

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

When God Abandons a Nation

Scripture: Romans 1:18-32

Code: 80-314

It is always instructive, it is always enlightening, it is sometimes literally scintillating to turn to the pages of God and see what it has to say and how relevantly it speaks to our time and to our lives. That will be true tonight as we turn in our Bibles to the first chapter of Romans. Romans chapter 1 and we're going to be looking at a somewhat familiar portion of Scripture to anyone who is a student of the Bible. Romans chapter 1, beginning in verse 18 and running through the end of this chapter.

I'm going to read just the first verse to set the stage for the unfolding of this profound truth. 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."

This section is about the wrath of God. Admittedly not a popular subject, certainly not a popular subject in the world and not even a popular subject in the church. But an absolutely critical and central subject to any understanding of the gospel, the wrath of God.

Now there are a number of different aspects to the wrath of God. There is what we could call eternal wrath because it is the punishment that God brings upon unbelieving sinners forever in hell...that's eternal wrath. And the Bible speaks often of that. There is also eschatological wrath, that is the wrath of God that is released at the end of the world described by some of the Old Testament prophets, described by Jesus Christ Himself in the Olivet Discourse and clearly laid out for us in the book of Revelation. Eschatological wrath, that aspect of God's wrath that is released at the end of the world.

There is also what we could call cataclysmic wrath, like a tsunami, a volcano, a hurricane, an earthquake, a plane flying in to the Twin Towers resulting in thousands of death...cataclysms happen in this world. And they are a reflection of the judgment of God. There is also what you could call consequential wrath. Consequential wrath is the sowing and reaping wrath, you live a certain kind of life and you set in motion certain forces that will produce judgment.

But there is one other kind of wrath and that is the wrath that is presented in this passage and it is the wrath of abandonment. It is the wrath of abandonment. It is that wrath exhibited by God when He turns His back on a society. One of the most tragic scenes on the pages of Scripture would provide a good illustration of it. It is a scene that involves the strongest man who ever lived, the mighty Samson. He is the original Superman, and a real one. According to Judges 16 verses 18 to 21 we read 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 has told me all that was 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 and looked for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to inflict him 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, "But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. And then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains and he was a grinder in the prison, a job for a mule." Because of his sin, the Lord left him. The judgment of abandonment.

To the sons of Israel, God said in Judges 10, "You have forsaken me and 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." God is saying I'm done with you. In Proverbs chapter 1 verses 24 to 31 we find a 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 even laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your dread comes, 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 devices."

In Hosea 4:17 it is recorded that God said, "Ephraim is joined unto idols, let him alone." There comes a time when God abandons men. God comes to a point where He lets a people go, lets them go to the consequences of their own sinful choices. They will not accept His counsel, they spurn all His reproof, as Proverbs says, so they eat the fruit of their own choices and they have to be satisfied with the devices they have chosen. Of the Pharisees Jesus said, "Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind," Matthew 15:14, the most terrifying words, "Let them alone."

It's a frightening thing to think about that. Frightening thing to think that you might be abandoned by God, that the opportunity for salvation is past, that the day of grace is over. The passages that I read to you relate to an individual in the case of Samson. But for the most part, they relate to a group such as the Pharisees or to a nation, such as Israel. And I think it's very relevant to talk about this because I'm going to try to show you from this passage tonight that it's pretty convincing that God has abandoned our nation. God has abandoned America to the effects of its sinful choices. Oh, this isn't the first nation that it's happened to, this is the story of history. Acts 14:16, the Apostle Paul said, "In the generations gone by, He...God...permitted all the nations to go their own way." This is the story of history. All the nations of history go their own way. So like the nations of old, like the nations past, we follow the same cycle of having the truth, rejecting the truth and being abandoned by God.

C.S. Lewis was writing in his book, *The Problem of Pain* and he wrote this, "The lost enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved." God will abandon sinners to their own choices and the consequences of those choices. And just what is this abandoning act on God's part, it is the removal of restraining grace. It is when God lets go and turns a society over to its own sinful freedoms and the results of those freedoms. No Scripture more directly confronts this abandonment and its consequences than Romans 1 does. Here is the most graphic and the most comprehensive discussion of what it means to be abandoned by God and it is the best passage that I know of to explain the moral chaos and the confusion that we experience in our own nation at this very time. God's wrath is already at work in our culture. We're not waiting for it, we are currently experiencing it.

Drop down to verse 24 and here is the defining section on what it means to be abandoned by God. Verse 24, "God gave them over." Verse 26, "God gave them over." Verse 28, the middle of the verse, "God gave them over." Three times you have the statement, "God gave them over." This term *paradidomi* in the Greek can have a judicial sense. It can be used of a judgment made on a criminal who was then handed over for punishment. Each of these phrases expresses the fact that the wrath of God has acted judicially to sentence sinners. It is God officially giving them over. It is God letting them go to the uninterrupted cause and effect their sinful choices produce. When this judgment falls, there is a depriving of restraining grace and sin runs rampant through a society. Sin is both the cause of this and the effect and the next cause and the next effect as it goes on and on and on. Sin is the reason and sin is the result. Sin is the cause and sin is the consequence.

Now I want you to notice the wrath of abandonment in its progression. This will help you to understand why I say we're experiencing it not only in America but in the world, and particularly in the western world today. Look at verse 24, "When the wrath of abandonment goes into action, this wrath which is defined for us as God giving them over follows three steps. It follows three sequential steps. You notice therefore, and that, of course, connects it to the prior passage, the prior passage has as its leading statement, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven." And then there are a number of statements about why the wrath of God is revealed, because the truth we suppressed, because that which is known of God is rejected, etc., etc. and then in verse 24 you come back to what that wrath is, "Therefore God gave them over." "And first of all, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them."

The first indication in a society of the wrath of abandonment is sexual immorality...sexual immorality. When a society becomes pornographic, when the general character of a society can be seen to be immoral, this wrath is in effect. When man is abandoned by God, when a society is abandoned by God, it operates only out of the passions of its own impure heart. It operates in the lusts of the heart, leading to impurity. The heart is wretched, the heart is immoral and the body follows. So you see that in verse 24. First the lusts dominate the heart, leading to impurity and the bodies follow in most

dishonorable ways. The heart is wicked and unrestrained and the body follows and you have a pornographic culture.

We can go back pretty readily in our own country to the sexual revolution connected to the hippie movement, connected to the Playboy empire beginning and since then this society has become increasingly pornographic until even the Internet is dominated by millions and millions of immoral pornographic websites to feed the insatiable lusts that dominate our culture. This leads to the smashing and crushing of marriage. This leads to horrific and horrendous abuse of children, pedophilia, all kinds of child abuse, all kinds of pornography involving children that continues to run rampant a wild pace because restraining grace has been removed. And sex runs rampant, marriage becomes a minor option as people engage in immoral behavior readily and constantly without commitment.

That's just step one. So you look at a society and ask, is it driven by sexual immorality? Is it filled with lust in the heart leading to impurity and the body follows in dishonorable behavior? The answer for our own world and our own society is yes. And it would be very hard to imagine one nation in this media saturated western world in which we live, it would be hard to understand one nation going this way without dragging all of the world exposed to its culture through the media with it. And so, it's not just a national issue, it's a world issue. But that's just step one.

Step two is in verse 26. "For this reason God gave them over...here's the second step...to degrading passions." Now we're not just talking about passions, we've added degrading. We're going down. There is a greater debauchery here. The degrading passions can be defined as gross affections, vile desires, perversion, or even inversion. And here it is to find. "Their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural." Plain and simple, Lesbianism, homosexuality. And the Holy Spirit first in this passage refers to the degradation of women because they are usually the last to be affected in the decay of morals because they have a mothering instinct and a protective instinct over their own children but when the wrath of abandonment is in force, even the women fall to the degrading passions. And in our culture the Lesbian movement has been vocal and relentless and passionate and fierce and even violent. Proof that absolutely all virtue is gone when motherhood, the highest, normal human virtuous relationship is abandoned and the people who do it are elevated as cultural icons. All virtue is gone when homosexuality invades the female gender.

And verse 27 adds, "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." And there's a little slip in of the consequential wrath. What is the due penalty of their error? That they receive venereal disease, AIDS. That's going to escalate, too, in this wrath of abandonment. There is also going to be the consequential wrath of sinful choices leading to deadly diseases.

Homosexuality is the second step. So look at a society. When you see a society that is pornographic, that is in to sexual immorality, fornication, adultery as a way of life, as a dominant way of life, which is not only in existence but approved and exalted in every way in the media, you know the wrath of abandonment is in operation. And then when a society also exalts homosexuality, lesbianism and male homosexuality, or sodomy, you know that it is even sinking deeper.

