

The Great Exchange: Romans 1:18-25

Scriptures for Today:

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. 20 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 and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 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. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Introduction

[STATE THE TITLE] - [QUESTION] What is an exchange?

- An exchange is when you give one thing and get something else in return.
- Every day we make exchanges.
- We exchange money for the things we need. (Groceries, Gas, Utilities)
- We Exchange our time and labor for a paycheck.
- Whenever we make an exchange, we are saying **what we receive is worth what we give up.**

[KEY LINE]

- Every exchange reveals what a person truly values.

[ILLUSTRATION — ESAU]

[NEXT SLIDE]

Hebrews 12:16 Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

- Esau came in from the field tired and hungry, and Jacob had prepared a meal.
- Esau possessed a valuable birthright, but at that moment all he could think about was satisfying his appetite.
- He gave up something with lasting value for something that would only satisfy him temporarily.
- The food was soon gone, but the birthright no longer belonged to him.
- Esau did not make that exchange because his birthright had no value. He made it because, in that moment, he valued his appetite more.

[KEY LINE]

- Esau exchanged something lasting for something that could only satisfy him for a moment.

[CONNECT TO ROMANS 1]

- Romans 1 describes an exchange far greater and far more destructive than the exchange Esau made.
- Mankind was shown the truth about an eternal, powerful, and incorruptible God.
- Instead of glorifying Him, they exchanged His glory for corruptible images.

- They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.
- They exchanged the worship of the Creator for the worship of the creature.

[EXPLAIN THE TITLE]

- That is why the title of this sermon is “The Great Exchange.”
- It was not great because it was a good exchange.
- It was great because of the value of what mankind rejected, the worthlessness of what they chose, and the terrible consequences that followed.
- This was not an equal exchange.

[KEY LINE]

- Mankind traded what was eternal and incorruptible for what was temporary and corruptible.

[CONTEXT — ROMANS 1:16–18]

- Before we begin in verse 18, we need to remember what Paul has just told us about the gospel.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

- So we see two revelations here...
- In verse 17, God reveals His righteousness through the gospel (for therein is the righteousness of God).
- In verse 18, God reveals His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.
- The righteousness of God reveals how guilty sinners can be saved.
- The wrath of God reveals **why** guilty sinners need to be saved.
- The good news of salvation becomes clear when we understand the bad news of our guilt.

[PAUL’S LARGER ARGUMENT]

- Paul is beginning to establish that all mankind is guilty before God.
- Romans 1 confronts the rebellion of mankind against its Creator.
- Romans 2 confronts the person who condemns everyone else when they do the same things.
- Romans 3 concludes that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin.
- Paul is removing every excuse before explaining how sinners can be justified by faith.

[EMPHASIS — WHERE THE CORRUPTION BEGAN]

- When people read Romans 1, their attention often jumps ahead to the sinful behavior described later in the chapter.
- But Paul does not begin with what mankind did with their bodies. He begins with what mankind did with God in their hearts.
- They refused to glorify Him as God.
- They were not thankful.
- Their imaginations became vain.
- Their foolish heart was darkened.
- Their corrupted behavior grew out of corrupted worship.

[KEY LINES]

- Before their bodies were dishonored, God was dishonored.
- Before their behavior became corrupted, their worship became corrupted.
- Before God gave them up to their lusts, they refused to glorify Him as God.

[SERMON DIRECTION]

- As we work through this passage, we are going to examine three parts of this great exchange.

1. The Truth They Rejected — verses 18–20
2. The Glory They Exchanged — verses 21–23
3. The Judgment They Received — verses 24–25

[TRANSITION]

- Before we examine what mankind chose, we need to establish what God had already shown them.
- God had not hidden Himself from the world.
- The problem was not that God failed to reveal Himself. The problem was that mankind refused to respond properly to the truth.
- The great exchange began when mankind rejected the truth God had already made known. Look again at verse 18.

1. THE TRUTH THEY REJECTED (VV. 18–20)

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; **19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. **20** 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 and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

- Remember verse 17 says that the righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel, while verse 18 says that the wrath of God is revealed against sin.
- God's wrath is not an uncontrolled temper.

