

The Exchange of God for Nothing

Romans 1:18-23 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ 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. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

❖ Intro

- **Let's Try to take this text today... one verse at a time...**
 - Paul is arguing the point...
 - Why it is reasonable that God's wrath is being revealed from heaven

❖ Recap

- **The Centrality of the Gospel in Romans... Oh... It's great need!**
 - Obligated to preach the Gospel
 - Eager to preach the Gospel
 - Unashamed to preach the Gospel
 - The Gospel is the Power of God to Save
 - The Gospel is for Everyone
 - The Gospel Reveals the Righteous nature of God
 - The Gospel is received by Faith
- **Last Sermon in Romans:**
 - **Paul then begins to show why that gospel is so important!**
 - The Wrath of God Revealed from Heaven:
 - 1) God's Wrath is Against Man
 - 2) God's Wrath is Against all Ungodliness
 - 3) God's Wrath is Against all Unrighteousness
 - 4) God's Wrath is Against Men Who Suppress the Truth
 - 5) God's Wrath is Revealed...
 - How is God's Wrath Revealed
 - 1) Conscience 2) Sin 3) Death 4) Nature 5) History 6) Cross 7) Future
 - How does it now serve the person saved by the Gospel?

❖ Verses Built on the Premise: The Wrath of God Revealed from Heaven

- **Remember where the argument is coming from...**
 - Also... remember... you are man... and we are the reason for the wrath of God...
 - Do not... Do not fail to take these verses personally...
- **Paul is making the point that all people everywhere throughout all time...**
 - Are without excuse... there is no excuse for them not to honor God as God...
- **You may be tempted this morning...**
 - To say... I am a Christian... this does not apply to me...
 - But Paul is making this point to all of mankind...
- **Granted... It is true... that if you have repented of your sins...**
 - And have trusted in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul...
 - Having been born Again by the spirit of God...
 - Then... you are in no danger of the wrath of God...

➤ **Why?**

- Because... Jesus has taken on the wrath of God for you...
 - Therefore... The wrath of God that is being revealed from heaven...
 - ◆ Is now... in many ways serving you...
 - ◆ Death serves you by bringing you to Jesus
 - ◆
- **But never forget...** we were all at one time children of wrath...
 - Paul says this in **Ephesians 2:3** **Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

➤ **So... why do I make this distinction...**

- **1) B/c some of you in here need to be brought under the conviction of God's Spirit**
- That you are indeed in danger of the wrath of God being revealed on you
 - On you in particular...
 - And you will see this morning that you have no excuse for not:
 - ◆ Honoring God as God
- **2) Secondly: If you have trusted in Jesus to take God's wrath on Himself for you...**
 - Then you are in no danger of God's wrath...
 - But... you must remember 2 things...
 - 1) God will discipline his children...
 - ◆ And you need to look carefully at these characteristic of sinful man today...
 - ◆ And make sure they are not true of you... not even in the slightest degree...
 - ◆ And as you examine yourself... repent of the rebellion you see in your heart...
 - 2) As you begin to evaluate your own heart...
 - ◆ Remember... that you must remain in the faith... you must remain faithful
 - ◆ If you find that you are not... then you are in danger of being a false fruit...
 - ◆ You must remain in your believing... and living out that belief... Remember
 - **Romans 11:22** ²² **Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.**

❖ **1) God Has Made Himself Known**

- ¹⁹ **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.**

➤ **Very Straight Forward verse...**

- Paul is making a statement... He is arguing a point here...
- And then he is going to prove it...
- *He says... God's wrath is coming... because men suppress the truth with their unrighteous deeds...*
 - They act like they do not know God, or his truth...
 - But that is not true... Because... God has made it plain to them

➤ **What can be known about God**

- And in a minute he is going to detail out what He means about
 - ◆ What can be known about God...

- But first he makes two arguments men about knowing God...

