

WHEN THE CREATURE IS WORTH MORE THAN THE CREATOR

GOLDEN TEXT

“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1:25)

USEFUL PRACTICE

The exaltation of the creature above the Creator is the usurpation of divine glory by human lies and vanity.

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 1:18-25

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 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.

22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I) To identify the consequences of unrighteousness and creature worship;

II) To understand the historical origin of Humanism and its consequences in our culture;

III) To know the types of self-idolatry and biblical guidelines to escape these evils.

INTRODUCTION

The pride and folly of an ungodly man keep him far from the truth of God. With the advent of the thought revolution, people started prioritizing the creature over the Creator more and more. Self-idolatry, a wicked heart, and choosing the pleasures of the flesh have created enmity between the human race and God (2 Tim. 3:4). Today's lesson is a warning about what happens when God ceases to be the measure of all things (Romans 1:18).

I – CONTEMPT FOR THE TRUTH

1. Impiety and injustice. The term "impiety" is the translation of the Greek *asebeia*, which means "ungodliness". It refers to the human being's decision to live as if God did not exist (Ps. 36:1; Jude 1:14, 15). The word "injustice" comes from the Greek *adikia* and means "unrighteousness". The word conveys the idea of not being upright before God or to others (2 Pet. 2:15). Both words reveal the general situation of the unregenerate humanity (Rom. 1:18), its idolatry, creature worship (Rom. 1:19-23), wickedness and moral depravity (Rom. 1:25-32) which express man's deliberate decision to despise divine truth (Rom 1:19, 20). This attack against fearing God, and the normalization of sin imprison and sear human

conscience (1 Tim. 4:2). Such actions come from man's refusal to glorify the Creator (Rom. 1:21).

2. Human folly. The apostle Paul assures that the general revelation of God, through nature, makes the human being possess knowledge about the Creator (Rom. 1:19, 20a). Therefore, no one can plead ignorance of God's existence or His eternal power (Rom. 1:20b). Nevertheless, even in daily contact with this revelation, the wicked man does not glorify God or give Him thanks (Rom. 1:21a). Instead of recognizing the Creator, human beings act as if they were not creatures and behave as if they were divine (Gen. 3:5). Because of the pretentious speculations of their heart and their self-idolatry, both their reasoning and their intellect regarding the truth become useless (Rom. 1:21b). Their ideologies reject, pervert and replace the truth of God with the lies of man. This folly results in idolatry and moral perversion (Rom. 1:22-25).

3. Creature worship. By rejecting God and His laws, the "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) are left to the mercy of their sinful desires, among them: sexual impurity and the degrading of their own bodies (Rom. 1:24). Here the biblical text ratifies the announced wrath of God against the godlessness and wickedness of men (Rom. 1:18). Man's moral corruption stems from his rebellion against God. His fallen nature exchanges the truth about God for a lie and prefers to worship and serve created things rather than his Creator (Rom. 1:25a). Thus, in religion, created beings are worshipped; in the sciences, matter is placed above God; in society, artists, athletes, politicians or religious leaders become a reference of idolatry in affront to the Creator, who is forever praised (Rom. 1:25b).

II - THE REVOLUTION OF HUMAN THOUGHT

1. Renaissance. The Renaissance is an intellectual movement that emerged in Western Europe between the 14th and 16th centuries. The characteristic of this movement was its deep rationalism, that is, everything should have a rational explanation. Renaissance people refused to believe anything that could not be rationally proven. During this period, which coincides with the Early Modern Age, which historians mark from the takeover of the Ottomans by the Turks in 1453 until the 1789 (French Revolution), the theocentric view (in which God was the measure of all things) was changed by an anthropocentric conception (in which man became the sole measure of all things). Instead of seeing the world through the lens of the Creator, men began to see it through the lens of the creature. Thus, the first effects of the process of secularization of culture appeared, when social life began to give way to rationalism and skepticism (John 20:25, 29). In this sense, the scientific and literary revolution, which took

place from the Renaissance, contributed to the emergence of Humanism.

2. Humanism. Italy was the main humanist center in the late fifteenth century. For the humanist movement, ethics and morals depend on man. Thus, the creature became the basis of all values, and not the Creator. Humanists deepened their studies on ancient history in order to deconstruct the sacred books. On the positive side, the appreciation of individual rights stands out. However, this is not a flag of Humanism. The Bible has a framework of conceptions of freedom and equality (Deut. 6:1-9) that precede many rights that appeared in modern times. It is also noteworthy that Scripture teaches equality between races, social class and gender (Gal. 3:28).

3. Enlightenment and Postmodernism. The Enlightenment emerged in Europe between the 17th and 18th centuries. Its adherents rejected tradition, sought answers in reason, understood that man was the master of his own destiny and that the Church was an unnecessary institution. Post-modernity, or Liquid Modernity, emerged in the mid-twentieth century. Sociologists observe that society ceased to be “solid” and became “liquid”. This means that values that were “absolute” have become “relative”. In this respect, collectivity was replaced by self-centeredness in which relationships became superficial. In this context, the two great imperatives that marked this movement were hedonism and narcissism. In the pursuit of human well-being, everything becomes valid, such as: using people, abusing the body, depravity and rampant consumerism.

III - TYPES OF SELF-IDOLATRY

1. Idolatry of self-image. Idolatry is anything that takes the place of the worship of God (Ex. 20:3-5). In this case, we can say that the cult of self-image is a form of idolatry. While Christ reflects the image of God (Heb. 1:2, 3), human narcissism reflects the nature of sin (John 8:34). The apostle Paul describes fallen man as a selfish person: a lover of himself; greedy: lover of money; despicable: without love for others; rebellious: without love for God; and hedonistic: lover of pleasure (2 Tim. 3:2-4). Thus, an unregenerate person has a need to promote himself by developing a high opinion of himself (Luke 18:11). He also craves for recognition and seeks to always be in the spotlight in an unlawful way (Luke 22:24-26). Contrary to self-idolatry, the Bible teaches that Christ must become greater, not man (John 3:30).

2. Idolatry in the heart. The heart refers to the emotions, will, and center of all personality (Rom. 9:2; 10:6; 1 Cor. 4:5). It is also described as deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17.9/NKJV), for from within it evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, greed, arrogance and folly (Mark 7:21, 22). In view of

this, God condemns the worship of idols in the heart (Ez. 14:3). Unfortunately, some people even pretend to worship God, but they actually serve idols in their hearts (Matt. 15:8). Thus, those who do not fear God bring idolatry into their hearts when they put their personal reputation first, seek pleasure as the greater good, nurture superstitious tendencies and grow very fond of material goods. Contrary to this posture, in order not to sin, we are warned to keep the Word of God in our hearts (Ps. 119:11).

3. Sexual idolatry. Failure to control sexual impulses is associated with sensuality (Rom. 1:27), sexual immorality (Rom. 13:13 – NIV) and licentiousness (2 Cor. 12:21 – NIV). The lust of the flesh characterizes those who are dominated by sexual sin (Gal. 5:19). It is not just the practice of the immoral act, but the intentional and compulsive pursuit of unlawful sexual pleasure (Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:15). It is the altar of sexual idolatry built in the heart (Mark 7:21). So, the worship of God is exchanged for the cult of the body in order to satisfy the idol of perversion and lust through sins (1 Pet. 4:3 - NIV). The biblical guidance to escape this evil is as follows: “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16 - NIV).

CONCLUSION

The corruption of the human race is the outcome of their rebellion against divine truth. Godlessness and unrighteousness have resulted in theories of self-sufficiency in which the creature rises above its Creator. By placing himself as the only measure of all things, man puts his interests above the divine will. The consequences are self-idolatry, moral depravity, social and spiritual decay. Nevertheless, Scripture warns that God’s wrath remains on those who are disobedient to divine truth (Rom. 2:8).