

“The Wickedness of Ingratitude”  
Romans 1:21  
(Preached at Trinity, April 15, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul has been setting forth the argument that all men have a knowledge of God.
  - A. There is the inner testimony of the conscience.

**Romans 1:19** – “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them”  
**Romans 1:32** – “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.’  
They know the judgment of God. They know their guilt. Their conscience condemns them.
  - B. There is also the external testimony of creation and providence.

Creation reveals two things about God

    1. His power  
“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power. . .”
    2. His divinity or as the KJV says, His Godhead  
“even his eternal power and Godhead”
    3. Paul is saying that through Creation and Providence these things are clearly seen  
“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen”
    4. God exists and it is unmistakable
2. Human beings, however, suppress this clear knowledge of God. Their unbelief is not due to an ignorance of God, it is due to the fact that they will not have Him. They despise Him. They hate His sovereignty, His Law, His holiness – Especially His Son.
3. Starting with **Verse 21** Paul begins to give some results of this universal denial of God.

**Romans 1:21** – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God

  - A. To glorify God is to worship Him.
  - B. The most serious problem facing mankind is this: Although they all know God they refuse to bow before Him and worship Him.
  - C. Because of this God’s wrath is kindled against them.

**Romans 1:18** – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”
4. There are two great demands of God on the lives of all humans –
  - 1) That we rejoice in God’s goodness (that's thankfulness), and
  - 2) That we worship Him as the only true God.This is what we see in **Verse 21**

5. Even the smallest understanding of God should cause a man to bow before God with praise and thanksgiving. It is only the evil depravity of the human heart that keeps him from doing so.  
Human beings refuse to glorify God as God – this is characterized by their ingratitude.
  6. God sees this ingratitude as great wickedness.  
**Luke 6:35** – "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."  
God is equating the unthankful with His enemies – one and the same
  7. This morning I want to spend a few minutes looking at the terrible wickedness of ingratitude. It marks lost humanity. It identifies them. It is the result of a complete dismissal of God.
- I. Lost humanity fails to recognize the grace of creation – the gift of life
    - A. Life is a gift
      1. Every breath is a gift from God.
      2. Obviously this is true for the lost man. For the lost life is an act of God's mercy because sin forfeits life – the wages of sin is death.  
The truth is, that all life is a gift from God
      3. Adam's life was a grace from God. The angels exist by the grace of God  
There is nothing in creation that gives us the right to exist
      4. God does not need creation. He was not bound to bring life into being.  
He would have been perfectly fulfilled and infinitely satisfied with Himself without creation
      5. The first four words in the Bible are, "In the beginning God"  
If it had ended there God would have still been God
    - B. Do you awaken each day with a great gratitude for the gift of life?
      1. Is your heart moved with thanksgiving as you consider the wonder of life?
      2. Listen to the heart of David  
**Psalms 139:14** – "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well." "Praise" - תִּפְאֵר – can also be translated "to give thanks"
      3. When you pray each day do you thank God for life?  
This is the heart of a believer – a transformed heart – an awakened heart
      4. And when you consider the vastness of creation do you marvel that God pays particular attention to man?  
**Psalms 8:3-4** – "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; <sup>4</sup> What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"
      5. Do you conclude with David,  
**Psalms 8:9** – "O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!"
  - II. Lost humanity fails to recognize the blessings of mercy and grace
    - A. No matter how much God does for us we think we deserve more
      1. The perfect example is Israel after God delivered them from Egypt

