

# ROAMING THROUGH ROMANS

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## *“The Rightness of God’s Wrath-Part 2”*

Romans 1:20-23

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter One. We are going to look at verses 20-23 this time. Let’s read our text and then roam through it verse by verse. Romans 1:20-23, Paul writes:

**<sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,<sup>21</sup>because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.<sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools,<sup>23</sup>and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.**

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, commenting on the development of mankind, writes this:

*It is one of regression, not progression; of devolution, not evolution; downward not upward.*

This is a powerful statement, because what we just read answers one of the greatest questions of theology, namely...

Does God have the right to pour out His wrath on fallen man?

And, can He do this even to the lost soul who has never heard of Jesus Christ?

The answer is unquestionably — *YES*.

As we learned last week, there is rightness in God’s wrath. Not only has He revealed His righteousness (Romans 1:17). He has also revealed His wrath (verse 18). And both are among His attributes. But how has God done this, one might ask.

God has revealed Himself in two ways that supersede the Gospel. First, He revealed Himself in His creation. The very heavens declare His glory (Psalm 91:1-4). And second, He has manifested knowledge of Himself inside of man. He has placed eternity in his or her heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That is why Paul wrote this, as we begin our study (Romans 1:20):

**For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,**

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We looked at this verse last time, but I want to touch on it again for context.

Paul uses a play on words here to make an important point. He says that the “**invisible attributes of God are clearly seen.**”

How can someone see something that is invisible?

The answer is actually simple. Look around you and you will see His power, i.e., the attribute Paul is talking about here. Everything about creation is incredible. And it is all laid out bare for any and everyone to see — *if you are willing to look.*

Have you ever seen the movie, “**God of Wonders?**”

Think about all of the incredible things that were shown in that movie. To think this all happened through time and by chance is, well, silly, in my opinion. Even ancient man could see the glory of God all around him. They could look at the stars and discover the fixed order of their orbits. They could take a seed, plant it, and watch it grow into a plant for food. They could see the marvelous cycles of the seasons, the sunshine, the rain and the snows. They witnessed the marvel of human birth.

If only we could see that in the same way they did.

And all of this pointed to one thing. It all pointed to a God who is powerful enough to create and sustain this thing we call creation. Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow said this:

*Now we see how the astronomical evidence supports the biblical view of the origin of the world... The essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same. Consider the enormousness of the problem: Science has proved that the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks what cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter and energy into the Universe? And science cannot answer these questions....*

*For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been there for centuries.*

God’s invisible attributes are “**clearly seen.**”

So man is “**without excuse.**” As we learned last time, man cannot charge God with hiding Himself. He is right there waiting to be found by lost man. And He has made every attempt to reconcile Himself to them, including becoming man and dying on a

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cross in their place. If you seek this knowledge of Him, I believe, He will put someone or something in place to reveal Jesus to you.

So the problem is not God. It is man. Look at verse 21:

**because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God**

Paul begins this verse with the word “**because.**” Some of your translations might say “**for.**” This points out to us why man is without excuse.

Paul will now give us four reasons why God is perfectly legitimate in pouring out this wrath. We already know that man has suppressed the truth in unrighteousness and that is bad enough. But it seems that he has done so willingly. Although men have knowledge of God, they choose not to glorify Him. This means that they choose not to have God rule over them. And I think this points to original sin.

Satan was the original sinner. In his pride, he desired to be like God, or even be God, rather than have God rule over him.

This led to the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They too desired to be like God. That is why they bought into the lie, which is, “Has God really said?” In their pride, they ate of the forbidden fruit. This gave them the knowledge of good and evil and introduced sin into the human race.

Now, every child born to man has this sin problem. That is why God placed eternity in their heart.

So the problem isn't a lack of knowledge of God. Men willingly choose not to give Him the honor He deserves.

The word *glorify* here is important. It means to “think about something in a magnified way.”

God has placed inside of every human the realization that He is God and should be worshipped.

And, of course, we know why men do not want to give God the honor and glory. They want to take it for themselves. Mankind likes to elevate any and every thing but God. We can't seem to resist the temptation to make God in our own image, even an image beneath us as we shall see later. And the tragedy of this is that we inescapably become like the god we serve.

But not only does man choose not to glorify God. He is also unthankful for what He has done. Look at the second part of verse 21:

**nor were thankful**

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I think that man's simple ingratitude against God is shocking.

I remember my first spring here in Bradford County. I drove home on Cotton Hollow Road; and as I went up that rise, it was like going through a tunnel of leaves. I had never seen anything like it. But then in the fall, all the leaves turned color and it was just — Wow!!! Reds, yellows, oranges in an explosion of color.

How could someone not see the Creator in that and give Him glory?

How could one see that and not be thankful that He saw fit to allow them time on His creation?

James, the brother of Jesus, captured this thought when he wrote this (James 1:16-18):

**<sup>16</sup>Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup>Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup>Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**

All good things in life come from God — life, health, food, shelter, jobs, friends, family, church and salvation.

But many, if not most, people today are unthankful. They want more than what God has given them. When asked, "How much is enough?" John Rockefeller said, "one dollar more." But this kind of thinking has changed in our time, especially with young people.

Everyone wants stuff handed to them on a silver platter. They don't want to work hard for things. They feel entitled.

But the problem with that is that if you are given everything, you never have a sense of the worth of things. And that leads you to being unthankful for them.

Humans should be the most thankful beings on the face of the earth. But instead of thanking God, they doubt Him, deny Him and curse Him. And this unthankfulness leads to what Paul writes next. Part three of verse 21 says:

**but became futile in their thoughts**

So this is the progression that we see in man — and why God is right in His wrath.

First, man knows God because He has made Himself manifestly clear. But he refuses to give God honor and glory for the things He has done. Thus man becomes unthankful for what God has provided, always wanting more. And this results in man becoming futile in his thoughts.

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The word futile means “vain.” Strong’s defines it like this:

*To make empty, vain or foolish.*

David Thompson, in his commentary, uses the word *moronic* to describe this condition of man. And that is what it means in its most literal interpretation.

What has the fool, the moron, said in his heart?

There is no God.

Unfortunately, as Francis Schaffer said, man has a God-shaped vacuum in his heart. Again, God has placed eternity there.

So when it is suppressed, when they refuse to give God glory and thanks, this is what happens (the last part of verse 21):

**and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

Tell me that the hearts of men have not been darkened. Dr. Fauci has been made to be some kind of hero because of the COVID virus. But have you seen some of the things that the government agency he runs has paid for? Your tax dollars, by the way! They have funded gruesome experiments on various animals, all in the name of science. And we don’t know the half of it. The experiments that they are doing in China and other parts of the world are beyond our imagination. Google the word *transhumanism*, and you’ll see what I mean.

You see, what they are really doing is they are trying to become God. In the darkness of their hearts, they do despicable things trying to take His place. Do some research into the things they are doing with gene splicing, called CRISPR-Cas9. It will blow your mind. But not only that.

Think about the things we tell our children. Science tells them that the world began four billion years ago. The first evidence of life was an algae that grew into the goo three and one-half billion years ago. The first official cell with a nucleus, they say, was two billion years ago. The first multi-celled organism was 1.7 billion years ago. Then some 543 million years ago, the “Cambrian Explosion” caused an amoeba to form. Finally, through exposure to the sun, this amoeba progressed into an animal that could climb a tree. And then it became you. This is not some information I made up. It is from a *Time* magazine article from 1995.

They were actually glorying in this bologna rather than glorifying the living God.

I’m sorry, but you have to be a moron to believe that.

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In fact, most scientists don't buy into the goo-to the zoo-to you garbage any more. The more they are able to understand our DNA, the more they see the need for a Designer. At its root, our DNA is filled with something like computer code.

Who wrote it?

Yet they still teach evolution to our children.

And how can they say this in the name of science?

No one was there to witness this.

So, at best, it is speculation — man's best effort to understand creation.

And at worst, it is the darkened mind of foolish men trying to explain away the God who placed eternity in their heart.

But the problem is: we have allowed these men and women with darkened hearts to teach our kids. These pseudo-intellectuals have taken God out of schools and replaced Him with the theories of one last time — *morons*. Shame on us.

You see, these theories of man may sound good. But think about what Paul is saying.

The word *foolish* means to be “without understanding or discernment.”

And the word *darkened* means “without light to the mind.”

In other words, these theories are lies from the pit of hell.

Left to his own imaginations, man loses sight of the light of truth that God has given him. He thinks he has come to some level of mental sophistication but, in reality, he is at the lowest level of stupidity. Just look at some of the things they believe.

What are some of the things the world says are good and true that are obvious lies?

Same-sex marriage.

Gender confusion.

Abortion on demand.

Euthanasia.

Socialism.

Critical Race Theory.

And the list goes on and on.

Here is the truth: No human being will ever stand before God and say he or she didn't know the truth.

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God has put within every heart the knowledge they need to come to Him. But many have darkened their heart and suppressed the truth. So they are deserving of God's wrath.

What we are going to look at next is the natural progression of what happens when the heart becomes dark. And it isn't pretty. Look at verse 22:

### **Professing to be wise, they became fools,**

Notice carefully what Paul is saying here.

Natural men, in the sight of God, profess to be wise; but they are not. They try to make us believe they are "scholars" when, in God's estimation, they are fools. R.A Torrey used to say:

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became "philosophers, that is foolosophers."*

Listen to what Paul says about these wise men in 1 Corinthians 1:20-25:

**<sup>20</sup>Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

He goes on to say that God uses the "**foolish things of the world to confound the wise.**"

I am a foolish thing. So are you! That is one of the reasons why I don't think that a pastor/teacher necessarily has to have degrees from some "semetary." Yes, I said "semetary," not seminary.

Don't get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with education. But when you mix the wisdom of man with the Word of God, there are problems. And that is what has happened in many so-called "Christian" schools. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones once wrote:

*The whole drift towards modernism that has blighted the church...and nearly destroyed its living gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy.*

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One of the biggest examples of this is how psychology has infiltrated the church. Much of what we now know as psychology was brought about through the imaginations of godless men. In fact, many of these men desired to destroy God and not lift Him up. So they would speculate on the human psyche, on the human condition, trying to figure out what makes you and I tick. But what they are looking at is not the spirit of man — the part that communicates with God. They are looking at the soul of men, and quite often the men they are looking at have a dead spirit. So they try to whip the soul into shape when, what the person's great need is, is a reborn spirit.

Man is fallen and in desperate need of salvation.

And no amount of head shrinking is going to change that. “Shrinkology” is presented as wisdom, but it can only be foolishness.

So, if you are in need of counsel to get through a struggle, go see your pastor or one of the other leaders in the church. Pray with a wise brother or sister and share in God's Word. And if it goes past that and you feel the need for “professional” counseling, look for not just a Christian counselor. Look for someone who does nouthetic counseling.

What is that, you might ask?

Here is a description from [www.gotanswers.org](http://www.gotanswers.org):

*Nouthetic counseling is a refreshing return to a strictly biblical method of problem-solving. Instead of focusing on the problem and expecting years of therapy, nouthetic counseling focuses on the biblical solution and expects the counselee to change—by the power of the Holy Spirit—conforming to the biblical model presented ( Romans 8:28-29 ).*

Pastor Ben Miller at Bumpville Bible Church is a strong advocate of nouthetic counseling. He is working on his certification. So he might be able to guide you.

Now, you might be wondering why I spent so much time on verse 22. It is because of what Paul is going to write next in verse 23.

Human beings should know God, because He has placed knowledge of Himself in creation and the heart of man. But man has suppressed the knowledge of Him. Because of this man, does not give God glory and is unthankful toward the blessings He has provided. This, in turn, has made man futile in his thoughts and given him a darkened heart. So man has turned not to Godly wisdom but to foolish, manly wisdom. And that has led to this (verse 23):

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**and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.**

Man, as we noted earlier, has a spiritual void in his heart. We were created to be imagers of God. And a large part of that is how we worship. Man, to fill that place in his heart we talked about in Ecclesiastes 3, will worship something. That is how we are wired.

And anything we worship aside from God is what?

An idol.

So in place of God, man becomes an idolater. He fashions gods to resemble him, and even settles for gods in the image of lesser creatures. By the way, this is an historical fact: Ancient cultures begin with the worship of one god and only later begin to worship many. The following is a list of historians that back up this claim (from Gene Pensiero's commentary on Romans 1):

1. *Herodotus, the famous Greek historian of the 5th century BC, said that the earliest Persians had no pagan temples or idols.*
2. *The 1st century Roman scholar Varro reported that Romans had no animal or human images of a god for 170 years after the founding of Rome.*
3. *Lucian, a 2nd century AD Greek writer, made similar statements concerning early Greece and Egypt.*
4. *The 4th century Christian historian Eusebius declared that “the oldest peoples had no idols.”*

And this is exactly what you would expect from what Paul writes here.

Without God, man does not evolve — he devolves.

And God allows this to happen.

It is the wrath of abandonment that we talked about last time. If man chooses to thumb his nose at God, He will give man what he wants. But we have just seen what will happen, and it is not good.

You see, there is one thing that God will never do. He will never share His matchless glory with anyone or anything.

He is majestic.

He is holy.

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He is God, and there is none like Him.

I think it is a disgrace for a sinful man to think that he can possibly invent or design something that equals God. Listen to what God thinks about this (Isaiah 46:5-10):

**<sup>5</sup>“To whom will you liken Me, and make *Me* equal  
And compare Me, that we should be alike?**

**<sup>6</sup>They lavish gold out of the bag,  
And weigh silver on the scales;  
They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god;  
They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship.**

**<sup>7</sup>They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it  
And set it in its place, and it stands;  
From its place it shall not move.  
Though *one* cries out to it, yet it cannot answer  
Nor save him out of his trouble.**

**<sup>8</sup>“Remember this, and show yourselves men;  
Recall to mind, O you transgressors.**

**<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things of old,  
For *I am* God, and *there is no other*;  
*I am* God, and *there is none like Me*,**

**<sup>10</sup>Declaring the end from the beginning,  
And from ancient times *things that are not yet done*,  
Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,**

Earlier in chapter 45, the prophet talks about how man cuts down a tree and makes a bunch of stuff out of it. Then he uses the leftover pieces to kindle a fire to keep him warm and make some bread. And then, last of all, he fashions an idol out of it to worship.

Paul personally saw this craziness in the Roman Empire. In fact, over 400 statues of idols stood in the City of Rome. We know from the Bible that Paul saw a statue to the “unknown God” in Athens, Greece. He tried to introduce them to Him, but they were too wise to fall for that. How silly and sad this is.

But such is the state of man. And I think in our time, most people know this is nonsense. So they find other idols such as drugs, alcohol, sex, sports and the like to fill the void only God can fill. But the most common idol I think people worship today is themselves. Warren Wiersbe was clever when he pointed this out. He wrote:

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*The greatest judgment God can inflict upon us is to let us have our own way.*

On the day that God pours out His wrath, this depraved, hedonistic world will deserve it.

There is “*Rightness in God’s Wrath.*”

But God...

Although man has done everything he can to suppress the truth, God has made possible an escape from the wrath they deserve.

I am so thankful for the blood of Jesus Christ, aren’t you?

In His wisdom, God the Father sent His only begotten Son into the world to die in the place of fallen man. He paid the penalty for every sin ever committed. And all one has to do to have life everlasting is to accept that payment on their behalf.

That is the wisdom of God, and it seems like foolishness to man.

But the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

What does it take for man to realize this?

He or she has to understand the depths of their depravity. They have to understand who they are in the eyes of a holy, yet loving, God.

And that is what we will focus on next time as we wrap up chapter one. Paul is going to give us a picture of our world. And it is ugly.

Read ahead to the end of the chapter, especially the three times that God says He has “given man over,” and pray for the plight of humanity.

Let’s pray!!

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REVELATION SONG: HE IS COMING BACK AGAIN!

He is coming back again  
He's coming back again  
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon  
I hope it's very soon  
My heart tells me He's coming back again

He is coming back again  
He's coming back again  
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon  
I hope it's very soon  
God's Word tells me He's coming back again

**MY JESUS, HE'S COMING BACK AGAIN!!!**