

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part III: The Condemnation And Salvation Of Pagans"
(Romans 1:18-32; 3:21-26)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) One of the troubling questions that arises about our Christian faith is this: "If the Christian's Savior, Jesus Christ, said, according to John 14:6 that no one could have eternal life except through Himself, how can the Christian's God be just and loving while condemning to hell the many who have never even heard of Christ?"

(2) This question takes on heart-rending dimensions when we consider an illustration I once read in an evangelist tract: the tract reported that if you drove in a car at 25 miles per hour past a human line of people standing six people abreast, you would never stop driving past the number of people who are passing into eternity without faith in Christ who come from the nation of India *alone!*

Since this illustration pictures just a single nation, not to mention the many around the world who die every second without faith in Christ, that can be troubling illustration if we **wonder** about the "many who haven't even **heard** about Christ!"

Well, HOW can the Christian God be a truly LOVING God if one must believe in Christ to escape Hell while so many people on earth never HEAR that saving Gospel?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "A hard question I face is: How can the Christian God of LOVE send the Biblically ignorant and especially Third World pagans to Hell when such do not have the Bible's salvation truths at their disposal that many of us in more developed nations have?"

- I. **The Apostle Paul wrote of PAGANS in Romans 1:23b,c, noting how they had come to worship man-crafted images of animal life.**
- II. **Yet, even such PAGANS are WITHOUT EXCUSE for such cultic behavior because of God's revelation to them, Romans 1:18-23a:**
 - A. Paganism is the long-term *result* of man's **rejecting** the Creator he fully **realizes** exists from what he easily can observe from **creation**:
 1. God's wrath is directed against sin in even pagans, 1:18a,b, 23b.
 2. This attitude of God's arises from pagan man's "suppression" of God's truth about Himself revealed in His workmanship of the universe's created order, Romans 1:18c-20a,b NIV.
 - B. Further, pagan man has set his heart **against** the Bible's Creator to shut out an awareness of Him in his mind, Rom. 1:21-22 with 23b.
 - C. Since the human mind tends to worship a god, but pagan man has rejected the Bible's Creator, the pagan has **replaced** the Creator with gods set up of what God has created, entering idolatry, 1:23c. This has added to God's wrath against the pagan man, Romans 1:18a, 21a.
 - D. Accordingly, even the **Third World pagan** is without excuse for his rejection of the Creator God of the Bible, and for God's righteous anger against his sinful rebellion against God, Romans 1:20c.
- III. **Hence, GOD judges the PAGAN akin to how the PAGAN has misused NATURE: God has released restraints so pagan man will MISUSE HIMSELF as he has MISUSED NATURE, 1:23, 24-32.**
 - A. Pagan man's rebellion against God results in his worship of what God has created rather than "reading" what is created as the **workmanship** of the **Creator GOD** and worshipping that true Creator, Rom. 1:23.
 - B. Fitting to this **misuse of nature**, **GOD** in turn has removed moral restraints on rebellious pagans so they will **misuse their own created bodies** in **UNNATURAL** ways, Romans 1:24-32:
 1. God has responded to pagan man's idolatrous misuse of His creatures by removing restraints on such a man's behavior, 1:24a.
 2. This has led to pagan man's dishonoring his own created body like he misuses other creatures around him in idolatry, Rom. 1:24b-27:
 - a. Thus, God has released pagan women to explore their lusts to the extent of immersing in lesbian acts and relations, Rom. 1:26.
 - b. God has released pagan men to explore their lusts to the extent of immersing in homosexual acts and relationships, Rom. 1:27.
 3. Since pagan man has not wanted to retain God in his thoughts, God has given him over to think and to do what is so depraved that he **himself** must **face** the wretchedness of his condition, Rom. 1:28ff:
 - a. Pagan man has been released by God to explore every kind of wickedness, be it evil, greed or depraved activities, 1:28-29a.
 - b. This has led to all sorts and degrees of crime, Romans 1:29b-31.
 - c. In fact, so depraved has pagan man become that he vicariously approves of such wicked deeds in others in full awareness of the fact that doing them **deserves death**, Romans 1:32.

