

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

### **A Nation Abandoned by God**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: GTY109

It is a real delight to be with you tonight. I want to thank Pastor Hurd(?) and Pastor Al for the opportunity to be here. Thank you, men, so much, this is a...this is a privilege and a...and a joy and a delight to me. I always love the opportunity to teach and preach the Word of God, but especially to meet and greet people who have listened to me on the radio through the years and come to me with all kinds of strange comments about...(applause)...thank you...come to me with strange comments about what they thought I looked like. (Laughter) This is it, better than you had never known. (More laughter).

It's a joy tonight to have my dear wife, Patricia, here. Honey, stand up and let them welcome you. (Applause) This...this is the best earthly gift God has given to me by far and I have to take advantage of every moment I have with her in this world because there's no marriage in heaven, so I've got to take advantage of it while I'm here. And I'm delighted to be able to do that. God has blessed us with four children and by His grace they're in Christ and serving with us in our church and they married four who love the Lord and we have 14 grandchildren who are being raised in the things of the Lord. And it's exciting to see that happening. (Applause) We are very, very grateful to the Lord and His goodness in our family, and I say that only to say God has used Patricia in a remarkable way in the lives of our children, to nurture them in the things of Christ. What...what a great blessing to me.

It's not a small thing to have the opportunity such as I have tonight to try to put a little bit of perspective and focus on the issue of praying for our nation. There are so many things that could be said and probably should be said and I certainly don't intend to say them all, by any means. But trying to kind of funnel down our thinking a little bit so that our prayers can be direct is really helpful. I remember one of our kids, I used to go from room to room when the kids were little and pray with them. And one of my daughters, I got into the habit of just because she was sleepy, I think, saying, "And God bless the whole wide world. Amen." And I thought that was a little unspecific, I guess you could say. Needed a little more targeting in her prayers. And if I can tonight, I want to try to target our prayers a little bit as to how we can direct our prayers in what, I believe, is the most needful way...not to the exclusion of any other things, but this, I think, has to be the primary focus. And it may take me a little while to get to that point, and you need to kind of stay with me and you'll see how this unfolds and hopefully it will be helpful. That certainly is my prayer.

One of the most tragic scenes in the Bible and yet one of the most familiar to us is the scene of the strongest man who ever lived, a man by the name of Samson, finding out he had no strength. Judges chapter 16 records this. "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 is in his heart.' Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands and she made him sleep on her knees, called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him and his strength left him. And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson,' and he woke from his sleep and said, 'I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.'" And here's the telling line written by God the Holy Spirit. "But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. So the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, brought him down to Gaza, bound him with bronze chains and he became a grinder in the prison." Sad. He didn't know that the Lord had departed from him. I can't imagine anything worse than being abandoned by God.

To the sons of Israel earlier in the book of Judges in chapter 10, God said this, "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." This was God saying to Israel, "I'm done with you, abandoned by God.

Proverbs chapter 1 records a similar sentiment. "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out My hands and no one paid attention. You neglected all my counsel, you did not want my reproof, I will even laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your dread comes, when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes 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, they will not find Me because they hated knowledge, did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would not accept My counsel, they spurned all My reproof, so they will eat of the fruit of their own way and be satisfied with their own devices." Again being abandoned by God, turned over to the inevitable consequences of sinful choices.

A haunting line is found tucked away in the little prophecy of Hosea chapter 4 and verse 17, and it refers to Israel by the name Ephraim and it says this, "Ephraim is joined to idols," so says God. The next line, "Leave him alone." Sounds out of character for God, doesn't it? "Ephraim is joined to idols, bring him back," might sound a little more like God. "Let him alone?"

People and nations, even the covenant nation Israel can come to a point where they are abandoned by God. Jesus reiterated this in Matthew 15 when He confronted the Pharisees and then described them to the disciples. He said this, "They're blind leaders of the blind. Let them alone." When God lets you go, it's serious. When Jesus pronounces over you abandonment, it's serious.

Now I'm going to say something, you're going to have to hold on to your seat a little bit. I'm convinced beyond doubt that in this same sense, God has abandoned America. I know that's a strong thing to say and I'm going to show you why I believe you can see that clearly in Scripture.

