

The Slide Toward Paganism

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Mike Miller

Straight Paths Bible Church

Romans 1:16-32 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible 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: 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. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 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. 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: 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 recompence of their error which was meet. 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; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

- I. We have heard many sermons on this passage and we have always just considered it a description of the path to sin and depravity.
 - A. We have used it more to illustrate how people end up being sodomites, or reprobates, but it describes in detail how man descends into paganism.
 1. And this is primarily a description of mankind as a whole, or individual countries or cultures.
 2. But the descent into paganism happens corporately; a certain people, or nation, or the whole of mankind, do this thing altogether.
 - B. It starts with a knowledge of God. (v.21, “because that when they knew God...”
 1. Man did not start out pagan and develop a knowledge of God; he started with the knowledge of God with Adam.
 2. When Noah got off the ark with his family, everyone who was alive in the world at that time knew about God very well.
 - C. The evidence is abundant in all pagan religion and practices that they once knew something about the truth.
 1. Many of their sacrifices are propitiatory, which means substitution; a life for a life; the sacrifice of a life for their sins.
 2. There have always been stories of a worldwide flood in almost all cultures on earth.
 3. There are a lot of practices that are common in pagan religions all over the world that have the shadow of the knowledge they once had of God.

4. But it has been changed by their vain imaginations and the darkness of their hearts and minds into unclean and unspeakable evil deeds.
 - D. This scripture explains step-by-step exactly how men end up in paganism.
- II. First, they knew God, but they glorified him not as God.
- A. They lost their wonder of God; their fear and reverence for Him.
 - B. This happens when people get caught up in the world around them and forget God.
 - C. Oh, they do not forget God right away, it takes some time to wean them away from Him.
 - D. But slowly, as they spend more time with the friends of the world that they do with the friends of God, they begin to transfer their affections and their passions to things of the world and the cares of life.
 - E. They take the reins of their life from the hands of God and take hold of them themselves, or they give them to a job, or a career, or a hobby, or a habit, or pleasure, or a wife, or some worldly cause, or a million other things.
 - F. It is not long after that that God is just a secondary concern and not the first thing in your life.
 1. In your mind, He is there if I need Him, but He understands how busy I am with all this other stuff, and He becomes like that friend or family member that moved away and now you seldom ever think of them or talk to them.
- III. Neither were they thankful...
- A. The next step in the journey to being a pagan instead of a child of God, is to forget that God gave you everything you have, even your very life.
 - B. You develop the attitude that it is YOUR life, YOUR body, YOUR business, and YOUR rights to do whatever you want to do.
 - C. That what you have you earned yourself, and have a right to be proud of that fact.
 - D. A humble heart of gratitude is replaced by a hard heart of pride.
 - E. Instead of receiving thanks God begins to receive the blame for anything that displeases you or does not facilitate your own plan for your life.
- IV. But became vain in their imaginations...
- A. Their thoughts, their dreams, their goals in life, their hopes, all became godless things of no value.
 - B. What do most people dream about having, achieving, accomplishing?
 - C. What do most people desire out of life, and spend their lives working toward?
 - D. Security? Yes, and mostly financial security; a way to be comfortable and safe and not have to worry about anything.
 1. Have everything covered that they can possibly think of that might happen.
 - E. This way they do not have to depend upon God for anything, because they gave up on that a long time ago.
- V. Their foolish heart was darkened...
- A. Light and happiness escapes them, and nothing can make them content or satisfied.
 - B. Their hearts are full of selfishness and evil thoughts toward others, so that their life is full of bitterness and hatred.
 - C. They are without God and without hope in this world, and it is the direct result of not keeping God in his rightful place in their heart and mind and being thankful to Him.
- VI. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...

- A. People in this state always think of themselves as superiors, especially to the foolish, weak-minded people who need religion for a crutch.
- B. At the same time many of the people who are in this stage of degeneration still profess to be Christians and give God their token acknowledgments like church attendance (when it does not interfere with their own plans and activities) and occasional prayer and offerings, and social media posts.
- C. They think themselves wise and let it be known to others, but God says they are fools at this point in the game.
- D. Fools who are entering the waterslide into paganism, and leading their children and grandchildren to destruction and damnation forever.

VII. Romans 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

- A. The next step after their heart grows dark is to change the glory of God over to something else.
- B. People love dogs and cats, but not God.
- C. People love the environment, but they do not love God.
- D. People love sin and iniquity and call it freedom, but they do not love God, yeah, they hate God at this point.
- E. The glory that God should get from his creation made in his own image and likeness is given to animals and ungodly, filthy men and women. (celebrities; sports heroes; rock stars)
- F. The honor and love that God deserves from those who He gave life to and then died for is given to devils who hate Him.
- G. The picture of the Jews choosing Barrabas over Jesus is the very clear illustration of what all men do on their way to becoming murdering pagans.

VIII. The rest of Romans 1 describes the low state of degenerate man that has been discovered all over the world through all the ages. (Read rest of chapter- v. 24-32)

- A. Absolutely nothing good, but all evil.
- B. The murdering savages that burn, mangle, strangle, and butcher their children, their wives, and other people in some kind of desperate attempt to find peace and security are common in all the earth, and always have been through the history of man.
- C. The stories of peace-loving pagans who were hurting no one, and had the perfect paradise until white men came and looted and murdered them is a fairy tale made up by this modern generation of pagans.
- D. Men NEVER leave God and his ways and become better people for it; they turn into savages and devils and it is a nightmare to even know about them and all their evil deeds.
- E. Verse 32 describes the crazy state of things when pagans do their worst deeds; they know that there is a God in heaven who condemns such things, but they do them anyway, and not only that, but they take pleasure in watching others do them, also.
- F. I think it is very obvious that our world, but our country in particular, has entered into this road decades ago and we are now living in a pagan society.
- G. Churches and individual Christians are going to have to learn to do spiritual battle in this new environment, which is the same environment our spiritual ancestors had to do battle in.
- H. Therefore, the Bible should become much more relevant to us as we learn to preach and live the Gospel in a world where paganism is dominant.