

Romans 1:18-32

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Date: 03 June 2012

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[0 : 00] against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made. So they are without excuse, for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darted.

So they were to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impunity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth of their God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For the women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And men likewise gave up natural relations with women, and were consumed with passion for one another.

[1 : 27] Men committing shameless acts with men, and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

They were filled with all manner of unanxiousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

Last week we began to see the connection between this passage, which is a key, pivotal passage in the New Testament. We saw the connection between this and the verse that went before, where Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

[2 : 40] It is the power of God for salvation. And we saw that unless you understand what follows, verse 18 to 32, you won't really understand the gospel.

We saw that in terms of salvation, and the word salvation, and what it means in everyday life, that if you're saved from anything, if you're rescued from anything, there's what you're rescued from, and there's what you're rescued to.

And this passage here tells us what we're rescued from. It's not pleasant reading. It's not the kind of description of humankind in which we like to think of ourselves as.

It's not humankind's description of himself. It's God's description. And I guess this is one more place in the Bible where the choice is, you either take it or not.

You either read it and believe it in faith, or else not. But one thing is for sure, God will not water down his message to us. Our response has to be either one of faith, or one of unbelief.

[3 : 57] Here is God's proposition to us. Here is God coming to us and saying, this is what I see. As I look at the world around me today, the world which I once created in perfect perfection, and holiness and righteousness and perfect happiness, now this is what I see.

I see slander, gossip, haters of God, insolent men and women, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to cares, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Remember, God has a panoramic view of this world today. God is able to look at this world not just see one or two individuals, but he sees the whole world.

And this is the way he describes it. That's what he sees. With God he'll always speak the truth. God cannot but speak the truth. And so the passage we get is, and we began to look at that earlier on, now two weeks ago, with the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, we began to look at the fact that every single human being has been implanted with a knowledge of God, an inward heart knowledge of God, as something within us, there is a chip within us, there is something that registers that there is a God, and not only so.

That register knows that God is righteous, his eternal power, and his divine nature that he clearly perceived, and the Bible tells us, in Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God.

[5 : 47] It's when we look up into the heavens, there's something within us. We know there's a voice that says, this is the doing of God. The question is whether we listen to that voice or not.

It's another voice that God has put within us, and that's the voice of conscience, that human beings have a sense of right and wrong. You know that it's that sense within you.

I'm not saying that it's infallible. I'm not saying it can't be changed, but it's there. And we know there is something within the human mind or the human heart that testifies to something being right or wrong.

And we read about dozens of people in Syria being massacred, men, women, and children, for apparently no reason. Something within us is outraged. We say it's wrong.

It's awful. It's terrible. This should not happen. And we call out for justice. We can't have one without guilt. You can't say on one hand, this is awful, it's horrific, it's terrible, and on the other hand, it doesn't matter.

[6 : 50] It doesn't matter about catching those who are responsible and bringing them to justice. So one thing we certainly can have one without the other as part of what we are as human beings.

See, the Bible is all about what we are as human beings. And I would imagine that if that question dwells within your heart, tonight, who do you think you are? Many people look back to that they have an interest in their ancestry.

And of course, by computer technology, nowadays we can bring together information faster and faster and we can find out who we are, our ancestry, our heritage, and going back into the past.

Well, here's going back even further. Not only does God tell us who we are, it tells us why we are, who we are, and the condition that the world is in this evening.

The condition, as I'm trying to say last time, is one in which God looks upon this world and he is angry. Is it any wonder that we read the awful list of sin in verse 13, the wondrous, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, faithless, heartless, foolish, and that of course covers the violence and the cheating and the lies and the deceit and the corruption is all there.

