

## Divine Wrath Revealed – Part 2

Romans 1:19-21

Beloved, never underestimate the blessing, the gift of corporate worship especially in song. And also the gift of hearing the Word preached.

To that end we take our Bibles and return to Romans chapter one. This is part two in a series that I have entitled, “Divine Wrath Revealed.” Let me read this section of Scripture to you. I will be focusing on verses 19 through 21. We will get a running start here in verse 16 of Romans one.

The apostle Paul says:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.<sup>1</sup>

As we study the Word of God we begin to see very quickly, especially in this text, that man has an innate hatred of all who have authority over them including his Creator. It is built in within us. From birth every child is naturally rebellious. He defies authority, demands his own way. And any parent will tell you, if they are honest, that without strict discipline his selfish foolishness will destroy him and everyone around him.

Every human being ever born save Jesus of Nazareth rebels against his Creator and lives primarily to satisfy the lusts of his flesh, the lust of the eye, the boastful pride of life.

Scripture teaches that because of Adam’s sin in the garden, the entire human race was plunged into sin, Romans 5:12. And every child is conceived in a state of sin and depravity.

The psalmist made that clear when he said in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”<sup>2</sup>

Quoting Psalm 14 the apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 3:10:

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:16-21.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 51:5.

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THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.<sup>3</sup>

And in verse 18 he says, “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”<sup>4</sup>

As a child matures he will naturally be ruled by—according to Ephesians 2:3—the lusts of his flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And then the apostle Paul closes that section and says that we are all by nature children of wrath.

Parents, when you look at your precious child, understand that God has made it abundantly clear that sin has penetrated his little heart, corrupted his very being including his body, his mind, his will, even his heart, which, according to Jeremiah in chapter 17 and verse nine, “is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”<sup>5</sup>

Unless your child is born again and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, he will join the masses in a march to hell. According to Ephesians chapter four beginning in verse 17 we read that together they will, quote:

...walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.<sup>6</sup>

I would submit to you that the greatest form of child abuse is the failure to teach these things to your child and lead them to an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of his depraved nature, Scripture tells us that every man is capable of committing the very worst sins as we will see in our study in Romans chapter one verses 18 and following. Scripture teaches that even when a man does right, it is for motivations other than to glorify God. Therefore, his actions are ultimately displeasing to him.

In 2 Timothy 3:4 we read that men are, “lovers of pleasure [not] lovers of God.”<sup>7</sup>

The unsaved are utterly bereft of that love for God that is necessary to fulfill the most basic requirement of God’s law, which is to love him supremely. Unsaved man is incapable of that. The unsaved will continue to spiral downward in morality, never upward.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:10-12.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 3:18.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 17:9.

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 4:17.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Timothy 3:4.

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Paul says in 2 Timothy three verse 13 that “evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”<sup>8</sup>

And, worst of all, the unsaved have no possible means of salvation or recovery in themselves. Jesus made that so clear in Matthew 19 verse 26. He says, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”<sup>9</sup>

The bottom line, unless God does something, unless God saves a man by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that man will be damned to an eternal hell.

Now, all of these truths that God has revealed to us in his Word are truths that men not only despise with a seething contempt, but also man will spend his entire life trying to suppress, trying to refute and trying to forget all of these things. And, certainly, Satan gives a myriad of things in this world that will help him do just that, different philosophies, different anesthetizers. Why do you think we have so many television channels and so many football games and so many malls?

Man is trying to deny the truth of his guilt before a holy God. And because of this, God speaks through his apostle in verse 18 of Romans one and says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”<sup>10</sup>

Now, once again, bear in mind that Paul is writing this letter to the Romans to help them understand very clearly the gospel of God. And now beginning in verse 18 all the way through chapter three in verse 20 he focuses on why the gospel is such incredibly good news. He begins by explaining the bad news that man is sinful and stands guilty and condemned before an infinitely holy and righteous God. And in verse 18 he begins with a message of warning concerning three things. Let me remind you of them and then we are going to build on them this morning.

First he reminds them of the nature of divine wrath. That is, that settled determined righteous indignation of God that is provoked by sin, a wrath that is constantly being revealed. It is perpetually being manifested. We know that because we see it in God’s moral order. You will recall that he has established both a physical as well as a moral order. And even as his physical universe has within it fixed, inviolable, inexorable laws, so, too, does his moral order. There is a built in consequence for sin that is the law of sowing and reaping and so forth.

And also we know that God personally intervenes from time to time and ultimately he will intervene and judge those who rebel against him. So Paul speaks of the nature of divine wrath.

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Timothy 3:13.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 19:26.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 1:18.

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Secondly, the origin of divine wrath. We see that it is revealed from heaven, heaven being synonymous with God's throne. God's wrath emanates from his throne where he rules in absolute sovereignty. And, thirdly, he speaks of the object of divine wrath. It is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. In other words, his wrath is going to be revealed against those whose nature and lifestyle are constantly restraining, suppressing the truth of who God is and who they are in light of his holiness and they will do this in their unrighteousness.

Even as the horse has a nature that causes him to eat grass and a dog has a nature that says, "No, I don't want grass here. I want meat," so, too, man has a nature that is sinful. Man has a nature that is ultimately opposed to God. That is just the way he is. He prefers his own sinful foolish agenda over worshiping his Creator.

And it is for this reason that man is the object of divine wrath.

And now this brings us to where we are at this morning in verses 19 through 21 where he describes, fourthly, the basis for divine wrath.

I have made this real simple. There is two reasons why God is justified in his wrath. When people ask you, "Well, I just can't believe that God would be a God of wrath, a God of judgment. Why on earth would he do this? What is the basis for his wrath?"

You can answer them with these two statements. First of all, because of man's rejection of divine revelation. And, secondly, because of man's invention of asinine religions. It is easy to remember, because of man's rejection of divine revelation and, secondly, because of man's invention of asinine religions.

Today we are going to look at man's rejection of revelation. Notice again in verse 18 he talks about those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, his wrath being revealed against them. And in verse 19 he says, "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."<sup>11</sup>

This is fascinating.

"That which is known about God is evident within them."<sup>12</sup>

Now what is he saying here? He is saying that in the depraved nature of every human being, God has incorporated an awareness of his existence, an innate knowledge that God is the Creator. Every man knows that ultimately God is the Creator and that he is accountable to him even though he can't stand it.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 1:19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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Man is incurably religious, isn't he? Anthropologists have seen this down through history. They acknowledge that all people groups have some sort of religion. They worship some kind of God. They place their faith in something.

I remember asking some of my dear friends in Siberia what they Communists worshipped since they denied God. And I loved one of the answers. One of my brothers said, "The state. They worship the state. They worship the collective good." Then he went on to add, "And the leaders worship themselves ." And then he finally added, "Although, down deep, everyone knows there is a God."

This is what the Holy Spirit is saying to the apostle.

"That which is known," which could be translated, "That which is knowable." That which is knowable about God is evident within them. It is built in. You see, no man is totally ignorant of God. We have been made in his image. All men know he exists. Even the most ardent Atheist knows that. But the unsaved man is going to rebel against it. He is going to suppress that truth in unrighteousness.

The fool is forever trying to convince himself that there is no God so he won't have to be responsible to him, to somehow silence his conscience. That is why the psalmist said in Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"<sup>13</sup>

In fact, according to Romans chapter two and verse 14 we learn that the unsaved who reject God will, quote, "do instinctively the things of the Law."<sup>14</sup>

Well, that is interesting. In verse 15 Paul goes on to say, "They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."<sup>15</sup>

So, every man has some innate knowledge of God, yet he suppresses that. He tries to silence his conscience. And it is for this reason, dear friends, that God is justified in his wrath.

Now notice how God apart from special revelation, apart from Scripture has revealed himself and made himself evident to man. There is really two ways if you want to summarize it this way, through creation and through conscience, through creation and through conscience.

First of all through creation. He has revealed himself through creation which is sometimes called general revelation or natural revelation because it is through nature.

