

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 1:18-23 - "The Heathen without Excuse"

Romans 1:18-23, *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."*

Paul has concluded his Introduction to Romans:

- His Salutation vs. 1-7
- His Personal Communication (vs. 8-15)
- His Transition to the Main Theme – The Gospel or Good News (vs. 16-17)

As powerful as this gospel is, there is one thing that it cannot do; it cannot save until a man sees himself a guilty, lost, and condemned sinner.

Having pronounced the *Universal Gospel* Paul now proceeds to show that there is a universal need for that gospel.

- If God sent His Son, it's because the world is lost in sin. Man's need of salvation is seen in the simple fact that there is a Saviour.
- If no one is drowning, why launch the life boats?
- If no one is sick, why send for the doctor.
- If no one is lost, why preach the gospel.

Before the good news, there was the bad news!

Today there is a weakness in much preaching today – lot' of sermons on the 'love of God' but not on 'the wrath of God'.

We now come to the first doctrinal section of Romans called: Condemnation – the wrath of God revealed.

Before the righteousness of God is revealed in salvation (vs. 17) we see God's wrath revealed in condemnation (vs. 18)

Chap 1:18-3:20

In this section, the question that is asked is, "Is the world lost?"

The answer is "yes", all the world is guilty before God (3:19)

It's not a very pretty picture but it's important for us to understand.

Hear ye! Hear ye! Court is now in session.

The first group Paul calls into the court room is the pagan, or heathen gentiles.

We see that they are (vs. 20) ". . . *that they are without excuse:*"

Notice the two reasons the heathen are without excuse:

I. They knew God, but suppressed the Truth (vs. 18-20)

Romans 1:18-20, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in righteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

Notice:

vs. 18 - *hold the truth*

vs. 19 - *known of God is manifest*

vs. 19 - *God hath shewed*

vs. 20 - *clearly seen*

vs. 20 - *understood*

vs. 21 - *they knew God*

So they clearly knew God but what does that mean?

Not redemption but revelation!

God has given every man a twofold revelation of Himself:

a) conscience (vs. 19) "...*in them;*"

b) creation (vs. 19) "...*unto them.*"

God's wrath is revealed (vs. 18)

What is the wrath of God?

It's not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people who God does not like.

Rather, it's the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin.

God is holy and righteous, His wrath is his holy hostility to evil, His refusal to condone it, or come to terms with it. But rather, it's His just judgment upon it.

Examples from Scripture:

1. Sodom & Gomorrah, The Flood
2. Sowing & reaping – the Natural law & the Moral law
3. at Calvary
4. Future wrath – the Book of Revelation

Notice verse 18, literally it is "being revealed"

How? – (vs. 24) God gives up!

Notice whom God's wrath is against (vs. 18):

1. all righteousness – toward God
2. unrighteousness – toward man

Why? – Literally they "hold down" the truth

Or suppress the truth

Why? (vs. 19) Conscience

How? (vs. 20) Creation

People often ask, "what about the heathen in the jungle without the Bible?"

Answer (vs. 20) God's general revelation in creation

It's in the present tense – continuous

It's Universal

Psalms 19:1-4, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,"

Notice the two things about God which are known through creation.

1. His Power – All Mighty
2. His Nature – God

The creation reveals the creator!

- The natural, the supernatural
- The visible, the invisible

They are without excuse!

There is no justification for atheism, agnosticism, or skepticism.

There is no defense on judgment day!

II. They Glorified Him not as God (vs. 21-23) – Perverted the Truth

Romans 1:21-23, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."

Notice that man steps downward

1. Indifference (vs. 21), *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, or New Living Translation: "... wouldn't worship him as God"*

2. Ingratitude (vs. 21), *"... neither were thankful;"*

3. Ignorance (vs. 21-22)

New Living Translation: *"... they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused, claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools."*

"wise" – Literally – 'sophos'

"fools" – Literally – morons

True wisdom starts with God. It's a fear, or reverence for Him.

George Washington Carver – "Mr. Creator, why did You make the peanut?" Many years later, he shared that God led him back to his laboratory and worked with him to discover some 300 marketable products from the peanut, including lard, mayonnaise, cheese, shampoo, instant coffee, flour, soap, face powder, plastics, adhesives, axle grease, and pickles. Likewise, from the sweet potato he made more than 100 discoveries, among them starch, library paste, vinegar, shoe blacking, ink, and molasses. These new products created a demand for peanuts and sweet potatoes. Economists and agriculturalists agree that Carver contributed more than any other individual to rejuvenate the Southern economy.

Carver died in 1942 and was buried with the epitaph, "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."

4. Idolatry (vs. 23)

Notice a few of the 10 commandments: Exodus 20:3,4

Exodus 20:3-4, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:"*

Notice the folly of Idolatry

Evolutionists say religion developed in a process like this: When man was primitive (when he had graduated from the ape tribe, lost his tail, quit climbing trees), he felt an impulse to worship something, so he took a stick, carved out an image, and began to worship that. That was the first step. As his intellectual powers grew, he began to make moral distinctions, saying, "This is right, and that is wrong." The next step in his reasoning process was to realize that the rain and the seasons must come from one or more superhuman beings and so he gave thanks to gods for their gifts. From that point he rose to the conception of the true God and became a monotheist.

So man has not evolved upward in his understanding of God.

These ancient people took a path of seven steps downward:

1. They knew God, but refused to honor Him. *"Knowing God, they glorified him not as God."*
2. They were not thankful for God's goodness to them. *"Neither gave thanks."*
3. They began speculating foolishly, *"Because vain in their reasonings."*
4. Their minds became senseless and darkened. *"Their senseless heart was darkened."*
5. They thought they were wise. *"Professing themselves to be wise."*
6. In reality, they had become very foolish. *"They became fools."*
7. Instead of worshiping the eternal God, they preferred idols patterned after mortal man. *"They changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man."*

How does a man get back to God?

He will not find his own way back!

Jesus the greatest revelation of God said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6)

John 1:12-13, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*