- [8 : 06] Is it any wonder that God is angry with this world? I ask you that, in all honesty, how do you possibly deny that if that is the real condition in this world and you and I are part of that world, then how do you blame God for being angry?
- Remember what we said about the wrath of God. God's wrath is not like your anger or my anger. It doesn't just erupt at any given moment. It doesn't, it's not focused on the wrong things like our anger.
- It's not uncontrolled, it's his settled displeasure from us. He's settled displeasure against a world that has grown so catastrophically wrong.
- So I'm going to ask this evening, what did we do to deserve the anger of God? You could ask it. In other words, what are we doing to deserve the anger or the wrath of God?
- and this passage tells us several things. It tells us first of all that we deserve God's wrath because we have suppressed his truth in unrighteousness.
- [9 : 23] Look at verse 18. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the righteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
- You notice that word ungodliness or godlessness? That's not just, that's not a derogatory word. That's a word that accurately describes our motives and what lies within the human heart.
- God. It's a condition in which God does not figure in our decisions or our choices and in which he is not worshipped and his will and his pleasure and his glory doesn't count.
- It doesn't figure with us. A person who is godless simply doesn't take God into the equation. He leaves God out. This is what John Strauss says.
- It is the attempt to get rid of God and since that is impossible the determination to live as though we had succeeded in doing so.
- [10 : 33] It's the attempt to get rid of God and because that's impossible you can't get rid of God. Trying to believe that he's not there doesn't make one iota of a difference.
- He is there whether we believe in him or whether we don't. and it's the determination he says to live as though we had succeeded in getting rid of him.
- You know when the song says the fool says in his heart that it's no God. Bershach is about the person who has come to an atheistic position but it's also about the person who lives his life as though God did not exist.
- Though he knows God exists he somehow erases it from his memory and from his consciousness. He's learned within himself to pretend and to live every day in the pretended notion that God does not exist or that he's so far away that he's got nothing to do with him.
- and that's the man or the woman who is a fool. The fool says in his heart there is no God and to say in your heart there is no God can equally be the person who takes enough who doesn't at any point take God into the equation.
- [11 : 54] Oh well of course that figures of course until those moments come and arise that rock their very existence. Those moments when we are faced with death or when we turn on our TV and see something which is so shocking and horrific that it really opens up our questions once again to wondering well what is the meaning of all this work?

Why is there so much evil and so much discontent in the world? and so we have suppressed with veracity and we've tried our very best to live as though God did not exist because that's what we want we want to live and to form our own destiny to create our own destiny that's what sin is all about and that's the reason why the gospel tonight is so unpopular so I look around saying in the world God and the world are one nobody can have a problem either people might even be interested in that they might say well that's not interesting news I wouldn't be alone if millions of people in the world are just simply believe that well God and the world are not separated beings they are one and the same thing but if I went around saying well we are God

God is ourselves and we and us and our very best and our very noblest I wouldn't have anybody arguing with that I wouldn't be popular that would be a popular belief nobody would have any question or any issue with that at all or if I was to go around saying then God is beauty the beauty of the world around us what do people say that a lot of people believe or who have persuaded themselves that that is what God is but if I go around saying the creation around me reveals that there is a personal almighty creator to whom all accountable that is not cool it's not popular in fact it's the most unpopular message in the world and that's what's happened we have suppressed the truth we would rather live as though there were no

God I want to ask you the question tonight to what extent does the Lord figure that you're everyday thinking I'm not asking whether you think about when you come to church I guess you're forced to think about when you come to church but I'm asking what I go on everyday personal basis to what extent does he figure if he's not Lord of all he's not Lord at all there's no use saying well I think about maybe so often there's no even any use saying well I think about maybe so often you're still living you're making your choices you're living your life as though God didn't exist because you want him not to exist to be there not to be there second thing this passage tells us is that we have not honoured God or thanked him and you'll find that over the page in verse 21 for although they knew

God they did not honour him as a God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking notice this very very interesting fact because we think think about sin as things we do like if you steal something or if you tell a lie or if you're violent without cause or something like that we think of these things as sin in what we do and of course denying that that is sinful behaviour in many forms of sinful behaviour but the problem with that is only what you think of as sin is that you can by not doing these things you can think of yourself as almost perfect if I don't do this if I don't do that if I don't do the next thing then I'm okay the Bible starts to describe sin it doesn't tell us about what we do it says sin is what we don't do the one where it begins it says because though they knew

[16 : 45] God that's your me by the way though we knew God we did not honour him as God or give thanks to him so sin begins in what we fail to do what's the first commandment the first commandment is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul and your mind and your strength that's the first requirement that God makes of him in one of us to love the Lord so you tell me tonight I am not a witty person let me ask you this question in that case do you love the Lord with all your heart and mind and soul and strength and if the answer is well I have to admit I don't the Bible cause you a wicked person a person who does not give your first priority your first love to God we'll see that in a few moments now we are all worshipping beings the very first requirement that first going thing looks for us that's what we were created for that's why so often

