

God's Righteousness In Romans – Part 2

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“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” (Rom. 1:18.) As noted last week, one consequence of suppressing the truth is “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.” (Rom. 1:19.) The truth is that “God created the heavens and the earth” so to suppress that truth causes a denial of God's existence and Genesis 1:1, even though the creation is full of evidence to the contrary. And with God out of the way, bad things are sure to follow as Paul will point out. (See last week's article.)

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” (Rom. 1:22-23.) Paul attributes idolatry directly to people suppressing the truth. Changing the glory of God into some sort of image to be worshipped is the definition of idolatry. And I don't suppose there is any charge against man that is greater than the sin of idolatry. It is the ultimate expression of unfaithfulness against God for it goes beyond a mere denial of God's existence. Idolatry seeks to replace God with some image of man's choosing.

“To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.” (Isaiah 40:18-19.) Again, we read in Isaiah, “I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” (Isaiah 42:8.) Not only do we find so many direct statements against idolatry, the Bible illustrates idolatry in many different ways. In Hosea, the prophet describes idolatry as prostitution (Hosea 4:10-14.) God tells Samuel that the rejection of God's kingship is idolatry (1 Sam. 8:7-9.) But idolatry is also more than just carving up something out of wood or stone. It is the pursuit of anything in this world other than the glory of God. Paul called covetousness idolatry (Col. 3:5.)

The Bible describes idolatry in such ways because it declares that there is only one God and none other exists. Idols that pagan's worship as gods “by nature are no gods” (Gal. 4:8.) Idolatry is the product of the human mind (Hab. 2:18-19.) Further, the attribute that the Bible uses most often to show the difference between the true God of heaven and the idols is that of creation. Note Jeremiah 10:11-12, “Thus shall you say to them: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.” It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.” Get a concordance and note the number of times this is used.

We must be aware of the seriousness of idolatry for even Christians can still engage in it if they are not careful. They may not build a statue (although some religions do) but they can still make other things more important than God in their lives. All because the truth of God as seen in creation is suppressed and the lie is created in our mind, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” (Rom. 1:25.) If we don't believe in God, we will worship something. That's our nature. God calls us now to “turn from idols and worship the living God” (1 Thess. 1:9.) But if the truth is suppressed, we won't.