

Romans: Lifting the Lid on Hell

By James Boice

Speaker 1:

Biola don't let me insult your intelligence. This is in your handout, but I'd like to read this to you. Since 1968, Dr. Boice has been the pastor of Philadelphia's historic 10th Presbyterian Church, has been the teacher on the Bible Study, our international radio broadcast since 1969. The editor of Eternity Magazine since 1985. Dr. Boyce has also served as chairman on the International Council on Biblical Inheritance for ten years. A prolific author, Dr. Boice has contributed nearly 40 books on a variety of Bible books and Bible related themes. He has journeyed to more than 30 countries carrying his extensive teaching ministries. Won't you please welcome Dr. James Boice?

James Boice:

Thank you. I'm glad to be here and to take part again in a Torrey week. I was trying to figure out the number of times I have been here. I think Ron said three times, and that is probably right. This is my third time to Biola, although I was here once at Talbot some years ago. As a matter of fact, I think my first visit to this campus area was to Talbot and I've enjoyed all of those visits, found them profitable and also the interaction with the students. Now we don't have a great deal of time this morning. We're going to try and finish here in about 45 or 50 minutes, probably 45 minutes, and I have a lot to cover. We're going to look at three key chapters in the Book of Romans, as you can probably tell from the titles. I think of the three titles. The one for this morning is the best, Lifting the Lid on Hell. And as we proceed with our study of Romans 1, which is what that is based on, I think you'll find why I've chosen that title.

I find this chapter to be a magnificent insight into our culture, and I regard it as essential for Christians who have any serious intention of impacting our culture today to understand this because it's God's own analysis of the kind of world we're up against in our task of bringing the gospel to people who are perishing. Now I'd like to read it, so we have it in front of our minds as we begin, and then I'm going to pray and then we'll start in. I'm going to begin with verse 18, passing over the introductory section not because it's not important but because we have limited time and I want to get to the heart of this important section. Verse 18. I'm reading from the New International Version.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- His eternal power and His divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lust. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men who also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful.

They invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents. They are senseless faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them. Now let's pray. Our Father, we're told in your Word that it is not possible for us by ourselves to understand spiritual things. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. And for that we need the ministry of your Holy Spirit, not just in the church in a general way, and not only in the inspiration of the Bible, important as that has been, but in carrying that word home to our own hearts and minds.

We ask for spiritual illumination and understanding, and perhaps equally important, maybe even more so, the determination to apply these things to ourselves in a life transforming way, so that the result of spending time together and spending time here studying your Word might not only be the enlightening of our intellects, but actually the redirecting of our lives. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. I don't want to say a great deal of introduction about Romans because you've

probably heard a great deal about that yourself. Let me ask a question. Do you have a course in Romans here? Do people actually are taught Romans? Do you ever get that? Is it part? How many have studied the Book of Romans? Quite a few. All right.

Romans, let me begin this way. I'm convinced that nothing is going to save America, but a revival. That we're on a rapid moral and certainly spiritual decline. A spiritual coming before the moral and the only thing that ever has turned a nation around has been a revival. And I'm convinced furthermore, second point that it is only the teachings of the book of Romans, the very heart of the gospel that are going to do that. That doesn't necessarily mean that a revival will come by an exposition of Romans, but it's these great truths, if any, that are going to redirect our lives and our land. Frederick Godet was one of the great commentators on Romans, and at the very beginning of his commentary, he said this, "every great spiritual revival in the church will be connected as effect and cause with a deeper understanding of this book."

So that's why I'm working on that. And these days we have together. And that's why I commend a study of this book to you. I'm even doing that at home at 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, where I'm the pastor, have been now for 20 years. We're going slowly through this book. I've been at it for two years. We're up to chapter five, and we're taking our time because these things are worth understanding and they're certainly worth mastering. Now I'm beginning with verse 18. I want to go the whole way through this portion, beginning with that verse and going to the end of the chapter to analyze what is really wrong with our society.