- a. He gave them freedom. He blessed them with His presence. He led them by pillar of fire by night and by great cloud by day. Was Israel grateful?
  - b. All they did was complain and murmur. God gave them Manna and they complained. Unless everything was completely to their liking they complained.
  - c. God's anger was kindled against such wicked ungratefulness  
**Numbers 14:27** – "How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me."
2. Israel was behaving just like every lost man  
The truth is, we deserve nothing.
- B. Let's consider our existence from the perspective of sin – our fallen world.
1. Most do not consider that we live in a world cursed by sin  
Remember, their consciences condemn them but they suppress it
  2. All of humanity is subject to the wrath of God  
**Romans 1:18** – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;"
  3. Paul says we are under the wrath of God by our very nature  
**Ephesians 2:2-3** – "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: <sup>3</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
  4. Every second we are not in hell is by the mercy of God
  5. Every second we are not in excruciating pain is by the mercy of God
  6. This is why every complaint upon this earth is so evil
- C. Sin deserves God's wrath and curse, yet, look at God's rich mercy. God has blessed us with the wondrous blessings of His grace
1. This world is full of wonder and beauty  
**Romans 1:20** – "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"
  2. Seasons continue to bring for rich harvests
  3. Rain continues to water the earth.
  4. God continues to sustain and preserve His creation
  5. All of this is by the richness of God's grace and mercy
  2. Lost humanity takes it all for granted  
We take the rain for granted and murmur when it doesn't come  
We take the sunshine for granted and complain when it's too hot.
- D. We live in a generation of complainers
1. Ingratitude expresses pride and unbelief
  2. A man is ungrateful because he is self-centered – He feels he deserves what he has and deserves to have more

3. The lost man's unbelief blinds him to the recognition that everything comes from God – He does not consider God's goodness and tender mercies

III. Lost humanity fails to acknowledge the majesty and glory of God and respond in praise and thanksgiving.

**Romans 1:21** – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful”

- A. God is the source of all things
  1. God has created all things as an expression of His glory – it is a manifestation of His majesty—His infinite worth and value
  2. Instead of recognizing this great value and being satisfied in Him lost humanity finds greater value in the things God has created.
- B. God is worthy of our praise and worship
  1. Worship is an expression of gratitude
  2. God demands absolute allegiance to Him expressed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment - **Exodus 20:3** – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
  3. Praise and thanksgiving are required by God  
**1 Thessalonians 5:18** – “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”  
**Psalms 100:4** – “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.”  
**Colossians 3:15** – “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”
  4. Instead of glorying in God and being satisfied in Him we seek the things of creation, the things of this world, and ignore God.
- C. God commands us to be thankful
  1. Thanksgiving is the recognition of God as the giver of all things and an expression of praise for His goodness.
  2. Thanksgiving is the placing of value God and upon God’s actions  
**Psalms 107:15** – “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”
  3. God expects all men to exalt Him alone  
Second Commandment: “I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God”  
**Exodus 34:14** – “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.”
  4. A failure to give thanks is to deny God

IV. Lost humanity fails to be thankful for God’s greatest gift – Jesus Christ

- A. These verses are talking about the sin of unbelief
  1. They know God but they will not bow to Him. They will not submit.
  2. This wicked unbelief and hatred of God is precisely why men will not have Christ

- B. Jesus is God in the flesh
1. In Christ we have fellowship and relationship with the eternal Creator  
This is the blessing of the New Covenant  
**Jeremiah 24:7** – "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."
  2. The lost man will not have Christ. He is in an unending pursuit of satisfying his flesh. He stubbornly claims his independence.
  3. He refuses to see the glory of God in Christ.  
He refuses to admit any dependence upon God. He simply rules out God and therefore he doesn't thank Him.  
**Romans 1:21** – "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
- C. Salvation demands seeing Christ as greater than all that this world has to offer
1. The Christian has given his life to a pursuit of Christ  
This is a clear teaching of Scripture
    - a. Jesus is the Pearl of great price
    - b. Paul counted nothing precious but Christ  
**Philippians 3:8** – "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,"
  2. For the one who has found this treasure his life is characterized by thanksgiving because he has been restored to the Creator.

#### Conclusion:

1. Ingratitude is a terrible sin. God's anger is kindled when He does not receive the praise of men.
2. If ingratitude is one of the marks of unbelief, then gratitude must be one of the marks of a believer. Is your life marked by gratitude to God?  
The Greek word for giving thanks is **εὐχαριστέω** – It can also be translated pray.  
The Latin word for grace is gratia – it can also be translated thanksgiving  
Listen to Paul's rule of prayer,  
**Philippians 4:6** – "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
3. Thanksgiving is of the essence of our life in Christ. Are you living in gratitude?  
**Psalms 92:1** – "*It is a good thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:"  
**Psalms 100:1-5** – "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. <sup>2</sup> Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. <sup>3</sup> Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture. <sup>4</sup> Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations."