

Romans 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Analysis

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Paul concludes the catena with Psalm 36:1. *Ouk estin phobos theou apenanti tōn ophthalmōn autōn* (οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, "there is no fear of God before their eyes"). *Phobos theou* (φόβος θεοῦ, "fear of God") is the foundation of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), covenant faithfulness, and all virtue.

"Before their eyes" means humanity lives as functional atheists—not necessarily denying God's existence but living as though He doesn't matter, won't judge, or can be safely ignored. This is the root pathology behind verses 10-17: without reverence for God, humans spiral into intellectual darkness, volitional rebellion, speech corruption, and violence. The fear of God is not servile terror but appropriate recognition of His majesty, holiness, and justice. Its absence produces the catalog of horrors Paul has documented.

Historical Context

The fear of Yahweh was central to Israelite piety, mentioned over 300 times in the OT. Paul's assertion that even Israel lacked this fear is devastating. Psalm 36 described the wicked; Paul applies it universally. Modern secular culture's dismissal of divine accountability would not surprise Paul—it is the natural state of fallen humanity.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life do you functionally live as though God doesn't see or care?
2. How would cultivating the fear of God transform your thoughts, speech, and actions?
3. Why is the fear of God the beginning of wisdom and the foundation of all virtue?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ	ἔστιν	φόβος	θεοῦ	ἀπέναντι	τῶν	ὀφθαλμῶν	αὐτῶν
no	There is	fear	of God	before	G3588	eyes	their
G3756	G2076	G5401	G2316	G561		G3788	G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 36:1 (References God): The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

Proverbs 23:17 (Parallel theme): Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.

Proverbs 8:13 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 16:6 (Parallel theme): By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.