

Foundations 6

God Winks at Sin?

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Introduction: Today we have our first audience generated sermon from Don Cole: Does God Wink at sin? From Acts 17:30 in the KJV which reads: And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

Two nuns were returning to the hospital where they worked when they ran out of gas. They hailed a passing driver who said he would be happy to give them some - he could siphon it from his tank. The only problem was he had nothing to put the gas in. The nuns looked in their car but they found no container except a bedpan. This will have to do, they decided. So they filled it with gas from the man's car and waved goodbye as he drove away. As the nuns were emptying the bedpan into their gas tank, a trucker drove by. He slowed down, did a double take, and rolled down his window. As he passed he shouted, "Now that's faith."

Our Lord had a different idea of what faith is. We find him talking

about it when Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection unless he saw with his own eyes. "Have you believed because you have seen me?" asked Jesus, when he caught up with Thomas. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

Believe without seeing - that is also Paul's message to us and the Athenians. Faith is trusting in a God we cannot see or prove. It's a trust of his love and power. Faith is like the confidence of children in their father who carries them precariously on his shoulders. He never tells them he won't drop them - they simply trust. - FAITH IS TO BELIEVE WHAT WE DO NOT SEE; AND THE REWARD OF FAITH IS TO SEE WHAT WE BELIEVE.

One of the Dangers of faith in a God we cannot see: is the sin of idolatry. In essence it is the making of a God we like instead of worshiping God as he is!

Paul's presence in Athens puts him at the heart of pagan intellectualism. There at the home of Plato, where highbrow philosophical debate is common marketplace chatter, Paul is but one voice among a host of competing ideas. Two of the more popular philosophical schools of thought there are Epicureanism and **Stoicism**,

whose devotees held very different views of the world. Most in America are not into Greek Philosophy, in fact most surveys will show That 80% of Americans consider themselves Christians. What this often means is that God is a kind loving heavenly father who gave us Jesus to pay for our sins so he could wink at our sins and offer forgiveness without any change required on our part. We Americans believe in Hell for people like Hitler, Sadam, Osama and a Child predator. But the Gossip, adultery, the thief who are good Americans and go to church every week-I think we honestly believe God winks at their sin! So the question becomes is this the God who is or is this the God we have made up?

God Winks?

Let's Read Acts 17:30 in the NIV In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. The first Truth of this verse is that God is a God of Mercy! But-Mercy is something we do not deserve-because of this truth we should not presume God's mercy!

The average human blinks their eyes 6,205,000 times each year.

Women blink nearly twice as much as men. Many of these human blinks are random nerve impulses with no thought required on the wink.

But when God winks at the sin we commit in ignorance it is a deliberate choice to overlook are sin until we repent. Scripture is clear God give out mercy in his own discretion: *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*^[f] ¹⁶*It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. Romans 9:14-16*

This make clear we have no right to expect or demand God's mercy. Not only had they worshiped many other gods but they also had not properly worshiped the living God! Though inexcusable, God did not strike them the Athenians with the judgment that they deserved. He "**overlooked the times of ignorance,**" restraining judgment for generations until that time that God revealed Himself through His Son, and provided the way to relationship to Himself through Christ alone. Now the overlooking is over. God has called them into accountability to the gospel by the resurrection of Christ proclaimed among them, by Paul.

Once you know the truth you are responsible to obey the truth. God will extend mercy because he is merciful-but when we know the truth and willfully disobey God will exact Judgment because He is a Just God!

That is who he is-it may not be who we wish for him to be -But the Bible is clear he is a Just God.

God Winked at the Athenians Temples Acts 17:22-27

The longest journey can be the shortest distance the journey around and within. A big reason God is not more real is that we look only at remote and distant places and not AROUND and WITHIN.

Ever notice how the places that are celebrated as perfectly gifted with the qualities that make us most aware of God's presence are often located about as far away from where you are as possible?

