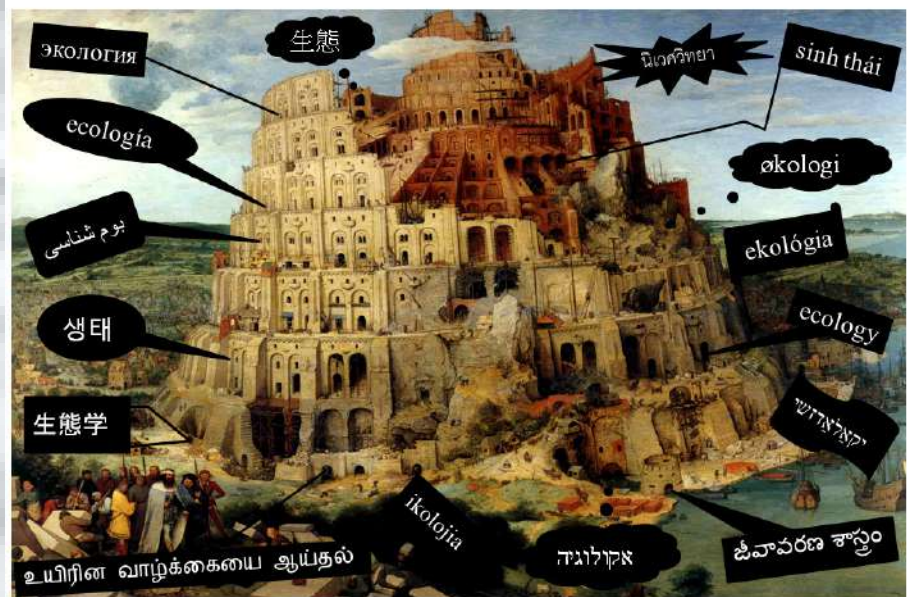


The 28th Annual
Oklahoma City Lectureship
March 23 – March 26, 2017

“Professing themselves to be wise, -
they became fools”

(Rom. 1:22)

THE ECOLOGICAL TOWER OF BABEL



A Foolish World





The 28th Annual
Oklahoma City Lectureship
March 23 – March 26, 2017

**“Professing themselves to
be wise, -
they became fools”**

(Rom. 1:22)

A Foolish World

DEDICATION



There is a sadness this year as we dedicate the Lectureship book! It was determined last year to Dedication this year's book to Earl Patterson, who had served the Barnes church of Christ for many years, in a number of ways. However, Earl departed this life before we could so honor him. Earl died on April 24, 2016! Therefore, he will not get to receive our love as expressed by the dedication but he will not be forgotten!

As the photo above shows, we honor both Earl and Gladys by dedicating the "28th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures" book to them!

Earl was born on October 24, 1947 in Bakersfield, CA. and Gladys was born on January 18, 1947 in Atoka, OK and Earl and Gladys were married on August 4, 1967 in Spencer, OK and they were married 48 years. From this marriage came two children: Alicia and Loren; and they were blessed with six grandchildren: Kenny, Sarah, Philip, Emma, Gus and Danielle (by marriage). They also were blessed even more with twelve great-grandchildren!

Earl served the Barnes church of Christ as song leader for many years. He was one, even during his illness, that you felt free to ask him to do things. He was one ready with a laugh, a smile on his face and was ready with a joke! As evidence to his character, little children loved him and he loved them.

When he was a young man, he traveled with U. L. Allen a gospel preacher, who was blind, and Earl sometimes lead singing during gospel meetings. Earl had a great desire to learn the word of God; and he was a student in the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies," even though he may have known as much, or more than the teacher. On a personal note, when he was in my classes, I called him my "fact checker," as I asked him to look things up. At times, he had the answer on the "tip of his tongue!"

His three favorite songs testify to his spiritual mind; they were: "Lead Me Gently Home, Father," "I Hold His Hand," and "O That Will Be Glory." Each has heaven written all through them! Gladys' favorite songs are: "Our God He is Alive," "On Sion's Glorious Summit," and "Lead Me Gently Home, Father." Thus, these two shared a favorite song: "Lead Me Gently Home, Father." Together in marriage and spiritually!

Gladys has served as Bible class teacher for more years than even she likes to remember, as it

might reveal her age! She envisioned, along with others, to have paintings of the Bible events, from the beginning to the end, hanging on the hall wall facing the class rooms. She and others painted them and they are now hanging on the wall up for all to see! She also, many years back, painted the painting hanging behind the baptistry. Though she has asked others to paint a new one, we are most happy with her work! She also helps with the meal served each Tuesday night, to the students and faculty of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies,” and she is also a student which reveals her desire to know the Word of God!

We are honored to dedicate the “28th Oklahoma City Lectureship book” to Earl and Gladys Patterson, who have served God through Christ!



PREFACE

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). The story of the Roman Empire and modern America! Anytime a people put themselves above the wisdom of God; they are proving their own “foolishness.” The rejection of God, is the first foolish act coming from the heart of man! From this “foolish” heart, a certain way of thinking follows; which is then concluded in the outward acts! As Paul wrote: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21).

The fact that America has changed is undebatable! While some see the changes as good and even desirable; Christians see the changes as destructive to the very fiber, “the soul” of our nation! It appears that these changes have taken place nearly over night! However, the “bud” of these changes started in the 1960’s and continued on through the 1970’s. The back ground that served as an excuse was the Vietnam War! America had gone through three wars: 1) World War I; 2) World War II; and 3) the Korean War and America was now in the Vietnam War.

However, before getting into this area of study, notice the words of 1914 in Britain, when British General Horace Smith-Dorrien said: “that war should be avoided at almost any cost, that war would solve nothing, that the whole of Europe and more besides would be reduced to ruin, and that the loss of life would be so large that whole populations would be decimated.” One might think that war is never popular, but it has been written, World War II never dropped below the support level 77 percent; despite the years and the damaging nature of the conflict. The Korean War was not as popular; and ended with about 30 percent support. The Vietnam War started with about 64 percent support in 1965, but it would end with only about 30 percent support. This is written to bring us to the point, there was greater protest during the Vietnam War than ever before! There was a change in attitude; the attitude was near, if not all together like that of British General Horace Smith-Dorrien: “that war should be avoided at almost any cost, that war would solve nothing.” Why the difference between World War II and the Vietnam War. In my humble opinion, a great change in America had taken place. The love of country, the goodness of America was no longer the opinion of many “Professors” in our colleges and Universities and from them to our young! But who were these who saw America in such low opinion? They were those called the “baby boomer.” This term generally includes those born between 1946 and 1964. They are the children of those who lived, fought, and sacrificed during World War II. I personally will never forget the words which came from the mouth of a young man spoken during a “Vietnam protest;” he said: “There is nothing worth dying for!” These words, though maybe the young man did not understand it, implied that there is nothing worth living for, for surely, we shall all die! Should we then not make our death worth something; in that it should leave behind a life of value?

The streets were full of protesting young people, they were protesting the Vietnam War; draft cards were burned, and some ran to Canada to avoid being drafted and sent into the war. But there was something that ran deeper! It was their view of America! It was their view of authority, their rejection of parental authority, and with it came a change in the moral values of America! From it came what is called the “hippy movement!” The “hippy movement” was a rejection of God and the moral teaching of the New Testament! It included among other moral changes, free sex, men and women living together outside of marriage, children being born without the foundation of a family; it brought a greater use of various mind changing drugs, and the communal families; if not Socialism, it was so close to it, it was hard to see the difference! Then, in 1973 the Supreme Court of the United States of America, gave their American changing ruling: The Constitution of the United States of America gave

women the right of abortion! With this ruling came the cheapening of life! With this cheapening of life came a rejection, first of God and that man was made in the image of God; then of “right and wrong,” as right became something to be rejected and evil became something to be embrace; “good” and “evil” as America had known it from her founding, was turned upside down!

America had the opportunity to know God, and had for many years imbibed, to some degree, the “principles and precepts” of “the teaching of Christ.” Her laws came from the Bible, not word for word, but in her values and sense of “right” and “wrong.” But, we have seen them change over the years; to the point that what was “right” is now “wrong,” and what was “wrong” is now “right!” We are now told that a boy may think, he is girl and it is so; or a girl may think she is boy and it is so! This was the Gentile world, the Roman Empire, which covered a large part of the earth. As we turn our attention to the Roman Empire and what it was like in the time of Paul we need not go in search of the history books written by men; for we have an inspired record as Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome. What was Rome like during the first century? A study of Romans chapter one, verse eighteen through verse thirty-two describes the moral values, a depravity that now dwelt in the hearts, then, in the thinking, and finally in the actions of the time!

According to, George Santayana (1863-1952), the words have been written differently through the years, but really says the something. It is a common and offend repeated phrase, Santayana wrote this way:” “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Now notice how the phrase has been written through the years:

- 1) “Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”
- 2) “Those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat their mistakes”
- 3) “Those who do not read history are doomed to repeat it”
- 4) “Those who fail to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors are destined to repeat them.”
- 5) “Those who do not know history’s mistakes are doomed to repeat them.”

(Written in his Reason in Common Sense, The Life of Reason, Vol.1)

However, today while looking at America, one might desire to say, “America is living the history of the past written by Paul in Romans chapter one, verses eighteen through thirty-two because we failed to remember and to learn from history.”

It is the purpose of the “28th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures” to open our eyes and let us see into the life at the time Paul wrote and compare it with life in America now!

Frank R. Williams,
director of the “28th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures



Introduction to the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies

First, a little history of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. It was a dream of Marion R. Fox, as there was no such school in the metro-area of Oklahoma City; but neither was there such a school in the state of Oklahoma. Marion saw a spiritual need that was not being filled. Marion was serving as the local preacher at the Barnes church of Christ and upon discussing the subject with the men of the congregation, it was agreed to start the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.” The school “opened the doors” in 1991 and the first classes were conducted in the Barnes church building.

The Barnes church building is in an excellent part of Oklahoma City. It is on 59th Street, between I-40 and I-240, just one block from the intersection of Anderson Road and 59th Street. The vision was larger than just the Barnes area; so, it was not long until classes were conducted in various locations in Oklahoma City, but not only here, classes were started in other parts of state of Oklahoma. Classes were conducted in Binger, Chandler, Hydro, Maysville, Piedmont, and Tuttle. At the same time, other congregation have contacted us concerning classes in their church buildings.

Second, at first the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” was designed to prepare men to be leaders in the Lord’s church; but it was also designed to help men who were serving as elders, deacons, teachers, and women to serve in teaching children and other women. Then, even this was enlarged to helping all, men and women, who desired to increase their Bible knowledge, which would help them grow in Christ; and to become better at teaching in home Bible studies! In this action, the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” has been able to render a great service to Christians in general!

Third, the curriculum is Bible-centered and designed to prepare the student to become an independent student of the word of God! It has been the intention of the school from its beginning, that each student should not be taught “what to believe,” but “how to learn” from the Scriptures the will of God. It has been the joy of faculty members to learn from our students! The faculty has never believed that they know it all!

Fourth, the full-time curriculum consists of four years of classes, but not limited to four years; one night per week presently. Now, this one night is Tuesday night, with classes starting at 6:30 P.M. On the other hand, students seeking advanced options may choose to attend extra courses in Greek and other subjects. Students are free, to be part-time students taking one class or more; they may be full-time students; and they are free to audit classes if they choose. The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” offers a greater maturation in the learning process than a two-year program. In fact, some students have come for five, six, or more years!

Fifth, one of the advantages of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is that the student may continue to work a full-time secular job, without needing to raise support from family, friends, and churches. By offering a schedule that fits people’s busy lives, we allow our students to immediately increase their usefulness in their local congregations!

Those who are now serving the school are: Marion R. Fox, is Director and teacher, and has degrees in: Associate of Science, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and a Doctorate of Education, has preached for nearly fifty years, and is one of the elders for the Barnes church; Jerry Gore, teacher and serves as one of the elders and teaches Bible classes for the Barnes church; and Chris Hill, teacher

and is the local preacher of the church in Luther, OK and has served for nearly sixteen years. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, class of 1997, with a Bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry; thus, these men are the present faculty! Frank R. Williams serves the school as Dean of Students and is an elder of the Barnes church. He has also preached for nearly fifty years.

Frank R. Williams



A Word from the Dean of Students

The “Annual Oklahoma City Lectures” is part of the efforts of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.” It helps our efforts to teach and to promote the school. This is also true of our Journal, “One Heart,” which also teaches and promotes the school. Therefore, this page is devoted to the school.

The school is a work of the Barnes church of Christ, individuals and sisters congregations. To all those who read this page, if you would like to help in preparing other to teach others, the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is a great opportunity to do just this. Our school is open to all who desire to improve their Bible knowledge. But, we also have classes on subjects that relate to the Bible; such as Greek, starting with beginners all the way to advanced Greek. Students are free to pursue these Greek classes just as far as their desire takes them. We have classes on the history of the churches of Christ in America; and this study reveals the efforts of men who loved the truth and their struggles in their “search for the ancient order of things.” There is much to learn about the churches of Christ of today, as one studies the history of the churches of Christ of yesterday. Every book of the Bible is covered; from the Director to each teacher, there is no desire to just skim the books, but to have an in-depth study of each one. It takes longer, but the effort is well worth while as a student’s face light up as truth is seen for the first time.

Our students are made up of elders, deacons, preachers, Bible class teachers, and those who desire to increase their Bible knowledge! At least one of our preacher students also speak on the “Annual Oklahoma City Lectures” each year. Our former students are now preaching and working with churches of Christ in a number of places and speak on lectureships and hold gospel meetings. This last year, for the first time ever, we had a “Graduation Program” and three students received a “Diploma in Bible.” This had been our desire of many years, but more efforts were put on teaching than keeping records; thus, we never had a “Graduation Program.” The three who graduated were one elder and two preachers! Just to show the desire our students have in learning, two of these have continued in their study in the school!

Those who make up the school would like to encourage you to think about becoming a student of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” in the school 2016 – 2017! Our classes start at 6:30 P.M. on each Tuesday night and the ladies of the Barnes congregation, who also are students, prepare a full meal which is served between the first and second class periods. This means that you do not have to concern yourself with a meal before coming to class. Come and join us!

Frank R. Williams,
dean of students

Marion Fox, director

Marion is a graduate of the Elk City school of preaching and has preached forty-seven years! He is now serving as one of the elders of the Barnes church of Christ. His college/university degrees include; an A.S. (1963) from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, a Baccalaureate (1965) and doctorate (1991) from Oklahoma State University, and Masters (1969) and a Masters (1969) from the University of Illinois. He has completed upper division Greek course at Oklahoma Christian College (now University). He has been a college professor (Engineering-Science division) and a National Science Foundation fellow in Engineering, Physics, and Semiconductor Manufacturing. Marion has authored several books and has engaged in several debates on various subjects.



Marion has served as teacher for the Elk City School of Preaching: Elk City, Oklahoma – 1973 – 1973; Westside School of preaching Duncan, Oklahoma – 1976 (Fall); Oklahoma School of Bible/Preaching, McLoud, Oklahoma – 1977 – 1981; Great Plains School of Bible/Preaching: Elmore City, Oklahoma – 1989 – 1991; Rocky Mountain audio and video Bible Institute Selmer, Tennessee - 1999 – 2005; and Online Academy of Biblical Studies: Dyersburg, Tennessee – 2000 – 2005. Marion has served as Director of the Oklahoma City school of Biblical Studies: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – 1991 to the present.

Marion has held gospel meetings and preached by appointment n fourteen other state. He preached and lectured at two state universities in Russia on scientific evince for the existence of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in England. He has also preached in Jamaica and Ghana.

Marion has authored seven books.



Our Faculty

Jerry Gore, instructor

Jerry was born in Amarillo, Texas, but has made his home in Midwest City, Oklahoma for many years. He served in the United States Army from June 1967 – June 1970. He received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma.

Jerry worked at Tinker Air Force Base for thirty-one years! Jerry and Judy have two children. Jerry has taught Bible classes at the Barnes church of Christ for many years and now serves as one of the elders! Jerry is a very good addition to the faculty of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. With his “engineering” mind, he is very detailed in his teaching.



Chris Hill, instructor

Christopher Hill graduated from Norman High School, Norman, OK and from Moore-Norman Technology Center in 1990. He passed his ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certifications and worked as an Automotive Technician while attending college. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, class of 1997, with a Bachelor’s degree in Bible and Ministry.

He is married to Joanna, who is also a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University. They have two children: Rachel (14) and Luke (12), who are homeschooled and are students in the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Chris worked with the church of Christ in Honesdale, PA from 1997-2001. He traveled to the Philippines two times where he helped with the preaching and conducted auto repair seminars.

Chris has served as the local preacher with the church of Christ in Luther, OK for nearly 16 years where he also serves on the board of directors for the Luther Community Service Center which provides food and other necessities for low-income families in Luther.

Chris has been a student at the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies and is now one of the instructors and he is good addition to the faculty! Chris has spoken on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures.





Dear Reader:

The One Heart Journal was originally conceived of as a much needed avenue to spread the news about the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. In the first issue, an eight page, black & white journal went out and was well received. Less than one hundred addresses were sent copies of the first issue.

Almost eleven years later, the Winter 2016 issue of One Heart was mailed out to about 507 addresses, plus bundles were given to congregations by our students for local members. The original eight pages have been extended to twelve; however, due to our printer we have gone to black and white printing. While this is still small compared to many brotherhood papers, we believe things continue moving in the right direction.

The Spring 2012 issue saw a change in the physical size of the Journal. This change was made to reduce the work in preparing the paper for mailing. This will also allow an increase in the number of pages; thus, the number of articles in future issues. As the number of pages and articles are increased, we will not reduce the quality of the articles. Sound biblical writers will be asked to write articles! It is our deepest hope that we can finally get four issues of the Journal mailed out each year. Subjects will be assigned to writers months in advance so each will have time to study and write quality articles!

It has never been our desire to add just one more paper to hundreds already produced by the churches of Christ. It has been said: “the churches of Christ have more papers per member than any other religious group!” This Journal was intended for a specific purpose: to demonstrate the level of teaching and soundness of doctrine taught at the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Inside each issue you will read articles by our faculty representing the kind of material they present in class on a regular basis. However, we are now reaching out to seek other sound brethren to write. A number of these are speakers on our lectureship, as the “Annual Lectureship” is a work of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

The Journal also allows us an opportunity to keep students, supporters, and area congregations informed about upcoming events and the class schedule for the school. We intend for the school to be a benefit to the church in the central Oklahoma area, and to do that we need more people to be aware of what we offer.

Just like the school, the One Heart Journal is made available at no cost to subscribers. Loving members of the Lord’s church contribute to the work and make it possible to publish and mail the Journal every quarter so that no subscription fee is ever necessary.

If you would be interested in receiving One Heart individually or for your congregation, please let us know so that an appropriate arrangement can be made. More people receiving One Heart mean more people are learning about the school and potentially participating in its work and growth.

In His Cause,
Frank R. Williams,
Editor, One Heart Journal

Contents

THURSDAY – MARCH 23, 2017		page
1. Marion R. Fox Barnes Congregation (Oklahoma City, OK)	Introduction to Romans 1:18-32	1
2. Benjamin J. Williams Glenpool, OK	Rom. 1:20 – Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their heart.	5
FRIDAY – MARCH 24, 2017		
3. James Rennaker Sterling Congregation (Rush Springs, OK)	Rom. 1:18-19 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their practices.	11
4. Dan Fredman Wagoner, OK	Rom. 1:21 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking (Part 1)	17
SATURDAY – 25, 2017		
5. Chris Hill Luther, OK	Rom. 1:22 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking (Part 2).	25
6. Bryan Hodge Youngsport Congregation (Killeen TX)	Rom. 1:23 – Those who refuse to have God in knowledge are corrupt in their worship.	35
7. Larry Thomson Nicoma Park Congregation (Yukon, OK)	Rom. 1:24-25 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong loving. (Part 1).	41
8. Johnny Hinton 16 th & Yale Congregation (Tulsa, OK)	Rom. 1:26-27 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong living (Part 2)	47
9. Bob Smee Enos Congregation (Marietta, OK)	Rom. 1:28-29 – God gave those up who refuse to have God their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 3)	53
SUNDAY – 26, 2017		
10. Frank R. Williams Barnes Congregation (Seminole, OK)	Rom. 1:30 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 4)	57
11. Lucian Farrar Sperry Congregation (Tulsa, OK)	Rom. 1:31 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 5)	69
12. Brian Berry Standing Stone Congregation (Cookeville, TN)s	Rom. 1:32 – And A Summary	75

Introduction to Romans 1:18-32

Marion R. Fox



MARION R. FOX was born August 20, 1943 in Sayre, OK and graduated from Sweetwater High School. He continued his education at the Elk City School of Preaching (receiving a certificate), and Oklahoma Christian College, now University, studying Greek. He has earned the following degrees: Associate of Science, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and a Doctorate of Education.

He and Cynthia were married in 1966 and they have three children: Brent, Marcey, and Melanie; and they have nine grandchildren.

All of Marion's local work has been in Oklahoma. He has preached nearly fifty years, and has served the Barnes church of Christ for nearly forty years; where he is now serving as an elder. He is the Director of the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" nearly twenty years. He also taught in the McLoud School of Biblical Studies for several years. Marion has written articles appearing in the: Gospel Standard, Firm Foundation, Contending for the Faith, Gospel Preceptor, Hammer and Tongs, Think, and One Heart, which is a Journal of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

He has written the following books: A Study of the Biblical Flood, The Work of the Holy Spirit; Vol. I, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Vol. II; The Role of Women, Vol. I; The Role of Women, Vol. II; and The Great Commission. He has also written many outline books for the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies; including: fundamentals of the Faith, A Study of Angels, Satan, and Demons, and Logic and Debate, Biblical Hermeneutics, homiletics, Introduction to the Bible, and The Gist of the Bible. Marion is working on translating the New Testament from Greek into English.

As a note of interest, Marion has engaged in six oral debates and two written debates. Also of interest is that he has traveled to Russia, England, Jamaica and Ghana to teach and preach the gospel. This work included what they call "street preaching," and he taught the churches. Marion has spoken on each of the 27 years of the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures, and is prepared to preach on the 28th one.

This passage of Scripture introduces the reader to the book of Romans. Here Paul sets forth the truth that the Gentiles were guilty of sin and needed the gospel of Christ to save them.

The Gentiles were both ungodly and unrighteous (1:18-32).

The basis of their sins was their ungodliness that led to their unrighteousness. The Greek word for ungodliness sets this forth: ἀσεβεία (pronounced *asebeia*) "*want of reverence towards God, impiety, ungodliness.*" (Thayer, p. 79) This is an attitude of heart. A person who does not elevate the Godhead to their rightful place will not see fit to subject himself to the will of God.

Their unrighteousness ἀδικία (pronounced *adikia*) "**1. injustice, of a judge ... 2. unrighteousness of heart and life ... 3. a deed violating law and justice, act of unrighteousness**" (Thayer, p. 12) flowed from a heart that was ungodly. This (unrighteousness) is manifest by actions, but actions are always preceded by an attitude of heart (here it was preceded by ungodliness). Their unrighteousness hindered the influence of the truth: (Rom. 1:18). The word "hindered" κατέχω (pronounced *katecō*) is defined: "**1. to hold back, detain, retain ... 2. ... a. to get possession of, take**" (Thayer, pp. 339-340) The book of Romans discusses righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) a total of 92 times in the N. T. A total of 39.13% of the occurrences of the word "righteousness" (in the New Testament) are in Romans. The main thrust of the book of Romans is righteousness and related words.

Ways we hinder the truth

First, we hinder the truth when we think social class distinctions determine a person's worth (Jas. 2:1-13). Second, we hinder the truth when we think racial distinctions determine a person's worth (Rom. 2:1-3:31). Third, we hinder the truth when we think age distinctions determine a person's worth (Mt. 19:13-14, 1 Tim. 4:12, etc.). And fourth, we hinder the truth when we think other distinctions (physical appearance, education, past lifestyle, etc.) determine a person's worth.

All sins are under two broad categories (Rom. 1:18): Ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sins can also be subdivided into: Sins of the heart (evil motives, evil thoughts, etc.), sins of the tongue, and overt acts.

Sins of the heart

Paul lists several sins of the heart in this passage: (1) Rejection of sufficient evidence (Rom. 1:20-21), (2) unthankfulness (Rom. 1:21), (3) failure to glorify God (Rom. 1:21), (4) professing themselves to be wise (Rom. 1:22), (5) changing the glory that God has (Rom. 1:23), (6) uncleanness (Rom. 1:24), (7) idolatry (Rom. 1:25), (8) they exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25), and (9) vile passions (Rom. 1:26-27).

Other sins of the Gentiles

After the Gentiles rejected God they committed the following sins: (1) They dishonored their bodies (Rom. 1:24). (2) They worshipped created things (Rom. 1:25). (3) They tested God by an unsound standard (Rom. 1:28). (4) They hindered the truth by their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:19). And (5) they did things that were not fitting (Rom. 1:28-31).

Other aspects of this passage of Scripture

In summary we might add that: In verses 18-23 they dishonored God, in verses 24-27 they dishonored their own bodies, and in verses 28-32 they dishonored other people. Most of the sins enumerated here relate to dishonoring other people (e.g. one would not murder someone that he honored; one would not deceive someone that he honored, etc.).

Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are: Corrupt in their practices (Rom. 1:18-20), corrupt in their thinking (Rom. 1:21-22.), and corrupt in their worship (Rom. 1:23).

God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of: (1) Their wrong loving (the meaning of the word "love" becomes twisted in both their thinking and in their actions - Rom. 1:24-25), (2) Their wrong living (by rejecting God and His word as their standard of conduct they live by the wrong standard - Rom. 1:26-27), and (3) Their wrong thinking (by rejecting God and His word as their standard of thoughts and motives, their thoughts are wrong - Rom. 1:28-32).

Paul demonstrates that the Gentiles were guilty of all sorts of sins (Rom. 1:18-32). The first reason for the Gentiles being guilty is because of their ungodliness (Rom. 1:18). Paul also sets forth: (1) The reasons for the guilt of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18-23) and (2) The results of the guilt of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:24-32).

The second reason for the Gentiles being guilty of all sorts of sins is because of their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

In Rom. 2:1-3 Paul warns about doing such things (the things of Rom. 1:18-32) and being guilty of one of these sins (if we break one of the laws of God we are a lawbreaker [cf. Jas. 2:10-12].)

Since all commit sin - either sin is committed by our: (1) thoughts, (2) words, or (3) actions. Since both words and actions flow from the heart, it is wrong thinking that leads to all of these sins (except the sins of the heart). Many sins come from a corrupt heart (Mk. 7:21-23). Evil speech comes from a corrupt heart (Mt. 12:34-35). From this we learn that evil thoughts come from a corrupt heart, and we

learn that evil words come from a corrupt heart, and we learn that evil acts come from a corrupt heart.

Translation of Romans 1:18-32 by Marion R. Fox

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth by means of ¹ *their* unrighteousness; 19 because that which is known of God is manifest in them;² for God manifested *it* unto them.³ 20 For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, both His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without a credible defense: 21 because that, knowing God,⁴ they glorified Him not as God,⁵ neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing⁶ themselves to be wise, they became fools,⁷ 23 and changed⁸ the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God gave them up by means of the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that⁹ their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: 25 for that they changed¹⁰ the truth¹¹ of God by means of the lie, and worshipped and served the creature¹² rather than the Creator,¹³ Who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 Because of this God gave them up unto dishonorable passions: for their females changed the natural use into the *use that is* against nature: 27 *and* likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female, burned in their lust one toward another,¹⁴ males with males working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error that was due. 28 And even as they refused to have the *true* God in *their* knowledge,¹⁵ the *true* God gave them up unto a reprobate¹⁶ mind, to do those things that are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 backbiters,¹⁷ hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection,¹⁸ implacable, unmerciful: 32 who, knowing the ordinance of God, that the ones practicing such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consenting with the ones practicing *them*.

1 Or, *who hinder the truth in*

2 Or, *...is manifest among them; ...*

3 Or, *...God manifested Himself unto them.*

4 With the article, this is a reference to the true God.

5 Without the article, this is a reference to the nature of God (i.e. deity).

6 Or, *pretending ...*

7 Or, *...were proven to be foolish. ...*

8 Greek – to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place ...

9 This is a result clause (their engaging in uncleanness had the result of dishonoring their bodies).

10 Or, *... exchanged the truth by means of the lie ... or, exchanged the truth by the lie ...*

11 With the article this refers to “the truth” in this immediate context.

12 Greek – *created thing or creature*

13 Greek – *the One creating ...*

14 Greek – *another of the same nature ...*

15 Greek – *a fuller or more thorough knowledge*

16 Greek – *something that has been thoroughly examined and found to be deficient.* Here the Greek words translated “reprobate” and “refused” are from the same root word.

17 Greek – *one who defames another or speaks with the intent to put the other person down*

18 Greek – *without the normal affection that one has for a family member*

Rom. 1:20 – Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their heart.

Benjamin J. Williams



BENJAMIN J. WILLIAMS was born in Morrilton, AR in December 18, 1982. He graduated from Seminole High School in Seminole, OK, being awarded the National Merit Scholarship. He and Selene (formerly McKnight) were married in 2003 and they have two children: Lucas and Calvin.

Ben started preaching as a teenager and his first sermon was preached in the church of Christ located in St. Louis, OK. For his undergraduate education, he attended the University of Oklahoma and graduating with a B.S. in Astrophysics. He continued his education and in December, 2015, he received his Master of Divinity from Oklahoma Christian Graduate School of Theology.

While he was working as student at Oklahoma University, he started preaching part time with the Barnes church of Christ and later he served as the fulltime preacher. He taught in the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies at the same time. He also became the first editor of the Journal, One Heart, a work related to the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, for which he wrote articles. He also, while working with the Barnes church, started a week of Bible teaching at the Frog Road Christian Camp and is director of the “Faith Week” session at Frog Road Christian Camp, which is located near Lake Keystone. He now serves on the Board of Trustees for the camp.

He has served as local preacher for the Glenpool church of Christ, starting in the summer of 2010. He has been called upon by a good number of churches to speak on subjects related to proving that God exists. He has written articles appearing in: One Heart, Gospel Journal, and other journals.

Romans 1:20 *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*¹⁹

The critique and condemnation of godless humanity in Romans 1:18-32 begins with a key assertion of God’s nature and humanity’s obligation to know it. The gospel (1:16) is God’s response to the train wreck that is human history. It has brought faith back into view and revealed God again, now in Jesus Christ, that we may live in the knowledge of him (v. 17). The sad plight of humanity has been and continues to be caused by a turn from God which results in God’s wrath (v. 18). The solution is for humanity to find again “what can be known about God” (v. 19).

His Invisible Attributes

Paul’s primary concern in this passage is the apprehension of God’s “invisible attributes.” It is helpful here to reflect on the ancient perception of the gods, especially as discussed in Acts 17:16-34. Athens was a “city ... full of idols” (v. 16). Besides the large shrines and temples which dominated the cityscape, Greco-Roman domestic life incorporated idols and places of prayer into every street corner and home. By contrast, in the realm of philosophy, Greeks were not always as sure of the idols and the gods they represented. Epicureans believed the world was completely material, and so while the idol may be real, the god it represented was distant if not entirely fictional. The Platonist believed that the real world was one of perfect ideas, making them skeptical of both the idols and of the Christian claims of a god “made flesh.” It is in this culture where Paul makes his claim that one Creator has made the material world a reality, but that he himself “does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything” (v. 24-25). God is near to us (against the Epicurean view, v. 27-28), and he is the originator of all life. As such, Paul argues that “we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, and image formed by the art and imagination of man”

¹⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures are taken from the ESV.

(v. 29).

This same line of reasoning figures into Romans 1:20. Paul's primary observation about God, overlooked by humanity, is that God's nature and attributes are invisible, rather than made of material substance like the idol. Going a step further, Paul takes on two other false notions of deity under the umbrella of discussing God's invisible attributes.

Eternal Power. First, God possesses and in a sense *is* "eternal power." Looking once again at the Epicurean philosophers, Paul's statements run against the claim that the gods, should they even exist, are distant and uninvolved in human life. Paul claims, as did Israel's Scriptures, that the one true God is in fact very active. This is Israel's favorite response to the false gods which surrounded them. Elijah suggests of Baal, "*Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened*" (1 Kings 18:27). The psalmist declares,

*Why should the nations say,
'Where is their God?'
Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.
Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.
Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them. (Psalm 115:2-8)*

The God of Israel is not material like the idol, nor bound to the earth at all. He is the Creator of the Earth, the place of human affairs, but he himself abides in his heaven. This distance between heaven and earth is not a gulf keeping God at arm's length. In Israel's story, people quite often run into God and find him active. Abraham meets him at Mamre, and Jacob meets him at Jabbok. Israel meets him at Sinai, and we might say that Pharaoh meets him at the bottom of the Red Sea. Heaven may be his throne, but the earth is his footstool and his power is clearly evident here below.

Divine Nature. Second, God possesses and in a sense *is* a "divine nature." Some ancient peoples believed in an invisible power in the universe, but they denied it personhood. Nature itself was worshipped by these pantheists as the only eternal power. Israel again disagrees. The God of Israel, though not human and not material, is still a divine person. His primary attributes are moral:

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7)

This is an absurd description of a natural force or of the universe as a whole. It is however a beautiful description of a God who is a person, both great in power and moral in character. An object or

force cannot be gracious, and it cannot receive gratitude for grace. Israel's God does both. As the late Cardinal Newman beautifully wrote,

*Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons. ... These feelings in us are such as require for their exciting cause an intelligent being: we are not affectionate towards a stone, nor do we feel shame before a horse or a dog; ... 'The wicked flees, when no one pursueth'; then why does he flee? whence his terror? Who is it that he sees in solitude, in darkness, in the hidden chambers of his heart? If the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the Object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine; and thus the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the Moral Sense is the principle of ethics.*²⁰

Israel's God then is distinct from all ancient perceptions of God in these two ways. First, he is the eternal power from whence the universe arises and continues. This stands against the belief in trifling gods with limited power or distant concerns. Second, he is the divine nature, a divine person in the imitation of whom all human persons are made. This stands against the belief in impersonal gods who are merely identical with natural forces. Paul believes these two invisible attributes of God are not only true, but are also clearly seen.

Clearly Perceived In the Works of God

The second half of Paul's claim sounds opposite to its first half. "His invisible attributes ... have been clearly perceived." How can God's nature be both invisible and clearly seen? Actually, the Greek text provides even a more detailed description of this knowledge. It is discerned clearly (*καθορᾶται*), as something that has been set out for inspection. This inspection takes place as humans understand (*νοούμενα*) God's works (*ποιήμασιν*). God does not hide himself, but rather invites the creation to behold him and see what may be known.

"The things that have been made" is possibly a rendering which is too limited. It makes the material creation the referent of the passage, when Paul may have something even more broad and challenging in mind. Whereas the physical creation can only show us a glimpse of God, God's "works" in history *"ever since the creation of the world"* gives us a much greater insight into his character. A better rendering might be *"the works which have been done since the creation,"* pointing not to the material universe so much as God's work throughout human history. To be fair, examples of both can be found in Scripture. The night sky is set forward as a work glorifying God in Psalm 19:1-6. The history of Israel is set forward as demonstrating God's covenant love in Psalm 136.

The writers of Scripture did not make such a large distinction as we do between what God has done and what he is doing. We tend to think of creation as a finished product, a one-time work. However, Scripture speaks of it in both senses. To Job God speaks of creation as past and complete: *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? / Tell me, if you have understanding."* (Job 38:4) However, he also speaks in the same text of creation as ongoing, the sun responding to God's command each day: *"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, / and caused the dawn to know its place, / that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, / and the wicked be shaken out of it"* (Job 38:12-13). Likewise, other passages speak of creation as a work still being performed by God, a continued action. *"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5:45b). A few passages speak of *"the beginning of creation,"* as if it were continuing still: *"From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'"* (Mark 10:6). God has continued to make them male and female even to this day.

At this very moment, our existence only continues because God is *"sustaining all things by his powerful word"* (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). Peter's second epistle elaborates on this idea. The scoffer believes

20 John Henry Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (London, 1901), 109-110.

that God has not acted “*since the beginning of creation*” (2 Peter 3:4). The believer knows that God has acted both in enormous, obvious acts (like the flood, v. 5-6) and in the subtle but continued care of creation (v. 7). When God ends his preservation of this world, it will burn (v. 10-12). When he acts again, something new will be ready for his people as a new creation (v. 13). As Peter states, it is an act of willful ignorance to look at the creation and at God’s continued works in it without seeing God himself on display (v. 5).

In our primary text, Paul is claiming that God’s nature is seen in his works. The text now draws its application. If it is the case that God has and does act in this world, and if his acts put on display his nature, what does this demand of the human creation?

Without Excuse

We may speak of the demand upon creation in at least three ways.

The Epistemological Mandate of Creation. First, we may speak of the epistemological²¹ mandate of creation. Paul is claiming that the existence of God’s works gives us a duty to know some truth of great consequence. The atheist Bertrand Russell was once asked what he would say if he one day found himself before God in judgment. His reply is now famous: “Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence!” Christian philosopher William Lane Craig has however countered with a series of questions which Russell should have considered.²² Not enough evidence ... for what?

Is there enough evidence for coercive, universal faith? No. God has not given enough evidence to compel or coerce a person into faith, but then again why would he? Scripture affirms that coercion was never his intent. God’s purpose for us has always included seeking before finding (Deuteronomy 4:29; of wisdom, Proverbs 8:17; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-10; Acts 17:27). Additionally, God has stated that we will find nothing if our seeking is not coupled with humility (Proverbs 1:28-33). For that matter, God has never claimed that humans will know everything to our satisfaction (Ecc. 3:11; 8:16-17). You may challenge whether or not that is fair or loving of God, but you cannot doubt that he has been candid in this expectation. God has been clear in stating that the person who seeks in humility will find enough truth for God’s purpose to be fulfilled in them.

Is there enough evidence to produce rational faith? Maybe. This probably depends on how far you limit the term “rational.” If you limit what counts as rational evidence to just one category of knowledge, such as science or personal experience, then perhaps God has not given us enough evidence, but what does that prove? If you eliminate historical evidence, you will find it very difficult to believe rationally in historical figures. If you eliminate mathematical evidence, you will find it very difficult to believe in mathematical postulates. If you eliminate aesthetic knowledge, you will find it very difficult to appreciate art. If you eliminate ethical knowledge, you will find it very difficult to believe in morality. Modernity has too often limited its definition of “rational” so much that it has excluded much of human experience and human knowledge. It is no surprise then that it finds faith difficult to justify.

Paul however is not looking at rationality through so limited a lens. Why would he? For that matter, why should we? Our human experience has allowed us to gain knowledge using a variety of tools. God speaks in most if not all of them. I do not believe that any one avenue of knowledge is by itself sufficient as testimony of God if a person approaches it with a determined skepticism, but cumulatively, they create a chorus which sings their Creator’s praise. Our determination to ignore the song of creation should not be a burden we place upon God. We are, as Paul says, “without excuse,” without anyone to blame but ourselves.

The Moral Mandate of Creation. The second mandate of creation is moral in nature. The knowledge which surrounds us in God’s works is not morally neutral. Creation is imprinted with an “oughtness” which speaks to the human soul. The remainder of the context in Romans 1 makes it clear that this

21 Epistemology is the philosophical study of truth, both in its nature and in its attainment.

22 William Lane Craig, “The Evidence for Christianity,” bethinking.org (Accessed 2/28/17).

is Paul's primary application. What is the connection between God's works and morality?

God's works show us not merely the power but also the character of God. In fact, it is the goodness of God which is the more profound attribute we see. When Moses wanted to see God's glory (Exodus 33:18), God responded by giving him a glimpse, not of his power, but of his "goodness" (Exodus 33:19) and said, "*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*" The greatest and most significant attribute of God is that he is good, a word which captures his holiness, his love, and his truthfulness among other things.

To go a step further, we may see that showing the goodness of God is the chief goal of the creation account of Genesis and of the remainder of Scripture thereafter. Ancient religions believed that the brutality of their world represented the brutality of the gods. The world was filled with war, so the gods must also war in their heaven. Genesis makes an opposite claim. Every aspect of creation shows God's goodness (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25), especially human life (v. 31). Why then is this world filled with such obvious evil? It is because humanity turned from the goodness of God toward the selfish deception of evil (Genesis 3). Humanity filled the earth with evil instead of God's goodness (Genesis 6:5-8). God has responded to this evil with even greater goodness and steadfast love, reversing the selfish sin of Adam with the selfless love of Jesus (Romans 5:12-21). Humanity must in every age choose either to reproduce the sin of Adam and its consequences or turn to the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the free gift of life in him. Just as Romans 1 describes the consequences of willful moral ignorance, Romans 5 describes the free alternative of Jesus: "*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification, and life for all men*" (Romans 5:18).

The Spiritual Mandate of Creation. Finally, we should notice that God's works place on us a spiritual mandate. Just as creation and human history is inexplicable without consideration of God's works and invisible attributes, so also human life is left empty without consideration of the image of God created in us (Genesis 1:26). The material universe is not evil, but in our willful ignorance we can certainly make it empty. A cynical poet observed:

A man said to the universe:
"Sir I exist!"
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation."²³

A more vulgar age has found less beautiful ways of saying this, but the sentiment remains. The godless universe is empty and uncaring.

But what if instead I am made in the image of God, and as such have a purpose? I do not mean to say here that each person has a specific purpose written in the stars or encoded in astrological charts. I only mean that once we decide to acknowledge that a Person has made us, we must ask, "What has he made us to be?" Scripture claims that God himself has breathed life into humanity (Genesis 2:7), and this means we are not our own.

Who among all these does not know / that the hand of the Lord has done this? / In his hand is the life of every living thing / and the breath of all mankind. (Job 12:9-10)

The Spirit of God has made me, / and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4)

As if this was not enough, God's renewed love toward us in Jesus makes the same demand. "*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body*" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God's works, old and new, demand that we recognize within us a spirit which is not our own, and therefore live a life which is not our own.

23 Stephen Crane, "War Is Kind and Other Lines" XXI, 1899.

Conclusion

In the medieval era, violence and corruption so infiltrated the church that Western civilization sought to be completely free both of the church and its God. Over several centuries, humanity has done its best to slowly and methodically remove the knowledge of God from among us. It is not a new cultural turn, but the long game worked out by the deception of Satan. What began with the deism of America's founding fathers in the 19th century became the secularism of the 20th century and now the moral chaos of the 21st century. Religion has been turned into a permissible hobby, but only as a part of private life. Faith has limited appeal in the public square.

In response to this crisis, Christians must compassionately reassert the principles of Romans 1:20:

1. God's nature is one of both great power and personal morality.
2. God's nature is woven into every facet of human existence if we will but look.
3. God's nature and works make demands of us which we cannot ignore without grave consequences.
4. The denial of God is the problem to which the gospel is heaven's response.

Rom. 1:18-19 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their practices.

James Rennaker



JAMES RENNAKER – was born December 27, 1971 in Pratt, Kansas. Then, in July 22, 2005 he and Julie (Pipkin) were married. They have been blessed with six children: Nicholas, Leah, Isaac, Eli, Andrew and Asher.

James started preaching in 1996 and the first place he did local work was in Clarksville, TX. He has attended: USAO, Chickasha, OK, and the Memphis School of Preaching, Memphis, TN, and graduated from this school. He has done local work at: Clarksville, TX and Sterling, OK. And is now working with the Sterling church and is in his fourteenth year.

He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in the following places: Marlow, OK, Marshall, TX, Carthage, TX, Talco, TX. And Redwater, TX.

Romans 1:18-19

The Roman letter contains some of the most basic yet thought provoking messages of truth found in God's word. Calvin correctly wrote of the book of Romans, "If we have gained a true understanding of this epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture." Without a doubt, the most "profound treasure" centers upon the fact that man is a sinner and in need of a Savior. This is seen mid-way through the first chapter as the reader is introduced to the thesis for the epistle.

Romans 1:16-17 declares,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Consider three fundamental facts contained in the reading; the gospel is God's power to save, both Jew and Gentile are amenable to the gospel, and within the gospel "is the righteousness of God revealed." The apostle will spend the rest of the letter proving these to be true and if men will be saved, it will be according to God's plan (the Gospel). Many are the ways in which man will devise a plan to save himself but all such efforts are futile.

Through the rest of the chapter, Paul's attention turns to the Gentiles of his day. Their evil thoughts and actions caused them to stand guilty before the Almighty Jehovah. The apostle declares that God's wrath has been revealed against the sins of mankind and without his obedience to the gospel, there was no possibility for salvation. The church must be persuaded to see God's disposition toward the unbelieving world. This then will serve as a catalyst for Christians to go "everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

JEHOVAH'S WRATH REVEALED

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (Romans 1:18)

"For" (*gar* in the Greek) links what is being written with what was just penned in the previous verses. Paul writes that God's righteousness is revealed (1:16-17) because "the wrath of God has been revealed" (1:18). In other words, the wonderful plan of salvation has been made known so that man may escape God's wrath which has been revealed against sin.

When considering wrath, it is necessary to distinguish between God's wrath and man's. Man's wrath is often spontaneous and lacking of facts, therefore, it is sinful (Proverbs 14:17, Colossians 3:8,

Galatians 5:20). Jehovah's wrath is not built upon emotion, jealousy, or spitefulness. Rather, God's wrath is legal wrath and thereby justified when punishment is exercised upon the ungodly and unrighteous. Those who refuse to be saved in the way revealed by His mercy, will be consumed in the way revealed by His wrath.

Verse 18 lists two forms of sin against which this wrath is exhibited.

Ungodliness

The word Godliness encompasses piety, reverence, and respect for God. To attach the prefix un simply negates these words. Paul is describing those individuals who are irreverent and lacking of respect for Jehovah. These rebellious and dishonest souls have no regard for God nor his word. The Creator is relegated to a position less than the created (Romans 1:25).

Unrighteousness

The word righteousness involves treating our fellow man as we would have him treat us (Matthew 7:12). The un prefix cancels this proper attitude and now describes one unwilling to love and aid his neighbor but is more likely to pass, "by on the other side" (Luke 10:31-32). This deplorable action is strongly condemned with Scripture (Romans 1:29, 1 Corinthians 6:9).

Jesus on a certain occasion taught the importance of proper placement of God and man within our lives. A lawyer approached the Christ asking, "*Which is the great commandment in the law*" (Matthew 22:36). What follows is a masterpiece, removing any doubt as to what is most important. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). The ungodly and unrighteous reject the two things upon which Jesus said the old law is built. What sin can be committed which does not violate my love for God or love for my fellow man?

Consider also the words of Titus, "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11-12).

Who hold the truth in unrighteousness

Notice how the Greek word for "**hold**" is translated in other verses:

Matthew 21:38 "*seize*", Luke 4:42 "*stayed*", 1 Corinthians 7:30 "*possesseth*"

The American Standard renders the phrase, "*Who hinder the truth in unrighteousness*"

The truth was being held back, restrained, and hindered by the iniquity of the Gentiles. Their wickedness is the very reason the truth had little to no influence within their lives and nations. This corruption not only impacted those in direct contact with the "*hinderer*" but also impacted the world to its very corners.

By application, the children of God in the Old Testament were not exempt from sharing the same condemnation (Paul will address this in chapter two of the Roman letter). Ungodliness, unrighteousness, and hindering the truth can be read throughout the pages of sacred history. Consider a few examples:

- *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30).* Jeroboam created an alternative way to worship Jehovah and in so doing "restrained" the truth. When Israel was taken into captivity, among the reasons listed for their exile was the influence

of Jeroboam, *“For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them”* (2 Kings 17:22). Did Jeroboam “hold” the truth in unrighteousness? Absolutely!

- The same can be said of King Manasseh as he failed to learn from his father, *“So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel”* (2 Chronicles 33:9). Just how did Manasseh make his people err? Verse two states he *“did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”* Notice the detail that follows:

- * *“He built again the high places”*

- * *“He reared up altars for Baal-im”*

- * *“Made groves”*

- * *“Worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them”*

- * *“He caused his children to pass through the fire”*

- * *“He observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards”*

- * *“He set a carved image, the idol which he made, in the house of God”*

Manasseh hindered the truth by not only building the places of idol worship but by engaging in the practices himself!

- How did the Jews during the life of Christ hold the truth? They tried to crucify him by accusing him of violating the law of Moses. Upon what basis? They said he blasphemed (Matthew 26:63-64). This was a perversion of the law! The evidence had been shown time and again that Jesus was the Christ so the problem is not with evidence, it is with their hearts. Consequently, the punishment meted out by the law for blasphemy was not crucifixion but rather stoning (Leviticus 24:16). Therefore, the Jewish authorities were guilty of holding the truth in unrighteousness.
- In Matthew 23, Jesus summarized the sins of scribes and Pharisees by pronouncing seven “woes.” Notice the following, *“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men”* (Matthew 23:13). Our Lord makes it evident that their false doctrines concerning Him and their vain traditions prevented people from becoming His followers. The parallel verse in Luke’s account described them as having, *“Taken away the key of knowledge: Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered”* (Luke 11:52).
- Also in Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced another woe that describes the end result of “hindering” the word of God from people’s lives. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”* (Matthew 23:15).

The world certainly has not changed from those days until now. There are countless groups and individuals both within and without the church, who *“hold the truth in unrighteousness.”* The evidence is found in newspapers, brotherhood periodicals, books, on television, internet, etc.

- Impossibility of apostasy - Sam Morris, prominent denomination preacher of the past, wrote the following in a tract:

*We take the position that a Christian’s sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of his soul . . . All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his souls one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any danger. . . The way a man lives has nothing to do with the salvation of his souls. (Quoted in Guy N. Woods, 1995, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, pg. 225. Brother Woods is quoting from the tract, *Do a Christian’s Sins**

Damn His Soul? By Sam Morris)

The floodgates are open for sin if this man's words are true! What better way can be invented to hinder the truth in unrighteousness? (Romans 6:1-2)

- Mechanical instrumental of music in worship (Quail Springs introduced several years ago)
- Pornography
- Abortion
- Premarital sex
- LGBT
- Evolution
- Skipping worship for entertainment (Isn't it wonderful when brethren would rather watch the Thunder play than worship the Lord?)
- Gambling

As always in Scripture, one cannot help but "*behold the goodness and severity of God*" (Romans 11:22). Beginning with the account of Adam and Eve, God's anger was seen at the entrance of sin into the world. Man stood guilty and rightly due the punishment given by Jehovah. But God's goodness was also seen in the promise of a Savior through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Peter expressed this goodness by writing, "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward usward not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9).