Open your Bibles to Romans 1...Romans 1. Don't be surprised, by the way, by that statement because while you're turning there, Acts 14:16 says this, this is from the Apostle Paul, "In the generations gone by," that's past history, "God permitted all the nations to go their own way." This is not the first nation God has abandoned, nor if Jesus tarries is it the last, or is it now the only. This is the cycle of history and it is this very cycle of history that Paul describes in Romans chapter 1. Here in Romans chapter 1, beginning in chapter 18 running to the end of the chapter, you have the most clear presentation of God abandoning a nation, what that looks like, what happens and why He does it. This is the most graphic and the most detailed and the most comprehensive discussion of what it means for a people, a society to be abandoned by God. And it perfectly describes the moral chaos in our own nation today.

It starts with very familiar words. Verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." Now let me stop you there for just a moment. We're talking about the wrath of God and I need to just let you know that in the Scripture and in reality there are five different manifestations of God's wrath. Okay? And you will recognize them. There is eternal wrath. That is that wrath which God unleashes on the unbelieving dead in hell...eternal wrath, suffering forever eternal punishment. That's eternal wrath.

There is also in the Bible eschatological wrath, that is the unfolding of divine wrath at the end of the age described in detail, for example, in Revelation 6 through 19, the pouring out of God's wrath in the breaking of seven seals, the blowing of seven trumpets, and the dumping of seven bowls of wrath...eschatological wrath, that wrath is yet to come as is eternal wrath for all society, yet right now there are many experiencing eternal wrath, all the unbelieving who have left this world are experiencing.

The third kind of wrath is what I guess you could call calamitous wrath. That is that wrath of God which produces calamity in the world and the most notable illustration of that is the Flood which drowned the entire world, only eight people were saved. Massive wrath on the part of God against sinful man.

Fourthly, there is consequential wrath, that's sowing and reaping wrath. That's the natural end of patterns and choices of sin. Whatever a man sows, he...what?...he reaps...that's consequential wrath.

But there's one other kind of wrath that is usually overlooked. We all understand eternal wrath, eschatological wrath, calamitous wrath, we all understand the...in the calamity of the Flood or God

destroying Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, etc., etc. Throughout history these calamities continue to even happen and they all fit in the category of God's judgment of sin. But there's this other category of the wrath of abandonment, it is a form of God's wrath in which He lets go of a society and let's it catapult full speed without restraint in the direction of its own sinful desires and devices and choices. That's the wrath being described here. This is the cyclical reality of this wrath that has defined human history and will always until Jesus comes. As Paul said, in all the generations gone by, God permitted the nations to go their own way.

I don't believe we're waiting for God's wrath in this society. We haven't had a massive calamity such as the destruction of an entire city, we certainly don't want that to happen, pray that does not happen, but it could happen and God would be just in any calamity that He brought upon us. We have not entered into eschatological wrath that comes in the end times, we are experiencing, all of us do, consequential wrath of sin. But this massive concept of the wrath of abandonment I'm convinced is now at work in our society. We'd like to talk about the fact that America was founded on Christian principles and God was at the center of it, and all of that, whatever it might have been in our founding, it's no longer the way it is and I want to show you how you know that has happened.

Go down to verse 24. You see in verse 24 the first word "therefore," this means we're now going to see a description that connects to what has been said. If you go back to verse 18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and we could stop at that point. The wrath of God is revealed. And then it goes on to talk about the wrath of God and the reasons for the wrath of God. And then in verse 24 it then describes the wrath of God and here's the description. "Therefore God gave them over, or God gave them up, in the lust of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them, for they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever, amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural. In the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman, 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. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind to do the things that are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, envy, full of...or evil full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, haters of God, insolent arrogant boastful inventors of evil, disobedient to parents without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful. And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, and not only do them, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

Now let me break that down for you a little bit. Three times the verb "gave them over" is used...three times. The wrath of abandonment is when God gives a nation over. This verb, *paradidomi*, can have a judicial sense. It's used often in Greek literature in terms of law courts and criminal courts. It

comes down to handing a prisoner over for punishment. It's even used in the case of Jesus being handed over for a crucifixion. Each of these uses of the verb in this text express the fact that the wrath of God has acted to hand over a society to sentence...to hand them over. As the historian Schiller(?) said, years ago, "The history of the world is the judgment of the world." There comes a time in a nation when God has had enough and He literally lets go and turns them over to the sentence that they have passed upon themselves by their incessant sinful choices. To see it another way, they are deprived of restraining grace.

