

**The Believers (at LSU)
Campus Meeting
September 24, 2009
Crucial Points of the Truth in Romans**

**THE POWER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD
MANIFESTED IN HIS CREATION**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:19-20; Psa. 19:1; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-28a; Job 26:7; Isa. 40:22; Gen. 1:27; 2:7a; Rom. 9:21-24a; Zech. 12:1

In Romans 1:18 Paul says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.” What is the truth in this verse? In order to answer this question, we need to read verses 19 and 20: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, being apprehended by the things made, are clearly seen, both His eternal power and divinity, for them to be without excuse.” According to these verses, the truth in verse 18 means all that God is and all the things concerning God and His existence and the knowledge of them. Therefore, with Romans 1:18-20 as the basis, we may say that truth denotes the reality concerning God, the universe, and man. Because this truth has been manifested, man is without excuse.

In the history of religious mankind there have been many terms related to God, such as polytheism, monotheism, and the belief of one god by choice, that is, by selecting one god among the many gods as the object of worship. This tells us that within man there is the need for God. Whether what he has found is right or wrong, every man wants God. We all know that the God whom we worship is the Lord who created the heavens, the earth, and the universe. The heavens, the earth, and all things did not come through evolution; they were created by God. Why did God create the heavens, the earth, and all things? The primary purpose is for His expression. God Himself cannot be fathomed, His eternal power cannot be comprehended, and all His divine characteristics cannot be determined. However, we see in Romans 1:20 that His eternal power and divine characteristics can be perceived through the things that He made, so that men would be without excuse.

All those who study medicine and physics acknowledge that the more they study and explore, the more they have to bow their heads, saying that there is indeed a Creator, a sovereign Master, in the universe. If you observe the movements of the stars or planets and the laws of creation, you cannot but confess that there is indeed an almighty One who has designed all these. The different scientific inventions throughout the ages are simply discoveries of the laws or principles set by this almighty One in the universe. Today we all know that the distance between the sun and the earth is just right; it is neither too far nor too near. If the earth were a little closer to the sun, the living things on earth would be scorched; if the earth were a little farther away, they would be frozen to death. Furthermore, there are innumerable planets and stars revolving in their respective orbits without colliding into one another. Who has designed them? Who regulates them? Undoubtedly, this is God’s work.

THE BIBLE EXPLAINING ALL THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

The first sentence in the first book of the Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). God said clearly that the heavens, the earth, and man were made by Him. It was only five to six hundred years ago that men discovered that the earth is round instead of flat. Therefore, they began to call the earth a globe. Yet around 700 B.C., that is, two thousand seven hundred years ago, the prophet Isaiah, one of the authors of the Old Testament, wrote in his book, saying, “It is He [God] who sits above the circle of the earth,... / Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, / And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in” (Isa. 40:22). As far as two thousand seven hundred years back, Isaiah told people that the earth is a big circle. This proves that the origin of the heavens and the earth spoken of in the Bible is neither an inference nor a fabrication but a clear word of revelation from God.

Job 26:7 says, “He [God] stretches out the north over the void; / He hangs the earth upon nothing.” Job was probably a contemporary of Abraham. Yet the book he wrote about four thousand years ago tells us that the earth is hanging upon nothing. The advance of modern day science has only proved again and again that the revelation of the Bible is totally accurate.

THE DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

In addition to God’s eternal power, this verse [Rom. 1:20] also refers to a deeper aspect of God, that is, His divine characteristics. [This verse] refers to the special features, the characteristics, as the outward manifestations of God’s nature.

Glory

What then are the divine characteristics as the outward manifestations of the divine nature? Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God,/And the firmament proclaims the work of His hands.” Here, the glory of God is no doubt manifested by the glory of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The glory of light is a manifestation of the divine characteristics of God’s nature. The heavens declare the divine characteristics of God’s nature through this particular manifestation. Psalm 8:1-3 says, “O Jehovah...who have set Your glory over the heavens!...When I see...the moon and the stars...” Glory here is manifested by the brilliance of the moon and the stars. From these verses we can see that the glory manifested in the universe tells us that the special features, the characteristics, of the divine nature are glorious.

Power and Ability

The work of His hands refers to God’s ability, wisdom, and capability. In other words, the universe is God’s masterpiece. We may well translate the work of His hands into masterpiece. In this masterpiece there are wisdom, skillfulness, ability, and power, all of which are characteristics as the outward manifestations of God’s nature.

Grandness and Majesty

Furthermore, when you see the universe, you are reminded of God as One who is grand and majestic. Grandness and majesty are also characteristics as manifestations of God’s nature.

Light and Life

Moreover, the universe is full of light and life. By this you can see that God's nature is full of light and life. The earth created by God is full of life. There are plants, animals, and humans, all of which are life and are according to the order of life.

God first created the lifeless things, and then He created a lower form of life, the plant life without consciousness. Following this, He created the animal life with consciousness. The life with consciousness begins with the oviparous, the life that is produced by laying eggs, and advances to the viviparous, the life that is brought forth apart from laying eggs. With the viviparous, there are also different levels. Beasts and cattle are viviparous, but they are different in level and size. The highest life of the viviparous variety is man's life. Most people today consider men as animals. We do not agree with that. I am not an animal; I am a man. First, I have God's image, and second, I have a spirit within me. The Chinese also say that man is the "spirit of all creatures." Man is not an animal; man is a life with the image of God.

Finally, the highest life is God's life, signified by the tree of life in Genesis 2. The record in Genesis 1 and 2 begins with the lowest level of life, then it goes up level by level until it reaches the life of man. From there it goes up from the life of man to the life of God, which is the highest life. Praise the Lord, as the regenerated ones we have God's life! When you look at the flowers, grass, trees, insects, fish, birds, beasts, and then the human race, everywhere you look is full of life. This declares to us that life is a divine characteristic of the Creator.

Beauty

Another characteristic of the divine attributes is beauty. The universe created by God is truly beautiful. Only a God of beauty can create a beautiful universe. Suppose your lawn were not green but black. You would see blackness when you go into your yard, and you would see blackness when you step out of your house. Would you consider that beautiful? Would you like to have such a lawn? The most beautiful thing is to have green trees, green grass, and red flowers. How beautiful, how pleasant to the eyes, and how refreshing are the scenes we see today!

Orderliness

Furthermore, everything in the universe is orderly. Today's scientific research tries to discover the laws and principles in the universe. Since there are laws and principles, there must be one who makes them. If there are laws in a country, there must be a legislature or congress. How could there be laws without lawmakers? How could there be laws and principles in the universe unless it is God who has set them? The moon, the sun, the earth, and the stars revolve within their orbits without colliding. If the earth were a little closer to the sun, we would be burned; if it were a little farther from the sun, we would be frozen. Who defines these things? Who causes the universe to be so orderly, without any confusion? All these things speak forth God's masterpiece and declare God's invisible, eternal power and divine attributes.

Our God being manifested in His creation is a great truth which we need to teach to the Lord's children. He is manifested in the aspect of His eternal, unlimited power, and He is also manifested in the aspect of His characteristics such as light, beauty, and life. Light, beauty, and life are a few of the many characteristics or attributes of God which show how marvelous He is.

Creation declares the glory of God, proving that there is a God. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament, the expanse, show His handiwork (Psa. 19:1-2). Although God's divine power and Godhead are invisible things, man can understand them by the things that were made. Man can understand and is without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Look at creation: how can we say there is no God!

GOD AS A DIVINE PERSON

Man can perceive the invisible things of God by observing the visible things created by Him. Both the eternal power of God and the divine characteristics that express God's intrinsic nature are manifested in God's creation. However, this is still not God Himself as a divine Person. What is referred to in Colossians 2:9 is the Godhead, God's person. The characteristics of God's nature, referred to in Romans 1:20, can be verified through the created things; however, the created things cannot manifest the Godhead and person. Only the living person of Jesus Christ, the Word who is God and who declares God (John 1:1, 18), can express God's Godhead and person, that is, the very God, God Himself.

What the Lord Jesus Christ reveals is much deeper than what the universe verifies. What is verified by the universe is only the outward manifestation of God's nature, not His Godhead. Only what is revealed and declared by the living person of the Lord Jesus Christ is God's Godhead and person, that is, the very God Himself. Before we were saved, we could see the characteristics of God's nature manifested through the universe, so that we were without excuse. After we have believed in the Lord Jesus, it is in Christ that we know the divine Godhead. The divine characteristics, which are outward, are manifested through the created things; the divine Godhead, which is God Himself, is lived out through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

GOD UPHOLDING AND BEARING ALL THINGS

There are countless items in the universe. In such a boundless and mysterious universe, who is maintaining, managing, upholding, and propelling it? Hebrews 1:3 says, "Who...upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power." The Lord Jesus upholds, bears, and propels all things not by His work but by His instant word, the word of His power. In creation all things came into being through Him as the Word (John 1:1-3). The universe has been framed by the word of God (Heb. 11:3): "For He spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood" (Psa. 33:9). God speaks and upholds all things with His word. According to Greek grammar, this upholding is continuous, unceasing. The Greek word for upholding implies several rich meanings, including maintaining, operating, managing, controlling, and even propelling.

The Lord Jesus as the Mighty God maintains, operates, manages, controls, and propels all things. He not only upholds all things for their mere existence but also maintains and propels them. This may be compared to a huge airplane. Once the engines are started, the airplane is upheld and maintained in the sky. Today no one can deny that the mystery of the universe is with God. God is the meaning and center of the universe; He is the purpose of the universe.

Without God, the entire universe is empty and dead. The meaning of the universe is the living God. As the living Spirit, He is omnipresent, and He is also a divine Person. You need only to open your heart and pray to Him, and He will enter into you. Then you will become a person with meaning, and you will enjoy God as the mystery of the entire universe.