GOD HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN TO THE WORLD

"*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them*" (Romans 1:19).

God's wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness is certainly justified based upon the fact that God has been made known. Therefore, man cannot dismiss his conduct due to God being unknown or unknowable (Romans 3:23). A cursory reading of Scriptures will make this quite clear.

- Nature stands as a testament to the Almighty. While Jehovah's will for man is not known in this way, one can certainly know that something greater than man exists. "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*" (Psalm 19:1).
And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:15-17).

But nature alone does not supply man with the answers to eternal life. In his commentary on Romans, brother Robert Taylor writes, "By nature alone and minus any and all revelation man would not and could not know God's name, that three possess the divine nature, the multiple attributes of God, that man has sinned against God, what redemption cost heaven in its expensive composition and what terms man must meet to be saved." (Taylor Jr, Robert R. 1996, *Studies in Romans*, Abilene, TX; Quality Publications, pg. 25) So there must be more. Has God shown himself to the peoples of the world at different times? And if so, was it possible for man to know God's will and thereby escape eternal damnation?

- The great flood of Noah's days came upon the world because of sinful practices, "*And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5). But God being a merciful God, was not willing to leave man without knowledge of him and his will. Remember that Noah was a "*preacher of righteousness*" (2 Peter 2:5). It cannot be denied that Noah spent much time declaring God

- and His coming wrath (1 Peter 3:18-20).
- Through the journeys of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the name of God was carried to many areas of their world; Canaan, Egypt, Midian, Padan-Aram, etc.
 - Joseph made known in Egypt the God of his fathers. He made sure that Pharaoh knew that God revealed the interpretation of the dreams of the cows and ears of corn (Genesis 41). Sometime after the death of Joseph, the Bible records, *“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph”* (Exodus 1:5). Not only was this new king ignorant of Joseph and his deeds but he also was ignorant of Joseph’s God. He would soon be introduced.
 - The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt would demonstrate to the world the power of Jehovah. The wonders and signs of the ten plagues would serve this purpose. God said of Pharaoh, *“And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth”* (Exodus 9:16).
 - When the children of God reached the eastern side of the Jordan River, the spies who contacted Rahab learned that indeed the power and name of Jehovah had spread beyond Egypt. Some forty years after the exodus the harlot revealed, *“I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”* (Joshua 2:9-11)
 - The ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem during the reign of David. 1 Chronicles 16 records the wonderful message the king gives to the people of God as they celebrate this occasion. Among David words are the following, *“Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. And when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people”* (1 Chronicles 16:16-20) *“Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations”* (1 Chronicles 16:24). *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth* (1 Chronicles 16:31)
 - The trying of the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would also bring exposure of the Lord to the Gentile world. These three youths refused to bow to the image and were thrown into the fiery furnace as punishment. Upon seeing they were unharmed, Nebuchadnezzar would declare their God unto his people. *“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.”* (Daniel 3:29, see also 4:34-37)
 - As Daniel was preserved in the lion’s den, it was king Darius who would made a similar decree to Nebuchadnezzar’s, *“Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions”* (Daniel 6:25-27)
 - When the time came for the Jews to return to their land, The Persian king Cyrus made great

proclamation concerning God, *“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah”* (Ezra 1:1-2).

The existence of the Creator is knowable simply by looking at the evidence readily available. In viewing what is created (trees, plants, stars, the human body, etc.), one cannot deny the power and intelligence that exceeds what mortal man possesses. But to this knowledge must be added that God is concerned with His creation and has a plan. The preceding verses declare that “Jehovah” has been carried into the Gentile world. Often it was God’s people declaring His doings to the unbelievers but sometimes it was the pagans and even their kings who saw the power of Jehovah and declared Him to be above all other gods.

The soul saving gospel of Christ had been taken to the world during the time of the apostles (Colossians 1:23). They upheld the words of the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and delivered a message of hope to the unbelievers. The church today must be vigilant in taking the same message of hope to the world of today. The present Gentile world lies in the same sin and condemnation as it did at every given time of the Old Testament. Will sinners escape the wrath of God which has been revealed? Only by knowing the answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Will the church escape the wrath of God which has been revealed? Only by supplying the answer to the same question.

Rom. 1:21 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking (Part 1)

Dan Fredman



DAN FREDMAN was born in Oklahoma City, OK and he and Pam were married in May, 1968. They have three children: Johnie, Christine, and Lacy. He and Pam have nine Grandchildren.

He graduated from Harding University's Christian Communication Program (Now the School of Biblical Studies) in 1980 – 1982, and he attended Oklahoma Christian College (now University) from 1967- 1968 and 1992 – 1993, receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Bible.

Dan has done local work for the churches of Christ in Texas and Oklahoma and has preached over forty-five years. He worked with the church in Broken Bow, OK for twelve years! He is presently working with the church of Christ in Wagoner, OK. He has spoken on several of the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures.

As a note of interest, Dan attended the Barnes church of Christ in 1952 and attended the Schwartz school in the area. Schwartz was one of the last one room schools in the state and Dan was one of three in the second grade. The family moved to McLoud, OK in 1953.

Dan has written several articles for the Journal, One Heart, and has spoken on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures for several years.

Text: Rom. 1:21

Introduction

A. *As you are well aware, you are getting a really deep look into Paul's letter to the Romans, especially the part in chap. 1 where he describes those who refuse to acknowledge God and its consequences.*

1. My lesson for this evening is based on what Paul says in Rom. 1:21.
2. There Paul says, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (NASB)
3. Romans 1:21, "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." (NKJV)
4. Ben has made things clear concerning the fact that refusing to acknowledge God corrupts our hearts, that is, the very basis of who and what we are.

B. *Now, we need to take things a little further in what all this refusal to acknowledge God does to man.*

1. The NASB here uses the word "speculations", the NKJV uses the word "thoughts" both pointing out it is the mind, the thinking, the way one thinks that is being affected by their refusal to acknowledge God.
2. The interesting thing here is that we are NOT talking about a bunch of atheists.
 - a. Paul emphasizes they "KNOW" God, they know about God but refuse to acknowledge Him, to honor Him, that is, to obey Him as God.
 - b. But, sadly, I honestly believe that a lot of people who "claim" to be atheists, do know,

deep down, that God is real and they just refuse, don't want to admit it which puts them in this same category Paul talks about here.

3. Also, this vs. is describing those who know God, know about God and refuse to acknowledge or obey Him.
 - a. We are talking about deserting or defecting from God.
 - b. They know God but choose to follow their own thinking, their own desires instead of listening to and obeying God.

C. So, now, let's consider what Paul talks about here with those who believe and refuse to acknowledge, refuse to honor God.

I. First of all, this is not something new to Paul's time, much less to ours today.

A. A refusal to acknowledge God has messed up people's thinking, darkened their hearts from the very beginning.

1. Again, we are talking about people who know God but refuse to listen to and obey Him.
2. When did people start doing this, from the very beginning of time.

B. They began early in the OT.

1. Gen. 3:6 – Adam and Eve.
 - a. Did Adam and Eve know God? Uh, yeah!!!!
 - b. Did God give them any instructions? “Do not eat of that one particular tree in the Garden!”
 - c. Satan lied to them, they refused to acknowledge God and their foolish hearts were darkened.
 - d. Genesis 3:6, “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”
2. Gen. 6-7 - Nearly the whole population of the earth refused to acknowledge God and their foolish hearts were darkened.
 - a. This is not all that far down the road from creation, all these people knew God, knew about God.
 - b. Noah preached what people needed to hear for over 100 years but not one soul returned to God.
 - c. The people weren't interested and didn't want to hear it. They refused to acknowledge God and their foolish hearts were darkened.
 - d. Only 8 souls on all the earth remained faithful to God.
 - e. 2 Peter 2:5, “and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;”
3. The Israelites, God's chosen people, constantly refused to acknowledge God and allowed their foolish hearts to be darkened over the centuries.
 - a. Beginning early in their establishment as a nation, the people chose to follow the 10

out of the 12 spies who followed their own wisdom instead of God's commands. Well over 600,000 rebelled, defected from God, while two men remained faithful.

- b. This set the pattern for the next several hundred years as first, Israel and then Israel and Judah consistently rebelled with the majority turning against God and a small minority remaining faithful.
- c. Prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos and many others preached to Northern Israel and Judah for years and years and were rejected, persecuted and refused.
- d. Only a very few remained faithful to God while the majority again refused to acknowledge God and allowed their foolish hearts to be darkened and went their own way.
- e. Over and over God punished them for their refusal to acknowledge Him and His way - we are told, this is a lesson and example for us today.
- f. 1 Cor. 10:11-12, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

B. In the NT we have the same story.

1. The Son of God comes in person to the earth and is rejected by the majority of His own people. They refused to acknowledge God by refusing to accept His Son.
2. John 1:11, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."
3. John 5:43, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me;"
4. After the church was established, men began to listen to false teachers and false doctrine and leave the truth.
5. They were refusing to acknowledge God by refusing to fully obey His word and their foolish hearts were darkened.
6. Gal. 1:6-7, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ."

C. In the second and third centuries leaders began to defect from the doctrine of Christ and gradually formed the apostate church that over time lost all resemblance to the church established in Jerusalem.

1. Again, to turn away from, to defect from the doctrine of Christ is to refuse to acknowledge God for Who and What He is.
2. When one refuses to acknowledge God, their foolish heart will be darkened, alienated from the truth of God.

D. Men continued to defect from God over the years and establish their own versions of the church while a minority continued to serve God to the best of their ability.

E. Even in our country, once the Lord's church was established and growing we had a great many who gradually began refusing to acknowledge God and allowing their hearts to be darkened.

1. Those foolish, darkened hearts allowed them to be led astray, to accept teachings that violated God's word.
2. Here in the latter half of the 19th century people began to defect from the Lord's way using instrumental music, the Missionary Society and changing women's role in the church.
3. According to brother Dave Miller's figures in his book "Piloting The Straight" we lost 85% of our brotherhood and 35 out of 42 Bible colleges to those who defected from God's way.

F. Brethren, we are now seeing the beginning of another great defection in the Lord's church.

1. We are already seeing it happen as we are already losing, not only individuals, but entire congregations to the liberal movement that wants to change the Lord's church into just another denomination.
2. Once again, the problem areas are Instrumental music, the role of women in worship, additions and changes in worship, the In-dwelling of the Holy Spirit and the purpose of baptism.

II. The question is, what can we do about it?

A. Jesus warned us that a majority of the world will not acknowledge Him or accept Him and, as a result, their foolish hearts will be darkened and will refuse to accept and obey Him.

1. Matt. 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."
2. Those walking in the darkness cannot see the narrow way!
3. This is not what we want and it certainly isn't what the Lord wants, but it is a fact we have to deal with.

B. So, what can we do to change things?

1. We know there are some things we cannot do.
 - a. We cannot force others concerning what they think, believe or teach.
 - b. Neither men nor congregations have the right to violate the autonomy of other congregations.
 - c. Elders have no authority over any except their own congregations.
 - d. Please do not misunderstand - elders have an obligation to be aware of what is happening in other places and other congregations - they cannot protect their congregation unless they are aware of the dangers that exist outside their own fold.
2. The Lord did not set anyone up to police the brotherhood.
3. This means that whatever we do to help the church we do as individuals or as elders working in our own congregations.

C. How do we do this?

1. Paul's instructions to the church in Ephesus are: "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ," (Eph. 4:15)
2. There is only one weapon with which to fight error and that is truth, the Word of God.
3. Ephes. 6:17, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
4. Paul says we are to speak the truth, use the sword of the Spirit, in love.

III. What is preaching the truth in love?

A. Paul tells Timothy to "Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season." (2 Tim. 4:2)

1. Again Paul says preachers are to "reprove, rebuke and exhort with great patience and instruction." (2 Tim. 4:2).
 - a. Notice that two out of the three are what most today would consider negative preaching - reproof and rebuking.
 - b. That is exactly what Paul meant with these terms - the GK word translated "reprove" means to censure, to sternly tell.
 - c. The GK word translated "rebuke" is an even stronger form of reproof meaning to expose, to convict.
 - d. That means that here Paul is telling Timothy that his preaching is to censure, to sternly tell his hearers what is right and wrong, to expose and convict of sin. And he is to do it so that they might be encouraged.
2. To preach in love means loving people enough to preach what they need to hear not what they want to hear.
3. It also means we must preach it with the right attitude, with an attitude of love, concern and kindness for the person or persons with whom we are sharing God's word.

B. But preaching the truth in love creates its own problems and another defection from Christ.

1. Preaching the truth has always driven the majority away.
 - a. People don't want to hear what they are doing wrong, they don't want to be told they are sinners and need to repent.
 - b. People don't want to hear that they need to change their lives or their priorities.
2. Tell people what they need to hear, tell them that they are not right and they will call you mean-spirited and unloving because you have the audacity to tell them they need to change their lives.
3. Preaching the truth has never drawn a crowd, again look at Biblical history.
 - a. How big a crowd did Noah draw in Gen. 6-7?
 - b. How big a crowd did the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos and others draw when preaching what the people needed to hear?
 - c. Neh. 9:26, "But they became disobedient and rebelled against Thee, And cast Thy law behind their backs and killed Thy prophets who had admonished them so that they

- might return to Thee, and they committed great blasphemies.”
- d. When Jesus got really serious about His preaching as He did in John 6, what did the crowds do?
 - 1) John 6:60-61, “Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” [61] But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble?”
 - 2) John 6:66, “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.”
 - e. We think of the apostles drawing and converting a tremendous crowd of 3000 on Pentecost, but Josephus indicates there were some 3 million Jews in Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. If true, the vast majority rejected what was preached and only .001 of 1% listened to and obeyed the gospel on that day.
 - f. Stephen drew a crowd with his preaching in Acts 7- 8, but it was that crowd that killed him.
 - g. Acts 7:59, “And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”
 - h. Now the apostle Paul did draw some crowds with his preaching.
 - 1) In Acts 13:50 he drew a crowd that persecuted him and drove them out.
 - 2) In Acts 14:5 he drew a crowd that intended to stone him.
 - 3) In Acts 14:19 he drew a crowd that did stone him.
 - 4) In Acts 16:20ff he draws a crowd that beats him and puts him in prison.
 4. Preaching what people need to hear has never been popular and people are refusing to acknowledge God and are defecting from His church.
 5. Why? Because their foolish hearts are darkened and they don’t want to hear the truth.
 6. This is the fulfillment of what Paul told Timothy when he said that the majority would be more interested in having their ears tickled than in hearing the truth.
 - a. 2 Tim. 4:3-4, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; [4] and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”

Conclusion

A. Brethren, what can we to do to reach out to those who are refusing to acknowledge God?

1. What can we do to bring light into those darkened hearts?
2. What can we do to stop the defection, the desertion, from the Lord and the church into the denominational world?
3. Stand firm on the Word of God, it is our only authority.
4. Preach the truth in love.
5. Encourage our brethren whenever and wherever possible to be like the apostle Paul and “fight the good fight, to finish the course and to keep the faith.”

B. Remember - the multitudes have always rejected God and His truth but we must not let that discourage us.

1. Brethren, there are good, honest, sincere hearts out there yearning to learn the truth.
2. The only way to find those few is to preach to the multitudes. We will rejoice over the few and weep over the many, but we will do it together.
3. Our God expects those who follow Him to be the light to those whose hearts have been darkened.
4. Romans 2:19, “and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,”

C. What about you today?

1. Do you truly want to hear the truth?
2. Do you want to be pleasing to God or to man?
3. Are you truly being that light to those in darkness?
4. It is your choice – You choose....
 - a. To please God or yourself.
 - b. To obey God or obey man.
 - c. To be lost or to be saved eternally.
5. Which have you chosen for yourself?

Rom. 1:22 - Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking (Part 2).

Chris Hill



CHRISTOPHER HILL graduated from Norman High School, Norman, OK and from Moore-Norman Technology Center in 1990. He passed his ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certifications and worked as an Automotive Technician while attending college. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, class of 1997, with a Bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry.

He is married to Joanna, who is also a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University. They have two children: Rachel (14) and Luke (12), who are homeschooled and are students in the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Chris worked with the church of Christ in Honesdale, PA from 1997-2001. He traveled to the Philippines two times where he helped with the preaching and conducted auto repair seminars.

Chris has served as the local preacher with the church of Christ in Luther, OK for nearly 16 years where he also serves on the board of directors for the Luther Community Service Center which provides food and other necessities for low-income families in Luther.

Chris has been a student at the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies and is now one of the instructors. He is currently teaching on the book of Ephesians. This is Chris' fourth time to speak on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures!

It has been said that good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that experience comes from bad judgment. We can learn a lot from experience. Here is a list of sayings that have supposedly helped cowboys with some of life's most complex problems. Some have called these sayings cowboy wisdom:

Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier 'n puttin' it back in.
If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.

If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'.

Never slap a man who's chewin' tobacco.

Always drink upstream from the herd.

Don't kick a sleeping dog.

Never approach a bull from the front, a horse from the rear, or a fool from any direction.²⁴



These cowboy sayings have some good sound advice, but I want to focus our thoughts on teachings on wisdom and foolishness found in the Bible. The Bible reveals many truths about the wise and about the fools and studying about them can help us to be wise and not to become fools. One book of the Bible that focuses extensively on wisdom and foolishness is the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is a compelling book of practicality and understanding. It is a practical guide to life in written form, and it is filled with exciting insights that we should read and apply to our lives. When we read a proverb, it can strike a chord within us. We may laugh, and then read another one and cry. The book of Proverbs is graceful yet powerful in its words. Proverbs can give us wisdom in the everyday decisions of life so that we do not live like fools. Here are a few descriptions of the fool as described in Proverbs.

²⁴ Cowboy Quotes, Sayings, and Wisdom. <http://www.cowboyway.com/CowboyQuotes.htm> (accessed January 15, 2017).

*The wise of heart will receive commands, But a babbling fool will be ruined.*²⁵ -- Proverbs 10:18

He who conceals hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads slander is a fool. --Proverbs 10:18
Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, And so is wisdom to a man of understanding. --Proverbs 10:23

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel. -- Proverbs 12:15

Every prudent man acts with knowledge, But a fool displays folly. --Proverbs 13:16

Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of knowledge. --Proverbs 14:7

A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless. --Proverbs 14:16

A fool rejects his father's discipline, But he who regards reproof is sensible. --Proverbs 15:5

Like a dog that returns to its vomit, is a fool who repeats his folly. --Proverbs 26:11



I believe one of the strongest descriptions of a fool comes from Proverbs 18:2. It declares that: *“A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.”*

There were even songs written about fools in the Bible. David, who trusted in God to kill Goliath and became the second king of Israel is credited with writing Psalm 53.

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God,”

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;

There is no one who does good.

God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

To see if there is anyone who understands,

Who seeks after God.

Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;

There is no one who does good, not even one.

Have the workers of wickedness no knowledge,

Who eat up My people as though they ate bread

And have not called upon God? And have not called upon God?



It is with this historical backdrop that the Apostle Paul describes the dangers of becoming fools. He lays out some very easy ways to understand what the end result will be for those who claim to be wise yet become fools. The focus of our study comes from the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome. In Romans 1:18-22 Paul declares:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and

²⁵ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible version unless otherwise noted, The Lockman Foundation 1995.

their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures [emphasis added].

There are several different words in the New Testament translated “fool.” The word translated “fool” in Romans 1:22 is “μωραίνω (mōrainō)” and is used in the casual sense to make foolish; in the passive sense, to become foolish.²⁶ It is related to our word “moron.” This word applies to a fool’s moral reasoning.²⁷

The irony here is intentional as men claim to be wise, their moral choices demonstrate the contrary. The tragedy is that they do not recognize their inconsistency. Wisdom is knowing how to make the right choices and decisions based on available knowledge. Those who reject a knowledge of God may think that they are wise and will even use their rejection of God as evidence of their wisdom! Those who claim to be wise, but are foolish, think they are wiser than those who make decisions based on a knowledge of God. The so-called wise of the world often consider Christians to be naïve, gullible, foolish, illogical, and full of ambitious thinking; all the while the foolish people consider themselves to be sophisticated, unbiased, smart, and guided by critical thinking. It is the nature of worldly wisdom to confuse foolishness with wisdom. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking.

The word translated “fool (mōrainō)” in Romans 1:22 is the same word Jesus uses in Matthew 5:13 and Luke 14:34 to refer to salt that has lost its savor.²⁸

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless (mōrainō), how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”²⁹

The imagery of salt that has lost its taste visualizes a scenario where the components of salt have become so diluted or adulterated that it no longer has any useful purpose.³⁰ In the same way, if we fail to fulfill our role as Christians by diluting the values and priorities of God, we become useless as teachers and preachers of God’s Word. Like salt that has become worthless, disciples who fail in adding Christ’s attributes to the world are useless for kingdom growth.

Paul warns above that there are those who claim to be wise (sophos), but in reality are fools (mōrainō). “Fool” is the opposite of “wise.” Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool to teach about being prudent in spiritual matters. The rich fool didn’t perceive that his death could come at any time and that his worldly possessions would be of no value to him after his death. The word that Jesus uses for “fool” (aphron) in this parable describes a person so focused on his physical life that he is not prepared for eternal life. That is a foolish way to live (and die).

The word Paul used in Romans 1:21 for “foolish” is an even stronger word to contrast “wise” (sophos). The word that is the very opposite of “wise” (sophos) is “anoetos.”³¹ Paul writes in Romans 1:21, *“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish (anoetos) heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.”* Being foolish in this sense is more than one who lacks understanding; it describes one who does not govern his lusts and is associated with evil desires.³²

26 W.E. Vine., An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 444.

27 Cottrell, Jack., The College Press NIV Commentary, Romans, Volume 1. (Joplin: College Press, 1996), 146-147.

28 Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 444.

29 Matthew 5:13.

30 “It should be noted that while sodium chloride as a chemical cannot lose its chemical properties, Palestinian salt came from the Dead Sea, and could lose its savor due to either chemical impurities or physical disintegration.” Larry Chouinard, The College Press NIV Commentary, Matthew. Edited by Ph.D. and Tony Ash, Ph.D. Jack Cottrell. (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1997), 101.

31 This word is made of two parts: “a”, negative, and “noeo,” the mind. Literally: Not applying the mind.

32 Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 444.

The Psalmist declares, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*³³ So those who do not fear God are fools. Therefore, foolishness finds its origin in the rejection of God. Isaiah defined a “fool” as a person whose *“heart inclines toward wickedness.”*³⁴ Prejudice against God is one of the chief causes of foolishness.

The so-called “wise people” often have very irrational thoughts and teachings because there is a moral fault causing guilt in their lives that keeps them from acknowledging God’s commandments. They know that if they acknowledge God and his omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent qualities they would be wise to obey His commands. That would require changing their views and goals to live moral and godly lives, a change which they are not willing to make. One of the most common reasons people choose not to believe in God and obey him is because they do not want to give up their sinful lifestyles. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking. The Bible calls these people “fools.” There are several people in the Bible who made themselves out to appear wise, but in reality were fools. Let’s look at a few examples from the Bible.

Herod the Great

The first Biblical example we will look at is Herod the Great. We learn a great deal about his faulty wisdom in the account of the birth of Jesus in the book of Matthew.

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him” (Matthew 2:1-4).

Why would Herod be troubled? Look again at their question: *“Where is he who is born king of the Jews?”* Herod would be troubled by such a question asked by these distinguished visitors because presently he is king of the Jews! And now he hears that someone out there is saying that a new king has been born!

There were several rulers that wore the name “Herod.” The “Herod” mentioned in this passage is Herod the Great. *“Herod has a history of killing people that he assumes are a threat to his power.”*³⁵ This paranoia may have originated from witnessing his own father die as he was poisoned in an assassination plot. Herod was suspicious and jealous of everyone around him, even those closest to him. Herod drowned his brother-in-law, who was the Jewish high priest, because he suspected him of an overthrow plot. He later murdered his wife, her mother, three sons he had by her and his mother-in-law. It was said that it was better to be born Herod’s pig than Herod’s son.³⁶ Now that we know Herod the king a little better, let’s return to our text where we see him interacting with the magi.

*“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth A Ruler Who will shepherd MY people Israel.’”*³⁷

If the people believed that a new king had been born, the paranoid Herod would want to locate him as quickly as possible and kill him. Prophets of the Old Testament foretold that Bethlehem will be the birthplace of Jesus.³⁸ Bethlehem was a small town five or six miles south of Jerusalem.

Matthew 2:7 reads, *“Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time*

33 Psalm 111:10.

34 Isaiah 32:6.

35 Michael Schmidt, Leadership Series – Herod the Great – Paranoid Ruler (September 10, 2012), <https://revschmidt.wordpress.com/2012/09/10/leadership-series-herod-the-great-paranoid-ruler/>

36 “Herod the Great,” www.livius.org/articles/person/herod-the-great/.

37 Matthew 2:3-6.

38 Micah 5:2.

the star appeared.” Herod is now calculating how many children he is going to kill to ensure that he eliminates the one who is born king of the Jews. Later in this chapter Matthew describes the killing of the infants in Bethlehem. Before that time Joseph and Mary were warned by God to flee to Egypt in order to spare Jesus’ life. Herod can’t let the magi know of his plans because they would not be accomplices in his murder plans. The purpose of the Magi’s trip was to worship the new King, not to kill him. So Herod does what he does best. He lies and claims a desire to join them in their welcome and worship of the new king.

Herod the Great tried the world’s wisdom in an effort to kill Jesus, the Son of God, but in the end he was a fool. He wasn’t just mistaken, his moral fault of lust and power-mongering led to his very foolish choices. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking.

Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon

The second Biblical example of a person who appeared to be wise, but in reality was a fool is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In the book of Daniel, we learn a great deal about his faulty wisdom in the account of his excessive pride.

The first four chapters of the book of Daniel tell the story of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was a mighty and powerful king. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho of Egypt and brought Judah under his control. It was during this time that the first Jewish captives were carried away to Babylon. In this group were the young men Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Nebuchadnezzar was an arrogant and proud ruler. Under his reign, Babylon had crushed all her enemies. History records that he never lost a battle.³⁹ The fourth chapter of Daniel differs from the previous three chapters in that it is written by Nebuchadnezzar himself in the first person. He describes what brought him to become a believer in the God of heaven.

As chapter four opens, Nebuchadnezzar records his confidence. He says of himself, “*I Nebuchadnezzar was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.*”⁴⁰ With Babylon well-fortified and his mighty army to defend it, he thinks he has nothing to fear. He is safe and secure.

Throughout history, God used various methods for getting one’s attention. He visited Abraham on the Plains of Mamre. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush. To unsettle the proud, boastful king of Babylon, God used a simple dream. Nebuchadnezzar is so disturbed over the dream that he calls for his wise men to interpret the dream, but they all fail.

Finally, Daniel is called to interpret the king’s dream. Nebuchadnezzar relates his dream to Daniel. In his dream, the king saw a large tree under which the beasts of the field slept, and birds nested in its branches. God commanded the tree to be cut down, but the stump was to be left and protected. At that point, the figure of the stump was changed to a man who was given the heart of an animal. The man would remain in this condition for seven years.

Through God’s power, Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Daniel tells the king that he is the tree that has grown strong and powerful. The cutting down of the tree to a stump that became a man means that Nebuchadnezzar will be driven from among men and would live with the animals. Nevertheless, during this time, his kingdom would be kept secure for him. Daniel tells the king that God will do this to humble the arrogant king so that he will know “*That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes.*”⁴¹ Daniel warns the king that unless he turns away from sin and toward righteousness his kingdom will be taken from him.

One year later, every detail of Daniel’s prophecy comes true.

39 Mitchell Skelton, “Nebuchadnezzar: Mightiest King” <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/nebuchadnezzar-mightiest-king-mitchell-skelton-sermon-on-ot-characters-96693>, (Oct 21, 2006).

40 Daniel 4:4.

41 Daniel 4:17.

All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, *'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'* While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, *'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'* Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

As Nebuchadnezzar walks through his palace and admires his accomplishments, he fails to acknowledge that it is God who raised him up to rule over Babylon. After the seven year period, Nebuchadnezzar's illness leaves him just as quickly as it came upon him. As he looks up into the heavens, his understanding returns to him, and he immediately begins to proclaim the glory of God.

Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed to be wise and powerful, but he was foolish not to recognize God's power especially after Daniel's warning in chapter four. His pride blinded him from the truth, and he became a fool. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking. Now that we have seen some biblical cases of foolish behavior from the so-called wise, we will now look at some modern cases.

The first modern example of foolishness is demonstrated in a man being put on display at the zoo.

In 1906, an African man was put on display at the Bronx Zoo, in New York. Ota Benga was a Congolese man, a pygmy. He was purchased from African slave traders by the explorer Samuel Phillips Verner.

At the Bronx Zoo, Benga had free run of the grounds before and after he was exhibited in the zoo's Monkey House. Displays of non-white people as examples of "earlier stages" of human evolution were common in the early 20th century.



On the first day of the exhibit, September 8, 1906, visitors found Ota Benga in the Monkey House. Soon after, a sign on the exhibit read:

*The African Pygmy, "Ota Benga." Age, 23 years. Height, 4 feet 11 inches. Weight, 103 pounds. Brought from the Kasai River, Congo Free State, South Central Africa, by Dr. Samuel P. Verner. Exhibited each afternoon during September.*⁴²

African-American clergymen immediately protested to zoo officials about the exhibit. James H. Gordon, a Christian, wrote, "Our race, we think, is depressed enough, without exhibiting one of us with the apes ... We think we are worthy of being considered human beings, with souls."⁴³

Gordon, was vocally opposed to the idea of a man being thought of as only another animal and opposed the leadership of the zoo who promoted Darwinism with this display: "The Darwinian theory is absolutely opposed to Christianity, and a public demonstration in its favor should not be permitted."⁴⁴

African-American newspapers around the nation published editorials strongly opposing Benga's treatment. Dr. R. S. MacArthur, the spokesperson for a delegation of black churches, petitioned the New York City mayor for Benga's release from the Bronx Zoo.

An editorial in *The New York Times* agreed with the zoo leaders that Benga was merely another animal rather than a human being with equal value and rights:

42 "Man and Monkey Show Disapproved by Clergy," *The New York Times*, (September 10, 1906): 1.

43 Mitch Keller, "The Scandal at the Zoo". *The New York Times*. (August 6, 2006).

44 *Ibid.*

*We do not quite understand all the emotion which others are expressing in the matter ... It is absurd to make moan over the imagined humiliation and degradation Benga is suffering. The pygmies ... are very low in the human scale, and the suggestion that Benga should be in a school instead of a cage ignores the high probability that school would be a place ... from which he could draw no advantage whatever. The idea that men are all much alike except as they have had or lacked opportunities for getting an education out of books is now far out of date.*⁴⁵

William Hornaday, the Bronx Zoo director, considered the exhibit a valuable exhibition for visitors; he was supported by Madison Grant, Secretary of the New York Zoological Society, who pushed to put Ota Benga on display alongside apes at the Bronx Zoo. A decade later, Grant became nationally prominent as a racial anthropologist.⁴⁶ This was what was promoted as wisdom in the last century.

The Bible teaches us that racism is wrong because we are all related, not by means of naturalistic evolution, but by special creation. We are not descendants of apes or other animals. We are all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve—the specially created couple, whom God made on the sixth day of creation in the Garden of Eden.⁴⁷ As the apostle Paul told the idolatrous Athenians on Mars Hill, God “*made from one blood every nation to dwell on all the face of the earth.*”⁴⁸ We are all of one race—the human race. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking.

The second modern day example of foolishness is demonstrated in people elevating the value of animals over people.

On May 30, 2016, Reuters news agency published an article entitled, “Killing of Gorilla to Save Boy at Ohio Zoo Sparks Outrage.” A three-year-old boy slipped into the gorilla enclosure at the Cincinnati Zoo. The zoo said in a statement that the boy “fell into the exhibit’s moat.” Video released by a television channel shows the 17-year-old 400-pound gorilla named Harambe handling the child and standing over him in the enclosure’s moat. The boy’s mother can be heard pleading for help. After several minutes of assessing the situation, the zoo’s Dangerous Animal Response Team responded to the life-threatening situation and made the difficult decision to kill the gorilla to make sure the child could be saved.

Zoo Director Thane Maynard said in the statement, “The Zoo security team’s quick response saved the child’s life. We are all devastated that this tragic accident resulted in the death of a critically-endangered gorilla.”⁴⁹ This was a sad situation on many levels, such as inadequate fencing around the enclosure, a child that was not being watched closely enough, and a gorilla that was killed. However, the saddest situation was that some thought it would have been better if the child had died and the gorilla had lived. Princeton University bioethics professor Peter Singer and animal rights activist Karen Dawn insist: “As animal advocates, we don’t automatically deem the life of a boy as exponentially more important than that of a fellow primate.”⁵⁰ This is the foolish reasoning of the so-called “wise.”

In Matthew 6, Jesus reassures His disciples that God’s care for them means that they shouldn’t worry about acquiring food and clothes. His reasoning included this observation in verse 26: “*Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*” Of course we are!

In Matthew 12, Jesus was condemned for healing people on the Sabbath. The religious leaders were so focused on accusing Jesus of breaking the Law of Moses that they missed the lessons that these

45 James Edward Gilmer Ph. D., James Edward Gilmer, *The Bible Is Right!: About Dinosaurs and Evolution!* (Bloomington: Authorhouse: 2013), 227, <https://books.google.com>

46 Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Blume, *Ota Benga: The Pygmy in the Zoo* (New York: St. Martin’s Press. (1992), 173–175.

47 Genesis 3:20.

48 Acts 17:26.

49 Merrit Kennedy, “Gorilla Killed To Save Boy At Cincinnati Zoo,” May 29, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/05/29/479919582/gorilla-killed-to-save-boy-at-cincinnati-zoo>.

50 Peter Singer and Karen Dawn, “Op-Ed: Harambe the Gorilla Dies, Meat-Eaters Grieve” *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 2016.

miracles taught. First, these miracles confirmed that Jesus was from God. Secondly, His message was from God. On this occasion Jesus entered a synagogue where the leaders hoped to trap Jesus in His words and accuse him of sinning. Attending the synagogue was a man with a withered hand, whom Jesus healed. The leaders asked Jesus this question in verse 10, “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*” Jesus took this opportunity to teach those in the synagogue a lesson from their own experiences. He responded with a question, “*What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?*”⁵¹ They all knew the answer! That sheep had value and would be cared for and rescued—even on the Sabbath. Jesus said, “*How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep!*”⁵² Even Jesus’ enemies were wise enough to know that animals were not to be compared to the value of human beings. This line of reasoning is lost on many of the so-called wise today because their reasoning begins with a rejection of God. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking.



Conclusion:

In the early days of the American railroad, a large locomotive used primarily for freight ran through the Midwest on a daily route. Another smaller, passenger train used a section of that same route to transport students to a school. One day the passenger train broke down, and mechanics were working to repair it. Dozens of students were onboard-unaware that a large freight train was moving toward them at a rapid speed. A flagman had been sent miles down the tracks to warn the freight train that there was a problem ahead; but despite the flagman waving his red flag, the large freight train continued on its course and collided with the passenger train, killing everyone onboard. The only survivor was the conductor of the freight train who had jumped off the train just before the crash. He was immediately taken into custody, and a hearing was held to determine why he didn't stop the train. The conductor and the flagman's stories contradicted one another. The flagman said he had waved a red flag, signaling the train to stop. The train conductor said that he only saw a yellow flag, signaling him to proceed with caution. The conductor reported that he slowed down; but by the time he saw the passenger train, it was too late and the accident was unavoidable. The flagman was instructed to bring the flag he had used. When he presented the flag, it was clear what had happened. The flag indeed was once a bright red flag. The corners of the material clearly demonstrated that over time the flag had faded and was nearly white in the center. Because of dirt and grime, the white portion of the material had become yellow looking, creating the confusion on the part of the conductor.⁵³

In Romans 1:22 Paul writes, “*Professing to be wise, they became fools.*” The word Paul uses here for “fool” is the same word Jesus uses to refer to salt that has lost its savor or flavor, and has become worthless. It is very similar to a red warning flag that has lost its color and was useless in warning the conductor of the train. It is like disciples who fail in adding Christ's light to the world and are useless for kingdom growth. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking. In Paul's letter to the Romans, we learn that they diluted their knowledge of the God of Heaven and turned to idols. They served what was created instead of the Creator. They turned from living the way God intended to following their own lusts. Those who refuse to have God in their knowledge are corrupt in their thinking. Let's not let our lives become diluted by sin so that our testimony for Jesus becomes worthless in warning about sin and pointing to the way of salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 1:20, Paul asks four questions that show the power of God's wisdom: *Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish (mōrainō) the wisdom of the world?* Once we realize who God is and obey His Word, we are able to fully recog-

51 Matthew 12:11.

52 Matthew 12:12.

53 Jeff Ables, A Faded Red Flag (July, 9, 2012), <http://jeffables.blogspot.com/2012/07/faded-red-flag.html>.

nize that the wisdom of the world is often foolishness. Proverbs 9:10 reminds us that “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” Our faith in Christ should be seen in the flavor we add to the world by living as servants of God. Let’s be salt of the earth and add savor to the world because of our faith in Jesus as our Savior.

References

- Ables, Jeff. A Faded Red Flag. July 12, 2012. <http://jeffables.blogspot.com/search?q=red+flag> (accessed January 3, 2017).
- Bradford, Philips Verner, and Harvey Blume. Ota Benga *The Pygmy in the Zoo*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1992.
- Chouinard, Larry. *The College Press NIV Commentary, Matthew*. Edited by Ph.D. and Tony Ash, Ph.D. Jack Cottrell. Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1997.
- Cottrell, Jack. *The College Press NIV Commentary, Romans*. Vol. 1. Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1996.
- Cowboy Quotes, *Sayings, and Wisdom*. n.d. <http://www.cowboyway.com/CowboyQuotes.htm> (accessed January 15, 2017).
- Goldberg, Barbara. *Killing of Gorilla to Save Boy at Ohio Zoo Sparks Outrage*. May 30, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ohio-gorilla-idUSKCN0YK0OT> (accessed January 2017, 2017).
- Herod the Great*. April 24, 2016. livius.org/articles/person/herod-the-great/ (accessed January 3, 2017).
- James Edward Gilmer Ph. D., James Edward Gilmer. *The Bible Is Right!: About Dinosaurs and Evolution!* Bloomington, Il: Authorhouse, 2013.
- Keller, Mitch. “Scandal at the Zoo.” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2006.
- Kennedy, Merrit. *Gorilla Killed To Save Boy At Cincinnati Zoo*. May 29, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/05/29/479919582/gorilla-killed-to-save-boy-at-cincinnati-zoo> (accessed January 03, 2017).
- Lyons, Eric and Kyle Butt. *Darwin, Evolution, and Racism*. 2009. apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category+9&article=2654 (accessed January 2, 2017).
- Lyons, Eric, M.Min. *5 Reasons Racism is Ridiculous*. 2015. <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=4171> (accessed January 3, 2017).
- Mitchell Skelton, “Nebuchadnezzar: Mightiest King”. ““Nebuchadnezzar: Mightiest King”.” *Sermon Central*, October 2006.
- Singer, Peter, Karen Dawn. Op-Ed: *Harambe the Gorilla Dies, Meat-Eaters Grieve*. June 5, 2016. latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-siner-dawn-harambe-death-zoo-20160605-snap-story.html (accessed January 2, 2017).
- SooperMexican. *OUTRAGE over endangered gorilla KILLED to protect child who fell into pen at zoo*. May 29, 2016. <http://therightscoop.com/outrage-over-endangered-gorilla-killed-to-protect-child-who-fell-into-pen-at-zoo/> (accessed January 2, 2017).
- The New York Times*. “Man and Monkey Show Disapproved by Clergy.” September 10, 1906: 1.
- Vine, W.E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, n.d.
- Wikipedia. Ota Benga. December 30, 2016. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ota_Benga (accessed January 3, 2017).
- <https://twicial.com/JanetGicala>

Norfolk, VA Train Wreck, Aug 1905

Stu Beitler

Virginia | Train Wrecks and Accidents | 1905

NUMBER OF DEAD MAY BE NEAR A HUNDRED.

Twelve Bodies Recovered and 75 or 80 Persons Missing in Virginia Wreck.

Norfolk, Va., Aug 18 - So far only twelve known dead have been taken from the wreck of the Atlantic Coast Line railway's Kingston and Greenville, N. C., excursion train which went through an open draw yesterday, though there are some eighty of the colored excursionists yet missing and the probabilities are that the bodies of many of those will be found in the bottom of the river after all dragging has been completed.

A wrecking company raised the two submerged cars but as they did so the ends fell out of the cars and what dead were in the car are now at the bottom of the river with the debris from the interior of the car. The river is now being dragged and it is expected a number of bodies will be recovered soon. The latest victims to be found are an unknown colored man and an unknown colored woman, it having been impossible up to this time to identify either. These bodies were taken from the water this morning.

The only white persons known to be dead up to this time are W. E. JOLLY, the promoter of the excursion and his young nephew, EDWARD FORBES.

There are some fifty-six or sixty of the 169 excursionists who have come to Norfolk either slightly injured or bruised. There are twenty-three injured at the hospitals with twelve known dead which leaves between seventy and eighty of the excursionists yet missing and it is believed that a large majority of these are at the bottom of the river.

The Atlantic Coast Line officials have given out no statement in the matter but CLEVELAND THOMPSON, an eye witness, says that the small "danger" flag which was placed on the track to warn the approaching Kingston train that the draw was open, though formerly a red flag, had faded almost completely white from continuous use during the past five years. It was Engineer S. M. REIG'S first run over the Atlantic Coast Line to Norfolk, he having just come from East Radford, Va., to this line.

It is now stated in Norfolk that the report to the effect that there is a car load of bodies in the river at the scene of the wreck is probably incorrect, though the statement may yet be verified. Direct information on this subject from the scene of the disaster was not obtainable early this afternoon. Correspondents at Portsmouth, Va., who first gave out the news of the finding of the bodies at the bottom of the river, say that the rumor is still in circulation, though they cannot verify it and believe the report is incorrect. The belief still prevails, however, that many bodies are at the bottom of the river and will be recovered before night, there having been no account as yet of the seventy or eighty "unaccounted for" excursionists.

At noon divers went to the bottom of the river at the scene of the wreck and found a car load of dead men, women and children, these being victims in the first car behind the engine, whose bodies went into the river when the end of the car dropped out as it was raised by derricks this morning.

The Fort Wayne Sentinel Indiana 1905-08-18

<http://www.gendisasters.com/virginia/2469/norfolk-va-train-wreck-aug-1905>

Rom. 1:23 – Those who refuse to have God in knowledge are corrupt in their worship.

Bryan Hodge



BRYAN HODGE was born in Blytheville, AR on May 3, 1965. The family moved much as he grew up, due to his father's work with the Army/Air Force Exchange Service. The family finally settled in Texas, mostly South Texas. He attended Cedar Valley College, University of Texas – San Antonio; and the Brown Trail School of Preaching where he graduated.

Bryan and Melinda (Wilson) were married on February 13, 1988 and they have three children: Jasmine Juneau, who is married and has one child (Fort Worth, TX); Jasper Hodge (Fort Worth, TX); and Choe Hodge (Denton, TX). Melinda works for Central Texas College in the hospitality and Culinary Arts Department.

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the church of Christ in La Junta, CO; Savannah, TN; Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; Talco, TX; Marshall, TX; Anchorage, AK; and is now working with church of Christ in Youngsport (Killeen), TX.

He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in: Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alaska, Wyoming, and Louisiana; he has also preached overseas in: India, Jamaica, Ghana, Panama, and England. He has written articles appearing in: the Gospel Journal, Think Magazine (Focus Press), Bulletin Digest, Bulletin Briefs, The Guide, The Apologist and One Heart, a work of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

This is Bryan's third time to speak on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures!

As a note of interest, Bryan had a debate with Kevin Miller a Seventh Day Adventist. Also, check out his website – bryanhodge.net; internet radio: Great Bible Texts on thegospelradionetwork.org.

It is an honor to be speaking on this lectureship. I want to thank Frank and Martha Williams, Marion Fox, and the entire Barnes church of Christ for having this lectureship, and especially Martha Williams for turning the manuscripts into a book that can be used in the future.

My assigned text is Romans 1:23. I shall do my best to avoid getting too much into the texts assigned to others. However, it seems that some of the greater context needs to be considered to appreciate the verse.

GREATER CONTEXT

“I am a debtor to Greeks and to barbarians both to wise and to unwise” (Romans 1:14). Why preach the gospel? Paul earlier stated that it was his duty as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1). Here he states that he owed such to others, regardless of language (Greek or barbarians. Remember that Paul possessed the gift of tongues cf. 1 Corinthians 14:18), regardless of education (wise or unwise).

Do we feel such a sense of obligation? Consider Acts 8:4; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 2:9. It has been said that the average member has heard 4,000 sermons, sung 20,000 songs, participated in 8,000 public prayers, and converted zero to Christ (stated in an article: Urgency in Reaching the Lost by Mike Vestal). I do not know what the true figures are; but we do need to be more aggressive and active in evangelism. Most of us can do better.

“So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also” (Romans 1:15). He was willing and able to preach.

Are we? Consider 1 Peter 3:15.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone

who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). He was not ashamed (cf. 2 Timothy 1:8; 1:12; 1:16-17). He believed in it, and in its power.

Do we? Consider 2 Corinthians 4:13.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Romans 1:18-3:31 has the aim of convicting all of sin (Romans 3:9b; 3:23). One of the sins of humanity is in worship (Romans 1:23). It is because all have sinned, that the preaching of the gospel is so important. All need the gospel. This is one reason why Paul was so passionate about preaching the gospel.

THE TEXT

“And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image made like corruptible man – and birds, and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:23).

Man by nature seems to be inclined to worship. Name a nation in history that does not have those who worship something. There are few true atheists, and even they tend to worship something (“Mother Earth,” and “Father Time,” Nature cf. Romans 1:25, Big Government). Richard Dawkins admits that “worshipping... has been found in all cultures” (The Economist, September 23, 2006: Misbegotten Sons). There are at least 35 pagan gods named in the Bible [See Chart at the end of this article.]

Do you remember Paul’s word at Athens? He said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious: for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with the inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD...” (Acts 17:22-23).

Let’s return to our text (Romans 1:23). Why would man do this? Why would man change the incorruptible God into the likeness of man or animal? I want to explore four reasons.

FIRST: SOME WANT A TANGIBLE GOD

They want a god that can be physically touched; a God that can be perceived through the senses.

An example: The children of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 32:1-5). Moses had been upon the mountain for about 40 days (cf. Exodus 24:18). They had not heard from him. They became impatient. Was Moses ever coming back? Would they ever move on from the mountain? The people gathered to Aaron and demanded gods be made (gods plural, perhaps majestic plural). Aaron took their earrings and from that a golden calf was crafted. James Burton Coffman comments, “The amount of gold accumulated by this action was fantastic, no matter how it might be calculated. There were at least 2 million people in the Exodus; gold rings in 4 million ears, had they weighed only ¼ ounce each, would have been 1,000,000 ounces of 83,333 pounds Troy” (Coffman, Exodus, p. 441).

Did the people make this image to represent Jehovah? It is likely that they did not (cf. Psalm 106:19-21; Acts 7:39b-40).

Where did they learn such behavior? It seems likely that this behavior was learned in Egypt (cf. Jereboam – 1 Kings 12:25-30 cf. 1 Kings 11:40; 12:1-3). The I.S.B.E. says, “The Egyptians... worshipped living bulls at Memphis and Heliopolis as the incarnations of Ptah and Ra, while one of the most elaborate rituals was connected with the life-size image of Hathor-cow, while the sun was revered as the ‘valiant bull’ and the reigning Pharaoh as ‘Bull of Bulls’... ‘calf’ worship was almost if not quite universal among all ancient Sem peoples” (Vol. 1, p. 543).

Did Aaron want the people to worship Jehovah under this image? Yes, he did (Exodus 32:4b-5). However, he had no authority to do this. Moreover, the LORD would later warn them not to do such (e.g. Deuteronomy 4:15-19). There is no material form which accurately represents the true nature and full glory of God [Yes, Jesus came to, among other things, reveal the unseen God to man (cf. John 1:18; 14:9). However, it was not his physical substance itself which revealed such].

Some still today want a tangible image to worship. It still is not authorized.

SECOND: SOME ACTUALLY WORSHIP CREATION

The Bible speaks of those who worship the host of heaven (2 Kings 17:16; 21:3, 5; 23:5; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13; Zephaniah 1:5).

History speaks of such. Robert Morey, describing pre-Islamic Arabia, said, “In Arabia, the sun god was viewed as a female goddess and the moon as the male god... The symbol of worship of the moon god in Arabian culture and elsewhere throughout the Middle East was the crescent moon” (Morey, *The Islamic Invasion*, pp. 50-51). Again, he said in ancient Syria and Canaan, the moon god Sin was usually represented by the moon in its crescent phase... The sun goddess was the wife of Sin and the stars were their daughters. For example, Istar was the daughter of Sin... The archeological evidence demonstrates that the dominant religion of Arabia was the cult of the moon god... Many scholars have also noticed that the moon god’s name ‘Sin,’ is a part of such Arabic words as ‘Sinai,’ the ‘wilderness of Sin,’ and so forth” (p. 212, 215).

Some worship animals. The raven is the chief deity of the Tlingit people of Alaska (wiki/Animals_worship). Some Hindu gods are in the form of animals. Ganesha is an elephant god. Hanuman and Arugugam are monkey gods.

Some in our society worship nature. The Bible speaks of those who “worship and serve the creature rather than the creator” (Romans 1:25).

THIRD: SOME BY WILL (CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT) CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN GOD, AS THEY WISH HIM TO BE.

They, on one hand, want (on some level) to be in a right relationship with God. They, on the other hand, want to live their lives, as they wish. Therefore, they construct a god in their own image, as they wish him to be. Sometimes this is a conscious choice. For example: A guest on a Phil Donahue show, who had five wives, was asked, “If God said polygamy was wrong, would you stop practicing polygamy?” The guest replied, “Oh, I’d change gods” (Steven Lloyd, *Coping: A Biblical Approach*, p. 93). Most, I understand, would never wish to do this.

