

Hopewell ARP Midweek Sermon, Wednesday, June 1, 2022
The Unrighteousness That Provokes God's Wrath

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Romans 1:18–23

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰For 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, ²¹because, 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. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Main idea: The wrath of God that is revealed against us is as great as God's own glory, because it has been revealed against the despising of His glory.

Introduction: Three revelations: God's righteousness (for men, in the gospel), God's divinity (in men, and to them in the creation), and God's wrath (upon men, in His "giving them up," vv24–32... part of the punishment for trying to have worship without God is to be given over to trying to have morality without God, but we are dense, so there are other revelations of that wrath "from heaven"). The passage before us focuses upon that against which God's wrath has been revealed.

1. The nature of all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: suppression of the truth (v18–21)

a. We know the truth

- i. It is manifest **in us**, because God Himself has shown it to us (v19)
- ii. It is manifest **to us**, because God gave us senses and minds and made His eternal power and Godhead observable and discernable (v20)

b. We push down on it in unrighteousness (v18b)

- i. By not glorifying Him (v21a)
- ii. By not thanking Him (v21b)
- iii. By trying to have wisdom without worship (v22)

2. The expression of the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: false worship (23)

- a. **Atheism.** All men worship, but if not God then what? "Wisdom" without worship produces worship without wisdom. All men are devoted to something. All men depend upon something. All men look for delight in something.
- b. **Humanism.** The most obvious candidate for this false worship is self, but self cannot sustain it
- c. **Paganism.** When we look outside of self, to something other than God, things only get worse.
- d. **Evolutionism.** Ironically named, since it is the devolution of idolatry, combing the worst of both humanism and paganism.

Conclusion: If this is what God's wrath is revealed against, then how greatly we continue to provoke Him! And therefore how desperately we need that righteousness from Him that is revealed in the gospel!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Romans 1 versus 18 through 23. These are God's words for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them 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 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.

Professing, to be wise. They became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible. God into an image made like corruptible, man, and birds, and four footed animals and creeping things So far, the reading of Gods inspired and inherent work.

Well, we heard last week, that one of the reasons that the apostle is not ashamed of the gospel, which is the power of God, for salvation is because the way that God saves us by his power is through this righteousness. That is revealed in the Gospel, the righteousness of God from faith to faith.

The righteousness, that is counted for us as if it were ours, because it is ours. When Christ is ours, when we believe in him and the righteousness, then that is also worked out in us who have already been counted righteous in Christ. And so that is one, great revelation, God's revealing His righteousness.

For those who don't have any of their own and we rejoice over the gospel. We're not ashamed. The apostle wasn't ashamed to preach it. We're not ashamed to hear it. Believe it, Tell it ourselves. Well, the reason we needed righteousness from God for us, to be revealed to us, is because there are two other things that have been revealed in.

The first place caught himself was revealed in his creation and will think about that under, the first point tonight when we think about the nature of the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, the nature of the ungodliness and righteousness of men in is that we suppress the truth. That's what our ungodliness and an unrighteousness.

Come from the pushing down upon the truth of God. God has revealed Himself both in men and to them will hear tonight. But man is not treated God as God not in our worship and not in our works and therefore in response to our ungodliness, not treating God as God in our worship and in response to our unrighteousness, which is not treating God as God in our works, God has revealed His wrath.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness. And so, from here in the middle of chapter 1, to the end of chapter 3, he's going to be talking about the revelation or the revealing, of God's wrath. And then the revealing of God's righteousness in Jesus, that is for us.

And here is where we find out that we have fallen short of the glory of God. And many of us have memorized, haven't we, that verse towards the end of chapter 3 that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Although the point there in chapter 3 is not that we have sinned and fallen short to the glory of God, but that God has given his own righteousness in Jesus, By the time, he's winding up the end of chapter 3.

It's really about the revelation of his righteousness. So, here we have the revelation of his wrath from where we are tonight until the end of the chapter. And tonight, we'll be hearing especially that ungodliness and unrighteousness against which the wrath of God is revealed. What have we done? That has so provoked.

