

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 1: 19-21

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Romans chapter 1, verses 19 to 21.

Paul received an excellent Jewish education and was well-versed in the Old Testament law, so he naturally knew the essence of the law. In Matthew 22:34-40, a lawyer tested Jesus by asking which commandment in the law was the greatest. At that time, Jewish rabbis had compiled and categorized all the commandments in the Old Testament, resulting in an extensive list of 613 laws. Identifying the greatest among them was challenging, as others could always cite related or derived laws to debate, leading to an endless argument. Jesus, knowing the lawyer's intent, did not cite a specific law but summarized the original purpose of God's giving of the law. Thus, the essence of the law is, first, to love God, and second, equally important, to love others as oneself.

We know that the law regulates human behavior, prescribing what to do or prohibiting certain actions, but love cannot be regulated. Jesus clearly understood that love is the very intent behind God's establishment of the law. Therefore, Jesus directly told him that the most important is to love God, and the second, equally significant, is to love others. Loving God and loving others are of equal importance but differ in order; if you first learn to love God, you will surely be able to love others.

When Paul addressed condemnation, dealing with different types of people, he surely recalled Jesus' response to the lawyer: when one's relationship with God is right, relationships with others can be healthy; if the relationship with God is poor, relationships with others will certainly suffer. Thus, he used two axes—godliness and righteousness—to categorize people. Godliness pertains to God, and righteousness to others. Paul then addressed the first, worst type of person: those

who are ungodly toward God and unrighteous toward others, whom he called unrighteous and ungodly. God's wrath will surely be revealed against such people.

Verse 19: "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them."

Paul first states a fact: what can be known about God is manifest in people because God has revealed it within them. The Chinese translation adds the word "heart," which is not in the original text. In the Bible, "heart" is a specific term encompassing the mind, emotions, will, and two interfaces: the first connects to the spirit, enabling the heart to understand spiritual matters, and the second connects to the body, driving physical actions. This verse does not use "heart" but says it is manifest within them, meaning within as opposed to without, indicating that through external things, people naturally know about God because God has revealed it within them.

This verse's discussion continues and is elaborated in the next verse. Paul here first notes that people have an inner capacity to understand God's matters if God chooses to reveal them. Genesis 1:26 clearly states that God created man in His own image, after His likeness. "Image" refers to man's inner resemblance to God, and "likeness" to his outward resemblance. Thus, people can know God's matters, especially those God has revealed.

Paul refers here to God's common revelation. Common revelation has several characteristics. First, it is clear, visible to everyone. Second, it is understandable; through the rationality God gave humans, what is seen can be internalized and reasoned to reach a conclusion about God. Third, it is unchanging; the conclusion reached through reasoning does not vary with time or place. This common revelation enables people to know, through creation, that a Creator exists and that His authority and power far surpass their own, leading them to submit and worship the Creator.

However, common revelation does not provide enough information to know the Creator personally; this requires special revelation, where God reveals the Creator's love and grace, enabling salvation through faith. Special revelation comes through the preaching of the gospel, but common revelation is sufficient for people to know God's existence and be willing to worship Him. This is unique to humans; every person seeks and worships God, a phenomenon absent in other animals.

Because humans are made in God's image, this image was formed when God breathed into man's nostrils. God's breath entered the body, becoming man's spirit; the interface between spirit and body produced the soul, mediating between them. Though man's spirit lost its function due to Adam's sin, the soul remains active. Thus, even before salvation, the human soul can recognize matters about God through common revelation.

Verse 20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

The previous verse stated that what can be known about God has been revealed and manifested within people. This verse further explains that what people can know about God has two aspects: first, God's eternal power, and second, God's divine nature.

Let us first consider God's eternal power. God created the universe with His eternal power and sustains all things with it. Hebrews 1:2-3 says: "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." The origin of the universe lies in God's creation. Though Darwin published 'On the Origin of Species' centuries ago, proposing evolution to replace God's creation, objective facts show that evolution occurs only within a species, and this capacity for evolution was designed by God and embedded in the species' DNA. When environmental changes occur, genes can mutate—or more accurately, specific

functions hidden in DNA can be activated to adapt to the environment. Thus, Darwin discovered a mechanism God designed and embedded in species to respond to environmental changes, but this cannot be extended to explain the origin of species.

