***Roman / American Culture

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-225***

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Our subject is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 40, in Colossians 1:25-29.

A nation which operates on the principles of God's wisdom, as revealed in the Bible, is a nation which will enjoy freedom, peace, and prosperity. The world is rapidly moving toward a unity, and eventually, it will be under a powerful man that the Bible calls the antichrist. And he will promise people freedom, peace, and prosperity. But he won't be able to deliver. And instead, it will be nothing but calamity. But historically, this has been the promise of God to those who are His people.

So, we find that, even to Israel in the Old Testament, this promise – that if you follow the work of God through the Word of God, you will be blessed as a nation. Obedience to biblical principles brings freedom; brings peace; and, brings prosperity. 2 Chronicles has a verse that you have often heard quoted, very often without people specifying that this was a promise to Israel. But it is a promise to us in an indirect way in the church age as well, because God's ways of doing things are always righteous, and they are always compatible with His character.

Some of us have special promises and privileges, as we do in the church age, that the Jewish people never had. But the Jews, as we, had a God Who said, "I'll bless you for doing right. I'll bless you personally for doing right. And I'll bless you as a nation when you do right. Notice 2 Chronicles 7:13-14. God says, "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn away from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land." Nations historically have drifted off from God. Nations historically who came to their senses and returned to God have also been brought under freedom, peace, and prosperity.

Treating God with integrity is the issue, and not pretending that He does not exist, or that we can make up our own rules as we go along. We may also add to this Malachi 3:7-12. Here again, the admonition is to the Jewish people: "If you do right, on the basis of my principles and the commandments that I have taught you, then I will take care of you as a nation. You will have freedom. You will have peace from your enemies. And you will have personal prosperity (Malachi 3:7-12).

Now, you understand I'm not applying this as being directly applicable to Christians. But the principle is true. This is the way God works, whether He's dealing with a Jew or whether he's dealing with a Christian, though the details are different. We Christians do not follow the system of tithing. We're not under the legal principle – the obligation of a 10% religious tax, and the other 90% is ours. Everything that we have is, as stewards of God, so everything we have belongs to God, and we have to ask him how much we can keep and how much we can spend on ourselves, and then how much He wants us to put into His work. But under the Jewish system, God said, "You bring me 10%. And if you want to give me an offering from the other 90%, I'll bless you for that. But if you don't, now you come under My judgment. You'll not have freedom; you'll not have peace; and, you will not have prosperity." What? Just because of our money? That's right. This is one of the most important signals of your spiritual condition then, and it is now as well.

Notice what the prophet Malachi said, in Malachi 3:7-12: "'God has said, from the days of your fathers, you have turned aside for my statutes (doctrines), and have not kept them. Return to me, and I'll return to you,' says the Lord of hosts. 'But you say, 'How shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings? You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me – the whole nation of you. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the Lord of Hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I'll rebuke the devour of you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground, nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,' says the Lord of Hosts, 'And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the Lord of hosts."

The principles of righteousness receiving divine blessing is the same. The details of the storehouse (the temple and all that) are different. God is not saying, "Bring all your gifts into the local church offering box." We cannot stretch it to that. But the principle of playing fair with God, with your money, is an example of the basis of divine blessing.

The United States has been a delightful land, because it has always been a land that has looked to God. It was founded upon the Word of God, and it has been generous in providing for the work of God, and the work of God all over the world. That's characteristic of Americans. It's not so much anymore. We are not a delightful land, because we are a land which is being corrupted, and we are going down the same deadly trail that other nations have gone down, that have ended up in their national destruction.

The Bible makes it clear, however, that there is a great difference between the human viewpoint wisdom of unsaved man from Satan, and the wisdom which comes from God, through the knowledge of doctrine.

So, we have seen, in Colossians 1:28, that the apostle Paul says, "We proclaim Him (Jesus Christ), and we admonish (we warn) every man concerning sin, and we teach every man the principles of doctrine with all wisdom, so that you may be wise." This is the business of the local church – to give people wisdom. How much wisdom are the people going to get who are not being instructed in the Word of God this morning, who maybe are no longer able to attend; who maybe don't want to attend; or, who are not here?. I guarantee you that there's going to be some wisdom here this morning that would open their eyes, and give them a chance to get their lives straightened out, and come under the freedom; the peace; and, the prosperity of God.

**Lying**

The Bible makes it clear that there's a big difference between what God thinks and what the devil tells you – he, we who has been a liar from the beginning, and, therefore, everything from Him is a lie, even when it looks good. The whole world system is one enormous lie. And yet, Christians cannot catch onto that, and keep living in this world system as if it were some nice good old place.

Proverbs 14:12 explains this when it says, "There is a way (the way of human viewpoint wisdom of this world) which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

In Proverbs 12:15, we also read, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

Now, the problem with a fool is that he begins with a basically false premise. That premise is stated in Psalm 14:1: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" And once he has accepted that false premise from Satan (that's the big lie): "There is no God," then Psalm 14:1 says, "They are corrupt. They have committed abominable deeds. There is no one who does good." Why is that? Well, because if there is no God, then you don't know the rules. You have no way of understanding what the principles for living are: what is wise; and, what is not wise. And it is inevitable, if we get far enough into this, this morning, that you'll be hearing some things that you'll be shocked to say, "Well, I don't know if that's the way I'd do things. I don't know if that's the way I believe things." And, all of a sudden, you're going to wonder whether the wisdom of the world has superseded the wisdom of God.

Psalm 10:4: "The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance (the arrogance) does not seek Him. All his thoughts are: 'There is no God.'" and if there is no God, then you may make your own rules. You may make up your own ways of life, and then you'll end up with what Isaiah described as calling good, evil; and, evil, good. This is the kiss of death for any human being – to think that there is no living personal God Who has laid down the ground rules by which the game of life is to be played.

**We Deceive Ourselves**

We have pointed out to you that the unbeliever, thus, makes up his own rules of conduct, and those come from his old sin nature. That's his frame of reference. And all of these are a lie. It's not the way the world really works. And one of the things that God hates most of all is a lying tongue – bearing false witness. This is violating the ninth commandment, and worst of all, bearing false witness to yourself. Even Christians are so corrupted that they constantly are willing to accept the viewpoints (the principles – the ideas) of the world, and take them to themselves as if they were truth. We deceive ourselves.

Proverbs 12:19: "Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment." Yes, a lying tongue is only for a moment. You can get away with a problem by being deceitful for the moment, but that's not going to last. It is better to say the truth. Then you don't have to remember what you said last time, to be sure that you're consistent with your lie: "Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment."

Notice Psalm 12:22: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." There's that word "abomination." That is emotional disgust on the part of the Almighty God.

In the book of the Revelation, speaking to the Laodicean Church, God uses a New Testament expression of abomination: "You make Me want to vomit." Lying lips are an abomination to God." That's how he feels about it: "But those who deal faithfully are His delight" – those who are truthful. That's the one that God takes a delight in.

To lie to yourself; to justify your evil conduct; to soothe your conscience; or, to indulge the desires of the sin nature by calling them your needs rather than the fact that they are the wants of your evil nature – that is lying to yourself.

Christians flee from the Word of God because they go someplace, as Demas did of old, on Paul's apostolic team, to find some need fulfilled, when all it was his wants of the old sin nature in the presence of the Word of God.

Now, Christians who persist in lying to themselves, in order to justify the practice of evil, are running a very dangerous game, because, in time, God's going to say, "Okay, do you want self-deception? Do you want to bear false witness to yourself? I'm going to turn you over to that. I'm not going to hold back anymore. I'm going to not only turn you over to what you want, but I'm going to let a curtain of blindness drop over your eyes, so that you won't even be able to see the truth anymore.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 point out to us how this is going to be done to all the people in the tribulation period, and those who go into it before the tribulation begins, because they would not believe the truth. Beginning at 2 Thessalonians 2:8: "And then that lawless one (the antichrist) will be revealed (after the rapture has taken place), whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to an end by His appearance at His coming." At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the antichrist will be killed, along with his false prophet religious leader, and they will both be placed into the lake of fire: "That is, the one who is coming is in accord with the activity of Satan (the antichrist, empowered by Satan), with all power, and signs, and false wonders." One of the last of the great all-time miracle workers in the human race will be the antichrist. He'll wow people with the miracles he can perform. And with all the deception, because he's Satan's man, he's got to be a liar. Anything associated with this world system is a lie.

**Satan is a Liar**

The devil is a liar: "And with all deception of wickedness for those who perished, because they did not receive the love of the truth, so as to be saved." People who do not love the truth will not listen to the gospel message, and they will not be saved. Christians who do not love the truth will not be out for the instruction of the Word of God in the church service that teaches the truth – they will suffer the consequences.

2 Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this reason, they will not love the truth." For this reason, God will send them a diluting influence, so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged, who did not follow the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." So this business of lying to yourself (excusing something you do because you want to do it), your sin nature tells you that you just need this until you consider it a need, and God said, "Keep pushing it. Keep pretending that something is so, that I have told you from the Word of God is not so. Keep doing what I have forbidden you to do. And the time will come when I will move My hand of influence away from you, and I'll say, 'Go ahead.'" And then you will shatter yourself upon your own self-deceit.

Now, Romans 1:18-32 is a very sobering example of what happens when God finally says, "I'm going to let you deceive yourself." And you may think, "Well, no, I'm not saying no to God. I'm not just deliberately violating the Word of God." Anytime you're absent from a church service, like Berean Church, where expository preaching is the name of the game, you're lying to yourself (self-deception). And you can go someplace else, and sit in church, and take sweetness-and-light, and inspirational talk, and you know that the Word of God is not being explained to you. There's no expository explanation. The preacher is here this week, and then he's in another verse this week, and he's another verse this week, that's your sure sign that you're not being taught the Word of God. You cannot be taught the Word of God by somebody who hops around from verse to verse. He's looking for a new high, and a new kick, and a new pitch, and that's why he's giving you a different Scripture.

Now, you can go ahead and ignore that, and keep going to a church like that, but what are you doing? You're not loving the truth. And you are as guilty of violating the Word of God as if you were absent from it in the first place.

Now, it started at the dawn of human history. We have a long passage, but I want to read it to you, to show you where the degeneration comes. And if you're thinking, you'll say: "Boy, that's today, isn't it? That's today. That's what they're doing today. So that's how it happened."

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." God has spoken. God is there, and He is not silent. He has spoken. And He has declared what is true, and He has declared what His principles of righteousness are. He has told us how we should live. And people suppress the truth.

There are preachers all over pulpits this morning, at this very time, who are suppressing the truth of the Word of God, because they're manipulating what God has said, in order that they may do what? It is so as to make it easy for people to feel comfortable with living with their sin natures, and to feel comfortable for not being here in church, and to feel comfortable for being up to their eyeballs, tangled in the world system.

Romans 1:19-20: "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 (what God's character is like, and His eternal power, and His divine nature – the fact that he's a person), have been clearly seen, and understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Right out there is all that creation. And only a fool will say, "There is no God," and look at creation. And God says, "Fine. If you want to pretend that all this happened by evolution (by itself), look at yourself. If you want to pretend that you just automatically had all those complicated parts of your human body, and everything else that makes you run, all fell together on its own, fine. I'm going to drop the curtain of understanding in your mind. And I'm going to let you go to that kind of thinking.

Well, when you have God's wisdom denied you (and that's what I'm talking about), when the curtain drops, you can't understand God's wisdom. If you're out of fellowship, you can't understand God's wisdom. And if you can't understand God's wisdom, all you have is the world's wisdom. And if you live by the world's wisdom, you've ceased being a human being. Well, now, you've transferred yourself into the category of an animal. You're just an animal. And you will react to all the relationships of life like any animal who has no spirit and contact with God.

So, God said, "Fine. You're without excuse. You've seen everything out here. You know that there had to be Somebody that made that – somebody that is far greater than you are. That somebody is a person you should come to and say, "How should I then live?"

Romans 1:21: "For even though they knew God (because he had made revelations to them of Scripture), they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks. But they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." God said, "If you won't believe the truth, I'll drop the curtain." And the blackout curtain will come down, and boy will you ever have a blackened mind then. You won't know anything. Satan will have a field day with you.

Romans 1:22-28: "Professing to be wise, they became fools." Do you know anybody like that in public life today? "And 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." They began worshiping the creation, and said, "That's our God:" "Therefore, God gave them over to the lusts of their hearts, to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them."

**You Become an Animal**

Once you get on human viewpoint wisdom, and once you deny yourselves the wisdom frame of reference of God, you become an animal. And when you're an animal, you treat your body the way animals treat their bodies. But because you're a human being, you'll treat your body even worse than an animal will, because you've got a mind that can figure out how to do things. An animal only works by instinct, but you can figure out how to be even more evil.

