

KNOWLEDGE, WORSHIP, GRATITUDE NO. 1763

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.”
Romans 1:20, 21.*

THOSE who boast of their knowledge betray their ignorance. Knowledge is not a possession to be proud of; since it brings with it so great a responsibility that a nurse might as well be proud of watching over a life in peril. Knowledge may become good or evil according to the use which is made of it. If men know God, for instance, and then glorify Him as God, and are thankful, their knowledge has become the means of great blessing to them. But if they know God, and fail to glorify Him, their knowledge turns to their condemnation. There is a knowledge which does not puff up the mind, but builds up the soul, being joined with holy love. Did not our Lord say, “And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”? But for men to know God, and not to glorify Him as God, and to be unthankful, is, according to our text, no benefit to them, on the contrary, it becomes a savor of death unto them, because it leaves them without excuse. Our Savior could plead for some, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But what plea is to be used for those who know what they do, and yet do evil; who know what they ought to do, and do it not? These have the light and close their eyes, or, to use another figure, they have the light and use it to sin. They take the golden candlestick of the sanctuary into their hands, and by its help they perform their evil deeds the more dexterously, and run in the way of wickedness the more swiftly. Accursed is that man who heaps to himself knowledge till he becomes wise as Solomon, and then prostitutes it to base ends by using it to aggrandize his wealth, to pamper his appetites, to bolster his unbelief, or to conceal his vices. A man may by knowing more become all the more a devil. His growing information may only increase his condemnation. It is clear, then, that knowledge is not a possession of such unmingled good that we may grow vain of it, better far will it be if the more we know the more we watch and pray. Go on and read, young man. Go on and study with the utmost diligence. The more knowledge you can acquire the better, but take care that you do not, like Sardanapalus, heap up your treasures to be your own funeral pile. Do not by a rebellious pride curdle the sweet milk of knowledge, and sour your precious blessing into an awful curse. It is soon done, but not so soon undone. It was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the eating of which brought all this evil upon us, which you see this day. You may still eat of that tree, if it so pleases you, but if you taste not of the tree of life at the same time, your knowledge shall only open to you the gates of hell. Knowledge of itself is as land which may either become a blooming garden or a howling wilderness. It is a sea out of which you shall bring pearls or dead men’s bones. Life and death, heaven and hell, are here, if it was said of old, “Take heed what you hear,” I will also say, “Take heed what you know.”

The people mentioned by Paul in our text fell into two great evils, or rather they fell into two forms of one, great, evil—atheism; the atheism of the heart and the atheism of the life. They knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We will first consider *the first sin mentioned here*, and then *the second*. I shall not look at these two evils as if you were Romans, because I know that you are not, but I shall adapt the text to your own case, and speak of these sins as Englishmen are too apt to commit them. Thirdly, *let us view the consequences*, or, what comes of men not glorifying God, and not being thankful. Then, fourthly, let us *fly from these sins immediately, God helping us*. O Holy Spirit, help the preacher now, for all his help is in You!

I. At once then, let us look at this first sin, a sin very common in these days. **THEY KNEW GOD, BUT THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD.** Even in old Rome, with all its darkness, there was some knowledge of God, how can the creature quite forget its Creator? Of course the people had not that spiritual knowledge which the Holy Spirit communicates to the renewed in heart, for the carnal mind cannot know God spiritually, its fleshly ideas cannot come near to His holy spirituality. But Paul means that they perceived the eternal power and Godhead of the Great Former of all things; and they might have perceived much more of His divine character and glory if their foolish hearts had not been darkened by their evil passions. When you go among the heathen, whether they are Pantheists or Polytheists, or whatever they may be, there is still a notion in the background of all their mythology of some one great superior being, elevated above those whom they call gods, some serenely just father, preserver, avenger, and rewarder of men. The most debased of mankind are still found to have some measure of knowledge of the great Creator; they hold the truth, though they hold it in unrighteousness. They can as soon shut their eyes to the sun, as completely blind their minds to the fact that there is a God. Some among the heathen no doubt attained to a very considerable knowledge of God, or at least they walked upon the borders of marvelous discoveries of the Godhead. We are greatly surprised at the language of Socrates, and Plato, and Seneca, and others, such men have lately been held up as patterns, but if their lives are studied, they will be found to be sadly defaced with what Paul fitly calls “vile affections.” These were wise men, but the world by wisdom knew not God. They were great thinkers, but a clear revelation of God was not in all their thoughts. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so they remained steeped in loathsome vice which we dare not mention, for it is a shame even to speak of the things which were done by the most enlightened of them in secret. They had knowledge, but they forgot its responsibilities. They knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We may now let all the heathen go, for it is truer of us than it is of them, that we know God. Those to whom I am speaking tonight dwell where the name of God is familiar, where the gospel of God sounds like a trumpet in their streets, where the character of God is painted with the finger of light upon the blessed pages of the Bible, and where the Spirit of God takes care that the consciences of men shall be enlightened. We know God, but I am afraid that there are many thousands and millions of our fellow creatures who glorify Him not as God. Let us see to it that we do not ourselves belong to the unhappy number.

Those do not glorify God as God *who do not trace all their good things to God.* “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,” but many ungrateful hearts forget this truth, and receive the blessings of this life with dumb mouths and cold hearts. In the old times there were those who traced everything they saw to what they called “chance,” that misinformed deity has been laid aside, and on its pedestal men have set up another idol known as “Nature.” Nowadays swarms of people attribute everything that is great and wonderful to “Nature”—they talk forever of “the beauties of Nature,” “the grandeur of Nature,” “the laws of Nature,” but God is as little spoken of as if He were not alive. As to laws of Nature, these occupy with moderns much the same place as the deities of Olympus with the ancients. What are laws of Nature but the ordinary ways in which God works? I know of no other definition of them. But these people attribute to them a sort of power apart from the presence of the Creator. One standing up in the street, venting his infidelity, said that we could not do better on Sunday than go abroad and worship Nature. There was nothing that was as refining and elevating to the mind as Nature. Nature did everything. A Christian man in the crowd ventured to ask, “What is Nature?” And the gentleman said, “Well, Nature—well—it is Nature. Don’t you know what it is? It is Nature.” No further definition was forthcoming. I fear the term is only useful as enabling men to talk of creation without being compelled to mention the Creator. I find nowadays that people talk about “Providence,” and yet discard God. Among the vulgar and the ungodly this is another subterfuge to avoid the ascribing of their blessings to the Giver of them. A farmer, whose crops had failed a second time, was consoled by a clergyman, because he suffered from the hand of Providence. “Yes,” he said, “that Providence is always treating me shamefully, but there’s one above that will stop him.” The poor soul had heard of Providence till he thought it an evil power, and hoped that the good God would curb its mischievous influence. This comes of not speaking plainly of God. For what is Providence? Can there be such a thing without the constant

working of the Great Provider? Men talk of “Foresight.” But is there any foresight without an eye? Is there not some living eye that is watching for our good, some living hand that is following up the eye, and providing for our needs? Man does not like to think of his God. He wants to get away into a far country, away from God his Father, and he will adopt any sort of phrase which will help him to clear his language of all traces of God. He longs to have a convenient wall built up between himself and God. The heathen often attributed their prosperity to “fortune,” some of them talked of “chance,” others discoursed of “fate.” Anything is to man’s taste rather than blessing the great Father, and adoring the one God. If they prospered, they were “lucky,” this was instead of gratitude to God. They looked into the almanac to find lucky days, this instead of faith in the Most High. They were superstitious, and asked their priests to tell them what would be a fortunate time for commencing an undertaking, this instead of resting upon the goodness of the Lord. Have we not some now who bless their good luck, and still talk about their fortunate stars? God whom they know they do not honor as God.

Yes, and we have among us men who talk neither of “fortune” nor of “Nature,” but of themselves. They are styled “self-made men,” and they are very prone to worship the great self who made them, they are never backward in that cult. Their adoration of themselves is constant, reverent, and sincere. “Self-made men,” indeed! Infinitely better is it to be a God-made man. If there is anything about us that is worth having, it must be from Him from whom every good gift and every perfect gift has always descended. Let us therefore give *Him* thanks. There is no other sun for our sky than yon sun in the heavens. There is no other source of good but the ever-blessed God, who has made Himself known to us, whom with all our hearts we now adore.