Now how do we know when this has happened? Note the progression. Verse 24, "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them." Impurity speaks of sexual sin. The first thing that happens in a nation when it is abandoned by God is a sexual revolution. Moral, sexual perversion, pornographic desire describes the general character of the culture. You can't even count how many million pornographic web sites there are. When a society is abandoned by God, it operates out of its own perverse sexual passion without restraint. You can go back to the 60's and the sexual revolution of the flower children, or Hugh Hefner in the Playboy world and it has gone like a flood since then. It is characterized by, as you look at verse 24, lust coming from inside as Jesus said, "What comes out of the heart of a man is what defiles him," leading to impurity, this means sexual impurity, and to the dishonoring of their bodies. The heart is wicked and the bodies demonstrate it. The body follows the heart. Lust conceives in the heart, James says, and brings forth sin and sin brings forth death.

The first thing you look for in a society you're trying to discern whether God has abandoned that society is whether or not that society has gone through a sexual revolution so that illicit sex, adultery, every form of immorality is accepted as normal in that society. And we're there.

The second step in the progression, verse 26, "God gave them over, not just to passions that are explicable because they're men and women, but to inexplicable degrading passions for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural." You know a society has been abandoned by God when it celebrates lesbian sex. God has given them over...gross affections, unnatural, unthinkable.

So you follow a sexual revolution with a homosexual revolution, and homosexuality becomes normalized. Verse 27 adds the male part, "In the same way the men abandon the natural function of the women burned in their desire toward one another.." And by the way, it is a burning that is just hard to comprehend. There was a man named Halpern(?) who was the coroner for the city of New York and he did, I think, 26 or 28 thousand autopsies in his day. He said we can look at a corpse that had been murdered and tell you whether a homosexual killed that person by the multiple wounds. He's not a Christian, he's a Jewish guy and he just said, "There's something about the passions of that kind of involvement that are not explicable."

But interestingly enough, the Holy Spirit puts the women first here and the men after. Why? The Holy Spirit refers first to the degradation of women because they're usually the last to be affected in the decay of morals because their hearts are so naturally inclined toward a husband and toward the responsibility of nurturing children. But when they lead the parade, God has removed His restraint. And the amazing thing of it is this, verse 27, "The man abandoning the natural function of the women, burning in their desire toward one another, men with men, committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." Right into this wrath of abandonment comes the wrath, the consequential wrath and even though it generates venereal disease and AIDS, they keep doing it. This is what step two looks like and we know this has come like a flood. But it's not the final step. The final step comes in verse 28, the middle of verse 28, "God gave them over to a depraved mind."

Now the version of the Bible you have, I'm reading the New American Standard, might have a different translation for depraved, so let me tell you what the word means...non-functional. It doesn't work, useless, can't think, can't reason, can't comprehend. And you look at this world and you say, "Rampant sexual immorality, out of control, destroying people willy-nilly even in the church, even in the leadership of the church. Homosexuality, same thing, rampant, out of control, demanding to be accepted as normal and the society rushing to affirm that acceptance. Isn't there anybody in the system who would stand up and call this what it really is, a massive, moral disaster? Can't they see it? Can't they figure it out? No...no. First Corinthians 1 says, "Man by wisdom knew not God." Human wisdom just on its own doesn't get there. Then you add that the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that do not believe and you've got a compounding blindness. And then you add the fact that they are blinded by virtue of the sweeping, dominating elements of their culture and you're just not going to get anybody to rise up and take that position and have people rally around it. You're going to have more people in leadership in the country outing themselves as homosexuals. If you think you've seen a lot of that, you haven't seen any of it yet as it becomes more and more accepted.