However, many do seem to shape their theological beliefs by how they wish things to be. Consider: (1) An adulterer or homosexual may wrest the scriptures to defend their behavior. Thus, creating his own message from God. Or, such a one may respond, “I believe that God wants us to be happy.” Thus, creating his own god. (2) One who has been sprinkled, instead of immersed, when confronted may wrest the scriptures to defend self. Thus, creating his own message from God. Or, such a one may say, “It doesn’t matter. God’s grace will cover it.” Thus, creating his own god. (3) One who worships in an unauthorized way may try to wrest scripture to support the practice. Thus, creating his own message from God. Or, he may say, “I don’t think God is so picky.” Thus, he creates his own god. (4) The one who uses crude language, and takes the Lord’s name in vain may excuse it, saying, “God knows my heart.” Thus, creating a god according to his own liking.

FOURTH: SOME ARE SIMPLY IGNORANT OF THE TRUE GOD.

This is not new. Consider: (1) Some think of God as man (Psalm 50:21b; Exodus 23:19). (2) Some think that they can hide from God (Isaiah 29:15 cf. Jeremiah 23:23-24). (3) Some think of themselves as God (Isaiah 14:4a, 13-15). (4) Paul address those in Athens who were ignorant of the true God, and His nature (Acts 17:22-31).

Steven Lloyd has written, “I would have to say that most of the counseling I have ever been a part of centered around helping a person change the way they think. It involved correcting some wrong

notion about God; or, it has involved correcting someone’s thinking about the very nature of man. Consequently, most counseling sessions become Bible studies” (Steven Lloyd, *Coping: A Biblical Approach*, p. 53).

Yes, creation should lead us to a creator (Romans 1:20). However, truly understanding God and His will comes by revelation (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-11). Christianity is a taught religion.

PROPER WORSHIP

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Proper worship consists of these components. (1) It has the correct object: God. It is not directed to mere men (Acts 10:25-26; 22:8-9), angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9), or false gods (Isaiah 42:8; Exodus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 5:6-10; 6:13; Matthew 4:10). (2) It has the correct attitude: In spirit. This is speaking of the human spirit (Joshua 24:14 cf. John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 14:15). He wants more than mere ritualistic lip service (Matthew 15:8). We are to give cheerfully (1 Corinthians 9:7). We are to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16). The Lord’s Supper is to be partaken with discernment of the Lord’s death (1 Corinthians 11:29). Prayer is to be more than vain repetition (Matthew 6:7). Worship should be with the whole heart (Psalm 9:1; 111:1; 138:1). (3) It has the correct action: In truth. Truth is God’s word (John 17:17). May we so approach Him.

CONCLUSION

We can try to create our own god. But, such is like trying to create one’s own reality. It will not work. In the end, there is only one God (Isaiah 45:5a, 6, 21). He is the ultimate reality. *“He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness”* (Acts 17:31).

Chart of Pagan God Enumerated in the Bible

<http://jesusalive.cc/ques220.htm>

Q: #220. How many Pagan/false gods does the Bible mention?

By: Steve Shirley

A: In my studies on this, I found 35 Pagan/false gods mentioned. It can be kind of confusing because some gods were the same but spelled differently in different places. Of the 35 I listed below, some may be the same as well, but I am pretty confident most are not. It is also interesting to note that most of the larger cities had numerous gods (polytheism). For example, the city of Athens had so many idols/gods (Acts 17:16), that they even made an idol “To The Unknown God” (Acts 17:23), just in case they missed any! (Paul used this opportunity to tell them about the one true God of all creation.) Below is my list:

Name Of Pagan			
False god	Worshipped By/In	Bible References (Total Verses)	Description
Adrammelech	Sepharvites	2 Kin 17:31 (1)	Sun-god
Amon	Thebes In Egypt	Jer 46:25 (1)	Sun-god
Anammelech	Sepharvites	2 Kin 17:31 (1)	Moon-goddess
Asherah (Asherim)	Canaan	Judg 6:25,26,28,30 (36)	Fertility goddess
Ashima	Hammath In Syria	2 Kin 17:30 (1)	-----
Ashtoreth (Ashtaroth)	Syria/Phoenicia/ Canaan	1 Kin 11:5,33 (9)	Love, fertility goddess

Name Of Pagan			
False god	Worshipped By/In	Bible References (Total Verses)	Description
Baal	Syria/Phoenicia/ Canaan	2 Kin 10:18-23,25-28 (47)	Principal god
Baal-berith	Shechem in Canaan	Judg 8:33, Judg 9:4 (2)	Name means "lord of covenant"
Baal-Peor	Moabites	Num 25:3,5 (6)	-----
Baal-Zebub (Beelzebub in NT Greek)	Ekron In Philistine	2 Kin 1:2,3,6,16	
(4 OT)(6 NT)	Name means "lord of flies" (protection from)		
Bel (possibly same as Baal)	Moabites/ Babylonians/ Ammonites	Isa 46:1 Jer 50:2, Jer 51:44 (3)	Principal god
Castor/Pollux (Twin Brothers)	Greeks	Acts 28:11 (1)	Twin sons of Zeus. Protection for sailors.
Chemosh	Moabites	1 Kin 11:7,33 (8)	Destroyer, subduer. Child sacri- fices made for
Dagon	Philistines	1 Sam 5:2-5,7 (7)	Grain god
Diana/Artemis	Ephesus In Greece	Acts 19:24,27-28,34-35 (5)	Moon, hunting, virginity goddess
Gad (Fortune)	Israel	Isa 65:11 (1)	-----
Golden Calf	Israel (Borrowed from Egypt)	Story in Ex 32	-----
Jupiter/Zeus	Greek	Acts 14:12 (1)	King god, ruler of heaven and all other gods
Kalwan (Chiun)	Babylonians	Amos 5:26 (1)	Possibly star god
Meni (Destiny)	Israel	Isa 65:11 (1)	-----
Mercury/Hermes	Greek	Acts 14:12 (1)	Messenger for the gods
Merodach/ Marduk	Babylonians	Jer 50:2 (1)	Possibly associated with Mars, war god
Milcom (Malcham, Malcam)	Ammonites	1 Kin 11:5,33 (6)	-----
Molech (Moloch)	Ammonites	Lev 20:2,3,4,5 (10)	Destroyer, consumer. Child sacri- fices made for
Nebo	Chaldea In Babylon	Isa 46:1 (1)	Writing, speech, literature, arts god
Nehushtan	Israel	2 Kin 18:4 (1)	Serpent Moses made in wilder- ness (Num 21:4-9)
Nergal	Cuth in Babylon	2 Kin 17:30 (1)	War and hunting god
Nibhaz	Avvites	2 Kin 17:31 (1)	-----
Nisroch	Assyrians	2 Kin 19:37, Isa 37:38 (2)	-----

Name Of Pagan			
False god	Worshipped By/In	Bible References (Total Verses)	Description
Queen Of Heaven (Known as Ishtar)	Assyria/Babylon	Jer 7:18, Jer 44:17,18,19,25 (5)	Love, war, fertility goddess
Rimmon	Syria	2 Kin 5:18 (1)	Weather god
Sikkuth	Babylonians	Amos 5:26 (1)	Saturn god
Succoth Benoth	Babylonians/ Samaritans	2 Kin 17:30 (1)	goddess
Tammuz	Babylonians/ Samaritans	Ezek 8:14 (1)	Vegetation god
Tartak	Avvites	2 Kin 17:31 (1)	Prince of darkness

Rom. 1:24-25 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong loving. (Part 1).

Larry Thomason



LARRY THOMASON – Larry was born on June 29, 1954 in Lawton, OK. He and Martha where married on August 23, 1975. To this marriage four children have been born: Jared, Brandon, Micah and Derek.

He has attended the following schools: Cameron University, Harding University, Southern Christian University, and graduated from Harding University.

He started preaching 1975 in Thyda, AR and he has done local at: Columbia, LA, Waco, TX, Hamilton, Ontario, Apache, OK, St. Charles, MO, Tuttle, OK, and Nacoma Park, OK. Larry is now working with the Nicoma Park church.

Larry has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships at: Louisiana, TX, Great Lakes Christians College Beamsville, Ontario, and Bernie, MO. He has written articles appearing in: Gospel Advocate and the Four State Gospel News. He has also worked with Camp-Lu-Jo Kismif in Lawton, OK and ap Ne-O-Tez in Missouri. Also he has held Singing Seminars for congregations and at Camp Lu-Jo.

God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong loving. Rom. 1:24-25 (Part 1)

In our text for this lesson, the apostle Paul writes, *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchange the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

GOD GAVE THEM UP! WHY

I. They dishonored God.

1. Through uncleanness.
2. In the lusts of their hearts.

II. They dishonored their bodies.

III. They dishonored the truth.

1. They exchanged the truth for a lie.
2. They worshipped the creature rather than the creator.
 - a. Honor the creature vs. honor the creator.

Because of their wrong loving. One thing led to another and they moved further and further away from God. Loving the wrong thing caused them to live wrong.

Several years ago now, the late brother Wyatt Sawyer wrote a book entitled, ***Must The Young Die Too!*** This book recounts the life of a young man from a good family who ran with the wrong crowd, and as a consequence, ended up forfeiting his life at the hands of the state. In this book, in a very compelling way, the author makes one aware of the dangers that youth face, and how quickly life can unravel by instantaneous but poor choices. This story is a powerful illustration that decisions made today are not just about today, but affect our tomorrows; in fact, sometimes affect whether we even have a tomorrow.

Most of us have probably known good Christian families who have raised their children the best they know how and brought them up in the *“nurture and admonition of the Lord”*, only to see them be drawn into the world and leave the church. Parents have been heartbroken and have tried every means to reach them and bring them back. There comes a point when we have done all that we can and the only thing left is prayer. There comes a point of no return, like Pharaoh who hardened his heart.

This is similar to what Paul is saying in Romans 1 about mankind. God had revealed Himself and His will to mankind throughout history, only to be rejected for man’s own devices. So God declares that He *“gave them up!”* There comes a point in time when God’s patience with man runs out, when man has rejected Him completely. This happened with the people of Noah’s day in Gen. 6, with Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain in Gen. 19, and with others as you read about God’s dealing with people in the Old Testament.

What does this mean that *“God gave them up”* or *“gave them over”*? This phrase is found three times in this chapter, verse 24, 26 and 28. Burton Coffman writes, “there is included a conscious requirement of God that the sinner thus judged shall be compelled to continue upon the shameful path he has chosen, just as in the case of Judas who received the sentence from Christ, *“What you do, do quickly”* (John 13:7), in which case Satan had already entered Judas’s heart, and he had been given up by Christ to commit the treacherous deed already committed in his heart.” It means that God removes all Godly influences, allows them to pursue what they have chosen. They are on their own and are handed over to their lust and sin and its consequences. God gives them up when he ceases to restrain them from evil and protect them against it. It doesn’t mean that God is not concerned about them. In fact Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:9 that *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* God turned them loose to be consumed by their evil and wickedness but God still desires that they repent and return.

Many in our world today are following in the footsteps of those spoken of in Romans 1. So many have turned their back on God and seek after worldliness and evil. In fact in a recent Gallup poll we are told, “Americans are becoming increasingly more liberal across several moral issues. According to a new Gallup study, a record high percentage of Americans are now accepting of same-sex relationships, having a baby outside of marriage and premarital sex between men and women.

Moral acceptance of divorce and stem cell research has also jumped, Americans have also grown more accepting of issues such as polygamy and cloning humans. Americans aren’t just growing liberal on specific issues, they are becoming more liberal in general. For the first time since Gallup began asking the question 16 years ago, an equal number of Americans now identify as socially liberal and socially conservative. This reflects a trend since 1999 of a growing number of Americans self-identifying as liberal, according to Gallup.” There is truly nothing new under the sun!

Paul uses similar language in 2 Thess. 2:9-12 where he describes what God will do with those who reject the truth. He reveals, *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they will not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

God gave them over to do what they had already made up their minds to do. He in essence says, “You asked for it, you got it”. An example of this is found in the Old Testament concerning the Israelites whom God delivered from Egypt and led them and protected them. The occasion is recorded in Num. 11:4-9; 19-20. Israel wanted something besides manna. They said to God, *“Who will give us meat to eat?”* God replied to them, *“You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you: be-*

cause you have rejected the Lord...” Similarly God says to humanity, *“the sin for which you lust, you will have until it comes out of your nose, and becomes loathsome to you.”*

What would cause God to *“give them up”*? The writer in our text describes some of the actions that would cause God to allow men to follow their own way and be lost. As we examine God’s word here, we’ll see how man has dishonored God through their uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts. They also dishonored their bodies. Finally, they dishonored the truth by exchanging the truth for a lie and worshipping the creature rather than the creator.

The word used here that is translated worship means to venerate, adore, worship or to honor religiously. They should have honored God but rather chose to honor their wicked ways and their idols. Thus they honored the creature instead of the creator.

We’ll examine these three actions of the unrighteous that caused God to respond in such a way.

First of all they dishonored God. Verse 21 says they *“did not glorify Him as God”*. Man was made to glorify his maker. Dishonor is defined as disgrace, shame, discredit, humiliation, degradation, ignominy, scandal, infamy, disrepute, ill repute, loss of face, disfavor, ill favor, or debasement.

In Hosea 9 verse 10 we are told, *“I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination (detestable, vile) like the thing they loved.”* These of whom Paul wrote loved unrighteousness. God hates sin and these people became detestable like that which God hates.

Jesus taught, *“ ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.’ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief”* (Matthew 13:57-58). The people of Jesus’ hometown did not honor Him, and their lack of honor, Jesus called, *“unbelief.”* They were like the people of Romans chapter one who did not honor God. God is the supreme ruler of the universe, our Lord and King and maker. Jesus is called the King of kings.

In ages past, kings and rulers have commanded respect and honor. To come before the king and to dishonor him would have meant certain death. Only those who were allowed could approach the ruler and would bow before them to honor them. Proper etiquette had to be employed in the presence of the king. Queen Esther recognized the proper protocol as she planned to approach king Ahasuerus as recorded in Esther chapter four. She was determined to help save her people and so declared, *“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”* (Esther 4:16)

How much more ought we to honor the God of the universe? Yet America is drifting further and further away from God and demanding to live however they want in total rebellion to their creator. America has worshipped and served the creature, themselves. They have turned that which they love into their modern day idols.

Paul tells us how God was dishonored. The unrighteous dishonored God through their “uncleanness”. The NIV has “sexual impurity”. They followed a course in life without moral restraint. This is one of the works of the flesh that Paul lists in Gal. 5:19-21. This involves sensuality, lewdness and degeneracy. It clearly stands in opposition to the holiness that is repeatedly set forth in the Bible that is to be characteristic of the Christian’s life. The gentiles were said to have walked in the areas of uncleanness as we see in Eph. 4:17-19. The gentiles, *“having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”*

Uncleanness would be anything that is impure or defiles a person in the eyes of God. It is suggestive of sensuality and evil doctrine that is often associated with it. As Paul reminded the early Christians that, *“just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more*

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” (Rom. 6:19) These brethren had come out of the world of sin and evil. They formerly were wicked in their evil desires but they had been buried with Christ and were now to live in purity and holiness. Paul writes to the Colossian brethren and instructs, *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”* (Col. 3:5)

You’ve perhaps heard of the ermine, which is a white, furry, weasel like animal. The story is told that if you find its den and cover it with soot or ashes, the ermine will not enter and would even succumb to capture before contaminating its fur.

The Bible teaches us that “all have sinned” and have defiled themselves. Jesus was sent to give his life and shed his blood that we might have forgiveness of sins and have our robes washed as white as snow.

Paul, in our text, goes on to say that their uncleanness was manifested in the lusts of their hearts. Those who dishonored God were given to dishonoring themselves through the fulfilling of their evil desires. There can be no greater slavery than to be given over to one’s own lusts. Man who was *“made but a little lower than the angels”*, would choose to make himself as low as the devil in rebellion to God.

As Vine’s dictionary describes, it denotes strong desire of any kind. The Bible speaks of evil desire, evil passions, and fleshly desires. In the context of this passage, lust is a longing, especially in that which is forbidden. Paul speaks further of this in chapter six verse 12 where he warns, *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.”*

To the Thessalonians, Paul would command, *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God...For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”* (I Thess. 4:3-7) Notice the word sanctification and holiness. Paul is telling us that the Christian has a higher calling and that is to live in all purity before God.

The Roman Empire was full of immorality and lusts of the heart. This immorality is what eventually undermined the empire and led to its downfall as Edward Gibbon documents in his book, *“The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire”*. In his book he lists five reasons for their downfall. They were the breakdown of the family and the rapid increase of divorce; the spiraling rise of taxes and extravagant spending; the mounting craze for pleasure and the brutalization of sports; the expanding production of armaments to fight ever-increasing threats of enemy attacks; and the decay of religion into a myriad of gods and religions and confusing forms from which to choose.

What about American society? Are we any different or have we embarked upon this same slippery slope of which destroyed ancient Rome. One writer by the name of Daryush Valizadeh who is far from being a Christian writer has made this observation about American culture today.

“If we wanted to measure the morality of a culture, what would be the best way to do so? Some may suggest looking at statistics of crime or drug use. Others would tell you to look at divorce rates, church participation, or births that take place out-of-wedlock. Many of these would provide a good clue as to the health of a culture, but even some atheists would agree that a thorough measure would be to stack up the culture against the seven deadly sins, which were introduced into the Christian faith to help its adherents avoid sin. If you use this yardstick on American culture, it’s hard not to conclude that it is indeed the most degenerate in the world.” What a sad commentary on our country. He goes on to describe the seven deadly sins as lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride. Needless to say, the church of our Lord has been affected adversely by our secular society.

Secondly, not only did the gentiles dishonor God but they dishonored their own bodies. This phrase probably alludes to the few verses following our text which describe some of the detestable acts of that

day. Paul says they dishonor their bodies among themselves. Or, they dishonored their bodies between themselves, of their own free accord. It is the taking of what God created (the body) and misusing it and abusing it. Personal shame and reproach is the result. Even in the realm of biology, one could argue that these immoral acts go against the purpose and design of the body.

We should take heed to the words of the apostle in I Cor. 6:18-20. *“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.”* We belong to God who created us and provided instruction as to how we should live as men and women. He has ordained what is right and appropriate behavior in society and in our families. He established the home with a husband and wife who are joined in marriage by God. Any sexual relations outside of God’s plan is sinful. As Glenn Stanton writes in *Focus On The Family*, “God’s instructions for our sexual lives serve Him by bringing Him glory when we obey them, and they also benefit us. God’s rules are not limiting prohibitions, but rather ennobling, enriching guidelines.”

Paul would also write to the Corinthians and ask, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (I Cor. 3:16) In II Corinthians 6:16 he argues, *“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said; ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’”* We are commanded to *“present your bodies a living sacrifice”* (Rom. 12:1) and *“keep oneself unspotted from the world.”* (James 1:27)

The apostle Paul speaks of marriage in Ephesians 5 and likens it to Jesus and the church. What a beautiful picture of love and self-sacrifice in a right relationship. Jesus is referred to in scripture as the bridegroom. The church is the bride. The Lord’s example of His love for the church is expressed in the words, *“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”* (Eph. 5:25-28)

America has not learned from history but rather continues to seek to satisfy all of the desires of the flesh to its own destruction. One of the rallying calls today is, “It’s my body and I’ll do with it what I want and no one can tell me what to do.” Our modern society is like a spoiled child.

Finally, Paul says the gentiles have dishonored the truth. They did so by exchanging the truth for a lie and by worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator. As Paul explained earlier in the chapter, they had no excuse for their rejection and rebellion to God. In place of true worship of God they established idolatrous worship. Jeremiah refers to idols as a lie. *“Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge; every metalsmith is put to shame by an image; For his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.”* (Jer. 10:14) They went from serving the living God to serving dead idols. Paul refers to them as “dumb idols” in I Cor. 12:2. From the beginning God has warned man about turning from the truth to worshipping an idol. He alone is the true God.

We are reminded of the question of Pilate in John 18:38, “What is truth?” Man is still asking that question today. We live in a day and time when truth by some standards has become relevant. In other words, whatever is true to you may not be to someone else and that’s alright. Truth is as you see it. Everyone can have different truth. We live in an age referred by some as the Post Modern age. It’s an age where logic and understanding is no longer emphasized or explored but rather relativism. It depends on your meaning of the word, “Is”.

God is a God of truth. *“He is the rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of*

truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is he.” (Deut. 32:4) Jesus came to bear witness to the truth. He exclaimed *“you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:32) Jesus made the claim *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* (John 14:6) We would do well to heed the wise words of Solomon in Proverbs 23:23, *“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”*

Matthew Henry would describe the ancient world in this way. “The barbarians adored the sun and moon, which of all others was the most specious idolatry while the learned Egyptians worshipped an ox and an onion. The Grecians, who excelled them in wisdom, adored diseases and human passions. The Romans, the wisest of all, worshipped the furies. And at this day the poor Americans worship the thunder while the ingenious Chinese adore the devil. Thus the *‘world by wisdom knew not God’*, (1 Corinthians 1:21) He goes on to remark, “It was the greatest honor God did to man that he made man in the image of God but it is the greatest dishonor man has done to God that he has made God in the image of man.”

As Isaiah would warn so many centuries ago, *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Isa 5:20-21)* Can you think of a better description of our society today? Instead of worshipping truth, holiness and righteousness, many have turned to their own gods. They worship self or money or power. They indulge in every excess imaginable. They have turned their backs on God.

The ancient civilizations believed that the earth was flat but believing it did not make it so. Many today have changed the truth into a lie. They rationalize their beliefs or actions as acceptable or they follow the lie because of their feelings and emotions.

Some years ago, a movie was released about the life of Frank Abagnale, a con artist. The name of the movie was “Catch Me If You Can”. It’s based on the true story of his life. He deceived many by convincing them that what he was or claimed to be was true. He portrayed himself to be a professor, an airline pilot, a lawyer and other characters through the years. He didn’t have the education or background to have been any of these professions. No matter how convinced a person would be that he was who he said he was, it was a LIE. He conned many out of money and goods. The devil is the great deceiver of all time and like Mr. Abagnale has conned many people to follow him and accept his way as truth.

As we conclude, take note of the words of the late brother Burton Coffman. “As people contemplate the wretched condition of the ancient Gentiles that came about by their apostasy, they should find the incentive to examine themselves continually, and to draw ever nearer and nearer to God. If a disaster similar to that which overwhelmed ancient Gentiles is to be averted from the posterity of present enlightened populations of the earth, men must employ themselves wholeheartedly in the service of God, striving constantly to know the Truth, and beholding in it, as in a mirror, themselves as they appear in the eyes of God. Only by the most faithful adherence to God’s truth in Christ, as revealed in the Bible, can it ever be possible to avoid a repetition of the historic moral catastrophe which debauched the pre-Christian era.

Rom. 1:26-27 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong living (Part 2)

Johnny Hinton



JOHNNY D. HINTON is married to Cynthia Dianne (Hogue) since May 12, 1984. They have 5 children and 2 grandchildren with a 3rd due in November.

Johnny D. Hinton is the preaching minister for the 29th & Yale congregation and is in his eighth year there. Johnny obeyed the gospel at age 11 and within a year preached his first sermon. Beyond training in the local church, he has degrees from two Christian colleges and has done extra work through a variety of other institutions. He has also been an instructor with the Owasso School of Biblical Studies since coming to Tulsa. He has also been an instructor each summer in Owasso's Future Preachers Training Camp.

Johnny entered full time ministry over 25 years ago. His experience includes Youth and Missions, but mostly Preaching. He has a special interest in both Evangelism and Apologetics.

Brother Hinton also loves to teach. He teaches in the church's Bible School program as well as conducting personal Bible studies. Johnny has been an adjunct Bible teacher at a Christian university as well as working with four other preacher-training programs.

(Romans 1:26-27)

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. -- NKJV

As always it is a pleasure to be involved in a program such as this. I enjoy opportunities to be with brethren in various places and study God's Word. The folks here at Barnes are wonderful and always gracious.

This particular lectureship, while from an ancient book, is addressing some very contemporary issues. I must say that my assignment was challenging and discouraging to some degree, but oh, so needful. Sometimes in presenting the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) we must address the ugly and uncomfortable things of sin, darkness, and a fallen world.

Edward Gibbons, in his writing on the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, spoke of its internal moral decay. I believe the Holy Spirit via Paul describes this downward spiral succinctly right here in Romans chapter 1.

This downward trend has God, not giving up ON them, but giving them up TO: (1) uncleanness, (2) vile passions, and (3) a reprobate mind. The case study found in verses 26 and 27 on vile passions seems to indicate the extreme of depravity.

Social media has allowed many of us to engage issues in our culture first hand. A statement often made by Christians concerning homosexuality is that it is "sick" or that those engaged in this "alternative lifestyle" are "sick." This is a pet peeve for me. Sickness relates to illness which relates to disease which implies an outside force has invaded thus relieving personal responsibility for the behavior. I refuse to play loose with such terminology. It is, however, sickening. Such behavior is repugnant to many. For many it is so off the grid for their thinking it is unimaginable.

On the other hand it seems there are some who are somewhat in the dark on just exactly what is involved with this. Let me say it this way -- we are not talking about two delicate men who happen to be room-mates. Nor are we talking about two tom-boyish women living together.

