

The Wrath of God

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[0 : 00] Pastor, it's good to be back again. All sun sound? Very good. All right. Praise the Lord. This morning we'll be in the book of Romans, in Romans chapter 1, if you want to turn there.

And we'll look at verses 18 down through 23 this morning. And while you turn there, I had a very strange text message that I got last Sunday evening. A dear brother of mine, who is a student as well at Virginia Beach Theological Seminary, texted me and said, I heard you were preaching Williamsburg. And I had to check my cessationist credentials because it seemed to sound like I had a prophet in my class. But apparently one of you, I don't know if you're here today, saw Brother Floyd, my dear brother, last week at a gospel skating event. So I'm glad that you were able to put in practice what we learned last week about brotherly love across churches. And so praise the Lord for that. That was neat to hear. But I trust you're in Romans 1 this morning. And we're going to read from verse 18 down through 23. So if you look along as we read the text, this is what the Bible says. I'll be reading from the English Standard Version.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. May God bless the hearing and teaching of his word this morning. Let's pray. Heavenly gracious Father, Lord, we thank you for your mercy and your goodness.

Thank you for your inspired word. And pray you'd give us ears to hear this morning as we look at your text. May you bless the hearing and teaching of this text. I pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

[2 : 35] Well, if you've paid attention to the news at all, particularly in the last few years, and you have a biblical or a biblically informed viewpoint, a worldview, then it may seem to you like our nation, and perhaps the world as a whole, has collectively lost its mind.

What was at one point unthinkable today is rapidly becoming the only acceptable and approved position on a number of issues. But in regards to our text this morning or the passage we're in, it's most pronounced, if I can say it this way, in the realm of human reproduction and gender.

And when you look at Romans 1, you can get a sense of what is happening in our society and what is happening in our world. We won't go into detail in the subsequent passages, but they tell us in verse 24 and on about a society that has gone mad, where God has left His people, or I shouldn't say His people, but people in general, to the extreme manifestations, the extreme demonstrations of their depravity, where it seems like everything is absolutely corrupt, where such behavior not only permeates society, but that society fully endorses and approves what is taking place.

It's a place where total depravity starts to look like absolute depravity. You're familiar with those terms. Total depravity is the idea that we can't reconcile ourselves to God because of our sin nature, but absolute depravity is when man goes towards an absolute expression of that sinful nature he has.

It's as if God has entirely given us over to our corruption and has abandoned His common grace, allowing us to embrace all of our sinful impulses.

[4 : 34] And so it describes the society or the world in which that takes place. And perhaps our society isn't quite at that point yet, but we're certainly headed towards that destination, are we not?

But in verse 24, there's a small word that begins in most English translations, which is a faithful translation of the Greek, the word therefore.

If you're the type of person who's interested in the technicals of grammar, it's an adverbial conjunction, but all that means is it's a connecting word, telling us that something that Paul here is talking about follows from what he previously discussed.

Therefore, on the basis of what we are going to discuss this morning about man and how he interacts with God, because of this, something has taken place. And what has taken place is a complete degradation of society.

But that degradation of society is not something, sometimes we hear social commentators talk about, well, society is falling apart, and therefore bad things are going to happen. That's all true, of course, but the falling apart of society in itself is a judgment, is the result of something else.

[5 : 49] It is the ramifications of what we'll look at this morning in verses 18 through 23. Well, if you look at verse 18, to get the full context, so we see the results of what we're going to talk about this morning is this degradation society.

But Paul, preceding this, talks about something that is far greater than what we see in our present passage, or what we see in the future passages. When Paul introduces his statements here, he's doing so on the basis to give a justification, if you will, for what he's talked about previously.

And if you look at verse 15, you can see what excites Paul. What Paul is talking about is that he wants to come to Rome, and he wants to share the gospel. Now, Paul ends up coming to Rome, but it's kind of through a different avenue than he would have expected later on, of course, through imprisonment.

But at this point, he's talking about wanting to come to Rome as a missionary, and come and speak to those churches, and share the gospel in the capital city, and perhaps the capital city of the world at that time.

