



Links Players

IDOLS | NO EXCUSES

For what can be known about God is plain to them [humanity] because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20, ESV)

*“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’” C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce**

There is a fine line between giving reasons and making excuses for failure. Interviews with players after the Masters reveal a wide spectrum of reasons from some and excuses from others for falling short.

Some players answered journalists’ questions with admirable raw honesty. Others shifted blame to the course conditions. A few players made excuses for their poor play, temper tantrums, and hand gestures.

At least two players raised the issue of “mud balls.” I will leave it to you to decide whether that is an excuse or a reason. I assume it could go either way, depending on the player’s heart.

When we arrive at the infinitely weightier issue of a life well-lived, there are no excuses for pleading ignorance, as if God has neither made himself known nor has any rightful claim to our love and loyalty.

To respond honestly to this opening chapter of Romans, we will need to “put our big boy britches on.” Paul preempts any duplicity on our part by proving that everyone, including the one claiming ignorance, “knows God.”

We know God because he has made himself known to everyone through creation—this includes everything both external and internal to us.

God shouts through creation, “This is my handiwork!” (Romans 1:20). Inwardly, our conscience ceaselessly reminds us that we are creatures and, as such, contingent beings who owe our existence and loyalty to our Maker (verses 20-21).

As scholars are quick to point out, this is not saving knowledge, as

in John 17:3; rather, this knowledge accuses us of being guilty, covenant breakers and leaves us “without excuse” (vs. 20).

Consequently, we become futile in our thinking, and our foolish hearts are darkened (vs. 21b). In our refusal to honor God and to bow in gratitude before him, we suppress the truth we know through ongoing acts of rebellion (vs. 18).

In our defiant denials, we make three exchanges: We exchange the glory of the immortal God for creaturely things. We exchange the truth about God for a lie, worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator. And women and men exchange natural [sexual] relations, committing shameless acts with one another.

Said more simply, unrepentant creatures exchange God’s glory for idols, the truth for lies, and creation’s natural order for disordered relations. Contrary to popular opinion, there is no such thing as a “neutral seeker,” only fugitives seeking a place to hide through indefensible subterfuge.

God daily cross-examines our hearts, sees through all our excuses, and exposes the sad truth that, as the prophet Hosea would say, we “have gone after other gods.”

Suppressing the minute-by-minute truth that God speaks through Creation and conscience, we deceive ourselves with erroneous thoughts conjured by a recalcitrant heart. And there is no worse deception than self-deception.

Paul forces us to confront the reality of our status as idolaters before a holy God. He accurately diagnoses our condition so that we can apply the only proper remedy—the salvation freely offered to us through faith in Christ (Romans 1:16-17).

God reveals two things: First, the free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ (verses 16-17). Second, God’s wrath against men and women for suppressing the truth we know and refusing to honor God and bow before him in gratitude (verses 18-32).

Three times, Paul tells us that “God gave them up” (24, 26, 28). In this life and the next, the worst thing that can happen to anyone is God giving us up to our culpable self-deception.

Turn to God through Christ and say, “Thy will be done.”

Prayer: Lord! May the truth of your existence, power, and divine nature break through and cause me to honor and thank you.

