


The Result of a Foolish Heart

2026-05-10 – Romans 1:21-23

	<p>For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged 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.</p> <p>Romans 1:21-23 (NASB 1995)</p>
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Good morning, everyone. Good morning. My name is Trevor Myers. I have the joy of serving as one of the elders over at Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church in Niles. A warm greeting to you all from those brothers and sisters. They're gathering there now to worship the same God. It's amazing that we can worship the same God everywhere and He is sovereign over all of us. And He knows that worship being praised to Him all over this globe right now. But especially in the Chicagoland area, it is a joy to be in another evangelical free church. I grew up in the free church, so I'm going to emphasize that. It's a fun time to be with you this morning.

I'm going to pray for us and then we'll dive into the word of God.

Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning through the shed blood of your Son, Jesus, and by the power of your Spirit. God, we confess our weakness to you. We confess that we have sinned against you. God, even this very day, our hearts are tempted away from your goodness, your holiness. God, help us to live for you with freedom and peace and joy, God. It is a wonderful thing to think of the blessings that you have poured out upon us. Help us not to take them for granted.

God, we particularly bless the mothers here today. God, thank you for the gift of motherhood, the gift of children. God, we all are children. All of us were born into this world by your hand. God, help us to remember that wonderful commandment to honor your father and your mother. God, may this day be a day where mothers are honored and particularly spent time with them and reach out to them to praise them for the gift of having a mother who brought us into this world.

Heavenly Father, we confess to you that we often neglect to think about others and we can tend to focus on ourselves. God, each of us here knows many unbelievers, whether in our family, our friends, our workplaces, our neighbors. God, we pray that your Spirit would move in us to speak the truth in love to those neighbors. We pray for opportunities. We pray for the moments even this day where we might interact with them and be able to show them what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

God, we pray for other local churches around this area. We thank you that there is not a singular location of believers who faithfully worship you. So we pray that all the local churches in this Chicagoland area, a very dark area in our country, God, that those churches would preach the faithful, true gospel. And God, we pray that disciples would be made.

God, we pray for State Senator Darren Bailey and his bid for governor. God, we do pray that you would bring Christian leaders to our state. We desperately long to have those who fear you in power. And God, we pray that any who are in a position of power, be it local or state or federal, that they would recognize that you are the one who put them

there. God, may they submit to you each day. May they trust you for strength and for power, God, to do what is right, to wield the sword, to uphold your law.

God, we pray for the sermon this morning. We come before you asking for your help. God, please speak through me. May these brothers and sisters in Christ be blessed. And most of all, may the name of Jesus be honored and glorified. We pray this in his name. Amen.

If you would, please stand for the reading of God's word. We will be in the book of Romans, chapter 1. I know last week many of you were probably here, so you probably have some context. I'm going to be focusing this morning on verses 21 through 23, but I'm going to start in verse 18 just to build up some context to our passage this morning.

Hear the word of the living God:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged 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. (Romans 1:18–23 NASB 1995)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Our main idea this morning is **Examining the Result of the Foolish Heart**. Examining the Result of the Foolish Heart.

Let's just remember the perspective that we are to have here this morning. We are reading and focusing on three verses of what many consider to be the pinnacle letter in Scripture. Every single doctrine that we hold to as Christians is found in the book of Romans. So we are looking at a very, very small sliver of text. And thankfully, it's at the beginning. I'm not jumping in here in chapter 7, needing to build up a ton of context for us.

To be clear, Paul is not calling the Roman church fools. He is not concerned about them being fools in this moment. He has said in verse 8, "***Your faith is being proclaimed across the whole world.***" He commends them. He affirms their faith. He then says in verse 11 that he is longing to visit the church. He's longing to be encouraged and impart a spiritual gift. And he says that he is eager to preach the one true gospel.

Now, there is a question for us. When we're looking at this long letter, again, 16 chapters, why would it be that Paul dives in so quickly to sin, unbelief, and unrighteousness, and the foolish heart? Well, I think the answer is because Paul is not ashamed of the gospel that he longs to proclaim. And the gospel is not all good news. For there to be good news, there needs to be bad news. Something had to have taken place to shift away from what was good to bring us back to what is good. And he is emphasizing this badness, this sinfulness, the evilness that is in the world, in the hearts of all who are born.

So there's only two people in this text. It's a little bit of a unique text because, again, it's a sliver of the book of Romans, but we have God, of course, He is present in this text and we have the fool. God and the fool. Now looking at the descriptors used in verses 18 through 23, we get a better idea though of who is this God and who is the fool. **We can glean from the text: It is the just, revealed, eternal, powerful, divine, glorious, incorruptible, creator, God. Very specific.** He's targeting particular attributes of the Lord to emphasize his greatness. And then if we think of the fool, listen to the contrast here, just from verses 18 through 23: **the ungodly, unrighteous, willfully ignorant, guilty, thankless, idolatrous fool.**

For honest, we all know which of those we relate to more. We are not like him. He is other. He is holy. We are so much like the fool. So today, as we examine the text, I'll give you just a brief idea of how I like to approach a text like this, because I know having different preachers come along, they have different styles. I like to narrow in on particular words and focus on words that we see in the text, key words that help us understand what is Paul saying to the church in Rome and what is God saying to us today.

Starting in verse 21 here: **"For even though they knew God."** Now everyone knows that there is indeed a God. **"O Lord, how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your possessions."** (Psalm 104:24) We read, **"He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart."** (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Every single person in this world knows there is more to this world than just the stuff that we see. There is something that we can sense. And we know as believers it is spiritual in nature. It is God himself. There is a creator to all of this.

But what does the human heart and mind do with this knowledge of eternity? Well, there's a helpful explanation that's given to us in verse 18. There's a very helpful parallel here between verse 18 and 21. Verse 21 says **"they knew God"**. Why is this in the past tense? They knew of a God? They don't anymore? Well, then verse 18 helps us: **men who suppress the truth.** Despite knowing that there is a God, they have suppressed the truth.

If you imagine pushing an inflated ball underneath water, you know it wants to pop back up. If you let go, it will. This is the state and the life of every single person that is suppressing the truth that there is a God, there is a Creator. And the human heart is pressing down, holding that truth because there is no accountability that they want. The fool longs to push this down and act as though everything they see is at their disposal. It's for them. They are God. But we all know that is pressing to come up. And so the fool suppresses the truth. This is the stubbornness that is so deep and ingrained to every single person.

We've all heard that saying, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Well, with the fool, the fool will never listen to truth. That's all throughout the book of Proverbs: how you can cast your pearls before swine, when the fool will not take the wise words that he has told over and over and over again. Why? Because he's suppressing the truth.

So let's go on with this verse. We have, **"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks."** So we're going to focus for a little bit of time on the word "honor". Now this is the same word that can be translated as glorify. It's the word "doxa", which should sound familiar, doxology. We sing the doxology. We sing praise to God. We honor him. We glorify him. This is the word that is used here. **They did not honor God or give him thanks.**

So imagine with me, just so we can press this word deeper into our minds, imagine that you are going into an art gallery. You see these pieces of art along the wall. And you come by one and you see people gathering around it. It's kind of drawing the crowd. It's one of those pieces of art. And you see that little name etched in the bottom corner. And then standing beside the painting, you see the artist. He's standing there, and guess what? The name tag matches the name on the painting. And he is smiling, he is joyful, he is happy, that everyone is looking around and enjoying what he has made. That's why he created it.

And then imagine someone comes up to this painting with all these people around it, looks at the painting, looks at the painter, looks back at the painting, and says, "Isn't it amazing that this picture, this painting, came about through random colors falling magically on a piece of canvas?" And that painter's smile is gone. He knows what he has created. He knows the effort, the time, the labor that went into this. And here is this guy walking up and saying, this is all a random chance.

We all see this parallel in the world, how the fool looks at the world that God has made, suppresses the truth, and declares, "Isn't it amazing that this is all random chance? You and I, we have just randomly appeared. We've developed, evolved into what we are now. And we are the top of the food chain. That's just how it is." And you can imagine, just as that artist's smile gets wiped off of his face, when all of his work is not attributed to him, he is not honored for the work that he is doing. We can imagine God's displeasure of the fool, his own image bearers, saying to him, you are not God, I am. It is placing ourselves above God instead of submitting to him.

Now God has made it evident, it being his invisible attributes on display in creation. And in Matthew 15:31, we see a proper use of honor and glory with the same word that's in our text today. The crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking and the blind seeing, and *****they glorified the God of Israel***** (Matthew 15:31). They worshipped him. They praised him. They gave him the honor that he is due. But the fool does not praise God nor give him honor.

And so what happens to this fool? What is the result? We'll continue on here in verse 21. ***They became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened.*** Now futile in their speculations, this we could simply say, is there's a lot of theory. There's a lot of endless debate and constant updating of what is actually true. How much do we see this in our world today? Of someone saying, nope, I actually know the truth, or now we learned this, is how everything came into being. The world's not this old, it's this old. And in five years it'll be this old. It's changing constantly because the source of authority that's appealed to is not the word, it's man. It's the fool, the foolish hearts of men.

And this word here, darkened, is a very important word. If we're all honest with ourselves, dark, it can provoke fear in the heart of young and old alike. I would guarantee you do not prefer sitting alone in a dark room, particularly if you don't know that room. You walk in somewhere, the door shuts, the lights are turned off. You don't sit there at peace going, this is what I was looking for. You immediately turn and you're like, where was that door? I want to push it and let a little bit of light in here so I can get my bearings. The unknown provokes fear. Darkness can be a scary thing to encounter.

And in Matthew 24:29, Jesus uses this word, this same word, and it's a very helpful comparison for understanding what does it mean for the foolish heart to actually be darkened. Well, Jesus says, ***"After the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light."*** (Matthew 24:29) That's

the drastic nature of this darkness that is going on in the hearts of the fool. Imagine our sun, imagine our moon, dark. The very star that we rely on, that God has set forth in the sky to give us light and life on this planet, for it to go dark. That is a reflection of the human heart. Once a heart of flesh, a heart of obedience, and now a heart of stone, a heart of disobedience. And we prove it when we press the truth down.

At Christ the King, we are now preaching through the book of Exodus, and many of you know the story of Pharaoh repeatedly hardening his heart. If there is a more epitome of the foolish heart, Pharaoh, I don't know one. But Pharaoh, if you think about this, the plagues that he endured himself and his whole nation, and still he hardened his heart against the Lord. And we like to think that there's a distance between Pharaoh and us. We like to think that my heart would never reject God like that. If I saw those miracles, I would turn to him immediately. If I was alive during Jesus' days and saw all these things happening, I would have been a true disciple. We look at the disciples and we know that's not the case. Our hearts, apart from Christ, the foolish heart is darkened.

And we gain further clarity of this in Romans 3, where we read, *****“There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God... There is no fear of God before their eyes.”***** (Romans 3:10–11, 18) So a simple message from this text today is rejecting God produces a darkened heart.

Now, that's the bad news. There is good news here where we can find light. And that light is not from our doing of finding that door, that escape hatch, and letting the light come in. Instead, it's God himself opening the door, coming to earth, and his Son, Jesus Christ, to take on human flesh, to bear the weight of our guilt and shame, our darkness. He bore that on the cross, and he entered into the darkness. Think of this with the tomb. Literally, a stone was rolled over the tomb, and what was that like in that tomb? Utter darkness, death, decay, sin. It's all right there. The reason we as Christians celebrate and set literally everything we have on this one truth, that Christ did not stay in the tomb, the tomb opened and the light came out of that darkness. Isn't that amazing?

So in that moment, for us, we're thinking that tomb is dark and full of death. And from that darkness, God rolls away it. And from it, the light shines forth into what we thought was light. We thought the light was going to shine into there. But instead, we learn this world is full of darkness. My heart is full of darkness. And because of that amazing truth, we can be forgiven of our sins, our hearts are now full of light, and we go forth in this world presenting the truth to those who are stuck in deception, for those who are still in their foolishness, suppressing the truth.

