

Romans 1:18-25

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[0:00] To many of you, I'm dressed different today. Maybe I look fancy or something like that.! But I assure you it's not true, because this is what I wear to work every day. So for me, it's pretty normal.

I'm also, unlike what you may think, because I'm up here preaching, I'm not anything special, okay? So I'm just like everybody else in this church.

I'm a member of this church. And I... do feel as though the Lord has given me a word for the church today.

And that primarily comes for two reasons. First, because my prayer these last, well, this last week has been that the Lord would give me the words that I'm supposed to speak.

And that was my prayer consistently. And so I feel like I have the words that the Lord wants me to bring. And the second reason is that this section of scripture you can hold off on the slides just for a second, Jay.

[1:01] It's actually the second slide. This section of scripture is really important to me. And this is something over the last year or two that I have come back to constantly.

If you are part of the community group that meets at our house, you've heard me talk about this passage before I would expect. Maybe some other folks too. So I feel as though the Lord has given me a word, but I also feel as though I need the Lord's help to bring this word forward.

I'm really excited to be able to bring this this morning to you all. And these are the things that I'm processing as I speak these. I pray that you will process these things too.

The background of Romans. Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul from Corinth to the church in Rome who were loved by God and called to be saints.

Romans 1-7. The theme of this letter of Romans is the righteousness of God. And the righteousness of God is the divine attribute that describes God as always acting in a way that is consistent with his own character.

[2:13] God is righteous in himself. He demands righteousness. He provides righteousness. And he rewards for the righteousness he provides. Romans shows us that God's divine attribute of righteousness shows us his attribute and declared that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the revelation of this righteousness.

The gospel of Christ is the revelation of God's righteousness. And what is that revelation? That the gospel is the power of salvation God offers through Christ which is available to all who would receive it by faith.

Romans 1-16 and 17. So the layout of Romans Oh, it's not working again.

The layout of Romans There we go. Keep going back to that first one. Can be simplified by breaking it down into four sections. Righteousness needed.

Righteousness provided. Righteousness vindicated. And righteousness practiced. Today we'll explore what Romans 1-18-25 reveals as the primary reasons that humans need God's righteousness.

[3:26] And I entitle our time here together. Go ahead, Jay. The two great failures of humanity. Romans 1-18-25. And so my goal for us today is threefold.

First that we would see that the failures of humanity as described in Romans 1 are our failures as well. And then number two that we would discuss what we ought to do about this.

The answer isn't just to understand the problem and implement the remedy. However, it is to know the process which leads to the problem.

My prayer is that we would see this process. Pray with me. Lord God, help us today to see our desperate need, our perpetual need for you, God, and your righteousness and help us to

understand the process that leads to our idolatry that we might pursue in love and act on and glory in your righteousness revealed through your gospel and the salvation and the salvation you offer to those who place their faith and trust in Christ Jesus.

Lord, speak clearly through me and to all of us today in Christ's name. Amen. The first great failure of humanity that we see in today's passage is humanity's suppressing the truth about God.

[5 : 00] And that is, go ahead Jay, the revelation of God as creator worthy of worship. This is our first great failure of humanity.

Verses 20 and 21 of Romans chapter 1 read this way. 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. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. Think of some of the most beautiful or awe-inspiring things you've seen.

Maybe it's modern industry like these huge skyscrapers or a space shuttle from SpaceX or something like that. Or maybe it's something smaller scale like beautiful art or even music or even things, food or things like that that people can create that are just awe-inspiring.

And so we're brought to a point of admiration and respect for the creators of these things, right? We think, wow, it's incredible that someone could do that. But yet when we see these things, these things don't actually tell us much about the creator.

[6 : 14] They don't give us insight into the creator himself. But our passage says that this is not true for God and his creation. God has created the landscapes, sunsets, galaxies, and all living things, the things that have been made in such a way that the evidence for a supreme deity and his eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen.

This term denotes that God's handiwork is continually on display to be perceived. It's not a limited time offer, if you will. It is plain and clear for all time.

So much so that we read that mankind is without excuse, as the passage says. But without excuse for what? For worship. God's revelation does not simply point to himself that we only acknowledge his work like a human who creates something wonderful.

But it points to a greater elevation of God to worship the creator. And God has formed and developed hearts and consciences to give us clear evidence through this revelation of created things and knowledge of him, verse 21, that the only appropriate response is to worship him.