"For they exchanged the truth of God (divine viewpoint wisdom) for a lie (human viewpoint wisdom of Satan), and they worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen: For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions." There it is again – the same thing that we told you about a moment ago. Do you want to keep pushing against the authority of the Word of God? Do you want to keep violating what God says, "Do not do this, but do this?" God says, "Do not absent yourself from a church service (Hebrews 10:25)." Do not neglect the assembling of yourselves together." Every time it's open for the instruction of the Word of God, be there, and do not excuse yourself." And if you choose to excuse yourself, then be aware of the fact that you are inviting darkness into your soul.

Well, then, the best of you will deteriorate rapidly. The most sincere of you will deteriorate spiritually rapidly. And just remember that the time may come when you won't even be able to be here: "For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural (now speaking in sexual terms). And in the same way also, the men abandoned the natural function of the women, and burned in their desire toward one another – men with men, committing indecent acts, and receiving in their own persons a due penalty of their error."

In the Old Testament Scripture, homosexuality and lesbianism had upon it the stamp of death. God said, "Tis is a deadly cancer upon a human race. It will spread. It is horrendously destructive to the individual and to society." Therefore, under the theocracy, there was no discussion. It was a capital crime. And the person was executed. So, God said that he gave them the due penalty of their deliberate error, which was death.

Now, we do not live under a theocracy today, so we're not properly to apply the death penalty to this. But the death penalty still is applicable to it – only God applies it. God comes in with diseases, and He applies a death penalty, and there is no use in your getting all hot and bothered, in saying how terrible that is, and: "No, that shouldn't be. That's not a loving God." It is a just God. It is a righteous God. And these sexual sins described here are the result of what? They are the result of saying, "I don't want to mind filled with the wisdom that Paul talks about in Colossians 1:28. I want the wisdom of the world. That's what I love (like a Demas): fine." It's going to show up in your body. It's going to show up what you do with your sexual life. And you'll degenerate to being an animal. And you will violate the moral code of God, and there'll be upon it the penalty of death.

"And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper." This is the third time now, that we have seen God saying, "I'm giving you over." Are you beginning to have a little cold chill? If you push God far enough, and you go beyond the point of no return, even as a Christian, He'll step back and say, "Fine. Go to it." If you do not come to your senses, someday we will hear that your sudden and premature death. For God says that the ultimate end of that will be the sin unto death. That is because once you are no longer of value in the service of God, as a believer, you're out of this life. And while you are functioning; serving God; fulfilling your mission; and, recognizing that you are His steward, you are immortal. And you'll get the full 70 years, and maybe more.

Romans 1:29-32, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murders, strife, deceit, malice, they are gossips, slanders, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful, and although they know the ordinances of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." They pat you on the back for joining them in their vial lifestyle that spits in the face of God. All these terrible sins that are described here – what are they the result of? This is the way that people who function on human viewpoint live. They're the ones who are guilty of these kinds of sins. Why? Because they're animals. What do animals do to one another? They eat each other. They're ferocious, and they chase each other down, and they're destroyers.

Well, this is a list of things that show how human animals destroy each other. And then they complement each other when they do such things. They pat you on the back for being a piece of lowlife. What a testimony! What a condemnation!

So, Christians who persist in lying to themselves, and acting against the wisdom of God, eventually will find themselves suffering the consequence of being left out there, without God's hand to restrain them.

**Government**

Now, the non-literal interpretation of both the Bible, and of the United States Constitution, has created lies which now undermine our republic. Government leaders prostitute their honor, as men, by lying to defend what is evil; deceitful; and, what is indefensible conduct of others who are in authority. Corrupt political leaders who seek power will corrupt, in time, the whole nation, and that will lead to national decline and extinction. History is on our side. It testifies to the divine blessings of a people who obey the truth of the Word of God, and so walk in the light of doctrine (the light of God's wisdom). Such a nation was the United States.

History also testifies to the self-destruction of a nation which rejects the truth of God, and so walks in the darkness of human viewpoint. Please remember that there were ancient nations who, because of that memory that they still had, that Paul in Romans 1 says that they degenerated from – they had the knowledge of God. Ancient nations had a memory back in their culture, back in their experience of what is right, and they operated as right. They were not Christians, as we would think. They were not even people with the Bible. But they understood that there was a God. They usually got it wrong as to who that God was. But they understood from conscience that some things are right, and some things are wrong. But they needed something more than conscience to tell them exactly what was right and what was wrong.