This issue has been fed to the American public with ever increasing frequency. In 1971 a gay character was introduced on the All in the Family sitcom. Other early TV series with openly gay characters included The Streets of San Francisco and Police Woman as well as Marcus Welby, MD.

There has been constant pressure in Hollywood by the LGBT since the late 60s to present such people in sympathetic light, and then favorable, and then normal, and then preferred to various degrees. Even Chuck Norris in one of his Braddock movies has a line where he says "One of the bravest men I ever knew was a homosexual."

Of course, one of the best known series on TV to promote a gay character was Soap (88 episodes; 1977-1981). Billy Crystal played the role of Jodie Dallas. Situation Comedies (i.e., SitCom) have an intentional way of getting audiences to laugh at sin using added laugh tracks. When we can laugh at sin we no longer take it seriously. When this began it was merely the fact of the person's situation. They could not and would not portray the full nature of what is involved.

Psychologists and Psychiatrists have a book which offers a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders. This book is commonly called the DSM which is short for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This book is now in its fifth editions, DSM-5, published on May 18, 2013. DSM-1 was published in 1952. Homosexuality was once considered a mental disorder or pathology but is no longer classified as such. This change came about as early as 1973. In 1980 there was an effort to reintroduce newly worded diagnosis in this category. It was removed entirely from the DSM in 1986. Some psychologists and psychiatrists still hold negative personal attitudes toward homosexuality.

As one might expect both public policy and education have been greatly affected by the influence of entertainment and psychology. Subsequently, those of us who hold a strong biblical worldview are scoffed at and vilified when we dare to support "traditional marriage" or seek to warn people about this particular sin.

God's people have always been called to be salt, light, and leaven. We have a prophetic responsibility in culture. This does not mean that we are foretelling something directly revealed to us about future events. Rather it means that we are forth-telling God's view on the matter and the unfortunate eternal consequence for those who die in their sins, this one or otherwise. We must be the vocal conscience of society whether they listen or not. Sadly, we must be reminded that those who seek to live godly will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

Reading Romans chapter 1, especially verses 18-32, has an all too familiar ring with the current American culture. We can see and feel this downward spiral tugging at us.

Our children are exposed to things most of us could never have imagined fifty years ago. My twin daughters see and hear things every single day in the public school that can curl your hair. They persist at being capable and vocal defenders of biblical truth among their peers and sometimes teachers. Parents and grandparents need to engaged with what is going on so as to arm our young people for this battle -- not just of their minds, but their souls.

My assignment is Romans 1:26-27 as quoted at the beginning of this manuscript. While, to those of us who are long standing students of the Scripture, it seems obvious if not simple, there are those who seek to gut its impact. They want to marginalize its application or redefine words or suggest that this is merely Paul's opinion. But what has the Holy Spirit said?

Based upon the reading from the NKJV, the behavior herein described is classified with six particular expressions:

1. vile passion: (Gk. atimia + pathos) while the term pathos can refer simply to affections, in this phrase it is described with an adjective which carries the stigma of dishonor, disgrace, shame, reproach, indignity, and vile.
2. an exchange of natural use: this is a trade from the intended design to one never intended (i.e., perversion)
3. against nature: this is that which is contrary to intended function (i.e., perversion)
4. lust: this term can mean simple desire but as used here goes way beyond that; it is described as a burning and is aimed at the wrong object; rather than the healthy desire for the opposite sex it is aimed at one's own gender.
5. shameful: (Gk. aschomosune) it bears the idea of external indecorum; nakedness; indecency; infamous lust or lewdness.
6. error: (Gk. plane) to wander from the path of truth and virtue, perverseness, wickedness. This term also carries with it the idea of deception, delusion, seduction, and fraud.

The relationships in question are males with males (explicitly stated); females with females (implicitly suggested).

While most versions use the terms men and women, the original language is even more precise in my opinion. It is more precise in its declaration about gender (sexual identity). The chart below illustrates the levels of precision in the language.

Anthropos

(mankind as in human being)

aner = man as in husband

gune = woman as in wife

arsen = man as in male

thelus = woman as in female

The top term anthropos is the general word for all humans. On the second level are terms that lend themselves to role identity but context must determine if they are being used of one's married status. The third level is gender specific language where one is identified by the biological or anatomical distinctions.

Paul uses the terms from this third level in order to be very clear and precise regarding the specific issue at hand. The apostle gives no wiggle room by which one can dodge the point. There is clearly an appropriate expression of human sexuality. God in his divine design and by his divine declaration has "*made them male and female... and these two shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5).

Anatomically it seems obvious to most that there is an intended matching for mating between males and females. Biologically speaking it requires this pattern for procreation. The delivery system of sperm to egg naturally requires copulation. The sperm and egg are called gametes. These are the two sex cells necessary for fertilization and the beginning of new life. The term gamete is from the Greek language. Did you know that the Greek term for marriage in the New Testament is gamos?

Occasionally, someone will try to justify homosexuality by stating that Jesus never addressed it. In Matthew 19:4-5 Jesus affirmed God's intent. Glaringly absent is any support for an alternative arrangement, no provision whatsoever. There is no positive promotion for two men or two women. There are numerous passages which address husbands and wives directly and indirectly. Among these are statements defining the respective roles and responsibilities.

Also it should be noted that homosexuality was a capital offense according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). It was this Law that Jesus lived under at the time. That being the case it was a non-issue for their culture at the time. But his chosen ambassadors addressed it among those people for whom it was an issue.

There are several passages decrying the expression of human sexuality involving same sex behavior.

There is the historical account of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed (Genesis 18-19; 2 Peter 2:6-8; Jude 7). Their sin is described as very grievous, as wicked, as ungodly, as lasciviousness, as unrighteous, as a walking after the flesh, as a lust of defilement, as a giving over to fornication, as going after strange flesh, and against nature. One might recall that the sin of homosexuality has long been referred to as Sodomy.

In 1994 the Department of Public Safety used the term Sodomy and defined it as “the detestable and abominable crime against nature.” Most, if not all, states no longer have or enforce laws against adult consensual same sex conduct. It is my conviction that this has occurred mostly out of pressure by homosexual lobbyist, but also because of similar behaviors being practiced by heterosexuals. This latter aspect has likely been fueled by the sexual revolution via pornography.

There are also New Testament statements of condemnation. Besides the Romans reference and those in 2 Peter and Jude, we have 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In the latter, Paul speaks directly about both sides of the male homosexual pairing. While one partner seems the aggressor with the other being more passive, both are condemned. Some modern translations express this simply as “men having sex with men”. The older versions (KJV and ASV) describe them as: effeminate and abusers of themselves with men. Effeminate is a Latin based term which carries the idea “to make a woman of”. This could cover both those who are used by men as if they were a woman and for those who desire to change their gender from male to female. Notice that the second phrase calls homosexual behavior abuse.

“Today’s psychiatrists and psychologists, with very few exceptions, do not try to change sexual orientation, and those aspiring to work in the fields of psychiatry and psychology are not trained not to regard homosexuality as disease.” (Chandler Burr, Homosexuals and Biology, The Atlantic, June 1997)

Paul’s approach to the subject would not be approved today. Not only did Paul say that such were unrighteous, but that they would not inherit the kingdom of God. He warned against being deceived on the matter. Furthermore, he had the audacity to suggest that they not only could change but in fact must. He declared, *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

As strange as such behavior may seem to most of us, it is not the unpardonable sin. While we may claim to be opposed to it because of Scripture, many of us have an acculturated aversion to it by how we were raised. Our children and current society are being acculturated to just the opposite.

Those of us who speak out against this sin or opposition to same sex marriage are considered bigots or homophobic. The last term is almost laughable to me. Why would I be afraid of someone who is confused on the proper use of his biology? Let us not be so heavy handed against this sin that we ignore other sins. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”* (Hebrews 13:4)

In closing let me comment on Paul’s statement that they were *“receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”* This is not likely to be referring to an STD (sexually transmitted disease) whether syphilis, gonorrhea, or AIDS. To some degree this behavior is the punishment itself for rejecting God. This is evidence of how low a person can get when they lose the ability to be rational.

“Romans 1:26-32 might seem like the work of some almost hysterical moralist who was exaggerating the contemporary situation and painting it in colours of rhetorical hyperbole. It describes a situation of degeneracy of morals almost without parallel in human history. But Paul said nothing that the Greek and Roman writes of the age did not themselves say.” (William Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series -- Romans, p. 30)

One more thought. Before we allow ourselves to get overwhelmed with the depravity of our day and this issue in particular, let us remember Paul’s comments earlier in this chapter.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17)

Rom. 1:28-29 – God gave those up who refuse to have God their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 3)

Bob Smee



BOB SMEE was born in Buffalo, WY on October 22, 1941. His first wife died. On January 1st, he and Sharon were married January 1, 1993. They have four children: Brandon, Brenda, Benita, and Randall.

Bob started preaching in 1967 in McCune, KS. He attended the following schools: Denver CAS, Oklahoma Southwestern, Oklahoma Southeastern, York College, Sunset Extension, Independence Junior College, SOTC.

He has done local work at the following places: McCune, KS; independence, KS; Waurika, OK; Ardmore, OK; (working North East Church of Christ in Ardmore for 15 years and with the 4 years for Maxwell Church) with the Meade, KS; Colby, KS; Powell, OK; Quartz Mountain Christian Camp; and Hobart, OK. Bob is currently with the church at Enos, OK. While serving in these locations, he was also involved in gospel meetings and lectureships in the following places: York College, Geneva, NE; Columbus, KS; McCune, KS; Wichita, KS; Canon City, CO; Waurika, OK; Gordonville, TX; National Christian Camp Lectureships in Arkansas and Florida; Altus, OK Liberal KS; and Wichita Falls, TX.

As a note of interest, Bob worked for eleven years in radio and T.V. and was Deputy Sheriff, Security Officer, coach in boxing and basketball in a Christian school (Basketball State Champs). Substitute teacher, and Director, Co-Director, and Teacher in over seventy Christian Camps.

The great Virgil Trout said, “God teaches in 2 ways—history and repetition.”

Not many people like history because each generation always feels it is vastly superior to earlier generations.

But...“history does, over and over, repeat itself!”

We all get bored with repetition, but we remember the oft repeated phrases!

Do you remember these commercials for instance?

1. A little dab’ll do ya
2. He ate the whole thing
3. It’s the real thing
4. It’s the _____ generation

In approximately 500 BC, Solomon gave us Ecclesiastes, written to young men as to the purpose and values of life. He lists where he looked for life’s answers and found them not:

I. Education

- A. Eccl 1:13
- B. Eccl 1:16
- C. Eccl 2:17

III. Money (possessions)

- A. Eccl 2:7,8,10

V. Sex

- A. Wives
- B. Concubines

II. Mirth (Entertainment)

- A. Eccl 2:2
- B. Eccl 2:8
- C. Eccl 2:13

IV. Accomplishment

- A. Eccl 2:4,5

VI. Wine

- A. Eccl 2:3

VII. Fame

- A. Eccl 2:9
- B. Eccl 1:12
- C. Eccl 1:16

All failed to satisfy

Read Ecclesiastes 2:14-19 (NKJV)

2500 years later, our young men today are looking in the same seven places and failing. This is the crux of our text. 500 or 600 years after Solomon, the Romans were looking in the same seven places and failing, just as Solomon had done, to find the answers.

If you look at the 21 or so problems, they all relate in part or in whole, go back to the seven areas of Solomon's failures.

In view of my assignment of verses 28 and 29 with my focus on "wrong thinking", I felt it valuable to look at the one who is considered the "great thinker" or "wise man" Solomon and how he found his "thinking" to be vanity and blowing in the wind.

Do you remember Naaman the leper and his anger that the prophet Elisha did not do what Naaman thought he should do? Do you remember the words Naaman said, "*Behold, I thought...*" Key word here is I.

Read Romans 1:27-29

Unrighteousness
Fornication
Wickedness
Covetousness
Maliciousness
Envy
Murder
Debate
Malignity
Whisperers

and Philippians 4:8.

Truth
Honest
Honorable
Just
Pure
Lovely
Good report
Virtue
Praise

You have a choice in what you think about. Compare the lists above and ask yourself which "thoughts" are best for us to have?

Continuing to look at history, Sodom is symbolic of all that is evil in thought and action. Ezekiel 16:49-50 tells about that sinful city. What does "fulness of bread" and "abundance of idleness" have to do with Sodom? What do they suggest?

In Proverbs 6:16-17, we are told about a sin that is considered respectable today. Can you guess what it is? It is numbered with the six things our Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him.

Then, there is the neglect of the poor and needy, the haughty—and what will be their end result.

Remember ten righteous souls could not be found in Sodom. My basic thought is that history just keeps on repeating itself—from the days of Noah until today. We must change our thinking or follow in the direction of Noah's people, Sodom, Israel, Rome, Tyre, Babylon, etc.

Basic
Instructions
Before
Leaving
Earth

Only Eternal Thing is Bible a (Letter from GOD)—it is:

1. Glorified

2 Thess 3:1 (KJV)

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2. Lamp/Light of GOD

Psalms 119:105 KJV

105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Jer 10:23 KJV

23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Prov 14:12 KJV

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death

Darkness cannot destroy light.

Light can destroy darkness!

3. Fire

29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Jer 23:29 (KJV)

4. Hammer

29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Jer 23:29

5. Milk

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)

6. Meat

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Animal	days can live without food
bird	9
man	12
dog	20
turtle	500
snake	800
fish	1,000
insects	1,200

Heb 5:12-14

7. Sword

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Eph 6:17 (KJV)

8. Mirror

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James 1:23-25 (KJV)

Wrong Thinking

Death Sentence

The toxic Waste of a Self Destroyed Society

1. Self-Centered – Matt 24:10-12; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 1 Tim 6:7-10
2. No Respect – Matt 24:35; John 12:48
3. No Appreciation – Acts 20:28
4. My Little-Bit Attitude – Prov 30:24-28
5. No Concern – Luke 15:28-30

**To understand the 21st Century, we must come to grips with
madness**

Rom. 1:30 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 4)

Frank R. Williams



FRANK R. WILLIAMS was born in Seminole, OK, on December 16, 1940. Frank and Martha (Gordon) were married on September 8, 1967, and they have four children: Virginia, she is married to Paul Moisant, Clint, who is married to Teresa (Goode), Benjamin, who is married to Selene (McKnight) and they have two sons, Lucas and Calvin, and John, who has one son, Elias. Frank graduated from Seminole High School, attended Yuba Junior College in Marysville, CA, and graduated from the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, AR, with a “Master” in Sacred Literature in 1972. Frank also taught in this school through the years, starting in 1972 – 1977, serving under all three directors: Reggie Nalls, A. J. Hendrix, and Bryon Nichols. He has also taught in: The School of Biblical Knowledge and The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, which he continues to teach and serve as Dean of Students.

Frank started in 1968, first in Jasper, AR, and has preached almost 46 years. He has done local work in Arkansas, Wyoming, Missouri, and Oklahoma. He has preached in the following states, in lectureships, gospel meetings, and other occasions: Arkansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Missouri, Texas, Georgia, Iowa, and California. He has written articles appearing in: Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, Christian Standard, Gospel Journal, edited, “The Spirit of Restoration” for about three years, and now serves as editor of the Journal “One Heart.” Frank made a preaching trip to India in 1977. Frank is now serving as an elder and associate preacher for the Barnes church of Christ.

Frank served this nation in the Army Security Agency with one year stationed in Korea.

We have reached the 10th lesson in the “28th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures” and our theme is: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” These words come from Romans 1:22 and is well illustrated on the cover of the Lectureship book, by a drawing of the “Tower of Babel.” The whole event, of the tower of Babel, is covered in nine verses; thus, not much attention is given to it; if we only count the verses, but the event itself tells us much about the people; about the heart of people, about their way of thinking, and about their action! These same points run through the “28th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures!”

The whole story of the “Tower of Babel” is told in only nine verses in the first part of Genesis chapter eleven. The key words which express the heart, the thinking, then, the action of the people of that time; are found in these nine verses. First, notice the great opportunity that lay before these people – verse 1 - “*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*” With one language, there was no limit to their ability to teach each other the will of God; they could teach: 1) the children, 2) the young, 3) the middle age, and 4) the older folks. This took place during the time when the “elder” oversaw the tribe as expressed in the word Patriarch: a social system, ruled by the older male member. In Genesis chapter ten, Moses gives the genealogy of Noah: “*These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood*” (Gen. 10:32). This brings us to verse one of chapter eleven: “*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*” They were set for greatness, but their heart was evil, which produced wrong thinking, which brought about corrupt action: “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!*”

AMERICA HAS BEEN SET FOR GREATNESS

Running through the entire lectureship is this thought: “*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts*” (Rom. 1:24). Thinking and the actions which follow starts in the heart. Jesus said: “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: ...*” (Matt. 15:19-

20). Or, as Solomon stated it: *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: ... (Pro. 23:7).* This is true of America; as she thinks in her heart, so is she! America has been set for greatness more than once; she has been greater at times than at other times. The reason for her better times is that her heart has been more in line with *“the teaching of Christ”* (2 John 9); while on the other hand, when she has been at her worst she has forsaken *“the teaching of Christ!”*

THE WISDOM OF AMERICA’S FOUNDERS

The more I study the history of America, the more I am impressed with the intellect and wisdom of our “founding fathers!” Let me say this, it will not cost you anything, the high intellect and wisdom which dwelt in our “founding fathers,” is also found in those who “searched for the ancient order of things!”

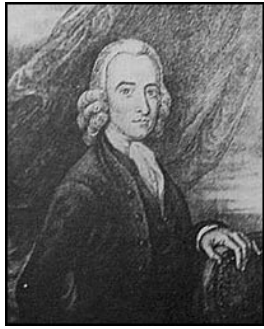


The Declaration of Independence by John Trumbull, 1819 | Photo Courtesy: Wikipedia

THE EARLY LEADERS IN “THE SEARCH FOR THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THINGS” IN AMERICA

These men possessed the same intellect and wisdom of the “founding fathers” of America! Their call was simple: “Back to the Bible!” They believed the church for which Jesus shed this blood; the blood by which he purchased the church (Acts 20:28) and that he promised to build (Matt. 16:18); could be found in the New Testament and that it could be restored! Thus, they started their search by discarding man-made doctrines, and went “back to the Bible!” It was no easy task, just as freeing this nation from the British was no easy task. First, their faith was in the word of God; Second, they believed the Bible was the inspired word of God; Third, they put their faith in *“the teaching of Christ”* (2 John 9); Fourth, they began a separation from the denominations of time; Fifth, they started obeying the truth as they discovered it; and Sixth, they “restored the ancient order of things” and churches of Christ began to spring up all across this great land of America!

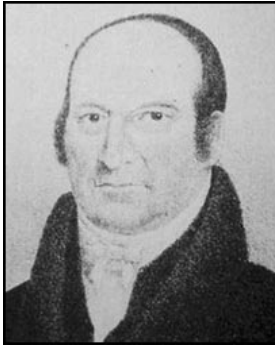
We who are members of the churches of Christ today, owe these “searchers” and lovers of truth a great debt! We today stand upon their work! They sometimes stepped forward, only to fall backwards; but they kept on searching and restoring “the ancient order of things!” Even in their weaknesses, in their failures, they marched onward, and they deserve our honor! Here are some of these men!



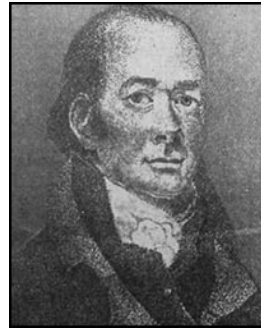
Robert Sandeman
(1718-1771)



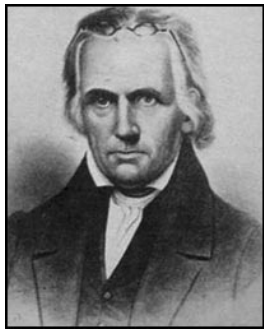
James O'Kelly
(1735-1826)



Abner Jones
(1772-1841)



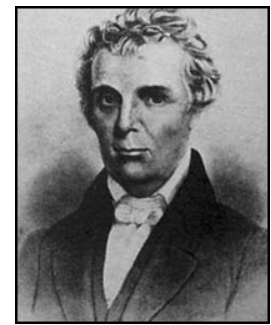
Elias Smith
(1769-1846)



Thomas Campbell
(1773 - 1854)



Alexander Campbell
(1788- 1866)



Barton Warren Stone
(1772-1844)



Walter Scott
(1796 -1864)



"Raccoon" John Smith
(1784-1868)

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

The “founding fathers were for the most part, men who believed in the one true God, and highly respected the Bible. Through this they gave to us “The Declaration of the United States,” which says within it: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness:” and this has become the most known statements of the whole “Declaration!” The keywords are: 1) “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created” and 2) “endowed by their Creator.” Who but the God of the Bible fits these words? In fact, this has been called “one of the best-known sentences in the English language” (1). It has also been called: “the most potent and consequential words in American history” (2). These words stand as the foundation of this nation and at the heart of them, is God! A study has been made, and of the 55 delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention, 49 were Protestants, and two were Roman Catholics; therefore, at least 51 of the 55 delegates were religious, believers in the Bible and in the God of the Bible!

A few statements are in order to help us see the heart, the thinking; thus, the action of our “founding fathers.



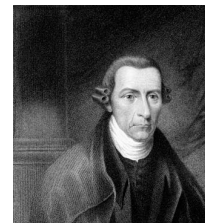
First, George Washington: ““It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor.”

Second, John Adams: “The Christian religion is above all the religions.”



Third, John Quincy Adams: “The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.”

Fourth, Patrick Henry: “It can not be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!”



Fifth, John Hancock was Governor of Massachusetts, and just a couple of years after the First Amendment was ratified, he signed a Proclamation for a Public Day of Thanksgiving (October 5, 1791). In it he said, in part: “that all may bow to the scepter of our Lord Jesus Christ and that the whole Earth may be filled with his glory.” (John Hancock, as Governor of Massachusetts 1791). He also said: “...And above all, not only to continue to us the enjoyment of our civil Rights and Liberties; but the great and most important Blessing, the Gospel of Jesus Christ...”

Sixth, Thomas Jefferson: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? ... Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.” (Jefferson Memorial)



It is also of interest, “According to the U.S. Department of Treasury, the motto ‘In God We Trust’ came about not at the time of the Constitutional Conventions, but due to increased pressures to recognize God on coins and money during the Civil War. In April 22, 1864, Congress passed an Amendment authorizing the motto to be placed on the two-cent coin” (One Nation... Under God?).

Just to show how the heart, the thinking; thus, the action of America has changed over the years, give some thought to the following:

- 1) Congress printed a Bible for America and said: “The United States in Congress assembled ... recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States ... a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools.” – United States Congress 1782
- 2) Congress passed this resolution: “The Congress of the United States recommends and approves the Holy Bible for use in all schools.” – United States Congress 1782

A little “food for thought” just here, what would happen today, if Congress, and the word “Congress” includes both the Senate and the House, were to do something like this today? There would be an uprising and the burning of the American flag, and no doubt the burning of Bibles, across this land! There would be a call for every member of Congress who voted for such a resolution to resign at once! We would hear: “We must have separation of church and state!” Yes, *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!”*

The Pledge of Allegiance

The first version was created by Colonel George Balch in 1887 (1850–1898) , a veteran of the Civil War; and read:

“We give our heads and hearts to God and our country; one country, one language, one flag!”

The second version was composed in August 1892 by Francis Bellamy (1855–1931) a Baptist minister; formally adopted by Congress as the pledge in 1942:



Eugenia Washington



Mary Desha



Ellen Walworth



Mary S. Lockwood

Third, in 1906, The Daughters of the American Revolution’s magazine, The American Monthly, listed the “formula of allegiance” as being the Balch Pledge of Allegiance, which reads:

“I pledge allegiance to my flag, and the republic for which it stands. I pledge my head and my heart to God and my country. One country, one language and one flag”

Fourth, in 1923, the National Flag Conference called for the words “my Flag” to be changed to

“the Flag of the United States”, so that new immigrants would not confuse loyalties between their birth countries and the United States. The words “of America” were added a year later. The United States Congress officially recognized the Pledge for the first time, in the following form, on June 22, 1942:

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945.

Following this there were efforts to get the words, “under God,” added to the Pledge but were not able to get the job done. However, on February 8, 1954, Rep. Charles Oakman (R-Mich.), introduced a bill to that effect. Congress passed the necessary legislation and President Eisenhower signed the bill into law on Flag Day, June 14, 1954 and the President Eisenhower stated:

“From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty.... In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s most powerful resource, in peace or in war”

THE TEXT – ROMANS 1:30

With these thoughts before us, it is time to turn our attention to the text:

“Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents” (Rom. 1:30).