Now the fool dies rejecting God and heads toward eternal darkness, where nothing but the fury of God's wrath is upon him. And let's look at the next verse here in 22. How does Paul describe the ungodly? Well, he goes on to say that the fool professed to be wise, but became fools. This is the image of that suppressing the truth. How foolish is it to have the truth, to know it? It's there. Eternity is set in your heart, but I will push down harder and harder and harder. God can save anyone at any age, but we also all know as someone gets more stubborn and more calloused, it gets harder to believe that God will, in fact, remove their hands from that truth and let them see with clear eyes that Jesus is Lord. Now, while there is life, there is hope. So we always pray, but we feel the weight of that. Are they ever going to believe? And we submit those people to our loving God, the one who came out of that tomb. Rest assured that he is in control of that loved one, that neighbor, that friend.

So what happens to the fool next? We're talking about the result of those with a darkened or foolish heart. Verse 23 is our last verse this morning, and we'll spend a little bit of time here: ***"They exchanged 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."***

Now this might seem far-fetched to us in our modern day. We don't see little idols set up everywhere. They are there, but increasingly so, I should say, but we are not in the same context of seeing these literally everywhere, on all street corners, in every house being erected and people actually worshiping them. And this is the exchange, the exchange of God's glory for the glory of his creation, which is so much of a diminished state because this creation has fallen. So what we're really talking about here, what Paul is getting at with this exchange of glories, is idolatry. This is idolatry. And we see it in our day all the time. We know it in our own hearts.

I want to point out that this is the only course of action for the fool to take. This should help us to remember and lovingly speak the truth to those who are lost with patience, with directness, with strength and courage, because they can't do anything but idolize creation. Their foolish heart is darkened. They suppress the truth. What else is there to do? So let us not get exasperated with those who do not have a new heart. Let us be careful to not exhibit impatience, to get angry toward those who are deceived. There is righteous anger. It's very difficult to keep that righteous part, though. We slip it into that just pure evil anger quite easily with people we know or with people we don't know. You read what they say, you hear what they say, and it's easy to let that old fleshly desire of anger just rise up within us and want to shout, how foolish can you be? Pretty foolish, because that's all they know. Don't forget that that's where you were too. You and I have the same story. We weren't inside that tomb in the darkness and then we rolled the stone away. We were on the outside and God graciously brought us into his loving kindness.

Now listen to the language that's used throughout scripture. I'll just read two for us today about descriptions of sin and the eternal consequences of those who are lost, and likewise what we once deserved. ***"For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*** (Ephesians 5:5) ***"Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who submit to or perform homosexual acts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."*** (1 Corinthians 6:9–10) We can read that all throughout the New Testament. The foolishness of exchanging the glory of God for corruptible creation. Idolizing something that is not God will always result in these actions and ultimately leads to eternal separation from God, to that eternal darkness.

The heart that you have is either in Christ or apart from Christ. It's either light or darkness. There is no neutral stance that we can hold. That is one of the great lies of our time. If someone tells you that you are good by nature or that we are born into this world pure and then we go downhill, they have not read the scriptures appropriately. They have not honestly assessed the world around them to see it doesn't take much to train a child to sin. They know how to do it. It is training them to obey, to be righteous, to trust, to not suppress. That is what is difficult.

So a few closing questions for us, just as means of application when we think about the foolish heart and the result of it.

Is this for God or for me?

So as you go forth today, this week, ask yourself, when you come to decisions, is this for my kingdom or God's kingdom? It's a hard question. Your life is not your own, for you were bought with a price. So rid yourself of this notion that you get to hold on to a little piece of that old sinful life that you once held, where you can just kind of keep it there on a leash, tamed. And remember those good old days when you could sin without remorse or kind of that prick of your conscience. There is one being that wants you to believe that is a good thing and that is Satan himself, the great deceiver, that you should entertain holding on to old sins. Bring it to the cross. Ask, is this for God or is this for me? Am I building up my kingdom or am I building up his kingdom?

Second question,

Am I exchanging the glory of God?

Where are you committing idolatry? Some of these might be deeply seated and rooted in our hearts. We need to cast those idols off and ask ourselves these questions. Am I exchanging the glory of God in this moment?

And then the third question,

Am I prepared to help the fool?