**Ancient Rome**

Well, how about ancient Rome? Rome is very close to us. Our culture, in many ways, is a direct descendant of the Roman culture. And Rome is a great history lesson of what happens to a nation that begins operating on human viewpoint, which, in its past, for some reason, operated on God's ways, and then abandoned those. And the result is classic. History is filled with the corpses of dead nation, which once were powerful and prosperous. These nations had risen to great power and prosperity, while observing God's moral principles. But they collapsed when immorality became rampant. It happens every time. Satan controls all nations. We know that. And he makes a sophisticated, convincing case for human viewpoint sin, and its values, as if those were joy, and freedom, and peace. Satan controls nations, and he lies to them. The Word of God tells us, in the book of the Revelation, that this is one of the things for which Satan will be judged – because he deceived the nations.

**The Fall of Rome**

Now, from the fall of a morally decadent Roman empire to the Reformation was 1,000 years, which we refer to historically as the Dark Ages. Once Rome fell, in something like 435 A.D., finally the last gasp was out of Rome, and she was through, then followed a thousand years of gradual degeneration, because what arose in it instead was a combined degraded Christianity – a combined biblical Christianity and the pagan religion of Babylon, which was the religion of Rome. And the result was that for a thousand years, the devil was in charge. And the result was horrendous. The barbarians finally overran Rome, not because Rome's walls were too low, but because Rome herself had sunk to such degraded conduct morally.

When Rome came to a final low point morally, there was nothing in the nation that could hold back the barbarians that were knocking on the door. Sensual indulgence and sexual immorality undermined all sense of decency, and the national resistance went down with it. And the once disciplined Roman society was no more. Once they abandoned the principles of God, sexual immorality took place, and everybody then shrugged their shoulders, and it became a way of life.

What happened was that they lost their respect for absolute moral values, and thus, they lost their freedom. Morality is God's order for mankind, in order to counter the desires of the old sin nature and the influences of Satan. Remember that the principles of morality apply to you, whether you're a believer or an unbeliever – whether you're saved or unsaved. This is the way that God says that society has to function. Once the moral absolutes are rejected, then the mortar holding society together is gone. There's no personal integrity, and no one's word is trustworthy. Then the rats come out of their holes. They've been waiting for their opportunity. Now, the rats are tolerated in the society, and they begin gnawing away at the foundations of the civilization. Then there's nothing to stop them. And once God's moral laws are gone, there is nothing to hold the rats back.

The glory of ancient Rome was a great glory. Roman citizens enjoyed huge cities. They had magnificent buildings. They had paved streets, some of which exist till this day. They had plumbing. They had a victorious, powerful army. They invented a new weapon, because in those days, armies were hand-to-hand combat. And the old long sword, the Thracian sword, that they used to use swinging overhead, always exposed a soldier, at a certain point, to where he was openly vulnerable. And the Roman armament makers struck upon the brilliant idea: "Let's make a short, 18-inch sword, called the “machaira.” And when those guys give us that two-handed swing, we'll hold our shield, and we'll make the lunge. And all of a sudden, the Roman army was victorious everywhere with that single weapon advancement. And they had an army which was absolutely unstoppable. They had law on order. The apostle Paul could claim justice, as you know, when he said, "I'm a Roman citizen, and I'm that by birth, and you can't beat me. You cannot deny my civil rights. And you have to treat me with the respect of a Roman. You can't even crucify me when you want to kill me. If you should judge me to execute me, you have to behead me. You have to treat me with the dignity of a Roman citizen. And they had prosperity coming out of their ears.

Rome was supreme, and Rome was unconquerable. But in time, in came that moral decay of the wisdom of man. It became widespread. That resulted in Rome pursuing wars which it could not win, and didn't try. It resulted in enormous taxation, because there was now mounting crime to deal with. There were race riots. There were internal conspiracies. Emperors were being killed, and the army would put somebody else in his place. There were political assassinations. There was a huge welfare program that finally developed, such that people who made mistakes in life demanded that the government help pay for their mistakes, and carry them through the consequences of what they had done. And there was creeping inflation, and just general apathy: "We don't care."

**Rome's Moral Breakdown**

Now, there were certain very clear (in probably five basic areas) in which the moral breakdown, which destroyed the marvelous Roman nation, was to be found. Edward Gibbon, an English historian, has written the definitive book called The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. And he has very effectively put together the principles that finally broke down the invincible Rome.