The text says to honor him as God and give thanks to him. Yet our text tells us that man has elected to not choose the appropriate response to God's revelation.

[7 : 51] The response that God has called man's heart to since the beginning. What do we call this type of behavior? an inappropriate response to something we know we ought to do or not to do.

We call it sin, right? Unrighteousness. Verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

If verses 20 and 21 are true, mankind knew the truth but did not respond appropriately doing so by suppressing the truth that is the revelation from God through unrighteous living.

Suppressing, the word that we see here is in the present tense active voice and expresses an active participation of the will.

Suppressing the truth is an active participation of the will. It's not passive. It's not passive. And we have this image of one putting all their weight on top of something in order to restrict its movement in freedom.

[9 : 06] That's what suppressing means here. It's a very intentional choice suppressing the truth. Truth does not pertain to the truth of the gospel because not everyone knows the truth of the gospel but the truth about God as one theologian says the human race possesses this truth about God yet holds it down in the sense of refusing to acknowledge the truth's moral implication and goes on in its sin.

We see a clear picture of this in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3. The serpent said to the woman did God actually say you should not eat of the tree in the garden?

The woman said to the serpent we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden but God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it lest you die but the serpent said to the woman surely you will not die for God knows when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil so when the woman saw that

the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate go back go back to this go back go forward there you go sorry about that Adam and Eve suppressed the truth ignoring the obvious moral implications of choosing to go against God's rule and did what they saw as best didn't they the implications were pretty severe loss of relationship with God and eviction from the garden paradise which God had created for them to enjoy and the implications of truth suppression according to verse 18 in our passage today is the wrath of God God's wrath in perfect harmony with all his divine attributes is the holy action of retributive justice right retribution towards the persons whose action deserve eternal condemnation it affirms God's righteous displeasure with sin his just retribution upon unrepentant sinners and that which is the contradiction of his holiness that is not my quote I am not that smart the wrath of God the action against the persons whose action deserve eternal condemnation this is heavy we see in verse 21 and 22 a consequence of the outpouring of God's wrath verse 21 Romans 1 they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened claiming to be wise they became fools one translation says their thinking became nonsense and their senseless minds were darkened this futility of thinking darkening of the heart and folly should be seen as one example of God's righteous wrath against those who reject what he reveals part of his judgment against us is allowing us to suffer the damage our sinful course leads to but unfortunately this is not the end of the destructive path for the ungodly and unrighteous the second failure of humanity is a direct result of the first suppression of truth rejection of God's clear revelation leads to futile thinking foolishness darkened hearts that's what our text says which in turn leads to grossly misconstrued worship our worship the second great failure of humanity is choosing idolatry over worship of God verse 23 and verse 25 discuss this verse 23 they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things verse 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than creator idolatry is an exchange it's an inadequate substitution the glory of the immortal God is what they gave up and what they pursued in exchange images they could create and build and touch and control the things around them that they took pleasure in idolatry is an exchange of what we cannot control and do not have power over for God's good pleasure and glory with what we can control and do have power over for our selfish sinful pleasure verse 24 therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their heart to impurity if worship of God is an outpouring of the heart's pure love worship of idols is an outward manifestation of the heart's impure lusts the heart's pure love in exchange for the heart's impure lusts!

Idolatry is the result of pushing away truth and actively pursuing a lie instead right? So idolatry is pushing away the truth and after we've suppressed the truth and we reach for the lie we suppress the truth we keep it down and we reach for something else and that lie is the key that unlocks the heart's darkest chambers which contain our sinful lusts see the lie we suppress the truth we reach for the lie we exchange the truth about God for a lie we receive the lie and that allows our hearts to open up and reveal the deep the scary depths of the idols of our hearts the sinful lusts and these lusts are deeply rooted and powerful the idols of the heart have an incredible pull over one's soul and power over our will and we won't get into it now the last seven verses of Romans 1 to the end of the chapter go on to detail this pull and this power and the resulting flagrant sin and total departure from God's design all rooted in mankind choosing the slippery slope of idolatry and pursuing the heart's lusts and this is sobering yet friends what's more sobering is that you and I are prone to the same cyclical progression the same failures the same tendencies as the people describe in Romans 1 you see we also suppress the truth about God how?