I go all the way back to Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and 3 and I would advise you to do the same don't ever lose sight of Genesis 1 2 and 3 don't lose sight of the Bible but there are three passages that explain to us why we are the way we are in Genesis 3 is one of those passages Genesis 1 it tells us about the world in which God created which was a perfect blissful happy world in which you and I have actually no idea to have the perfect happiness that Adam and Eve lived had as they lived in that perfect world why because their life revolved around the glory of God and every time the Lord came into the garden as he did whatever that means I'm not sure what it means but what it does mean is that there was regular contact with the Lord and it was an absolute thrill to them everything they did was motivated by

God and focus on God that every decision had God's glory in the more they focused on the glory of God and the being of God the more they wanted to be close to Him and speak to Him and hear Him He was there of to enjoy Him it's hard for us to think about that isn't it unless we're a Christian we've again God has given back to those who have come to faith in Jesus He's given back to us that sense of fellowship and oneness with God that we lost way back at the very beginning we were created for God and ever since we took that fatal step way at the beginning of time and chose not to give God a central place in our heart then we haven't been doing what we've been created to do right now if you're living a life which is outside of

God outside of Jesus but you're not living as we've been created to do it's like a tumble dryer into which you put dishes switch the tumble dryer on and you wonder why are the dishes not dry why are they in a thousand pieces you say because it's not what tumble dryer has to be made for you put dishes into the tumble dryer you say but it's supposed to dry but it's not supposed to dry dishes it's not what it's been created for it's like driving your car off the pier expecting to get to Alapul it won't it won't go anywhere it'll sink and you'll drown why because the car has been created to go to Alapul on the water that's what it goes for a car has been created for dry light and no matter how you argue or object or say but I want the car to go to

Alapul on the water the car is a little transport I think it should get there that's what we said ourselves we said I want to replace what God says with what I think you see it doesn't make sense it's so outside we replaced God with what we think we reckon ourselves to be so wise and so clever and it gets worse and worse the more technologically clever we are the more we use our advancement and our achievement to drive God further and further out of the picture that's why today we have almost universally excluded

[21 : 58] God from the creation process and we have preferred to think of ourselves as evolving from animals in order to drive God out of the picture and in order to persuade ourselves that we have just been in the process of time and chance we just happen to be here well no matter how you try to and what you try to persuade yourself and no matter what the benefits are in that kind of understanding you will never be able to drive out the being of God because he is he is there and there's that voice within every heart that will never be satisfied until we come to know him as our Lord and as we come to that personal relationship with us that he offers to us in Jesus

Christ and so we have not honoured God and we haven't decided to give him the place that we were created to give him and we have become futile in our thinking the word futile means worthless meaningless driving the car also being in order to get up that's what it means futile completely foolish in our thinking then the third thing is this passage shows us that we have made three fatal exchanges in verse 23 we have changed the glory of the immortal God into images who is heavenly mortal man and birds and animals in verse 25 it tells us that we've exchanged the truth of God for a lie and we've worshipped the creature rather than the creature and then later on it tells us that we have changed when it comes to the wrong relationships with one another we have exchanged natural relationships and by the way this

God who tells us what natural relationships are we don't have any business in deciding ourselves what we were created for and what we were created to do and that applies to our walks of life natural relationships for unnatural lives so we may see fatal exchanges I don't know what it is but humankind I suppose it's part and parcel of being living in the world but something is that loves to trade I remember growing up in Glasgow and I don't know what it was but I don't know if this happens now but you swapped all your toys you had a whole bunch of stuff you had what you had but you maybe played with it for a wee while and then if you had pearls you know you saw something along to them and maybe he would say to you you must swap and he would swap exchange what you had for what he had because you almost thought that he had more fun with this than you had with you you were fed up with it anyway and you had it since last

Christmas whatever it was whether it was a game or some kind of toy or a shotgun or a bank or whatever it was I'm not even sure if you know this whatever it was but wherever it was I remember coming home and my mother would always check what we came home with to see if we had given away something really valuable and come back with a piece of rubbish and very often that's exactly what happened much to my parents complete thought you would come back with something that you thought was really good fun you'd seen in power play but in actual fact compared to what you're given away it was worthless completely worthless and that's part and part of human development that you kind of do understand what's worth something and what's not worth something and it's all to do with business and selling and buying and battling and trading and all the rest of it and that's why eBay is so popular

