

The Reason for God's Wrath Romans 1:18-23

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It's obvious to the most casual observer that people in our current culture have no fear of God and His wrath.

In fact, our culture rarely mentions the existence of God, assuming for a moment they even admit there is a God.

Leith Samuel writes in *HIS* magazine, *"Many missionaries point out that the heathen know more than we think. They know that there is a God."*

There are no atheists among heathen tribes. There has never been discovered upon earth a tribe of people, however small or depraved, which has not believed in some kind of god or had some system of worship.

Even the heathen in these so-called primitive tribes know that they have sinned. When a Christian comes to them and talks about sin, he often finds ready acknowledgement that this is true.

The heathen seems to know that their sins must be punished. They seem afraid of punishment, and afraid of death. They know that sin must be atoned for, and they seek ways of appeasing their angry deities."

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Therefore, when we consider all the people in the world that have never heard of the name of Jesus, we must realize that they are condemned, not for their rejection of Jesus, whom they have never heard, but for rejecting or sinning against the revelation they do know about God. This is what brings about God's wrath.

The reason for God's wrath is the result of three things:

- Suppression of the truth (Verse 18)
- Ignoring God's revelation of Himself, and... (Verses 19-20)
- Perverting God's glory (Verses 21-23)

Today we'll begin with the verse we ended with last week, Romans 1:18, "*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*"

Did you catch that? God's wrath is "*revealed from heaven.*" It's part of His righteousness. It's part of His Holiness. This is why man's ungodliness and unrighteousness reveals God's wrath.

And the one thing we see in man's unrighteousness are people "*who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*"

So, how does someone suppress the truth? You do it by ignoring the truth, burying the truth, or keeping the truth from others. Herein is part of the reason for God's wrath.

People don't just ignore the truth of God for themselves, they actively hide or cover the truth to prevent others from seeing it.

And what truth is that? It's the truth that God has revealed Himself to all people.

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Romans 1:19–20, "*Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*"

There's a lot packed into these two verses. Think about it. Because of the truth that God gave, men have tried to suppress it.

But God has made Himself known to all people. Therefore, His truth can be found inside each person because *“his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen.”*

Do you know that even babies know right from wrong? Research conducted at Yale University's Infant Cognition Center contradicts a common belief that children are born as blank slates and learn right and wrong from watching other people.

Researchers found that babies, as young as three months, can actually distinguish good from evil.

The study used puppets to demonstrate good and bad behavior and allowed the children to choose which puppet they wanted to play with afterward.

In one case, a puppet struggles to open a box, and another puppet helps it open the case. In the other example, while the puppet struggles with the box, a second puppet comes along and slams the box shut again.

More than 80 percent of the time, babies selected the “good” puppet when presented with a choice between the good one and the bad one.

Paul Bloom, an author and professor who took part in the study said, *“Humans are born with a hard-wired morality; a sense of good and evil is bred in the bone. We are naturally moral beings, but our environment can enhance—or sadly, degrade this innate moral sense.”*

How can you stand in a dark, open field on clear night and observe all the stars and not praise God?

Or witness a magnificent sunrise or sunset or see the beauty of fall colors across a mountain range and not acknowledge Him.

Those, who are spiritual and attuned to the things of God, will break out in praise by singing a poem penned by a lay-minister in Sweden in 1885 named Carl Boberg.

A poem inspired by the sound of church bells ringing during a wild thunderstorm. He titled it "*O Great God.*"

In 1891 someone put it to music, so Mr. Boberg republished it with the musical notations.

By 1930 the song had traveled across borders where Stuart Hine, an English missionary, heard the song when he was in Poland. He translated it into English.

In the 1940's, evangelist Dr. Edwin Orr heard this song being sung by native tribal people in Assam, India, and being deeply inspired by it he brought the song back to the United States.

Where, in 1954, it found its way into the hands of George Beverly Shea, who sang it nearly 100 times during Billy Graham's 1957 New York crusade.

And, by 1959, it became the theme song for Billy Graham's weekly radio broadcast, bringing "How Great Thou Art" into the national consciousness.

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.

God is revealed in the natural world around us, He has shown us *“his eternal power and divine nature.”* Theologians call this *“Natural Revelation.”*

This revelation is sufficient to even the most primitive to acknowledge that there is a God who created it all. God has revealed His truth to all people, but this natural revelation is limited.

Because, in this natural revelation there’s not enough to tell someone how to approach God. Just having this knowledge of natural revelation cannot save an individual.

This is why there’s special revelation.

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In special revelation, God reveals Himself to us in His Word. This is where we find Jesus, our only means of salvation.

But in the natural world, God has revealed Himself in such a way to hold all people accountable. *“For God has made it plain to them.”* And what has He made plain?

Romans 1:20a, *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”* The theory of evolution is just man’s attempt to eliminate any need for God.

Dr. George Wald, a Harvard professor and the winner of the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize, stated: *“When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities—creation or spontaneous generation—there is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved 100 years ago, but that leads us to only one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation.”*

We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds; therefore we choose to believe the impossible, that life arose spontaneously by chance.”

So, for Dr George Wald and many in the world of science today, the Scriptures say, *“they are without excuse.”*

God has shown Himself to the world. His truth is everywhere to be seen. But man hasn't just chosen to suppress God's truth, he's covered it up so no one around them will see it.

Man has chosen to ignore God's revelation of Himself.

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That's why man takes the glory that belongs to God and perverts it. We see this around us every day. Just listen to the news or read the social media postings.

Atheist demand we remove any mention of God in the public arena and the sad thing is, we just stand around and let them. Our justice system has failed us by ruling against anything godly.

Romans 1:21, *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

Our natural reaction to God's revelation of Himself should be praise and thanksgiving, just like Carl Boberg wrote in *“How Great Thou Art.”*

However, for some, they've chosen not to give God His due. What did Paul just write? *“For although they knew God.”* There's no excuse because everyone, whether they admit it or not, has a knowledge of God.

They know who He is, but they pervert that knowledge. “*They neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.*” So, they suppress the truth, ignore the revelation, and chose to make up “new truth.”

They reject the very reason man was even created, that is: To bring glory and thanksgiving to God.

So, over time, the ability to see the truth was impaired. Verse 21 continues, “*but their thinking became futile.*”

They either thought they knew more than God or chose to disbelieve the revelation that they were given, so “*their foolish hearts were darkened*” or to borrow from a popular movie, they “*went to the dark side.*”

The Bible sums it up in Romans 1:22, “*Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.*” In rejecting and suppressing the knowledge and truth of God, people claim to be wiser than God and that’s just plain foolish.

Psalm 14:1a, “*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”* The Hebrew word used here for “*fool*” means a self-righteous person who is morally and spiritually insensitive. In other words, an immoral degenerate.

Not that they’re lacking in intelligence, but that they’re lacking in knowledge of God because they rejected that knowledge.

Romans 1:23, “*And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*”

Did you hear what Paul just said? What does corrupt man do? He makes a god in the image of man or a lower animal.

Can you see what's happening to godless people? They're not getting better, or "evolving" into something better, they're de-evolving into something lessor.

Where's the profit in worshipping man-made objects or man worshipping themselves? What profit is there in terms of eternity? Man has chosen to worship the creation, rather than the Creator.

God's not given the glory that is due Him! It's being perverted and corrupted as man tries to glorify himself.

Is there any wonder why God's wrath is coming?

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Conclusion

So, where does this leave us now? Well, we have God's special revelation in our hands, the very Word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures.

This Word tells us several things about approaching God. Jeremiah 29:13, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*

But we also must have faith that He is who He says He is. Hebrews 11:6, *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

God sent us Jesus so we can have salvation from His wrath. It's through Jesus that we can know the truth and know the way to God.

It's through Jesus that we can know what true life really is because John 14:6 tells us, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

God has revealed Himself to everyone. What will you do with that information? Will you seek Him out or will you reject it and suppress it? The choice is yours.

What will you choose?