It is my responsibility to examine each of the words that appear in the verse. Then, put them into the overall context and theme of this lectureship. It is necessary that we reach back to verse twenty-nine and pick up the thought: *“Being filled with all unrighteousness”* as verse thirty is a continuation of the thought and each word expresses “unrighteousness! Let us also keep in mind, those who practice such are those who have “given up God,” therefore, *“God has given them up!”*

THE WORDS OF THE TEXT

The first word, rightfully should have been in verse 29, but is not, so it becomes our first word: *“Backbiters”* (katalalos) which means: *“a defamer, evil speaker.”* It refers to those, in short, who take a pleasure in scandalizing their neighbors, without any reference to the presence or absence of those who are spoken against. These are the people who defame the character of their neighbours, and hurt their good name, their credit and their reputation. One writer put it this way: “How frequently does murder follow slander! These remorseless liars, whether clandestinely or openly, set whole communities on the fires of hell, often deluging homes with blood.” He also said they are: “Practitioners of evil,” i. e., they are professional scoundrels, ready to do anything that is bad and nothing that is good.” (3) All we must do is recall the riots of the last few years and recall it was *“evil speakers,”* scandalous words that produced them! They are “unrighteous” because they have given God up, they do not believe in his existence; therefore, they live in a state outside of that which is “righteous!” Thus, *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!”*

Second, to this point, Paul has spoken chiefly of sins of malice in his list of words: *“fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbites;”* now as one writer put it, “throws in one emphatic word summing up the catalogue as far as it has gone” (Ellicott). He then resumes with a new class of sins. He turns his attention to sins of pride: *“despiteful, proud, boasters!”*

In our English New Testament, we have three words in English, “hateful to God” but one word in Greek. There is some debate as to how this should be translated. Some well known translators believe the Greek word should read, “hated of God;” while others hold to the words, “haters of God.” It seems in keeping with the text, as it addresses the sins of men, to stand with it as it is, for they are proving that

they are “haters of God!” The Greek word (theostugēs) means: “exceptionally impious and wicked.” Albert Barnes wrote: “There is no charge which can be brought against people more severe than this,” (4) Adam Clarke simply used the word “atheists,” referring to those who insolently drive away from themselves all that is good and refers to those who exalt themselves above others. Greatness is never reached by giving up God; who in turn is forced, yes, because of the nature of God, he is forced to give them. Therefore, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!”

THE THIRD SET OF WORDS: “DESPITEFUL, PROUD, BOASTERS”

The first of these three words is “despiteful” (the Greek hubristēs) and the Greek word means: “1) an insolent man 2) one who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong.” Adam Charke would add these thoughts: “stormy, boisterous; abusing both the characters and persons of those over whom they can have any power.” Albert Barnes gives us a little more to help our understanding of the word; as he write: “This word denotes those who abuse, or treat with unkindness or disdain those who are present.”

Ellicott’s Commentary looks at these three words as they relate to each other. He says: “The three words correspond to the distinction between act, thought, and word.” Now with this in mind, he says of the first word: “The first implies distinctly insolence in outward bearing; it is the word translated “injurious” in 1 Timothy 1:13.” It is most interesting that Paul uses this same Greek word as he describes his former self: “*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*” (I Tim. 1:13). Here the English word “injurious” is our word. Just what did Paul do? Luke wrote of him: “*As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison*” (Acts 8:3). Here is Paul’s action against the church of our Lord and it was “injurious;” he was “uplifted with pride” and this caused him to make “havock of the church!” It was Jesus as the Christ he was rejecting and would not bow before him and he acted upon it!

The second word, “proud” and Ellicott wrote: “The second” and he is writing of the word “proud;” says, “is a strong self-esteem mixed with contempt for others. (See 2 Timothy 3:2).” Here is what Paul wrote: “*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy*” (2 Tim. 3:2). The word of interest here is the word “proud” (huperēphanos, same word used in Rom. 1:30) and means: “showing one’s self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent.” In the age we are living in, it is Christ that has the “pre-eminence!” As Paul wrote of Christ: “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*” (Col. 1:18). Though Paul does not use the same Greek word in these two verses, notice the meaning expresses the same thought. The Greek word in Colossians (prōteuō) means: “to be first, hold the first place;” while the word (huperēphanos) in Romans one, verse thirty means: “showing one’s self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent.” To use an expression from my childhood, we have more “smart-elicits” today than any time in my life time; who believe that they are above all others; who hold themselves to be first! They know it all and there is nothing they do not know! “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!*”

The third word in this list of three, is “boasters” (alazōn) and means: “an empty pretender, a boaster.” Ellicott says: “is used especially of boastfulness or braggadocio in language.” Barnes says of this word: “Those who arrogate to themselves what they do not possess, and glory on it. This is closely connected with pride. A man who has an inordinate self-conceit, will not be slow to proclaim his own merits to those around him.” Gill’s Exposition of the entire Bible gives this: “boasters: of their parts, abilities, wisdom and works; all which they attributed to themselves, and to the sharpness of their wit, their sagacity and industry.” Then, he concludes with these thoughts; here is one who is “boastful in words,” “proud in thoughts,” and “insolent in acts!” This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place

where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of people.

THE FINAL TWO PHRASES

With this we have arrived at the last thoughts, the Holy Spirit writes: *“inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents.”* Taking these one at a time and giving them the necessary attention is called for.

First, “inventors of evil things.” Paul uses two words: 1) “inventors” (epheuretēs) which means: “an inventor, contriver” and 2) “of evil things” (kakos) means: “1) of a bad nature 1a) not such as it ought to be 2) of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting 2a) base, wrong, wicked 3) troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful.” Here I am giving the whole meaning, so we can see the full view of the word. Notice with me what Barnes writes: “This doubtless refers to their seeking to find out new arts or plans to practice evil; new devices to gratify their lusts and passions; new forms of luxury, and vice, etc. So intent were they on practicing evil, so resolved to gratify their passions, that the mind was excited to discover new modes of gratification.” (Barnes Notes on the whole Bible). Think with me now, does this bring anything to your mind? How about the time just before the worldwide flood? Moses wrote: *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). Barnes went on to write: “Vices change their form, people become satiated (full, frw), and they are obliged to resort to some new form. The passions cease to be gratified with old forms of indulgence, and consequently people are obliged to resort to new devices to pamper their appetites, and to rekindle their dying passions to a flame.” Evil my friends requires more evil, and more evil just requires even more evil! This necessitates “inventors of evil things!” “This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of people.” (Barnes). So, it is with America today! *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!”*

“INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS” AND THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE RULING BY THE SUPREME COURT

The United States Supreme Court membership in 1973.

This nation has committed one of the most uncivilized crimes of all time. The ruling is simply known as “Roe vs Wade,” but it was the landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court on the issue of abortion and it changed the face of America! The Court ruled 7–2 that a right to privacy under the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment extended to a woman’s decision to have an abortion.

The seven Judges who voted for a “woman’s right to abortion” were: 1) Harry Blackmun, 2) Warren E. Burger, 3) William O. Douglas, 4) William J. Brennan, 5) Potter Stewart, 6) Thurgood Marshall, and Lewis Power. These seven men have more blood upon their hands than did Pilate, when he washed his hands and said: *“I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it”* (Matt. 27:24). The two Judges who opposed the Majority were: 1) Byron White and 2) William Rehnquist.

Here is the 14th Amendment:

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the

Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

Section 3. No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may, by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

Section 4. The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5. The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Here is a review, made by “Justia US Law” as found on the internet, on how the Supreme Court reach the conclusion that the woman’s right to abort the unborn.

“In *Roe v. Wade*,⁵⁵⁷ the Court established a right of personal privacy protected by the due process clause that includes the right of a woman to determine whether or not to bear a child. In doing so, the Court dramatically increased judicial oversight of legislation under the privacy line of cases, striking down aspects of abortion-related laws in practically all the States, the District of Columbia, and the territories. To reach this result, the Court first undertook a lengthy historical review of medical and legal views regarding abortion, finding that modern prohibitions on abortion were of relatively recent vintage and thus lacked the historical foundation which might have preserved them from constitutional review.⁵⁵⁸ Then, the Court established that the word “person” as used in the due process clause and in other provisions of the Constitution did not include the unborn, and therefore the unborn lacked federal constitutional protection.⁵⁵⁹ Finally, the Court summarily announced that the “Fourteenth Amendment’s concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action” includes “a right of personal privacy, or a guarantee of certain areas or zones of privacy”⁵⁶⁰ and that “[t]his right of privacy . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.”

“DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS”

This brings us to the last phrase in Romans one, verse thirty. It is “*disobedient to parents!*” The apostle has moved the national level to the family. Please keep in mind, the family is the foundation of America! It has been said, and rightly so: “As goes the family, so goes the nation!” The foundation of the family is the word of God; as it was God who established the family when he brought the woman whom he had just created unto the man! It is good to read the words them selves: “*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man*” (Gen. 2:22-23). It is also necessary to read the words spoken by Adam, which are said to be the words of God: “*And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*” (Gen. 2:24). These words are said to be the words of God by Jesus: “*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*” (Matt. 19:4-5). The enduring nature of the family, as God intended it, is seen in Jesus’ next words: “*Wherefore they*

are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (verse 6). God intended the husband to be faithful to the wife and the wife to be faithful to the husband! Divorce was not part of the plan and it is the failure of the man and the woman in marriage that sometimes brings this “one flesh” body to divorce! Divorce has served as the first break in the family!

This naturally brings us to the phrase before us: “*disobedient to parents!*” The parents first failed in marriage, followed by children who became “disobedient.” Let us recall the words of Paul in another text: “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*” (Eph. 6:1-2). These words and those of our text, go in direct opposite directions! First, when children are “disobedient to parents,” they are not obeying them, they are not showing them the “honour” of which Paul wrote! Barnes put it this way: “among the Romans the duty of honoring parents was enjoined by the laws, yet it is not improbable that the duty was often violated, and that parents were treated with great neglect and even contempt.” But the subject is not new to the New Testament; Moses wrote: “*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*” (Ex. 20:12). Children being obedient to their parents points to the wellbeing of the present family, but also of the future family! Just as “disobedient to parents” points to the unstableness of the present family and does not speak well of the future family! It is in the family that a child learns first, the necessary “instruction in righteousness” that will guide them throughout their life! Therefore, the “instruction in righteousness” is the building blocks for the family, both now and in the future!

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY

The last two phrases of our text, “inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,” have worked havoc upon the family! The right to abortion, if not the “greatest” evil, it is so close to the “greatest,” it is hard to identify any space between what would be first and second. It is outside the realm of reasoning to justify in the mind of a woman to take the life of her own child! Yet, the greatest promoters of abortion are women! There would be no abortions, if women who have conceived in their womb, would simply determine not to have an abortion!

“*And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; ...*” (Luke 1:41) The Greek word (brephos) used by Luke in this text, means: “1) an unborn child, embryo, a fetus 2) a new-born child, an infant, a babe.” Now, read with me the words spoken by the angel to “the shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8) : “*And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*” (Luke 2:12). The Greek word used by the inspired Luke, as he records the event, is the same (brephos) used in referring the “babe” which leaped in the womb of Elisabeth! Therefore, to the God of creation, when he created them male and female, declares for the record of life, that there is no difference between the life in the womb and life outside the womb! But, let us add just a little power to the point! There was a time when “infants” to the Lord; the text reads: “*And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them*” (Luke 18:15). Did you know the Greek word used by the inspired Luke is the same as the two other verses just sighted? Just how old these “infants” were at this time is unknown, but they were old enough to have an innocent heart/mind; for Jesus said of the disciples: “*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*” (verse 16). But, Jesus used a different Greek word. In English, the text reads “children,” but the Greek word “paidion” means: “1) a young child, a little boy, a little girl 1a) infants ...” Don’t forget that Luke used the word “infants” and used the same Greek word used for the babe in the womb and out of the womb; but now the Holy Spirit has used as interchangeable with the word “children,” and this is just what he does in verses 15 and 16!

Therefore, if we are permitted to reason, which some are opposed; we can rightfully conclude that God sees no difference between the “babe” in the womb and the small child running around playing

in the yard! Then, taking what God sees and what United States Supreme Court has ruled, it is just as lawful to take the life one as the other!

Here are a few interesting facts!

1. “Jane Roe” of the landmark Roe v. Wade lawsuit, whose real name is Norma McCorvey, who became a pro-life advocate. McCorvey wrote that she never had the abortion and became the “pawn” of two young and ambitious lawyers who were looking for a plaintiff who they could use to challenge the Texas state law prohibiting abortion. However, attorney Linda Coffee said she does not remember McCorvey having any hesitancy about wanting an abortion.” (5)
2. There have been 58,586,256 abortions between 1973 and 2012! Think of it this way:
 - 1) In the Revolutionary War, the number of Military personnel killed 4,435;
 - 2) In the War of 1812, the number of Military personnel killed 2,260;
 - 3) In the Indian Wars, the number of Military personnel killed 1,000;
 - 4) In the Mexican War, the number of Military personnel killed 13,283;
 - 5) In the Civil War – the War between the state – the number of Military personnel killed 498,332;
 - 6) In the Spanish American War, the number of Military personnel killed 2,246;
 - 7) In World War I, the number of Military personnel killed 116,516;
 - 8) In World War II, the number of Military personnel killed 405,399;
 - 9) In the Korean War, the number of Military personnel killed 54,246;
 - 10) In the Vietnam War, the number of Military personnel killed 90,220; and
 - 11) In the Persian Gulf War, the number of Military personnel killed 1,565.
(These numbers like all such are subject to debate. I found other numbers, but these serve the purpose in making the point here.)

Therefore, the total number of Military personnel killed in all eleven wars: 1,189,502. Now, try to digest this! There have been 47,396,754 more abortions, between 1973 and 2012, than all the Military personnel killed in all eleven wars!

Here are a few more interesting facts, which the “inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,” folks have brought to America. Just look at the year 2012 and what the Preliminary data indicates, as it relates to the family:

1. For the year 2012, the Preliminary data indicate that 40.7 percent of all births were out-of-wedlock!
2. Eighty-three percent of first births to non-high school graduates are to unwed mothers.
3. Women who have graduated high school and completed some college but do not have a degree, Fifty-eight percent of the first births in this group are to unwed mothers.

Here is some more interesting information about the family, as we learn that the young are delaying the age they get married:

1. “The biggest downside to delayed marriage in America is that many young adults are now putting the baby carriage before marriage.”
2. Bradford Wilcox wrote: “What they often don’t realize is that children born outside of marriage are significantly more likely to be exposed to a revolving cast of caretakers and the social, emo-

tional and financial fallout associated with family instability and single parenthood.”

(Wilcox is co-author of the study and National Marriage Project director Bradford Wilcox, an associate professor of sociology in University of Virginia’s College of Arts & Sciences)

Here is a little information, for you to digest from “the inventors of evils,” as they are “now engaged in making marijuana legal! Here is one statement I read:

“Because legal weed is creating the stock market opportunity of a lifetime. In fact, right now all it takes is some spare change to become a marijuana millionaire. ... And the marijuana stock market is preparing to take off. Heck a mere \$100 investment could mint you a multi-millionaire.”

“The inventors of evils” are not concerned with the “evil” that is produced by their actions, but they are looking the end game: money! Let us understand, there is nothing wrong with having money; nor is there anything wrong with working for. In fact, Paul wrote: *“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing”* (2 Thess. 3:11-13). But, at the same time, Paul wrote Timothy: *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Tim. 6:10). Finally, Jesus said: *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matt. 6:24). It is clear the “inventors of evil things” are showing their “love of money,” at the expenses of our young!

CONCLUSION

It must always be remembered, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Pro. 4:23). Let us here recall the words as Jesus said: *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”* (Luke 6:45).

It is the heart/mind that must be changed, if America is to be changed; therefore, the gospel of Christ, God’s power to save, is directed to the heart/mind. All mankind is called upon by God, through Christ, to believe the gospel of Christ; repent (have a change of mind) of his sin; to confess faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God; and be baptized into Christ in order have his sins forgiven; and to live faithfully to God until death takes him from this life!

END NOTES

- (1) Stephen E. Lucas, “Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document”
- (2) Ellis, American Creation, 55–56.
- (3) William Godbey’s Commentary on the New Testament
- (4) Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Whole Bible
- (5) Affidavit of Sandra Cano. January 2, 2005

Rom. 1:31 – God gave those up who refuse to have God in their knowledge because of their wrong thinking (Part 5)

Lucian Farrar



LUCIAN FARRAR, JR. – was born in Natchez, Mississippi on September 15, 1939. He and LuEllen Kay (Ousley) were married on September 2, 1962. LuEllen died April 16, 2015. To this marriage four children were born: Monte, Michael, Melisa, and Mark.

Lucian started preaching in January 1961 at Chickalah, Arkansas. He attended Harding College (now University) and Arkansas State Teachers College (one semester). He graduated from Harding College with a BA, in 1962.

Romans 1:28 says, “*Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*” Those who have rejected God have a depraved and perverted way of thinking. Paul concludes exposing this wrong way of thinking in Romans 1:31, saying they are “*without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affections, implacable, unmerciful.*”

Even some respected scientists, well-educated teachers, and learned lawyers are **without understanding** and discernment. And those who look to these professional experts as the final authority are also without understanding.

When the apostle Paul was in Athens, he spoke to the Areopagus, a court composed of some of the most educated men in world. He told them that they were **ignorant of the God** who made heaven and earth, the One gives us life, breath, and all things. (Acts 17:22-25) And Paul went on to say, “*Truly the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*” And when they heard Paul speak of the resurrection of the dead, they would hear no more. They refused to hear any evidence proving the resurrection of Jesus. Paul had insulted their intelligence with his foolishness. So some began to mock and scorn him. (Acts 17:30-32)

Earlier in his sermon, Paul had reminded these Greek philosophers that their own poets had said that we are the offspring of a god in whom we live and move and have our being. Paul concluded, “*Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.*” (Acts 17:29) Children are like their parents, aren’t they? God created man in his own image. (Genesis 1:17) And God gives to man life, breath, and all things. (Acts 17:25) Why should men worship a lifeless image that was created by man and is dependent upon man for its care and upkeep? Athens was the world’s center of learning, but it was full of idols that they worshiped. Now that is foolish! And they thought Paul was foolish, because he thought that the God who created all things was able to raise the dead. Now, which faith is more reasonable? The faith of the Athenians in a lifeless idol or the faith of Paul in a living God, who created life and therefore is able to raise the dead

Things have not changed. Today’s popular worldview is secular humanism as set forth in the Humanist Manifesto I of 1933. This document was signed by John Dewey, the father of modern education. Humanist Manifesto I teaches that humanism is a religion, for it says, and I quote, “Today

man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and his deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. **To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present.** We therefore affirm the following: **First:** Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. **Second:** Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process. **Third:** Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected. **Fourth:** Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization are the product of gradual development due to his interaction with natural environment and with his social heritage." They believe that religion is not the results of revelation but of evolution. They call for separation between church and state to rid of any Christian influence so that their humanistic religion may be established. Do you see why evolution is taught in our public schools and creation is not allowed? Humanists teach that man is totally physical without a soul. In Humanist Manifesto II of 1973, it is stated that their goal for the 21st Century is to make it the humanistic century. This latest document states: "As non-theist, we begin with humans not God; nature not deity. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves." Like the ancient Greeks and Romans, the modern Humanists have made their own religion according to their own desires, because they do not want to retain God in their knowledge. Among the fifteen articles of faith in Humanist Manifest I is the **Eighth:** "Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now." They do not believe in life after death, just as did the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens. They think we are foolish to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet in their denial of the existence of God, they believe that lifeless matter produced life, just like the ancient Greeks believed that in their lifeless idols gave them life. Where is the understanding and discernment? We can see design in nature all around us and in the universe above us. Our own body is a well-designed and complex organism that could not have happened by chance. Hebrews 3:4 observes, "Every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God." So, "Professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools ... without understanding." (Romans 1:22, 31)

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness, he will deal unjustly, and **will not behold the majesty of the LORD.**" (Isaiah 26:10) Jesus also quoted Isaiah in Matthew 13:14-15, "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears. Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'"

Covenant-breaking is another example of wrong thinking in a person who does not retain God in his knowledge. He believes there is no divine witness to his broken promises. Don't you see why humanism is so popular today? Adolf Hitler signed an agreement with the Prime Ministers of England and France in 1938 promising that he would not go to war if Germany was allowed to take the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. As he was leaving the meeting, one of his officers asked him about the agreement, and his reply was, "O that was just a piece of paper, it means nothing." And the next year, he started World War II. Whether great or small, we should not make a promise that we do not intend to keep. I was a student for one semester at a state college, and I remember a young lady who said, "I'm not concerned about marrying the right man, because if it doesn't work out, I'll just divorce him and get another man." The marriage vow meant nothing to her. Many young men have the same attitude. But the Bible says, "The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth ... she is your companion and the wife of your covenant." (Malachi 2:14) And God condemns covenant-breakers.

Psalms 15:1 asks, "LORD, who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill?" And in the answer given in verses 2-4, we read, "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart ... He who swears to his own hurt, and does not change." God blesses

those who keep their promises, even when they are difficult and painful to keep. You will also gain the respect of others if your word is your bond. But covenant-breakers cause others to lose confidence in them. James Byers, one of our elders at Sperry, tells about the time he went to buy a used car. The salesman agreed with James on the price of a station wagon. He said he'd have it ready for him the next day with a new radiator hose installed. James got a loan from his credit union for the exact amount they had agreed upon. But when James handed the check to the salesman, he said that he couldn't sell the car for that price. James just quietly picked up his check that the salesman had laid on the table, and he left. Later that day, the salesman called him saying maybe he could sell the car for the price that they had agreed upon, but James said, "No." He called back again with an even lower offer, and James told him, "I'll never buy a car from you, because you broke our agreement." If James could not trust the salesman to keep his agreement, how could he believe anything that the salesman had said about the car? He was untrustworthy. It's an old saying, and true: "Honesty is the best policy."

Without natural affections is the third example of the wrong way of thinking in Romans 1:31. In nature, we can observe a mother cat feeding and protecting her kittens. The same is true for a dog and with her puppies. And you better leave those cute little bear cubs alone, or you'll have both Mama and Papa Bear to deal with. When a man and woman love each other in the bond of marriage, they will also have a natural affection for any child that may come from their union. Even before the child is born, they love their baby and try to do whatever is best for the child. But those who do not want to retain God in their knowledge are without natural affections. It is not love but lust that they have for members of the opposite sex. In Humanist Manifest II of 1973, it is stated under article six: "Neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered 'evil.'" When sex is just a pleasurable activity to be enjoyed outside of marriage, the pregnancies that follow may be unwanted. If there is no commitment of living together as husband and wife, there may not be the natural affection for the child. The child would only be a hindrance to their lifestyle. So, it's not surprising to read "The right to abortion should be recognized." This quote is also under the sixth article of faith in Humanist Manifesto II.

Abortion advocates do not want to believe in God, because they know He condemns the shedding of innocent blood. And there is no blood more innocent than that of an unborn baby. God says in Exodus 21:22-23, "*If men fight and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life.*" God imposes the death penalty for causing the death of an unborn child. The Hebrews word for the child in the womb is the same word for a young child, an infant or a baby. The Greek word for the baby in the womb of Elizabeth in Luke 1:44 is the same word for the baby Jesus in the manger in Luke 2:12. There was no difference between the fetus before birth and the baby.

Israel was tempted with idolatry in Old Testament times, because they committed sexual acts in the worship of the gods and goddesses of fertility. And the babies born to these immoral unions were offered as sacrifices. This sin was one of the reasons why God allowed his holy temple and the city of Jerusalem to be destroyed in 586 BC and the Jews to be taken captive to Babylon. Their idolatry is described in Psalm 106:35-38, "*They mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood.*" What was the result of their shedding innocent blood? Verse 40 says, "*Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them.*"

Is not our nation just as guilty as ancient Israel? Babies are being conceived out of wedlock, and to get rid them, they are offered in the fires of abortion clinics, where innocent blood is shed in the wor-

ship of what they called “free love.” Since abortion was legalized in our country, over 58 million babies have been killed in abortion clinics. Compare these 58 million babies slaughtered with the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust of Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Our inhumanity is almost 10 times greater. And the humanists, who call for separation between church and state, want us to fund their religious belief “that the right to abortion should be recognized.” Those of us who believe in God should be fearful that God will punish our nation just as he did Israel for shedding innocent blood.

Besides abortions, we are hearing almost daily about the neglect, the abuse, and even the killing of young children by their parents. These cases are further proof of the loss of natural affection. If the life of the unborn is nothing; so is the life of the just born. The humanists of today say that their roots are in classical Greece and Rome, and in classical Greece and Rome they killed their unwanted children. In most of the Greek city-states, killing infants was not merely permitted, but was actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the ancient men of the tribe, and that if found weak or deformed, should be killed. Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher in his work on government, called for the exposure of children that are naturally feeble and deformed, in order to prevent an excess population. But the Romans were even the most unrelenting in their treatment of infants. The Roman father had an absolute right over the life of his child, and that right was often used. The humanists are disciples of the Greeks and Romans. So, their killing will not stop with abortion.

And if parents are without natural affection for their children, will not their children cease having natural affection for them? When parents become old and useless, children without natural affection will want to get rid of them. Maybe they will be able to convince some lawyers and judges that mercy killing of the old and useless is good for an enlightened society. Now, is this the wonderful world that the humanists want for the 21st Century?

Implacable is the fourth example of the wrong kind of thinking that is found in those who reject God. This word describes persons who will not be reconciled to God or man. The **implacable** arrogantly and stubbornly refuse to hear or see any evidences for God or for Jesus Christ, because they want to be their own god. We see this attitude in the humanists who demand that only their views be taught or considered. They do not believe in academic freedom. There are hundreds of scientists that believe in God and creation. But their views are not allowed to be heard in our schools. With this attitude of self-sufficiency, they don’t feel the need to be reconciled to God or with others. They are constantly at war with others and refuse to listen to terms of accommodation. If they feel that you have wronged them, they will seek revenge, and they will make you their enemy for life. They are unwilling to make peace.