I guess because people actually enjoy it's not that they won't necessarily need to buy and sell they just love it to tackle what we are as humans you exchange and trade one thing for another and here's what Paul is saying we have traded we have made three and had to soften mistakes we first of all have traded the glory of the immortal God saw images resembling mortal man and birds and animals what he's saying is there was a time you had it in your hand almost you had something absolutely priceless all you need to do is go back to the garden of Eden and they read it there and how Eve and Adam they possessed the perfect relationship with God it could not have been better and yet they were persuaded to give it all away they swapped it for something which was absolutely worthless as soon as Eve and Adam had done the deed they suddenly realized the world turned upside down and they knew something that they had never known before sin invaded into the world guilt that massive feeling of guilt invaded and would never ever be eradicated they were doomed in the day that you need the offset

[28 : 16] God you will die and that's what they chose to do to do that instead of continuing to live in perfection that they decided to trade that perfection for something which was utterly worthless as time went on of course the Old Testament tells us the Christ Testament tells us of course how human God is a worshipping being God but instead of worshipping the living and the true God humankind decides to worship and bow down to the created rather than the creator form I want to ask the question today who do you worship it's a very searching question and I don't want you to say I don't worship anything because I don't believe you I don't believe there's one single person in the world that doesn't worship because we were created to worship and you don't stop worshipping when you stop believing in

God you only change from worshipping God to worshipping something else that's what happened in the garden of Eden the focus the focal point was altered from the Lord to themselves all of a sudden they became the centre of their being the centre of their destiny of course if you're the centre of your being you don't want to think of God looking over your shoulder and calling you into account for everything that you do so what you do is you persuade yourself that either that God is so far away he takes no interest in you and you eradicate him from his thinking or you replace him with other items that you would prefer to think of as objects of worship and that's why that's the moment of pagan worship in the Old Testament that's why the Egyptians were worshipped rules that's why the

Canaanites worshipped Baal because they believed that they were so dependent on some kind of deity that they believed was in Baal but they worshipped because they worshipped all kinds of different rituals in order to fulfil their what they knew as a sense of worship and you might say well that doesn't happen because there's nobody like that down to you you get from primitive age in the world and don't go down to anybody what do I wish to say to you tonight that the person or the thing you worship is what you give yourself to that's different isn't it every person here you give yourself to something you live without something it might be several things something that fills your money something that fills you with all and thrills you gives you an reason to live if you did your business if you bring money the bible says that covetousness is idolatry it could be your whatever sport you follow whatever music you listen to whatever aspirations that you have if ever there was a world in which there were celebrity gods it's this world where people from every country in the world can tune in and focus millions and millions of people can focus on the same film stars and rock stars and frugal stars and it's not just a question of admiration it's awesome there are millions of people today that live for their favourite musician or their favourite rock star or their favourite movie star and they think about it all the time that's who they want to want to be that's what they want to be because the world elevates a person because of their legs or because of their talent and these will become the gods that have filled the rest of the world with all don't tell me that we don't worship we may worship in a different way but we shall worship

I want to ask who is it that you worship this who do you live for what is it that you live for because it's either the living and the true God or else it's something or someone who is created that's what this positive tells us we exchanged the glory of God for the created and began to worship the created and then of course there's the other great exchange which is in terms of relationships with one another and if you think that I'm going to go into a tirade against homosexuality I'm not going to do that and so you're going to see this chapter conforms once again to the overall teaching of the Bible that homosexuality was created to be within the bond of marriage one man one woman in marriage for life there's no need to say any more than that any other sexual relationship outside of that page law therefore

God whatever God was joined together let no man could as other God created the woman to be with the man he brought the woman to the man that was to be the special unique relationship in which they want to be capable of and the sexual expression was to find the place that is the only place and let me tell you this whenever you seek to find satisfaction outside of that you go terribly wrong and the world goes terribly wrong and the world does not find satisfaction whatever frustration it is whether it's antisocial or homosexual or whatever it just goes back from back to Washington because we've got a wrong at the beginning you get wrong at the beginning you don't listen to God then it's like putting dishes into the top of that you become broken

[34 : 52] I wonder in a world that is so full of sexual pleasure like our country is where kids are growing up not knowing what's right and wrong and experimenting with their bodies and come going into relationships and emotions are all shocked at bits I feel so sorry for them I wonder what carnage is going on inside their souls and their hearts as they try and wrestle with a guilt and that's a guilt that can only be taken away when they come to know the Lord Jesus Christ if ever there was a generation that needs to hear the gospel it is this one a generation that has been led astray by a thinking which is man-centered and selfish and which lives for pleasure if you live for pleasure your own pleasure tonight you are not going to optimize begetting because you are living for the wrong thing