God created all things according to their kinds—monkeys as monkeys, humans as humans—and archaeology has yet to find a half-human, half-monkey fossil. DNA, a recent scientific discovery, has become a major research focus, especially with tools to decode it. Our understanding of DNA remains rudimentary; human DNA contains three billion genes, with less than 10% known to be functional. This means God's wise design included vast capacities for humans to adapt to various environments.

God not only displayed His wisdom in creation but also sustains all things today with His power and command. Modern physics has developed equations to calculate everything from planetary orbits to subatomic particle interactions. Notably, these equations include four constants derived experimentally: the speed of light, gravitational constant, Planck's constant, and Boltzmann's constant. These specific values ensure the universe functions orderly, perhaps serving as God's means to sustain all things.

God can adjust these values at any time, producing entirely different operational patterns and trajectories. When human moral corruption provokes God's wrath, He can alter these values, bringing catastrophic judgment. Especially at the end of the age, as lawlessness abounds, supernatural disasters will occur frequently, warnings from God's eternal power. The world does not understand because they do not believe in God. But God's children must learn to be alerted, as God is telling us Christ's return is near, and we must prepare ourselves to meet Him.

The second aspect of what people can know about God is His divine nature. Since God created the universe, creation naturally reflects God's nature and characteristics. For example, when spring arrives, flowers bloom in vibrant colors and fragrant aromas, displaying God's beauty. A simple snowflake under a microscope reveals perfectly symmetrical structures, showcasing God's wisdom. Even fierce beasts like tigers gently nurture their young, reflecting God's love. Since

the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen. These are external, part of the general revelation that enables people to know God.

At the same time, within people, God has given the ability to think and reason. Though eyes cannot see God, through creation and its display of God's eternal power and divine nature, we know God exists. This knowledge results from using the reasoning ability God granted, leaving people without excuse.

Verse 21: “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

Though they knew God, the Greek word for “knew” here is *ginosko*, meaning to learn to know, knowledge gained through learning. This aligns with verse 20's statement about conclusions drawn from observing creation: knowing God exists is clearly evident and inexcusable. Knowing God but not glorifying Him as God means not placing God first; nor being thankful reveals human arrogance, refusing to humble themselves or maintain a grateful heart toward God. This is like a child in a family who denies their father, disobeys him, and is ungrateful—a betrayal of their origin. The result is that their thoughts become futile.

The Greek word for “thoughts” is *dialogizomai*, a compound of *dia* (back and forth) and *logizomai* (reasoning), meaning repeated reasoning. We must understand that a person's reasoning shapes their life. Saints can reflect on pivotal moments in life requiring decisions, where reasoning determined their present state. Thus, reasoning is a critical function God granted through creation.

Healthy reasoning, recognizing God's existence, places God first, allowing other matters to fall into proper order. When people clearly know God but neither glorify nor thank Him, the reasoning ability God gave becomes futile, meaning they can no longer reason healthily. The result is self-centeredness: their needs must be met immediately, their desires satisfied promptly. Seeing only themselves, they become foolish, and their hearts grow dark.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you face persistent challenges you cannot overcome, consider whether your reasoning is faulty. With healthy reasoning, you can place God first in your life, and when your relationship with God is right, your relationships with others will improve. Conversely, if your relationship with God is unhealthy, your reasoning becomes futile, leading to self-focused actions driven by the flesh, darkening your mind. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. You are the sovereign Creator of the universe. Before people knew You, You granted common grace, enabling them to observe creation and know God exists. When people are willing to glorify and thank You, they can, through special revelation, see Jesus Christ's salvation and believe in Him as their lifelong Savior. Lord, we confess that, though we are Christians, we often fail to glorify or thank You in many matters, causing our reasoning to become futile. Lord, adjust us, help us recognize our condition, and know we need to turn back. How we need to place You first in our lives, learning to let the Holy Spirit have absolute sovereignty over us, leading us to live a life pleasing to You. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.