A depraved mind in the original language is one that's tested and found useless, therefore disqualified for its intended use. The reasoning faculty has been corrupted by the influences that surround it. MTV did a survey on morality. Boy, there's a...(laughter)...switch. And they took, you know, they took the Middle Ages idea of the seven deadly sins, you know, lust, greed, all those things, and they surveyed their audience about what they thought about that. And basically they thought all those things were virtues. Now they thought they were all virtues. Yeah. And when that happens and your entire sense of morality is warped, then your conscience is ill-informed and it doesn't function. So you have unconscionable behavior. And then you laugh at the Jerry Springer Show instead of falling on your face and weeping at the aberrations. A depraved mind, reasoning faculty so corrupt that it must be rejected as non-functioning. And as a result of that, what happens? God gave them over, verse

28, to a depraved mind. So as a result, they do the things that are not...what?...proper, fitting, sensible, reasonable.

What do they do? They're filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, envy, murder, deceit, malice. What's that? That's the nightly news. It's the local newspaper. Slanderers, haters of God, and on and on and on and on it goes. They're unconscionable. Conscience can only function...conscience is a sky light, okay? Conscience is a device that reacts to your moral code. If you're a Muslim, conscience tells you to blow up infidels because conscience is not a set of moral laws. It's not a set of moral rules. It's a mechanism, like pain. Pain is a mechanism God gave you that responds to your physical condition. It says to you something is wrong with your body. Pain is simply the device that tells you that. And it's a good thing, isn't it? It's a good thing cause it tells you've got a problem with your body you need to deal with. That's what conscience is, it's a mechanism God gave you that accuses you or excuses you, Romans 2 says, but only functions if it is morally informed accurately. And if you have a culture that has developed an aberrant morality, then you have consciences that function off of that aberrant morality. And you get all the stuff, all the inexplicable behaviors. And that's why in verse 32 it says, "Although they know the ordinance of God, all they know...all they know inherently in them, Romans 2, what is right and what is wrong, they who practice such things are worthy of death. They know that. They do them anyway and they give hearty approval to those who practice them.

You know what that reminds me of? Bill Clinton's approval ratings went up in the middle of the Louenski(?) affair. Why? Because a culture like this approves of somebody like that, perfect fit. That's our kind of guy.

So they are without reason, without conscience. This is what it means when God abandons a society.

Sexual revolution, down one more step; homosexual revolution, down one more step; you can't ever get your way out of it because the mind, the cultural mind is gone...it's gone...it's gone. And I would put it this way, maybe simply, there's no surer indicator of a corrupted, wicked and abandoned society under God's wrath than when that society does not tolerate anger against sin. This society will not tolerate you standing up and displaying righteous indignation against sin. How long is it going to be before if you preach against it in your pulpit the government is going to come in and tell you, you can't do that? They've done it in Canada.

One night Larry King said to me, off the camera, he said...he said, "You know," he said, "I like you a lot but...he said...you're all...you're all caught up in the words of the Bible and you miss the message." So I said, "Well, what's a message with no words?" I don't think we miss the message.

It was C.S. Lewis who said, "The last experience of the sinner is the horrible enslavement of the freedom he desired."

So, Paul is unfolding for us this picture of what a society looks like when it's abandoned. It's not my description. Now you see why I said I think America is here going through the cycle of Romans 1.

Why does it happen? Let's go back to verse 18 and find out. Why does it happen? I'm going to give you the short version. Here's why it happens. Verse 18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven in this form of abandonment against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that makes up this society." Verse 18, "Who suppress...what? There it is, that's it...they suppress the truth...they suppress the truth." That's why I wrote the book The Truth War, it's always about truth, always about truth, always. From the Garden, it started out as a war of truth, right? God says you eat the fruit, you'll die. Satan says, no you won't, you shall not surely die. There it is. Adam and Eve believed Satan. They thought God was lying to them. That started the truth war, it's going on today. It's always about the truth. Simple, this happens when you suppress the truth.