IV. **Yet, for the pagan, God GRACIOUSLY reveals and supplies salvation from sin and Hell by faith in Christ's work on the cross:**

- A. God has arranged history to cause a thirst in pagans so they will seek Him and He can give them the Gospel, Acts 17:24-30; 2 Peter 3:9.
- B. Accordingly, God saves pagan men when they believe that Gospel of faith in Christ's death in their place on the cross, Romans 3:21-26.

Application: (1) As the BIBLE teaches the ROLE of the created universe to be to exalt GOD since it is HIS WORKMANSHIP the universe reveals, worshipping what is CREATED is paganism, and that brings God's WRATH. (2) To expose his sin even to the PAGAN, God GRACIOUSLY releases moral restraints so that one's own debauchery becomes evident even to HIMSELF, making the pagan man face his guilt, Rom. 1:32. (3) Thus, he is responsible to repent, and GOD will graciously get him the Gospel of Christ so he might believe for salvation, Acts 17:24-30 and 2 Peter 3:9 with John 3:16. (4) If the pagan man believes in Christ, God pronounces him righteous just like any one else who believes anywhere on the earth!

Lesson: (1) A pagan is ANYONE living ANYWHERE in the WORLD who has REJECTED God's revelation of Himself in Creation to the extent that he has MISUSED that revelation to worship a false god(s) (an idol or materialism, etc.). (2) Thus, God has removed restraints so that such a man's depravity becomes evident even to himself. (3) Like anyone else, the pagan will be saved if he seeks after the Creator who will supply Him the Gospel to be saved by faith in Christ, Acts 17:24-30; 2 Peter 3:9.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) The Creation Ex Nihilo magazine published by Answers In Genesis supplies the following report in its March-May, 2000 issue, p. 7. It is taken from a story in the Religion Today Archives and News Summary web site of November 2, 1999. It tells of a study of small children which was headed up by an Oxford University psychologist:

"Psychologists have been surprised to find that children believe in a creator God regardless of whether they are exposed to religious faith. They reported that children in Britain and Japan gave similar answers when asked who created various natural objects. The children had abstract notions of a Creator despite not having been influenced by concepts of God from organized religions.

As the Oxford University psychologist leading the study reports, her **Japanese** research assistants were surprised at the children's responses, given that We **Japanese** don't think about God as **creator** -- it's just **NOT** part of **Japanese** philosophy."

This study exposes the Creator-awareness of God that ALL men on earth inexcusably have as revealed in Romans 1:18-20!

(2) As a child of missionary parents to Nigeria, I personally knew Raymond Davis, a one-time General Director of SIM International who wrote the book, Fire on the Mountains (Cedar Grove, New Jersey: SIM International Publications).

(a) On pages 240-241, Mr. Davis reported around the turn of the 20th century, before the coming of the missionaries, an Ethiopian pagan claimed to have a revelation from "the God who created the heavens and the earth." He taught that people should stop worshipping Satan and pray to the true Creator. They were to pray especially on Sunday. Asa taught a code of laws that closely resembled the Bible's Ten Commandments. All of this came from a man without a knowledge of the Christian Scriptures or beliefs.

(b) Mr. Davis reported on pages 3, 54 and 59-61 of an Ethiopian **witch doctor**, Cheleke, who predicted in the 1920s, a decade before the Evangelical missionaries came, that men would fly "in the heavens and the mountains would shake" (predicting Mussolini's invasion and bombing of Ethiopia in World War II). Then, a messenger would come with a Golden (the evangelistic Wordless) Book, that a big house would be built in every village and "Whoever entered the house would save his soul."

However, though Cheleke lived to hear the Christian Gospel from a "Wordless Book", he rejected it. After Cheleke's death, Mr. Davis reported this pagan witch doctor's own house that once had been used for Satan was converted into a church. It became a house, in Cheleke's prediction, "where men entered and found salvation."

God has given ALL men EVERYWHERE adequate insight in regards to the Creator -- it is that Creator God's business to get those open to the truth they already know about the Creator the Gospel of Christ for salvation so that they can be saved, Acts 17:24-30! ALL men are without excuse -- and that includes US!