

The Deliberate Ignorance of Man leads to the Wrath of God.

The Reality of the Wrath of God

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
Romans 1:18 (KJV).

Ignorance of the Creator-God is inexcusable. Nor will this ignorance be tolerated by God. When, in Eternity Past, God set in force the redemptive plan for man there were many facets to His plan. God's redemptive plan included not only for the atonement for man's sins but it included unmistakable signs of the existence of God – the Psalmist testifies to this fact (read [Psalm 19:1-6](#)). In fact, Paul uses an interesting word from which we get our KJV translation "revealed" – *gk* = *apokalupto*. This is a compound word *apo* = from + *kalupto* = concealment. Combined it means literally to remove from concealment. There was almost no classical usage of this word but it was used for a lot different words in the OT original to the LXX translation (over 100 times) – all the way from uncovering one's nakedness (ex. [Lev 18:6-10](#) and other passages) to the fact that: **"The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations."** Psalm 98:2, NIV.¹ So, it is not a stretch to use an English expression "the naked truth" when it comes to the wrath of God against all ungodliness. The fact is that all mankind knows that God is very angry at their sin – thus the universal shame that has to be actively covered up by men – more on that later. This wrath – God's wrath is a compounded phrase. Hear what Lenski has to say:

"God's wrath" is practically a compound like "God's gospel" (v. 1), and "God's righteousness" (v. 17), and the genitives indicate origin, if not more. This "wrath" is not fiction nor a figure of speech but a terrible reality —Lenski New Testament Commentary.

This is not a truth that has to be taught to little boys and girls – it an innate fact – a reality – that sin is wrong and that God hates it. Please note that the wrath is of God is against the ungodliness and unrighteousness – not against mankind. The reverse is true of God's predisposition toward man. For that refer John 3:16. God so *loved* the world etc. So it is the practice of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that God hates. For this we need to go further into this chapter to make the distinction between the sinful condition of man as per ch [5:6-10](#) and the active suppression of knowledge of God's extreme displeasure with man's active pursuit of godlessness and unrighteousness. This distinction is very important for us to understand how on one hand God can love the World and on the other hand be so wrathful against godlessness and unrighteousness.

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The Deliberate Ignorance of Man leads to the Wrath of God.

Godless Men Are Actively Suppressing the Truth of God

This shows the participation godless men take in actually suppressing “the truth.” Before I comment on this let me share with you Lenski’s translation:

For there is revealed God's wrath from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18 —Lenski New Testament Commentary, my emphasis.

Lenski hits the nail on the head – the truth – all about God - the Creator and the Redeemer is actively suppressed by these godless men. They do this in their active pursuit of Sin. The original for Lenski’s “suppress” or the KJV’s “hold” is very vivid. The original *kataecho* means to hold firmly or to hold down. Classical Greek uses the word to control or to prevail upon. The Complete Biblical library Greek - English dictionary shows that the LXX has Abraham’s descendants *possessing* the Promised Land. In the NT [Luke 4:42](#) has the people seeking and preventing him from leaving them (“stayed” in KJV). This is a very forceful detaining or holding down in Romans 1:18. Sinful man is forcefully suppressing *the truth* – God’s Truth. What Paul is doing is building something essentially a court case that man is inexcusably guilty in his sinful practice of suppressing the truth.

I want to go to a previous lesson on John 1:3 to reinforce the external evidence of God in the universe:

“Jesus Christ, the Creator

All things were made by him;... John 1:3a.

An overview of verse 3:

"All things..." Has no article. Lenski calls this word (gk = panta) "immense." This use points to the absolute subject of the universe - with no time considerations - and all of the reality of the universe - both seen and unseen.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Hebrews 11:3

Note the wording especially "seen" and "unseen." We as an arrogant species are tempted to consider only the empirically seen that which can be observed but as we shall soon see there is more that "meets the eye" in this - another amazing passage. Had John used the article (ta panta) in Jn. 1:3 he would have been referring to the present universe - the universe in the present state. The anarthrous usage (no article) removes all limitations and refers to both the universe and to time itself. John is referring to the entire creation and time itself.

Let's look at Hebrews 11:3. There is an interesting play on the words "things which are

The Deliberate Ignorance of Man leads to the Wrath of God.

seen" and "things which do appear."² "Things which are seen" are things we as empirical beings observe. "Things which do appear" is the universe that is showing itself to us - an interesting personification of the universe. But not really a personification for Paul had this emphasis in Romans 1:19, 20 where the truth of God is shown to unbelieving men through His creation - in that tragic case man just doesn't "get it." So Hebrews 11:3 give further light on the passage from John 1:3 - (the word "All things"). In the interesting interplay in Hebrews 11:3 between man as God's creatures observing that which they see and God's universe - both seen and unseen, God is causing the universe to show itself to man. I hope that is not too confusing - such is the depth of the original language.

The Fingerprint of Jesus Christ.

...and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:3b

I have used this verse before in previous lessons but please bear with me as I go over what John is saying in this part of the verse. In the first half of verse 3 we are considering the entire universe. Now we are zooming in on each particle of the universe.

"...any thing made..." I have to quote from Lenski; "Whereas the plural πάντα covers the complete multitude or mass, the strong singular οὐδε ἓν points to every individual in that mass and omits none."³

In previous lessons I have used the example of the celestial zoom lens - with this imaginary zoom lens allows us to go to the very edge of the universe and observe everything that the Logos has created - that's the "All Things" of John 1:3.

Now we crank this zoom lens down to more than the most powerful microscope that we now possess and look at the tiniest particle. John says that the tiniest particle would not even exist without the Logos' creative work. The fingerprint of Jesus Christ is on the tiniest particle - whatever that is. We are still lurching around with our theories about that. Vincent says of this part of our zoom experience, in the microscope mode, 'The reference is to the infinite detail of creation, rather than to creation as a whole.'⁴

"...was made..." Finally let's look at the word "was made." This has the ultimate sense of being completed in every detail. The tense is in the perfect - meaning there was nothing more to be done. Does that bring to mind a passage from Genesis? You bet it does:..."

² KJV has the translation right this time!

³ Lenski, Interpretation of ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL, page 36.

⁴ Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. II, Page 36, Par. 3.

The Deliberate Ignorance of Man leads to the Wrath of God.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
Genesis 1:31.

*God's work was done - it was perfectly done and complete with nothing left to do but to rest. Not because He was tired and needed rest but because there was nothing left to do in His creative work. Let's develop this perfectly done and complete work (perfect tense of "...was made" of John 1:3) of every particle of the universe.*⁵

So the external evidence is there for all men to see but the sad fact is that men have deliberately taken God out of the equation.

Now, we know that some men *do* respond to the evidence of God in the heavens and in the earth. It is natural that these men will respond from this to eventually the Gospel under the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. So, we are not discussing an exercise in futility by God to reveal himself. No. The subject at hand is the active suppression by wicked men *who have pursued without restraint SIN* and in this pursuit have – of necessity suppressed that which is knowable about God. More on this in the next verse.

The Evidence of God is *Within* Men.

¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ 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).

I'm sorry but I have to disagree with the KJV on this. KJV almost suggests a conditional **"...that which *may* be known..."** Many other translations including NASB states it correctly. Literally – **"because the known regarding the [one and only] God is [statement of reality] in [intimate connection with] them..."** This is an amazing charge that Paul makes. Paul goes on to say just what is Known – His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature. Amazing!⁶ So it is not a question of man trying to discover God and His true nature. The amazing fact is that everywhere man looks – within and without shows the fingerprint of our Creator-God.

This is another important argument that Paul uses in his indictment against all godlessness – that the evidence of God resides *within* man.

⁵ Taken from a previous lesson: [The Work of Christ: Creation.](#)

⁶ When we are witnessing to the unsaved please remember this – we do not have to argue the existence of the Creator, Redeemer God they already know this as a fact.

The Deliberate Ignorance of Man leads to the Wrath of God.

Man Is Without Excuse Regarding the Nature of God.

Finally, it takes a tremendous effort on man's part to erase the fingerprint of God both in the universe and within himself. In the following verses of chapter 1 we will see this slippery slope of total depravity. For our final thought let's consider the Psalmist's insight regarding each and every one of us in our gestation.

¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; ¹⁶ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. ¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Psalms 139:13-17 (NASB95)

This passage refers to all boys and girls who are formed within the womb of mother. God lovingly takes part in our creation (see esp. vs. 15). That is redemption's plan and when this plan is thwarted God gets very angry. It is His intention that every man and woman come to know Him and to be reconciled to Him (see [2 Peter 3:9](#); [1 Tim 2:4](#)).