But there's a third step and the third step is in verse 28. "Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer...here's the third step...God gave them over to a depraved mind." First the heart is rotten and the body follows, and then the mind goes. What is a depraved mind? Well the word literally means tested and found useless, disqualified for its intended purpose, a non-functioning mind. Reasoning is so corrupted that it is crippled. The faculty, the intellectual faculty can no longer function. The moral law of God written in the heart has been literally stomped and replaced with cultural immorality. The conscience cannot function. And so, says verse 28, they do the things which are not proper, not moral. So immorality goes in every direction and now you can't find your way back because the mind is so corrupt. People don't think right. People's brains don't follow the paths that they should. They advocate all the wretched things and depreciate all the virtuous things. And what flows out of this pornographic, homosexual, depraved culture? All evil...verse 29, "All unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful inventors of evil." They even come up with new forms of evil. "Disobedience to parents." You wonder how in the world did that get in there? That was a capital offense in the Old Testament. Disobey your parents, you lose your life. "Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful." And that's just a partial list. It's like somebody opened the sewer of sin and let it run through society. And although they know the ordinance of God, it's written on the heart, Romans 2, it's written on the pages of Scripture, and they also know that those who practice such things are worthy of death. They not only do the same, but also give hardy approval to those who practice them. They know it's wrong. They know the consequences. They do it anyway and they give hardy approval to others who do it. I always think about the impeached President Clinton was caught in his scandalous immorality, his approval ratings went up. That's Romans 1, of course they went up because all the rest of the sinners feel comfortable with a leader that's like them.

This is just any day in the newspaper, any day on the cable news network. This is just life in the world in all its sinful forms, without conscience, without reason, without restraint a society becomes like lustful, immoral beasts, running wild. It gets to the Jerry Springer level where it's just so bizarre and so corrupt that we laugh at the unconventional corruption. You look at the society in this country and you ask yourself, is this a pornographic, homosexual, depraved society manifesting all these characteristics or not? The answer is unmistakably clear. The media, television, the music industry, radio, magazines features the people who are the purveyors of this filth as the cultural heroes and icons...movie people, television people, music people, etc. This stuff is even advocated across this

country in educational institutions, particularly universities are literal hot beds for the advocacy of all of this kind of iniquity.

This is what happens when God abandons a society. I look at our society and I say, "This is it." And that then brings us to the question of the text...why does God do it? Why does God abandon a society? Let's go back to verse 18.

Now we know what it looks like when He does, but why does He do it? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." The wrath of God is already operating in our culture. And God has abandoned our society on a wide scale and let our society go the way it chooses to go without restraint. But God has abandoned our society because our society has first abandoned God. There is no surer and no sadder evidence of a corrupted, wicked abandoned society than when that society will not tolerate anger against sin. Our society won't tolerate anger against sin. Our society feeds on sin and wants no one to deny its iniquities. And so, here we are under the wrath of God's abandonment. It isn't like it once was. Restraining grace has been pulled back and this society gets more immoral, more homosexual and more depraved every day. And why? I'm going to show you a sequence starting in verse 18 that has led us to this. The major reason is summed up in one statement. "We suppress the truth."

Any society that suppresses the truth, literally in the original, who are constantly attempting to suppress the truth and they suppress it in unrighteousness, or better, by their ungodliness. We crush the truth, we silence the truth speakers, clinging to our sin. We see the light, we hate the light, we run to the darkness, despising the light, condemning the light. Suppressing the truth must imply that we have the truth. God does exist and He has made His existence known to us. He's divinely authored our minds to work on a cause and effect basis and to go back to the fact that the effect, the world, must have a cause, namely the Creator. And we would be able to understand there was a God just by reason. Also in Romans 2, He has divinely placed within us a law written in our hearts which is a moral ethical standard that must be obeyed or it activates a conscience that is a warning device in every human being that threatens that human being a loss of well being and fear and danger if violated. Then there is the revelation of God in Scripture. In the western world we've had the Word of God for centuries. In America we've had it for centuries. But this nation and the world has suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, crushed it under the preferences for sin.

Now let me just kind of unpack these verses, verse 18 down through verse 23, by giving you four specific sequential reasons for the wrath of God. Number one, revelation.