What truth? Real truth. As Francis Schaeffer used to say, the true truth...biblical truth. You suppress this, that's where you go. Take the Word of God out of the place of its supremacy and you suppress the truth. Deny that it's true, deny its veracity, deny its authenticity, deny its inerrancy, deny its inspiration, deny its sufficiency, deny its clarity...that's the latest one that nobody really knows what the Bible means anyway, it's a wonderful book, we believe God gave it to us but we have no idea what it means. That's convenient. I mean, you can divide my life, my life up into attacks on the Bible coming from every imaginable angle...the truth is always under assault. This nation has succumbed to that. There are even churches that have decentralized the truth cause they think it offends, it's divisive. It's all we've got, folks. It's all we have. God saves through the truth. You're begotten again, Peter says, by the Word of truth. You're sanctified by the word of truth. Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth," John 17:17. That's all we have.

Of course it's being assaulted by Satan. Of course the critics come along and say it's not inspired, it's not true, you can't believe it. Of course the mystics come along and say no, it's fine, but we have more revelation over here and more over there, and more over there. And the cults all develop out of extrabiblical revelation. And then there are others who come along and say, "Well, the Bible's fine, it's just not sophisticated. You need to add philosophy and other kinds of things to the Bible to fill it out." And now there are those who come and say, "Well, it lacks clarity." And that's an attack on the old perspicuity, the doctrine of perspicuity, that Scripture is clear, that God intended it to reveal not to hide. So the truth is diminished in its place, it's denied, it's rejected. It's amazing how people mock biblical truth today...amazing.



Oh, you can figure out a way to make it so smooth and soft, take out all the hard parts so it doesn't have the sting. But if you give the unadulterated, unexpurgated, pure Word of God, it will generate a negative reaction in many environments. You need to speak the truth in love, but all we've got is the truth. Suppress the truth.

Let me expand that a little bit. Give you four things to think about, four reasons for wrath that have to do with the suppressing of the truth. Number one, revelation. We've been given the truth. "Suppress the truth in unrighteousness because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them for since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, eternal power, divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse."

What is this? This is not even talking about the Scripture. This is talking about the fact that God has inlayed His truth into the fabric of man's being. He is not without a witness to the truth. Look at chapter 2 for a moment, drop down in to verse 14, "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 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness." Part of being human like all the other parts of being human, be able to think and to make relationships, to speak and to act in the ways that humans act, those kinds of things are the familiar components of what it means to be human. But another one is, the Law of God written in the very fabric of man's nature so that he cannot plead ignorance. In fact, it says in verse 20 that he has enough of the Law in himself, enough of reason to be without excuse. You cannot plead ignorance, that which may be known of God. What is knowable regarding God. What man can know, what of the light that lights every man that comes into the world, John 1:9, is written in the heart. It is evident in them. Two ways, one, in reason...in reason. Where does reason inevitably take you? Reason inevitably takes you to an ultimate cause. Reason is simply a cause and effect device. Reason is simply thinking our way through patterns of cause and effect. This leads to this, this leads to this, this leads to this, and that's how reason works. And eventually you get back to the first cause of the massive universal effect of creation, so reason is a device given by God to all human beings that leads them directly back to Him...directly back to Him.

Any thinking person knows that. You can't have an effect without a cause, right? I mean, how simple do we have to be? You ask me where this watch came from, if I say, well there's a bunch of tin floating in a box and pulled it out and it started to tick and this is it...is ridiculous. Well how can you explain the universe that way? It's an absurdity. Nobody times nothing equals everything? That's totally irrationality.

