

Introduction:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Thus begins the greatest story ever written. And what a powerful beginning. This beginning asserts some phenomenal truths that must govern and mold our worldview. We learned in our previous lesson that this statement denies atheism, materialism, polytheism, pantheism, and fatalism. But this statement is so much more than a negative denial of false worldviews. It is also a demand for some positive perspective regarding our relationship with God. Since God is Creator, we must react in proper ways. In fact, in **Romans 1:18-32**, Paul highlights four ways we must relate to God since He is Creator. By the time we are done, you are going to know those four ways. In fact, be ready, because when we are done, I'm going to invite you to turn your life over to the Creator God as your Judge and Savior. Some of you I'm going to invite to be baptized, immersed in water for the remission of your sins in order to escape the wrath of God's judgment. Others, I'm going to invite you to pick one thing that you've been holding on to that you know needs to be brought into submission to God and decide today to trust God's judgment on that one thing by surrendering it to Him.

Discussion:

I. We must honor and thank our Creator.

- A. "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (**Romans 1:21**, ESV). In this context, Paul asserts that the people he is talking about knew God because of the testimony of the creation itself. How much more will we be held responsible since we accept the testimony of **Genesis 1:1**?
- B. The Creator is God. He deserves honor. He deserves respect. We are not on His level. I have no desire to take away from the idea of God as friend, but I hope we understand all friendships are not equal. When a servant is the friend of the king it is a wonderful, loving, comforting relationship. It means the servant can rely on the king to wield his power on the servant's behalf. It does not, however, mean the servant can pretend to be king. It does not mean the servant can be disrespectful or flippant. We must recognize God is not one of us. As **Isaiah 55:8-9** explains, God's ways and thoughts are above ours. We must honor Him.
- C. Part of this honor is giving thanks. Giving thanks is not merely a formality; it is an admission. If I thank you for something, I am asserting you are the source of it. When I thank you for a gift, I am admitting you are the giver. When **Romans 1:21** says these folks did not give God thanks, it is saying they didn't recognize the source of all that is around them is God. **James 1:17** says every good and perfect gift comes from God. We must not take our blessings for granted but recognize the Creator as God, honoring Him and thanking Him.

II. We must worship the Creator and not the creature.

- A. **Romans 1:25** explains one big huge problem people have had is worshiping the creature rather than the Creator. They saw a connection between the sun and vegetation growth, so they worshiped the sun as the provider of blessings. The ancient Egyptians knew their lives were sustained by the annual flooding of the Nile, so they worshiped the Nile. Additionally, as man tried to envision the divine, instead of keeping God separate from the creature, they envisioned Him as one of the creatures. Look at ancient pictures of gods and see them pictured as bulls, goats, alligators, humans. They may have had many horns, eyes, wings to demonstrate power or knowledge, but in the end they were merely powerful variations on the creatures.
- B. We just explained that we need to give thanks for God's gifts. Regrettably, too many move beyond being thankful for God's gifts to worshiping the gifts themselves. Our ancient counterparts did this very literally. They loved to drink and party, and thus was born a god of debauchery: Bacchus or Dionysus. They loved sex and thus was born the goddess of sex (though they said love): Venus or Aphrodite. We don't name our gods and goddesses, giving them personalities, building temples for them. But we do the same thing. God has blessed us with gifts of food, sex, entertainment, finances. Instead of seeing them as gifts that prompt us to honor God, we pursue the gifts like gods. **Genesis 1:1** means everything else is a gift. Everything else should point us to God. Sex is not the creator. Food is not the creator. Money is not the creator. God is the creator. God and God alone deserves our worship (**Matthew 4:10**).

III. We must obey the Creator.

- A. In **Romans 1:28**, Paul said those who didn't acknowledge God progressed on to do what ought not be done. In **Romans 1:29-31**, he listed a series of sins and disobediences. When Paul returns to this concept in **Romans 3:23**, he explains everyone has done this. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.
- B. We must grasp this demand of **Genesis 1:1**. God is the Creator. We must obey Him. A Creator has the right to govern His creation. A Creator has the right to mandate laws. A Creator has the right to dictate behavior. Consider **Psalm 104**. This psalm explains the greatness of God because of His creation. But notice something in this passage. He gave the earth foundations so it wouldn't be moved (**vs 5**). It hasn't been moved. When He rebuked the flood waters they fled (**vs. 7**). Mountains rose and valleys sank to the place God appointed for them (**vs. 8**). The waters stay in their appointed place so they will not flood the earth again (**vs. 9**). He goes on to talk about the springs that give drink to the animals and the grass that feeds them. In **vss. 19-23**, He talks about the moon that marks seasons and the sun that marks days. Interestingly, this psalm of praise for God's creative work ends with this: "Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!" (**Psalm 104:35**, ESV). Every bit of God's creation obeys Him, doing what God put it here to do except us. We are the only ones that ignore God's will. We need to examine creation and learn to obey the Creator just as the rest of creation does.

IV. We must surrender to the judgment of our Creator.

- A. It is perhaps because of this final reason so many question **Genesis 1:1**. **Romans 1:32** says, "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (ESV). This is the picture of God the Creator judge. Our modern culture doesn't like the idea of judge. It doesn't like the idea of being accountable to someone other than self. But the one who created the world has the right to judge the world, punish the world, even destroy the world.
- B. **II Peter 3** highlights this. **II Peter 3:8-10** describes this coming judgment. Then in **II Peter 3:11-12**, Peter demonstrates this idea of judgment means something about how we should live. We need to surrender to God's judgment. That is, we need to live in view of the coming judgment. We need to live in view of the fact that it can happen at any time. If you get pulled over for a ticket or brought before a judge on various charges, you may be able to weasel your way out of it. You may be able to bat your eyes, cry, threaten, bribe and get the charges dropped. But when we stand before the Judge of all the earth, we will not be able to manipulate Him, cajole Him, bribe Him, entrap Him. He will judge based on His righteous judgment and we will simply accept whatever judgment He offers. How much better is it to listen to His judgment now and live accordingly? This is the message of **Ecclesiastes 11:9**. Walk in the ways of your heart. Follow whatever delights you. But always remember this. You will face the Judge. Surrender to Him now or surrender to Him later. You decide which is better for you.

Conclusion:

As we wrap up, let's admit something. These four relationships are hard. They are especially so if they are just left at the level of, "This is the right thing to do, go do it." There seems to be a little part of us that rebels against merely being told what to do. I know some of you don't have this problem. But I do. It is hard to hear, "God is Creator so honor Him, worship Him, obey Him, trust His judgment." That is especially true when His judgment is those who have done those things are worthy of death. I've already done too many of those things. What now?

Let's conclude by learning one more thing about our Creator. This doesn't necessarily stem from His being our Creator. In fact, considering the rights He has as Creator, this one thing is somewhat shocking. As Creator, He has the right to demand from us honor, thanksgiving, worship, obedience, and surrender to judgment. Even though He has the right to merely demand it, our Creator took a different approach. He offered the sacrifice by which all these things can become a reality. **John 3:16** explains God loves this world He created so much, God gave His one and only Son so we might escape His judgment and wrath and instead have life. No wonder John later recorded in **I John 4:19**, "We love because he first loved us" (ESV). I owe God all of this because He is the Creator. But I am motivated to honor, thank, worship, obey, and trust His judgment because He is Redeemer. How can we not love the God who loved us this much first? Can I invite you to surrender your life to this God who has the right to demand your surrender, the right to force your surrender, but has left your surrender up to you? And then He sacrificed His Son to make your surrender possible and worthwhile. He loves you. Will you love Him?