And in verses 16 and 17, he speaks about why the gospel so entralls him. Why is it so exciting to him? Well, maybe it's self-evident, but here he specifically tells us it's because it reconciles men of all backgrounds with their creator, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, whether you're of Israel or of the nations, the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

[7 : 13] God who imputes his own righteousness to sinful men in his mercy and in his sovereign volition. But there's an urgency to Paul's desire to share the gospel, and that's where verse 18 comes in.

It starts with another conjunction, with the word for, saying this is the reason why there is an urgency to share the gospel. Yes, it's the good news, and yes, it's exciting, but why the urgency?

Well, as we see in verse 18, it says, for, or perhaps we can translate indeed, for or indeed, the wrath of God is revealed or is being revealed.

You see, what God does impute is righteousness to sinful men who are saved. God's righteousness also demands judgment. It demands an answer.

Therefore, when man is in his corrupt state, it brings forth God's sovereign punishment. Consider other verses from the scripture that point to this. In John 3, 36, it says, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

[8 : 22] Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. The wrath of God is upon all sinful men. And then Paul says elsewhere in Ephesians 5, 6, Let no one deceive you of empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

This is the lot of every man, every mortal man since Adam, since the fall. Well, sometimes as Christians, we use language that only makes sense to other Christians, and we use the terminology being saved.

And that's a perfectly legitimate way to describe our salvation, our situation as Christians. After all, Paul uses that language later on in Romans 10, verses 9 through 10, which many of you have committed to men and Mary.

But perhaps we don't always appreciate what that really means when we say we are saved or we're being saved. Because from what are we being saved? Well, it's from something, eternal death, damnation, and hell.

That's all true. But it's also from someone. We are being saved by God, from God, from His wrath.

[9 : 34] Matthew 10, 28 tells us, And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. And Hebrews 10, 31, is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Well, why is it fearful to fall into the hands of the living God? Because He punishes sin, He pours out His wrath upon corrupt man. Habakkuk 1, in verse 13, says in part, You, referring to God, who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

Man's repeated practice of wickedness is something that God says, and we say in some sense, the Almighty cannot even look upon. He is that holy, and man is that wicked.

The gulf is that great, if you will. And so Paul appropriately concludes Romans chapter 1 by saying, Though they know God's righteous decree, and we'll get into that more, that those who practice such things as sin deserve to die, or as the King James puts it, are worthy of death.

You see, man's natural relation to God is one of enmity. It's because he raises his fist in rebellion against the Almighty. He is therefore under God's wrath, which is poured out against him.

[11 : 00] And if you look at verse 18, I think the ESV does a good job here with the translation, where it talks about the wrath of God being revealed, which is a good representation of what the original says, that not only is the wrath of God poured out against man and the final judgment, and not only is it poured out on the individual man when he dies, who is unsaved in eternal punishment and in damnation, but the wrath of God is also presently being revealed against the world, against man.

It's an ongoing condition, a foretaste, if you will, of what final judgment looks like. And we can see that in the world at large, but there's clear examples in the scripture of this.

It's seen even in the beginning in the expulsion from Eden, that man, because of his sin, now is thrown out of Eden and has to toil and labor in this world of hardship. Or what about the great flood, where God flooded the world and killed off every single person except for Noah and his immediate family?

Or even Israel, who he elected for service, when Israel was divided, there was the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, and God had the northern kingdom conquered by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom eventually taken captive by the Babylonians foretaste of God's final wrath.

So we see that the wrath of God abides in this present world, even as it's being stored up for final judgment. And where does it come from? Well, if you look at verse 18, it says, this wrath comes down from heaven.

[12 : 37] And I think this is the script of God essentially looking down upon earth from his majestic throne, and he sees the vileness of his creation, and he pours out his righteous judgment upon the earth.

Paul goes on in verse 18 to tell us about the nature of this wickedness. There's two components of it. One, the ungodliness of men, and then the all-encompassing unrighteousness of man, which flows from that nature.

Ungodliness is this idea of complete rejection of God's decrees and governance. So man may not fully appreciate that or recognize that, but that's effectively what he does.

But we have to be careful. When Paul is talking here, he's not talking about the idea of these absolute atheists. I mean, at this time period, you didn't really have a lot of people when Paul wrote this like that. It was well before the Darwinian framework.