I'll give you a little thing to think about. There was a scientist by the name of Van Noimen(?) And VanNoiman invented, or conceived of an invention called the ultimate machine...the ultimate machine. Okay? Called the VanNoiman Machine, all engineers and scientists know about. The VanNoiman Machine, he said, this is the ultimate machine, it is self-perpetuating. It has the capacity within itself to sustain itself. Wow! Secondly, it is self-repairing. Anything that ever goes wrong with it, it can fix. It has within itself the ability to fix itself, to generate whatever new parts it needs to reassemble them so that it functions. And then thirdly, it reproduces itself. It multiplies itself. This would be like having a car that generated its own fuel, fixed itself, and when you came out in the morning there were three little cars sitting next to it. (Laughter) Okay? This is a VanNoiman Machine. The complexity of this machine is staggering. And so it can't be built, it's way too complex. It becomes exponential, almost...almost to infinity to put something together like this, it can't be done. And yet that is exactly what every single organic cell in existence in the biological world does. It's a factory of perfect self-generating, self-repairing, self-reproducing machinery. Don't tell me that one time there was a pile of protoplasm and it decided to become this. My reason tells me there has to be a Creator. And do you know the whole world believed that until Darwin came along? Jonah out on a boat, and the sailors, pagan sailors say to him, "Why is this going on?" He says, "It's my God, He's doing it cause He's punishing me. And so it's my God." And they say, "Well who's your God?" He didn't say, "Well, let's see, He's the Hebrew God, He's the God of the Hebrew people, that's who He is." He didn't say that. He said this, he said, "Well, He's the God who made the earth and the sea." Oh, that's a natural assumption...natural assumption. Go to Mars Hill, Paul's up there, they have a deal there for the unknown god. Paul says, "I want to tell you who this unknown God is." He doesn't say, "This is...this is the Christian God of New Testament." He says, "This is the God who created everything. This is the God in whom we live and move and have our being." Everybody got it. Only in the modern world do we not get it.

You go back to God, the massive first cause of everything. So that's in the fabric of being human. And you know, you have to work hard for a couple of hundred years to convince an entire society that that's nonsense and that what makes sense is nobody times nothing equals everything. And though it doesn't make sense, it works in a totally immoral culture because if there's no Creator, there's no judge. So reason is the first thing that shows you God. The second thing is morality which is built into the fabric of all of us and has again to be cultivated to the point where you've got a society of people whose reason doesn't need God, and whose sense of morality has been totally perverted.

Here we are. Here we are. Even though since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power, divine nature clearly seen, clearly understood so that we're without excuse, this society has rejected God. That's our second point. Point one, revelation, God has revealed Himself to every person. Second, rejection, men have turned away from the truth. Verse 21, interesting, "Even though they knew God," that is humanity, that is society in any given period of time by God's creative design have the knowledge of moral law and reason that leads them back to a moral law-giver and a judge and a Creator, even though they know that innately, they did not honor Him as God, or give

thanks, but instead of doing what was reasonable and moral, they became empty in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. And the bottom line is that they don't like the God their reason leads them to and they don't like the God that their innate sense of what is right and wrong leads them to and so they abandon that God and the lights go out. And then you come up with stuff like a rock is a rat is a dog is a boy. Life is random. Truth is relative. People are basically free to do whatever they want. It's all good. Everyone ought to be free to do whatever he wants. The goal of life is self-satisfaction. Live it up and don't let anybody tell you, you can't do anything.

So they didn't honor Him as God. They weren't thankful to Him for what He had given. And the lights went out. They became empty in their speculations, their thinking, their patterns, their ideologies, their foolish heart went black. Empty human ideas, now you can't know God, can't know the truth.

But you think you're smart. Look at verse 22. "Professing to be wise...professing to be wise, they became fools." That's the third step. You go from revelation to rejection to rationalization. Men insist they're doing fine, never did better. We're very advanced. Professing to be wise...reminds me of the guy lying in bed in the nut house, pounding his chest saying, "I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon." And the guy in the next bed saying, "Well, I'm God, I'm God, I'm God." Just that kind of insanity. Or the lady who came to the psychiatrist's office with a duck on a string and said, "You've got to help my husband, he thinks he's a duck." This is no perception of reality. In fact, it says, "Professing to be wise, they became fools." The word is *moraino* from which we get moron, proud morons giving each other Ph,D.s. (Applause)

And finally, it comes down to...goes from revelation to rejection to rationalization to religion. Yeah, religion. That's right. Verse 23, "They exchanged the glory of an incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible men, birds, four-footed animals and crawling creatures." What religion is that? Oh how about environmentalism where you worship...what?...the creation, not the Creator. Wow. Yeah, this is man at his...you say, "Isn't this man at his highest? He's worshipping?" No, this is man at his lowest. False religion is man in the pit. He's gone so far down, he's created the fantasy of false religion. Religion is not man at his highest, it is man at his lowest. The ultimate insanity is to worship any other than the true God, right?

And so we see what happens in a society when God turns them over and we see why He turns them over. And that was just a quick overview. So we look at our nation, our hearts are broken, the mind is depraved, they think they're smart, they're morons. They can't get to the truth, the mind is completely gone. They invent bizarre religions. They become religious. And today they like to talk about being spiritual, right? I'm very religious, I'm very spiritual.

What in the world does that mean? What does that mean? As if you can invent your own worship and your own religion. That's man at his lowest. That's all the way at the bottom, total complete

rejection of the true God and the true faith. That's where we are. Now the question is...how do we pray?

Turn to Psalm 81...Psalm 81. And I want the Holy Spirit to give you direction here as we think about this. See if this doesn't sound familiar, verse 11, Psalm 81 verse 11, "But My people did not listen to My voice or My word. Israel did not obey Me." So verse 12, "I...what?...gave them up." Wow. If He would do that with Israel, a covenant people, what do you think is going on in America, we're not a covenant people? "So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their own heart to walk in their own devices. I let them go, I let them go to the consequences of their choices." This is God, He's abandoned them. But look at verse 13, and here's the heart of God that I think we have to grasp in America in this hour, here's God, His words, "O that My people would do...what?...?...yeah, there it is...that they would listen to Me, listen to Me. That Israel would walk in My ways." Right there, folks, is your mandate to pray.

What do you have to pray for? You have to pray for the Word of the living God to be proclaimed across this nation. And if it's not being proclaimed in churches, it's not going to be proclaimed anywhere else. This is not a time for weak men in weak ministries preaching weak messages. This is a time to call on God to raise up a generation of passionate faithful gracious loving preachers of the Word so that a nation can listen to God. That's the answer. Think God might react? He said...I love this, verse 14..."I would quickly.." you like that word? Isn't that a good word? I don't get the picture God's dragging His heels here. "I would quickly subdue their enemies, I would turn My hand against their adversaries and it would be so great that even the people who hate Me would pretend to obey Me." And then I love this, I love verse 16, "And I would feed you with the finest of the wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you." That's metaphoric, I would just drown you in blessing.

God only wants one thing out of a nation. Listen and believe this book. I really get grieved even when I hear evangelical people in the media and the public eye kind of equivocating about the clarity of the gospel. It's all we've got. Or about the clarity of what Scripture says. Your prayer and mine has to be that God would raise up faithful preachers and people who would proclaim His Word across this land. Pray for this generation of young men that God will call and shape and send, pray for pastors everywhere. Pray for lay people, for Christians to be bold. There's only one solution and that's the truth...the truth by which God saves, by which God sanctifies, and if this nation will respond and listen to His truth, God will open the flood gates. We might be the greatest recovery story in history. But there's no other way than that people listen to Me and walk in My ways. It's not going to happen if there's a famine of the hearing of the Word of God. Pray that the Word, as Paul said, would have free course and that it would run with all its power across this land. With all its beauty and magnificence, all its power and grace, that people would hear and believe and be saved and be obedient, all that to the glory of God. I don't know what God's plan is, I just see here what His heart is. "O, that My people would listen to Me," that's the heart of God.

Our Father, we thank You for simplifying things, as You always do even in the midst of what is so profound. It all comes down to the truth again, the truth...the truth...the truth...the truth. Make us people of the truth. May we trust the truth, unleashing it in all its power, knowing that we...we have no..no other weapon but the sword and it is sharper than any other. So, Lord, we just plead with You that Your Word in all its saving and sanctifying and transforming power would explode across this nation, that the truth would replace the lies that abound everywhere, not for us but for Your own glory. This we ask in the name of our Christ. Amen.

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