

Anton LaVey was born in 1930 in Chicago, Illinois. His family soon moved to California, where he spent most of his early life in the San Francisco Bay Area. LaVey's biography tells of his dropping out of high school to join a circus and carnivals. LaVey later noted that seeing many of the same men attending both the bawdy Saturday night shows and the tent revival meetings on Sunday mornings reinforced his increasingly cynical view of religion. [Anton LaVey on Wikipedia](#)

It seems that Mr. LaVey, observing so much hypocritical religion, refused to believe in the reality of God's saving grace.

In 1966 Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan. In 1969 he published *The Satanic Bible*. This book combines philosophy with religion, strongly emphasizing both materialism and individualism – two traits that have come to dominate our culture with or without LaVey's help. On page 25 of *The Satanic Bible* you can find *The Nine Satanic Statements* – the core principles of LaVey's satanic creed. The first Satanic Statement goes like this:

*“Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence.”*

“Indulgence instead of abstinence”: You don't have to be a satanist to subscribe to that philosophy, but, from the demonic standpoint, it is a great way to bring people into bondage – a bondage to themselves, to their own passions. How opposite from the fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control (Gal 5:23).

Here is one of LaVey's most remarkable insights: Satan can easily bring out the demonic in any society without anyone even noticing him. People need not take any interest whatsoever in the occult. The devil only has to convince people to habitually indulge themselves, while simultaneously keeping them away from the truth of God's word, which would free them from this bondage to their sins.

*John 8:31-32 (NKJV)* <sup>31</sup>... *Jesus said ...*, “*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*” <sup>32</sup>*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*”

**We must let the truth of God's word set us free or our passions will soon enslave us.**

Last week we left off with Paul's description of the gospel, which is a good summary of the Book of Romans. All that we discuss today is written with this truth in the background.

Context: The Power of the Gospel - **1:16-17**

Now Paul begins his explanation of the gospel. Romans is the Gospel from God's Perspective. It tells us of the Wrath of God (1:18 – 3:20), The Grace of God (3:21 – 8:39), The Plan of God (9 – 11), and the Will of God (12 – 16).

The Wrath of God: This is why we need the Gospel so badly. Here Paul describes the downward spiral of degeneration visible in the Gentile world. This was the Greek and Roman world of Paul's day, but not much has changed. This process has been repeated in many different places at various times throughout history. The process Paul describes is active in our world today.

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| I.  | A Society Rejects God    | 1:18-23 |
| II. | God Rejects That Society | 1:24-32 |

I. A Society Rejects God 1:18-23

A. A Society Rejects God by Suppressing the Truth 1:18

*John 3:19-20 (NKJV)* <sup>19</sup>*And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* <sup>20</sup>*For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

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B. A Society Rejects God by Ignoring Him 1:19-20

*Psalms 19:1 (NKJV)* *The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

*Acts 14:17 (NKJV)* *Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."*

God has revealed something of himself in his creation – attributes like power and intelligence. Each of us, therefore, either accepts or rejects God. Don't be fooled. The truth may be suppressed. God may be ignored, but when the day comes that we stand before God, there will be no excuses.

C. A Society Rejects God by Exchanging His Glory for Idols 1:21-23

1:21 If you have no God to glorify you have no God to thank.

1:22 Paul's culture was full of philosophers or "lovers of wisdom", but the Scripture says that they've literally become "moronic".

1:23 *changed* is better translated "exchanged" – as in exchanging one thing for another.

Idolatry is born when we reject what we know about God and see ourselves as the center of everything. Then what? We invent "gods" that we like – ones that will affirm all that we do, pat us on the back. These gods might be wooden figures, but in our world they are usually our goals or things we pursue: love, comfort, security, money, power – all things that might be fine in themselves, but are definitely not worthy of our worship.

Gods that we make will never confront us or hold us accountable. When we make our own god, we become his boss. We define his parameters, personality and job description.