So there would be really no way to intellectually at all, if we can put it that way, understand the world and the universe apart from a God or some gods, at least of their own mindset and of their imagination.

[13 : 43] But there is an effective atheism in their mind where God effectively plays no real role in their decisions or in the thoughts of men, at least as the human puts it, from the human perspective.

They don't seek after God and they don't have any real interest in his control over their lives. And therefore, God's wrath is further justified because mankind has this disposition where they have actively opposed him and effectively declared war on their own creator.

Romans 5.10 says it very flatly that man is God's enemy. For not only does people not give devotion to the true God who formed them and gave them life and a world in which to inhabit, but not only do they turn against God entirely in that sense, as a result of that, they are actually unrighteous, not just towards God, but towards each other in their relationships.

They show contempt for other people, defrauding them, using them, deceiving them, lusting after them, hating them. It flows from this ungodly mindset which leaves man at war with God and also with other men.

Well, as we've seen so far, we know God pours out his wrath on the earth and we know why he does so and we know why it's just. But why has man found himself in this situation?

[15 : 15] Why is this man's condition? Well, Paul answers that for us as well in verse 18. It says, By their unrighteousness suppress the truth, or by their unrighteousness they suppress the truth.

And this really is the heart of the matter. We talked about a little earlier about the idea of total depravity. That doesn't mean that man is as bad all the time as he can be. It's not the absolute depravity that we talked about earlier, but it does mean that he is inherently corrupt.

And in this corruption, he cannot appropriately acknowledge or revere the true God. He's unable to do so. Aside from regeneration, he is always in a state of suppression of the truth.

When we talk about suppression, it comes from the Greek word or the Greek concept that somebody is holding something down, pushing something down, which you might otherwise know to be true.

But because of our inherent sinful disposition and our love for sin, we can't acknowledge the true God, and therefore we suppress that knowledge or we hold that knowledge down in our unrighteousness.

[16 : 25] Now, of course, some suppress more than others. The outright atheist is suppressing, if you will, his pre-programmed knowledge of God to the most extreme extent where he doesn't acknowledge any sort of God. But the pagan allows some knowledge of God in his mind.

There's something out there to some degree. But he suppresses who God truly is. And as verse 23 tells us, therefore he exchanges the true God for one of his own imagination.

Well, I think there's some applications here from what we've seen so far in verse 18, and particularly in regard to our interaction with other people.

You see, one of these applications is that when we tell people about the wrath of God, we tell people the gospel, that it encompasses the whole corpus of the message of God, which is that we are sinners under his judgment.

When we tell people about that, we're not telling them anything they don't inherently know. So sometimes when you think of Christian apologetics, you'll come in with archaeological arguments and scientific arguments and the like, and that all has its place.

[17 : 32] But that's not the core. That's not really the gospel message because man already knows this. He just doesn't acknowledge it, at least the wrath of God. He knows that there is a God.

He knows that he has violated his law, and he knows that demands judgment. The Bible actually never seeks to prove God's existence along the lines of what we previously discussed.

And so when the skeptic, or somebody who might even say, I'm spiritual but not religious, is brought to the Bible, he doesn't really need God to be proven to him. Instead, the effect or the force of the scripture reminds him that he, as a man or a woman, is a created being, creating God's image, subject to the law of God, and he has rebelled against that holy law, that holy truth.

But in his suppression, his spirit may know this, but this truth is very inconvenient to his philosophy and his mindset.

1 Corinthians 2.14 tells us, The natural man or natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

[18 : 54] So he has this understanding, but he can't really discern who the true God is, because he doesn't have the spiritual mindset. Well, flowing from this first point of application, that man really already knows that he is under God's judgment, though he may not acknowledge it, is how people respond when the suppression is brought to the forefront of them.

When we tell them the gospel, we tell them what the scripture says. I wouldn't put, or I wouldn't want to put too much stock in traditional therapy, but when you think about traditional therapy, what do they try to do usually?

I don't know a ton about it, but usually they are trying to uncover something from a person's past that might be very painful or very sensitive. And when that traditional therapist touches on that, there is usually a volatile or an emotional reaction to something they are suppressing from their past, some trauma or something of that nature.

Well, likewise, the same sort of thing happens when somebody is confronted over their sinful condition before the God they refuse to honor, per verse 21.

Now, in some cases, they will continue to try to suppress what they ultimately know to be true. They'll deflect. Maybe they'll use humor or something like that to deflect it or excise themselves from the conversation, not wanting to acknowledge or confront the seriousness of their condition.

[20 : 17] So they'll try to push it away. It's more comfortable, of course, for them to ignore their station before God than to deal with it. But in other cases, either initially or maybe somebody who's tried to deflect, but then they're forced to confront this, it becomes painful to them, and they'll become enraged or hostile or antagonistic.

After all, they're happy with their sin, right? And they're antagonistic towards God. So they'll seek to violently, and I'm assuming using words and attitudes in our present period, but they'll violently resist the conviction brought about by the Scripture.

They'll respond in this hostile manner because the suppression is being challenged. But then yet there's perhaps one other reaction. In God's providence and mercy, sometimes these same words and truth will break a man, forcing him to see his pride and ugliness of his condition, and even in God's grace, allow him not only just to see that, but to truly repent and respond in faith to Jesus Christ.

I think the Puritans had a saying that goes something like this, the same sun that hardens the clay also melts the wax. It can have different effects on different people.

Well, as we understand this, we understand the different ways that people respond to the gospel message. And while we need to be faithful in presenting the gospel where opportunities appear, such suppression is inherent in all men, and it's only God who liberates men from such mentality.

[21 : 53] Remember what we said from 1 Corinthians 2, that these things need to be spiritually discerned. Well, returning back to the text, returning back to Paul's discussion in verse 19, in the ESV it reads, for what can be known about God is plain to them, as Paul further discusses this mindset of man and his suppression.

In the ESV it says, what's known about God is plain to them. I think the NASB and the King James are a little more accurate in their translation, where I think the NASB says, is instead of being plain to them, is evident in them or within them.

And the King James says, manifest in them or within them. Now there's some debate about how that translation should be, or how that verse should be translated. But I think it's better to talk about it being within, because when you just say it's plain to them, that just means it's evident.

They can see it. And that's true, and Paul will go on to discuss that. But it's also true that it's something within them, something inherent, something internal, if you will, once again, something that's pre-programmed within us, something that is plain to us, not only to see, but to also acknowledge internally.

And I think that's what Paul's discussing there. But nonetheless, in addition to this internal witness, there is an external witness, which Paul goes on to tell us about here. That is, that God has revealed himself in the natural world to man.

[23 : 18] Sometimes theologians will call this a general revelation. So the scripture is specific revelation or special revelation, but seeing God and his work in nature is general revelation.

And so, once again, we see God's wrath being further justified. Man suppresses the knowledge of God despite having the inherent witness or the eternal witness, but God has also deliberately shown himself to man externally, and man still resists God.

It talks about what is knowable about God here, here in the text, was knowable about God. For man can perceive these things about God with his very faculties.

He can see nature, he can hear, he can experience, he can feel. He's able to perceive God with his own faculties, the very faculties God has given him to be able to do so.

And God has chosen to reveal himself in creation to man. by his own decree. God has decided to limit his transcendence.

[24 : 19] When we talk about the transcendence of God, it means that we can't appropriately understand God. And if God was entirely transcendent, we wouldn't be able to know anything about him. But in his kindness and in his mercy, he has made himself accessible to men.

It's a gift to us to be able to perceive God in nature, to be able to observe things that point to God. For many, of course, that's not enough. Particularly atheists will always complain. There's not enough evidence about God.

It tells us here that God's given us an incredible witness of himself in his kindness. But yet, being left as witness, we run in the opposite direction. Is not God justified in bringing judgment upon such rebellion in the face of such revelation?

Paul goes on in verse 20 to tell us three specific things about this revelation. One, that God has made known certain invisible attributes that he has to us.

And two, man has witnessed these attributes since creation. So ever since the world was created, man was able to witness these attributes and witnesses them in creation. And then, as a result of this, there is no justifiable excuse, Paul puts it, no excuse when being held accountable for defying God.