Number one, revelation. Men have been given the truth. Verse 18 says, "We suppress the truth." Verse 19 then describes the source of that, "That which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them through reason and the moral law written in the heart, 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." They are without excuse because it is so obvious that a creation has to have a Creator, a design has to have a designer. God has inlaid the evidence of spiritual and moral truth and of His own existence and His greatness and His power in the very fabric of man's being. We talk about our five senses, but we have more working in us than just five physical senses. We have two spiritual senses. Reason is one and morality is another. These are so strong within us that they would lead us to God as a Creator, a powerful Creator, they would lead us to God as a law giver and therefore a judge if we just followed what is implanted in our hearts. In fact, it is so imbedded in us, the end of verse 20, that all of us are without excuse. You cannot plead ignorance and in our country and the west we have additionally the Bible and churches and Christian institutions, all the colleges, ivy league colleges originally founded were all founded as Christian institutions to train pastors. Throughout the history of this nation we have had the truth. God has made Himself known through general revelation, in creation, perceived by reason and in the law written in the heart, perceived by conscience. That which may be known of God. God is knowable. Christ is the light that lights all men. "Everyone has some knowledge of God evident...I love this important statement...evident in them...or within them." In the mind, in the soul, in the reason, in the conscience, in the fabric of what it is to be human. Then you add to that the special revelation of Scripture and we have heard the truth since the beginning of this nation's existence...we have heard the truth. The truth is always attacked, it's always attacked. We live in a modern world. Evolution has carried out a massive assault on the truth by denying that there needs to be a cause for the effect of the universe. What kind of idiocy is that?

Whenever Gentiles were evangelized in the book of Acts, whenever Gentiles needed to hear about God, the preachers would tell them about the God who created everything, Acts 14, Acts 17. They would take them back to creation because everyone knew there had to be a creator, He had to be powerful, He had to be a designer. He had to be moral because there was morality in the heart shown up in the laws that men made and in the structures of relationships. This God also was a God who had personality because personality can't come out of non-personality. And so when evangelizing Gentiles, you started with the Creator as Paul did on Mars Hill. When evangelizing Jews, you started with the Old Testament. For the Gentiles it was the general revelation of God, for the Jews it was the special revelation of God. And now our society has succeeded in eliminating the need for a Creator with the theory of evolution and in disparaging the authenticity of Scripture. And even in the church today there is a mad dash to remove the Scripture because people don't want to hear it. But the truth is there. It's in the conscience, it's in the reason that takes you to God and it's in the revelation of Scripture. Sinners are without excuse because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them in creating them the way He did. And so, looking at the creation you see His invisible attributes, eternal power, divine nature clearly and you have no excuse.

Revelation, that's the first thing. God has revealed Himself to man. Men have received the truth. In this country, even the biblical truth. Second word in this progression, rejection. Men have turned from

the truth. Verse 21, "Even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened." And though man finds God in reason, he rejects Him. He finds God in the moral law and conscience, he rejects Him. Is exposed to the truth of God in Scripture, he rejects. He suppresses the truth under his iniquities because he loves darkness rather than light. And he plunges downward believing that he can live his life any way he wants without any consequence at all. And leaving himself therefore under divine judgment of the severest kind.

And so we look at a society today, in particularly here in America and in the western world so amazingly influenced by the gospel and we see a people who do not honor God. Go back to verse 21. They do not honor Him as God, they do not give thanks." That is to say they do not thank Him for being the source of everything they have. Man's problem is not that he can't find God, man's problem is not that he can't recognize God. Man's problem is not that he can't find the truth, or recognize the truth. It is that he will not...and it's back to John 3 again...they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They don't want to honor God. To honor God would then cause them to be accountable to Him and to His law and therefore under His judgment. Man would rather live without God in view at all.

I was thinking this through some couple of years ago and thought that man likes to live with five dominant lies. These are very comfortable to the sinner. One, life is random...life is random. We're all products of evolutionary chance, no purpose, no creator, no accountability. We basically live in a universe where a bottom line formula is nobody times nothing equals everything. Nobody is in charge, nobody put us here. We're accountable to nobody. A rock is a rat is a dog is a boy...was the mantra of one organization. No one made us, we have no reason and that's why we are free in this random world to do what we want.

The second dominating lie, truth is relative. No absolutes, no standard, you just kind of have to flow around public opinion but you can change public opinion, as we well know. Ethics can be changed if you have enough clout and enough power and enough persistence, but there is no absolute truth. We're all free to possess our own truth and demand the freedom to live our lives according to our own truth which is of our own invention.

A third dominating lie is that people are basically good, oh if they go bad, somebody abused them. Somebody else is to blame, they lack self-esteem, they have psychological problems based on environmental failures. But people are basically good. I'm basically good, I'm a good person...you hear them say that all the time.

A fourth lie that dominates our culture is that everyone can change his own life, get control, take charge, become the person you want to be. You have the power to be whatever you want to be. That's the biggest lie ever. You can be everything you want to be. People tell their kids, "You can be

anything you want to be." Let me tell you, if you're slow, you'll die slow. If you're dumb, you'll die dumb. If you can't carry a tune in a bucket, you'll die not carrying a tune in a bucket. There are certain things you can't ever change. You cannot do anything you want to do, that's ridiculous. But that fits the mantra of this maniacal kind of freedom in a sin-saturated culture.

And the fifth and dominating lie is the goal of life is self-satisfaction. The goal of life is self-satisfaction. You're really after feeling good about yourself, being satisfied with who you are. You hear people say, "This is who I am, take it or leave it and I'm happy who I am. This is me and I'm just out there." And you want to say, "Well we wish you weren't, just go somewhere else." It's this blatant kind of brash self illusion. Life is random, truth is relative, people are basically good, everybody can change his own life if he chooses to, and the goal of life is self-satisfaction. The truth is opposite that. The truth is opposite that. God is sovereign and nothing is random. The Bible is absolute truth. All people are basically sinful. Only Christ can change your life. And selfless submission to Jesus Christ is the goal of life. They've got it completely wrong.

And so, why would they honor a God they deny? Why would they give Him thanks? They think they've achieved everything on their own. They can look at the beauty of this world with all the good things that God has placed in it by His common grace and they can't thank Him for a sunset, for love, for children, for a baby, for a good meal, for a vacation, for rest, for sleep, for a comfortable chair. They can't thank Him because then they would be acknowledging that He's the source. It's like Isaiah, he wrote of his own time, "You felt secure in your wickedness and you said no one sees me. Your wisdom and your knowledge have deluded you for you have said in your heart, I am and there is no one besides me." That is the modern American mantra...I am the invictus(?), I am the captain of my soul, empty, useless self-centeredness. And into this vacuous self-centeredness is sucked deeper darkness. Go back to verse 21, "Because though they knew God they didn't honor Him as God, or give thanks," and we're talking collectively about a society here. "But they became empty in their speculations," futile, empty, human ideas, useless. And as I said, into that vacuum is sucked darkness and the end of verse 21 says, "Their foolish heart was darkened." They wouldn't know and now they couldn't know. The darkness dominated. The light went out. Intellectual darkness and moral darkness turn to spiritual darkness...deadly darkness.

Wrath came because of revelation and it comes again and again and again and again to societies throughout all of human history because they will not acknowledge God who has revealed Himself and so you have revelation followed by rejection. And when there comes rejection, the light goes out, the darkness comes. And a third step follows, rationalization...rationalization. This if it weren't so sad would be funny, verse 22, "Professing to be wise they became fools." The idiocy of verse 21 is exacerbated in verse 22. Their darkness is so profound that they can't assess their true condition. So they profess to be wise.

It reminds me of the lady who went to the psychiatrist, she had a duck on a leash. And the doctor said, "How can I help you, Ma'am?" She said, "It's not me, my husband, he's the one, he thinks he's a duck." This would call into question her perception of reality, would it not? It's like the guy lying in the mental hospital in the bed, kept saying, "I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon." And the guy in the next bed said, "No you're not...no you're not."

"How do you know?"

"I'm God."

You say, this is ridiculous. This is no more ridiculous, no more absurd, no more bizarre than giving yourself a Ph.D. when you're a fool, congratulating yourself for your wisdom and knowledge and insight and achievement when your heart is black and shut out completely of true knowledge. Professing to be wise they're proud to stand up and declare how really wise they are. And it always reminds me of the emperor's new clothes. The story about the emperor who was convinced that he was wearing the most beautiful clothing when he was stark naked and went out parading the glory of his new garments and everybody laughed. Fools, *morino*(?) from which we get moron. We have a society of proud morons flaunting themselves as if they're significant, as if they're wise, they're on endless talk shows, endlessly driveling out their folly.

That leads to a fourth element, the downward spiral goes from revelation to rejection to rationalization. They tell themselves they're wise when the truth is they're morons. But the fourth cause of God's wrath is the worst. Revelation, rejected, darkness rationalized and the fourth, religion...religion. This is so interesting. Verse 23, "They exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." How ridiculous. Religion..men create their own gods to accommodate their own useless ideas. You might think that religion is man at his highest. Let me tell you, religion is man at his lowest. False religion is man at the bottom...at the bottom. It's man who has gone away from the truth of God and the further he goes, the more he descends into satanic false religion. Religion is not man at his highest. It is man at his absolute lowest. This is the final straw. As verse 25 indicates, we didn't read it earlier because I wanted to save it till now, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and they worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever, amen. They kept worshiping, they developed the religion but they worshiped something of their own creation, or a creation of God, an animal, a fish, a star, a constellation, or an idol rather than the Creator. Verse 28 says it again, "They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer." It doesn't mean they're not religious, ah the whole world is religion, fanatically religious.