Anton LaVey on defining God:

*...the Satanist simply accepts the definition which suits him best. Man has always created his gods, rather than his gods creating him. (The Satanic Bible p.40)*

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II God Rejects That Society 1:24-32

A. God Rejects That Society by Handing Them Over to Uncleanness 1:24-25

1:24 (also 26 & 28) *gave up* surrender, to give into the hands of another – the Bible uses the same term to speak of Jesus being “delivered” to Pontius Pilate the governor.

When God surrenders a society to uncleanness or impurity, people begin indulging their lusts and treating their own bodies disrespectfully, treating them with contempt. It's as if they are vandalizing this temple, which God designed for the Holy Spirit.

B. God Rejects That Society by Handing Them Over to Vile Passions 1:26-27

1:26 *vile passions* literally, “passions of dishonor”

1:26-27 Paul uses homosexuality as an example. The terms for *men* and *women* here are more generic - “male” and “female”

Some would say Paul is gay bashing, but I honestly believe he is merely describing the culture of his day. He says that because they have exchanged truth for the lie and exchanged the Creator for created things, God allows them to exchange natural functions for unnatural functions – to use a man as a woman, and a woman as a man.

These temptations were no doubt always there, but when the restraints are removed, such practices become widely accepted in society. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, at the time of this writing, homosexuality was commonplace. Many great philosophers extolled it and practiced it. Men like Socrates, and other great names of Greece, had homosexual relationships. It's said that out of the first fifteen Roman emperors, fourteen of them were homosexuals, some very openly so. This was common in the Roman world, as it is common in our world today. Once again, the restraints have been removed, so the temptations are very great.

Nonetheless, the Bible is pretty confining when it comes to sexual expression: One man, one woman, one lifetime is the ideal that God has set up. Therefore, all homosexual relationships and, let's face it, a lot of heterosexual relationships must be classified as sin – temptations to be resisted rather than pleasures to be indulged. It's interesting how different this is from the satanism of Anton LaVey:

*Satanism encourages any form of sexual expression you may desire, so long as it hurts no one else. (The Satanic Bible p.69)*

Sounds a lot more like our society than the Bible if you ask me. This past week Iowa became the third state to legalize same-sex marriages, following Massachusetts and Connecticut (California has flip-flopped on the issue.) Also this week: Sweden became the fifth country in Europe to do the same. The Netherlands, Norway, Belgium and Spain also allow same-sex marriages.

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C. God Rejects That Society by Handing Them Over to a Debased Mind 1:28-32

The worst part about this list of 20+ characteristics of a degenerating society is that any one of us can see the potential for one or more of these in our own heart. Paul wants us to see ourselves in here. Sexual sins are not the only sins out there – they are probably not even the worst. When restraints are removed all kinds of arrogance and evil appears everywhere.

Before the flood in the days of Noah, the Bible says this:

*Genesis 6:5 (NKJV) Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

In today's news we read of a father killing all five of his children. An AP article describing the shooting spree in Binghamton, NY on Friday ended with this grim bit of information:

*A string of attacks in the U.S. in the last month left 44 people dead in all.*

*A gunman killed 10 people and himself in Samson, Ala.; shootings that began with a traffic stop in Oakland, Calif., left four police officers and the gunman dead; an apparent murder-suicide in Santa Clara, Calif., left six dead; and a gunman went on a rampage at a nursing home Sunday, killing seven elderly residents and a nurse who cared for them.*

NY Governor David Paterson lamented:

*"When are we going to be able to curb the kind of violence that is so fraught and so rapid that we can't even keep track of the incidents?"*

[Read full article](#)

Now God doesn't want us to become grouchy old codgers who sit around moping, saying "What's the world coming to? The country's going down the tubes! Why, back in the day, I'll tell you, the world was a different place."

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Here's how Jesus describes discipleship:

*John 8:31-32 (NKJV) <sup>31</sup>... Jesus said ..., "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup>And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

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And how about this final challenge:

*Luke 9:23-26 (NKJV) <sup>23</sup>Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? <sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.*