

## Romans

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Romans 1:26-32



Vss. 26-27

- Where Dan left off last week was as Paul was expounding on Rome's pagan culture. Rome in Paul's time had no culture beyond pagan culture. So if Paul sounds like some high-minded moralist, he is actually understating the moral climate of the city. Its own writers had nothing good to say about their great city and its empire.
- Virgil wrote: "Right and wrong are confounded; so many wars the world over, so many forms of wrong; no worthy honor is left to the plough; the (farmers) are marched away and the fields grow dirty; the (plough) has its curve straightened into the sword-blade. In the East, Euphrates is stirring up the war, in the West, Germany; close-neighboring cities break their mutual (alliance) and draw the sword, and the war god's unnatural fury rages over the whole world; even as when in the circus the chariots burst from their floodgates, they dash into the course, and, pulling desperately at the reins, the driver lets the horses drive him, and the car is deaf to the curb."
- Suetonius, writing of the reign of Tiberius, said: "No day passed but someone was executed." It was an age of sheer, utter terror and rampant immorality. "Rome," said Livy, the historian, "could neither bear its ills, nor the remedies that might have cured them." Propertius, the poet, wrote: "I see Rome, proud Rome, perishing, the victim of her own prosperity." It was an age of moral suicide. Juvenal, the satirist, wrote: "The earth no longer brings forth any but bad men and cowards."
- It seems that the wealthier Rome and its citizens grew, the greater their desire for luxury and the greater the boredom. William Barclay tells us, "In the public baths of Rome, the hot and cold water ran from silver taps. Caligula had even sprinkled the floor of the circus arena with gold dust instead of sawdust". Juvenal said bitterly: "A luxury more ruthless than war broods over Rome. No guilt or deed of lust is wanting since Roman poverty disappeared." "Money, the nurse of debauchery and enervating riches sapped the (strength) of the age with foul luxury." Seneca spoke of "money, the ruin of the true honor of things," and said, "we ask not what a thing truly is but what it costs." It was an age so weary of ordinary things that it constantly craved new sensations. Lucretius speaks of "that bitterness which flows from the very fountain of pleasure." Crime became the only antidote to boredom, until, as Tacitus said, "the greater the infamy, the wilder the delight."
- Juvenal could not believe that it was possible to have the rare good fortune to find a woman over age 20 who was still a virgin. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the typical Roman society lady as having a figure "like Venus, with a golden girdle of vice." Juvenal writes: "Is one husband enough for Iberina? Sooner

will you prevail upon her to be content with only one eye." He cites the case of a woman who had eight husbands in five years. He further cites the incredible case of Empress Agrippina, the wife of Claudius, who at night used to leave the royal palace and go down to serve in a brothel for the sake of sheer boredom and lust. Again Barclay, "There is nothing that Paul said about the heathen world that the heathen moralists had not themselves already said. And vice did not stop with the crude and natural vices. Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals".

## Vss. 28-32

- There's a line in MacBeth that suggests that when a person excludes God from their life, loses God, they lose their humanity as well. Such a person "de-velops" into just another predator mammal (verse 28).
- In verses 29-31 Paul outlines the qualities of such a creature. Here's just vs. 29.
  - They are filled with all unrighteousness/replete with all evil – **Adikia**, meaning that the evil man is the man who robs both man and God of their rights. He has so erected an altar to himself in the center of things that he worships himself to the exclusion of God and man.
  - Wickedness/Villainy – **Poneria**, meaning purposefully destructive.
  - Greed/ The lust to get – **Pleonexia**, meaning a desire which knows no law; a spirit which will pursue its own interests with complete disregard for others.
  - Evil/ Viciousness – **Kakia**, meaning a person who is devoid of every moral quality.
  - Envy – **Phthonos**, meaning one who resents and begrudges good in others.
  - Murder – **Phonos**, meaning not just the act of killing, but Christ spoke of eliminating even the spirit of anger and malice.
  - Strife – **Eris**, meaning the contention which is born of envy, ambition, the desire for prestige, and place and prominence.
  - Deceit – **Dolos**, meaning a person who has a tortuous and a twisted mind, who cannot act in a straightforward way, who stoops to devious and underhanded methods to get his own way, who never does anything except with some kind of ulterior motive.
  - Malice – **Kakoetheia**, defined by Aristotle as "the spirit which always supposes the worst about other people."
  - Gossips – **Psithuristes**, the person who whispers malicious stories in the shadows.
- Vs. 32: CS Lewis said that God never sent anyone to Hell, but there are many who chose it. People know "the ordinance of God", but intentionally reject both the Commandment and the One who gave the Commandment. They know they are "worthy of death" but are unconcerned and give "hearty approval" to everyone who practices the same things they do. Misery does love company.