

Preacher's Pen points

Dayton: 1925, 2004



Dayton, TN, though a small town, has twice been raised to national notoriety in the past century. In 1925, the Dayton courthouse was the scene of the so-called Scopes “monkey trial” in which a jury convicted John Scopes for teaching evolution. The verdict was reversed on a technicality. Now, nearly 80 years later, a recent vote to ban homosexuals has made the town a focal point in the fight over gay unions. Last week Dayton was the scene of a “gay rights” march involving several hundred supporters. There is a real correlation between the two events that have made Dayton a focus in the news.

Connecting the Dots

The Scopes trial was a historic watershed that eventually made the teaching of evolution acceptable in the public school system. The widespread propagation of evolutionary thinking has had a profound effect on the morality of the nation. Though a few may consider evolution compatible with theism, it is clear that it is championed by unbelievers as an intelligent basis for the rejection of God. Tell a man that he is no more than a highly-evolved animal and he will become like one. In fact, he will do more! He will resort to practices that are both unnatural and degrading.

Commentary from Paul

Paul, in Romans one, explains the correlation between one's view of God and the resultant moral life. As he reflected upon the Gentile world, he could see that the rejection of God was the beginning of a process that led to their moral degradation: *“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is*

unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” (Rom. 1:25).

Observations

Paul's remarks make several things clear. First, homosexuality is not the only sin that comes as a result of the abandonment of God. The larger context reveals that all sin is ultimately rooted in the rejection of God and carries with it the same penalty, *“the wrath of God” (Rom. 1:18)*. This should cause all of us to address the subject of immorality with humility and mercy toward others.

Second, though all sin brings God's wrath, homosexuality is a cultural marker of the depth to which human beings fall into sin when they leave God. The OT reveals that such sins identify people and nations ripe for judgment.

Third, the practice of these sins *“against nature”* is a matter of human choice and not the result of mere genetic influence (or as it often stated, *“God made me that way”*.) Homosexuality is a deviant moral choice, not a divinely-sanctioned, genetically-conditioned practice.

Fourth, the gospel has the power to deliver the morally deviant from both the immediate and eternal consequences of this practice. Just as some at Corinth, hearing of God's sacrificial love in Christ, were *“washed, justified and sanctified” (1 Cor. 6:9-11)*, even so today deliverance from this sin is possible for those who believe the gospel.....even in Dayton, TN. —Johnny Felker