

THE ROMAN REVEALING
Theme: The Reign of Righteousness
From the Sermon Notebook of Dr. Doyce H. Nolan

SUBJECT: THE WORLD OF PAGANISM

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 1:18-32

Sermon No. 4

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Introduction

William Booth, 1829-1916, who was the founder of the Salvation Army, said, "The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell." *Quotes of William Booth*
http://thinkexist.com/quotes/william_booth/

Mr. Booth's words have become a reality in our day. However, Paul points out in our scripture that living righteous lives is required by God from man, whoever he is, whatever he is and wherever he is, in relationship to salvation. This requirement is required from the world of paganism because the wrath of God is revealed against ungodliness and unrighteousness. *Let us observe...*

**I. THE UNGODLINESS OF THE WORLD OF PAGANISM.
(18-23).**

Notice verse 18 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.** The word "hold" means to suppress or

restrain. When men restrain the truth of God in unrighteousness there is a movement downward in his life immediately.

Paul tells us that men everywhere are exposed to two lights, whether in the heart of civilization or in the depths of paganism, the light of conscience and the light of creation. *Observe*

1. The Light of Conscience (19). *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.* The popular notion that primitive tribes are not condemned until they hear the Gospel is completely shot down here in the verse. **Paul goes even further in 2:14-15.** *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shows the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another.*

So, wherever man is found there is the light of conscience which tells him about God! Conscience is a God-given faculty within the human heart that distinguishes between right and wrong. So, conscience makes man responsible for rejecting or accepting what is right and what is wrong! Man, no matter how primitive he is can not be excused from rejecting the truth of God in unrighteousness. *But man is not only exposed to the light of conscience...*

2. The Light of Creation (20). *For the ionvisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

No one with any measure of intelligense can observe the heavens and the handi-work of God's earth without recognizing that behind

and beyond these is a Supreme Creator! This is true of all primitive tribes. They will tell of a great spirit that brought about all that we see. This is called “natural theology”. So, Paul tells us that wherever man is found he is without excuse to reject the eternal power and the God-head! *A scholar by the name of Lee Samuel wrote a book entitled “Are the Heathern Lost” He says...*

“Many missionaries tell us that the heathern know more about God than we think. They tell us that there are no athiest among heathern tribes. There has never yet been found a tribe on earth however small or deprived that did not believe in some kind of God, or had some system of worship. The heathern found in primitive tribes know that they have sinned.

When a Christian missionary comes to tell them about sin he often finds a ready acknowledgement of their sin. The heathern seem to know that their sin has to be punished; they seem afraid of punishment and afraid of death as men are everywhere. They know that sin has to be atoned for, and they seek ways of appeasing angry deities.”

So, Paul says men everywhere are without excuse. He illustrates how ungodliness leads to degradation in a six-fold test that leads man to descend into the depths of the darkness found in this chapter. **Verse 21** *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.*

1. Man Dethrones God. (21a). *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God,..* Man’s purpose on earth is to glorify God. When he ceases to glorify God in reverence and worship he dethrones God from the universe as the God of all creation!

2. Man Depreciates God. (21b). *neither were thankful.* This is the common sin of many Christians today who have sethroned God from the position of authority in their lives. They are no longer thankful for what He has done, so, they are no longer committed to him in a total relationship to their activity.

3. Man Defames God. (21c). *but became vain in their imaginations.* This refers to the worship of idols. This is a serious thing when a man turns from the worship of God to some man-made idol or man-made religion that is of his imagination. The two most prominent idols are the gods of convenience and compromise.

4. Man Desecrates God. (21d). *their foolish heart was darkened.* Scripture tells us that we are to consecrate the Lord God in our heart. When a man descends the first three steps, his heart descends from consecration to desecration. His heart becomes darkened and he is ready to sin to his shame.

5. Man's Departure from God. (22). *Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.* When a man professes himself to be wise this is no more than spiritual hallucination. Paganism is an example of a departure from natural theology, or primitive knowledge of God, when he suppresses the truth of God.

6. Man Degrades God. (23). *And changed the glory of the uncorruptable God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beast, and creeping things.* When man holds down the truth of God exposed in the light of conscience, the light of creation, and the light of Christ, he has followed these six downward steps to the world of paganism.

John 3:19 This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. *The ungodliness of the world of paganism...*

II. THE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE WORLD OF PAGANISM. (18, 24-32).

Notice verse 18 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.**

When God is dethroned in the individual life, in social life, or in the life of a nation, there comes a time when God withdraws Himself from the affairs of man. What follows is God's wrath and judgement.

My friends, it is a sad day when God gives an individual up! It is a sad day when God gives a nation up! But here is the truth in the word of God! When man rejects God, God rejects man! Why? There are Two reasons: *Sensual Idolatry and Social Insanities.*

1. Sensual Idolatry. (24-27). Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working

that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

America has become a nation of sensual idolaters! Pornographic books, sexual exploitation of children, explicit sexual perversion in movies, nudity campgrounds and recreation centers have sprung up from coast to coast.

Homosexuality and lesbianism is the ultimate distortion of God's creative genius in making man and woman for each other. When man and woman indulges in any sexual activity other than that for which they were biologically and emotionally designed it is to commit the most heinous sin on the face of the earth. Animals, wild creatures don't even participate in such disgusting, degrading activity. It is an open sin against God Himself, against the very commands of God!

The Biblical Denunciation of homosexuality Leviticus 18:22
Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

Homosexuality Carries the Death Penalty Leviticus 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. *Sensual Idolatry notice...*

2. Social Insanities. (Romans 1:28) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

The once known Christian America, stands today as the Land of a reprobate mind! According to Mr. Webster the word "reprobate"

means “deprived, vicious and unprincipled. We are a nation that has lost all moral principles! *Notice...*

Verse 29-32 Being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which committ such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. The picture Paul describes is that of the human heart!

America, with all of our education and culture, have refused to adhere to God’s law of moral standards. We have come up with new laws and new standards of living by which to guage ourselves. It is the new morality based upon humanism, which teaches that we are gods within ourselves and we can live anyway we choose.

There is no sense of shame, sexual crimes are no longer hidden, but pronounced as “domestic partners”, or “cultural unity” for the purpose of receiving the same benefits as marriage between one man and one woman, designed by God for the betterment of the human race. It matters not how we rationally excuse sin today, in God’s eyes, sin is still sin!

Conclusion

We have looked at the world of paganism; we have in fact, looked at our own heart. There is not one person present who does not have the potential of committing all of these sins if it were not for

the grace of God. Without Christ, without God, we are without hope in this world!

It does not matter how civilized man becomes or how primitive man is, when man holds down, suppresses the truth of God we are capable of the degradation described in this chapter.

I remember the late Dr. W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas and president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies sharing the following account in chapel.

He had gone with other missionaries to find the most primitive tribe on earth. They flew as far as their little plane could go and then set out on foot cutting their way through jungle after jungle for days, finally coming upon this tribe. They were astonished to find that God had revealed Himself in standards of morality to this tribe and that nine of the Ten Commandments were being practiced in some form. Here was the standards of God's laws written in their heart.

So, man everywhere are exposed to two lights; the light of Conscience and the light of Creation. Whether in the heart of civilization or in the depth of paganism, man is without excuse for not living according to God's moral standards.