

The Heathen Without Excuse – Part 1

Romans 1:18-23

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Let's read beginning in verse 18 of Romans chapter 1. Paul says, "For the wrath of God is revealed..." it starts right off with the section on the wrath of God or condemnation. The wrath of God is literally being revealed, "...against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold..." or suppress or hold down, "...the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead..." I want you to note this phrase, "...so that they are without excuse." That's what this whole section is about. They are without excuse. We are going to learn that the Gentile world, the moral man, the Jew and the religious man are all without excuse. They are condemned before God and they stand in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice verse 21. Why are they without excuse? "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain..." or empty, "...in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." I read one verse beyond our text because I want you to see as it flows into the next section that we will begin next Wednesday night.

Paul now completes his introduction. I want to give you some background that we've covered because as we go through Romans I want you to see it in its context. In verses 1-7 of chapter 1, we have the opening "Salutation." In verses 8-15 we have Paul's "Personal Communication," and in verses 16-17 we have Paul's "Transition to the Main Theme." So, "Introduction, Paul's Personal Communication, and then the Transition into the Main Theme." Now as powerful as the gospel is, and I want you to go back with me to verses 16-17, Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." verses 16 and 17 give the theme of the whole book of Romans, it's the gospel of Christ, "...for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," or the Gentile, "...For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." We have a universal gospel. We have a gospel that is for the whole world. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," it actually means that I actually glory in the gospel, and I glory in my commission to preach this gospel, and it's a universal gospel for every man. So, having announced the universal gospel, verse 16, Paul now proceeds to show that there is a universal need of the gospel. Get that and you get the whole section.

The gospel is for every man. Every man needs the gospel. This is foundational. Before you can understand how God justifies the unjust, you have to understand that man is unjust and stands in need of salvation and is under condemnation. We live in a culture today that does not accept these concepts, they are not politically correct and they are rejected by, oh pretty much

are whole culture today. The idea that some people are going to hell, the idea that some people are lost, the idea that there is one way to be saved, the idea that there is one gospel for the entire world, that is what we are preaching as believers. All have sinned. All have come short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous, no not one, and there is only one way to get to heaven and that's through Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Him. So what is Paul going to do in this section? He's going to basically show us that all the world is guilty before God. He is going to call all of mankind into the courtroom, and he is going to show us that they are all guilty and condemned and stand in need of God's righteousness. If God sent His Son because the world is lost in sin, and we believe that's true, man's need of salvation is seen in the simple fact that there is a saviour. Why would God send His Son to die on the cross if man did not need salvation? Why would Jesus suffer and die? Remember when Jesus said in the garden of Gethsemane, "If it's possible, let this cup pass from Me?" He was talking about the crucifixion, the bearing of the sins of the world. It was not possible. He died on the cross.

I'll never forget. I was a young Christian and somehow, somehow the Lord gave me enough wisdom to be able to answer this friend of mine, and a bunch of my friends, who at that time were into transcendental meditation. Some of you who lived in the 70s remember TM, transcendental meditation. He was telling me, "John, you know, you follow Jesus and I will meditate, and we will both be in heaven together." He actually said, "I'll see you there." By sitting in a lotus, emptying your mind of what little is there, you're going to save yourself? And, like a flash, I had just read the garden of Gethsemane scene. I said to my friend, "Why would God...", and he had a Catholic background, "...give His Son to die on the cross if we could get to heaven by meditation?" If I could meditate and get to heaven, if I could be baptized and get to heaven, if I could just live a good life and get to heaven, do you think the Father would've let the Son suffer and die? I don't think so. When Jesus said, "If it's possible, let the cup pass from me?" The Father would've said, "Okay, okay, I'll let it pass. You don't have to die. We'll just tell everybody to meditate and we'll see you there." It wasn't possible. The only hope of man's salvation was in the person of Jesus Christ.

God sent His Son because the world is lost in sin. Man's need of salvation is seen in the simple fact that Jesus came and suffered and died. Someone put it like this. If no one is drowning, why launch the lifeboat? If no one is sick, why send for the doctor? If no one is lost, why preach the gospel? That's so true, and yet the common view today is that no one is lost, everybody is okay, we'll all find our own path, and we'll all get to heaven in the end. Before the good news, we have to have the bad news. We have to understand that we are sinners, that we are under condemnation, and we cannot save ourselves by our own good works or by our own righteousness. There is no other way by which man can be saved then at the name of Jesus Christ.

I think the weakness in much preaching today is in the simple fact that we don't believe that man is sinful. We have a happy message, a positive message. I heard one popular TV preacher once say, "People are condemned enough. They feel guilty enough. They feel bad enough. I don't want to tell them they're sinners, I just want to be positive with them." If

someone is sick, they need to know they are sick. Have you ever tried to get somebody that was sick and they wouldn't accept that. They wouldn't go to the doctor. "Come on, go to the doctor." "(Coughing) I'm okay." "Come on, you need to go to the doctor." They fall down, "No, I'll be fine." "Dude, I'm taking you to the doctor, you're sick!" "No, no, no, really, I'll be alright. No, no." "No, you need a doctor." Jesus is the Great Physician, and we are sick. We need to go to Him in order to be saved.

We come now to the first doctrinal section of Romans called, "Condemnation-The Wrath of God Revealed (1:18-3:20) Question - Is the world lost? Answer - "All the world...guilty before God" (3:19)" Let's turn there for just a second. I want to show that to you. Romans 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law..." he's speaking about the Jews. Why? "...that every mouth may be stopped..." and here's our phrase, "...and all the world may become guilty before God." That's what the Bible says. Go back with me to chapter 1.

All the world becomes guilty before God, and here's what we're going to look at the next several weeks, "The Heathen Condemned, The Moralist Condemned, The Jew is Condemned," then he takes the three groups and puts them into one group and says, "The World is Condemned." So we have to go into the pit of despair before we can be lifted into the heights of God's great love and great mercy and God's salvation, so buckle your seatbelts, okay? If we jump over this section and just go to salvation and sanctification, we won't really appreciate the gospel or the need for Jesus Christ. So, it's not a very pretty picture, but it is important for us to understand. Paul is basically saying, "Here ye, here ye. Court is now in session." The first group Paul calls into the courtroom are the pagan heathen Gentiles. We see that they are all without excuse. Another little peek, I want you to look at chapter 1, verse 20. We will get there in just a second. He says, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." All of these groups are going to be seen as being without excuse. Now, there are basically two reasons that they are without excuse in our text tonight. I want you to write them down. First, they knew God but they suppressed that truth, or you might say they rejected God's clear revelation. Even the heathen, even the irreligious, even the person living in the most primitive jungles, and by the way, this answers the question everybody wants to know, "What about the man in the jungle? What about the African? What about the person in New Guinea living in a hut somewhere and he's never heard about Jesus. What is God going to do about him?" It's always interesting that so many atheists are so concerned about the salvation of the heathen. I've even said to people, "Well, what about the African? What about the people living in the jungles? What if they'd never heard?" I thought, "Man, if you're that concerned, go share the gospel with them." It's just a smokescreen. We're going to get the answer to that question here in these verses. They knew God, but they suppressed the truth, verses 18-20. I want to show you what I mean. Look at verse 18. Notice these phrases, "...hold the truth..." and notice in verse 19 this little phrase, "...known of God is manifest in them." There were things about God that they knew and that God had manifested to them, even these pagans living out in the jungles. I want you to notice verse 19, "...God hath shewed it unto them." Then notice verse 20 says, "...clearly seen, being understood..." I'm just lifting phrases out of these

verses. Then verse 21, "...they knew God."

What we're going to learn here is not man's evolution; that he started very primitively and has evolved up. Many atheists and agnostics believe that religion has evolved; that religion is man's evolution, and he created a kind of god and has moved from pantheism to polytheism to monotheism. Then we have Christianity, Judaism and that man is evolving in religion, but it's a cultural phenomena. The Bible is very clear that man started with a knowledge of God, and even in the most primitive cultures in the most primitive places, God has revealed Himself. We are going to see two main ways He has done that so that they are without excuse. So, they hold down or suppress the truth, verse 18. They know God. He's manifested to them. God showed unto them, verse 19; and verse 20, they are clearly seen, they are understanding, and verse 21, they knew God. Clearly, they knew God, but what does that mean that they knew God? That doesn't mean they knew Him in a redemptive sense. It doesn't mean that they were saved. It means they knew Him (listen carefully) in a sense that God revealed Himself to them. God cannot be known apart from revelation, and when God reveals Himself to you there is a sense in which you actually know God. God has given every man a two-fold revelation of Himself. Write these down. First, conscience; and second, creation. Every human being has been given by their creator a conscience, an innate sense of right and wrong. Even atheists that don't believe in God have an innate sense of what is right and what is wrong. Notice the little phrase in verse 19, "in them," that's conscience. Then again in verse 19, "unto them," that is creation. So, in them and unto them, God has revealed Himself. God's wrath now is revealed to those who at one time knew Him by the revelation in conscience and creation. Go back to verse 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven..." stop right there for just a moment. What is the wrath of God? Well, let me tell you that it's not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people whom He does not like.

Have you ever been around somebody that just blows their top, freaks out, screams and yells and has fits of rage and anger lashing out at other people? That is not what we mean by God's wrath. God's wrath isn't God just, "Aagh! I'm just so mad right now! I gotta find me a sinner and throw a lightning bolt at him! There's a wicked, vile sinner!" Swoop! Boom! A pile of ashes. The wraaaaaath of God! When we think of the wrath of God, we think of the old puritan preachers that used to preach about the wrath of God. Jonathan Edwards, the great American theologian, many feel the greatest theologian America has ever produced in the early years of America, preached a famous sermon even today, it's called, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Can you imagine that on the marquee of a church? I'm sure the church would be packed that Sunday, people just flocking in. "Wow! He's going to preach on the wrath of God! I can't wait to hear about that!" This is not something we like to think about, but please understand, if we're going to think Biblically, we have to accept the fact that God is holy, that God is righteous and God must be consistent with His nature. He will never violate His own nature, and that in His righteous and in His holiness, He must and will and does judge sin. You got that? But, it's not just God whimsically blowing His stack and throwing lightning bolts at people. Let me give you my definition of the wrath of God. It's the settled determined response of a righteous God against sin. God is holy and He is righteous. His wrath is His holy hostility to evil, His refusal to condone it or to come to terms with it, but rather His just judgment upon it.

Now let me give you a little scenario. If someone commits a murder, and they're guilty. Hypothetically, they're guilty. They've committed a murder, and they are brought before a judge. They are found guilty, and the judge sentenced them to 30 years, life in prison, whatever it might be. I'm not here to talk about how long someone should go to jail for killing somebody, but the judge sentenced them. Is that wrong of the judge to do? Would you get up and accuse that judge of being unrighteous? "Come on, Judge! Why would you send them to jail? Why would you send them to prison? All he did was murder someone. Come on! What kind of a judge are you?" Why would we expect anything less from God when we have rejected the revelation of God. When we have refused to submit to Him, when we have violated His laws, moral laws, His commandments, and we have sinned against God's holy, righteous law? Why would God not be consistent with who He is and judge sin? It doesn't mean the judge is a bad person. It doesn't mean that they are wicked or capricious or they just like to send people to prison. I can't imagine the heavyweight responsibility of being a judge of having condemned someone or sending them to prison. That would be horrible. God has to be consistent with His nature.

God's wrath is seen in different places in the Bible. Sodom and Gomorrah is a demonstration of God's wrath. The flood of Noah's time was a demonstration of God's wrath. God's wrath is seen in what we call sowing and reaping. There is natural law and there's moral law. The natural law would be gravity. If you went up on top of the church tonight and you said, "I don't believe in gravity." You jumped off the building, guess what? You get a lesson in gravity. Splat! You jumped off a bridge somewhere, natural law, you and I know that man has aerodynamically created airplanes to supersede God's natural law of gravity, and so forth, but built in nature there are laws. That's how come we can do science. That's how come we can build airplanes and rockets—because there's laws in nature that are consistent. So, God has built in laws into the universe that are moral laws, and there is a sense (there are many facets to God's wrath) in which even God's moral law, the Bible puts it like this, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." It says that if you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption. If you sow to the spirit, you will reap life everlasting. So, if you sow to the spiritual realm, obedience to God, submission to His will, then you have life everlasting. If you resist those moral laws that God has put into culture and society, put in His Word, then you are going to reap what you sow. God's law of wrath has been demonstrated in its greatest in the cross. You know when Jesus hung on the cross and died, you know what you are witnessing? The wrath of God. When Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" It's because your sin and my sin was placed upon Jesus Christ, and God's wrath was poured out upon the innocent so that we, the guilty, could be forgiven and we could be free. Then we will see in the future that God's wrath will be poured out upon a Christ-rejecting world in the book of Revelation. Read Revelation 6 through chapter 19 when God pours out His wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world.

I want to point out a very important distinction. Again, because these verses are foundational to the whole book of Romans, I want to take the time with them. In verse 18, when it says, "...the wrath of God is revealed..." in the Greek, it's in the present tense. So, it should be rendered and understood like this, "...the wrath of God is being revealed." The wrath of God is not just a future concept and the judgment day, but right now, right here, in our world we are witnessing

the wrath of God; that it is being revealed, that it is being unfolded in the world today. You say, "Well, how do we see God's wrath being revealed?" Well, you'll understand it after we finish next Wednesday, but let me give you a little hint. God gives man up to his own lusts and his own desires, and God gives man up to a reprobate mind. Do you know the worst thing that God can do to punish you for your sins? Let you reap what you've sown. To just take His hands off you and let you do whatever you want. It's like a parent (let me give you a little homely illustration) having a five-year-old and letting him do whatever they want; eat whatever they want, watch whatever they want, go to bed whenever they want. I see parents of little toddlers and they are always asking them what they want. Do you want to sit up? Do you want to sit down? Do you want to eat this? I'm like, "You're the parent for heavens sake!" Forgive me. I was in a restaurant the other day, and I was by myself. I had actually gone there just to get away and have a little peace and quiet. I was eating and this mother was there. I was about to plug her into a parenting class. When you have a five-year-old, you tell them what we're going to do now, and when we are going to go to bed, and what we're going to eat. You don't give them all those options. It might be good to let them grow up a little bit before you...Do you know what God does in our so-called infancy? If God is going to judge you or His wrath upon you, He just takes His hands off. He just lets you reap what you're going to sow. It's of God's mercy that He puts roadblocks in our path, hinders us and keeps us; and He has his moral laws that we won't hurt ourselves. So, the wrath of God, literally in verse 18, is being revealed.

Notice in verse 24, (we start next week) God gave them up, and how did they end up? With reprobate minds. Minds that do not work and cannot discern right from wrong. Now, who is God's wrath against? Verse 18, notice these two phrases, "...all ungodliness and unrighteousness..." two categories. I don't believe they are synonymous. All ungodliness has the idea of rebellion against God, those who are rebelling against God and ungodly toward God. Then, unrighteousness carries more the idea of wickedness with men or my relationship toward men or people around me. Here's another important distinction in verse 18 when it says, "For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..." at the end of verse 18 it says, "...who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Here's the distinction, and you'll see it in some of your modern translations. The word "hold" means to hold down or to suppress. They intentionally and purposely suppress the truth. They reject the truth. They know the truth, and they willingly, purposely suppress it or they hold it down. It's like the little boy that was told by his mom, "You can't have your dog upstairs in your bedroom. He has to stay in the backyard in the dog house." After mom went to bed, little Johnny went down, got little Fido, snuck him up into his room and was playing with him when he heard his mom coming up the stairs. He stuck his dog in the toy box, and he sat on the lid. That's what men do. They take the truth of God, they stick it in their proverbial toy box, and they sit on the lid. They don't want to let it out. They know God, but they suppress the truth. God has revealed Himself in their conscience and through His creation, verses 19-20.

I want you to notice in verse 19, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them..." there it is. God gives everyone a conscience. I know Jiminy Cricket says, "Let your conscience be your guide." For many, a conscience is like a wheelbarrow. They push it wherever they want it to go. Do you know the Bible says that you can have a seared

conscience? That is, God gives you light, you reject that light, and your conscience is darkened and your heart becomes hardened. The conscience is like a window that lets the light in, but if the window gets dirty, what happens? The light cannot come in. A conscience is only as good as it's obeyed, responded to, and as it submits to revealed truth in God's Word. We can't just let conscience be our guide because it may be a darkened conscience or a seared conscience or a perverted conscience. That conscience needs to be educated by the word of God as to what is true and what is false. We have this innate kind of knowledge of what is true and false. The Bible makes clear what is true and false, and when we respond properly, our windows are clear and the light comes flooding in. Someone said that the conscience is like a sundial. It only works when the light of the sun is on it. Can you imagine on your wrist if you had a little sundial. At night, you say, "Uh, well, it's not working right now." It only works during the day, so conscience only works when God's light of His Word sheds upon it.

Notice also creation in verse 20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world..." I want you to notice it says "creation" not evolution. I totally and completely reject the evolutionary hypothesis, especially for certain macroevolution, that a lizard all of the sudden Poof! sprouted wings and took off flying. They called it the hopeful monster theory, these great intelligent people. That a lizard all of the sudden Boom! just popped out wings and took off flying. That we all came from a common stock, just a little amoeba, you know. From the goo, to the zoo, to you. It is wholesale accepted as true today in our culture. These passages in the next few verses fly in the face of all the teaching that there is no need for a creator, that there is no special creation, that we are all the product of some accident. There is no God, no moral law, nothing is really right or nothing is really wrong, so just live however you want. This is what we've come to believe today in our culture. So, notice what he says there in verse 20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen...those things that are made..." not evolved but created, made and designed by God, "...even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." They can look up into the heavens. They can see the stars. They know that there is a God who is powerful, a God who is wise. They have a conscience. They have the manifestation of creation. People often ask about the heathen, as I said, in the jungle. God gave to them His revelation in conscience and creation. God's general revelation in creation, in the present tense, God is continually being revealed to them. Now, you've got to hold your place here in Romans 1, and I want you to turn to Psalm 19:1-4.

In Psalm 19, the first four verses, we have God's general revelation in nature, and then in verse 7 down to verse 11, we have God's specific or special revelation in the Bible. Now go back with me, verses 1-4, and check this out. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament..." that is the cosmos, the stars and the heavens, "...sheweth his handiwork. 2 Day unto day...and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." This is a universal revelation of God in creation. God is speaking through creation; no speech, no language, no voice where they are not heard. Notice verse 4, "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun..." now I've highlighted some words in these four verses. In verse one, I've highlighted the word "declare." In verse 2, I've highlighted the word "speech." In verse 3, I've highlighted the word "no speech nor language," and "voice" and "heard." Then in

verse 4, I've highlighted "all the earth, and their words." Do you get the drift of what is going on in this text? Creation is speaking. Amen? What is it saying? It's saying, "There's a God, there's a God, there's a God. And, He's powerful and wise and a lot bigger than you are." Isn't that awesome! Even the heathen out in the jungle has no excuse that God has revealed certain things to them; that there is a God and He is the creator, and He is awesome in His power and in His wisdom, God's general revelation in creation. Now, again as I said, this is in the present tense. It is universal, (go back with me to Romans 1) so that everyone is without excuse.

Now, two things about God is known in creation, as I pointed out; His power, which is His eternal power, and His nature, or His Godhead, that He is wise. The creation reveals the Creator. So, natural creation reveals the supernatural Creator. They are without excuse. In verse 20, the word excuse is where we get our word apology from or anapologetos, where we get our word defense. They have no defense. So, no justification for their atheism, agnosticism or skepticism. No defense for judgment day because they did not live up to the knowledge they had. Knowledge brings responsibility. I want to say this now, lest I forget. God will only judge people based on what they know. I get this question all the time. "What about the person that doesn't know? Is God going to send them to hell?" God will only judge a person based on the revelation they had, so if the only revelation they had was their conscience and creation, that is the basis by which God is going to judge them. If they respond to their conscience and creation, then God is going to take care of them in light of the cross of Jesus Christ. They are not going to be saved apart from the cross of Christ, but they can be saved because they responded. I believe light responded to, more light comes. If they respond properly to God's revelation, God will make Himself known to them even if He has to appear to them in person. Where no missionaries go, He will send an angel. He will do whatever He has to do if they respond to that light, but light rejected brings more darkness. You need to understand that. That's a very important principle.

Notice the second division, of which I have actually run out of time, so I'm going to...this keeps happening to me on Wednesday nights. I'm going to touch on these verses. I told Gabe I wanted him to come out and at least do a couple songs, but I'm going to touch on these verses. There's no hurry, we are going to build on them next week. Here's my second point, write it down. They glorified Him not as God, so they perverted the truth. First, they suppressed the truth. Second, they pervert the truth. This is an amazing section, and I wish I had more time. They glorified Him not as God; they perverted the truth. Again, first they suppressed the truth, the conscience, the truth of creation. As I said, I don't believe in evolution. I believe the Bible clearly reveals, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Some people say they believe in theistic evolution, that God created matter and then it evolved. I think there is a lot of theological problems with that, and I think the Bible clearly teaches the opposite of that. You say, "Well, this is unintellectual and unscientific and so forth." I don't think so. Some of the greatest scientists, and as you study this passage in Romans you find out that if you reject the knowledge of God and the light of God's revelation in creation, that your mind is not going to work properly. You say, "John, did I hear you say what I think you just said?" Yes you did! If you reject God's revelation in creation, you are not going to think properly. You are not going to think straight.

Sir Isaac Newton was a Christian. A lot of the discoveries he made and the influence on his life was the word of God and the revelation of God. And many scientists who believed in God, understanding the natural laws in science, have been able to discover marvelous things. Science does not contradict the scriptures. He is the God of all creation. I mean, you don't have to have a PhD to understand that something can't come from nothing. In the beginning there was the big bang. Well, what caused the big bang? What bang? I mean, just go back to the origin of matter. How did matter get here. Why is there something instead of nothing? Then the atheist or evolutionist will say, "Well, you know, you believe that God has always been and came from nothing." The Bible says that God is eternal, yes, but no one made God. No one created God. You either have to believe in some shape or form of eternal matter, or you have to believe in eternal God. Both take faith, and I choose to believe in an eternal God. I choose to believe, for good reasons, that God created in six literal days. Now, I'm going to get some e-mails and some letters when I say that. Every time I've said that, I do, but I still believe it's true, that there were six days. Do you think it's kinda hard for God to pull it off in six days? He could've done it in one second. Everything, Boom! Just be...poof! Done. God has what we call "fiat." That means that He can speak things into existence. I don't have that power. I wish I did. I'd be pretty stoked. I'd also be pretty messed up. In the beginning God created. He said, "Light be." And light was. God created light. God created energy. God created matter. He just spoke it. He has fiat, so from God came all things. He is the origin of all creation. He is the source and the sustainer of all creation.

Now, next week, because we don't have time for this passage, we'll see the steps of man downward. Not man's evolution, but man's de-evolution. I'll just point them out to you, though it's hard for me to resist. In verse 21, it starts with indifference. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful..." the New Living Translation has, "...they wouldn't worship Him as God." Then it went to ingratitude, verse 21. "...neither were thankful..." then it moved to ignorance, verses 21 and 22, "...they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused." (I'm reading from the New Living Translation.) "Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools." The Greek word is morons. The word wise there "sophos," we get our word sophisticated. They claimed that they were wise and they were sophisticated, but their minds became darkened and they became moronic in their thoughts. True wisdom starts with God, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. Then, in verse 23, in closing, they moved to idolatry. They moved to idolatry. So, mankind started with God and a true knowledge of God, and he degenerated down to idolatry. Now, there is a really fine line, and we will move into that next section next Wednesday night between idolatry and immorality. It moves from idolatry into immorality. You get rid of God, you start making your own gods, gods of your own invention, and then it moves into idolatry and into immorality. We will see the downward trend morally, of man's degeneration and sexual immorality. So, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God. They didn't thank Him, they become unthankful. They became empty in their reasonings. Their senseless hearts were darkened. They professed themselves to be wise, they became fools. They changed the glory of an incorruptible God into the likeness and the image of corruptible man. This is why the heathen are without excuse. Now when we move through the book of Romans, the moral man is going to say, "Yes, they are quite pagan. Yes, they are quite

heathen, but I'm a good person. I'm a good person, and God will forgive me." The Bible says, "Who art thou, o man, that says you shouldn't do something? You do the same things." So the heathen, the moral man and the religious man, the Jew; the whole world is guilty before God. Let's pray.