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 14:1.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 2:14.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 2:15-16.

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I want to give you a footnote here. In verses 16 and 17 Paul is speaking of God's revelation in the gospel, the special revelation. But now in verses 19 and 20 he is going to make a transition to special or from special to general revelation.

Notice verse 20.

He says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."<sup>16</sup>

There are so many examples of this. One that I would remind you of, have you noticed how all calendars are built on seven days? It would have been so much easier to use 10 as the basic number, but it is built upon seven all around the world.

Well, what is that? That is a perpetual reminder that God is the one who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them and he did that in six days and on the seventh day he rested, a perpetual reminder.

But it is interesting, he talks about this invisible attributes. This is really summarized in the two phrases, "his eternal power and divine nature."

In 1 Timothy 1:17 Paul refers to him as "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God."<sup>17</sup>

God is invisible to us. In John one and verse 18 we read that "No man has seen God at any time."<sup>18</sup> And certainly this is true. No man has ever seen God in his essence, in his spirit being. Although he did assume visible form from time to time in the Old Testament times and certainly in Jesus men could see God. Otherwise he is invisible. He is invisible to us although that is true, he is also the almighty God, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Consummator of all things.

But since the creation of the universe man has been able to behold our invisible Creator by looking at his divine power. All we have to do is just look up into the sky and see the constellations, the stars and behold the fixed order of the heavenly bodies as they careen through space in their predetermined courses.

We have all seen these things. And this may have caused Paul to even be reminded of what the prophet Amos referred to in Amos 5:8 where he spoke of God as the one "who made the Pleiades and Orion And changes deep darkness into morning, Who also darkens day into night, Who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the surface of the earth, The LORD is His name."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 1:20.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 1:17.

<sup>18</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>19</sup> Amos 5:8.

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Think how God has revealed the invisible attribute of his divine power in the vastness of his creation. There is a website that has been going around. I have seen it. I have been fascinated with it. It is on one of my little favorite buttons. You might want to look it up. But it is a graphic of the scale of the universe. And it allows you to zoom from the furthest, largest part of our known universe all the way down to the smallest. It allows you to see, the way I put it, outer space all the way down to the smallest elementary particle called a quark Q U A R K which is one of the building blocks that builds up matter.

From the macro to the micro, from the telescope down to the microscope, from the biggest to the smallest.

Now if you are thinking about ratios and you are thinking of maybe the ratio of our solar system down to an atom, beloved, you are not even close. Our solar system that our earth is in is basically like an atom in the known universe. And the earth is like an atom of an atom and a quark is unimaginably smaller than an atom.

They tell us that the estimated size of the universe is 900 yottameters. That is 93 billion light years in diameter. Just so that you will remember your physics, how much is a light year? A light year is basically six trillion miles. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. And a light year is the distance that light can travel in one year which is about six trillion miles. So take 93 billion times six trillion miles and that is the estimated size of the universe.

But the observable universe, what we can see isn't 900 yottameters. It is only 140 yottameters in diameter. That is 14 billion light years across, 140 yottameters.

But guess what? The galactic super cluster that we live in, it is only 1.5 yottameters. So we have gone from 900 to 140 now down to just 1.5, a mere 150 million light years in diameter. That is one with 24 zeros after it.

In this website you are able to zoom in to earth and when you zoom in to earth you haven't even reached the midway point of the size scale. Earth is merely an infinitesimal atom in our tiny little galaxy. As I looked it, the midpoint of the size scale of the known universe is about a salt crystal which is 0.5 millimeters. Now that is the midpoint. Now you can start going in the other direction.

We start getting smaller on the same scale. You look at a salt crystal and then you keep zooming in, zooming in and it shows you all kinds of things, but you begin to see something far smaller than a salt crystal. You can see white blood cells. And then you keep going and going and going and you see, for example, the largest virus and that is nothing compared to how small the nucleus is of an atom that you will eventually see. And then we keep going and going and going and finally you get to an electron and finally once you get to the end you get to the quark.

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They even have a thing beyond that called quantum foam which is the fabric in Einstein's space time theory.

It is interesting that an atom itself is largely space. Can you believe that? It is largely space. Its actual matter takes up only one trillionth of its volume. That is like the space our earth's solar system occupies in our galaxy. There is therefore a ratio of space here that exists within every atom and by comparison our whole solar system could exist inside one atom.

Well, let me give you some perspective. Guess what? There are three atoms in every molecule of water. And I thought, well, that is interesting. I wonder how many molecules are in a drop of water. Give me something I can deal with here.

One scientist put it this way to answer that question, quote, "If all the molecules in one drop of water were the size of a grain of sand..."

We are not talking atoms now here. Let me back up. We are talking just the molecule. If all the molecules in one drop of water were the size of a grain of sand they could make a road one foot thick and a half a mile wide that would stretch from Los Angeles to New York.

Amazing, isn't it?

Beloved, we cannot even begin to conceive how large our universe is. What we can observe is utterly astonishing.

And the universe that we can see isn't even close to the third heaven that Scripture talks about where God lives. We cannot fathom, either, how small things could be. Talk about eternal power.

The earth is 25,000 miles in circumference and yet it travels through space at 66,700 miles per hour. It spins at 1000 miles per hour and it is tipped at 23 and a half degrees in its orbit on its axis and its axis is what determines our seasons. If that degree were even minutely changed in one way or the other we would either burn or freeze. And our earth is suspended in space with no support. It orbits the sun at a speed of 1000 miles per minute in an orbit that is 580 million miles long.

Our minds just short circuit, don't they? You begin to see smoke coming out your ears when you think of these things. To imagine the sheer size and the intricate design of what God has created. Truly, as we read earlier in Psalm 19:1:

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Psalm 19:1-2.



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And, beloved, it is for this reason that the Spirit of God speaks through his apostle and in verse 20 says, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”<sup>21</sup>

Now we haven’t even begun to talk about the intimate complexities of biological systems and organisms, plants and animals and bacteria, amoeba, that single celled protozoan organism or human beings. Let’s talk about that for just a moment. Let’s talk about the human eye.

Lawrence Richards says this, quote, “The human eye is enormously complicated, a perfect and interrelated system of about 40 individual sub systems including the retina, pupil, iris, cornea, lens and optic nerve. For instance, the retina has approximately 137 million special cells that respond to light and send messages to the brain. About 130 million of these cells look like rods and handle the black and white vision. The other seven million are cone shaped and allow us to see in color. The retina cells receive light impressions which are translated to electric pulses and sent to the brain via the optic nerve. A special section of the brain called the visual cortex interprets the pulses to color, contrast, depth, et cetera, which allows us to see, quote, pictures of our world including, incredibly, the eye, optic nerve and visual cortex are totally separate and distinct subsystems. Yet together they capture, deliver and interpret up to 1.5 million pulse messages a millisecond. It would take dozens of cray super computers programmed perfectly and operating together flawlessly to even get close to performing this task. Obviously of all the separate subsystems aren’t present and performing perfectly at the same instant the eye won’t work. It has no purpose. Logically it would be impossible for random processes operating through gradual mechanisms of natural selection and genetic mutation to create 40 separate subsystems when they provide to the whole until the very last state of development and enter relation.”

Another scientist responds accordingly, an Ali Dimersoy says this. Quote, “How did the lens, retina, optic nerve and all the other parts and vertebrates that play a role in seeing suddenly come about?”

Well, that is a great question, isn’t it?

He says, “Because natural selection cannot choose separately between the visual nerve and the retina. The emergence of the lens has no meaning in the absence of a retina.”

I love this. He says, “The simultaneous development of all the structures for sight is unavoidable. Since parts that develop separately cannot be used, they will both be meaningless and also perhaps disappear with time. At the same time their development all together requires the coming together of unimaginably small probabilities,” end quote.

And you want me to believe that all of this just happened, that all of this just happened randomly? Are you kidding me?

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<sup>21</sup> Romans 1:20.

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A couple of years ago I was at the zoo with my grandchildren and some other relatives. And I am always fascinated with monkeys. And we were watching the monkeys jump around and we were talking about them and there happened to be a man and his wife that were there. And he was a biology professor at a college and he began to launch into what he was convinced was a very erudite and compelling explanation of the evolution of the monkeys who he explained were our distant cousins.

And, I must confess, I did see some resemblance there in my family.

But as I listened to the poor man, I was thinking of this text. You know, the only explanation for someone to deny such overwhelming evidence of a Creator is if they have another agenda, because this man was not unintelligent. This man had an agenda that causes him to deliberately refuse to embrace the obvious. He, like so many others, suppress the truth in unrighteousness, the truth that God has built right into his very nature, the truth about God that God reveals within him as well as without him, outside of him.

God reveals himself in what we can touch and what we can hear and smell and taste and see. That is why in verse 20 he says, “Man is without excuse.”

So, beloved, herein is the basis for divine wrath. Herein is why God is justified in his wrath, because man has rejected God’s revelation of himself in creation.

But not only in creation, but also, secondly, in conscience, meaning man is trying to constantly silence his conscience.

Verse 21.

“For even though they knew God...”<sup>22</sup>

In other words, fallen man knows God in his conscience. The law is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, chapter two verse 15, as we read earlier.

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”<sup>23</sup>

Now this is basically a clarification as well as an amplification of verse 18. This is how man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness and explains even more why he is without excuse. And here Paul really speaks of four ways that man rejects God’s revelation of himself in creation, four ways that he tries to silence his conscience that attests to God’s rule over him.

First of all he says here that they did not honor him as God.

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 1:21.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

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So, number one, he refuses to honor him as God. Honor is a term in the original language, *doxazw* (dox-ad'-zo). We get doxology from that. It means to praise, to give glory. What he is saying here is that man refuses to acknowledge him as their creator and give him the praise that is worthy of his name.

Can you imagine going into the Sistine Chapel and seeing that incredible artwork and saying, "Boy, that is interesting how all that just came together over the years," and not giving Michelangelo some credit for painting it?

Now, translate that into the universe.

So what we have here is they refuse to honor him as God. This is why God has created us in the first place to give him glory, is it not to give him glory, to offer him praise. We celebrate all that he has done for us, all that he has created.

The Lord made this clear when he said to Moses in Leviticus 10 and verse three, he says, "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy,"<sup>24</sup> in other words, utterly separate, utterly transcendent, utterly other, beyond your imagination other.

And then he says, "And before all the people I will be honored."<sup>25</sup>

Psalm 29 verse one.

"Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name."<sup>26</sup>

You see, to ignore our creator or, worse yet, insist that he doesn't even exist is the supreme insult to him.

When Jesus returns he says in Matthew 24:30, "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory."<sup>27</sup>

You see, it is because of God wanting to be glorified that Jesus came, died, rose again and has ascended to the right hand of the Father and that has saved a redeemed group of people to the praise of his glory. And because of that, Paul tells us in Philippians two and verse nine that:

God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of

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<sup>24</sup> Leviticus 10:3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 29:1-2.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 24:30.

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those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>28</sup>

It makes it real clear. But not only does man try to silence his conscience by refusing to give honor to God, but, secondly, he refuses to give God thanks.

Think about it. How often when you go to a restaurant do you see people pray before their meal? It is a supreme insult, isn't it, when you give someone something of great value and they have no desire to thank you and just turn around and walk away.

Think about it. Despite all of the blessings our Creator God has given us in our life, for the unregenerate, for the proud they are completely ungrateful. They have no desire to give him thanks.

Thirdly, he silences his conscience by concocting futile speculations. This refers to foolish, useless, godless reasoning about life and about God.

Think of the theory of evolution. Talk about futile, foolish, that order comes out of chaos?

I love the way John MacArthur puts it. Nobody times nothing equals everything? Do you expect me to believe that?

Think of all the idiotic forms of religion. We are going to talk about this more next time we get together. Reincarnation, people starving and they won't eat a cow because they think it is grandpa.

It is pitiful, isn't it? I mean, we laugh, but it is pitiful. People worshipping trees and little fat guys with pot bellies, little statues, you know? People blowing themselves up thinking there is going to be 70 virgins awaiting them in a heavenly paradise. It is insane.

I think of Freudian psychoanalytic theory I studied a number of years ago all about the id and the ego and superego, all of these bizarre explanations and also very immoral, trying to help us understand why we do the things we do.

You know, that still has enormous influence on the world of psychiatry. In fact, I looked it up on the internet. If I was going to Harvard this spring and studying this I would be given a course called Introduction to Psychoanalysis. I notice one of the required reading includes *Freud and Man's Soul*. Well, that would be good. The course objective is, quote, "Students will be expected to develop a basic mastery of the fundamental concepts and their application in clinical practice as well as a critical eye toward evaluating the nature of psychodynamic thought," end quote.

Futile speculations.

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<sup>28</sup> Philippians 2:9-11.

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You know, man continues to spiral downward in deviancy. He never spirals upwards in morality. We are experiencing devolution here, not evolution. We are going the other way. That is because of these futile speculations.

I was reminded... I was thinking this through of Colossians 2:8 where Paul warns, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

“They became futile in their speculations.”<sup>30</sup>

Their explanations, their reasoning is futile, meaning it is useless. It is empty. It is vain. It is worthless.

And when a person reaches this stage of life, no matter how well educated, he is living in a world that is meaningless, that is hopeless, that is dark.

And, therefore, fourthly, we see man has a heart that is darkened. His foolish heart is darkened.

I think of Jesus’ words in John 12 and verse 35 where he said, “Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.”<sup>31</sup>

You see, when man gets to this stage in his sinfulness, he prefers darkness over light because his deeds were evil. His whole life becomes gothic. Are you familiar with that? Do you see that? You go the mall and you see these poor kids walking around with stuff poked in them and tattoos everywhere and they are wearing these horribly dark things. It is so sad.

Darkness always replaces light, doesn’t it? And what this is referring to is the darkness of those who are not only spiritually blind, but also those who have been doubly blinded by Satan. Scripture speaks of those dead in their trespasses and sins. This is referring to spiritual cadavers, people who are like a corpse incarcerated in a tomb that is, therefore, absolutely, totally pitch black, utterly bereft of any light.

Beloved, this is a foretaste of hell, what Jesus called outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These are the ones Jesus described in Matthew 6:23 whose whole nature is so corrupt that darkness actually emanates from within them and thereby characterizes their whole being. He says this in that text.

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<sup>29</sup> Colossians 2:8.

<sup>30</sup> Romans 1:21.

<sup>31</sup> John 12:35.

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“If... the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”<sup>32</sup>

These things define men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God has given them a manifestation of himself through creation and through conscience. They reject it and therefore because of these things his wrath is poured out upon them.

Now in closing this morning I want to answer a question that I often hear and some of you may be thinking it.

The question is this. Well, now, wait a minute. What about those people who live in remote parts of the world and they have never heard the gospel? All they have is general revelation. They know nothing of Christ. How can God be justified in sentencing them to an eternal hell when they never had a chance to hear the truth? Have you ever heard that? Maybe you are thinking that.

I have heard that many times. Let me answer it rather briefly.

Number one, you must remember that God is perfectly just in all that he does.

Secondly, know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23. All men are by nature sinners. Therefore they are guilty and they are condemned.

But, thirdly, all men as we have studied this morning, have both internal as well as external evidence that God exists. Internally, as we have studied here in verse 19, “That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”<sup>33</sup>

He has revealed himself internally through conscience, verse 21, as well as chapter two and verse 15 and other texts as well as externally through creation.

But, fourthly, and this gets to the very heart of the question. Even as God’s natural revelation shines through the entirety of the world, it goes to the ends of the world, so, too, his special revelation, the gospel will certainly reach all whom he has chosen to be saved, all who, according to Jeremiah 29:13 seek and search for him with all of their hearts.

Let me put this in perspective.

