Sept. 29, 2002 Northwest Bible Church

**Romans 1:21-23**

Foolish Worship

**INTRO**

In Romans 1:18-21, Paul shows how the whole human race, especially the heathen world, all deserve the just wrath of God. God has clearly revealed Himself to them through creation but they have refused to worship God.

But there is in addition to this shame of rejecting the true God of creation, even a deeper shame, as we see what they prefer to worship instead. In this passage, we will see the effects of sin on their mind, and then the effect of sin on their worship.

**I. THE NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN (Romans 1:21-22).**

Human nature is polluted with a great spiritual poison. Eph. 2:1. What is revealing in v. 21-22, is the effects of this depravity, this spiritual death, upon the mind of man. We call this the *noetic effects of sin*, or in common language the effects of sin on the mind.

A. “futile in their speculations” (Romans 1:21). The word translated “speculation” means to think or reason with thoroughness and completeness. The word “futile” means to become useless and hence worthless, amounting to only nonsense. The thinking process of unbelievers is poisoned by their sin so that they become futile and cannot and will not acknowledge the only true God’s existence. Eph. 4:17-18.

B. “their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21). Their heart, which is the command center of the spiritual life of man, is totally in the dark. They have NONE OF GOD’S LIGHT.

The word “foolish” here refers to a lack of capacity for insight and understanding — ‘without understanding, senseless, foolish.’

C. “professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). “Professing to be wise” speaks of the self-deception at work in man’s natural heart. Jer. 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” They are blind but think they see.

**II. THE FOOLISH WORSHIP OF DARKENED MINDS (Romans 1:23).**

Nothing reveals the utter depravity than to see what their hearts prefer to call god.

A. A foolish exchange. “They exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

THREE-FOLD CONTRAST:

Glory ----------------------Image in form of

Incorruptible --------------corruptible

God ------------------------ man, birds, 4 foot animals, crawlers

B. A foolish image. They don’t even attempt an image of God but rather they worship an image of either man or animal. They love fake gods that they can create, control. “The heart of man is a perpetual factory for making idols.” Calvin.

MAN –

BIRDS –

4-FOOTED ANIMALS -

CRAWLING CREATURES -

C. Foolish worship

Isaiah 44:9-17 gives a hilarious picture of the foolish worship of the pagans. Compare also Romans 1:25.

**CONCLUSION**

O FOOLISH MAN, O FOOLISH WORSHIP, who can deliver mankind from such folly which flows so freely within and contaminates all his religious thoughts? Only the grace of God through Jesus Christ.