This begins, as you know, with the declaration of the wrath of God, saying that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of the race. It's a strange place to begin. It's not where we would begin. We live in a day where we're told that you have to approach people in terms of their felt needs, and nobody has a felt need to be told they're under the wrath of God. And furthermore, even when we read this, if we come to verses 16 and 17 that immediately precede it, where Paul announces the theme of the book, that is the good news of the gospel, a power of God into salvation, we would expect him at that point to begin to talk about the good news. Instead of that, we find him talking about wrath. And that's the kind of thing which, if you're sensitive at all to what you read, raises a question in your mind and you say, Well, then why does he begin at that point?

Obviously, the reason is that we can't understand the good news until we understand the bad news. You have to know how desperate the situation is before you can begin to understand the love and the grace of God. Now, wrath is an unpopular idea today. When we talk about it in a secular context, it's hard for people even to take it seriously. They say, Come on, you've got to be kidding. The wrath of God? That's an outmoded idea. I mean, you can talk about the love of God. You can talk about the mercy of God. You can talk about the grace of God, assuming there even is a God. But to talk about the wrath of God, that's just about the craziest thing imaginable. Doesn't help to explain, which, although it is true that in the Old Testament there are at least 20 different words that are used for wrath in order to capture the fullness of the idea.

It doesn't help to explain that in the New Testament there are two major words for wrath, thumos and orge. Thumos, explaining an outpouring of the wrath of God. Orge a sudden building up of

the wrath of God because people really don't believe in wrath. What we have to do is what I believe Paul does. That is he looks at the culture. He analyzes it in terms of what's there which any person who has any openness of mind can see. And he says to them, look, the very fact that your lives are the way they are and your culture is experiencing the kind of thing it is should be proof to you that the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against your unwickedness.

In other words, this is an argument. *Od hominem*. It means to start where the man himself is. He doesn't begin with any presupposition of God's revelation of himself in Scripture. He doesn't begin with any presupposition of the truth of the Christian gospel. He simply says, look at your culture. You've been living for yourselves in a secular way all these years. You have centuries of that kind of approach behind you. Has it made you happy? Is your culture successful? Are you going on in joy or are in things in such a mess that the only thing that could possibly explain it is the wrath of God? Now that's the way we need to approach our culture today.

He explains, first of all, why the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against men and women. And it has to do with three things. If you look at verses 18 through 20, you find the three key ideas. They are number one, the wrath of God, which you find first. Number two, the suppression of the truth, which you find at the end of the same verse and number three in the next two verses, the statement that God has revealed himself to men and women in nature. Now this isn't talking about the Christian revelation. This is not talking about God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ or in the Scriptures. This is simply talking about God's revelation of himself in nature. Verse 20 explains it.

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities that is, number one, his eternal power, and number two, his divine nature have been clearly seen. Now that's the order Paul presents these. First of all, the wrath. Secondly, the suppression of the truth. And third, the natural revelation. But in order to understand how wrath comes, you have to take it in the inverse order. First of all, the natural revelation, followed by the suppression of the truth of that revelation by men and women because of their wickedness, and number three, the revelation of the wrath of God upon them because of that suppression of the truth. You see, the importance of the natural revelation is this. It doesn't require any special intervention of God, either in history or by the person of the Holy Spirit to make it clear to men and women.

God is saying here through the Apostle Paul, I have spread evidence of my existence and my power throughout creation so thoroughly and so clearly that anyone who is in their right mind can see it. The point of the passage, of course, is that when women deny that they are not in their right mind and we get to the very end of Romans 1, we're going to find a very clear statement of the fact that they are actually out of their mind, which means to say, spiritually speaking, they are insane. Now, you see, this doesn't mean that God has revealed himself in nature in such a way that the most brilliant scientist, by carefully exploring the intricacies of the created order, can discover at the end of a long process of investigation and deduction that somewhere there must be a divine power.

That, of course, is where that kind of investigation should lead. But that's not what the text is saying. The text is saying God has spread the evidence for his existence throughout nature and everywhere and anywhere. So if you look at a star, you should be able to deduce that there's a

God behind it. If you look at a snowflake, you should be able to deduce that some God of order has made the snowflake. If you look at your fingerprint, different from every other fingerprint, you ought to be able to say, there's a God somewhere who is responsible for these things. Now that in itself is not a saving revelation. Nobody is saved by the revelation of God in nature, but the revelation of God in nature is such that as I said before, if anyone was in their right mind, they would say to themselves, yes, there is a God. If there is a God, I am the creation of this God, and therefore it's my duty as a creation of this God to seek that true God out and honor him for my existence.

But in point of fact, Paul says nobody does that. On the contrary, they do exactly the opposite. They suppress these truths about God because they really do not want to know them. You want to understand human nature. I suppose that is the greatest of all insights to recognize that men and women in spiritual things are not honest and open as they like to pretend they are, not seeking out the truth of God wherever he may be found, working as hard as they can for spiritual perception. Actually, the opposite is the case. They're doing everything they can, including the creation of false religions to suppress the knowledge of the true God, which is really there. And if you say to yourself, Well, why do they do that?

The answer is the true God makes demands upon us that we do not want to acknowledge or submit to. You see, if God is anything, God is sovereign and a sovereign God is sovereign over me. That means you see that if there is a God, and if I come to that God honestly, then that God is the one who's going to tell me what to do rather than me tell him what to do. And we don't want that. We're glad to have a God that's made in our image. A God we can boss around, a God

we can call in to help us when we want. So when we're off doing something we want to do, whether or not it's according to His will, and we get into trouble, we ought to be able to turn to him and say, God help me out. God like that is fine. Nobody have any trouble with a God like that. But a God like that isn't God. God like that is my servant.

And I'm really God. See a God that is really God is a sovereign God, and that means it is his will that's going to be done. And it's his will for my life that I must come to. And because I don't want to do that because I want to be God in my own life, I repress that matter about him. I don't want to acknowledge His sovereignty. The same thing is true for any other attribute of God you can think of. If you think of His Holiness, we try to suppress the knowledge of God for that reason as well. Because after all, if God is Holy, that it means God has a standard of righteousness to which I, the creature must come to. But I don't want to do that. I want to make up my own standards. There's something I want to do. I want to be able to say what I want to do is right. And so I made that my standard. And I don't want any God who gets in the way.

Same thing is true of omniscience. The fact that God knows everything. I don't mind a God that knows everything about you. Somebody ought to expose what you're like. The problem is, you see, that God also knows about me. If God's omniscient and I don't even want to acknowledge to myself what I'm like. Let alone to you. And I certainly don't want to have what I'm really like known to Almighty God. Or have to face up to the fact that all of that, all of what I am, all the hidden secret thoughts of my mind are going to be exposed at the final judgment. You see, God like that is so threatening to me, so terrifying to me. That what I really want to do as a natural

man, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, is suppress that truth, run from it and do anything I can to escape its implications.

And so what I do, according to what Paul writes, is suppress the truth. I know better is what he's saying. But nevertheless, I run away. Now that is our world. Our world knows better, doesn't know the gospel. It's not converted. Holy Spirit is not necessarily at work in the lives of the masses out there in general, but on the basis of the natural revelation, the world knows what it's doing. So it's not just open and honest. It is actually hostile that the God who reveals in strength, self, and Scripture and whom we profess. Now the second thing, Paul says, having analyzed what the world is like and what it does and why the wrath of God has come upon it is to explain what effect this has on the individual. And I think to understand that we have to know something about psychology.

Psychologist in our day will talk about a certain sequence in personal experience that frequently goes like this. Somebody at some stage in their childhood experiences, something that is so upsetting, so shocking, so disruptive of his or her world that they can't really face it. The psychologists speak of that as a trauma. And then because they can't face it, they bury it in their subconscious, refusing to acknowledge that it's happened or that it's really there. And the psychologists and psychiatrists speak of this as repression. And then because the thing really is not eliminated but merely buried in our subconscious, what happens, inevitably is that something comes into our lives to betray the existence of the thing with which we haven't dealt.

And the psychiatrists call that substitution. So you got a three-stage process, trauma, repression and substitution. Now that trauma might be any one of a number of things. Suppose a man is having difficulty in his work and decides that he can't figure out what's wrong himself, so he's going to go see a psychologist and find out if the doctor can help him. He says, Doctor, I'm having difficulty working. I don't know what's wrong. I seem to be doing pretty well in my work, but suddenly I find I can't concentrate, my mind's always distracted. I don't even know what I'm thinking about. And besides that, I'm nervous all the time. I wonder if you can help me.

So the doctor begins to work on it, and he begins to analyze it and has the person talk about himself or herself. Now, the person begins to talk. And suppose the doctor notices that as this person is telling about his childhood, every time he mentions his mother, he has a strange little physical reaction, his shoulder twitches just a little bit like that. The first time it happens, the doctor doesn't pay a great deal of attention to it, but the second time this man mentions his mother, his shoulder twitches again. And the doctor, who is trained to be alert to nonverbal as well as verbal forms of communication, stops and says, I just wonder, You mentioned your mother a moment ago. Could you tell me in your past in your childhood, did you have a good relationship with your mother? And the man is surprised that the doctor would ask him such a thing? He says, Well, my mother, of course, I have a very good relationship with my mother.

And the doctor knows that there's something wrong. So he probes a little bit. And says, Did you ever go through a bad experience? Was there ever anything traumatic in your life that involved your mother? And the man has so suppressed this that he's not even aware that it's there. But as the doctor probes, drawing out of the man's memory, things that happen in his childhood,

eventually he gets to the root of the problem. Something has happened there, which was so traumatic for this man as a child that he suppressed the truth, and now, years later, the substitutionary device is coming in to betray the existence of the problem.

Now, that is very similar to what Paul is saying in this next paragraph of Romans 1. You see we were created in the image of God, and our duty, as well as our privilege is to honor and worship Him. But we refuse to do that. We sinned in Adam and we've gone our own way individually. And as a result of that, we are on a course in which we are trying to suppress the reality of this great cosmic trauma. We are made to be in harmony with God, but we're not in harmony with God. Our culture is not in harmony with God. It's our fault. Actually, we are under the wrath of God. And as the result of that, a process of substitution has come in. You see, it's not just like this that we could say to God, God, we just don't want you anymore. Goodbye. That's the end of it. It doesn't work that way.

That is such a traumatic rupture in our makeup, the makeup each of us individually in our culture that we can't quite deal with it. So we suppress what we've done. And instead of that, we find what? Verse 22, although they claim to be wise, they became fools, and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Put in very simple language. It means because we can't face the truth of what we've done, we have become what? Religious. And that's the explanation of the universality of religion on the planet. It is not just a case of men and women seeking after God, as if we're doing everything in our power to find the true God.

Actually, the existence of religion all over the planet is proof of the fact that we are running away from God and we are using religion as a substitutionary device. Now, in verse 24, Paul begins to explain how this has affected our culture. He's talked about the initial problem, the repression of the truth. He's talked about this matter of substitution, the first effect, and now in verse 24 and following, he talks about the culture, which is primarily why I'm studying this. Now, if you studied Romans, as many of you say, you have, you're aware, I'm sure that in this section of the first chapter there is a downhill path described, and it's marked out in a graphic way by a repetition of words. In verses 24, 26, and 28. In the Old King James version, it was clearer. In the New International Version, there is a variety of translation, but in the NIV, that same idea is captured by the fact that it's divided into paragraphs.

So verse 24 and following is a paragraph. Verse 26 and following is a paragraph. And then verse 28 and following as a paragraph. The old one said, Therefore God gave them up. This version says, Therefore God gave them over because of this, God gave them over, and Furthermore, he gave them over. Now what's that describing? Well, first of all, it's obviously describing a downhill course, and it's something that's taught elsewhere in the Bible. You recall in the Old Testament in the book of Hosea that when Hosea's wife Gomer ran away from him, she entered upon a downhill course. One year when she had run away from her husband Gomer to run off with another man, she was living with a man who, as she thought, would take care of her very nicely. He had lots of money and he was good-looking and she could have a fast life.

But there wasn't any true love there. And so the year following that, when that man got tired of her, she was living with somebody else who didn't have quite so much money, wasn't quite so

good-looking and couldn't take care of her quite so well. And after that she was somebody else and then was somebody else. And at each stage she went downhill until eventually, we find in the second chapter and into the third chapter, she was living with somebody who wasn't even able to take care of her at all. She was hungry and she didn't have enough clothes to wear. Now the reason that is portrayed in such a graphic way in Hosea is that as the book itself indicates at the beginning, this is a picture of all of us when we run away from God.

When we run away from God, we say, Well, the reason we're running away from God is we don't like what God is going to require of us. We don't want to be tied down to all that religious stuff and all that biblical morality. There's no fun in that. We want to go out and enjoy ourselves. We want really to realize our full potential. We want to move up and up and up. But what happens, of course, is exactly the opposite. When we run away from God, we don't move up and up. Rather, we go down and down until finally, by the grace of God, some of us find out what we're doing and turn from it, finding salvation in Jesus Christ. Now that's exactly the pattern we have here in Romans. You see, you've had men and women rejecting the knowledge of God, substituting artificial gods or religious movements for the true gods, letting that take his place.

And we read, therefore, in verse 24, God abandoned the race to that course. God gave them over, first of all, to sinful desires to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. Now what's that talking about? What that really is talking about is just immorality in general and sexual immorality, because that is the most visible evidence of it. It's what we call in our day, the new hedonism. We say to ourselves, Well, I want to be free. I want to be able to do anything I want. If I want to live with somebody, not married to them, that's fine, I ought to be able to fulfill

myself that way. But look here's what it says. Verse 25. By doing this, they exchanged there's that word again. You see, you get in a bad course when you're getting rid of the truth of God, you always get something else.

And here in verse 25, it explains what happens. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and they worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. I noticed a number of years ago that CBS ran a special on the swinging singles lifestyle out in Southern California, I think probably the Newport Beach area. I'm not sure exactly where these interviews came from, but it was somewhere out here in this area, and it was fascinating because what they were doing was interviewing women, particularly who had been in this single's life, sleeping around and doing whatever they chose, thinking that they were going to fulfill themselves and be free. And they asked these women, what has been the result of that? What do you think of it? How do you assess this swinging singles movement?

And the fascinating thing. This is not a religious program. Now this is on secular television. The fascinating thing is that these women said one after the other, something like this. They said, Listen, all these guys want to do is to get into bed with you. And I've been that route, and I've had enough of that for a lifetime. Fascinating, isn't it? What they were saying was the truth of Romans 1:25, that they had exchanged the truth of God for a lie and having lived a lie, they began to discover what they had done, and they didn't want to have anything to do with that anymore. What I want to suggest is that in your evangelism in a very secular culture that's the point at which you have to begin. The fact that men and women are living the lie and perhaps are beginning to see that it's a lie and look for something else.

And at that point, you can bring in the Bible's explanation of it and the salvation which God provides in Christ. Now, number two, first is talking about sexual perversions, impurity. Now it begins to talk about homosexuality and lesbian conduct. Even their women exchange natural relations for unnatural ones and so forth. It calls it shameful lust. Now there's a difference between verses 25 and 26 on the one hand, and verses 26 and 27 on the other. And it makes this second evidence of God abandoning men and women to their own devices worse. You see, the first is sinful, and that's clear enough. The second is also sinful. But in addition to being sinful, it is shameful. The first is sinful, but it's natural. The second, in addition to being sinful, is unnatural. That's the difference.

Now, I sometimes say, since the first is talking about fornication. Sexual relations outside of marriage and adultery and faithfulness in marriage, I sometimes say that humanly speaking, nothing is more natural than that. Anyone who thinks that it's perfectly natural to remain with one man or one woman in a married relationship all one's life and never be restless is fooling themselves. It's not natural to us. Our hearts naturally long for change and difference and experimentation. And all of that. And adultery and fornication are natural things for fallen human beings like ourselves. But you see, when it's talking about homosexuality here and lesbianism, what this is saying is that it is not natural.

Now, how do we know the first is wrong? Well, the reason we know the first is wrong if it's natural to us, but is nevertheless wrong is only because God reveals that it's wrong. That's why we need Scripture. But in the second case, we don't even need the Bible to tell us that it's wrong. It's just obviously wrong because it's unnatural. The mere physical parts of the human body are

not made to function that way. Anybody in their right mind ought to be able to see that. But nevertheless, you see, in this downhill course that men and women launch themselves on because they reject God. That is the inevitable outcome. At this point. I really like the translation of the New International Version better because the King James used to say God gave them up, and this says God gives them over.

Now the idea is the same. When the King James translator said, God gave them up, he always meant that God gave them up to something. But when we read that today, it just sounds as if God was holding them in his hand, and he just sort of gave up on them. And there they are. They kind of floated away as if they were in a gravity-free environment. But it's not that way. When God gives something up, he gives it up to the laws of spiritual decline. His own spiritual laws, the laws of his universe. And like gravity, that will always pull you down. And that's why you see, I think this other version is better. They said, they don't want God. God said, all right, don't have me just live in my world, that's all.

And so they begin to be pulled down by the laws of spiritual gravity affecting their sin. And they first get into sexual impurity and then into unnatural relations. Now that brings us in verse 28 to what I think is the most important section of all, because here it says. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. Now, why in the world is that third? Isn't it true? Since this is talking about the mind, that sin originates in the mind? First of all, you think of the thing and you do it. And if that's the case, wouldn't it have been more correct for Paul to have put verse 28 first, followed by verse 24, followed by verse 26?

In other words, God gave them over to a depraved mind. They stopped thinking properly. As a result of that, they began to indulge in sexual immorality. And as a final stage, they fell into that kind of unnatural sexual activity, which is described in verse 26 and 27. Well, that is true of course. Sin does originate in the mind. But Paul's not thinking wrongly here. He knows exactly what he's doing. And what he is saying here is a point that we need to hear in addition to the fact that sin is in the mind. Not only does sin originate in the mind, sin corrupts the mind. When Paul is picturing this three-stage departure from the person in law of God, the last thing he comes to is the fact that our minds are depraved as a result of the path that we have chosen.

And in a certain way, he describes all these terrible things that come into us as a result of God giving us up to a depraved mind. And when he gets to the end, verse 32, he says, Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but they also approve of those who practice them. What does that mean? They approve of those who practice them. Approval means they say that this is right. Now that's the evidence of the depraved mind. When you first go your own way against God's way, you know that it's wrong. It's clear that it's wrong. But the more you persist in sin, the more you dull your own mind to spiritual sensitivity, just the way our culture is doing and eventually you come to the point where you cite.

Notice, this is very important. That which is right is wrong. That which is wrong is right. That which is moral is immoral. That which is immoral is moral. In other words, you've entirely mixed up your values, which is exactly what American culture is doing in our day. And what's the word for that? If somebody looks at something black and says it's white, looks at something

white and says it's black, something wrong and says it's right, what's a person like that doing? What are they like? Well, the answer is they're crazy. Somebody that gets things utterly backwards is out of their mind. They're the kind of people you lock up if they're dangerous. And you see what Paul is saying here is that our culture in its path, its pelbell path to get away from God is spiritually insane.

Now, listen, you want to make friends with a crazy band? You want to sell your soul to a culture that is that mixed up? No one in their right mind would do that. And the important thing is to recognize that that is what the world is like and go in another way entirely. I want to give you an illustration of this from the Old Testament, and I want to preface it by something else from the Old Testament. If you have your Bibles, I hope you do. Look at Psalm 8. I think you know these verses because they're quoted at least a few of them are quoted in Hebrews in reference to Jesus Christ. But in Psalm 8, they have to do with man in general. And they describe man's place in the universe. Now here it is, verse three and following.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you've set in place, what is man that you're mindful of him, the son of man, that you care for him? You made him. Now this is important, a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds and beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the sea. Now that describes man in a very interesting way, doesn't it? It describes him as Thomas Aquinas did as a mediating being. That is one who is part way along

this structure that the verses describe. The very top, you have God. Then you have the heavenly beings, the Angels, the unfallen beings, then you have man. And under man, you have the beasts.

Thomas Aquinas said it was part of his anthropology. Man is unique in that, like the Angels, he has a soul, but unlike the Angels, he has a body. Like the animals, he has a body. But unlike the animals, he has a soul. So man is a soul-body being. In one respect, he's like the Angels and the other respect he's like the beasts. So he's in the middle. Now, look, Francis Schaeffer pointed out wisely, I think, that when God describes man in verse five, after having placed him in this context, he says to him, "Not that he is a little higher than the beasts, but rather that he is a little lower than the Angels." What does that mean? It means that in this mediating position, though man is in the middle, he nevertheless has the opportunity and joy of looking up beyond where he is, to the heavenly beings and beyond that to God.

And what happens if you do that? Well, you become increasingly like that, to which you look. You have a model in life, somebody you're very proud of that you would like to be like. You will become increasingly like them. And that's what it's saying. You see, if you look up to the Angels, you'll begin to think of spiritual things. And if you look beyond the Angels to God, you'll become increasingly like God. But what has happened? We suppressed in all each of the true God. That's what Romans 1 is all about. Our culture says, we don't want a God like that. We don't want a God that is sovereign and moral and omniscient and unchangeable. Why a God like that will restrict us from doing what we want to do. Let's block the knowledge of that God out. So they wipe out what Francis Schaeffer called the upper story universe.

What happens, you see, is that they're left with nothing but what? The beasts. And so we look to the beasts and what? We become increasingly like that to which we look, we begin to act like animals. Isn't that what it says? Now, that's the introduction. Let me take you to Daniel 4, which is the illustration. Here you have God's judgment on Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar took the glory of God to himself. Verse 30. Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence by my mighty power for the glory of my majesty? You see, that is the best statement in the Bible that I know of what we call secular humanism. That everything's for man. It's of man by man, for man.

And it says verse 31 that while these words were still on his lips, a voice came from heaven and said, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." Now you know, I'm sure that what that means is that Nebuchadnezzar became insane. Now I ask the question, why was this Nebuchadnezzar's punishment? Was God simply sitting up in heaven with the book of punishments on his lap and looking down at Nebuchadnezzar, and after he looked at Nebuchadnezzar for a while, he said, Look, I'm not going to put up with this any longer. This has just gotten to be intolerable. This man has to be stopped somehow. Let's judge him. How shall I do that?

Well. And he opens up his book. He bends to flip the pages. And here's boils. Well, no, that happened to Job. I don't want to mix up those stories. Here's the loss of health. Well, no, that's

happened. Blindness. No, I'm saving that for John 9. Finally, God comes to insanity, and he says, insanity. There's one I haven't used for a while. Let's have Nebuchadnezzar become insane. Well, you know as well as I do that nothing in Scripture is like that. God is not whimsical. God has a reason for everything he does. And if Nebuchadnezzar was judged by insanity, that's meant to teach us something. But what does it teach? It teaches that when you say to yourself, as our culture does in its secular humanism, all this world, all this life, all these experiences are for me, by me, of me, when you put yourself in the place of God, because you've already obliterated the knowledge of God up at the top of that long pathway that's described in Psalm 8.

What you do is become insane. And God's judgment of the culture is to withdraw His hand, leave us to go our own way, according to his spiritual laws. And on that pathway, men and women become not only insane, but begin to act like what? Like animals. Because that's what is described. He's going to be driven away. He's going to live with the animals. He's going to eat grass, like cattle until he acknowledges that the most tie is the true God. Now I find that fascinating because, you see, I think that is exactly what our culture is saying. If our culture is looking to the animals to describe why we are the way we are and is mixing up moral values, what our culture will do is say, Look, what we do is not bad, because after all, we are only descended from the animals.

Basically, that's our roots. And so if the animals do it, it's not so bad if we do it. Now I've actually seen that. I've seen scientific articles along that line. Some time ago, I came across an article in a science journal that was written by a husband and wife team. They were exploring a family of ducks, and they built a blind, and they were inside the blind taking pictures and

recording what was going on. And they recorded what they described as gang rape in this family of ducks. And then they wrote their article. And although they didn't say this in so many words, I think the tone of the article was this, look, gang rape is a bad thing. Rape is a bad thing. But after all, we have to understand where we come from. We come from the animals. So it's not all that surprising. If the animals do it, then we should do it, too.

In 1982, the September 6 issue of Newsweek had an article on baboons. I had a picture of a baboon and a baboon was holding this infant in its hand. The picture said the infant baboon was dead and that the baboon had killed it. And this was a story about infanticide among baboons. And then the headline said something like this. It said, "Scientists say that all animals, including man, that says a lot, practice infanticide." Do you get the idea? The baboons kill their offspring, so it's really understandable that we since we're just animals kill our offspring, too. What's so bad about a million and a half abortions in the United States every single year? If we can take a picture of a baboon killing an infant baboon. See what's happening.

We've cut our way off from God. And as a result, we have no framework in which to describe ourselves. But the animal framework. And I want to say this. When we begin to act like animals, we not only act like animals, we act worse than animals because we do things that the animals wouldn't even do. I have a friend whose name is John Gerstner, a professor. Was not retired now, but a professor out in western Pennsylvania, and he was teaching Romans on one occasion. And he compared men and women to rats. And when he finished, somebody came up afterwards was very incensed, demanded that he apologize because they said that's terribly unjust. Well, Gerstner said, yes, that is true. The comparison is terribly unjust. And I do apologize. I apologize

profusely to the rats, because when a rat is acting like a rat, a rat is acting the way God intended for a rat to act. When we act like rats, we are behaving much less than God intended us to act.

And moreover, we do things that the rats couldn't even conceive of doing.

You want to see what we do? This is lifting the lid on hell. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful. They invent ways of doing evil. The animals do not invent ways of doing evil. They're not capable of inventing it. But we are. They disobey their parents. They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Now that's telling it the way it is. That's the United States of America today, apart from God's grace in Jesus Christ. And listen, don't try to be like that. All of us have that in us. We say to ourselves, oh, it's so glamorous. It's because it's the way it's presented to us on the television. And we get our images of it on the television. And it's a lie. It's exchanging the truth of God for a lie. Don't fall for the lie.

Recognize it for what it is. Say thank God that he has rescued me from that. If he has and say by His grace, I want to reach out and rescue others. Let me sum up what that says in those last verses in four propositions. Number one, we have made earth a hell apart from grace. Number two, when we die, we will carry that hell with us into hell. A little bit of hell that we are, we'll take it to hell. Number three. That little bit of hell that we carry with us will make hell even more hellish. Number four, hell filled with people just like ourselves apart from the grace of Jesus Christ will go on getting increasingly hellish throughout eternity. Now that's a negative place to stop. Tomorrow, we're going to see the solution.

Boice: Romans Lifting the Lid on Hell

You find it in Romans three, what God has done in the gospel, giving us a righteousness, not our own. Let me just refer you as we end today to 2 Corinthians 3 at the very end. There it's talking about the image of God that we've lost, the transformation of ourselves into the image of Jesus Christ. And it says because this is what God intends. It's the exact opposite of Romans 1. As we see the glory of God reflected in the face of Jesus Christ, we are what? Transformed increasingly.

[audio abruptly ends]