In Romans chapter 10 verse 17 Paul says, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

And, of course, the argument here by some is, “Well, what about those that never get to hear about Christ?”

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew 6:23.

<sup>33</sup> Romans 1:19.

<sup>34</sup> Romans 10:17.

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Anticipating that very question he asks a rhetorical question in verse 18. He says, “But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?”<sup>35</sup>

To which he replies, “Indeed they have.”<sup>36</sup> And then he quotes Psalm 19:4.

He says, “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”<sup>37</sup>

This is referring to the voice of God’s revelation of himself through natural revelation. Paul’s point is simply this. Even as God’s revelation of himself in creation has gone out to the ends of the world, so his gospel has done the same. It reaches the ends of the world.

My friends, there will never be a man who will stand before God and be able to say, “If I had only heard the gospel, then I would have believed.”

God’s reply would be basically this. “No, no. I revealed myself to you in your conscience and you suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. I revealed myself to you in creation and you could see my eternal power, but in your pride you suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. Had you not done so, I would have caused you to see the light of the gospel. In fact, Jesus promised in Matthew 24:14, ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations.’<sup>38</sup> That included your nation, your people group.”

In John 1:9 we read that he who is “the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”<sup>39</sup>

“No, you had an opportunity to see me, to seek me, to search for me with all your heart. You had all of the evidence you needed. I saw to that. But instead you chose to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. You loved darkness rather than light because your deeds were evil. So you are without excuse.”

And, beloved, may I warn you of something here? That line of questioning is hideously arrogant. He is God and you are not. He is perfectly just in all that he does. How dare you impugn the character of God by suggesting that somehow he is not fair?

We will never understand why or even how, but Scripture is clear that God chooses some, but not all. And certainly we know that all that he chooses will be saved. Jesus said in John 6:37, for example, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Romans 10:18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 24:14.

<sup>39</sup> John 1:9.

<sup>40</sup> John 6:37.

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Beloved, God's saving purposes, as mysterious as they may be to us, are always perfectly just. And they can never be thwarted. Do you really think that God maybe limited in his ability to save those whom he has chosen in eternity past? Do you really think that? The God that has created all of these things and sustains all of these things that he may have a problem here, that there may be someone out there who needs to hear the gospel, but it is... he just can't get anybody to go get it to them. Do you really think that God is that small? What planet do you live on?

Think of the arrogance in the question: How can God sentence them to an eternal hell? They never had a chance to hear the truth.

Rather than that, say, "Oh, God, I am so thankful that you are perfectly righteous in all of your ways. I am so thankful that your saving purposes could never be thwarted. I am so thankful that even in your wrath against sinners you were justified. And, above all, I am thankful that Jesus bore your wrath in my place."

You see, that is the attitude to have.

I think of our dear brother Elijah who will be here in the coming weeks for about a month. When he was 10 years old in the remote regions of the Dinka tribe in Sudan herding his father's cows, he knew that there was a God, but didn't understand who he was. All of those people worship some form of a god because they knew he exists. All you had to do is look around to see, put a seed in the ground and look what comes out. Grass. And these animals eat the grass and we drink their milk and eat their meat. I mean, there is something going on there.

Well, God in his grace sent a missionary who told that little 10 year old boy about the gospel of Christ and he believed and was saved.

Think of the mystery of your own salvation, dear friends. Think of that, the circumstances for each one of us will all be different, but there is one common thread. There was a powerful God who found us and saved us by his grace.

Jesus says, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, that wind will blow through the entirety of this world until God has saved all of those he has chosen to save for his glory. May we all rejoice this morning in God's amazing commitment to reveal himself to us through creation, through our conscience and we all respond to the praise of his glory, trusting in his gospel of grace to save us from the wrath that we so justly deserve. Let's pray together.

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<sup>41</sup> John 3:8.



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*Father, these truths are overwhelming to us and all we can say is, “Thank you, Jesus, for saving our soul.” Thank you, Lord, for making us whole. Thank you, Lord, for giving to us your great salvation, so rich and free. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*

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