You see, man does not ascend from the muck of paganism and ignorance up to the truth of God. That's not how it works. Man is not evolving up, he is not ascending to God. He is descending. He falls from the truth of God into the slime of religion, false religion, satanic counterfeit. Religion is not

man at his best, religion is man at his worst. Religion is not man at his highest, it is man at his lowest. It is not man ascending, it is man descending. It is not man finding God, it is man finding Satan and being content with him. The ultimate insanity...the ultimate insanity is to reject God and create a non-God that doesn't exist and worship that. How insane is that? A false God, a false Jesus, and you do that and call yourself wise and erudite and you pontificate about your religion and you have all kinds of complexities in your satanic system, all kinds of people going around with titles and robes and authority and influence and power. This is moronic.

The idols come in all kinds of forms, from primitive statues of the lowest cultures to the more elevated gods of self and sex and mother nature, from the Roman eagle to the spotted owl, to the golden bulls of Egypt to the dolphin gods of environmentalists, from the worship of a stick to the worship of the earth, from Aborigines to environmentalists, from pantheistic worship of the world to eco-feminism, from eco-feminism to Islam and every other religion. I'm not surprised is terrorism is associated with religion, it's man at his lowest. Is it any wonder that as a society then we are struggling with our ethics? Is it any wonder we are struggling with our morals? We've rejected God. He gave us revelation, we rejected it. We rationalize it and call ourselves an elite educated advanced culture and we invent religion as if it's an indicator of how high we have ascended when the fact of the matter is we're going down at warp speed. We have abandoned God and God has returned the favor.

And so, we are under His wrath. That brings the question...is there any hope? Is there any hope for this country, for any society in this condition? Well, I will take you to a passage of Scripture that gives us hope. Turn in your Bible to the Psalms, and I want you to look at this, Psalm 81...Psalm 81 because this cycle is a constantly visible cycle in history, going on all the time. It has happened before in Israel. It is happening even now in Israel. Many generations of the Jewish people, God's chosen people for a future redemption, many generations have gone through this cycle, rejecting the true God, rationalizing about their condition, inventing complex religion, descending. Is there any hope for them in the future? Is there any hope for the western world? For any nation in the world? For us?

Well all I can say is there is a word of hope in Psalm 81. Let's look at verse 11. "But My people did not listen to My voice and Israel did not obey Me, so...and here's the same language...I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart to walk in their own devices." That's Romans 1. This happened to Israel. As I said, the history of the world is the judgment of the world. God has allowed all the nations to go their own way, Acts 14. Nothing new. I gave them over. But verse 13, here is a plaintive cry from the heart of God. "O that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways. I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their adversaries. Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him." In other words, they would be so good to be under the protection of the Lord that people would even pretend to be believers. And the time of their punishment would be forever, punishing their enemies. And I love verse 16, "And I would feed you with the finest of the wheat and from honey from the rock I would satisfy you." This is a plaintive cry

from God who says, "O that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways. I would turn from abandoning them, from giving them over to their own sinful choices to defending them and protecting them and punishing their enemies and I would feed them with the finest of the wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy them."

The key, listen to Me. Walk in My ways. The only hope for this or any other society is to hear the Word of the Lord and obey it...to hear the Word of the Lord and obey it. And I would suggest that this is not a good time for weak men preaching weak messages in weak churches. This is a time for bold and powerful, strong biblical ministry that calls people to hear the Word of the Lord and respond. This is the only hope for any people for any individual.

Our Father, the Word comes to us with such clarity and power. Thank You for warning us. Thank You for the grace of confronting us with the truth. Help us, Lord, to be proclaimers of Your Word, the Word of the gospel that saves. It's not too late until Jesus comes we can keep preaching this Word, to the ends of the earth, across this nation and all the nations may Your people proclaim nothing but Your Word so that those under this wrath, this current wrath may be saved and escape the final and eternal wrath. May there be a great revival of Your Word and may people listen to it and obey it, to Your glory we ask these things. Amen.

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