God has made clear to us what his natural function for our human relationships is and we would do well to live within that as he has intended us and so the result is from verse 29 to verse 32 a world that has gone so wrong a world that lives in hatred and deceit and maliciousness a world that can't trust in which men and women can't trust each other in which they talk about one another in which they hate God in which they are insolent and hot and proud ghostful inventors of evil disobedient to parents and so on and so forth I think there's there's every dark description that's possible of a world that has gone wrong but it's a world which you and I are part of you can't separate yourself from that world I'm not saying of course that everyone is the same but what I am saying and what the

Bible says is that every one of us has the seed of whatever perversion or evil is possible within this universe universe every one of us carries that seed I often wonder what my life would have been if I had been brought up in a different hole I know I'm capable of I'm actually not capable of anything anything at all there's no ease of in this world that I'm not capable of and I can really stand down and one of the things that really fills me with a sense of wonder is why did God place me in a home that was lovely and stable and a home in which I heard the gospel there's no question about I can't point the finger at anyone else but the Bible tells me that it was into that world that

God came he could have written off the world if he had given us what we deserved we would have been destroyed thousands of years ago this is where the real wonder of the gospel comes in that it was into that same gossiping slandering God hating insolent haughty boastful inventors of evil disobedience you name it God saw it when he and the person of Jesus Christ entered into this world and grew up surrounded by all of this evil and he came in because he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish and have pepper but have a lasting life and the reason he died on the cross as we saw this morning was so that the anger of God that we've been speaking about that we deserve and that was focused upon you and I was diverted it was shifted it was relocated it was redirected away from us we are the ones who deserve

God's anger and that's why Paul is making a point of it because he's so full of wonder and awe at the gospel I am not ashamed of the gospel the reason he goes into all the sordid details of this world's evil is because he's amazed at the love of God that is expressed in the cross where God's anger that we deserve is shifted away from me and it's on to Jesus and Jesus takes it all on my behalf as my representative as my sacrifice so that instead of me suffering the wrath of God that I deserve Jesus did it he did it all he did it completely he suffered every last drop of the anger of God God did not afford one ounce of his anger that I deserve and that you deserve to me but he placed it he unleashed it on his own beloved son so that I could be free from the guilt of sin not just living a part of a sinful world but my own personal guilt

[40 : 51] I know we'll be late to see no wonder this is not some kind of private against the world if God meant to destroy the world why tell us how guilty we are he tells us because he wants you and I to sow the liberty he wants us to see Jesus he wants us to see that the door is open to forgiveness and to newness of life in Jesus Christ he wants to leave us in no uncertain terms of our desperate need prayer because ultimately his time to leave will result one day if we live and die outside of Christ then his judgment under his eternal punishment which you and I did no mistake we deserve I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of

God for salvation do you see where you've been saved from do you see the cesspool that you've been saved from there's no other reason that David said that he took me from the mighty clay from the fearful clay and from the mighty clay that he set my feet upon a rock that's what you and I can say tonight if we've come to faith in Jesus Christ and what I can say tonight also is that God is prepared he is willing and he invites you to do the same to come to faith in him to come to see that continuing to live as though God doesn't exist or continuing to run from him or turn your back on him or argue against him or use all kinds of other values in order to justify your own self-centeredness he's not going to work ultimately he might be working now he won't continue to work because of the needy with an emptiness that no one will fill apart from Jesus Christ so I'm repeating with you once again tonight to stop you've gone on too long stop and turn because the Lord has died for himself because he invites you the greatest and most precious invitation that anyone can give to you is the invitation to his wedding feast to his kingdom to the goodness of life that he can give simply and trusting in the ministry my Father in heaven we pray that we are a blessing to each one of us we ask the Lord once again for anyone here listening who is who you are dealing with and speaking to we pray we thank you Lord that in this church we have seen so many people coming to that great message we've all come to see that we need Jesus and for some it can be a deeply painful process and yet Lord we know that when you begin a good work in someone you complete it you continue with that person you continue to work in our hearts and in our lives to pray you'll bless to us that part of your word that we've read together we ask that you will that you will implant it in our hearts and press upon us our desperate need for a saviour we remember also fighting this evening in hospital we ask that you will give him a real sense and a knowledge of your presence and your strength so that he is able to say that even this painful episode is there's one in which he was able to see the hand of

Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen