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Heavenly Father, I ask now that You will make our hearts ready to hear the message that You have prepared for us today. Please put the right words into my heart and into my mouth. I pray that You confirm them in the hearts of my friends here what is from You and what is not. Which is how to be more God-focused as we live our lives. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen. Well, I'm going to start by reading a fairly long passage of Scripture. It's in your bulletin. I think it's the first one in there if you want to read along. Romans 1, verses 18-32. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 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, 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. Professing to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made by a corruptible man, and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who was blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting, being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness, they are whispers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them. So a lot of, for me that passage evokes a lot of emotion. Some people see that passage and there's a big chunk in there obviously about homosexuality and so they just sort of scoop this whole passage into that category and move on. Some people see that list of all those sins and they either think that they're being attacked or accused of all those things or they think, "Oh, I'm not on that list," and then they just sort of write themselves off. But we're not talking about homosexuality today. Instead I'm going to focus on three little phrases that probably did not jump out at you as we read that. Those three phrases are, "Did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, and they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." They did not glorify Him as God, they were not thankful, and they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. Today I am exhorting you to be God-focused. That is to keep Him in the forefront of your mind and to keep out anything that distracts you from Him. A great example of this is as I was preparing this sermon a friend shared with me a movie trailer and it was not edifying at all and it was just something that was distracting me from God and holiness and righteousness and I just had to say, "No, that does not belong in my mind. That is not helping me to be God-focused." And I've been trying to reevaluate everything that comes my way before it comes into my mind because if it's going to distract me from God and being God-focused then I just need to walk away from that. But let's look at what happened to these people that Paul was talking about. It starts by saying that they did not glorify Him as God nor were they thankful and so they became futile in their thoughts and then their foolish hearts were darkened. After that they professed to be wise but by doing so became fools and so God gave them up to uncleanness and God gave them up to vile passions. It says as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind. And then starting in verse 29, he starts going into this list of what happened to these people who did not stay God-focused. They became filled with unrighteousness which is the constant breaking of the laws of goodness. Whether or not they knew the holy scriptures and what God said they do not to do, each one of us has a conscience and has a sense of right and wrong in our hearts and these people were filled with always doing what was wrong. They became filled with sexual immorality which is any sexual behavior outside of God's design. They became filled with wickedness. Wickedness, the word here, implies the deliberate desire to corrupt and injure others. They were filled with covetousness which is the greedy desire to have more and more for no other reason than to just keep gaining more and more. It's not to provide, it's not for retirement, it's just you have to keep acquiring. They were filled with maliciousness. Wickedness is sin's fertile soil. It is to be destitute of even a scrap of goodness. They were full of envy which is when you want someone to lose what they have because you don't have it. They were full of murder. They were full of strife, constantly arguing, fighting, bickering, constantly correcting. They were full of deceit, unable to be their true honest selves with others. They were full of evil-mindedness, constantly putting a malicious bend on whatever thought they came up with. How could they use this for evil? They were whispers which is to gossip and tear someone down behind their back secretly. They were also backbiters which is to tear someone down in public very loudly. They were haters of God. They were violent. They were proud. They were boasters. A boaster is someone who proudly makes untrue claims about themselves. They were inventors of evil things. They were disobedient to parents. They were undiscerning. That word there literally translates as stupid but it's not just talking about someone who is mentally incapable of thinking. It's talking about someone who understands that God is real and true and they have deliberately turned their back on that truth. They're untrustworthy, they're unloving, unforgiving and unmerciful. And finally, they knew the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death and yet they not only did them but also approved of those who did them. All of this corruption came from not being God-focused. I almost called it God-minded but that's not accurate enough because you hear the word God-minded you just think, "Oh, I just need to think about God some more. I just need to believe in God." But it's not just that Satan and all of his demons believe in God. But to be God-focused is to set your mind, have a mindset that acknowledges God's glory and glorifies Him in your heart and constantly gives thanks for what He has done. You retain Him in your knowledge. You work Him in to your decisions and into your life. What will please God in this situation? How would God want me to act right now? Be mindful of the truth of His word and the leading of His Holy Spirit in every situation. That is God-focused. In Philippians 3, 18 and 19, we hear that "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things." These people who are headed for destruction have taken their mind off God and godly things and have focused on earthly things. But what does the Bible tell us to do? What does it exhort us to do? Matthew 22, 37, Jesus said to Him, "You shall love the God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Romans 12, 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Ephesians 4, 17-24, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness in their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning your former conduct the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness." Colossians 1, 21-22, "And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He is reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His spirit." Colossians 3 says, "Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth." Again and again, the Bible says that this is a life that begins in the mind. It begins on being God-focused and not just believing, not just having collegiate understanding, but actually having a will that is turned towards God, an active preconception of working God into everything that you're doing. And then finally this verse which we read last week, and it's really good, I'm going to read it again. 1 Peter 1, 13-16, "Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts as in your ignorance, but is He who called you as holy? You also be holy in all your conduct, for it is written, Be holy for I am holy. Gird up the loins of your mind." That's what it says. "Treat your mind like a temple." In the Old Testament, the Jewish temple, it was a very holy, sacred place, and they were very careful to meticulously keep it clean, keep it sanctified, keep the evil and impure things out. And that's how we are supposed to treat our minds. Because if we don't, we're going to find ourselves over here on this list of all these wicked evil people. And so often we think that we've gotten our behavior in line. And so often I'm around folks and friends who say, "I don't cheat on my spouse." And yet they look at all kinds of vile things on the internet and they say that there's nothing wrong with spending an hour looking at that new Sports Illustrated catalog. It's in the mind where all of this wickedness starts. And if you're losing the battle in your mind, you're losing the battle. No matter what it might look like on the outside, the outside is just a few steps behind where your mind is. So be God-focused. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. Gird up the loins of your mind. Glorify Him. Give thanks to Him. Enter Him every second, every day, in everything you say and do. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise and we thank You that You give us the ability to walk with You, that You live here in us by Your Holy Spirit. And that You were not just content to save us and leave us in our filth, but that You are changing us and transforming us into a beautiful bride, into children that shine like lights in this dark world. God, as we go forth, please show us the areas where we have not been walking straight towards You. Show us the areas where we have been wandering off this path. Help us to gird up the loins of our mind. Help us to walk and live a God-focused life as we go throughout this week. We ask these in Jesus' name, Amen.