[EXAMPLE] We have tempers over foolish things. Small things. Someone won't go at a green light. Etc.]

- God's wrath is the righteous response of a holy God against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness.

- **[EXAMPLE]** A good judge will not let wrongdoing go unpunished. If they did that would be a corrupt judge.

- Ungodliness begins with man's refusal to honor God, and unrighteous living follows.
- Wrong living grows out of a wrong response toward your Creator.

[IMPORTANT TO NOTE]

- These verses do not describe people who had no truth about God.
- They "hold the truth in unrighteousness." They possessed truth, but refused to allow it to govern their lives.

[APPLICATION]

- People sometimes say, "If God would only show Himself, then I would believe."
- Romans 1 says that God has already shown mankind the truth about Himself.
- The real question is whether we are willing to submit to the God revealed by that truth.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

- Verse 19 tells us that God has shown mankind enough about Himself to make everyone accountable.
- God placed evidence of His existence, power, and wisdom throughout creation.
- The heavens, the earth, the complexity of life, and our own bodies all point beyond themselves to their Creator.

[EXAMPLE] The human eye is so complex. The conception of a human being. A child growing in the womb.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

- Creation speaks to every nation and language without using an audible human voice.

[ILLUSTRATION — IMAGINE YOURSELF WALKING IN THE WOODS]

- If you found a house in the woods, you would never believe it assembled itself.
- The house would not tell you everything about its builder, but it would prove that a builder existed.
- Creation is not God, but it reveals the power and wisdom of the God who made it.
- If a building requires a builder, how much more does this universe require an all-powerful Creator?

[NEXT SLIDE]

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, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

- We cannot see God with our physical eyes, but we can see the work of His hands.
- The invisible things of God are understood through the visible things He made.
- Just like how we have cars to drive points to the fact that there is a car manufacturer.
- When we can walk into a grocery store and buy fresh vegetables it points to the fact that there is a farmer that did all the work.
- We don't have to see and understand the process to believe that these things came from somewhere.
- In the same way, creation reveals that there is a God and it shows us His eternal power and Godhead.
- There is no way to ignore it. Mankind is without excuse. Yet, they continue to reject the truth.

[IMPORTANT DISTINCTION]

- Even though creation reveals that there is a creator, it does not fully reveal the death, burial, and resurrection on its own. It has been manifested to everyone that there is a God, and everyone has a chance to accept or reject the truth.
- But the gospel must be preached. When people seek the Lord, God will always send a preacher to reach them with the gospel. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" "Faith cometh by hearing..."

[TRANSITION]

- God revealed the truth, but mankind refused to respond properly.

2. THE GLORY THEY EXCHANGED (VV. 21–23)

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:21-23 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. **22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

- When verse 21 says, “they knew God.” it does not mean that they were saved or had placed their faith in God.
- It means that they knew there was a God because He had revealed Himself through creation.
- The truth was available, but they refused to respond properly to it.
- Knowing that God exists is not the same as honoring and believing Him.

[SO WHAT DID THEY DO? THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD]

- God does not need us to add anything to His glory. He already has ALL glory.
- To glorify God is to recognize who He is and give Him the honor, worship, and authority that already belongs to Him.
- Mankind saw the work of God but refused to give God the credit.
- They enjoyed what the Creator made while refusing to honor the Creator.

[EXAMPLE] It makes you mad when you put time and effort into building something, or making food. And people take advantage of that effort. They use and consume but show no honor or respect to the one who put in the work. We do that to God all the time.

- Mankind wanted the benefits of God’s Creation without acknowledging Him or submitting to His authority.

[IT SAYS THEY WERE NOT THANKFUL]

- Thankfulness acknowledges that what we possess came from someone else.
- An unthankful person receives the gift while ignoring the giver.
- Every breath, every meal, every ability, and every good thing in this life comes from God.
- Yet mankind receives these things and often acts as though it is entitled to them.

[THEIR THINKING BECAME VAIN]

- Because they refused to glorify and thank God, they “became vain in their imaginations.”
- The word vain describes something empty, useless, or without profit.
- When people remove God from their thinking, their minds do not become neutral.
- They begin filling the empty space with false explanations, false ideas, and false gods.

[THAT LED TO THEIR FOOLISH HEART BEING DARKENED]

- The darkness of their heart followed their rejection of the truth.
- God gave them light, but they turned away from it.

- If you repeatedly reject the light and truth of God's word, don't be surprised when your path becomes darker and darker.
- If you recognize that your path is getting darker, If you are doing things that you wouldn't have done before. And you can see it. You need to run back to the light as fast as you can.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

- These people did not think they were foolish. They professed themselves to be wise.
- They believed rejecting God made them enlightened, intelligent, and independent.
- But the Bible says they became fools.

[EXAMPLE — WILLING TO CONSIDER ANYTHING BUT THE CREATOR]

- We see this contradiction among some of the world's most celebrated scientific thinkers.
- Richard Dawkins openly rejects belief in God, yet he has acknowledged that life on earth could have been planted here by an advanced extraterrestrial intelligence.
- Neil deGrasse Tyson, who is a famous astrophysicist, entertains the possibility that our universe is a simulation created by some higher-order being.
- They are willing to consider that aliens or an advanced civilization, is the reason why we are here.
- But when the Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," that explanation is rejected as unreasonable.

- **Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools**

[REFERENCE] Psalm 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God...*

- The Bible does not call someone a fool because he lacks education.
- He is a fool because he looks at the evidence of his Creator and refuses to acknowledge Him.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

[THE GREAT EXCHANGE]

- Here we see the first direct exchange in the passage.
- They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into the image of something corruptible.
- God is eternal. He does not decay, grow old, or die.
- Man, birds, beasts, and creeping things are all part of a creation that grows old and passes away.
- They exchanged what was eternal for what was temporary.
- They exchanged the glory of God for an image made by human hands.

[NOTICE THE DOWNWARD PROGRESSION]

- First the image was made like corruptible man. Then it moved down to birds. Then to fourfooted beasts. Finally, to creeping things.
- We were created to worship the Creator above us. But instead, we bow down to the things beneath us.

- God gave us dominion over the animals. He gave us some authority over His creation.

And what do we do? We place that creation above God Himself.

- Imagine worshipping a vulture that eats dead animals and is unclean. Imagine worshipping dogs that eat dung off the ground. Imagine worshipping tiny insects that we are able to stomp and destroy. Imagine lifting those things above God. That is sickening. But that is what mankind has done.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Psalm 106:19-21 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. 21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

- Israel had seen the power of God in Egypt and had walked through the Red Sea.

- Yet they made a golden calf and worshipped an animal that eats grass.

- They had experienced the works of God, but they exchanged His glory for something they made themselves. They forgot their savior.

[APPLICATION]

- Not everyone is bowing down before a golden calf today, but people still attempt to create their own gods.

- Whether it's entertainment, sports, animals and pets, the environment, celebrities, money, whatever it is. When you place those things above God, you are trading and exchanging the glory of the incorruptible for that which is corrupted.

[TRANSITION]

Let's see what God's response is when mankind rejects the truth, refuses to glorify God.

3. THE JUDGMENT THEY RECEIVED (VV. 24-25)

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:24-25 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

- Verse 24 begins with the word "Wherefore."

- What happens here is the result of everything we have already seen.

- They rejected the truth, refused to glorify God, became unthankful, and exchanged His glory for corruptible images.

- Because they continued rejecting God, "God also gave them up."

- This is one way the wrath of God mentioned in verse 18 is revealed.

[KEY LINE]

- God's wrath is sometimes revealed by what He does to people, but it can also be revealed by what He allows people to do to themselves.

[GOD GAVE THEM UP]

- God had shown them the truth, but they repeatedly chose something else.

- Eventually, God allowed them to pursue the very desires they demanded.

- God did not force them into sin. Verse 24 says these were “the lusts of their own hearts.”
- The desires were already present. God’s judgment was to remove restraint and allow those desires to control them.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Psalm 81:11-12 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. **12** So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.

- Israel would not listen to God’s voice.
- They did not want God, so God allowed them to walk according to their own counsel.
- That is one of the scariest situations that you can be in as a human being. When you rebel against God so much, that he allows you to walk in your own counsel. And He allows you to do whatever you want.

[ILLUSTRATION — REMOVING THE RESTRAINT]

- Think about water pressing against a dam.
- The dam does not create the force of the water. It restrains the force that is already there.
- If that restraint is removed, the water rushes in the direction it was already pressing.
- In the same way, God did not create the lusts in their hearts.
- When He gave them up, He allowed what was already pressing inside them to run its course.
- What they called freedom became part of their judgment.

[THEY DISHONoured THEIR OWN BODIES]

- Verse 24 says their lusts led them “to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”
- God created the human body with purpose, order, and dignity.
- When people reject the Creator, they also reject the Creator’s purpose for the body.
- Man begins treating his body as though it belongs entirely to him and can be used however he desires.
- But the body did not create itself. It belongs to the God who made it.

[NEXT SLIDE]

Romans 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

- This is the second direct exchange in the passage.
- In verse 23, they changed the glory of God into a corruptible image.
- In verse 25, they changed the truth of God into a lie.
- They could not actually change what is true.
- God remained the Creator, whether they acknowledged Him or not.
- They changed the truth within their own thinking and replaced it with something false.
- The lie was that the creature could take the place of the Creator.
- The lie was that mankind could reject God’s authority and live without consequences.

[THEY WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE]

- Their false thinking eventually produced false worship.
- They “worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.”

- Worship describes what they honored.
- Service describes what they gave their lives to.
- What they worshipped in their hearts eventually controlled how they lived.
- Man was created to serve God, but after rejecting God, he began serving the things God created.

[EXAMPLE] In our own lives it starts out by worshipping or honoring something else above God. The more we honor and worship something, the more we start to serve that thing.

- Some people worship money, so they start to serve it and organize their entire lives to gaining more.
- Some people worship pleasure and make every decision according to what satisfies the flesh.
- Some people worship nature so they start serving it and refuse to acknowledge the God who created it.
- Some people worship animals. What happens? They start serving their animals.

If your life revolves around serving anything more than God, then there is a major problem that needs to be addressed.

- The object can change, but the exchange remains the same: the creature receives what belongs to the Creator.

[THE CREATOR REMAINS BLESSED]

Paul ends verse 25 by saying that the Creator “is blessed for ever. Amen.”

- Mankind may reject God, redefine Him, and give His glory to creation, but none of that changes who God is.
- God does not lose His glory because people refuse to recognize it.
- Every idol will pass away, every creature will die, and every lie will eventually be exposed.
- But the Creator remains blessed for ever.

CONCLUSION — THE GREATEST EXCHANGE

- It is easy to read Romans 1 and only think about what “they” have done.
- They rejected the truth, They exchanged the glory of God, They worshipped the creature more than the Creator.
- But Paul is leading us toward the truth that every one of us is guilty before God.
- That’s why in Chapter 3 he shows us that it is proven that all are under sin.
- There is none righteous, no, not one.
- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- We have not always glorified God as God.
- We have not always been thankful.
- We have allowed created things to become more important than our Creator.
- If creation leaves mankind without excuse, consider our responsibility when we also possess the written Word of God and have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and we don’t listen to His commands.
- None of us can stand before God and boast. We have all sinned and deserve His righteous judgment.

[THE GREATEST EXCHANGE]

- Romans 1 shows us the exchange that condemned mankind, but the gospel reveals the exchange through which mankind can be saved.

[NEXT SLIDE]

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- Jesus Christ never rejected the truth, never dishonored the Father, and never committed a single sin.

- Yet upon the cross, He gave His sinless life, bore our sins and the judgment we deserved, and experienced the forsaking of the Father.

- He took our sin and our punishment so that we could receive His righteousness and everlasting life.

[KEY LINE]

- Mankind exchanged the Creator for the creature, but the Creator entered His creation and gave His life to save us. That truly is the greatest exchange. All we have to do is believe on Jesus to receive eternal life.

As we go from here, let's glorify God, let's be thankful, and stop allowing created things to take the place that belongs to our Creator. Let's serve Him with everything we have within us. Let's pray.