**Family Breakdown**

Number one was family breakdown. And I mean number one. When this happened, everything was on its way down – the breakdown of the family unit. In Rome, this was ultimately the unit of all influence in Roman society. It was the source of the moral fiber which produced Romans who were capable of dominating the world. And they were capable of controlling it. What is under attack in the United States above all else? The family. This is number one. The result in the Roman Empire was that, when the family was attacked, along came divorce. This became an acceptable option, and thus, a widespread evil practice.

The thing that is interesting is that, in the early part of Roman history, divorce was unknown, and it was frowned upon. It was looked down upon. It was considered just absolutely unthinkable. The Romans said, "Yes, you made a stupid marriage. But you will deal with it. And you'll live with the consequences, but you'll not break the family." The family was a sacred trust.

Now, the Jews were brought to task by God for the same reason. In Malachi 2:11-16, here is the last book of the Bible, and God said this to the Jews: "I want to tell you why I'm going to bring you down as a nation: because you violated the family unit. That's why." And once you start on the road to immorality, you violate marriage; you violate the sexual integrity; you violate the care of children; you violate the role of husband; and, you violate the role of wife. Everything goes down the tube once you start breaking down the family unit. And without a family unit, a society cannot stand.

So God said, "Before I close this book and finish the Old Testament, I want you to know that it all comes back to your family. If you hadn't done what you have done to your families, there'd be hope for you. But now this nation is doomed. I'm going to fulfill my covenant with Abraham, and I will, in the future, fulfill all My promises absolutely. But you're going to go through a lot of misery for a lot of centuries before that happens."

Malachi 2:11: "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god." First of all, God told Israel, "There are some women you should not marry." You should not marry some women as a Christian. You should not marry people, if you're a Christian, who is not a Christian. You should not marry a man or a woman who is beneath you spiritually, and who is not up to your spiritual caliber. You'll never bring him up to it, and it'll be a misery, and you'll have a divorce for sure. You can count on it. That's the world's way.

Now, one of the things that God says is that you must never marry outside of the Jewish family group. You don't go outside and marry one of these women who is not a Jewish, unless she has become a proselyte, and has come over, as Ruth did, into the Jewish commonwealth of God, and has accepted God and the authority of the God of Israel. But they were marrying these cuties who were outside the Jewish realm.

Malachi 2:12: "As for the man who does this, may the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob, everyone who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the Lord of hosts." He said, "No matter what your family does, I'm cutting you off from divine blessing.

Malachi 2:13: "And this is another thing you do. You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts a favor from your hand." God says, "Here you are whining to Me. You're carrying on because I'm not blessing you. And I don't care about your offerings, and I'm not receiving them. And here you're pouring out your tears and self-pity, but I told you not to do this. I told you not to destroy the family, because if you did it, it's going to destroy your nation. Rome knew that originally. And then it began violating the family, and Rome was on the course of destruction.

Malachi 2:14: "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness to you and the wife of your youth, against Whom you have dealt treacherously. Though she is your companion and your wife by covenant – by covenant of Israel, and by your marriage covenant. This is the wife of your youth. She was the Jewish lady, but now you've gotten acquainted with these cute girls over here in the world system, in these pagan nations, and you have divorced your wife, and you have taken to your heart this pagan woman. And in the process of doing that, you've destroyed the family."

Malachi 2:15: "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit." Those who are in touch with spiritualities – they don't do that kind of thing: "And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heeded then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherous against the wife of your youth." You want to raise up a posterity. And yet, you are dealing treacherous with the wife of your youth, that you have made a covenant with – this one who is to be the source of that posterity.

They became animals. They just married, willy-nilly, whoever came along. They put themselves in positions where they would marry the pagans for one reason or another. And they would do so by divorcing the Jewish wife of their youth, and fracturing that family unit.

So, God says to them, in Malachi 2:16. What a dramatic statement! "'For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with wrong,' says the Lord of hosts, 'so take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously." He covers his garment with wrong, excusing himself that, in his case, something is different; or, in her case, it's different – that divorce can be entered into in order to make another union that is more pleasing.