God that He is full of wrath against us. Not so much fury or ra which as if it were in a moment. But the enduring burning fire of the wrath of God upon and against man. And Well, what we aimed to see tonight then is, how have we so provoked God, that this wrath of his would be revealed against our ungodliness, and

against our unrighteousness, There is no room of course for thinking whether or not there is wrath, it plainly declares that there's wrath and there's even less room for judging the wrath of God.

As man would like to do many, will say well I can't believe in a God that would have wrath against sin. I prefer to believe in a God and so forth. All someone does when you let yourself think that way, feel that way, speak that way. All you're saying is that you reject the true and living God, the real God, and instead have invented a God of your own imagining, You're not saying anything about the actual character of God when you when a man speaks against the wrath of God, He is not saying anything about the actual character of God, he's only describing himself as the wise.

Seminary professor said when a student raised his hand and said, well I like to think of God and it went on to give what he thought was a very clever description. The professor waited patiently for the student to finish. And then said well that's all very well. But we're not studying you or how you like to think we are studying God.

So, what is it that we have done to provoke Him? What is the nature of our ungodliness and unrighteousness? And then how is that ungodliness and unrighteousness? Expressed? Those are the two basic ideas before us tonight. And the first, in the first part, we'll hear that the nature of all our ungodliness and unrighteousness is suppression suppression of the truth pushing down on the truth in unrighteousness.

And then the expression of our ungodliness and unrighteousness is especially in false worship, false worship Worshiping without the truth of God, and we'll see that especially in the last verse tonight, verse 23. And then next week, we'll see, especially the unrighteousness that comes out of that, of course, unrighteousness and ungodliness are not too complete.

Separate categories Ungodliness worship without God, is the violation of the first half of the law, isn't it? The first table of the law, worshiping, a God of our own idea, in a way of our own idea without reverence for him in the life or the heart or on the lips and treating as common that which God has made.

Holy, especially His worship and the time that he himself has set apart for that worship. So the first four commandments which we also know as the greatest Commandment and because we have been unrighteous in the greatest commandment, we'll find out next week. He gives over men, He gives men over also to unrighteousness in the second, great commandment the rest of his moral law.

So first the nature of all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men suppression of the truth, one of the things we'll say again in a moment when we get to the second point is that there is no such thing as an atheist. The atheist says he doesn't believe in God. Well, God does not therefore cease to exist because the atheist says in his heart, he is a fool.

He says in his heart that there is no God nor can the atheist make atheism exist by saying that he doesn't believe in God because God has shown the truth of his reality to that atheist and God has shown the truth of his reality in the things that have been made.

And so, it's its mockery and scorning for the atheist to say that he doesn't believe in God, but it is the truth and reality for God. To tell us not to believe in atheists. And we don't, We know the truth. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness, They don't lack data, They don't have all of the data, but they have plenty to leave them without excuse.

As the as the end of verse 20 says, no, the data is there. They're just pushing down on it. Now we used to do this horrible thing in swimming pools. When I was a kid which is basically do our best to drown one another, and you figure out how to get someone's legs out from underneath him, and then push down upon the shoulders or the head.

Probably should not give too much drowning advice from the pulpit, but we were suppressing one another in unrighteousness. That's the nature of the word that the apostle uses here. It's not that our brother didn't exist. We just didn't want any of him to be visible above the surface, and that is what the so-called atheist does with the knowledge of God.

He knows that God exists but because he is unrighteous because he wants to as the Lord said about Jeroboam the son of Niebat and that horrible condemnation that we just read on the Lord's Day. Put God behind his back or two Lord's days ago. Maybe he put God behind his back Because the atheist wants to do that.

He suppresses the truth and unrighteousness. It's no good to do. So however verse 19 tells us that what maybe known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. That is to say even before we get to all of the evidence of God that he has put and the rest of the creation he has.

As the scripture says, put eternity in men's hearts, he has created us with a knowledge with a sense of himself, and we just gave an example of that. A few moments ago, when we were thinking about the man who says, well, I refuse to believe in a God, who would have wrath against sin.

It's a form of the self-destructive argument. God doesn't exist because I hate him. Well, you know, he exists, you know, that he is God, You know, that He is righteous, you know, that you are sinful, you know, that your sin deserves the wrath of God as we'll hear about in the next portion.

