

Romans 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Analysis

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Having established God's righteousness revealed in the gospel (v. 17), Paul now contrasts it with God's wrath revealed against sin. Apokaluptetai gar orgē theou ap' ouranou (ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὥργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, 'for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven') uses the same verb apokaluptetai (is revealed)—God's wrath is as much a present reality as His righteousness. Orgē (όργή, wrath) is not capricious rage but settled, righteous indignation against sin. It is judicial, not emotional; holy, not vindictive.

The object of wrath is epi pasan asebeian kai adikian anthrōpōn (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων, 'against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men'). Asebeian (ἀσέβεια, ungodliness) refers to violations against God—irreverence, idolatry, impiety. Adikian (ἀδικία, unrighteousness) refers to violations against people—injustice, immorality. These two categories encompass the two tables of the law (Exodus 20). The participial phrase tōn tēn alētheian en adikia katechontōn (τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων, 'who suppress/hold down the truth in unrighteousness') describes active resistance to known truth. Katechontōn (κατέχω) means to suppress, hold down, or restrain—humanity actively suppresses revelation of God.

Historical Context

Paul's indictment of humanity begins with Gentile idolatry (1:18-32), then includes Jewish law-breaking (2:1-3:8), concluding that all are under sin (3:9-20). This threefold structure demolishes any claim to innocence. The Greco-Roman world was saturated with immorality—temple prostitution, infanticide, gladiatorial bloodshed, slavery, sexual exploitation. Jewish readers would have nodded in agreement about Gentile depravity, only to be confronted with their own sin in chapter 2. Paul's diagnosis is universal and total.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile God's love with His wrath (όργή), and why is denying divine wrath an assault on God's holiness and justice?
2. In what ways do you or your culture 'suppress the truth' (κατέχω τὴν ἀλήθειαν) about God, morality, or reality?
3. What is the relationship between 'ungodliness' (ἀσέβεια) toward God and 'unrighteousness' (ἀδικία) toward people?

Interlinear Text

Ἄποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὁργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ
is revealed For the wrath of God from heaven against
G601 G1063 G3709 G2316 G575 G3772 G1909

πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίᾳ ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν
all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men G3588 G3588
G3956 G763 G2532 G93 G444

ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων
the truth in unrighteousness who hold
G225 G1722 G93 G2722

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 5:6 (Judgment): Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Romans 1:32 (Judgment): Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Colossians 3:6 (Judgment): For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

2 Thessalonians 2:10 (Righteousness): And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Romans 4:15 (Judgment): Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Romans 5:9 (Righteousness): Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Romans 6:13 (Righteousness): Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Romans 2:3 (Judgment): And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Romans 1:19 (References God): Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

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