[25 : 38] God, in his essence, is hidden from the eyes of men. Paul tells us in the observable power of God and in his very divine nature, he has made himself known to us.

One example of the observable power of God can be found in Psalm 90, verse 2, before the mountains were brought forth. Wherever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

And of course, this tells about the internality that God has no beginning and no end, but also speaks about the creation demonstrating the power of God. Even in the creation, the majestic and mighty mountains you might see.

If you go out west, you go to other parts of the world and see just the might and how small we are compared to the mountains. That demonstrates the power of God.

And God's very divine nature is shown. It's shown in nature, but also, remember, God himself entered his own creation. The Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, walked among men, came into creation, as Colossians 2.9 tells us, for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

[26 : 47] Fully God and fully man, a witness to man. And in Romans 1.20, it tells us that these attributes are clearly perceived, or at least should be clearly perceived, by God's human creation.

Yet he fails to do so. But God making it so clear in creation. Ever since the beginning of creation, all the things that have been made testify to God.

The psalmist puts it this way in Psalm 33. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth, all their host. He gathers the water of the sea as a heap.

He puts the deeps and storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it came to be.

He commanded and it stood firm. You see, looking at God's creation should create awe in man about how his God is revealed and both how the world came to be by him and presently is under his command.

[27 : 55] A little while ago I read a book by an atheist. And this atheist, in one part, was in utter awe of the event horizon of a black hole.

It's not too important what that is, but it's a cosmological phenomena that scientists don't fully understand, of course. But he was just in awe of that phenomena. He looked at the creation and effectively worshipped without appreciating the origin of that very cosmological phenomena that he was so enthralled by.

Oh, God has chosen to reveal himself in these ways even if man doesn't recognize it. And it should be so evident to us, at least to an uncorrupted mind, that whoever dismisses him and his wrath, ultimately, as Paul puts it here, has no excuse.

Just as man has actively rejected God in his witness and creation, he is stripped of any defense he would have that would insulate him from the wrath of God because he ignores God in this way.

You might recall the end of the book of Job, Job's mouth and his complaints, they're silenced, they're silenced. When God reminds him of many things, including how he controls all the animals and the hydraulic cycle and everything else in nature, Job stops his complaining at that point.

[29 : 19] But every single man and woman can observe these same things for himself or herself, right? And yet, in doing so, he proceeds in irreverence rather than in repentance unless quickened by the Lord.

Man ignores God and is therefore deprived of defense. Well, the Almighty's justification that natural man is indefensible or in an indefensible position is further established in verse 21.

For Paul here says that even though man, despite how corrupted he is, knows God. Now, he doesn't know God in a relational sense, of course, but he knows he has this knowledge of God. He should at least perceive him in nature.

So he knows God in that sense and he is without excuse not only because he should know that, but he doesn't respond rightly to that knowledge.

If he did, he would both acknowledge the true God and he would rightly worship that God. This is how Paul puts it. They did not or they do not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

[30 : 29] I would personally translate honor as glorify or give glory to God. That's what natural, what man should do when he sees the power of God. For indeed, God has revealed both his might and his divinity to man and that should logically cause everyone to bow the knee to the Almighty.

Revelation 4.11 puts it this way. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created.

This should cause us to revere the Lord. And more so, when God gives us this general revelation, in many ways in doing so, it actually gives us material benefits that should produce gratitude.

Consider Acts 14.17 talking about the general revelation of God. Yet he did not leave himself without a witness. This is the general revelation. For he did good things by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and with gladness.

In God's common grace, he leaves both a witness about himself and in doing so, he allows the human race to function and even enjoy life.

[31 : 47] We're not just to be in awe of his power, but to be in debt for how he lets us live and even thrive. But this is not how man reacts.

Paul here reiterates part of the nature of man's suppression where he adds two things to this concept about how man is so corrupted. Man is corrupted intellectually here, he talks about in verse 21, and he's corrupted emotionally as well.

Because you see, in contrast to how men should respond, we said logically, man should respond by revering God when he understands God's power, but instead, Paul says, he's futile in his thinking, or they're futile in their thinking.

Whatever knowledge they have of God does not serve as the correct foundation for reasoning. That should lead, as we said, man to adore the Creator. Instead, the thought process becomes entirely corrupt, which leads to a foolish conclusion about God.

In rejecting the very foundation they have, for any understanding we can know about anything, about the universe and reality, which is God, they reject that entirely. It's foolishness, it's silly.

[33 : 02] And so in man's quest for true wisdom, he actually renders himself a fool. It's entirely futile. 1 Corinthians 3, 19 and 20, for the wisdom of this world is folly with God, for it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness.

And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, but they are what? They are futile. They are futile. Well, man's intellect is not the only thing that is touched, however, by his sin.

His emotion or what is intuitive or what is spiritual is also corrupt. Natural man has become entirely undone. You see, God should be at the center of everyone, of every man, of every person.

After all, all people are created in God's very image. He gave us all life and an environment in which to dwell. But in place of the throne that God should occupy in the heart of unregenerate men is simply darkness and emptiness.

As Paul once again puts it in this verse, their foolish hearts were darkened. and in place of the light of God's revelation something fills that vacuum.

[34 : 20] Falsehoods and corruptions seep in. They become under the slavery of sin and Satan. The true purpose of life to honor God is forgotten and the lusts of the world dominate.

Yet it gets worse. Not only does man not recognize the wretched path he is on, he's utterly convinced he is on the path to wisdom and enlightenment in his sin nature.

That's how Paul puts it in verse 22. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. Have you ever interacted with someone who not only doesn't know what he's talking about but he thinks he does?

And he compounds that even more by being oppressively arrogant despite being in error. or maybe some of us have even been that person in their lives.

But you know what? That's the description of the entire human race when it comes to God aside from his sovereign regeneration.

[35 : 25] Excuse me. In fact, the apostle Paul himself, the man writing this letter, is a pretty good example of this error. He says in Galatians 1.14, and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people.

So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my father. And he adds in Acts 26, or talking about him in Acts 26.9 where he's speaking, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

So Paul thought he was a pretty godly man. He was following after the orthodoxy of the Jewish religion, and he thought in doing so, in defending Yahweh, he would attack Yahweh by attacking the Lord Jesus Christ and his followers.

He was entirely wrong, and yet he thought he was entirely right in doing so. You see, when man follows this course of his corrupted reasoning, his tendency is to boast of his ability to understand the truth on his own, because he has essentially, though we wouldn't put it this way, but he has essentially deified himself.

He's made himself God. For man alone becomes the arbitrator of who God is, or even if he exists. God is the one on trial. For man can't inherently reason his way to ultimate truth, but he is convinced that he can.

[36 : 47] And then man further confirms his foolishness in this way, as Paul speaks in our final verse we have this morning. He makes a damnable exchange, if you excuse the language. Think about it this way.

The victim of a fraud feels some shame when he's defrauded. If I give over my wealth, my hard-earned money, or something valuable, and I get something counterfeit in return, I'd feel ashamed of that, or I should feel ashamed for that.

But man, man is boastful as he exchanges the worship of the true eternal God to the dumb idols of this world, perverse 23. Paul even goes into more detail in verse 25, where he talks about how man has traded the truth for a lie.

He bows down to creation rather than its maker, rather than the creator. Well, this portion of Romans, Romans chapter 1, is largely directed towards the Gentile people.

But Israel actually has a good example in their history of illustrating this mindset, this foolishness. You might recall the golden calf incident, where they bowed down to the golden calf in the book of Exodus.

[37 : 55] And the psalmist later on describes it this way in Psalm 106, 20. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. Israel saw the power and authority of God both in deliverance and in Sinai, and yet at this time they'd rather bow down to an image of some silly animal that spends its day gorging on grass rather than he who created the cow in the first place and created everything that has ever existed.

Exchanging a pagan idol or even materialistic passion, wealth, power, fame, everything else in this absurd transaction. And it's one that every single man makes outside the regenerating work of the Spirit makes this terrible exchange.

And it all flows back out of the suppression we see in verse 18. It does seem, though, the nature of this exchange actually is very much related to that suppression.

How much a person suppresses somewhat determines how deep he has found himself in idolatry. Take Roman Catholicism, for example. It's very close to the truth in some ways.

They would say they believe in the God of the Bible, believe in the Trinity, believe in the deity of Christ. But in departing from the truth of Scripture, it's essentially embraced a Christianized paganism with its icons and rituals and alternate authorities.

[39 : 23] And then you take another modern religion that's more pagan in its nature, Hinduism. They recognize some sort of divine power, some God of some sort, but they do pretty much what's clearly described in verse 23, turning animals into false gods to whom they give reverence instead of the true God.

And I would say the most extreme form of suppression leads to the most extreme form of idolatry, and that's atheism. And atheists would be aghast to hear that. They'd be pretty offended most likely.

What do you mean? We're the reasonable ones. We're the logical ones. We don't bow down to idols, but don't they? Because the pagans at least take creation and mold it into some sort of creature and then bow down to it.

The atheists don't even bother with that step. They just worship the creation by itself. They take science stripped of all divinity and are in awe of it. They look at the cosmos and are enthralled by it, how it spontaneously just came to be.

They are reverent towards an undirected process that supposedly brought forth all life and existence. Call that whatever you want, but I call that worship. But whichever direction man takes in his corrupted, ungoverned mind, he ultimately exchanges the truth for a lie, the creation for the creator, and idols for God Almighty.

[40 : 52] Well, to switch gears a little bit, if I were to ask you this morning to name one pharaoh of ancient Egypt by name, I think most of you, most populations, unless you're really interested in Egyptian history, would name Pharaoh Tutankhamen, or he's more affectionately known as King Tut.

That would probably be your choice, I'd imagine. And King Tutankhamen was actually a relatively unimportant Egyptian leader who died pretty young. I think he was around 19 when he died. But the reason why he has become so famous is because his tomb, to my knowledge, was pretty much the only one that's pretty much undisturbed into the modern era.

So in the 1920s, that's obviously pretty far back for us, but well after the end of the Egyptian Empire, Howard Carter and some others excavated his tomb and found pretty much all the treasures of him. And so posthumously, after his death, he's become the most famous of all the pharaohs, even though he wasn't that important during his life because he had all his treasures.

But this pharaoh, Tutankhamen, actually was responsible for one important policy change during his reign. And that is he restored the nation back to its worship of a pantheon of gods with a focus on its chief god, Amun or Amun or Amun-Ra, depending on the time period of the translation.

And you might ask, well, why is that relevant to the Bible in this passage this morning? And part of the reason is I would say, now this is not what everyone accepts, and I don't anticipate everyone agreeing, but I believe that his grandfather, or his great-grandfather, Tutankhamen's grandfather, great-grandfather, was the pharaoh of Exodus.

[42 : 27] The pharaoh of Exodus. And my discussion here doesn't hinge upon you agreeing with that, but I think it's interesting at least. And by that I mean this is the pharaoh whom Moses interacts with and won't let his people go and then is defeated at the Red Sea.

Well, Tutankhamen's grandfather was a man named Amun-Hotep III. And he had a son, logically, who was Amun-Hotep IV, who eventually became pharaoh. And this pharaoh, Amun-Hotep IV, inexplicably changed his name to Akhenaten, which literally means effective for Aten.

You might ask, why am I bringing up these strange Egyptian names? Well, this is why, without going into too much detail about this pharaoh. During his reign, he made a significant change to Egypt.

He removed all the other gods and he made there to be one god named Aten, who would be the sole god of Egypt, hence changing his name to Akhenaten, which means effective for Aten.

And here's how one hymn that either he wrote or one of his priests wrote, this is what it says, O sole god, beside whom there is none, you made the earth as you wished, you alone.

[43 : 41] Well, that sounds pretty similar to something you might read in the Psalms about the true god, about Yahweh. Now, I'm not suggesting that Aten got saved and became a believer in the god of Israel, in Yahweh.

I'm not suggesting that. There's no evidence of that. But what I am suggesting is if the timeline is correct, as a young man, then this pharaoh-to-be saw the god of Israel bring the Egyptian empire to its knees.

He understood that Egypt's gods were ineffective and the suppression of his idolatrous heart probably became a little less forceful, at least enough to recognize that there is only one God, maybe without truly understanding his identity.