Lord willing not next week. I'll be out of town. But the the week after, you know, all those things because he has made those things known to you, He has made those things known in you, even those who are uninstructed in Scripture and suppressing the truth and unrighteousness to a large extent, we'll use language like the divine spark, Of course, misplacing it thinking that it is something that belongs to us and is found in in man about man, when it is something that belongs to God and it is the knowledge of himself that he has put in each of us.

The very fact that people believe that there is a right to wrong. No one actually believes in the complete absence of right and wrong. Because if you tell them that they should, they'll say no that's wrong to.

We know that God is and we know that He is righteous and we know that we are sinners and we know that he hates sin. So the truth is manifest in us because God himself has shown it to us. This gives you an advantage when you are talking to someone who refuses to acknowledge God, you know, something that they have not admitted to themselves.

They know that God exists, However, hard. They try to plead otherwise. They know that he is and therefore you have as it were a tactical advantage. When engaging them. It's also the the truth about God is also manifest to us. You see that in verse 20? For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made or wonder several wonderful things going on here in verse 20 One, is it describes to us what happens at the creation God Himself is invisible.

God himself is a complete whole God has all of the characteristics of his godness imperfection in himself from all eternity. He as he describes himself to Moses her names himself to Moses. I am He is that he is but when he created he created in such a way as to display things about himself.

And so, all of these invisible perfections suddenly have visible evidence and not only does he make visible evidence of who he is. He makes creatures, who can see, and touch and smell, and hear and taste, who is there, here who can see, and touch and here, smell and taste.

You see, God put evidence of himself in the creation and then he gave you these observing powers. And not only do you have these senses by which you can observe what is in his creation, but he's also given you a mind so that you can comprehend. And understand. You see the point of all of these glorious things is for God to show himself to us, who are made in His image.

So that we may know him so that we may adore him so that we may love him. He has known himself from all eternity. He has adored himself within the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit from all eternity, there has been adoration appreciation, love and fellowship. And so God creates an entire world.

That is observable and discernible. And then he makes us with the capacity for observing and thinking and understanding so that we may know him. This is what is often called general revelation, that knowledge of

himself that he has given in us and then presented to us in the created things even his eternal power and his godhead.

You might have, we have an our English translation before us Godhead. Other translations. Say, divine nature. His godness, all of his attributes and perfections taken together. And so we're without excuse, We are without excuse and yet this pushing down upon the truth, in unrighteousness takes takes form or takes shape.

And, especially two ways we push down on the truth, by not glorifying him, and not being thankful to him verse 21 here without excuse. Because Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God nor were thankful. You see the right response to a creation? That is full of good things.

And a creator that create a, you not just to enjoy good things, but to enjoy Him and his goodness, that's why there are good things so that you can see, and smell, and hear, and taste, and touch and experience and know the one who made all those things. Remember when we were hearing about the fourth commandment in the Lord's day evening that we weren't made for those things, we were made for him, and that's why he created us not so that we could observe the Sabbath.

We weren't made for the Sabbath. We already existed the Sabbath didn't exist before we did. The Sabbath was made for us so that we would be reminded about Him for whom we are made Him as our purpose and Him as our pleasure. But what happens when you're pushing down on the truth and unrighteousness suddenly you're not realizing your purpose of adoring him and loving him and praising him.

And when we don't adore him and love him and praise him, we become despisers of the Living. God, We of all the creatures were made to enjoy him and to praise him. And then when we deny Him, We become the greatest cosmic traders. That could ever be. This is what it means.

When it says, we have fallen short of the glory of God, not that somehow we were supposed to be as glorious as God was or God is, and we have just fallen short. No, because we were made to know and praise His glory, and we have rebelled entirely against the purpose for, which we are made.

Now, someone who sees the good things that God has made and knows and him and his goodness in them. How do you respond to him? Not just with worship of who He is. But how do you respond to his making these things Why we're thankful for them? Of course, Thank you, Lord, that you made all of these beautiful things to see and beautiful music that we could hear and speech that we could communicate one another and creating us so that we might enjoy food and making all of these different types of food and even different types of taste buds.

So that there's an almost limitless permutation of of good things to enjoy eating and smelling as well. And so forth. You're just full of thankfulness to the God, whose so wanted to communicate so much about himself, that he made so many beautiful wonderful things. But if you're not, knowing him in those things then are you thankful to him for those things?

This is one of the reasons why it's so disheartening, When you hear Presidents or other people in politics, talking about thankfulness in general, instead of thankfulness to God or faith in general. Instead of faith in the living God because it is, this Godless thankfulness. This this nebulous thankfulness that is aimed anywhere other than at the true and living God.

That is actually the unthankfulness that is being described here. God. Hates Our generalized Thanksgiving days because they are not Thanksgiving's to him that come from worship of Him. That says the reason we're so grateful for turkey and stuffing and corn or whatever it is that you're grateful for is because in those things God has made you to know Himself and his goodness.

And so they suppress the truth and in righteousness verse 18. Because although they new God, They did not glorify him as God that in respond with worship and therefore they were not properly thankful for the things that were made. We tried to have wisdom without worship. They're foolish hearts, or darkened professing, to be wise that became fools.

No, I have learned that I can if I happen to be up and my wife is not, I can actually go into our bedroom closet. There's not a ton of room there but I can close the door and turn the light on, and then I can see what what's in there.

But if there is no light and I go in there, even though I'm the one who arranged rather meticulously where all of my clothing is, I have many a time reached in gotten something, taken it to the bathroom with me, flipped on the light and discovered that I had to make another trip.

It wasn't what I was looking for.

Trying to have any sort of wisdom at all without knowing, who made the world. And why shuts off the light. The foolish heart is in. Utter darkness, whatever it thinks it has, whatever it thinks it knows is not actually. What is there?

And so man, trying to be wise without God is utterly foolish. He tries to have wisdom without worship. There is no true wisdom, unless you are all worshiper of the Bible's got unless you are thankful for all created things because they are the means by which the Creator has displayed different parts, different attributes of his to you.

And so the nature of all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men is suppression of the truth. You see We are wicked. We suppress the truth in unrighteousness But God is not wicked. Like we are, he will not pretend a way the sinfulness of rejecting Him of refusing to worship him of unthankfulness for all the good things that he has made and all the good things that he does.

And sometimes I'll we talking to someone who does not have much of a Christian background at. I actually sometimes as someone who's come up in church or maybe even as an officer and a reformed church and they'll say well God doesn't so upset with with sin like you are, Why can't he just pretend it away?

Why can't he just not be upset with it? Well because he's not on righteous like we are and so he is full of wrath and that's why he's had to reveal it from heaven at times, we're going to see next week that in the breakdown of man's thinking and man's immorality, God reveals his wrath against our ungodliness and our unrighteousness.

But don't miss that. Phrase from heaven. Many times against Sodom and Gomorrah. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the so-called God's of Egypt, the wrath of God is revealed and then especially in the flood. That's one thing that really messes up the anthropologists and the archaeologists.

Every single culture knows about the flood. They tell different lies about who and why, but they all know that it happened. The wrath of God is revealed And second place, the expression of our ungodliness and unrighteousness is in false worship As a follow-up to the truth that we all know about God is the is the counter of truth or the corresponding truth that all men worship.

All men are devoted to something All men depend upon something all men. Look for delight in something, The man who ceases to have something to live for or strength or hope to live by or pleasure in anything that man is on the verge of destroying himself. It's one of the reasons why there's so much self-destruction in our, in our sinful miserable world of murder is because it's impossible to be a man who doesn't worship.

All men are devoted to something. All men depend upon something all men. Look for delight in something. But if not God than what You see, trying to have wisdom without worship, because you're a worshipping person because you are a creature made for the purpose of worship. Means you will worship, But you'll do it without wisdom.

Your worship will be marked by this darkness of art. That doesn't know the living God And so you'll have wrong objects of worship. And even those who claim to be worshipping the Living God when they don't worship according to God's wisdom, what do they do? They make up their own way of worship, and God says, you don't have him then, and you hate him.

Then worship without wisdom is in. Utter darkness, they're foolish hearts are darkened professing to be wise that became fools in the first part of this folly. They changed the glory of the incorruptible. God into an image made like a corruptible man. Now, We have rules in our house that are more or less.

Sometimes less followed about exchanges. There are there comes a time when a sinful five or six-year-old will recognize that they're less clever. Three or four-year-old sibling does not understand the comparative value of what they have. And we will not let them trade. They have to get their Lego trades or whatever else it is approved by mom and dads so that there can be an arbiter.

Well man has traded the glory of God himself.

First of all, for himself for man. Now, if you are a worshiper and you're created to worship, but you are suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, you no longer have the option of worshiping God. So what are you going to trade that for? Well, the first thing, man, trades it for is men.

This is humanism, The most obvious candidate for man's false worship is himself. The problem is man has a really hard time being his his own help. His own purpose or his own pleasure, Man, is a sinful miserable wretch. One of the things that you learn. Well you ought to learn by living in this world but one of the things that is obviously true about ourselves.

If you just read the Bible, is that man is constantly in trouble. We have no help. We have no goodness. We have no life. We have no strength in ourselves. And even after we are brought to faith, there is so much remaining sin and not just remaining sin, but persisting weakness that we are constantly in trouble is the man who doesn't know or think that he's in trouble.

That is in the most trouble. He's the one who as you read the book or watch, watch the show. And you see that, he's about to get annihilated, how much worse his situation is, if he doesn't realize how much trouble he's actually in Well, humanism cannot be sustained which is why man descends into paganism.

He realizes that he doesn't have goodness or strength in himself. And so he starts looking for for other candidates, the list at the end of verse 23 is probably descending, an ability birds, at least they have wings, they have some semblance of power. This would have been as especially sharp twist of the knife, from the apostle, to the Romans to the Roman church.

The the Roman Empire identified itself with the eagle and they would have said yes birds no not birds. Because in birds there is not strength or help or hope for man four-footed animals the the four on the floor. It's getting worse and then the creeping things paganism. When we look outside of ourselves to something, other than God, things only get worse.

We cannot be our own help. Nothing else can can be our help and then we in a great irony in the last couple of hundred years have taken the two to and matched them up together into something cold evolutionism. So you have birds and four-footed creatures and creeping things and we take man and we stick him in with all those other things, not recognizing man's distinction from the other creatures.

And we think that if we if we if we make a humanistic paganism that somehow we will invest man with this increasing strength in this increasing goodness. And so you have the wok nonsense that has rejected, all morality that has gone before. And that's the only part of the numerality is just to reject all other morality and man, trying to have wisdom without worship has become self-mocking.

You see then how we were made for God and we were made in his image and we have utterly rejected Him. It's not about human flourishing. It's not about trying to recover a way of worship, or a way of morality that will give us our best life or restore us to enjoyment and success and life and health.

It's about having rejected the glorious God who didn't need to make anything.

And it is against our rejection of Him In our ungodliness, and our unrighteousness that has wrath burns. And if that's what God's wrath has revealed against then how greatly we continue to provoke Him, How much of

our life you and I do. We live unmindful of our God and so his wrath has great indeed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

But therefore, how desperately? We need righteousness from Him that has been revealed in the gospel. You see as bad as your sin is, if you are in Jesus Christ, there is already now. No condemnation against you. God hates your forgetfulness of him, your trusting in yourself, you're hoping another things your, despite he hates all those things with the entirety of his glorious being.

But he himself has propitiated his wrath God. The Son is exhibited as the atoning sacrifice, so that there's not a drop of this wrath left even against such sinners. As we are, who have despised the glory of God. That's why the apostle is so excited about the gospel in which this righteousness, the righteousness of God is revealed.

Even for sinners who have provoked wrath in this way by despising, the glory of God, God Himself as the gospel. Not only that he has revealed himself in the creation and to us, not only that he has revealed His wrath against our despising him and rejecting him. But he's revealed his righteousness for us, as the power, by which He saves us in his gospel.

How eager we ought to be then to hear in these coming chapters. This gospel of which, the Apostle is not ashamed.