

Slide 1

Avoiding Satan's Snare

ROMANS 1:18-25

Introduction

1. Does it ever make you angry when someone takes advantage of you — when someone lies to you, deceives you, steals from you?
2. I imagine that even as I have spoken these words, your mind has suddenly brought up a memory from the past either of an incident that has taken place or a person responsible for the deception.
3. There is a truth of Scripture that I would like for you to remember — Satan is a liar and the father of lies. There is no truth in him.

Slide 2

4. This truth is taken from a statement which Jesus made to the Pharisees on one occasion when He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths.

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44, NASB95)

5. He began by deceiving Adam and Eve in the beginning, thus costing them their lives.
6. He continues to wage war against all of mankind, even as we sit here this morning in worship.

Slide 3

7. This is why the apostle Paul wrote these words in his letter to the saints in Ephesus (Ephesians 6:12).

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against

the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12, NASB95)

8. The good news for us is that God is not ignorant of our struggle, neither has He turned a blind eye to Satan’s schemes.
9. You and I can take hope the fact that God is actively involved in our salvation.
10. Last week we ended with Paul’s statement that in the gospel “the righteousness of God is revealed” (Romans 1:17).
11. The next verse which began our reading this morning proceeds with these words, “for the wrath of God is revealed” (Romans 1:18).

Slide 4

12. Many of us have either heard or read the words of God which He proclaimed to Moses on Mount Sinai — “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7a, NASB95).
13. However, our God is also a God of wrath.
14. This does not mean that God is given to impulsive, uncontrolled anger.
15. Two words in the Greek language express anger or wrath:
 - a. *Thumos*
 - 1) We get our words *thermos* and *thermometer* from it.
 - 2) Red-hot anger
 - 3) Anger that causes a person to lose control and punch someone.
 - b. *Orge* (this is the word used here)
 - 1) Signifies a settled and abiding condition.
 - 2) Controlled
16. God’s wrath is not directed against goodness, but against “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (v. 18b)

17. This morning, I would like for us to look at what Paul reveals to us about how Satan works to gain a foothold in our lives.
18. The unbelief which Satan works to create within our minds and how he causes it to progress.
19. My goal is for each of us to stand firm in the faith and remain always on the alert (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Slide 5

A. THE SUPPRESSION OF TRUTH (vv. 18-20)

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” (Romans 1:18, NASB95)

1. This suppression of the truth is not passive.
2. It carries the idea of holding something down.
3. This suppression of the truth involves a “continual and aggressive striving against the truth.”
4. All who are without Christ are in the constant process of holding down the truth which subjects them to God’s abiding anger — No exceptions.

Slide 6

5. What is it that unbelievers suppress?

“because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19–20, NASB95)

- a. The basic knowledge of the transcending power of God as Creator and Sustainer.
- b. God’s “invisible attributes” which Nature reveals are His “eternal power and divine nature.”

- c. All of this causes us to realize how finite we as humans are — and how great the gulf that exists between ourselves and God.

Slide 7

- 6. It was David who declared:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.
Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.”

(Psalm 19:1–2, HCSB)

- 7. In verse 19, Paul says that “what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them” (ESV).
- 8. As a result, Paul tells us that those who refuse to believe are “without excuse.”

Slide 8

- 9. In other words, it takes a concerted effort to deny that an all-powerful God made and sustains the Creation (Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 53:1).
 - a. “The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, “There is no God.”” (Psalm 10:4, NASB95)
 - b. “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.” (Psalm 14:1, NASB95)

Slide 9

B. THE PERVERSION OF THE TRUTH (vv. 21-23)

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and

four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” (*Romans 1:21–23, NASB95*)

1. There was a time when these who suppressed the truth saw God as the majestic, transcendent, all-powerful being that He is, one who is infinitely greater than themselves.
2. In spite of this, they did not honor Him as God.
3. Neither did they thank Him for the blessings they had received.
4. Instead, they turned to images like themselves, which they had created, and worshiped them.
5. They sought to reduce Him to their own level through idolatry.
6. As they did this, their idolatry progressively degenerated.
 - a. First, “their foolish heart was darkened”
 - b. Second, “professing to be wise, they became fools”
 - c. Finally, Paul reveals the progression of their degeneration
 - 1) They worshiped “an image in the form of corruptible man”
 - 2) Next, came birds
 - 3) Then “four-footed animals”
 - 4) Finally “crawling creatures”
7. Once man gets rid of the true knowledge of God, he worships images with which he is comfortable.
8. Ultimately, he worships himself.
9. How do we prevent ourselves from traveling down this same path?

Slide 10

10. We must always seek to give glory to our incorruptible God.

“Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling.” (*Psalms 2:11, NASB95*)
11. In Revelation chapter 4, the apostle John presents us with a scene in Heaven.

12. He allows us to be witnesses to the worship being given to the Lord our God.

13. First, in verse 8, we find these beings who are simply called “the four living creatures” praising God day and night, saying,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” (Revelation 4:8, NASB95).

14. Two verses later, we find “twenty-four elders” who fall down before him, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11, NASB95)

15. When we meet here each week, it is to worship this same God who alone is worthy.

16. To cease to revere Him is to put ourselves on the same plane and ultimately to ignore the truth of who He is!

Slide 11

C. THE PERVERSION OF LIFE (vv. 24-25)

“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Romans 1:24–25, NASB95)

1. Paul presents us with the logical end of such a life.
2. When Satan persuades us to suppress the truth about who God is, we find ourselves looking for something to replace Him.
3. Ultimately, we turn to ourselves.
 - a. We become our own final authority and end.
 - b. We thus put our passions and our desires as the end for which we strive.

- c. This results in our lowering ourselves to a condition in life which is far below the purpose for which God created us.
4. To better understand why we have become the recipients of God's wrath, we must first go back to a statement which Paul makes at the beginning of our Scripture reading this morning — "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . ." (*Romans 1:18*).
 - a. "Ungodliness" (*asebeia*) is against God.
 - b. "Unrighteousness" (*adikia*) is against men.
 - c. The "first precedes and entails the second" (Lightfoot, p. 251)
5. "Ungodliness" ("godlessness," NIV84) is the attempt to get rid of God.
6. Since this cannot be done, people then choose to live as though they had accomplished it — "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (*Romans 3:18*).
7. The essence of goodness is godliness — when we cease being godly, we cease being good.
8. The result is that we make a conscious choice to live for ourselves rather than for God and others.
9. Now, because we have "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" God gives us over to the desires of our heart.
10. Long ago, the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (*Jeremiah 17:9*).
11. The result is that we will experience the logical consequences of our choices — the dishonoring of our bodies.

Conclusion

1. This downward spiral began with a person choosing to suppress the truth.
2. There is more to the truth that I would like for you to consider as we conclude this morning:
 - a. Not only must we believe that God created and continues to sustain all that exists — the heavens, the earth and all they contain.
 - b. But also that God made us a little lower than Himself and crowned us with “glory and majesty” so that we would rule over His works (Psalm 8:5,6).

Slide 12 – Romans 3:23; 6:23

- c. Because we sinned and fell short of His glory (Romans 3:23), Jesus, His Son, came into this world and lived among us in order to save us from our sins and redeem us back to our Father (Titus 2:14).
 - d. One day, Jesus will return in all His glory with the holy angels (Luke 9:26) to claim those who are His.
3. When we suppress this truth, we choose to purposefully ignore God and live for ourselves.
4. Such a life is ultimately self-destructive and leaves you with no hope beyond this moment.
5. Jesus invites you to come to Him so that you might experience the salvation and abundant life He offers.
6. Ultimately, you will know the eternal life He promises in the home He has prepared for you.