Popular spiritualities routinely tout the mountains of Tibet, the temples of India, the deserts of New Mexico as the best locations for exalted spiritual insight and renewal. When is the last time you heard someone talk about finding fertile ground for nurturing the soul in ... White Plains, New York; Phillipsburg, Kansas; Star, Idaho; or Elbert Colorado? Perhaps that is one reason so many of us decide that setting out on a spiritual quest, going on a journey in search of God's perfect presence, is simply too much effort. Assuming that an experience of holiness requires some exotic, remote location, we despair of any hope of experiencing God in our own lives before we even get started.

Paul's speech before the Athenians declared that God is Omnipresent

and our Creator. Paul even dared them to look at the evidence of the divine in their midst not on those futile shrines they had set up to some "unknown god," but in the words of an itinerant tent-maker and his master, a carpenter from Nazareth named Jesus.

Knowing the "Unknown God," Paul declared, doesn't take an extended journey or clever philosophical argument. It only takes ear and eye and nose and fingers and tongue for truth. The truth, Paul revealed, had been present among them for a long time. God's design for humanity was outlined in God's creation and defined in the holy Scriptures. Paul rejects the Athenians' vague searching for some unknown, out-of-sight god that remains forever evasive. The God Paul knows so well had not only been eternally close, the divine had been underfoot. In the person of Jesus Christ, God had become touchable, audible and visible for every man, woman and child. Because as Paul declare in Romans 1:18-20:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

God is in his creation and close to every one of us. But he is not

trapped in creation-He is transcendent-meaning beyond the created. Nature should have taught the Athenians you cannot trap God in a statue. Because God is the creator not the creation. This means that God is man's ruler, while at the same time he is close and personal. He is urging us and Athens for the personal creator to rule our life. But what Paul is getting to. . . is if choose idolatry instead of revelation we will be held accountable because we now have the truth of God as he is-not as we wish.

God winked at the Athenians Idolatry Acts 17:28-31

IN the days before ultrasounds, amniocentesis, IVFs or cloning, the whole notion of when human life began was based on a very simple fact.

A pregnancy was believed viable and a baby was deemed alive when the expectant mother felt its quickening - it's first movements. Until that moment of quickening, there was no way of knowing if the pregnancy

might be achievable or if a miscarriage had occurred. But a baby who

had quickened, a baby who had stirred with enough vigor to be felt by its mother, was believed to have had its body and soul brought to life.

Once this unique, new soul moved within its mother, the family could relax and look forward to the arrival of its newest member. In that

straightforward conceptual framework, "to live, and move, and have being" were bound inextricably together.

Once outside the womb, however, things get more complicated. As long as hearts beat and brain-waves pulse, we can all claim to be alive. Even those of us with injured or ailing bodies can still move with our mind's eye, be rowdy and aroused by our emotions.

But there are millions of seemingly sentient human beings walking around who fail miserably at having being. For these people, it's as if the quickening that once signaled they were genuinely alive, and filled with a God-created soul, had somehow left them. They may have the semblance of a life. They may walk and talk. They may move and work.

They may eat and drink. But their existence is so unexamined, so unconcerned and uncaring, that they seem to have no true being.

That which had quickened them before birth has somehow died before their actual death.

We've seen and heard a lot these hollow humans who are somehow both quick and dead at the same time.

- They're the shooters who walk into a nursing home and kill seven people. But they are also the average pew Sitter who hear week after week the good news of Jesus and never act on it. Never experience transformation.

These are the ones who walk among us, who live, and move, but have no

being, no soul that quickens and stirs within them. It's as though their souls have dried up and blown away for lack of water. The soul craves spiritual water - clear, deep pools; swift, running rivers; vast, unbounded seas. Without these deep waters the soul shrivels, becomes puny and spindly, stunted and fruitless.

We're living in a world of shallow waters. "If you swim in the ocean of most men's souls," muttered a cynic over a late night snack, "you'll barely get your ankles wet."

The Athenians we the walking dead, Paul explained to these learned people the one True God as He is! These men were very religious-but they did not have a relationship with the one true God.

Today we have a "Christian Society" But most have yet to experience the one true God. We must proclaim who he is and make clear what he did for everyone through his son Jesus Christ. ECC do not assume those around us have Faith I the God who is-more often than not there is faith in the God we desire!

