, learn the secret of Samson’s strength. When she first asked Samson to reveal his secret, He refused to give it away. He did, however, toy with the idea, and in doing so he took the first step down a slippery slope. After a few more tries Samson eventually told Delilah his secret and the Philistines were able to capture him.

Do you see how the slippery slope works? One step and we lose our footing, and may not be able to regain it. Sin behaves very much this way. James explains, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth

death” (1:14-15). We take the first step on the slippery slope when we allow desire to dwell in our hearts. The next step - sin - comes quickly. And the harmful result is (spiritual) death.

Fornication is a result of the slippery slope. Often fornication begins with a desire which is followed by a little “innocent” flirting. Next comes some serious eye contact and touching, followed by passionate forms of affection, and then, finally, fornication. Perhaps the guilty parties did not intend to commit sin in the beginning, but once they started down that slippery slope, there was no easy way to stop.

Other sins happen in a similar way. Stealing is the result of greed. Insult is the result of anger and hatred. No one ever became a drunkard without a first step on the slippery slope. Lying, too, has a tendency to grow worse and worse once we begin.

Churches fall victim to the slippery slope when they first lessen their resistance to error. After the first few steps are taken their is no easy way to stop the slide. After a while the church will not be taking any stand at all. Any and every innovation suggested will be accepted.

Beware of the slippery slope. It poses a great danger to us and it always ends with us being hurt.

April 18, 2004

Attendance
AM Worship: 200
PM Worship: 171

Wednesday Evening: 162

Our Goal:
Every member
at every
service!