[16 : 36] well we ignore what we know of God's revelation the things clearly perceived verse 20 his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature all by themselves these things have given us enough evidence to know God verse 21 and to choose to worship him now add to the things clearly perceived the truth of the Bible that we know unlike the people in Romans 1 we have the whole scripture the completed word of God which contains a staggering amount of evidence and revelation about God and on top of that we have endless resources including books and digital media at our fingertips and there are no people in the history of the world who have more truth about God available to them but we ignore what we know of God's revelation and we fail to pursue and uncover the truth available to us when we go on choosing unrighteous thoughts and actions when as John Piper writes we choose unrighteousness which is loving sin more than loving God and his truth so anytime we're pushing anytime we're pursuing sin instead of living in light of the

truth that we know we are suppressing truth and when we suppress truth and choose sin we're believing a lie and when we continue to believe the lie we continue to suppress the truth hope you see this trend we suppress the truth about God when we believe the lie that there is something better there's something better or something more that we're missing the youth today use the term FOMO fear of missing out FOMO this was new to me a few years ago fear of missing out we want to be God right the grass is greener the next big thing come on something better and Adam and Eve believe the serpent's lie and when he said did God really say that that you couldn't eat he just didn't want you to be like him the serpent said and we try to be God and take control for our selfish gain and pleasure the serpent twisted the truth didn't he and Adam and Eve believed the lie that they knew wasn't true they had the truth and they understood the implications and we think it's so easy to read

Genesis 3 and think how foolish for an apple right we know it's about more than an apple but how foolish exactly our choosing to pursue and accept truth versus suppressing it leads to foolish thinking we shouldn't be surprised foolish thinking and darkened hearts and God gives us over to whatever it is that our hearts really long to worship our idols listen in friends we choose idolatry over worship of God what is idol worship idol worship is our response to the thing or person most loved more than God wanted more than God treasured more than God desired more than God and enjoyed more than

God the thing or person more loved wanted desired treasured enjoyed more than God idol worship steals away the affection that we are meant to give to God and the satisfaction we're supposed to get from God it snatches it up and when we don't pursue truth right when we suppress it when we believe the lie we are automatically choosing idolatry and you think but why I'm not sitting here thinking alright it's time to go worship some idols let's go it's because actually we're always worshipping something we're always worshipping something friends

I'm always worshipping something each day we will worship something friends God has designed us at our very cores to worship our hearts and minds have been created to worship just like our bodies have been created to breathe if you stop breathing you will not exist we're we're designed we're always worship as long as we're alive we're always worshipping something and the thing I think we miss sometimes is that it's either God or everything else there's nothing in the middle it's God or everything say it with me God or everything there's nothing in between we're either treasuring [22 : 52] God or we're treasuring something or everything else we're either believing the truth about God and worshipping God or believing the lie and worshipping something else well how do we know what we're treasuring!

we're going to talk about that really soon so what can we do about all of this what can we do so now that we've seen the process we can implement the remedy to truth suppression and idolatry and I have four words to help guide our efforts recall revisit recognize return recall revisit recognized return how can we implement the remedy to truth suppression and idolatry first we've got to recall the design for mankind to worship the creator we have to see that we were made for worship we were made to worship and so we will worship there is no non worship state you know mentally physically too mankind has an innate desire and clear reasons to worship the creator and those are reason enough as we saw in verse 20 but just think about your life friend think about the blessing and provision that

God has given to you so many reasons to worship amen so many reasons to worship amen that's much better I don't like when people do that but I like doing it I gotta be honest I know you're awake there's so many reasons to worship and it's endless and if you don't have any of those reasons right now if you can't feel them or if you're numb to them come talk to me let's talk I'm sure we can find some reasons to worship in your life because we worship in the hard times too don't we sometimes we grow most in those hard times friends if we're not seeing the need to worship the creator we're missing the point the point the theme of humanity worshipping God is strung throughout the course of human history throughout the entire Bible too and we see worship this is really fun to do this section worship in the beginning

Romans 12 ever since the creation of the world right it's the beginning in the things that have been made humanity has been called to honor him as God and give thanks to him there was worship we are called to worship in the beginning worship in the middle Romans 12 says present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship so this is worship from the beginning between the beginning and the end all of human history man is to have a life

that is one of worship and worship in the end revelations 4 1 through 7 the scene in heaven the four living creatures day and night never cease to say holy holy holy is the Lord almighty who was and is and is to come we've got to recall the design for mankind to worship the creator if we're going to stop suppressing the truth and turning to idolatry next we must revisit the truth of God's word continuously how do you view the truth of God's word is it like as a package that has arrived in the mail so now we're good because we have it now we've got the package or as a helpful book in the library of your mind maybe or as a task to accomplish each day the truth of God's word is just something I've got to do check the box and then I'm good or and this is my favorite one recently or do we view it as like a condiment or like a topping on food like we've got everything in our life and then it's like oh

[27 : 48] God's word boom you know like okay now we're good like the cherry or the sprinkles or whatever your thing is or maybe we view God's word the truth of God's word as something that we've got to go to in the midst of a trial like that's kind of like the trial thing that I go to I kind of just go there or maybe it's something else I didn't cover everything but it's okay and I love this passage this is what Moses says about truth in Deuteronomy 6 look at the urgency and the seriousness in these verses it's not on the slides but just listen to these verses Moses speaking to Israel hear oh Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart your soul and all your might Deuteronomy 6 6 in these words

I command you today shall be on your heart great we're all set they're on my heart I know them you know I know these Bible verses I grew up in the church this is just dialoguing with myself here actually verse 7 you shall teach them diligently to your children and you shall talk about them when you sit in your house when you walk by the way when you lie down when you rise you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes you shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates that's a lot of stuff yeah a lot of stuff it's like your house would be covered your body would be covered with these reminders seems a little excessive but just three verses later we see why verse 12 through 14 same guy same group same idea take care lest you forget the lord who brought you out of the land of

Egypt out of the house of slavery it is the lord your god who you shall fear him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear you shall not go after other gods the gods of the people who are around you 400 years in slavery!

How could we forget! it's! God! I happens and it did happen and in Deuteronomy chapter 8 Moses says again he devotes the whole chapter and he says guys don't forget God so we've got to visit the truth of God's word how do we view truth we need to ask ourselves how do I view the truth of God's word and then how should we view truth we got to see it as hydration as a life source the truth of God's word is essential for our spiritual life it's essential I think this is the first medical illustration I've ever given here at my time at the church which is a little surprising to me and I see Dr.

Jake just walked out maybe he can still hear me when we get dehydrated it's because we don't have enough water you don't have to be medical to know this we don't have enough water if we don't replace the water that our body is using right around 50% of our bodies are made out of water water is essential to our bodies but if we don't drink it we get dehydrated everybody knows this every adult at least knows this and some kids in theory know this right water is essential we have to hydrate our bodies we need a constant flow of spiritual truth also entering our hearts and minds right so our spiritual hydration is like our physical hydration we've got to have it friends we have to have it we need it we need reminders everywhere like

[32 : 22] Deuteronomy 6 said listen it wouldn't be in the Bible if it weren't true would it it's not the Bible doesn't have fluff if it weren't true it wouldn't be there so why don't we take these words seriously we need a constant flow of spiritual hydration that's the truth of God's word we need it everywhere like Deuteronomy 6 says we need spiritual nourishment food and fluids to avoid dehydration what are some of the symptoms of dehydration lethargy laziness unclear thinking inability to finish the dishes for my wife it's not true if you don't want to do the dishes drink some water you'll come talk to me after the service right so lethargy laziness unclear thinking right lead to poor choices spiritually we need that constant flow we need that flow of truth because that gives us clear thinking wisdom enlightened hearts right what the people in

Romans 1 21 lacked so we've got to revisit the truths of God's word continually we've got to consider how we view them and then next we've got to choose to pursue truth friends it's not good enough to just know we've got to pursue it we've got to get it from Pastor Mike last week how do we

help nourish a healthy fear of the Lord scripture prayer corporate worship fellowship admiration of creation that same list applies today we've got to pursue these things and super practical here's some other really practical ways you can pursue truth text your Christian friends often times I find those end in spiritual encouragement and accountability if you don't have a cell phone email your Christian friends listen to worship music if you don't have an Alexa device I'll buy you one if you don't have a way to listen maybe that's not true if you don't have an Alexa device they're really cheap online if you have a way to play music at your house do it worship music is going on in our house all the time flood your mind with the words of truth from worship music write scripture down on your hand in your car your mirror on your desk at work take a screenshot of scripture on your phone and make it your background for a few hours I have a lot of screenshots on my phone that are safe for some reason that have been scripture that I've used or even thoughts spiritual truth or put a sticky note in your car so you can see it when you're driving ask your brothers and sisters to hold you accountable when you feel you're having a bad day or a stressful event work trip that's coming up something you're thinking about coming up in the near future