Now, perhaps, as I said, the speculation's incorrect, but whatever happened, it's pretty clear that God pricked his heart in some manner, for you don't just overturn generations of theology and risk your own political authority on a whim.

Something happened there in his life, and I think it's seeing the power of God in the Exodus account. But that was only a brief period in Egyptian history. Most of Egyptian history was given over to this other polytheistic religion that pretty much perfectly depicts what we see in our present passage in verse 23.

[44 : 55] They regarded Pharaoh to be God on earth and the rest of their gods were these strange amalgamations of humans and beasts and birds and insects. Verse 23 tells us, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Well, we don't have time to go into more detail about this, but I think it's fairly obvious who they were ultimately worshipping when they bowed down to wicked rulers and these beastly idols and other pagan cultures do the same thing.

Because if you aren't worshipping God, then you're worshipping someone, and that someone is the prince of power of the air. All these systems are just really worshipping Satan wearing different masks.

But this isn't unique to just worshipping, pardon me, just the Egyptian culture and the pagan cultures after all. For we're told that the wrath of God is being poured out against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

everyone inherently suppresses the truth of God. We're ultimately the same as all these people.

[46 : 13] In this room today and in any room, there's literally two types of people. Ex-Satanists and Satanists.

not in the sense that we make a conscious decision to bow down to the deceiver. Even the Wiccans, the people who practice witchcraft, are offended if people say that they're Satanists, they worship Satan, because they disclaim Christian theology.

They say Satan's just a part of your theology. And I believe them when they say they're not consciously doing so, when they're not actively worshipping Satan. But they're effectively doing so, and so is everyone else who makes this damnable exchange.

change. Recall, our natural condition has always been to suppress the truth of God, because we are unrighteous and unable to reason or acknowledge the Almighty, or reason to or acknowledge the Almighty.

And therefore, we at all at one point made this corrupt exchange and were rightly under the wrath of God. We were His enemies, or to put it bluntly, we were Satanists.

[47 : 24] Of course, those who are given over to this wickedness sometimes express egregious manifestations of such corruption, provoking the wrath of God.

But it's important to remember, so did we. Our illumination, regeneration, and conversion could not have been born of our own will or righteousness, because like everyone else, our minds were futile, and our hearts were darkened.

It had to be a sovereign act of God that changed our condition. Consider Ephesians chapter 2. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, and God being rich in mercy because of the great love of which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

There is nothing of which we can boast. Instead, we should tremble at the wrath which should have been our fate, and praise the Lord for setting his electing love upon us, while desiring the same for everyone else who is still under the bondage of their own corrupt minds and being.

And perhaps, if you were someone here today who is still under such bondage, on the one hand, you're under a cloud of suppression, and even now, perhaps your mind is erecting every defense mechanism it can against this text and teaching.

[49 : 02] Yet, in this suppression, you confirm that you want Satan as your king. I don't mean this as an antagonistic statement, though I understand it sounds like it. We were no different if we were Christians.

Instead, I mean this as a warning. For if God has permitted you some illumination this morning, perhaps he'll allow you to see what an awful place this is to be. John 8, 44.

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks of his own character for he's a liar and the father of lies. And his lie is this, exchanging God for any form of idolatry leads to enlightenment and freedom.

What he's calling you to is to worship him instead of the true God, whether it's through pagan religions, empty materialism, or arrogant skepticism.

[50 : 07] He doesn't care. You're worshiping him in any way. But if you have ears to hear, there's a better way. The verse immediately preceding this passage, Romans 1, 17 says, For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith, for faith.

As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. And so the call here is respond in faith to the Christ who died, that you may be liberated from the corruption of your mind and the impending wrath of God.

Let's pray together. Father God, I praise you for your goodness, for the illuminating light of your word. I pray, Father God, that if there's anyone here, Lord, who has not been touched by the gospel previously, that you'd give them a renewing of their mind to see the truth of the scripture, that they worship a false god, they worship the dark one ultimately, however they understand it, that they may run in repentance and faith towards the Christ who can save them.

And for those of us here who have known God and know God, let us see that, Lord, we are no different, inherently corrupted and wicked, but, O Lord, let us glorify you in truth and righteousness that we see your power and work and your redemption in Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in the name of the Savior. Amen.