➤ **1) Plain to them**

- this means it is evident... widely known...
 - its like those geico commericals... did you know you could save 15% on car insurance... and the person says... yeah... everybody knows that...
- **Did you know?**

- Only 2.4% of Americans consider themselves Atheists
 - ◆ That is interesting... you would think it were higher...
- 3.3 consider themselves agnostic... it just means they think there is probably a Supreme being out there... but it can not be known
- 14.4% consider themselves nothing in particular...
- **The overwhelming majority of our country and the world believe there is a God**
 - Some sort of divine being...
- **Note: I do not think that Paul is arguing this...**
 - I do not think the problem is that people are not religious...
 - **As a matter of fact... He would go into a place preaching...**
 - ◆ This is in the book of Acts...
 - ◆ **Acts 17:22,23** "So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects."For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.
- What we will see later... is that man's worship... Did not honor God as God...
 - We will come back to that...
- **2) God has shown it to them...**
 - Now... interestingly... this word means:
 - He has made it know to them...
 - **Paul is not saying...** it could be known if they looked a little harder...
 - If they read a little more, or searched a bit more...
 - **Rather...** He has shown it to them...
 - He has caused it to be made known clearly to the mind senses and judgment...
- **Ok... so that is Paul's first argument...**
 - God's wrath is being revealed... but... what can be known about God...
 - It is evident... it is plain to man... and God has shown it to them

❖ 2) Man is Without Excuse Because God Made it Clear

- **²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.**
- **So, they are without excuse**
 - Man has nothing to say... Man has no defense...
 - Not you or me... or the person down the street... or the person in China... or the person living in the most remote part of the world, cut off from civilization
 - ◆ We have no excuse for not knowing that God is...
- **Why?**
 - **Invisible attributes clearly perceived...** or clearly seen
 - So... hear... Paul is saying... there are things about God... that He has made clear...
 - What are they? His invisible attributes...
 - ◆ At first reading... that seems like a joke right? Or am I the only one to see that...
 - **Paul is saying...** His invisible attributes have been clearly perceived...
 - ◆ You can clearly see.... That which is invisible... invisible means unseen
 - ◆ You can see that which is unseen....
 - **But... this is amazing here...**
 - Even that which is invisible about God... is clearly seen...
 - God's glory is so great and mighty, that even his attributes that are invisible...

- ◆ Are standing out in the world around us so much...
- ◆ That they are clearly seen...

▪ **Illustration:**

- **Now... when I was in college... I was hanging out with a friend one evening...**
 - ◆ And it got pretty late... so I took this friend home...
 - ◆ But... it was really late... so I was tired... and after I dropped my friend off
- **I was in a bit of a hurry to get home...**
 - ◆ So... I was on this side road... and it had a stop sign at the bottom of a hill...
 - And I knew it did, because I had traveled this road many many times
 - ◆ And I could tell no one was coming... so I never even slowed up...
 - I just went right through the stop sign...
- **Well... of all the times... there was a cop sitting right there...**
 - ◆ And he pulled me over quickly...
- **He came to the window and asked me... did you see that stop sign...**
 - ◆ My first instinct was to say... uh no... what stop sign...
 - I have never been this way before...
 - ◆ But... I had seen it... multiple times... and it was rather large... and red... with reflective white letters...
 - ◆ So... I couldn't lie...
- **I told the cop... Yes sir... I saw it... I was tired, and ready to get home**
 - ◆ So I just decided I would go right on through it...
- **At that point he began to laugh and let me go...**
 - ◆ Because I was honest...
 - ◆ Now... my honesty is not the point...
 - ◆ The **clarity** of the stop sign is...

- **Paul is saying... God has displayed himself to you... He has made himself known to you**
 - Not with one stop sign at the bottom of a hill...
 - ◆ But, with a million stop signs scattered throughout the entire universe
 - ◆ And you can not go anywhere where His glory can not been seen...
 - Paul then explains what God has made known...

➢ **Which invisible attributes?**

- Eternal Power and Divine Nature
- **Eternal Power** refers to God's might and ability and power... that are from everlasting..
 - Meaning... it does not take a rocket scientist to recognize...
 - ◆ That something or someone powerful made that huge sun and moon and stars...
 - And this earth... they came from somewhere... somewhere powerful
- **Divine Nature**... simply refers to the quality of God as being God...
 - The invisible attribute of God being God is clearly perceived...
- **Paul is saying... God has been made known to all men...**
 - That there is a divine being with eternal power in existence...
 - ◆ And it is clearly perceived... or clearly seen...

➢ **How have they been perceived?**

- In the things that have been made
- **Paul says... look around you...**
 - **Look at how God has created your body...**
 - ◆ How your muscles and tendons and bones all work together...
 - ◆ And how your body has little receptors all over it
 - ◆ And they send information to your brain to let you know hat kind of surface you are standing on...

- ◆ So you want fall, or if you are hot or cold... and then your body responds...
- ◆ Your mind wants to do something... and it gets the body to do it...
- **Animals live in the wild with no need for doctors... and they continue to exist**
- **The planets have been neatly placed in our solar system...**
 - ◆ And they go in these neat paths every year...
 - ◆ We have a huge sun that is the perfect distance from us so we do not get too hot or too cold... and die
- **There are billions of stars and galaxies in the universe...**
 - ◆ How did they get here???
 - ◆ And these galaxies have the neatest shapes...
 - They are not weird looking ... they are beautiful
- **The human cell is so complex... but... it is in its most simple form**
 - ◆ It has proteins and motors and all kinds of parts to it...
 - ◆ But it can not be reduced down to something more simple...
 - ◆ If you take even one part away... the whole cell shuts down...
- The human cell has the mark of the creator written in it for us to see
- **Modern science wants to teach us that...**
 - ◆ The cell just happened to come into being... by itself... over billions of years
 - ◆ It just happened to exist and make dna that would make up our
 - Ears and eyes and skin and stomach that digests our food
 - Our immune system and our voices and the list goes on and on

➤ **Therefore: Man is Without Excuse!**

➤ **Why is our faith so weak in the church today?**

- **Do we suffer from the same thing Paul is talking about...**
 - Because... you are about to see that the problem is not that people do not believe
 - Most people believe in God...
- **So... the problem for man is not that they do not recognize there is a God...**
 - Because they do...
 - Do you see that... God is not saying through Paul: That people have no excuse for not knowing I am here...
 - Rather... it goes much deeper... and it is more vile and problematic than that
- **Do we in the church today?...**
 - know God (not in a personal relationship with Jesus sense)
 - But we know God is real... yet... we fail to honor Him as God or give Him thanks
 - This is our next point...

❖ **3) Man Did Not Honor God as God (Such a rich statement)**

- **²¹ 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.**

➤ **Although they knew God...**

- You see that... Paul is saying they know God
- This is not knowing God in a special way through the gospel...
- Where they have a real relationship with Him...
- He is just saying... they know God is... they know what God has done..
 - But...

➤ **They do not honor him as God...**

- Within every person there are built in mechanisms to know that God is...
- But... that does not mean that men will honor him as God

➤ **They do not honor him as God or give thanks**

- Man failed to glorify God...
 - This is what Paul is arguing..
 - **We have failed to glorify God...**
 - What is the sole purpose of man?
 - It is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever...
 - We were created in the image of Almighty God...
 - And we were created to mirror his image and reflect His glory...
 - ◆ This is our God given task...
 - **Here we can go back to why God's wrath is being revealed from heaven...**
 - Back in verse **18 Because of ungodliness and unrighteousness of man...**
 - **Ungodliness is:** A Failure or refusal in any way to live to God's glory
 - Ungodliness is when men fail to honor and worship God as they ought...
 - **Rather... they became futile in their thinking**
 - Men's thoughts become vain... that is what futile means...
 - ◆ It means empty...
 - **Man's thinking began to be filled with nothingness...**
 - ◆ This is not to say they were not thinking about anything...
 - **It means... their thoughts were filled with insignificant things...**
 - ◆ Their thoughts surround themselves
 - ◆ How am I going to entertain me
 - ◆ How am I going to build my own kingdom
 - ◆ Oh... I need this thing or that thing that do not honor God
 - ◆ Oh... what will people think about me if I follow God...
 - What people think is so important
 - ◆ **Oh... the universes appeared like this over billions of years...**
 - Let me study and study this... and continually push God out of that equation
 - Do you know... that leading scientists have to constantly remind themselves...
 - What we are studying did not come through design...
 - Even though it looks that way...
 - **And their foolish hearts were darkened...**
 - The result of men having their minds filled with nothingness
 - And not filled with the weighty and awesome considerations of God Almighty
 - **Their foolish hearts were darkened...**
 - Not acknowledging God as God... and not meditating on Him as God
 - Leads to a darkened hearts...
 - A heart void of light...
 - Meaning their actions were dark... and sinful...
 - **Paul teaches this in verse 18... He says... people suppress the truth...**
 - Do you remember how?
 - By their unrighteous deeds... they suppress the truth about God...
 - ◆ Why? So they can sin more... and be their own God
 - ◆ **John 3:19-20 ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.**
 - Oh... how foolish men are...
- ❖ **4) Men Became Fools**
 - **²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools,**
 - **You know people just like this**

- ◆ Maybe because we all have a little bit of this in us...
- ◆ I was speaking with a girl the other day... she was working the café at the club...
- ◆ She says... I hope I get to heaven cause of how nice I am to people...
 - All the good things I do for people...
- ◆ **I said... you may get to heaven... but it will not be because of the good things you did for people...**
 - She was shocked...
 - She said... huh? How can that be...
- **I responded simply by saying... the good things we do are never good enough...**
 - ◆ Only faith in Jesus gets us into heaven...
 - ◆ Then she says... well... doing good things would prove I believe in God...
 - ◆ And I said... maybe... but people do lots of good things... and it wont get them to heaven
 - ◆ But... when God lives in a person they do respond by doing good things...
- **I told her... please understand this...**
 - ◆ Do not get your understanding of who God is and what He requires...
 - From your own mind...
 - Men are not smart enough...
 - Everyone would come up with a different God to suit themselves...
- **I told her... there must be a single source of authority...**
 - ◆ We can claim to be wise, and know what God is like...
 - To know what He allows or doesn't
 - But... we will just show ourselves to be fools
 - Unless we go to God's Word for us...
- **Men claim to be smart and wise... but that is not the case...**
 - There is no wisdom void of God....
 - **Psalm 14:1 The fool has said in his heart, there is no God...**
 - Now, remember... this is not just for atheists...
 - It is for people who live as if there is no God...
 - They do not honor God as God
- **Man's big problem comes down to how they have done this...**
 - Paul now is going to explain... what He is talking about...
 - What He means by men suppressing the truth
 - What he means about futile or empty thinking
 - What he means about darkened hearts
 - What He means by claiming to be wise but becoming fools...
 - Look at our last point
- ❖ **5) Men Exchanged the Glory of God for an Image of an Image**
 - **²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**
 - **The exchanged the Glory of God... for images...**
 - The nasb translates this verse:
 - **and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.**
 - Exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God
 - ◆ For an image... an image...
 - ◆ That is in the form of what
 - Corruptible man...
 - **Notice what we have here...**

- Men have been made in the image of God...
- Men have noticeably fallen from their created state...
- And now... men exchange the immortal and incorruptible God...
- For an image the resembles an image of man... who is a broken image of God
- **This is like me taking my autographed 1990 Joe Montana card...**
 - And making a copy of it... on a copier...
 - Then... getting someone to draw that copy for me...
 - Then making another copy of it...
 - ◆ And holding that as valuable...
 - ◆ Well.... It is actually MUCH MUCH WORSE!

➤ **Men have always sought to worship something other than God...**

- Here... it is an image resembling man... or even worse birds or four footed animals or crawling creatures... like a snake or insect...
- **It is not always on the form of a carved idol...**
 - **Follow your heart... and you will find what you truly worship...**
 - ◆ Where do you put your time and energy and money?
 - Are they used as a process to honor and thank God...
 - Or are they for self...
 - We are all in danger of doing this...
 - **I am not saying that when you work...**
 - ◆ And pay bills to have a home and food on the table
 - ◆ I am not saying that is not a worthy way of living...
 - **Just evaluate your purposes...**
 - ◆ Are they toward God... do you work and provide for the glory of God...
 - Is your time and energy for the glory of God in whatever you are doing

➤ **Application:**

- Have you in anyway... even as a follower of Jesus
 - Been living as if God was an afterthought
 - Do you fill your life with empty and vain things, instead of your creator?
 - Do you push back the truth of God's word... so you can continue in sin?

❖ **Remember the Gospel**

- It can reverse the minds filled with futile vain thinking...
 - And replace it with the knowledge of the truth of God
 - **1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
- It can reverse the darkened hearts
 - And it can shed light on the hearts of lost men...
 - **John 1:9-12 ⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,**
- **Verse 16: The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who continue believing...**

(Discipleship Groups... Clean up around church a bit after church... Leviticus... Building... magnets... youth camp...