Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Judgment on a Reprobate Society
Scripture: Romans 1:18-32
Code: 1261

As you know, I have been concerned over the last couple of weeks - in fact, over the last month or so, of thinking in my own mind and in my own heart about some of the things that are happening in our world and our society and how it affects the church. Really the world has been pretty subtleand little by little has infiltrated the church of Jesus Christ. And from time to time I hear about things in Grace Church that just shatter me. And maybe you do, too and maybe from time to time you've even been a part of such things, I don't know. I trust not and I pray not.

But all of this has caused me to realize that we can't be smug and we can't just go on playing church, we can't have our little parlor games and our little conversations and our little programs without really realizing that this is a war. And if we're going to make any kind of a dent in our society, number one, we're going to have to keep our own ranks pure and number two, we're going to have to get a little bit confrontive about this whole thing. We're going to have to come out from our closet and we're going to have to begin to say things that are true and need to be said.

I was with a young man today by the name of Dennis Agajanian and some of you may know him, he plays the guitar, but he also likes to preach Christ and he likes to preach Christ outdoors wherever he can. So he finds all the schedules for all of the weird groups that are meeting and he goes there with a bullhorn and he preaches Jesus Christ. Recently he went to the gay fair in Hollywood and he went over to the kissing booth at the gay fair and he began to preach Jesus Christ and somebody hit him in the side of the head with a 2x4. But he was confrontive; I thank God for him, for that kind of confrontiveness. I think these two things we need to understand, people, that we're living in a world that is going to corrupt us unless we, number one, keep our own lives pure and, number two, get a little bit bold about our own testimony.

That's what I want to talk about. We live in a decadent society and I don't think we all understand it. I think that we are insulated. You know, you're born into a Christian family in many cases. You know, you have a Christian dentist and a Christian doctor and a Christian insurance man and you buy a Christian car from a Christian car dealer - a Christian car is one with a sticker on it.

(Laughter)

And you make sure you go to church and you go to Bible study and you really don't know what's going on out there, and little by little you begin to expose yourself to the world, and maybe you get a

little taste of it, and maybe you get more than you ought to, and you fall into sin, and maybe you don't really understand the full impact of what the system really is and I'd like to just maybe talk about that tonight. When I say the world is decadent, *Webster*says "decadent" means marked by decay and decline. Believe me, the history of man is not evolution, its devolution. It's not up, it's down.

Decadence is a good word to describe human history. Human history is a decline. The society of man has been on the decline ever since the fall of Adam. Man has never ascended; he has descended progressively from the fall. Man, you see, started life in the image of God and when he sinned and that image was marred, the process of decline began, and man sinks lower and lower and lower and lower until finally he will sink into the debauchery that is described in the Book of Revelation as the time of the tribulation, and at the end of that debauchery Christ Himself will come and put an end to all of it.

The world system is vile, it is degraded, it is debauched, and it is marked by decline over a period of thousands of years further and further and further away from God's standard. Now one verse sums this up and one passage is going to be our theme for tonight. Turn in your Bible to Romans Chapter 1 and I want you to look at verse 28 just as a key and then we'll back up and look at this entire passage from 18 to 32.

Romans Chapter 1 verse 28. And here basically is a comment on the problem of human history. It says in Romans 1:28, "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 obscenities." Right? They did not like to retain God in their knowledge; God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things, which are obscene.

Now you'll notice that it says there that man has been given over to a reprobate mind. Now what that means is a depraved mind, depraved reasoning, a worthless mind, unable and unwilling to think right. Man cannot think right. He cannot reason properly. He will never reason himself to the truth. He will never reason himself to God. He will never reason himself to righteousness because his reason is warped, his mind is reprobate, and what that means is simply depraved, declining, unable and unwilling to think right thoughts.

And there's a play on words here. The Greek goes something like this: as they found God worthless, God gave them over to a worthless mind. Now this is a mind which cannot form right judgments. This is addocemas. Unapproved, useless, worthless, rejected by God. The human mind is rejected because the human mind has no capacity to come up with righteousness. You know its only thanks to God that we have any law at all left in our world because if we left it up purely to the judgment of men apart from some code of law based on the word of God, we'd never have anything remotely related to justice, because man's mind is so depraved.

And what a reprobate mind refers to is people who's moral sense is so perverted and who's minds are so clouded with their own evil speculations that they do obscenities, and an obscenity is something which does not fit into God's moral order, something that is not seemly. It simply means it doesn't fit into God's moral order.

Now you don't have to be a genius, you don't even have to know very much information to know that the world is full of obscenities. I received some information - I'm a chaplain for Chief Davis' office in the police department, protestant chaplain, so I have opportunity to talk to some of the people in law enforcement and get some information and I said give me some illustrations of obscenities that are going on in our world today and they gave me some, none of which I could use because I wouldn't read them in public.

Can you imagine the most bizarre kind of mutilations, the most bizarre kinds of crimes, the most bizarre kinds of activities, and you have just barely begun to scratch the surface of the obscenities that occur regularly in our society. Let me give you some illustrations. There are more murders with no apparent motive than ever before. Murders that are an afterthought. Somebody goes to commit a crime and just as an afterthought they kill everybody who happened to be around the situation.

The other night in our neighborhood somebody came into a store two blocks from us and wanted to rob the store but that wasn't enough, they had to take weapons and smash in the heads of everybody in the store. There are more gang murders of rival members and bystanders who are shot simply while they're sitting in their house watching television because they get caught in the crossfire. A young man came into that thing that happened near our house and took out a gun and killed one of those robbers and the police will not say who he is and they will give no information to anybody who he is because they feel a gang will retaliate and kill him.

More drug and prostitution-related murders; pimps killing prostitutes for non-performance. Clients killing prostitutes for sexual aberrations, drug dealers killing each other during rip-offs at the time of transaction. There are more drug-related murders; specifically several recent murders have been committed by suspects under the influence of angel dust, which is an animal tranquilizer. In confessions murderers say this: "I feel I was under the power of another force, I really didn't want to do it."

That's interesting, isn't it? There are more multiple murders in a shorter period of time than ever before. A downtown slasher some time ago killed 20 to 25 victims. The West Side Rapist, 13 victims, and you remember most of them were in their 70s and they were raped and then murdered. And The Hillside Strangler has now gotten 10 girls in five weeks. And six or seven of those by the West Side Rapist were dismembered.

There are more murders by homosexuals and of homosexuals than ever before. On January 16, 1977 Leslie Ramirez, a 14-year-old girl, was shot in the head while watching television in her home. She was the victim of gang warfare, she had nothing to do with either gang; she was just sitting there.

Recently a gruesome murder with multiple stabbings occurred while the slayer was under the influence of PCP. Gang murders have become voluminous problems. So far this year there have been 515 murders in the city; that's much faster than one a day, as opposed to 467 last year; at this time an increase of 10.27%. So far 2,170 women have been raped, that is they reported a rape. That's 11.8 percent over last year. Robberies are also on the increase. 13,852 that they know about compared to 12,000-some-odd last year, an increase of nearly 7 percent.

And so crime as far as we know is up and yet our police force is one of the most conservative, the most effective, the best in the nation. Now we hear a lot today about let's eliminate victimless crime prosecution. If there's no victim then we don't want to prosecute. If they want to have drugs, that's fine; if they want to do their thing in prostitution, if they want to be homosexuals, leave them alone, it's a victimless crime. Well, there's no such thing as a victimless crime, that's a fabrication by those who would legalize prostitution, gambling, pornography and drugs. There's no such thing as a victimless crime.

Just to give you an illustration, 50 % of all burglaries are committed by people who are on a drug habit and have to do that to feed their habit. So drugs is not victimless. Homosexuality is not victimless, either, as made obvious by the masochism, sadism, the chickhawk murders where homosexuals are killing little children, etc., etc. These are not victimless crimes. The district attorney in 1975 in San Francisco said he would not deal with prostitution unless violence was involved. Crime immediately went up 34 percent in the first three months. All crime. Because there's no such thing as an isolated crime. And later when the district attorney and the chief of police and the community moved against this decision and reversed it, crime immediately fell by 27 percent.

There's no such thing as a victimless crime and when society says they just want to tolerate all these things you see that the reason is they don't have any standard at all, so they're just bowing to majority rule and they don't know why not so they don't know why they should prevent it. I'll never forget listening to George Putnam on KIED one day and he was interviewing a state senator from California and the state senator said, "I'm against abortion" and he went into this big long tirade against abortion and I said boy that sounds like a good thing, that's terrific. And then finally George Putnam said to him, "Why are you against abortion?" And he said, "Because I took a sample, a straw vote, of my district and they're against it by majority, so if they're against it I want to be the people's perspective in the State Senate. So I'm against it." Great moral conviction.

The majority of people are against it, he's against it. Society dictates law where there is no standard. I was informed this morning that the West Coast capital for cocaine is Woodland Hills. Because cocaine is very expensive and it's mostly passed among the affluent and it soon is going to be a drug decriminalized. You know the city in the United States that has the highest crime rate per capita of any city in America? Las Vegas. You legalize gambling and you'll have the flood of every other conceivable vice there is because criminals can't stop with one crime, see? That's a mentality; it has the highest per capita bankruptcy in the nation, the highest per capita crime rate in the nation.

In Los Angeles in 1969 there were 18 places where you could get pornographic material. In 1976 there are 143; 800 percent increase. Dr. Jerome Latner, head of the State Department of Health recommended serious consideration to legalizing heroin in California. He might want to know that more than 1,000 babies are born as heroin addicts in New York alone because their mothers are addicted - they enter the world as heroin addicts. A United Nations narcotics agency said at November 1st in Geneva, Switzerland the United Fund for Drug Abuse Control said that in the United States an estimated 620,000 people are addicted to opiates such as heroin. France has 100,000 addicts; five times what they had in 1970. West Germany has 40,000 addicts as far as they know. The Netherlands 15,000 addicts. In 1976 there were 2,000 O.D. deaths, overdose.

I'll tell you another interesting thing, just to show you trends. In the past, the city attorney of Los Angeles was a God-fearing man which some of you know and love who has been a part of our church, Roger Arenburg. And to give you a difference in what's happening in our view of these kinds of things, in 1972 there were 820 obscenity cases filed by the city attorney. In 1972, 820 filed. In 1976, 40. They don't want to prosecute obscenity or drugs or homosexuality or prostitution. The decline is all around us. And when there are no absolutes, you see, then there is no way to defend these things. When you give up God and you give up the Bible, you've got no basis and so you decide everything on the majority vote and if the majority of the people want to have prostitution, homosexuality or the majority of the people can't think of a good reason why the people who want to do it should be restricted from doing it then you're going to get it by votes because there's no standards.

Where there are no absolutes, society itself becomes the absolute. And you know what happens ultimately? You get anarchy. Pretty soon in order to survive you have to be a criminal and then when everybody gets to be a criminal you've got anarchy and then to stop anarchy you get a police state. Now you say how can all of this happen? Well, let's go back to Romans Chapter 1. How can we get in such a mess?

Well, the answer is developed for us in the first chapter of Romans. And Paul opens in verse 18 with the devastating statement. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold or literally who are guilty of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness." Now let me introduce you to several words that I want you

to key on as we go through this text. The first word is "wrath." The first word is wrath. The wrath of God. Now I don't know how that hits you, but that's a fearful word. There aren't too many people who want to talk about that much more, but that's really something we ought to talk a lot more about.

When I was involved in this recent debate, I finally got to the place where I decided that I was just going to say what I thought and, I said, "You may try to tell me that this is an intellectual thing, that God blesses homosexuals and all this stuff is hearts and flowers and wonderful relationships and filial friendships, and its all very beautiful and its all very David and Jonathan and so forth and so on, but the fact of the matter is you're nothing but evil, vile, Godless, apostate perverts."

(Laughter)

You know, you can only take so much and then you get to the place where you don't need to discuss it, you just need to speak judgment. Wrath. The wrath of God is revealed. Now this is a fearful theme and I want you to understand that the wrath of God is something you need to see, so I want to take a minute to develop what it is. We see the wrath of God begin to unfold in the Old Testament. In Numbers Chapter 16, for example, it tells us of a rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who rebelled against God and at the end of this rebellion Moses asked Aaron to make a special atonement for the sins of the people, and he said this, "Because there is wrath gone out from the Lord." Numbers 16:43. There is wrath gone out from the Lord.

And you remember what happened; the ground opened up and swallowed them up. When the children of Israel were led away in the Baal worship, Numbers 25:3 says the wrath of the Lord was kindled against them. In Jeremiah Chapter 50 in verse 13 Jeremiah said that the Babylonians had mistreated Israel, and, quote, "Because of the wrath of God that place will not be inhabited."

The Old Testament prophets spoke continuously about this. Isaiah talked about it not only in the present but in the future. He said, "Behold the Day of the Lord comes cruel with wrath and fierce anger." Isaiah 13:9. Ezekiel 7:19, Ezekiel talks of the Day of the Wrath of the Lord. You know, it simply means anger. Even in the love and grace of the Old Testament, and the love and grace of the New Testament, wrath has a prominent place. But there's some interesting aspects to it in the New Testament. It's developed in a way that I think will help you to understand as we think of it.

Paul speaks frequently of the wrath, the wrath of God, but he never speaks about God getting angry. He sort of depersonalizes it. For example, he speaks of God's love and he also speaks of God loving. He speaks of God's grace, and he speaks of God graciously giving. He speaks of God's faithfulness and he speaks of God being faithful. He speaks of God's wrath but he never talks about God getting angry because he doesn't want to give you the impression that God is just up there and when He sees something He just gets really mad and He just comes and crushes it.

In fact, let me take it a step further now. Stay with me in this thinking. Only three times does Paul ever call it the wrath of God. Once here, once in Ephesians 5:6, once in Colossians 3:6. Only those three times does he even connect it with God. He never says God gets angry, so that the wrath is almost set apart from some whimsical attitude of God. It's almost a principle that's sort of just there by virtue of who God is and then further when he talks about it, only three times does he even relate it to God; all the other times, you know what he calls it? "The wrath," period. He doesn't even connect it to God. The wrath.

For example, look at Romans 3:5. No, let's look at 5:9. "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath." From wrath. Now there, that isn't necessarily connected to it, at least in the verbiage, though obviously he's connected to it. Romans 13:5, "Wherefore, he must needs be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake." Conscience' sake. Now there again we need to be careful how we live because of wrath. In 1 Thessalonians he talks about "the wrath" to come. Now the point is that Paul does not always identify this specifically with God as if its some instant act of God, as if God sees things and just gets angry about this and angry about that and angry about this and angry about that.

Now let me bring all of this into focus. The wrath of God is, listen: a principle that operates in the universe. It is the consequence of disobedience and rebellion. *It is the consequence of disobedience and rebellion*. Illustration: if you jump off a ten-story building, God does not say now that guy is going to get it. He broke my law of gravity; why, I'm going to kill him! God doesn't have to kill him; you kill yourself by jumping off a ten-story building. Why? Because there's a principle in the world and it's the law of gravity. You violate it, you take the consequences, God doesn't have to come down and do it.

You go 100 miles an hour into a stone wall on your motorcycle; God does not have to kill you. The law of inertia that energized you, moving you into that immovable force is going to do the job fine. The point is simply this: God has created a world in which there is law and when you violate that law, certain consequences take place.

Same thing is true spiritually. The wrath is simply the spiritual consequence of sin, already at work in the world and when you step into sin you collide with it, that's all. God has ordained a moral order; God has ordained moral law, and the one who transgresses that moral law falls into the consequence and that is already at work in the world. Now listen to me, people, I want you to see this.

There is a fury of wrath blowing through the history of man that's been blowing ever since the fall of Adam. The wrath of God is already at work, it isn't just future. There is a future aspect. It is at work now. You know why our society is so rotten, so debased, so debauched, so declining, so depraved? Because it is subject right now, this moment, to the wrath of God which is working on it right now to

destroy it. The wrath is already at work.

J.A. Froude, who is a historian said, "One lesson and one lesson alone, history may be said to repeat with distinctness that the world is built somehow on moral foundations so that in the long run it will be well with the good but it will be ill with the wicked." End quote. Now just that secular historian recognizes that there is a law, there is a principle, and that principle is what Paul calls the wrath and when you step outside of the place of obedience to God you step right into the gale of God's judgment. It's already worse.

Now that is the wrath, the moral order of God at work in the world is His wrath. And if you violate God's laws, if a society violates God's laws, if mankind violates God's laws, God doesn't have to come down and step on everybody. The very principle itself will begin to work its own retribution. The psalmists over and over again said that. Entrapping men in their own sins, catching them in their own snares. They make a net for themselves with their own sins, he said, they make a chain for themselves with their own sin by which they will be bound.

Wrath is simply the inevitable consequence of sin for the unsaved and by the way for the saved. As soon as you sin, as soon as you enter into sin, in your life, you step outside the circle of blessing and you get right into the gale of wrath and you're going to get chastened, right? You say oh, but John. I thought in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 we've been saved from the wrath? Yes, but did you read the rest of the verse? We have been saved from the wrath to come. We'll never know the ultimate wrath, we'll never know the ultimate consequence of sin, but believe me, if you step outside the circle of obedience, right now you will step right into the wrath of God. And the consequences are inevitable. Chastening. There's no sense trying to fight God about it, you walked into it and the consequences will come to bear.

The wrath of God is already at work. Shiller says the history of the world is the judgment of God on the world. When man sinned, God turned loose the natural principle of retribution and it's just working its way to the destruction of society. You see, it says God gave them over to a reprobate mind. That was His judgment. When they said we don't want You, and we don't want to be like you, and we don't want to be in Your image, we want to do our thing; God said go ahead and do it and you will suffer the consequence. You see the decadence of our society is not because God lost control, it's because God let man go the way man chose to go.

Francis Schaeffer says in *Death in the City*, quote, "There is no real preaching of the Christian Gospel except in the light of the fact that man is under the wrath of God," end quote. In the decline of human history is the working of God's wrath. It isn't just future, it's right now. You say how can people be so debauched as the people in our society that we see? How can they get so corrupted? How can it become what it is and getting worse and worse? Because the reprobate mind just constantly declines. That's why the Bible says, "Evil men," 2 Timothy 3:13, "will grow worse and worse and they

will invent new kinds of sins as they get more reprobate all the time."

I don't want to shock you out of your senses but do you know there are movies being produced right now in our city where people are actually eating feces and smearing them on their faces? Now that, people, is when humanity has sunk lower than animals. That's what you can see if you want to go to those X places. Humanity is declining, declining, declining. And then to sit down at the table to discuss it and they come across as intellectuals. Don't kid me. Man has suppressed the truth, Romans 1:18 says. Suppressed the truth in unrighteousness and thus he is left to the consequence of his freely chosen course of action and unless its reversed by divine grace he will go from wrath now to wrath to come.

Paul uses this passage to show us that all humanity is morally bankrupt because it has rejected God; it is left to the consequence of its debauchery. So the world is in a condition of terrible, terrible, fearful judgment. Just to give you a little insight into this exposition, look at verse 16, Romans 1. Here's a comparative so you'll see that the thought of Paul, "For I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in it [that is, in the Gospel, now watch this] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Now look at verse 18 - for the wrath of God is revealed. You see, in 17 and 16 the righteousness of God is revealed and in 18 the wrath of God is revealed and here is his parallel. Just as the future salvation of believers is something we possess in the present, so the future wrath of God is something working in the present also.

The wrath of God is at work right now. In fact, Ephesians 2:3 says that if you're an unbeliever you are a child of, what? Wrath. A child of wrath. You're under the power of Satan. The lusts of Satan you do; that's the wrath, you say oh, my. How could God be so cruel? Let's go to the second word, "responsibility."

Well, wrath works, and it works justly on man because man has responsibility, verse 19. Because that which may be known about God is manifest in them. Listen, when a man turns his back on God and when a man sins, listen, he doesn't sin against some little tiny glimpse of light, he sins against the flood of light. People always say oh, what about the heathens? God is so unjust, the heathens - listen, I don't care who you are, whether you're a heathen in Southern California or a heathen in New Guinea or a heathen anywhere else, a man sins against floodlights of divine light.

John 1 says that Christ is the light that lights every man that comes into the world. Listen. God never reaps judgment where he hasn't sown knowledge. You understand that? Never. God never reaps judgment where he hasn't sown knowledge. Where there is wrath, it is there because there is responsibility. That which may be known of God is manifest in them. God has shown it to them. And then in verse 20 beyond that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen. If you can't see it in you, you can sure see it around you, can't you? The heavens, what do

they do? They declare the glory of God; the firmament shows his handiwork. John Calvin said, quote, "In saying that God manifested it, he means that the purpose for which man is created is to be the spectator (the *spectator*) of the failure of the world. The purpose for which eyes have been given to him is that by gazing on so fair an image as the image of God he may be led to its author." Tertullian said it was not the pen of Moses that initiated the knowledge of the creator; the vast majority of mankind, though they have never heard the name of Moses to say nothing of his book, know the God of Moses nonetheless. Nature is the teacher; the soul of man is the pupil.

So from conscious and creation God is known, and so it says at the end of verse 20, by these things God can be seen, His eternal power and His Godhead so that man is without what? Excuse. God does not reap wrath where He has not sown knowledge. History is the story of man's descent away from the knowledge of God. Man was created in the garden and knew God. Early man knew God. The history of man is to move away from that.

God gives every man, I believe, enough knowledge of Him that if he lives up to the knowledge he has God will bring more knowledge. Man's ignorance, beloved, is deliberate. They suppress the truth, verse 18 says. They suppress it. The truth was accessible, (verse 28 I read you earlier.) They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They didn't want those demands on their lives. It's true of our society today. They don't like those things. I always think about that at Christmas season. The world loves Jesus in a manger; they just don't want Him to grow up, they don't want Him making claims on their life.

Well, God has given us enough knowledge of Himself - read Acts 17:22 to 31. It says that God has given enough knowledge of Himself so that we could find Him if we would feel after Him. But man doesn't want God; he doesn't want to know God; the accessible truth he suppresses. Now that leads us to a third word. Wrath, because of responsibility. The third word? "Rejection." Verse 21. God's wrath is justified because man is rejected. In the middle of his responsibility he rejected.

Now listen. Stage one in the decline and fall of the world was intelligence. Man knew God. He knew God. When history began, man knew God. Listen, don't you listen to the liberals and those who want to tell us that the history of man - and the evolutionists - that the history of man is the story of beasts that worshiped idols and finally evolved into a man that worshipped one God. Just the opposite is true.

Man started out in the image of God, worshipping God, and has come down to grovel in the dirt and worship idols. The very opposite. Man went from intelligence to stage two ignorance. Stage one of man's history is intelligence. Stage two is ignorance. Verse 21. Because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. Neither were thankful but became vain or empty or useless in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened professing themselves to be wise they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and

birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

Now look what Paul says. Man knew God. He didn't want to know God, because God made claims on his life and he didn't want those claims. He wouldn't acknowledge God as Lord, he wouldn't be grateful and thus obedient, he wanted to be his own Lord, so he professed himself to be wise, and he said I'll run my own show, I'll do my own thing, I don't want You in my life and his foolish heart was darkened, he became a fool and verse 23 he wound up worshiping stupid things like birds and beasts and snakes. That's animism, fetishism. You see, now note this: this is so important. Man's failure is not that he fails to recognize God; it is that he will not let God rule his life.

Man knows God. He acknowledges God. He will not let God rule his life. He lives in ungrateful disobedience. And the result? An empty mind and a darkened heart. In fact, he got so rotten you have the fall in Genesis 3 and by the time you get to Genesis Chapter 6, God drowns the entire world.

Once the fall began, it really went fast. And it wasn't much better even though it started out with righteous people, it got rotten real fast. God has been so much more patient with this society than he was with that one in His grace. Man the worshipper became man the philosopher; man the egotist in his empty wisdom revealed his stupidity. He threw off the obligation to God, thought to rise above his creaturelynessand he was going to be like God, just what Satan said to Eve, and he wound up being stupid enough to worship snakes and birds and beasts. That's the decline and fall of the world.

Now you know in some cases, God broke through. Romans 2:14 says that now and then there were some Gentiles who didn't have the law, but they "did by nature the things contained in the law." Verse 15, "They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscious bearing witness and their thoughts to meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." In other words, now and then there was a bright light among heathendom. Now and then there was somebody who believed even though they didn't have the written law they saw the law of God in their conscious and they adhered and they believed that someday, the day of Jesus Christ they're going to belong to Him. In some cases God broke through.

You say but we don't have an idolatrous society; oh, yes we do. You know what the idols of our day are? Materialism. Money, money, money. You know what the other idol of our day is? Humanism. Do your own thing. Grab all the gusto, get it while you can, live it up. And sex. Humanism, materialism and sex to me are the idols of this age. We have our idols. I think looks is an idol. I think science is an idol. Technology is an idol. We have our own pantheon where we go and bow to our own gods.

So you see what Paul is saying here is wrath, and wrath is justified because man has responsibility and with that responsibility man chose rejection and once man rejected God in the fall and man has continued to willfully reject God the spiral down is rapid and rapid and rapid. And you see what I'm

trying to say to you people is the very state of the world, the very rot that is in our world *is*the judgment of God, you understand that? Do you see how debased man is? Do you see how vile he is? Do you see how low he is? Do you see how corrupt he is? Do you see how literally obscured the image of God is; do you see how man can't even begin to be what he was made to be? That is the judgment of God.

Man is groveling in the dirt and worshiping stupid idols. There's a fourth word. It's the last word that I want you to see, the word "reprobation." Reprobation. From idolatry - now listen to me - from idolatry to immorality is a short step. Whenever you find an idolatrous society you always find an immoral one. You know why? Because idolatry is basically this. Idolatry is creating false gods, right? Would you agree to that? Idolatry is creating false gods. Now watch: whenever man creates false gods, he always creates false gods that tolerate his evil desires. You understand that? Man on his own would never have invented the Holy God of the Bible. Never. Never.

Whenever you see an idolatrous society they inevitably invent a God who tolerates their vices. In fact, usually they will integrate their vices into their worship, historically. The Gay Church does that today. They've created their own Jesus, their own God, like Troy Perry's book says, "The Lord is my Shepherd and He knows I'm gay." God is a God who tolerates their vices.

It is a short step from idolatry to immorality. And so that's exactly what happens. Man moves very rapidly, self-deification results in self-indulgence and this passage defines for us a degeneracy of morals that is almost unbelievable and yet is no exaggeration even in the day in which it was written by Paul, Juvenal, Tacitus and Seneca - all attest to the same kind of morality in that society. It shows us what happens when the wrath begins to work and all hell breaks loose. It's another way to say, Galatians 6, 7 and 8. "Whatsoever a man sows," *what*? "That shall he also reap." It's the law of retribution.

Now look, I'll show you something. Verse 24. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves." Now notice, God gave them up, number one, and it had an effect on their body. Look at verse 26. For this cause God gave them up to vile affections. Now this had an effect on their will, their desire, their passions. Now notice verse 28. God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Now what you've got here is a rotten body, a rotten heart, a rotten attitude and a rotten thinking process. Now that's what's know as total depravity.

When God gave man up, his body became corrupted, his desires and will became corrupted, and his mind became corrupted. He can't think right, he can't will to do right, and he can't act right, okay? His thinking process, which is where it all starts, is reprobate. His will, which is the vile affections part, which decides what he'll do is vile, and his body is vile, there's no way he'll be anything but vile. Unless the grace of God intervenes, he's vile. And there's only one way, beloved, that a holy God

can react to a vile sinner and that's negatively, right? The wrath.

Three times Paul says, verse 24, "God gave them up." Verse 26, "God gave them up." Verse 28, "God gave them over." You see, look. Now watch this. It isn't God who's doing this in terms of just standing in line banging everybody. Its God simply let them go and left the consequences of His own law to take their effect. And when you as a Christian commit an immoral thing, when you disobey God and you sin, it isn't God who comes down and just starts whacking you around, *you*have stepped out of the circle of blessing into the storm, dear one, and you will suffer the consequence. That's just the way it is. And God is not about to undo His nature and His nature prescribes that kind of a holy annihilating reaction against evil.

So Christians say well, you know, oh, I've had such problems since I've sinned. God could have been a little understanding. Don't talk to God like that. You stepped into the gale and you have to take the consequence. Now watch what happens. When God gives a man over, when God gives man up, sexual perversion and inversion are the results of God's wrath taking hold. It's just incredible what occurs. Verse 24: "God gave them up to uncleanness." *Epithumea*. It's the key word that describes the rest of the passage. It's a broad word, epithumea is lust gone wild. That's what it is; it's lust gone wild. Man just grasps. The Stoics said epithumea was grasping for pleasure, which defies all reason.

The lexicon says reaching out after a forbidden pleasure; it's lust gone wild. It's the kind of thing that makes people do shameless and nameless things. Well, what are the things they do? Well, let's see. Firstly, they dishonor their own bodies between themselves. Incredible. Such dishonor, I can't tell you. The sadomasochistic cult in this city alone would shock you. This is what the police report said. The evolution of pornography has gone like this. Earlier, predominantly heterosexual relations. Now acts of bestiality, sadomasochism, urination, defecation, torture, sexual murder, and most recently children. That's what's been going on. Uncleanness. Beyond anything you could even imagine. Lust gone wild.

Dishonoring the human body in ways that are indescribable. Verse 25 - now here's the key to what happened. You see they exchanged the truth of God for the lie. You know what the truth is? The truth is God is God. You know what the lie is? You are God, that's the lie. The definite article is the Greek, the lie, you're God, run your own life, do your own thing. Don't let anybody give you any religion that imposes something on you. Now watch this - they exchange something. They exchange the truth of God for the lie.

Now listen to me. When you make that kind of a spiritual perversion, the thing that's going to happen is going to touch the physical world, and you're going to get a sexual perversion, and that's exactly what followed, and worship and serve the creature more than the creator who is blessed forever amen. And once man exchanged the truth of God for the lie, when you exchange the truth about God

for a perversion then verse 26 for this cause God gave them up to vile affections even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature. Now listen. Sex perversion comes from spiritual perversion. That's why Paul uses homosexuality as his first illustration. When a man perverts true worship, he perverts the supernatural world, he perverts the spiritual and he'll find perversion occurring in the physical because he's lost his moorings.

They exchange. They made two exchanges. Man and history. Exchanged God for idolatry, exchanged right kind of sex for perversion. The best illustration Paul can use is homosexuality. You see it is against supernatural law to not worship God and it is against natural law to have sex with somebody of the same gender. The perversion of worship became the perversion of behavior and in verse 26 he's talking lesbianism. We think of women as the purer sex, the more modest, and yet here we see Paul simply saying you're going to find in human history lesbianism and we find it. Seventeen million lesbians in the United States.

According to a book called *The Gay Church*, page 82, 17 million. That's how many they think there are. You know what? That's the wrath of God at work. If women in our society and in mankind's history want to exchange God they're not going to have any problem exchanging the natural for what is unnatural. And so they choose to live godless, they're given over to the results, God says all right, you're perverted, then your perversion will touch your physical living as well. And so we have lesbianism, vile ungodly wretched sin.

And nobody no time is going to try to intellectualize that either. Not to me, anyway. Then in verse 27 he covers the other side and likewise also the men. Leaving the natural use of the women - burned in their lust one toward another. Men with men, working that which is obscene and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error, which was fitting. Did you notice that little last phrase? When they do it you see they get exactly what the consequences are. They get the results that are fitting. They throw themselves into the vortex of the wrath and they're going to get what happens.

Seventy-five percent of all venereal disease belongs to homosexuals. That's part of it. Look at the statement, "they burn in their lust." Lesbians and homosexuals burn in their lust. Ukiahin the Greek it means literally to burn out. They literally are so consumed with lust that they're on fire. You know those lustful homosexuals in the city of Sodom in Genesis 19 almost ripped Lot's house to pieces? And do you know that when the angels went out and struck them blind they were stone blind, he literally struck them all blind, and they tried to feel to find them, those angels so they could commit homosexuality with them, that's how lustful they were even when they were stuck blind, they couldn't get over their passion.

And Lot knew how severe their passion was so he offered his daughters to them. That was a dumb thing. But he knew something because he lived in that society of the burning, consuming passion. You know that it's not abnormal for homosexuals to have five or six affairs a week with five or six

different people. Sadomasochism - you know, what happens in homosexuality once you give yourself to it, it's not long before you're in sadism and masochism because once your lust begins to burn, you see what's happened is you've sold your soul to Satan and once you're in Satan's system, the wrath of God is really at work, you begin to be depraved and decline at such a rapid rate that passion takes over and you spin into dimensions of passion that could only occur when you've sold yourself to the devil.

Out of control. They build dungeons with torture racks, they stretch people out, they flagellate them, they beat them and commit all kinds of sexual obscenities going on right in Hollywood. Homosexuals Kearney and Hill of San Bernardino killed an estimated 40 victims. Homosexual Juan Corona killed 25 to 30. Listen to this: according to "The New York Times" the man who knows more about violent death than anyone else in the country is Dr. Milton Helpern, formerly the chief medical examiner for New York City. In his biography entitled *Where Death Delights*he says, quote, "It's not my role to condemn homosexuality as such and I leave it to the psychiatrists and psychologists to try to figure out why people practice homosexuality. Having performed 60,000 autopsies I say this. [60,000 this man has performed.] It is high time that those who deviate from the norms should understand the risks. I don't know why it's so but it seems that the violent explosions of jealousy among homosexuals far exceed those of the jealousy of a man for a woman or a woman for a man. The pent-up charges and energy of the homosexual relationship simply cannot be contained. When the explosive point is reached the result is brutally violent. But this is the normal pattern of these homosexual attacks. Multiple stabbings, senseless beatings that obviously must continue long after the victim dies. When we see these brutal multiple wound cases in a single victim we just automatically assume that we are dealing with a homosexual victim and a homosexual attacker." End quote.

The police told me that they can look at a body and tell whether a homosexual killed the person by virtue of the multiple mutilations. You see, its passion gone berserk. And once a person exchanges the worship of the true God for idolatry, once you make that spiritual exchange, the physical perversion just comes right on its heels. Men with men working obscenities, women with women working obscenities, and they receive in themselves the recompense of their error, which is fitting.

And, you know, they're so unfulfilled it's just incredible. I received a letter this week; one of the staff gave it to me from the Presbyterian Laymen. This is what the letter said. "A strong move is under way to have the Presbyterian General Assembly declare that homosexuality is not a sin and that homosexuals may be ordained as ministers of the Gospel. A Task Force on homosexuality created by the 1976 General Assembly is completing its two-year study at the cost of $70,000 and now ready to finalize its recommendations to the 1978 Presbyterian General Assembly."

Can you imagine? This kind of activity being said not a sin and these kinds of people ordained to the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The Gay Church masquerades as if it's Christian. Do you

realize that in one of The Gay Church publications a magazine called "Cross Currents," an official publication of the MCC - Metropolitan Community Church, the cover photo shows two nude men having communion in front of a cross? And these people tell me they're Christians. Their church papers are filled with sex perversions. Those churches are nothing but a cruising place for homosexuals to pick up other homosexuals. That's all.

And you know what happened? Once this perversion came, everything came on its heels; once you reject God, and that's what man has done - once society rejects God, it's gone. And perversion comes, and then he just gets into a list and he just runs down the list. It just doesn't end. Verse 28, the verse we read at the beginning, "They didn't like to retain God in their knowledge, so God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do the things which are not seemly," and what did they do? Here's a definition of our society, couldn't be any clearer, it's a definition of every society since Adam fell.

"They are filled with all unrighteousness." They are filled with it. And then he goes on to describe it. Now listen to this, I want to tell you a little story. There's a species of ants that live in some parts of Africa. And some scientists have studied these ants, they live in subterranean tunnels. Many feed in the earth. The young are sheltered in the earth and the queen is housed in the earth. The worker ants go on foraging trips and they leave this little subterranean catacomb and they go to distant places to get food and they return to the nest with food for the queen and the little ones to support the colony.

It is said by these scientists after their studies that if, while they are away, the queen is molested, the workers far away become nervous and uncoordinated. If the queen is killed they become frantic, rush around aimlessly, and eventually die in the field, never being able to find their way back. Their conclusion is that the workers in the normal situation while the queen is alive are constantly oriented to the queen by some radar-like signal. If the queen is killed all that orientation ceases, frenzy ensues, a frenzy they said that ends in death.

I never heard a better analogy of human history, did you? Man rushes off; as soon as he kills God, he is disoriented. He is frenzied. He can't find his way back; he ends up in death. And that manifests itself in the wrath, and the wrath leads us to verse 29, to fornication. It leads to - and some of the manuscripts leave that word out, but that's certainly true. Wickedness, ponarea, it means evilness, badness, I don't know how else to say it. Same word they use to describe Satan in Ephesians 6. Just wretched. Covetousness, the lust to get the aggressive vice. Maliciousness. You know what maliciousness is? It's the desire to injure. Essential viciousness, it wants to hurt. Full of envy. And murder.

Strife - now we could spend time on each of these; strife is always based on jealousy; it's a desire for prestige. And then he says deceit. Using people to get your own ends, deceiving them. This word is really, really full of meaning - malignity. You know what it means? Dirty mind. Tacolathia. Dirty

mind. You're going to get - when a society turns it back on God, they're going to be sexually perverted, wicked, covetous, malicious, envious, murdering, strife-ridden, deceitful and they're literally going to be dirty minded.

I'm telling you, we've got a dirty-minded society. And then he says whisperers; that's secret slander. You know what the word is? I don't even know if I can say it, it's a hard word to say. Sitheristhais. Sitheristhais. That sounds like whisperers don't it? Secret slanderers. Sitheristhais. It's like the same word for the next word, backbiters. Tacolalia. Blu-blu-blu-blu-blu.

(Laughter)

Well, sometimes those words are onomatopoeic; if you remember your English you'll remember what that means. Backbiters, haters of God. And the reason people hate God is because he puts himself as a barrier between them and their pleasures. Insolent. And that actually is a word that means sadism. Sadistic. Proud. Boasters. And then this, inventors of evil things. You know in Jeremiah 19:5 do you ever remember this verse? It says this; "God said Israel did evil that had not come into his mind." They were inventing new stuff. Society has done that in all of its sick history. Goes on talking about disobedient to parents and you say how did that get in there?

Well, that's important. Disobedient, rebellious generation of young people is part of the wholesale degeneracy of society. Without understanding that means senseless, so stupid you can't believe their stupidity. Covenant breakers. Boy, would you say that's true of our society? They don't keep their word? They don't keep it on a national level; they don't keep it on a personal level. Without natural affection you know what that word is? Astorgos, it means they don't love their family members like normal people do. We have family strife today? We have family hates, family murders. You know that most homicides are related to family feuds, something in the family, one kind of family or another.

They don't have normal love for their children; children don't have normal love for their parents, astorgos. This was true in the Roman days, too, when a child was born they'd lay the child at the feet of the father and he either went *[No Audible Sound]*or down. If it was up, the kid lived; down cut its throat.

Seneca said we kill a mad dog; we slaughter a fierce ox; we plunge a knife in a sickly cow; children who are born weak or deformed, we drown. The natural bonds of human affection are totally destroyed and man becomes heartless and that's what you have with this chicken hawk thing where these strange people take these little children and abuse them. Normal human affection is gone.

Implacable, that means ruthless, you can't appease them, you can't satisfy them, you can't stop them. Unmerciful. That's the kind of society we have people. Why do we have that kind of society? Did God make us this way? Did God do this to the world? No, God made the world, God made man in

his own image and man said I don't want that, man keeps saying that and man keeps degenerating and the wrath is at work turning man into something less than an animal. And the incredible end of it all in verse 32 will literally knock you over. "Who knowing the judgment of God, do you know people know the judgment of God?" That's why we have so many psychologically imbalanced people. That's why so many people drink, that's why they take drugs, that's why they kill themselves, because they can't stand the reality of guilt, see? They see God in this thing and they know they're violating God. And even though they know that, they go on committing these things and not only that but they have pleasure in them that do them.

It's incredible; they even applaud the people that do this. They applaud this. They just keep the thing going and if a guy wants to feel guilty, he wants to turn to God somebody will say hey, man, live it up, oh, you're just doing great, just keep going the way, everything's fine, we're all doing it, see? They just perpetuate the wrath. Where's it all end? Well, it all ends ultimately in Chapter 2 verse 5. "After your hardness and unpenitent heart treasures up under thyself, wrath against the Day of Wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, He will render to every man according to his deeds."

It ultimately will end up in the wrath to come. That's where it's going to end. In the wrath to come. These people who live like this are just piling it up, piling it up, piling it up, piling it up. Somebody said remember, if the goodness and grace of God's self-revelation in the world and in the Word is not leading you to repentance, then every day, every hour you live, drops another drop into the treasury of wrath which one day will burst the damn of God's patience against this fallen world.

You say is there any hope? Sure there's hope. You want to know something, folks? Every one of you sitting in here used to be this, didn't you? 1 Corinthians 6, "Such were," *what*? "Some of you." We were all sinners. The only difference is that the trend in our lives has been reversed by grace. John 5:24 "Our Lord said, he that heareth my Word and believeth on him that sent me have everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but is passed from," what? "Death to life."

Listen; let me say this as I close. If you're in the system, if you're caught in the wrath, and you're in the descending, declining, debauching flow of the world, God's grace reaches out to you, and as you go sweeping by in the gale of wrath God extends His arm to grab you and pull you into the circle of His grace. Jesus died on the cross to make it all possible and rose again that we might have life. I mean, I can promise you that God can save you from the wrath to come, and God can provide a resting place right here in the middle of the wrath where its peaceful and calm and beautiful and quiet. And that's the place of obedience.

All you have to do is open your heart to Christ. Now some of you are Christians; maybe you don't think this relates to you. It does. In Jude 21 there's a little statement, I want you to listen to me say it. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Keep yourselves in the love of God. When I taught the Book of Jude, I told you this; what he is saying there is here is a little circle, okay? It's the love of God and it

rains in this little circle a very gentle rain and the gentle rain is the gentle rain of blessing and grace and goodness.

Around that circle on the outside is the storm of God's wrath and it's sweeping the world into hell. And the Christian, as long as he's obedient, it rains blessing and as soon as you act against God, as soon as you act immorally, as soon as you act in an obscene way, you step outside and you will be caught in the storm. Now listen: You will be saved from the wrath to come. Yes, your salvation is good. But you will not escape the consequence of stepping out of the circle of blessing into the storm of wrath here and now.

Whom the Lord loves, He what? Chastens and every son he scourges. Why? It's a principle. God can't reverse it. He must act according to His nature. That's why John pleads and says beloved, love not the world neither the things that are in the world. The world passes away. Don't even get near it.

You know something, as a Christian when you sin a sin it isn't that you've just oh, well, it's a little mistake I made. You have stepped into the system. No wonder the Apostle Paul says come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing. Let me tell you something, beloved, I told some people this today. If the church is every going to do anything we've got to start in two places. Number one, we've got to clean up our own act. You know you're not going to help the situation, you're not going to do anything to reach those people sweeping by into the gale of God's judgment, you're not going to do anything for anybody unless you're living in the circle of holiness. You understand that?

I mean, you've got to have your life right before God can use you. I mentioned about Lot this morning, poor old Lot. Sad guy. He was trying to be a godly man in the midst of the swirl of judgment in his town, and he just didn't do very well, and he allowed his daughters to get him drunk and they committed incest with him and they had children and he lost everything and he lost his town and his wife and his character and his reputation and he just didn't know how to handle it, see? And the world is going to come into you like a flood - you're living in another Sodom right now.

Now unless you guard yourself by the spirit in that circle of holiness where it rains blessing you're going to find yourself falling into sin; you're going to get caught in the storm, you're lost to the cause of God although you're not lost for eternity, you're lost to usefulness and you just can't make any - you can't give any meaning to your life while you're being thrown around and God's chastening you. We just have to keep ourselves in the place of love.

And the other thing is this: how in the world can we be salt and light if we've lost our light and lost our savor? Right? If we're doing what the world does what have we got to say to them? You see the standard is high, you've got to stay in the circle to be blessed and you've got to stay in the circle to be useful, you understand that? And when I hear about sin among you, I get green because you see it's

like you were a traitor, it's like you said I'm going to go on the other side for a while. You're on the side of the thing we're fighting you see?

I mean let's rally the troops, huh? Let's identify the enemy - they are the enemy, we are God's and let's keep the lines clear, see? Let's pray.

Father, we know that man has been subject to wrath because of his responsibility, because of his rejection in that responsibility and has suffered retribution. And even now the world is being swept away into hell in wrath. Father, I thank you that every Christian is saved from the wrath to come. Every Christian. But Father sometimes we as Christians disobey You, and we slip into the wrath that's presently operating in the evil world and we get caught up. Maybe its sexual sin, maybe it's a love of money, fame, prestige, pride, lust, covetousness. Whatever it is that drags us out of that little circle of blessing, that place of holiness, that renders us chastened and useless to Your cause, for that time, prevent that in our lives. Help us to be able to live a holy life that we might be salt and light and that we might be some kind of preservative, some kind of hope in a fast decaying world. Help us to know who's team we're on, be true to the uniform, true to the commander, to fight the battle with courage, confidence, knowing that in the end we win because You win. Help us to anticipate each battle in the power of the Holy Spirit to go in His energy to fight that we might know Your victory we pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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