



**Romans 1:18-32**  
**Suppressing the Truth Pt 1**

**Summary:** Most of our problems result from suppressing what we know about God.

Over the next several weeks, as we move through the final verses of Romans chapter one, we will do some of the most important work we have ever done as a church. I'm asking you to join me in praying we that see more spiritual growth and transformation, salvation, renewal, healing, and habit-breaking than ever before – that change becomes normal.

To get there, I'm asking you, as saints, to go to war with me spiritually for people in this room – for yourselves, for your spouses, your children, and your friends - for the people who will listen online, and for the people God will bring in to hear these things. Join me in asking God to reveal Himself, unmistakably and undeniably. Join me in asking God to give people another chance, to say things to them, to us, that He has said before but we didn't listen, or we brushed aside, or we forgot.

Join me in asking God to stir things up that may have settled quietly to the bottom of our souls. Because I believe we're about to see things in Scripture that can change us - if we can see them, if we can hear them, if we can receive them and believe them – we will find things here that change lives.

Maybe you're the one who needs to change. If so, I hope the summer of 2024 becomes part of your testimony for the rest of your life – that this is where it began.

But if it's not for you personally, then maybe it's so you can share with others. God wants to equip you for ministry to someone you love. Over the coming weeks God will give you what you need in order to help someone else transform.

So, either way, whether you're the one who changes or helps someone else change – this section of Scripture is packed with really, really, powerful stuff.

I'm expecting it to induce pain. I'm expecting confession. I'm expecting stuff to get stirred up. I'm expecting requests for prayer. I'm expecting requests for counseling. I expect it to be hard. But I also expect it to be good - really, really, good. *If* we're willing to hear what the Spirit says to the church.

So, read with me to the end of the chapter. Let's see what God says and what He wants to do.

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. 20 For

since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

OK, that's a pretty powerful portion of Scripture, right? It stirs things up. You probably have questions. You want to reread it to try and understand or blow past it and say I didn't really get it and I'm not interested. Oh, but my friend, if that's your reaction, you're living out exactly what it says!

So let me summarize with a short outline to help make sense of what the passage says.

### **God reveals. We suppress. Life is hard.**

God reveals Himself to the world. We can know God. But, we don't want to, so we suppress the truth. We live according to self-centered, individual desires which leads to all the things we see listed here – everything from sexuality to the breakdown of the family and community and a general loss of virtue and kindness.

We'll return to this theme more than once, but I want to point it out right from the beginning – many of the problems people experience in life come from resisting what we could have known, or do know, about God. *Which means*, if we want to see change – in our lives or the lives of others – it's going to happen by reversing course and putting God at the center.

Another way to say that is – if you want to see change in your life, your marriage, your family, it's not enough to harness your bad behaviors. The way to see real change happen is to stop *suppressing the truth*, start to see and appreciate God.

So, let's start there.

### **God Reveals.**

God reveals Himself. Look again at these words:

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead,

Theologians speak of natural or general revelation and special or specific revelation. Natural revelation can be received by anyone, anywhere. Special or specific revelation comes through the prophets and apostles, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and Scripture.

The focus here is on natural revelation which Psalm 19 explains

**Psalm 19:1 (ESV)** 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.

We've all experienced this. You've stared at the sky, or at a flower, or at some scenery or view and felt something. You've had a sense that you're a very small part of something much larger. You've studied science and said to yourself that the world and everything in it, from the macro to the micro, is so well designed. It's amazing, there's no way this just happened. You've held a newborn infant and felt something stir inside of you and marveled at the miracle of life.

Friends, nature speaks to us. The universe gets our attention. That is why almost every society in the history of man has had a religion, gods, or goddesses. Human beings, all around the world, all throughout history, have understood there is someone or something over us all, responsible for it all.

Nature is meant to grab our attention. It is meant to wow us. It is meant to communicate. But it doesn't tell us the full story. Natural revelation says there is a God, but it doesn't tell us what kind of God He is – for that we need special revelation, and God gives us both.

General revelation also happens another way - through our conscience, the pull and tug inside that says I shouldn't do this, or this isn't right. We all experience moral revulsion to certain actions. It's why alcohol is often involved in doing things you're later ashamed of – you need to drink in order to get up the courage to do what you're going to do. Or to try and forget what you've already done.

We could say it like this: God reveals Himself through Creation around us and Conscience within us. The basic point is – God reveals. To everyone, everywhere – He makes Himself known. He's not hiding from us. He is, according to Scripture, [clearly seen](#), and even [understood](#).

But here's the problem: instead of listening, we [suppress the truth](#).

## **We suppress**

Look at

[Romans 1:20](#) For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The passage makes clear what we all know because we've all done it: we ignore God. God is speaking, but we shut Him out. We refuse the testimony of natural revelation – we see things clearly but tell ourselves 'It's not that way.'

Friends, there is a sense in which we know as much about God as we're willing to know. Or, the better way to say it is, *we all know a little bit more about God than we wish we did*.

I need you to notice the power of what is said here.

We tend to think of 'rejecting God' as hearing a clear presentation of the gospel, perhaps the four spiritual laws, and then rejecting it. Or, reading Scripture and saying, no that's not for me.

But according to this passage, rejection is not just rejecting Jesus as Savior it's rejecting God as Creator. We don't just say I don't need You to save me, we reject the fact that God made us or would have any claim on us and our lives at all. It's a far greater sin.

There is a terrible, tragic, twisted irony today in that the more we are able to see and learn about Creation, the farther some people push away from God.

So, for example, today we can clearly see the beauty, the design, the interconnectedness of nature and creation and yet people honestly try to say, it's all just the result of random processes unfolding over time. There's no God behind it all, there's no purpose to it all. It sure is consistent, and predictable, and standardized, and governed by certain laws, but, it came from nothing, it's headed nowhere and it's up to us to make any kind of meaning out of it before we die and give our molecules back to the universe to be formed into something else.

Friends, it takes just as much faith, or more, to believe that nothing caused the universe than it does to believe a personal, loving, intelligent God created it with a purpose in six days.

Or, how is it that in the year 2024 when we can see with absolute clarity that a human being is developing inside a woman's body that we make a political issue out of whether or not she should be able to abort – to terminate – that pregnancy and that life?



It is an absolute monstrosity of morality that we use the right to kill babies as a platform for election in this country when we can all clearly see *and know* exactly what is happening in the woman's womb. Do you want to know what it means to [suppress the truth](#)? Here it is! *We know what we're doing*, but we don't want it to be true.



John 3:16 is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. All Christians know it. Football fans have seen it a thousand times. It's taken from a time when Jesus explained who He is and why He has come. He says,

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

It's a clear and concise explanation of the gospel. God sent His Son Jesus to bring us eternal life, if we will believe in Him. And, God did that *because He loves us*. That was His motivation. There's a lot to think about and consider in that one sentence.

But then Jesus goes on:

**17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Again, more good stuff to know. Jesus came for our salvation. God is trying to do something good for us, something helpful. But there's also a problem – God sent His Son to save us

because we're condemned. Things aren't OK. We need to be saved. Jesus is on a rescue mission but..., *not everyone wants to be saved*. Notice:

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

We were just on top of the world spiritually speaking. It seemed like good news: God loves us. Jesus came for us. But now this - a bucket of ice water poured down your back. God knows, the reality is - *not all people want to be saved*, because not all people want to repent. Some people love the darkness more than the light.

Friends, whether you're a Christian yet or not - that's you. That's me. There are times when every single one of us loves the darkness more than the light. We choose it. We want it. We know the truth, but we **suppress** it. We go our way. Do our own thing.

More often than not, *we* are the source of what's wrong in the world and what's wrong in us.

And what does it look like?

Well, look again at:

**Romans 1:22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

And then jump down with me to

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

All of this junk happens inside of us. So, where does it all come from? Well, we'll dig into this more in the coming weeks, but for now I just need you to see the big picture, see the

overall argument, understand the flow. God reveals Himself, but People suppress the truth, and then,

### **Life gets hard.**

Do you remember back in verse 18, Paul said [the wrath of God is revealed... against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth...? This is what wrath looks like](#). For all you grammar nerds – the word [revealed](#) in verse 18 is in the present tense.

That might not mean much to most of us, but it's actually super important because it means it's happening right now, in the present. The pain of life here and now is part of the wrath of God. We're experiencing judgment right here, right now and it looks like sexual immorality, violence, pride, anger, lying and all the other things we just read about. Yes, there's also the final and eternal wrath of God. But don't think His only jurisdiction is in eternity.

God's wrath is baked into the human experience. There are consequences for violating His laws and ways, and many of those consequences are just built right in.

Those of you who play sports, think about it. If you show up to practice and just laugh and joke and have a good ol' time and don't pay attention to the coach or the drills you should be running, what happens when you show up for the game? You lose. Does the coach need to discipline you for goofing off? Not really. The consequences for your choices come.

That's what's happening in our lives right now on this planet. We are surrounded by, affected by, and we participate in sexual immorality, violence, lies, and unrighteousness and all the other things we see listed here in the passage. These behaviors that come from [suppressing](#) the truth and ignoring God break up friendships, families, communities and nations. They lead us to experience [wrath](#).

But, there is good news!

If we want to change what is happening in our lives there's a clear path out of the consequences. We just have to work our way back up the chain.

Instead of suppressing what we know about God, we need to embrace it. Look with me at vs 21 – here's the key my friends! People are under the [wrath](#) of God, they experience all this hardship in their lives, all this sin, [21 because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened](#).

As Jesus said, the light came into the world, but we all loved the darkness.



Well, if you want to reverse course, embrace the light. Let it drive the darkness out of your foolish heart. Instead of having that stinkin' thinkin' – being **futile in your thoughts**, be **thankful**. Instead of ignoring or resisting God, **glorify** Him, **thank** Him, turn to Him and embrace Him. Receive what God is revealing instead of **suppressing** it.

Here's how that works. If you want to be freed from your **sexual immorality** – whatever flavor it takes – whether it's your explicit romance novels, or you're going too far in your relationship with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or you're looking at things on your phone in secret – you're not going to find full and lasting freedom by just telling yourself to quit.

You find freedom by confessing your sin, admitting it is sin, and turning to God – not just to find forgiveness, but also to find a new path in life.

God doesn't just say "Stop that!" He's says, 'Walk this way. Come close to Me. Be in the light. Explore what I reveal. Receive the truth, don't **suppress** it.'

Are you holding a grudge, are you being unforgiving? **Unforgiveness** will eat you alive from the inside. It dominates your thoughts, your emotions and memories. It makes you feel things in your body – you tense up and you're not fun to be around because you're bitter about what happened. *That's the wrath of God!*

You're not supposed to live that way. That's not God's best plan for your life. So, work your way back up the chain – receive what you know to be true. God wants you to forgive as you have been forgiven. God wants you to leave judgment and justice with Him. **Vengeance is Mine God says, I will repay** (Romans 12:19). He's revealing truth to you, don't **suppress** it.

Are you being **unloving**? It's really, really easy to do if you look around – you see people who are hard to love. It's easy to get worked up about it. It's easy to be offended and angered. But *that's the wrath of God working against you!* It's not His best for you.

He's revealing Himself to you and telling you to love people, pray for people, especially people who aren't like you and who you don't automatically like. Be the good Samaritan. Don't **suppress** the truth that God wants to see *all* people saved, including those who look like the worst possible sinners!

Friends, God is revealing Himself – through Creation and through Scripture. You know more about Him than you're actually comfortable with. You have heard God's voice. You have been nudged by His Spirit. You have been pricked by your conscience. God doesn't *have* to do any of that. But He does.

So, how do you respond?

Do you **suppress**, or do you receive? Do you love the darkness or the light? The truth is, there's a part of each of us that drifts to the shadows. Come out of them! Renounce the



works of darkness and be in the light. Stand in the light. Bask in the light. Let God's light shine on you until you look like you spent all summer on the beach in Florida.

That's how you avoid the [wrath of God](#). That's how you change your life. That's how you find forgiveness that covers all of your sins, fully, freely, and forever.

### **How to love Jesus more**

My friends, if you want to see change in your life, if you want a reset, if you want freedom from the things that have owned you and controlled you and the things you just can't seem to shake – the answer is not to just stop doing them – it's to start responding to God. Receive what He reveals. [Glorify](#) God. [Thank](#) God. Humble yourself and [walk](#) in His wisdom. Say "God, I've been wrong. Forgive me and teach me Your ways."

You can, and you should, do that right now, this morning.

That might mean you need to become a Christian. God has been showing up in your life and you're ready to let Him in. He'll come. All you have to do is ask. He's already talking to you about something – you can sense His Spirit pressing on your heart and mind - let Him lead you. Tell Him He's right and you're wrong. Tell Him you want Him to take your life, lead you, and direct you from here on out.

If you already know Him, you may need to do some repair work. You may need to ask forgiveness for ignoring Him, suppressing Him, rejecting or resisting Him. Tell Him you're sorry. He will forgive you. Ask Him for help. He wants to give it.

We're going to come right back to all of this next week, and we're going to go in even deeper. This was just an overview to help us see the flow. But don't wait another week – if God is revealing Himself to you this morning, respond – don't [suppress the truth](#)! Walk in the light you have received and reflect that light to others.

Let's pray.



## Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

### Romans 1:18-32 Suppressing the Truth Pt 1

**Summary:** Most of our problems result from suppressing what we know about God.

- Name one way you have seen God's power and glory on display this week.
- Name one reason you have to be thankful to God this week.
- Read Psalm 19.
  - What do you learn about natural revelation?
    - What are some ways you have seen, experienced, or understood God through nature?
  - What do you learn about special revelation?
    - What are some ways that Scripture has been helpful in directing your life or giving you answers?
  - How have you benefitted from each?
  - Why are they most valuable together?
- The result of suppressing the truth is futile thinking and a darkened heart.
  - Where, or about what, are you most likely to suppress the truth? Where is your thinking most often faulty? Where is your heart dark? How and where do you resist the truth?
  - How do you let the light of Jesus in? What practices have been helpful to you?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9