For SPR to happen-You don't know what SPR is Soul Pulmonary Resuscitation. For that to happen we must point to God as he Is a God who both Justifies and Judges-who creates and is in creation-a God who winks at our sin in ignorance-but demand obedience when we know the truth!

God No Longer Winks when the truth is heard Acts 17:30

But a change has occurred from the previous generations. **"God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent."** The little

adverb **"now"** points to a dramatic shift in the divine economy of the universe. Now everything is different! For centuries men did not

have the full revelation of God that came in Christ. They had pointers to the redemptive work of Christ through the sacrificial system in the Tabernacle. The holy days pointed to a day of greater fulfillment.

Every time the sacrificial blood of a lamb was poured out on

behalf of the one offering sacrifice, sinners were pointed to the mercy of God and provision of God for salvation. But now, what had been for so long only in shadows has become substance!

Even the Greeks that had wrongly worshiped before an altar to the Unknown God, denying Him as the transcendent God before whom there is no other, were called to a change in their worship and beliefs.

They wrongly worshiped creation instead of the creator. God will not accept being wrongly worshiped. The fact that God has raised Jesus from the dead after His substitutionary death renders men

inexcusable for rejecting the revelation of God found in His creation and in His Word. Both revelations point to Christ as he is not as we want him to be.

And so the Lord God makes a universal declaration, "**God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.**" The call to repentance is in itself a universal declaration of man's sinfulness. All men must repent because all men are sinners (Rom 3:23). God the Creator has been offended, as men have chosen to go their own way in spite of all the moral laws inherent in nature and conscience calling for conformity to the divine will (Rom 1:18-23). Even apart from the written revelation, God has revealed enough of "His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature" so that men are "without excuse" for the folly of their sin and rebellion against God (Rom 1:20). So God calls for repentance, turning from sin, changing one's mind about the way he thinks about God and His way and will. This transcendent God is approachable, having demonstrated this by raising one of our own race - Jesus Christ, from the dead. So through

Christ, He calls for us to repent. Have you taken this call to repentance seriously? This word seems to have fallen from our vocabulary because of the distaste we feel in thinking upon our own sinfulness. We tend to reject reminders of it, opting instead for a kind grandfatherly God who winks at our wrongdoing: you know boys will be boys. But hear the word of the Lord. He calls all of us to repentance.

Ray Pritchard points out that repentance implies a change of mind about the way we think about life, God, happiness, etc. "Repentance is a change in the way you think that leads to a change in the way you live" [*An Anchor for the Soul*, 100]. J. I Packer reminds us, "Repentance is a fruit of faith, which is itself a fruit of regeneration. But in actual life, repentance is inseparable from faith, being the negative aspect (faith is the positive aspect) of turning to Christ as Lord and Savior." He further explains The New Testament word for repentance means changing one's mind so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed and one's whole life is lived differently. The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly; mind and judgment, will and affections,

behavior and life-style, motives and purposes, are all involved.

Repenting means starting to live a new life [*Concise Theology*, 162-163].

Conclusion: What is your response to the Truth?

Look in 17:32,33: *When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." ³³At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others*

Paul's sermon received a mixed reaction, some laughed, some wanted more information, and a few believed? The empty tomb declared that death has been conquered for the believer, sin has been forgiven, and eternity secured. That's why Peter, one of the first witnesses of the resurrection, could assert, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable

and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet 1:3-4). Is your confidence to face the judgment of God in the crucified and risen Christ? Will you be the one who sneers or believes today? Many of us have just taken a sigh of relief because we wrongly assume this sermon is going to be for the non-church and does not apply to self oh it does-when we know the truth we are required to obey! When we are ignorant God tends to overlook our destructive foolishness. But like any good Father when he clearly communicates his wishes he expects to be obeyed.

Temptation after Elders Meeting-Argumentative-Stealing

When we know the truth God expects us to Obey! Praise Band come up front! There is a reason you are here today-To know the truth of God's Mercy and Justice-To know your Creator-Most of to obey your resurrected Savior Jesus Christ! If you desire to live and love the God who is-through the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit please come up front as we stand to sing!