Divorce was extremely rare in early Rome, but it came to epidemic proportions by the end of the first centuries. Before that, Romans married for life. Did they have problems? You betcha. And yet, history shows us that the Romans said, "We'll work this out. And if we can't work it out, we'll do the best we can with it. We'll give each other some space, and we will live with civility. And all they had were their pagan gods, but they knew that they were going to carry through with their problems. But the one thing they were not going to do was what they knew was wrong – breaking up that family unit.

So, divorce and remarriage then became so extensive in the Roman society that marriage was viewed as merely a system of legalized adultery. We have that in the United States virtually today, because one out of every three marriages now ends in divorce. It is plain legalized adultery. The people in the upper classes of Roman society outright rejected marriage. And they detach sex completely from marriage. They didn't abandon the sex, but now it was no longer within the confines of the order of God within marriage. They became animals. Barnyard sexual morality is what developed. They didn't know God. And, as many Christians today who devolved to this same thing, they don't know God. They don't know marital love in a godly fashion. All they know is what some barnyard animal knows about sex. And that's where they had degenerated. That is self-destructive to the family. That violates the divine institution of the family.

Now, I must read to you 1 Corinthians 6:13-20. The apostle Paul is dealing with some serious, sexual, moral problems that had taken place in Corinth: "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food. But God will do away with both of them. Yet, the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord. And the Lord is for the body." People in Corinth were saying, "When my stomach wants something, I feed it. That's what I should do. My needs are to be met." And so when they said, "We have desire for sexual activity, it's a desire, and we should meet it." But Paul says, "No, Christians. Now, you have to change that. Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food, but God is going to get rid of all that. It's only to keep your body alive now, but your body is immortal. It will last forever. It'll be raised again. But it's for the Lord's purposes.

"Now, God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." We will be resurrected. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" You're part of the body of Christ in the church age: "Shall I then take away the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? Oh, may it never be. Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her?" Now, that doesn't mean he's married to her. "One body with her" simply means that he's entering into a marriage relationship – something that is related only to a marriage relationship: "For he says, 'The two shall become one flesh.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one Spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Don't put yourself in the place of temptation. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

This is another excuse they were giving: "Oh, my sins are all outside my body." Paul says, "No. Sexual immorality hurts you physically. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and that you're not your own. For you have been brought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." But the upper classes of Rome said, "We don't want anything more to do with marriage."

Notice 1 Corinthians 7:1-5: "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman." This Scripture, "not to touch a woman," refers to sexual relations.

Our time has rapidly gone, but I will point you to Genesis 20, to give you a frame of reference for this. In Genesis 20:6, Abraham has gone out into the Negev, and he's sojourning in Gerar. And the territory is under King Abimelech. And he's afraid that King Abimelech is going to take Sarah, his wife, into the harem. So, he says to Sarah, "Tell him you're my sister. If you tell him that you're my wife, he'll kill me." So, the result is that, sure enough, Abimelech takes Sarah into the harem, and God comes to him, and calls his attention to what he has done. And the result is that Abimelech is indignant about the fact that Abraham lied to him.

Well, Abraham says, "Well, I didn't lie to you. She is my half-sister (and she was). Have you heard that kind of talk recently? "She's my half-sister. It's not really a lie." So, Abimelech is horrified by this, because he has a great respect for the God of Abraham.

In Genesis 20:6, Abimelech was pleading with God: "Are you going to hold my whole nation blamed for this. I didn't know this. He deceived me." Genesis 20:6: "Then God said to him in the dream, 'Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart, you have done this. And I also kept you from sinning against Me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her." There you have that same phrase: "I did not let you enter into a sexual relationship with Sarah. I kept you from doing that. I knew that you were the innocent party here." So, it goes on that God forgives Abimelech, and heals that particular breach that had been brought on by Abraham's conniving.

Also Proverbs 6:29 illuminates that word: "So is the one who goes into his neighbor's wife. Whoever touches her will not go unpunished." Here it is describing violations of the moral code. Here again, "touching" is a matter of "sexual relations."

Now, the high classes of Rome simply abandoned all orderly fashion of sexual relations within marriage, and went about it as if they were just barnyard animals.

Now, this even gets worse. The destruction of the family that brought Rome down gets even worse, and we shall walk you through that next time.

Father, we want to thank You that the Word of God gives us Your wisdom, so that we do not have to live like fools. We are capable of knowing that there is a God, and You have not been silent. You have spoken to us in Scripture. Thank You so much for the orientation and the wisdom which we have received this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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