Unmerciful is to be unforgiving and lacking in compassion for others. This is the last example of the wrong kind of thinking by those who reject God. Jesus told the parable of a servant who owed his master a debt that he could never repay. When the servant begged his master for patience, his master had compassion for him and forgave his entire debt. However, this forgiven servant found a fellow servant who owed him a sizeable but payable debt and demanded payment. And when his fellow servant could not pay him immediately, he threw him into prison. When the master was informed of this, he was angry and put the unforgiving servant in prison to be tortured. Jesus concluded, “*So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*” (Matthew 18:35) “*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.*” (James 2:13) “*He who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.*” (Proverbs 14:21). Part of mercy is showing compassion for others by providing for those in need. After Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, he asked the lawyer, “*So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?*” And the lawyer said, “*He who showed mercy on him.*” Then Jesus said to him, “*Go and do likewise.*” (Luke 10:25-37)

Those who reject God are **without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affec-**

tion, implacable, unmerciful. If this is the wrong way to think, what is the right way to think? With faith in God our negatives are turned into positives.

Understanding begins with faith in the one true God of heaven and earth, who created and sustains all things. The apostle John wrote, *“We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding.”* (1 John 5:20) *“Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* (John 1:17) The apostle Paul admonishes us, *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles (the nations) walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feelings, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”* (Ephesians 4:17-20) In the next chapter Paul writes, *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ... See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”* (Ephesians 5:6-10, 15-17) How can we know the Lord’s will? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 provides the answer: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Instead of being covenant-breakers, we should be **covenant-keepers** like the Lord our God. The prophet Daniel described the Lord as, *“God, who keeps his covenant.”* (Daniel 9:4) God made a promise to Abraham, saying, *“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Genesis 22:18) Galatians 3:16 tells us that the “seed” is Christ. In Christ all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. This promise was repeated to Abraham’s son Isaac in Genesis 26:4 and to Isaac’s son Jacob in Genesis 28:14. *“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”* is therefore called *“the promise made to the fathers”* in Acts 13:32. It is the theme of the Bible. The blessing of the promise is the forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist introduced Jesus Christ as *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) Peter spoke of *“the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”* (Acts 3:25-26) We know that God will keep his promises. The Bible says, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.”* (2 Peter 3:9-10) *“The world is passing away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* (1 John 2:17)

God has **natural affection** for us, *“for it is he who made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people.”* (Psalm 100:3) *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) *“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and he was buried, and he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and he was seen of Cephas, then by the twelve. After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once.”* (1 Cor. 15:3-6) *“The love of Christ compels us.”* *“He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.”* (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) Jesus said, *“Love one another as I have loved you.”* (John 13:34)

God is not implacable, but **peaceable**. God wants sinners to be reconciled to him. The apostle Paul, who at one time was a persecutor of Christ and his church, wrote, *“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has*

committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:18-20) Christ is the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) Peter spoke of *"the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all."* (Acts 10:36) At the conclusion of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, he said, *"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to him, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.'" (Acts 2:38) And in verse 41 we read, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that same day about three thousand souls were added to them."* They were reconciled to God.

God is **merciful**, and he is *"the Father of mercies."* (2 Cor. 1:3) Jesus says, *"Therefore, be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:36) "God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before-hand that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:4-10). In Revelation 22:14 we read, *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city."* What city? It is the New Jerusalem in heaven, described in Revelation 21. God the Father, who is on the throne promises, *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son."* (Rev. 21:5, 7)

Who is your spiritual father? Is he God or Satan? Whose desires do you want to do? God's or Satan's. Jesus said to unbelievers in John 8:44, *"You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."* God created man with the freedom of choice. He does not force anyone to believe him or obey him. It's up to you. If you have made Satan your choice in life, God will let you be with Satan and all of his followers in eternity. Those who reject God will find out what life is like without God. It will not be the utopia that the humanists envision; it will be hell.

Heaven is only for God's children who love him and want to be with him. Do you want to be God's child? Galatians 3:26-27 tells how we become sons of God, *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* Through faith in Christ and baptism we are united with Christ and clothed in his righteousness. We are now God's children. And the chapter concludes by saying that if we belong to Christ we are heirs according to the promise God made to Abraham. (Galatians 3:29) Are you a child of God? If you are not God's child, why not confess your faith in Jesus and be baptized. Are you an unfaithful child of God? If you have not been faithful to him, you need to repent and pray to God for forgiveness, according to Acts 8:22. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Whatever your need, will you come as we stand and sing the invitation song?

Rom. 1:32 – And A Summary

Brian L. Berry



BRIAN BERRY was born November 11, 1962, in Hobart, OK. He has attended Oklahoma Christian University from which he graduated and Bear Valley Bible Institute, Denver, CO, from which he also graduated.

Brian and Susan were married December 20, 2014 and between them they have five children: Brandon, McKennah, Ethan, Micah, and Dylan.

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the following congregations: Moore, OK; Paden, OK; Erick, OK; and is now working with the Sycamore church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships with the Edmond church of Christ Vacation Bible School Adult Series Lectures; Bear Valley Bible Institute Homecoming Lectures, Denver, CO; Edmond church of Christ; Prague, OK; Leedey, OK Summer Series; Erick, OK; Carnegie, OK Summer Youth Series; Mountain View, Ok church growth Seminar. He has written articles appearing in the local newspaper in Sayre, Oklahoma Record.

This is Brian's first time to speak on our lectureship.

Introduction

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17). And with that statement, the apostle Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, reveals the rich, life-changing, eternal truth known as the book of Romans. How great is this truth? Brother R. C. Bell once said, “If you get Romans, God gets you.” To learn these truths it must be approached with effort and determination to understand what the Holy Spirit desired. The text contains the theme of God's wrath, while unpopular with many in a self-absorbed society, it is entirely biblical. Divine wrath, however, must not be viewed as analogous with the human anger. God's wrath is neither impulsive nor volatile. It is the measured justice that responds to the rebellion of humanity. Because of sin, God's wrath is revealed; it is revealed in: First) the violent acts of nature (Romans 8:22); Second) the testimony of history (Genesis 6-9); Third) the sacrifice of the cross (Romans 3:24-25); and Fourth) the prophecies of the end of time (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Overview – Romans 1:18-32

“It does not matter how small the sins, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the light and out into nothing. Murder is no better than lies if lying does the trick.” - C. S. Lewis. In a section beginning with “for” in 1:18, and consummating in 3:20, the message is that “faith” of 1:17 is the only means by which one may attain the righteousness offered in the “power of God unto salvation,” i.e., the “gospel” of 1:16. This is true because men are depraved depraved (very veil: having or showing an evil and immoral character) and cannot earn God's salvation by their own works of merit. This section of Scripture from 1:18-32 clearly shows that the Gentiles (primarily, though not exclusively) are guilty and are sinners. The section of Scripture from 2:1-3:8 clearly shows that the Jews are equally guilty and are sinners. The conclusion: all are guilty and are sinners before God and all are shut up to the faith as the means by which to obtain God's salvation (Romans 3:19-20). According to a citation the apostle Paul draws on from the prophet Habakkuk, this is the precise point he is making.

Romans 1:18-32

This particular section, namely, 1:18-32 can be broken down into two smaller sections, 1:18-23 and 1:24-32. The first section deals with the basis for the guilt of the Gentiles (and indeed all men by extension), and the second section deals with the consequences or results of such guilt.

Romans 1:32 – “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

“Who knowing” - That the Gentiles had a moral sense, or were capable of knowing the will of God in this case, is clear from Romans 2:14-15, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)” The means which they had of arriving at the knowledge of God was their own reason, their conscience, and an observation of the effects of depravity.

“The judgment of God” – This is the declared sentiment of God that such things deserved death. It does not mean His own inflictions, or His statutes or precepts; but it means that God thought or judged that they which did such things should face death. As they were aware of this, their guilt was displayed in still persevering in the face of His judgments, and His solemn purpose to inflict punishment.

“Were worthy of death” – “Death” in the Scriptures is often used to denote punishment. It does not mean here that these deserved capital punishment from the civil magistrate, but that they were aware they were evil, and offensive to God, and deserving of such punishment from His hand.

“Not only do the same” - Since they sinned against light and knowledge, with approval and pleasure of their own sins, the evidence of the “reprobate mind” is not simply that such things are done occasionally under temptation or in the heat of passion, but that they are the habits of people’s lives. These allow themselves total freedom in the practice of these sins.

“But have pleasure in them that do them” – These not only allow themselves in the practice of these sins, they delight in those who also commit them; and hence, encourage them in it, and excite them to it. This was a grievous aggravation of the offence. It greatly heightens guilt when we excite others to do it, and seduce them from the ways of innocence. That this was the case with the pagan there can be no doubt. People often do not commit sin alone. They need the countenance of others. They “join hand in hand,” and become associated in iniquity. All social sins are of this class; and most of those which the apostle mentioned were sins of this character. The Jews have a saying “*that no man is suspected of a thing but he has done it; and if he has not done the whole of it, he has done part of it, and if he has not done part of it, he has thought in his heart to do it, and if he has not thought in his heart to do it, he has seen others do it, and has rejoiced.*” (T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 18. 2.)

When God Abandons A Nation

It is always instructive, it is always enlightening, it is sometimes literally scintillating to turn to the power in the pages of God’s Holy Scriptures to discern what it has to say and how relevantly it speaks to modern times and our lives. “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:16-17).

To set the stage for this unfolding truth, God has spoken, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*” (Romans 1:18). This section, Romans 1:18-32, concerns the wrath of God. Admittedly this is not a popular subject, certainly not a popular subject in our world and not even a popular subject in the church at times. However, the wrath of God is an absolutely critical and central subject to any understanding of the gospel.

Scripture indicates, as noted above, there are different aspects to the wrath of God. There is an aspect of this wrath displayed in this passage that may be best described as the wrath of abandonment, i.e. the wrath exhibited by God when He turns His back on an individual or a society.

C.S. Lewis in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, wrote, “The lost enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved.” When individuals, groups of people or even nations resist the counsel of God and spurn His reproof, there comes a time when He abandons them to the consequences of their sinful choices. These are some of the most tragic pronouncements of tongue or pen. Salvation is past ! The day of grace is over !

No passage of Scripture more directly confronts this abandonment and its consequences than Romans 1. Here is the most graphic, most comprehensive discussion of what it means to be abandoned by God and it is the strongest passage explaining the moral chaos and confusion that we experience in our own nation at this very time. God’s wrath is already at work in our culture. We’re not waiting for it, we are currently experiencing it.

In the defining section on what it means to be abandoned by God, three times the inspired apostle Paul writes, “*God gave them up*” (verse 24), “*God gave them up*” (verse 26), and “*God gave them over*” (verse 28). Three times you have the statement, “*God gave them over.*” This term, “*paradidomi,*” in the Greek language can have a judicial sense. It can be used of one who is delivered up to judgment (<http://www.biblestudytools.com>). In every single usage of this phrase the fact is expressed that the wrath of God has acted judicially to sentence sinners. It is God Himself officially giving them over. It is God letting them go to the uninterrupted cause and effect that their sinful choices produce. When this judgment falls, there is the deprivation of restraining grace and sin is allowed to run perpetually rampant through a nation. Sin is the cause and sin the effect. Sin is the reason and sin is the result. Sin is the action and sin is the consequence.

The Progression Of Abandonment

When God’s abandonment, defined as “*God gave them up,*” goes into action, there are three sequential steps according to this passage. The word “*Wherefore,*” of verse 24 connects with verses 18-23, with verse 18 beginning with, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...*” Verses 18-23 enumerates the reasons for the revealing of God’s wrath. Those reasons are emphatically stated as “... all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Verse 24 explains this wrath, “*Wherefore, God also gave them up...*”

The first indication that God has abandoned a society is sexual immorality – the passions of an impure heart. “*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves*” (Romans 1:24). When the heart is wretched and dominated by lust, the body follows in dishonorable ways. The heart is wicked and unrestrained and the body follows along in a sexually charged nation. In a nation becoming increasingly pornographic, the consequences are horrific and horrendous. Marriage is no longer held in high-esteem, children are abused, and sex runs rampant. Look at a nation and observe if it is driven by an insatiable desire for sexual immorality. Look at a nation and observe if it is filled with lust in the heart leading to impurity and the body follows in dishonorable ways. When these conclusions are in the affirmative concerning a nation, this nation will have not only a national influence, but a world-wide influence today due to means of communication available.

The second indication that God has abandoned a nation is “vile affections.” “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:” (Romans 1:26). The spiral downward of God’s description of why He abandons

societies continues. The debauchery is greater with these degrading passions that can be accurately described as gross affections, vile desires, perversions or even inversion. And specifically these are described as “women did change the natural use unto that which is against nature,” i.e., homosexuality or lesbianism. The Holy Spirit began this verse by referring to the degrading actions of women, often the last to be affected in digression of morals with their mothering and protective instinct. However, even women fell prey to their own “vile affections.” The lesbian movement is very vocal, relentless, passionate, fierce, and even violate. It’s hard proof that absolutely all virtue is gone when motherhood, the highest human virtuous relationship is abandoned and the people who indulge are elevated as icons. All virtue is gone whenever homosexuality invades the female gender.

In addition, verse 27 adds, “*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*” (Romans 1:27). The Jews say, as “one commandment draws on another, so one transgression draws on another; for the reward of the commandment is the commandment, and the reward of transgression is transgression.” (Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 2). There will be consequences for sinful behavior – disease of body and debasement of mind.

The third step in the digression to God’s abandonment is homosexuality. As we take a long, hard look at a nation – when we see a nation that is pornographic, indulged in sexual immorality, fornication, adultery as a dominant way of life, which is not only in existence but approved and exalted in every way, you know that God’s abandonment is in operation. And therefore, when a nation also exalts homosexuality, lesbianism and sodomy, then it is evident that it is sinking deeper into sin.

The fourth indication that God has abandoned a nation is a “reprobate mind.” “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*” (Romans 1:28). God gave them over to a “reprobate mind.” Initially, the heart becomes depraved - tested, found useless, disqualified for its intended purpose - and the body follows along. Rational thinking is so corrupted it is crippled. The intellectual faculty – the conscience - is no longer able to function. Thus, they do things which are sinful, not moral. Immorality runs rampant to the point that the reprobate mind may not find its way back. This is reflected in those involved advocating numerous wretched acts to the depreciation of anything virtuous.

What is the natural progression of a pornographic, homosexual, and a depraved culture? “*Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:*” (Romans 1:29-31).

And what is the response? Although they know the ordinance of God, and they also know that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. “*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*” (Romans 1:32).

This is the result when God abandons a nations. This is what our nation looks like – government, internet, television, radio, magazines, music, newspapers – this is it !

God’s Reasons For Abandonment

This is what it looks like when God abandons a nation. And this brings us to the question, “Why does God abandon a nation ?”

The first reason God abandons a nation is a nation first abandons Him. This is clearly illustrated in one of the most tragic scenes gracing the pages of Scripture. It involves the strongest man who ever lived, the mighty Samson. “*And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart.*”

Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house” (Judges 16:18-21). As the result of his sin, God left him – the judgment of abandonment. To the sons of Israel, God said in Judges 10:13-14, “Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.” He was done with them. A similar sentiment is written in Proverbs 1:24-31, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” were the inspired words of the prophet Hosea in 4:17. Jesus once spoke of the Pharisees, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch,” (Matthew 15:14). Over and over and over again, God abandons a nation when that nation abandons Him.

The second reason God abandons a nation is revelation. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” (Romans 1:18). Man has been given the truth. Any nation that is constantly attempting to suppress the truth in unrighteousness, silencing the bearers of truth, and hates the light absolutely implies the truth is available. The source of this truth is then described, “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Romans 1:19). God made it evident to them through reason and the moral law written in the heart, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;” (Romans 2:14-15).*

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). “They are without excuse” because it is evident that a creation must have a Creator, a design must have a designer. God has inlaid the evidence of spiritual and moral truth and of His own existence and His greatness and His power in the very fabric of man’s being. All humans have five senses, but man has more working in him than just five physical senses. Man has two spiritual senses: reason and morality. These are so strong within that they lead to God as the all-powerful Creator, that they lead to God as a law giver and therefore a judge. These should be a natural progression from what is implanted in the hearts of man. Because of this, “they are without excuse.”

Our nation has assaulted the need for a Creator with the theory of evolution and by disparaging the authenticity of Scripture. Even in the church today there is an attempt to minimize Scripture because people don’t want to hear it in its pure, unadulterated form. But the truth is there. Ignorance is no excuse. Additionally we have the Bible and Christian institutions such as churches, and Christian schools. God has made Himself known through revelation, in creation, perceived by reason and in the law written in the heart, perceived by conscience, in the very fabric of what it is to be human. However these and all truth will always be attacked.

Sinners are without excuse because that which is known about God is evident within them for God

made it evident to them in creating them the way He did. And so, looking at the creation you see His invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature clearly and all “are without excuse.”

The third reason God abandons a nation is the truth. *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”* (Romans 1:21). Although man finds God in reason, he rejects Him. Although man finds God in the moral law and conscience, he rejects Him. Although man is exposed to the truth of God in Scripture, he rejects Him. He suppresses the truth under his iniquities because he loves darkness rather than light. And he plunges downward believing that he can live his life any way he wants without any consequence at all. Therefore, man leaves himself under divine judgment of the severest kind. Seneca is an instance of this, of whom Austin says, “that he worshipped what he found fault with, did what he reprov'd, and adored that which he blamed” (De Civitate Dei, l. 6. c. 10.).

We see nations today so amazingly influenced by the gospel but yet we see a people who, *“...glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.”* They do not thank Him for being the source of everything. Man’s problem is not that he can’t find God. Man’s problem is not that he can’t recognize God. Man’s problem is not that he can’t find the truth or recognize the truth. It is that he will not. Why? *“They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). They don’t want to honor God, because to honor God would then cause them to be accountable to Him, to His law and therefore under His judgment. In view of it all, man as a whole would rather live without God.

The sinner, therefore, becomes comfortable with at least five dominant lies in life. **The first lie is life is random.** Everything is a product of evolutionary chance, no purpose, no creator, no accountability. In this universe the formula might be best described as nobody times nothing equals everything. Nobody is in charge, nobody put us here, and everyone is accountable to nobody. No one made us, we have no purpose, and we are free in this random world to do as we please. **The second lie is truth is relative.** There are no absolutes, no standards, and everything flows around popular opinion. Popular opinion, ethics and anything else can be changed with enough power and persistence, but there is no absolute truth. All are free to embrace truth as they see it and demand the freedom to live lives according to this truth which is of their own invention. **The third lie is people are basically good.** If people become evil, it’s not their own fault. Somebody else is to blame, they lack self-esteem, they have psychological problems based on environmental failures. But people are basically good. The mantra is, “I’m basically good, I’m a good person.” **The fourth lie is each individual is in complete control of their own life.** Anyone can change his own life, get control, take charge, and become the person he wants to be. Anyone has the power to be whatever he wants to be. **The fifth lie is self-satisfaction.** The goal of life is self-satisfaction. The ultimate goal is feeling good about oneself and being satisfied with who you are. You hear people say, “This is who I am, take it or leave it and I’m happy who I am. This is me and I’m just out there.”

The truth, however, is diametrically opposed to each of these lies. God is sovereign and nothing is random. The Bible is absolute truth. All people are basically sinful. Only Christ can change one’s life. And selfless submission to Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal of life. They’ve got it completely wrong.

So why would they honor a God they deny ? Why would they give Him thanks ? They wouldn’t because they think they’ve achieved everything on their own. They can look at the beauty of this world with all the good things that God has placed in it and they can’t even thank Him for a sunset, for love, for children, for a baby, for a good meal, for a vacation, for rest, for sleep, for a home. They can’t thank Him because then they would be acknowledging that He’s the source. It’s like Isaiah’s day when he wrote, *“For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me”* (Isaiah 47:10).

The fourth reason God abandons a nation is rationalization. If this weren't so sad it would be funny. *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"* (Romans 1:22). The foolishness of verse 21 is exacerbated in verse 22. Their darkness is so profound that they can't assess their true condition, thus, they profess to be wise.

It reminds me of the lady who went to the psychiatrist with a duck on a leash. The doctor said, "How can I help you, Ma'am?" She said, "It's not me, my husband, he's the one, he thinks he's a duck." This would definitely call into question her perception of reality. It's like the guy lying in a bed in a mental hospital who kept saying, "I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon." And the guy in the bed next to him kept saying, "No you're not, no you're not, no you're not." To which the man said, "How do you know I'm not Napoleon?" And the reply was, "Because I'm God."

There is no more ridiculous, no more absurd, no more bizarre act of foolishness than giving yourself a Ph.D. when you know nothing about a certain discipline; congratulating yourself for your wisdom and knowledge and insight and achievement when your heart is black and completely shut out of true knowledge. "Professing themselves to be wise," shows they're proud to stand up and declare how really wise they are. This always reminds me of the emperor's new clothes. The story shows an emperor who was convinced that he was wearing the most beautiful clothing when in reality he was stark naked and went about parading the glory of his supposed new garments and instead everybody laughed. "They became fools." "Fools," is a word in the Greek language from which we get our word "moron." We have a nation of proud morons flaunting themselves as if they're significant, as if they're wise. The driveling out of their folly is endless.

The fifth reason God abandons a nation is religion. *"And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things"* (Romans 1:23). In religion men often create their own gods to accommodate their own futile ideas. So Philo of the Jews spoke of "some, who, leaving the true God, make to themselves false ones, and impose the name of the eternal and incorruptible upon created and corruptible beings" (De Vita Mosis, l. 3. p. 678, 679). Thus, rather than religion taking man to his highest level, religion often takes man to his lowest. False religion is man at the lowest. It's man who has gone away from the truth of God and the further he goes, the more he descends into satanic false religion. This is the final straw.

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 1:25). They kept worshiping alright and they even developed a religion, but they worshiped something of their own creation, or a creation of God, an animal, a fish, a star, a constellation, or an idol rather than the Creator Himself. *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"* (Romans 1:28). It doesn't mean they're not religious. They may even be fanatically religious, just tragically religiously wrong.

These idols come in all forms, from primitive statues of the lowest cultures to the more elevated gods of self, sex and mother nature, from the Roman eagle to the spotted owl, to the golden bulls of Egypt, to the dolphin gods of environmentalists, from the worship of a stick, to the worship of the earth, from Aborigines to environmentalists, from pantheistic worship of the world to eco-feminism, from eco-feminism to Islam and every other religion. Is it any wonder then that as a society there is a major struggling with ethics? Is it any wonder there is such a struggle with morals? God has been rejected. He gave His revelation, it's been rejected. Man rationalizes and calls himself an elite, educated, advanced culture and invents religion as if it's an indicator of how high he has ascended when the fact of the matter is an eternity in hell is drawing closer. Man has abandoned God and God has returned the favor.

A Message Of Hope

One has said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The inimitable

apostle Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4). This cycle, rejecting the true God and digressing into disobedience, and then returning to God, is nothing new. Many generations of the Jewish people, God’s chosen people for the redemption of mankind, have repeated this same cycle. There is always hope for any society as a whole to return to God.

Psalm 81:11-16 has a definitive word of hope: *“But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways ! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured forever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.”* This is Romans 1. This happened to God’s chosen people. The history of the world is the judgment of the world. God has always allowed nations of their own free will to go their own way. But there has always been the plaintive cry of God, *“Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways !”* (v. 13). Over and over and over throughout Scripture God implores those who have turned their hearts and lives away from Him to return to Him.

The key, God says is listen to Me. And not only listen to me, walk in my ways. *“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”* (John 3:21). The only hope for this or any other individual or nation is to hear the Word of the Lord and obey it. The safest and greatest place for mankind to be in this world is right in the middle of the will of the only true and living God.

How Will We Respond ?

Christians shouldn’t at all be surprised at the critical even intense reactions of the world in response to the proclaiming of God’s Word. John the Baptizer, of whom Jesus proclaimed, *“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater...”* (Matthew 11:11), was beheaded for courageously informing the King that it was wrong for him to be married to one who was not his wife lawfully (Mark 6:14-29). Following three years of preaching a message of repentance, our Savior, our supreme example, was crucified (Mark 1:15).

Will the army of the Lord, Christ’s church, continue to teach God’s truth in love on every subject and every evil ? What will be our response to the threats against us that are present and are surely coming ? Let’s be clear: this is not a time for weak men preaching weak messages in weak churches. This is a time for bold and powerful, strong biblical ministry that calls people to hear the Word of God and respond powerfully and assertively. This is the only hope for any people and for any individual. *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:1-8).

May God, our Father, empower us to preach and live His truth with absolute clarity and absolute power. Let us preach His Word and proclaim our thankfulness for His love and His pathway to heaven. Let us preach His Word and proclaim our thankfulness that He has warned us of eternal destruction in

hell. Let us preach His Word with thankfulness for His amazing grace that confronts us with truth. Let us fervently pray for His help to always proclaim His Word that saves eternally. Let us live ever knowing as sure as we and others are alive today, it is not too late until it is too late. Until Jesus returns we can keep preaching and living His Word, to the ends of the earth, across each and every nation, so that those under His wrath and who have been abandoned by Him may come to Him, return to Him, and be snatched out of the fire. God help us be part of the greatest revival of His Word. May all desire to love Him, learn of Him, and live for Him. To God be the glory forever and ever, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen !