The Reality of God's Wrath
Scripture: Romans 1:18-32
Code: 80-184

Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1, Romans chapter 1. I want to read for you just a few verses, starting at verse 18, Romans 1:18: "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."

This brief reading introduces us to one facet of the wrath of God. There are a number of ways in which God expresses his wrath. There is eternal wrath, which the Bible calls hell, the lake of fire, perdition, where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, and where the torment is everlasting and results in weeping and gnashing of teeth. That's eternal wrath.

There is a second category of wrath indicated in Scripture and that is eschatological wrath. And that is the wrath of God that will fall on this earth prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. That wrath is described for us in the sermon that Jesus gave, we know as the Olivet Discourse, particularly in Matthew 24 and 25. But, most notably, is described for us in Revelation chapter 6 through 19, when we read about the unfolding of seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and finally, seven rapid-fire, vial judgments poured out upon the earth after which the Lord Jesus comes. That's eschatological wrath yet to come in the future.

There's third kind of wrath and we could call it cataclysmic wrath. There are times in history when God bursts forth upon the scene with an outpouring of wrath that literally buries the ungodly. Such as the Flood, such as the devastating and wholesale destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even in the New Testament, such as the destruction of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, cities around the Sea of Galilee, for their lack of response to the work of the Messiah. There have been through history such cataclysms that sweep away thousands upon thousands of people.

I had occasion, a couple of years ago, to be down in Napoli, or Naples, Italy and to go visit Pompeii where Mount Vesuvius erupted in, I think it was 75 A.D. Gas came out of that volcano as it erupted and asphyxiated the people of Pompeii because the wind was blowing that direction. They were instantaneously asphyxiated, so instantaneously that they fell to the ground in almost the very positions they were in when the gas hit them, in the walking positions, and curled up positions, and

sitting positions.

Following the gas came mountains of ash out of that volcano, literally burying the entire city of Pompeii so that it wasn't discovered for hundreds and hundreds of years. There was not even a record that it was there, there were fields there and farms there, until more modern times. Archeologists dug up that city. As they were digging it up they found an interesting phenomenon. Occasionally they would puncture the earth with their shovels and all of a sudden they would discover a hole. And at the bottom of the hole there would be some bones lying, just in a pile. This kept happening, and happening, and happening and finally they began to realize what had happened.

The person instantly asphyxiated, fell in that position, the ash covering them, hardened in the air, and as the skin and tissue decayed, the bones eventually fell to the bottom. So instead of just digging out the hole, they injected it with plaster and then cleared the dirt away. And they had a plaster form of the person in the exact form they were. If you go to Pompeii today, we can go and look in the museum, you'll see little babies, you'll see little children; you'll see people in running positions, sitting positions, lying down positions. They never knew what hit them.

That's cataclysmic judgment. That's a form of God's wrath. If you walk through the city of Pompeii, you go down the main street, you see these little booths and you're told that they were brothels. That city has been so kept by the volcanic ash that you can still see the frescoes on the walls of the private houses that show abnormal sexual conduct in explicit fashion. Cataclysmic judgment.

There's a fourth kind of wrath and that's what I call sowing and reaping wrath. People say to me, "Do you think AIDS is the wrath of God?" Absolutely. It is built in for the very human life, which we live, that certain violations of God's law result in certain diseases. And when a man sins in the area of sexual conduct, he sins against his own body, Paul said. And certainly that's an allusion to venereal disease, which was rampant in Paul's time. And whatsoever a man sows, what did Paul say? He's going to reap.

But there's a fifth kind of wrath. Not only eschatological wrath and eternal wrath and cataclysmic wrath and sowing and reaping wrath, but there's the wrath of abandonment. And this is another category of God's wrath, separate from the others.

One of the most tragic scenes on the pages of Scripture involves the strongest man who ever lived, the only real superman there ever was, the mighty Samson. Listen to what it says about Samson in Judges, chapter 16 verses 18 to 21. "When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart,

she sent and called the lords of the Philistines saying, 'Come up once more for he's told me all that in his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands." She sold him for money. "And she made him sleep on her knees, and called her a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair." Remember, Samson had told her that his strength was tied to those. "And then she began to afflict and his strength left him and she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson.' And he awoke from his sleep and said, 'I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.'" And then this incredible statement is made, "But he didn't know that the Lord had departed from him." That's the wrath of abandonment. So the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, brought him down to Gaza, bound him with bronze chains, and he took the role of a mule, grinding grain in the prison, abandoned by God because of sin. What a tragedy.

To the sons of Israel, God said, in the same book, chapter 10 of Judges, "You have forsaken me. You have served other gods; therefore, I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your distress." I'm done, the wrath of abandonment.

Proverbs chapter 1 verses 24 to 31 records similar sentiment, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention, and you neglected all My counsel and did not want My reproof, I will," listen to this, "laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your dread comes." And God is speaking here to Israel. "When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes on like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come on you, then they will call on Me, but I will not answer. They will seek Me diligently but they shall not find Me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept My counsel, they spurned all My reproof so they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own desires." They're going to get exactly what they want with no restraint. I'm stepping back and leaving them to the consequences of their own sinful choices.

Wasn't it shocking when the prophet Hosea recorded the words of God, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone"? You have thought that God would say, "Ephraim is joined to idols, go get him back." Abandoned by God. Of the Pharisees, Jesus said to the disciples, Matthew 15:14, "They are blind leaders of the blind. Leave them alone."

I want to say something to you that may shock you. I believe, right now, the United States of America is experiencing the wrath of abandonment. I don't believe we're on the brink of God's wrath; I think we're right in the middle of it. People have not yet experienced eternal wrath, those who are alive. Not yet have we entered into the age of eschatological wrath. Occasionally we have some calamities in which many souls perish. But I do believe that we are now experiencing the wrath of abandonment,

and not just us. Paul said this in Acts 14:16, very important statement, he said, "In the generations gone by, God permitted all the nations to go their own way." Did you hear that? In the generations gone by, God permitted all of the nations to go their own way. This isn't anything new; this is the cycle of history. It's always gone like this. C.S. Lewis, writing in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, said, "The lost enjoy the horrible freedom they have demanded and are forever enslaved."

Now, no Scripture more directly confronts this abandonment than Romans 1. Let's go back to Romans 1. Here is the most graphic, comprehensive discussion of being abandoned by God anywhere on the pages of Scripture. And it best explains the moral chaos and the moral confusion we're experiencing in our nation. And I'm going to take you through this passage and I'm not going to say everything that could be said. You've heard a lot this week. But I want to get you to a place where I can conclude in a way that is really critical to wrapping up our week.

God's wrath is already at work in our culture. We're not waiting for it, folks. We're in it. "That's a pretty bold statement, what makes you say that?" Scripture here proves it, proves it. Look at verse 24, "Therefore God gave them over." Verse 26, "For this reason, God gave them over." Verse 28, middle of the verse: "God gave them over." Now, in verse 18, he says, "The wrath of God is revealed." And we ask, "What wrath? Eternal wrath, eschatological wrath, calamitous wrath, sowing and reaping wrath, what wrath?" The wrath defined in 24, 26, 28 as God what? Giving them over; that's the wrath of abandonment. That's the wrath of abandonment.

Paradidmi is the Greek term. And it's a judicial term. And it was used of taking a criminal and handing him over for punishment or execution. And the wrath of God here is acting judicially to sentence those who are guilty. And the sentence is to let them go to the uninterrupted course and consequence their sinful choices produce. It's just the pulling back of restraining grace. No more restraining grace. Sin then becomes both the cause and the effect. It becomes both the reason and the result. It becomes both the fruit...the root and the fruit. Wrath, then, like this, leads sinners to just increasing, blatant sin because of the absence of restraint.

And I'll show you the progression. Look at verse 24. Here's the first step. You know you're experiencing this kind of wrath when this happens: "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them." That's step one: Moral and sexual default. Promiscuity. Fornication. Adultery. This is sexual evil. Sexual sin. When a society, when a nation, when a people are abandoned by God, God removes restraining grace and they operate purely by the lusts of their hearts which results in impurity. And it touches the outside so that they use their bodies in dishonorable ways. In their freedom from God's truth, and their denial of God's truth,

and their rejection of God's truth, they turn to their lusts. They become their own gods.

And I think it was in the 1960s that I first began to read about the sexual revolution, wasn't it, and the flower children and free love, and free sex. It all seemed so frightening and so horrible and so antisocial and so bizarre and so isolated. And it belonged to the Woodstock crowd and Haight Ashbury hippies. And now it's pervasive in our society. Pornography's rampant. Fornication is rampant. I can't remember the last time I ever saw a program on television, of any kind, where two married people had a pure and wholesome relationship. At best, it's comedic and the real romance always belongs to those who have illicit relationships. I mean it's just in the fabric of our society, everywhere. And our society applauds it, exalts it. Now we don't have partners in marriage anymore, we have significant others. People are living with people without marriage. It doesn't matter one bit to the society. We have gone through the sexual revolution. It's over. And the revolt was successful. And that's the first evidence of this wrath having taken place.

Go to verse 26 and show you...show you the second step. The first step is the sexual revolution. The second step is a homosexual revolution. Verse 26, "For this reason, God gave them over." This time, not just to passion, but to what? Degrading passions. Not just perversion but inversion. "For their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural. And in the same way, also, the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men, committing indecent acts and receiving, in their own persons, the due penalty of their error." There's a little footnote at the bottom on the sowing and reaping wrath. But this is homosexuality. You can tell when a nation has been abandoned by God because there will immediately be dominance by sexual sin and then there will soon be dominance by homosexual sin. There's no question where we are.

I'm not talking about homosexuality being advocated in the streets. I'm talking about it being advocated in the White House. And the Supreme Court making sure that it protects all the rights of those people who live this perversion. It's being taught in elementary schools in Los Angeles by a special program in the city, and in all of the elementary schools of Los Angeles, there has been the requirement that somebody be there, in an elementary school, representing the homosexual community to protect homosexual elementary students from harassment. It's just an alternate lifestyle. It's clear-cut evidence from Romans 1 of the abandonment of God on a culture.

And he says in verse 26, the women first, because this shows how deeply endemic this wickedness is, and this abandonment. Women are the last to fall. I mean they just have...they just have God-given motherly instincts, don't they? And they're just designed by God to long for a man as a leader

and a protector and a savior and a supporter. I mean they're the last to go.

By the way, there are very few traces in ancient literature, surrounding the Bible, in the Roman world, very few, almost none, I think the idea of lesbianism, if I remember correctly, may be referred to three times in all the extant literature available around biblical times. It was just not a part of female culture. And it was so odd and so bizarre as to never even been written about. And in our society, it leads the parade, doesn't it? This is how far we've gone. And that's why Paul puts it at the beginning, just to tell us that when the wrath comes, the women will lead the parade.

Verse 27 says that, "Men burned in their desire toward one another." I don't want to get clinical here. Read a book by Helpern, coroner in the city of New York, where of course, the most murders are committed in La...in...in America. He was the coroner of the city of New York, the main coroner, the head coroner, for twenty some years. In his book — he's not a Christian, he's just writing a book as a observer — he did sixty thousand autopsies of murder victims in the city of New York. And he said, "I could tell whether a homosexual did the killing in ten seconds by looking at the body." He said, "I'm not making a moral judgment but I'm telling you there are burning desires and passions among those people that are not like heterosexual people." Multiple stab wounds, multiple shots. Almost, without exception, the bizarre mass killers that we know, serial killers, are homosexual. It is a kind of burning that is outside the norm. And when the society embraces homosexuality, it is clear evidence that you're marching right down the trail in Romans 1.

Step three comes in verse 28. God gave them over to a depraved what? Mind. You say, "Well, that doesn't seem like it's worse than homosexuality." It is. It is. You know why? Because when the mind's gone you can't get back. You can't get back. Then what you get is the Jerry Springer Show.

Don't you wonder sometimes why somebody doesn't stand up and call a halt to this insanity? Don't you wonder why somebody in Congress doesn't stand up and say, "You know, we're committing suicide nationally. We're destroying families. We're ruining society. We're wrecking our marriages. We're wrecking our children." Don't you think somebody would stand up in the university environment and call the faculty together, some president or some dean or something, and say, "You cannot continue to avow the things you're avowing. They're destroying people's lives." Where are these people? You know what's happened? The mind's gone. And we would assume that those who are in the White House, who represent our nation, who are great leaders, would think clearly about moral issues. No? Mind is gone. And when the mind goes, then the floodgates are opened.

Verse 29, you get all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. And those are all the folks that are written about every week in the LA Times, or any other newspaper. That's just life on the street, isn't it, just life in the world today. And the courts don't know what to do with them 'cause they can't figure out who's at fault, even.

And verse 32 says, "Although they know the ordinance of God." How do they know that? Because that which may be known of God is written where? In them, in their hearts. And they know it. And you know what? They even know that those who practice such things are worthy of death. Now the law of God is written in their hearts and in this country, let me tell you something folks, they've grown up with the Bible around them. But it says, "They not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." You know who the heart approval folks are? That's the studio audience that claps for the people on the Jerry Springer Show. Jerry gets to the end of this program and gives this little soliloquy about his advice. And you wonder why he doesn't just stand up and say, "This is wrong. This is destructive. This is devastating. This is ruinous."

So Romans 1, I think, we're living in our nation. And that tells me that we're under the wrath of abandonment. You say, "Well, how did we get there?" Well, let's go back to verse 18 and see. How did we get there? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Let me ask you a question? Has this nation had the truth? Was it not founded on Christian freedom and the love of the Gospel. Has it had the truth? Has it suppressed the truth?

I was thinking about this. There's no surer and no sadder evidence of an abandoned society under God's wrath than when that society will not tolerate anger against sin. Did you get that? You can't be against sin today. It's not politically correct. We have definitely suppressed the truth. Not all nations have had it the way we've had it, but we've had it. Literally, the Greek says, "who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth by their ungodliness." We've had the standard. It's really been written into the fabric of our society, hasn't it? When man assaults the standard, ignores the standard, rejects the standard, tries to suppress the standard, exercising his willfulness brings upon him the wrath of God.

Four reasons for the wrath of God unfold here. And number one is revelation. Revelation. Verse 19, "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." First thing men have been given: Revelation. This is what theologians call natural revelation. God has inlaid the evidence of Himself and of His moral law in the very nature of man's being so that he is not without witness to the divine reality of God and morality. Man can't plead ignorance; he is utterly without excuse. Verse 19, look at it again, "Because that which is known about God is evident within them." You say, really, everybody who comes into the world? That's right. Everybody who comes into the world has the evidence of the existence of God within them.

Well where is it? First of all, it's in reason. It's in reason. It is only reasonable that if you follow of the path of reason, and reason, simply, is a...is a process of cause and effect. All reason functions on a cause and effect premise. That this produces this; and this produces that; and that produces that. And that's how you'll link logical thought together. When we say someone is rational, we mean by that, that they run through thought processes that work off cause and effect. God has put into the fabric of the thinking of man, cause and effect relationships. If I do this, this results. If I do this, this results. If this is true, this is true, and that's true, and this is true. And if you follow cause and effect back far enough, there has to be a first what? Cause.

So reason leads you where? To God. It is normal to believe in God. It is normal to believe in a cause for the greatest effect of all, which is the universe. That's why, when Jonah was running from God and he got out there in the boat and he was trying to get away from God and the storm kicked up and Jonah said, "Look, throw me over. My God is angry." And the pagans said, "Well, who's your God?" He didn't say, well He’s the evangelical, fundamental, Hebrew God. He didn't say that. He didn't say He's the Triune God. He said this, "He's the One who made the land and the sea." "Oh! Really!"

You see Darwin hadn't been born yet. And until him, everybody was looking for the Originator. Nothing has been as damning to the truth of God as evolution, nothing in history, because now people don't need a cause. When they needed a cause there was always hope they would look for Him in the right place. You know, even those ignorant philosophers up there on Mars Hill, in Acts 17, had an altar to unknown god. Paul said, "Oh, He's the God who made the Heaven and the earth and everything in them." "Oh!" Nobody stood up and said, "Sorry. We believe that once there was a one-celled thing who said one day, 'I'll be two.’ No, we believe that nobody times nothing equals everything." Now that's deep.

Listen to this. In the book of Acts, whenever the apostles evangelized pagans, they started from creation, from the first cause. Whenever they evangelized Jews, they started from the Old Testament.

So reason takes you back to God, I mean very clearly takes you back to God. So does conscience.

Look at Romans 2:14. I'm just going to mention this briefly, 'cause it’s not in this passage but you need to know it. "When the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do instinctively the things of the law, these not having the law are a law to themselves," verse 15, "in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." Let me tell you how God has made every human being. Built into every human being is a sense of right or wrong. It's there like hearing, and smelling, and seeing, and touching, and all of that. There is built into the fabric of human life, every individual, the knowledge of right and wrong. There is a sense of right and wrong in the heart. There is an intrinsic moral law.

Now, God has also given you a mechanism called your conscience. And your conscience is...is merely a warning mechanism. In my book on *The Vanishing Conscience*, I gave an illustration of Avianca Airlines, Avianca Airlines flying out of Spain, around Europe. And one day, one of the Avianca planes flew into a mountain and killed everybody on the plane. Just pile-drived itself right into a mountain. And, of course, when they went in to find the little black box and the cockpit recorder to try to figure out what had happened, they got the recording, the tape out of there and they played and this is what was going on in the cockpit. They heard, all of a sudden, the synthetic voice in the cockpit saying, "Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up," in English. And then they heard the pilot inexplicably say, "Shut up, gringo," and flipped off the switch. And within minutes it hit the mountain.

Now, the synthesized voice recorder in that Boeing airplane is informed by radar. The radar goes out there, finds a mountain, sends back a message that the mountain's too close. And the synthesized box warns, "Pull up, pull up, pull up, pull up." Only a fool would flip the switch and say, "Shut up, gringo." Now, the little voice wasn't the reality. It was only the mechanism that warned about the reality.

In every human being, God has put moral radar. And when you're going down the wrong path, thank God you have a conscience that says, "Pull up, pull up, pull up." Everybody has one. Everybody does. They feel guilt, remorse because of that innate law that's in them. You know what our culture's trying to do today? Two things. Our culture's trying to misinform the conscience, "Let's come up with a new morality. Let's try to un-teach them what they think is normal morality and normal ethics and teach them something new." So they try to misinform the conscience. "We'll fake the conscience out so it can't react." That's what the architects of the new morality try to do. You'd be interested to know, I read about MTV, and they were talking to the president of MTV. And they asked him what his goal was for his organization. He said it was to transform people.

And the second thing our society wants to do is to take the conscience that's well-informed and silence it. And that's been largely the objective of secular psychology. "You're really good. Your problem is really self-esteem. You lack self-esteem. You really don't know how wonderful you are. You shouldn't feel guilty for anything. If you got a problem, somebody did it to you. You didn't do it. Don't let anybody make you feel guilty."

So the culture works to misinform the conscience and to silence the conscience. You got a whole society of people flying blind right into that eternal mountain. But, in the beginning, God put the law in the heart that tells us right and wrong and the mechanism to trigger, when we either need to be accused or excused because we've done right or wrong. And then God has given us reason that takes us back to Him. I mean those are so basic, so basic. And when somebody comes along and says to me that the whole universe is an accident, I just can't accept that.

Do you know that birds navigate by the stars? Now, how did that ever happen? Do you know that birds raised from eggs inside a building, where they've never seen the sky, can instantly orient themselves toward home when shown an artificial sky representing a place their species have never been? How does that work? I don't have any idea.

There's a fish called archer fish. I don't know if you've ever heard about archer fish. They shoot drops of water with great accuracy at insects. Because its water, it doesn't kill the insect. Scientists think they just do it for fun. Now how did they ever develop that?

Mites, little microscopic bugs, live in the ear of a moth. And a moth can fly fine if only ear is occupied. If two ears are occupied, it can't fly. And strangely enough, mites don't get in both ears. How do they know that, those little guys? That if one of their buddies is over there, they shouldn't be on this side.

There is a thing called the bombardier beetle, produces chemicals in its body in two separate sacks. And when the enemy comes along, that little beetle has the capability to mix those two little chemical fluids and they come out of the mouth and explode in the face of the enemy. But the explosion never occurs prematurely. Now, you can't evolve two explosive liquids in a beetle and never blow the beetle up.

Well I think you're getting the picture in ways you probably have never thought about it before. Do you know codfish lay nine million eggs? You probably know that.

Do you know the earth is twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, weighs six septillion, 588 sextillion tons, and hangs in empty space? And spins at a thousand miles and hour with perfect precision so that we're not going like this all the time. Time is kept to the split second. And at the same time it's spinning at a thousand miles an hour, it's careening through space, around the sun, in an orbit of 586 million miles, at the speed of a thousand miles a minute.

Do you know that the comets can have tails a million miles long? And travel 350 miles per second? I mean it's just astonishing stuff. And then these people come along and say, "Well, it just happened." If you follow the God-given reason of cause and effect, you're going to have to come back to a great cause, aren't you? And then you follow conscience, and you're going to find out that whoever the Great Cause is, He is moral. And He has a law that can't be violated without consequences. Now that's not redemptive truth, as Stephen Olford said, but that's getting you back to the God who can redeem. The redemptive truth then unfolds on the pages of Scripture, doesn't it?

The first problem that we noted then, in Romans 1, is revelation. The second issue that brought about this judgment is rejection. Verse 21: "Even though they knew God." They knew God through reason. They knew God through conscience and the written law in their heart. “They did not honor Him as God or give thanks. But they become futile in their speculations,” their ideologies, their concepts, philosophies, theories, viewpoints, religions, they become empty in them and their foolish heart was what? The light went out. There was God in creation and the path of reason would take them to Him. And there was God in conscience and the law in their hearts would take them to Him. But man loves darkness (What?) rather than light. And he turns on that knowledge and plunges downward.

Listen to what Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse wrote, "God gave man brains to see things, these things, and the sorrowful answer is that God gave man brains, for example, to smelt iron and make a hammerhead and nails. And God grows a tree and gives man strength to cut it down. And brains to fashion a hammer handle from its wood. And when man has the hammer and the nails, God will put out His hand and let man drive those nails through it, place Him on a cross, in the supreme demonstration that men reject God." Rejection. God gives the truth and men turn from the truth. And then they become futile, empty in their speculations. Empty, useless, nothingness and they get sucked into darkness where they can't know God. And the law of God no longer speaks. And conscience no longer reacts. And reason is warped and twisted. And the light goes out.

And that's not all. The third step is rationalization. They won't receive revelation. They act in rejection. And then they defend it in rationalization. Verse 22, listen to this, "Professing themselves to be" what?

Wise. “They become fools.”

That reminds me of the guy in the mental institution. He's lying in bed and he's saying, "I'm Napoleon. I'm Napoleon." All day. All day. All week. The guy in the next bed is really getting weary. Finally he says to him, "Shut up. Who told you you're Napoleon?" He says, "God did." The guy replies, "Oh, no I didn't." Or the lady who went into the psychologist's office with a duck on a string, said, "You need to help my husband. He thinks he's a duck." I mean nobody knows what reality is. Perception is so skewed that they give each other PhDs, and they became fools.

You want to know an interesting thing? The word fool in Greek is *mrain*, from which we get the word "moron," educated morons. They go around congratulating themselves and writing books and teaching courses and parading their false erudition. You say, "Is that the bottom?" Well, they go from revelation to rejection to rationalization, and thinking themselves wise, and now there's one more. Final step: Religion. You say, "Wait a minute. I thought religion was man at his highest?" No, it's man at his lowest. It's men in the muck.

Verse 23: "They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals, or crawling creatures." That's describing false religion. God reveals Himself, man rejects the revelation, rationalizes that he's wise, and then recreates his own religion out of useless idols.

Verse 25, we skipped over it, but it follows the same line. "They exchange the truth of God for a lie, worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” So they created their own gods. Verse 28 at the beginning says the same thing, "They didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer." They wanted gods of their own making.

So man, now mark this, man does not ascend from the muck of paganism and ignorance to religion. He descends from the truth of God to the muck of false religion. That is man in the pit. That is man at the lowest. He falls from the truth of God to the slime of religion. Religion is not man at his highest; it is man at his lowest. Religion, false religion, is the ultimate insanity. It is the ultimate insanity.

Man rejects the God that is and creates non-gods and worships them. That is insanity. And then calls himself wise and opens a theological school to teach about his non-gods. They come in human form; they come in animal form; they come in all forms, whether you're worshiping the Roman eagle or the spotted owl, the golden bulls of Egypt or the whales and dolphins. Whether you worship a stick or

whether you worship earth. The new religion, I've been reading about eco-feminism, whether you're an aboriginal or an environmentalist. I always want to tell the people that worship the earth, "You know, if you think we're messing up this planet, wait till you see what Jesus does to it."

So, is it any wonder then, that we have a problem in our society? We've been abandoned by God and there's the flow. You say, "Well this is kind of a...this is kind of a negative note to end on." I'm not finished.

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 81 and I will be finished. Psalm 81, verse 11, you're going to find familiar terms here. Psalm 81:11, "For my people did not listen to My voice." There you are. "Israel did not obey Me." So, verse 12, what does it say? I what? Here's the same phrase. I what? "I gave them over." What did You give them over to? Stubbornness of their... I just let them go. Just moved back. Removed the restraining grace and let them walk in their own what? Devices. You got what you want. That's it. I'm stepping back. Same exact thing. We're not the first people this happened, this happened to Israel. God has allowed all the nations to go this way; they all go this way. The history of the world, Schiller said, the historian, "The history of the world is the judgment of the world." But listen, beloved friends, hear the heart of God in verse 13, "O that My people would" what? You hear the heart of God there? Israel, would you listen. "O that my people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways." There's the heart of God. And you know what that tells me? There's still hope. There's still hope. "I would quickly subdue their enemies. I would turn My hand against their adversaries." If they would just turn back to Me, I'd protect them. We're not protected right now. But if we would listen to God and walk in His ways, we would be protected. Not only that, verse 15 says, "Even those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him." In other words, if a people turn to God's Word and begin to walk in His ways, they will experience such protection and such blessing that even people who hate the Lord will hypocritically pretend to obey Him, even though their time of punishment will be forever. They're going to perish eternally. But for the time being, they'll submit.

You hear all this talk about somehow we need to take over the culture and somehow we need to harness this nation and get a cultural morality and bring this nation back to morality. There's only one way to do that. You preach the Word of God, people listen the Word of God, they obey the Word of God, God comes to bless, God comes to protect. And the blessing of God is so greatly on the people who have come to obey His Word that even the people who don't believe it are afraid to act against it. And then He says in verse 16, "And if you would do this," and here's the grace of God, "I would feed you with the finest of the wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you." That's God's way of saying I'll just give you all the good things I have. That's encouraging to me.

And I think that that is what we have to have in hearts as we think about the condition of our nation, is the recognition that if we can take the Word of God to people, and if they'll listen to His Word and walk in His ways, then they have the promise of God's blessing. I don't know what God's going to do in this nation in the future, but I know what my responsibility is. It's like the prophet Isaiah, to go and preach, isn't it, to go and speak the truth.

You know, I love Africa. I'm going to close with this. I love Africa. I love a lot of things about Africa; it's just a fascinating place. I went through Kruger National Park and saw those fabulous animals. And it was just incredible, white rhinos and massive elephants and all that stuff. But, one animal, it's really not an animal, insect, fascinated me more than anything was ants. Those ants over there are not like any ants I've ever seen. They build these huge things like twenty, thirty feet high, really amazing.

And I read about those ants when I got back 'cause I was curious. And I read that some of those ants live in subterranean tunnels. All that mounds are full of all these subterranean tunnels that go all the way down to the ground everywhere. And down, way down, in the deep part of this, the queen is housed. And the workers go on foraging trips. And they go out and they get stuff to eat and then they bring it back. And then they go out, and get it, and bring it back. They got out, and get it, and bring back. If...If the worker ants are out there doing that, and the queen dies, or ... start, back up one from there. And the queen is molested or disturbed, scientists tell us they become nervous and uncoordinated and kind of spasmodic and running all around like they lose their purpose, because somehow they're connected, by some impulse, to that queen. And if she's killed they become frantic, science says, rush aimlessly and die, just because the queen back in the anthill died. Somehow there's a radar device in that queen that connects with all those ants. And if she's killed they completely lose their orientation, and a frenzy ends in death.

Let me tell you folks, the King lives. And there is no reason for the frenzy. If we just maintain the contact with the King through His truth. And He'll show us what to do. Amen?

Father, thanks for our time tonight, for this great conference. Help us to proclaim the Word. As we started this week, we talked about doing it with authority and that is what You've called us to do. We thank You for all these great messages, all this great music. And we pray, oh God, that You would cause this week to have a lasting impact on our lives. Seal to our hearts what the Spirit has accomplished so that we're never the same. And we'll praise You, in Jesus name. Amen.

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