But may I not be addressing some who, at this moment, do not bow before God and bless Him for their prosperity? They attribute it to their industry, and to their good luck. Oh, sirs, you come under the head of those who know God, and yet do not glorify Him as God, neither are you thankful. The Lord help such to confess this sin, and may His grace wash them clean of it, for indeed it is a great and heinous sin in the judgment of the Most High. Justice makes a black mark against those who do not ascribe their good things to God, from whom they flow with such sweet constancy of kindness.

But we can also commit that sin, in the next sense, *by not feeling any obligation laid upon us through partaking of the divine bounty*. Are there not many rich men to whom it never occurs to feel bound to serve the Lord who gave them power to get wealth? Are there not many healthy persons, sound of limb and strong in constitution, who, yet do not praise the God who has kept them from sickness and death? Are we any of us sufficiently grateful for our talents, our faculties, our friends, our daily provisions? Do we not all receive a large amount of blessing for which we do not render praise to God? The fact is that every mercy brings an obligation with it, and we that receive most ought to render most, for we receive nothing from God without being, thereby, naturally and of right, laid under bonds to return to Him the glory due unto His name. We are tenants, whose rent is to be paid in service and praise. It is a very blessed obligation! It is a happy bond to be bound to praise and bless God! Praise is no more a burden to a true heart than song to a bird, or perfume to a flower, or twinkling to a star. Adoration is no taxation. God’s revenue of glory comes from myriads of free-will offerings, which gracious spirits delight to present to Him all their days. Yet there are some, who know God, but they glorify Him not as God, they rob Him of that which should be their life to bring. They seem to say that they are their own, and not God’s, they may live as they please, they may serve themselves. God is not in all their thoughts, and as to spending and being spent in the service of Him who gave them being, it has not yet crossed their minds. God’s complaint concerning them is a just one—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” God grant us grace to avoid this cruel provocation, and may we glorify God as God by practically acknowledging the obligation under which His mercy places us.

Many may be met with who know God, but never glorify Him as God, because *they never adore Him, and worship Him, with the love of their hearts*. They regularly go to church or to some place of worship and sing psalms and hymns, and they may even have family prayer at home, but their heart has never adored the living God with living love. Their worship has a name to live, but it is dead. They pre-

sent to the Lord all the external harvest of worship, but the corn is gone, only the straw and the husk are there. And what is the value of your husky prayers? Your prayers without a kernel, made up of the straw of words, and the chaff of formality? What is the value of professions of loyalty from a rebel? What is the worth of professed friendship to God when your heart is at enmity against Him? Is it not a mockery of God to present to Him a sacrifice “where not the heart is found”? When the Lord has to say—“They come as My people, and they sit as My people, and they sing as My people, but their heart is far from Me”—can He take any pleasure in them? May not God thus complain of many? Oh, let it not be so with you! I know that there are some here against whom that charge would rest if we pressed it—that they know God, but they do not glorify Him as God, for they do not love Him. The name and service of God are much on their tongues, but they do not delight in Him, they do not hunger and thirst after Him, they do not find prayer and praise to be their very element, but such service as they render is merely lip service, the unwilling homage of slaves and not the delighted service of those who are the children of God. Oh, my brethren, if we accept Jehovah as the living God, let us give Him the utmost love of our souls. Will you call a man brother, and then treat him like a dog? Dare you call God your God, and then act towards Him as though He were not worthy of a thought? With what joy does David cry, “I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds”! This is the kind of spirit with which to deal with the Lord. Oh, to rejoice in God all day, and to make Him our exceeding joy! Thus, and thus only, do we glorify Him as God. Without the fire of love no incense will ever rise from the censor of praise. If we do not delight in God we do not fitly adore God.

There is another way of not glorifying God as God, and that is by *never recognizing His omnipresence*. Have we not among us those who on Sunday feel some kind of reverence of God, but during the six days of the week are godless? When they are in a place of worship they have some sense of God’s being there, if they do not fear and tremble, yet they behave with decency and respect, but in other places they dare to act as if they were out of range of God. Do they fancy that God is not in that secret chamber where they follow out their passions? Do they imagine that He is not in that vulgar company where they make mirth of sacred things? Do they imagine that out of man’s sight is also out of God’s sight? Do not some men so act and live as if God were either dead, or else were blind and deaf, utterly oblivious to everything that is done on the face of the earth? How blind must they be, who think God blind! May we never fall into this absurdity! May we feel that we cannot anywhere consent to sin, for God is there. The whole earth is God’s House; shall we abuse the King in His own palace? The skies are the roof of His temple, and beneath God’s blue sky we ought never to find a place to sin. Nowhere in time is there space for evil, nor is there room for sin in the universe. Yet, alas, how few recognize, “You, God, see me,” as being a death-blow to sin? “They know God, but they glorify Him not as God,” but think that He is absent either in person or in mind, and that in some secret places they can hide from Him, and with impunity follow their own desires.

Are there not some, again, and many, who do not admit the true glory of God because *the idea of His sovereignty is very horrible to them*? I lay this charge against many professing Christians—that their god is not the God of the Bible, and that they have no notion of Jehovah, the true God. The one God of heaven and earth is Jehovah—that God who said of old, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Certain professed followers of Jesus will not have this God, but they make to themselves a god who is under some degree of obligation to his sinful creatures, of whom they say that he is bound to treat all alike. These are guilty of robbing divinity of its most majestic attribute, namely, sovereignty. They are for dictating to the King of kings, and tying the hands of infinite compassion, lest the supreme will of God should have too much liberty. I know of no such god as that, the God I worship can never do other than right, yet He is under no obligation to His creatures, but orders all things according to the counsel of His own will. I believe that if the Lord had denied me mercy, I had so sinned that I could never have impugned His justice. When I see Him save a sinner, I look not at it as a deed which He was bound to do, but as a spontaneous act, free as the air, full of His own goodness which arises entirely from Himself. “He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” I, for one, am perfectly satisfied with everything that God does, whether of power, justice, or mercy. My heart says, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems

good to Him.” I could have sung the Song of Moses at the Red Sea, when all Egypt was drowned, and found in the drowning of the foe a deep background of joy, because I would have seen in it the carrying out of the divine will, the reign of righteousness, and the avenging of cruel tyranny. I make bold to say that I would have praised God as the waves went over Pharaoh, for the Lord did it, and He did right. I would have cried with Moses, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” I expect to be among the number, though some seem as if they would decline the service, who shall forever bless God for all His dealings with mankind—the stern as well as those that seem more tender. The Lord God, even Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is the God whom I worship. I do not know this new god that has lately come up, who they say is all tenderness and has none of the stern attributes of righteousness and wrath. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in Him my soul delights. Let Him sway His scepter even as He pleases. His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Again will we say Hallelujah, when all His everlasting purposes shall have been fulfilled, the wicked shall be punished, and the righteous raised to their Father’s throne. To know God, and to glorify Him as God, is to regard Him as supreme, ungoverned; the Arbiter of all things, whose will is law. I believe in God on His throne, God giving no account of His matters, but doing His own pleasure as God over all. Short of this I could not glorify Him as God.

There are some others who know God, who fail to glorify Him as God, because *they do not trust Him*. In revelation God has presented Himself as the object of trust to His creatures, and He has promised that all who trust in Him shall be forgiven their transgressions through the atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. Such as trust Him He declares shall be saved, and He sends out a messenger of mercy to all mankind, proclaiming—“He that believes in Him is not condemned.” He bids sinners come and trust under the shadow of His wing, and He declares that none that come to Him will be ever cast out. Revealing Himself in Christ Jesus, He pleads with guilty men. Asking nothing of them, He entreats them to accept His mercy, which He freely presents to them without money and without price. Making no distinction in the gospel call, He bids men come to Him saying, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides Me there is none else.” When proud man replies, “No, I shall trust in myself, trust in my own works, trust in my own prayers, but I shall not trust in Christ,” then he knows God, but he glorifies Him not as God, and when he perishes he will be without excuse. What kind of God is that whom we will not trust? How do we honor Him when we refuse to believe Him? Do we accept His Godhead, and yet refuse His mercy? This cannot be.

