

June 3, 2015

Man's Rejection of God and Reality

Romans 1:21 (NASB), **“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”**

The common refrain from humankind as we have already discussed as we work our way through Romans 1 is: How could God possibly be justified in His wrath? Underlying this line of thought is that God is unfair because how can man be expected to love God if they don't know anything about God? God is however justified in His wrath and in His judgment because of mankind's willful rejection of Him. The apostle Paul explicitly declares that **“though they knew God”** through His natural revelation, His general revelation, unbelieving humankind still rejected God. Although people are innately conscious of God's existence and of His power, people are just as innately and wickedly inclined to reject that knowledge. The natural tendency of unregenerate mankind is as it says in 2 Timothy 3:13 to **“proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”** Paul reminds believers in Titus 3:3, **“We also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”**

A prominent evolutionist said, “I refuse to believe in God, so what other alternative do I have but evolution?” At least the man was honest, but he inadvertently gave clear testimony to the fact that it was not evidence for evolution that led him to disbelief in God but rather his disbelief in God that led him to embrace evolution.

Here in verse 21 the apostle Paul mentions four ways in which men exhibit their rejection of God. The first being that man fails to **“honor”** God **“as God.”** This is the basic expression of the root of sin of pride which is at the core of man's fallenness. The word **“honor”** is the Greek word *doxazo* and is probably better translated as glory. The worst deed that we as humans commit is our failure to glorify God or to **“honor”** Him. To glorify God is to exalt Him, to recognize Him as supremely worthy of honor, to acknowledge His divine attributes. Since the glory of God is also the sum of all the attributes of His being, of all He has revealed of Himself to man, to give God glory is to then acknowledge His glory and extol it.

Scripture continually calls upon believers to glorify the Lord. David in Psalm 29:1-2 says, **“Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in holy array.”** 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, **“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”** But we live in a Romans 1 world in which God is completely ignored at best and ridiculed and blasphemed at worst. We live in a Romans 1 world where humankind seeks only to glorify itself. We live in a Romans 1 world where former world class athlete can spit in the very face of the creator because in his utter depravity he believes that he can be whatever he wants to be not what God has created him to be.

Secondly, because man in his all-consuming pride fails to honor and glorify God as Creator, he also fails to **“give thanks”** to Him for His gracious provision. His unbelief is made all the more worse by his complete lack of gratitude. Although God is the source of everything that is good – giving man rain, sun, and other natural blessings to both the just and the unjust alike, the natural man, the unbeliever fails to thank God because he fails even to acknowledge His existence. Matthew 5:45 says, **“For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”**

Third, as a consequence of man’s failure to honor and thank God, fallen man has become **“futile in their speculations.”** To reject God is to reject the greatest reality of the universe, the reality which gives the only true meaning, purpose, and understanding to everything else. Refusing to recognize God and to have His truth then guide their minds, sinful humanity is doomed to **“futile”** quests for wisdom through various human **“speculations”** that lead only to falsehood and therefore to still greater unbelief and wickedness. We saw this before our very eyes only two days ago in the deranged and utterly perverse image of Bruce Jenner on the cover of Vanity Fair posing as a woman. Why would a grandfather and father do this? Because he has failed to honor God and thank God and the result is that he is a deeply lost man who is looking for validation and meaning by mutilating his body (which God gave him and created), and by posing as something that he most assuredly is not.

To forsake God is to exchange truth for falsehood meaning for hopelessness, and satisfaction for emptiness. But an empty mind and soul is like a vacuum. It will not remain empty but will draw in falsehood and darkness to replace the truth and light that it has rejected. The history of fallen humanity is not evolutionary it is devolutionary as we have witnessed the last few days as the world has fallen all over itself to congratulate and proclaim courageous a sixty something year old grandfather who has decided to mutilate his body in the quest for something he will never be. The **“foolish heart”** that rejects and dishonors God does not become enlightened and freed, as sophisticated unbelievers like to claim, but rather becomes spiritually **“darkened”** and further enslaved to sin. The person who forsakes God forsakes truth, light, and eternal life, as well as meaning, purpose and happiness. He also forsakes the foundation and motivation for moral righteousness.

Spiritual darkness and moral perversity are inseparable. This is why we are where we are in our culture today. When man rejects God, he rejects virtue. The godless philosophy of the world inescapably leads to moral depravity which we are now witnessing. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:8, **“See to it that no one takes captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”**

When the incarnation of truth and light came into the world, unbelieving mankind would not have Him. Because Jesus was the light of the world, they rejected Him, because their deeds were evil and they loved darkness rather than light (John 3:19-20). For the very reason that Jesus spoke the truth, they would not believe Him (John 8:45). That is the legacy of man’s refusal to glorify God.