Am I prepared to make disciples? We must read the word, pray, fast, and gather with the saints. That is how we equip ourselves. Prepare for when the foolish hearts that are around us actually want to talk. Or maybe they don't want to talk and we need to be the ones to talk to them. But you need to be able to say what it is you believe. We don't need to have every answer, but we should be able to share with confidence, with ease, "This is what the Lord has done for me. All I want for you is the best, what is the most good and true and beautiful, and that is God Himself. Stop suppressing the truth, turn to Christ, and you no longer have to have the pressure of pushing down on this."

It is a message that the world hates, and we will not be loved for this. I don't think they loved Jesus very much, so why would we expect that they would love us? Jesus was crucified. We live in a very comfortable society. Praise God for those freedoms. We don't need to say, well, we just need severe persecution, and that's the answer. It might be, and God could bring that about. But while we have the freedom, let's use it. Let's proclaim the truth. Let's act righteously. Let's live for his kingdom and not ourselves and prepare like this with freedom to gather and worship and hear from the one true and living God.

So you ask yourselves those questions and these things will help us to remember that the result of a foolish heart is darkness and idolatry. As a guest preacher here, all I can say to you is, fulfill the duties that God has given to you. This will come to your own heart and God. Bring your life before Him and ask God, how would you use me? And read His word and figure out, how do you command me to live? The foolish heart is darkened and full of idolatry. Praise be to God, that is not the position that we are in as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray that we will go forth from this place knowing that you are the one true God. Help us to hold fast the good confession. God, bring the work that you are doing in our lives to completion and help us, God, help us, we pray, to repent quickly when we sin. Help us to be mindful of the things that are in our lives right now that is actually building our own kingdom and not building up yours. God, we thank you for the deliverance that you have given to us, transferring us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of your beloved Son. We pray this in his name. Amen.

****Scripture References (in order mentioned/quoted):****

- Romans 1:18–23
- Psalm 104:24
- Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Matthew 15:31
- Matthew 24:29
- Romans 3:10–11, 18 (referenced)
- Ephesians 5:5
- 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

Sermon Summary

Title: Examining the Result of the Foolish Heart

Preacher: Trevor Myers (Elder at Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church)

Text: Romans 1:18–23

Main Idea

When people reject and suppress the knowledge of God, their hearts become darkened, leading to futility, foolishness, and idolatry.

Key Points

Pastor Myers began by setting the context in Romans. Although Paul praises the Roman church's faith, he quickly addresses sin and unrighteousness because the gospel requires both bad news and good news. The passage presents two realities: the glorious, incorruptible Creator God and the ungodly, thankless, idolatrous fool.

He explained that **all people know God exists** — eternity is set in their hearts and God's attributes are clearly seen in creation — yet humanity willfully **suppresses this truth** to avoid accountability. Like pushing a beach ball underwater, the truth keeps trying to surface, but the fool presses it down.

As a result of refusing to honor God or give Him thanks:

- They become **futile in their speculations** (constantly changing theories about origins, truth, and reality).
- Their **foolish heart is darkened** — a profound spiritual blindness compared to the sun and moon going dark (Matthew 24:29).
- They **profess to be wise but become fools**.
- They **exchange the glory of the incorruptible God** for idols — worshiping created things (including modern forms of idolatry) instead of the Creator.

Pastor Myers emphasized that this is not just ancient paganism; it is the natural condition of every human heart apart from Christ. He used Pharaoh's hardened heart as a vivid example and reminded listeners that we all once walked in this darkness.

Gospel Hope

The sermon did not leave listeners in despair. Pastor Myers powerfully contrasted the darkness with the light of the gospel: Jesus entered our darkness, died for our sin, and burst forth from the tomb. What we could not do for ourselves, God did. Believers are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

Application

Pastor Myers closed with three practical questions for reflection:

1. **Is this for God or for me?** (Whose kingdom am I building?)
2. **Am I exchanging the glory of God** for something else (idolatry check)?
3. **Am I prepared to help the fool?** (Equipping ourselves through Word, prayer, and fellowship to share the gospel with those still suppressing the truth).

May 10, 2026
Pastor Trevor Myers

He encouraged patience and compassion toward unbelievers, remembering that we once were in the same condition, and urged the church to live boldly for God's kingdom while they still have freedom to do so.