

**“WITHOUT EXCUSE.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**April 2, 2023, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Romans 1:18-23**

**Introduction.**

I have a distinct memory from high school back in Wichita, KS. I was a relative new Christian, at a gathering of high school friends, standing in a driveway. A girl was pressing me with questions about Christianity. “If Christianity is the only way then what about those innocent people in Africa who have never heard.”

Never mind that the great dark continent of Africa is one of the most Christian continents, it’s the favorite go to place for picking on Christians and suppressing the truth. It’s one of most common objections, and usually not a sincere question, more of a smokescreen, a dodge to avoid thinking about their own soul’s relationship to God.

I fumbled along as best as my young faith could, trying to defend God and His honor and integrity. I wish I had just known my Bible better and especially Romans 1. I could have explained the revelation of God to our world and the rebellious rejection of God by the world.

That’s the outline of our text. Revelation and rejection, proclamation and response.

Having talked about the revelation of God’s wrath last week the rest of our text this morning answers why God pours out His wrath in two parts, the revelation of Himself and the response to that revelation which is suppression and rejection.

**Revelation. What can be known about God?**

Notice how clearly Paul states *five things* about God’s revelation.

*First*, God is the one who gives the revelation. Apart from Him revealing it, we can’t know it. We can’t get there from here. There has to come here. God tells us what we need to know about Him. This is God’s inspired Word telling us He has done this. Let there be no arguing on this.

*Second*, God’s says His revelation of Himself in creation is plain, clear, obvious. Everyone can see it. You don’t have to be a scientist or a philosopher to see it, in fact it helps if you aren’t.

It is plain, clear and obvious to people in the jungles of Africa and the concrete jungles of NYC, in the remote villages of Papua New Guinea and Alaska, to people who are illiterate and rocket scientists, to people who lived five thousand years ago and who live now, to people who claim to be atheists and Buddhists.

The language of God's creation is able to be understood in every language and tongue, it translates perfectly to every race and culture. It is equally accessible to every person, young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, wise and foolish, slave and free.

It includes everyone we know, our relatives, our parents, our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, grandchildren, those who are walking in the faith and those who are walking away from it.

There is no such thing as an atheist. God doesn't believe in atheist, He says they don't exist, they just deceive themselves when they deny there is a God. Everyone knows.

What can be known about God *cannot not be known*, it is visible, plain, obvious. God Himself has wired all of us to see and know it. As Scripture says, "God has put eternity in our hearts." God has made us spectators of His creation and has given us eyes and ears, minds and hearts, to see and know Him.

Glory to God He has made what He wants known about Him obvious, gloriously obvious.

*Third*, God makes specific aspects of Himself known in creation.

Creation is the first act of God and His fingerprints are all over every part of it. God is the artist and He has signed every piece of art.

**Psalm 97:6** The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.

**Psalm 19:1-4** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The Psalms declare in beautiful, powerful poetry what God has done and what we can know about Him.

The heavens declare the glory and majesty of God. Who cannot look at the sun, the moon, the stars, the Milky Way galaxy, and be stunned by the immense grandeur, power, beauty? Who could make all that and what must He be like? They are a faint reflection of God's beauty, the purity of His holiness, His majesty and splendor.

The God who created so much beauty is without evil, without sin, without impurity or deformity. He is infinite in majesty, eternal in duration, mighty in power, wise and immutable in counsel.

His eternity is known in that He was before all things and makes all things and holds all things.

His wisdom is seen by the perfect order with which He has arranged everything.  
His justice is evident in how He governs His world, right from wrong, good from evil.  
His mercy is seen in how patiently He bears the sinful wickedness of man.  
His goodness is seen in the perfectly ordered creation suited for our blessing, our benefit and wellbeing. It reveals a creator who is perfect, good, loving, gracious, generous.

Creation is a million windows that open to the reality and presence of an invisible, personal, knowable, creator God.

**Fourth**, God revelation of Himself is permanent, from the very beginning of creation to now and always.

Psalm 19 says day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals knowledge, God's creation never shuts up, day and night, 24/7/365 God's creation reveals Him and knowledge of Him. There is nowhere, no place and no time, where His voice is not heard all through the world to the ends of the earth. Every single day we are reminded with the glorious truth and knowledge of a creator God, a sustainer God, a generous God.

Every day the sun rises and sets, the sun and the moon do their dance, the seasons, the rhythm of nature, the tides, the rain and sun, all point to the perfect faithfulness of an intelligent designer. The birth of every baby, so beautiful, so fearfully and wonderfully made with great intricacy and complexity, who does not marvel at the complexity of the human eye and the brain. These are not the accidents of millions of years of mutations.

“God continues to reveal Himself in the world He has made. God has infused the world with His presence, with signs that point to Him and His love. He can be seen in everything from the beautiful to the tragic to the mundane” (John Stonestreet).

**Fifth**, God has made Himself so clear, to everyone, it is inexcusable not to know and therefore, all are accountable and justly punishable for willfully rejecting Him.

When mankind sins, they sin against the light, they sin against truth that is clearly shown *to* them, and it is *in* them, in their consciences.

**Psalm 50:1-4, 6** The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

3 Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest.

4 He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!

From all of this revelation comes the conclusion. Everyone is without excuse for not knowing God. Everyone has a moral obligation to believe what is written here, a moral obligation upon which hangs everyone's eternal destiny.

No one on planet earth will get away with saying to God, “If only I had known, if only someone had told me, then I would have believed.” No one can plead ignorance. The issue here is not is there a God out there somewhere but how will you respond to the God who is out there.

**Response. They did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him.**

Everyone starts from a position of knowing the truth and then does one of two things. Either they honor God and give thanks to Him, or they seek to suppress the truth about God and then seek to substitute or replace God with idols, gods of their own making.

**Suppress the truth.**

To suppress something you have to take hold of it, grasp it as tightly as you can and then push it away or push it down. This is an exercise like taking a big beach ball and trying to hold it under water. You have to keep fighting it, exerting all your energy.

To suppress the truth you have to continually aggressively fight against truth. Suppressing the truth in creation is the worst version of whack-a-mole. You suppress it in one place and it pops up in another. It is doomed to fail, because everything in creation all around us reveals the truth about God and His glory.

Giving examples of suppressing the truth today is like picking low hanging fruit, it is too easy.

I just read about a major convention of doctors that refused to allow pro-life doctors to set up a booth in the convention hall. A federal judge was just shouted down from speaking at Stanford Law School a couple of weeks ago.

Higher education is increasingly becoming an oxymoron as debate and free speech are denied. The goal of all manmade religions and philosophies is to suppress the knowledge of God.

Darwinian evolution is a profound attempt to suppress the truth about creation and reject any intelligent designer. They say the universe exists purely by chance, by fate, by accident, by random mutation. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

Is there any clearer attempt to suppress the truth than much of what passes for modern art? It is dark, chaotic, purposeless, meaningless. It doesn't seek to reveal the beauty and goodness of creation but to cover up truth, beauty and goodness.

The whole debate surrounding gender confusion and sexual identity today is just a form of rebellion against our God and our God-assigned sex. Same-sex unions suppress the truth about God's design for marriage. Abortion and euthanasia coverup God's truth about life and death.

We see the truth suppressed in hatred of authority, in denial of absolute truth. Truth is suppressed by calling it misinformation and then saying no one can know what it is.

Our culture is foolish and darkened, and as our culture goes, so goes the church in America, falling into speculations and darkness.

Truth is being suppressed by those who twist doctrines, who say Jesus is not the only way, who say Jesus didn't die on the cross to appease the righteous wrath of God as our substitute for sin, who change the meaning of marriage, who make sin normal and call it good.

As I said, this is easy picking. We all like to point out there at all the ways the truth is being suppressed or labeled misinformation and removed from public view.

More importantly is how do you and I suppress the truth or spin it, how do we soften or excuse or make light of our own sin? This text is about us, about our hearts, about the ways we lie, deceive, cover up, excuse, distort the truth.

When do we love sin more than we love God? When do we take pleasure in our sins, shut up the truth by silencing our consciences? It's just a little sin. Do we love the darkness of our independence rather than the truth of our dependence on God? My will verses His will.

How often are we guilty of loving darkness, of not honoring God and thanking Him?

The truth is, we are created and called to glorify God, to honor Him and thank Him. But we forget to glorify Him, to acknowledge Him, that He is the one who has given us everything we have, everything we need. When we do that we are no different than those who scoff, censor or cancel the truth, beauty and goodness of God and creation.

God is the source of all we are and have. What do we have that we have not received from Him? In Him we live and move and have our being. We should be overwhelmed with a sense of wonder and awe to be alive. We should be giving grateful thanks to the One we owe our existence and everything around us. Don't underestimate the power of gratitude and thanksgiving to overcome the suppression of in the world and in our own souls.

### **Implications and application.**

Is there any hope for us in the face of the darkness of our world and our own hearts?

Remember Romans 1:16-17. Against the revealed wrath of God our only hope is the revealed righteousness of God and that righteousness is paid for by the death and resurrection of Jesus and received only by faith and not by sight or works.

Our only hope is to not make excuses, but to plead for God's mercy for us and our children and our grandchildren.

Our only hope is in what happened on Palm Sunday. Jesus deliberately, intentionally, purposely, resolutely going into Jerusalem to sacrifice His life for our ungodliness, our unrighteousness, our love of darkness, our hopelessly futile thinking, our love of sin.

The greatest suppression of truth in the history of the world, was when evil men took Jesus who was the Way, the Truth and the Life, and killed Him and sealed Him up in a tomb. And then the greatest thing happened in the history of the world, the truth triumphed over evil, the truth rose from the dead, the truth was resurrected.

Remember this every time you see the truth being suppressed, the truth being trampled, the truth being thrown away, the truth being called foolish. Jesus triumphed and His truth is triumphing. The gates of hell cannot and will not prevail against it.

We are praying Colossians 1:9-14 this year, it's a prayer against the kind of knowing God in Romans 1, the kind of knowing that leads to hell. It is a prayer for growing in our knowledge of God and His will. No excuses, just striving after the truth and giving honor and thanks to God.

**Prayer:** O God, you are life, wisdom, truth, bounty, and blessedness, the only true good; our God and our Lord, you are our hope and our heart's joy—we acknowledge with thanksgiving that you have made us in your image and for yourself, and that we may direct our thoughts to you. Lord, make us know you aright and increase in that knowledge, that we may love, enjoy, and possess you more and more, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Anselm)