The counts are many against men, but this one more must be mentioned—many know God, but they never glorify Him as God *by submitting themselves to Him, and yielding up their members to be instruments of His glory*. If I glorify God as God, then I desire to obey God’s commandments, to spread His glory, to magnify His name. I desire in all things to please Him, if indeed I treat Him as God should be treated. If I know God, and yet live for my own profit, for my own honor, for my own comfort, then I do not glorify God as God. Oh, sirs, when the Lord is glorified as God, we yield ourselves to His control without a murmur. He may take what He will away from us, and we say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” He may remove every comfort from us, and cover us with boils and pain, but we shall sit down with Job upon the dunghill, and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Knowing Him as God will make us submissive to suffer, and quick to act. We shall feel the force of Elijah’s cry, “If the Lord is God, follow Him.” We shall awaken ourselves to the utmost energy to serve Him when He stands before us as really God. If we serve man and are faithful, we do the best we can for our master, but if God is our Master, oh, what service we are bound to render to Him! What enthusiasm ought to be kindled in our breasts by the belief that we are God’s servants! “I am Your servant,” is our happy claim, our honored challenge. This it is that makes a man of a man and something more than man. Oh, to learn this lesson, and to practice it! To glorify God as God will make us akin to angels! Even you Christians may feel that this is much beyond you yet, but towards it you must always fly. I shrink before my Lord in speaking of Him, but I desire what I have not yet attained—that I may truly glorify Him as my Lord and my God.

II. Now we come to consider the second sin. May the word which I have to say about it be blessed to many of my hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit! The second sin is, “NEITHER WERE THANKFUL.” Did you know, dear friends, that un-thankfulness was such a sin as this? Have you ever thought of it in this light before—that men were without excuse because when they knew God they were not thankful? Un-thankfulness is a sin for which there is no excuse if it is attended with knowledge. I fear there are thousands who *call* themselves Christians, who are not thankful, and yet they never thought themselves very guilty on that account. Yet you see these sinners were without excuse, because they were guilty of a great sin before God, and that sin was un-thankfulness. I tremble both for myself and you when I see lack of thankfulness thus set in the front rank of sins.

How is it that we may be unthankful?

I answer first; *there is in some a lack of gratitude for mercies possessed.* They receive many blessings without making a note of them, or even seeming to know that they have them. Their daily mercies seem to come in always by the back door, where the servants take them in, and never tell their master or mistress that they have arrived. They never receive their mercies at the front door with grateful acknowledgments, but they still continue as dumb debtors, daily owing more, but making no attempt at a return. The Lord continues to bless them in things temporal, to keep them in health and strength, yes, and to give them the means of grace and spiritual opportunities, and they live as if these things were so commonplace that they were not worth thanking God for. Many professors are of that kind—recipients of countless mercies, but destitute of such common thankfulness as even beasts might manifest. From them God hears no song of gratitude, no chirp of praise, though birds would charm the woodlands with their minstrelsy. These are worse than the dumb driven cattle, or the fishes in the brook, which do at least leap up, and mean their Maker’s praise.

Some show this un-thankfulness in another way, for *they always dwell most on what they have not got.* They have manna, and that is angels’ food, but then they have no fish, and this is a ready theme for grumbling. They talk very loudly of “the fish we ate in Egypt,” and lament those ample feasts provided by the muddy Nile. Moreover, they have none of those delightful vegetables—the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions. They have none of these rank luxuries, and therefore they murmur, and call the manna, “light bread.” They put this complaint over and over again to Moses, till Moses must have been sick of them and their garlic. They said that they could not get leeks, and cucumbers, and onions, and that they were therefore most hardly done by, and would not much longer put up with it. Thankless rebels! And have I not known some of God’s servants say that they enjoy much of the presence of their Lord, but they have no riches, and so they are not among the favored ones? Over their poverty they fetch a deep groan. Some live in the presence of God, so they tell us, and they are full of divine delights, but yet they are greatly afflicted with aches and pains, and all the sorrows of rheumatism, and therefore they murmur. I admit that rheumatism is a dreadful pain, but at the same time to dwell always on the dark side of things, and to forget our mercies, is a sad instance of ingratitude. We are few of us as thankful as we ought to be, and there are some people who are not thankful at all, for instead of a song concerning their mercies, their life is one long dirge for their miseries. Must we always hear the sackbut? Is the harp never to give forth a note of joy?

Some show their unthankfulness by *fretting under their supposed ills.* They know from Scripture that even their afflictions are working for their good, yet they do not rejoice in the prospect, or feel any gratitude for the refining process through which the Lord is passing them. Heaven and perfection are left unsung, but the present processes are groaned over without ceasing. Their monotonous note is always this pain, this loss, this burden, this uncomfortable sensation, this persecution from the world, this unkindness from the saints, and so on; all this goes to show that, though they know God, they do not glorify Him as God, neither are they thankful.

We can be guilty of unthankfulness, also, by *never testifying to the goodness of God.* A great many people come in and out of your houses; do you ever tell them about God’s goodness to you? Did you ever take up a single ten minutes with the tale of the Lord’s loving-kindness to you? Oh, what backwardness there is to testify to God as God, and to all His goodness and love! Our mouths are full of anything rather than the goodness of the Lord. Shame on our wicked lips!

Some fail, also, in their *singing of God's praises*. I love to be singing in my heart, if I may not sing with my tongue. Is it not a good thing for you housewives, when you are about the house, to sing over everything? I remember a servant that used to sing at the washtub, and sing in the kitchen, and when someone asked her why she was always singing, she said that if it did not do anything else, it kept bad thoughts out of her mind. There is a great deal in that, for bad thoughts are bad tenants, who pay no rent and foul the house. I knew a dear old Methodist preacher, who is now in heaven, who when he came downstairs each morning was always singing a bit of a hymn, and he did the same in the barn, and the field. I have passed him in the street, and noted his happy melody, indeed he was always singing. He never took much notice of anybody, so as to be afraid of being overheard. Whether people heard him or not did not make much difference to him. He was singing to the Lord, not to them, and so he went on singing. I do not think that he had much of a voice, or an ear for music, but his soul was made up of praise, and that is better than a musical education. God does not criticize our voice, but He accepts our heart. Oh, to be singing the praises of God every minute of our lives, and never ceasing! Do you not think that many fail in this respect? They are not preparing for heaven, where all is praise, or they would take up the joyful employment at once.

It is plain that many are not thankful to God, for they *never praise Him with their substance*. Yet when the Jew was thankful, he took care to give a portion to the house of the Lord. Before he would eat his corn, he would send his sheaf to the sanctuary. If we are grateful to God, we shall feel that the first thing to do is to give of our substance as an offering of thanksgiving to the Most High. But this does not strike some people, whose religion is so spiritual that they cannot endure to hear of money, and they faint at the sound of a collection. Their thankfulness rises to singing an occasional hymn, but it never goes as far as giving a button to the cause of God. I am afraid their thankfulness is not worth more than what they pay to express it, that is to say, nothing at all. God deliver us from such a state of heart as that and may we never, in any of these senses, be found among those professors, of whom it is said that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful.

III. Listen carefully to me now for two or three minutes while, in the third place, I mention, very briefly and solemnly, what was THE RESULT OF THIS.

They knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful. And the first result of it was that *they fell into vain imaginings*. If we do not glorify God, the true God, we shall soon be found setting up another god. This vain imagination business is being done quite as extensively now as in Paul's days. Depart from the inspiration of the Bible, and from the infallibility of the Spirit of God who wrote it, and where will you go? Well, I cannot tell where you will go. One wanders into one vain imagination, and one into another, till the dreamers are on all sides. I expect to see a new doctrine every day of the week now. Our thinkers have introduced an age of inventions, wherein everything is thought of but the truth of God. We do not want these novelties. We are satisfied with the Word of God as we find it. But if you do not glorify God as God, and are not thankful to Him for His teaching, then away you go into vain imaginings.

And what next? Well, *away goes the mind of man into all sorts of sins*. The chapter describes unnatural lusts and horribly fierce passions. Men that are not satisfied and thankful—men that have no fear of God before their eyes—it were a shame for us to think, much more to speak, of what they will do. A heart that cannot feed at God's table will riot somewhere. He that is not satisfied with the cup that God has filled will soon be a partaker of the cup of devils. An unthankful spirit is, at bottom, an atheistic spirit. If God were God to us, we should not be unthankful to Him. If God was glorified in our hearts, and we were thankful for everything that He did, we should walk in holiness, and live in submission. And if we do not thus behave ourselves, the tendency will be for us to go from bad to worse, and from worse to the very worst. This has been done on a large scale by nations, whose downward course of crime began with lack of thankfulness to God. It is done on a smaller scale by individuals, to whom departure from God is the beginning of a vicious career. Get away from God, and where have you gone? If you do not love Him, and delight in Him, where will you stray? May the Lord tether us fast to Himself, and even nail us to the cross.

It seems that these people, of whom Paul wrote, fell into all kinds of bitterness, such as envy, murder, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating of God. They became spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and so forth. Well, if your spirit is not sweetened by the adoration and the love of God, it will grow bitter. If love does not reign, hate will rule. Look at unthankful people. Hear them talk. Nobody's character is safe. There is no neighbor whom they will not slander. There is no Christian man or woman whom they will not misrepresent. The very angels of God would not be safe from suspicion if they lived near people of that kind. But when you glorify God as God and are thankful for everything—when you can take up a bit of bread and a cup of cold water, and say with the poor Puritan, “What, all this, and Christ, too?”—then you are happy and you make others happy. A godly preacher, finding that all that there was for dinner was a potato and a herring, thanked God that He had ransacked sea and land to find food for his children. Such a sweet spirit breeds love to everybody, and makes a man go cheerfully through the world. If you give way to the other order of feeling, and do not glorify God, but quarrel with Him, and have no thankfulness for His mercies, then you will suck in the spirit of the devil, and you will get into Satan's mind, and be of his temper, and by and by, you will do his works. Oh, brothers and sisters, dread unthankfulness! Perhaps you did not think that it was so bad, but it is horrible! God help you to escape from it!

IV. And that you may escape from it, let us finish up by this exhortation. **LET US FLY, BY THE HELP OF GOD'S SPIRIT, FROM THESE TWO SINS.** *Let us glorify God, as God,* every one of us.

“Oh,” says one, “I am full of sin.” Come and glorify God, then, by confessing it to Him. “Oh, but I am not pardoned.” Come and glorify Him by accepting pardon through the blood of His dear Son. “Oh, but I am of an evil heart.” Come and glorify Him by telling Him so, and asking His Spirit to renew you in your mind. Come; yield yourself to His sweet gospel. May His blessed Spirit incline you to do so. Come; take Him now to be your God. Have you forgotten Him? Remember Him. Have you neglected Him? Seek Him. Have you offended Him? Mourn before Him. Say, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” Your Father waits to receive you. Glorify Him as God.

And then, next, let us begin to *be very thankful*, if we have not been so before. Let us praise God for common mercies, for they prove to be uncommonly precious when they are once taken away. Bless God that you were able to walk here, and are able to walk home again. Bless God for your reason; bless Him for your existence. Bless God for the means of grace, for an open Bible, for the throne of grace, for the preaching of the Word. You that are saved must lead the song. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me bless His holy name.” Bless Him for His Son. Bless Him for His Spirit. Bless Him for His Fatherhood. Bless Him that you are His child. Bless Him for what you have received. Bless Him for what He has promised to give. Bless Him for the past, the present, and the future. Bless Him in every way, for everything, at all times, and in all places. Let all that is within you bless His holy name. Go your way, rejoicing. May His Spirit help you to do so!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 1:1-22.
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