I asked a few guys at church this week to hold me accountable as I prepare for today's sermon because historically for me in the weeks leading up to a sermon and preaching I feel most vulnerable to engage in idol worship I haven't totally figured it out I have ideas as to why but I asked a few guys to hold me accountable and to check in that's my way of pursuing truth because they say how can I pray for you or give me an encouraging word church we must wake up and see the need to proactively pursue truth because it's a lot harder to suppress truth when we're surrounded by it it's harder to suppress truth when we're surrounded by it but unfortunately we still resort to idolatry at times and we need help recognizing our creature worship it's our next

R hang in there everyone you're doing great recognize your tendency towards creature worship so here's three questions we can ask to decipher what you're worshiping and if you're accepting truth or believing the lie and pursuing something else number one your time where and how am I spending my time where and how am I spending my time so if you've gone all day and haven't considered spiritual things then what is your life source consider the things events relationships hobbies that you engage in that have no eternal value or kingdom influence and I'm not talking about occasional enjoyments of a movie or a show or something like this I'm talking about a prolonged unhealthy addictive amount of time spent time that you might be taking away from things that you from things that have value like relationships or family so the measurement shouldn't be in minutes hours or days but in an individualized heart analysis of your time friends ask

[38 : 38] God to reveal what he thinks about your time he'll do it either directly from him to you or through somebody else right and that's where that accountability piece comes in second question what is giving me joy what do I hunger and thirst for ask yourself during and at the end of your day when you think about it it's clear if it's not God it's something else it is something else it must be number three what am I treasuring look at your life what do you love what do you cherish what do you desire that is who or what is currently functioning as your God and we can look at the psalms for some really healthy comparisons psalm 119 the psalmist love for the word of

God psalm 63 longing for the courts of the Lord psalm 42 the desire of the psalmist for the living God what do you treasure and I think the more church the more we consider our similarities to humanity as described in Romans chapter 1 and the more we ask ourselves some of these questions about how we view and pursue truth of God's word and our tendencies towards worshipping our idols and pursuing unrighteousness!

we start to see an overwhelming need for God's righteousness and that leads to the final word the final idea return to your need for God's righteousness verse 18 let's go back to that one Jay return to your need for God's righteousness Romans 1 16 and 17 tells us that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God and the power of God for salvation is Jesus Christ Jesus bore the full wrath of God's righteous requirement for the penalty for sin upon his shoulders God's wrath upon Christ's shoulders the wrath which you and I deserve to bear as the ungodly and unrighteous Verse 18 2 Corinthians 5 21 reminds us for our sake he made Christ to be he made

Christ to be sin who knew no sin that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God this righteousness is available to those who would trust through faith that Christ has met God's perfect righteous requirement on our behalf God's righteousness he cannot get rid of it is part of who he is his righteous wrath must be acted upon and Christ delivers us from the wrath there's no wrath for the children of God there's no wrath for the children of God because as Paul said in the first chapter

of his letter to the Thessalonians you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come this is a reason to rejoice is it not if all of this is new to you

I implore you to repent of your sin and turn to Christ for salvation from the wrath of God as I heard a pastor say recently I would love to rearrange my day to talk to you more about this brother and sister in the Lord in Christ the good news of the gospel should never grow old or become dulled and if it has I'm afraid that we're forgetting the truth about who we are and who God is and when that happens we must repent and return to the Lord friends Shoreline let's be a church who never forgets our need for God's righteousness and never ceases day and night to praise God that Christ has made that righteousness possible for his glory and for our good let's pray

[43 : 25] God in heaven we worship you we pray that our lives would worship you as you designed in the beginning and now and in the end would you grant us the strength and grace in our process in our journey to embrace and pursue the truth and to push away and hate the idolatry that knocks on our door God you through Christ can change our hearts that this might happen God we love you and we trust you Amen