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An Apostolic Multiplier

Verse Study - Romans 1:18

The Wrath of God

This document is a compilation of multiple theological sources. It is researched, ordered and presented by Dr. Thomas Hale. Its goal is to accelerate and enrich the personal studies of others through a structured guide.

Romans 1:18 (AMP)

[Ro 1:18] For God's [holy] wrath *and* indignation are revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who in their wickedness repress *and* hinder the truth *and* make it inoperative.

Romans 1:18 (NASB)

[Ro 1:18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

[Ro 1:18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Introduction by Dr. Thomas Hale - The Laws of Creation

Psalms 19:7-11 (NKJV) The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; ^[8] The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; ^[9] The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. ^[10] More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ^[11] Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.

When God created all things He established fixed laws (principles) by which the universe and everything in it operates. These laws (patterns) guarantee the proper function of all things. This pattern in creation includes human beings. We were created to live by the laws that God established before we were born.

God's laws or rules of operation for human beings are found throughout the Scriptures. Sometimes the word law is specifically used, other times a different word with the same basic meaning is used. These other words include ordinances, precepts, statutes, commands, commandments, degrees, instructions, words and ways. No matter which word occurs, they all carry within them a basic concept or principle, which is a law that Father God has established to preserve, protect and provide for his sons and daughters in the world, resulting in their maximum performance and success.

A proper understanding of God's laws (principles) is necessary to help us understand how these principles function in our life. God's laws are permanent, constant, they do not change. They are consistent and work the same way and in the same manner EVERY TIME and EVERYWHERE! God's laws cannot be broken or changed. They endure forever and they cannot be broken, as the Bible says:

1 Peter 1:25 (NKJV) But the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

John 10:35b (NKJV) ...to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Consequently, God's laws contain an inherent judgment (wrath) when they are disobeyed and an inherent blessing when they are obeyed. In other words, the principle itself contains your

punishment or blessing. The effects of God's laws cannot be avoided or ignored because they are inherent in the law itself!

Mark 4:26-28 (NKJV) And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ^[27] and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ^[28] For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.

Jesus said the earth brings forth crops of itself. The English words, "of itself," translates the New Testament word (Greek), *automátē*. This word means automatic, spontaneously, of its own accord. Adam Clarke says this word means, "by its own energy, without either influence or industry of man."

So the Kingdom principle is that if you sow seed, it will automatically bring forth fruit (blessing). The command itself contains the power to multiply and bring forth fruit to the sower!

God is not capricious in His love for us or in His judgments (wrath) of us. Myles Munroe, in speaking about *God's Original Plan for Mankind*, says this:

"We may prefer lawlessness, which is the freedom to do whatever we want to do, but our very creation by God, our Manufacturer and Source, requires that we follow His principles. Should we choose lawlessness—doing what we want, when we want, how we want—we can expect to reap the inevitable results, which include slavery, death, and the loss of privileges or freedoms. This is precisely what happened to the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden."

For a deeper understanding of the wrath of God as a position that man places himself into, follow this link to view Dr. Ron Cottle teaching on Romans 1:18:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!AiC2r-MFfSf4huhwkbqpBXLraWSmw>

Adam Clarke's Commentary - Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed—The apostle has now finished his preface, and comes to the grand subject of the epistle; namely, to show the absolute need of the Gospel of Christ, because of the universal corruption of mankind; which was so great as to incense the justice of God, and call aloud for the punishment of the world

1. He shows that all the heathen nations were utterly corrupt, and deserved this threatened punishment. And this is the subject of the first chapter, from verse 18 to the end (Romans 1:18-32).
2. He shows that the Jews, notwithstanding the greatness of their privileges, were no better than the Gentiles; and therefore the wrath of God was revealed against them also. This subject he treats in Romans 2:1-29 and Romans 3:1-19.
3. He returns, as it were, on both, Romans 3:20-31, and proves that, as the Jews and Gentiles were equally corrupt, they could not be saved by the deeds of any law; that they stood equally in need of that salvation which God had provided; that both were equally entitled to that salvation, for God was the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.

By *οργη θεου*, the wrath of God, we are not to understand any uneasy passion in the Divine Being; but the displeasure of his righteousness, which is expressed by the punishments inflicted on the ungodly, those who retain not God in their knowledge; and the unrighteous, those whose lives are profligate.

As, in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed for the salvation of the ungodly, so is the wrath of God revealed against the workers of iniquity. Those who refuse to be saved in the way revealed by his mercy must be consumed in the way revealed by his justice.

Ungodliness—*ασεβειαν*, from *α*, negative, and *σεβω* or *σεβομαι*, I worship, probably intended here to express atheism, polytheism, and idolatry of every kind.

Unrighteousness—*αδικιαν* from *α*, negative, and *δικη*, justice; every thing contrary to strict morality; all viciousness and profligacy of conduct.

Who hold the truth in unrighteousness—In what sense could it be said that the heathen held the truth in unrighteousness, when they really had not that truth? Some think this refers to the conduct of their best philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Seneca, etc., who knew much more of the Divine nature than they thought safe or prudent to discover; and who acted in many things contrary to the light which they enjoyed. Others think this to be spoken of the Gentiles in general, who

either did know, or might have known, much of God from the works of creation, as the apostle intimates in the following verses. But Rosenmuller and some others contend that the word κατεχειν here does not signify to hold, but to hinder; and that the place should be translated, who through maliciousness hinder the truth; i.e. prevent it from taking hold of their hearts, and from governing their conduct. This is certainly a very usual acceptance of the verb κατεχειν, which Hesychius interprets κρατειν, κωλυειν, συνεχειν, to retain, hinder, etc.; these men hindering, by their vicious conduct, the truth of God from being propagated in the earth.

AMG's Complete Word Study Bible Notes - Romans 1:18

1:18 The expression “hold the truth in unrighteousness” does not mean that the men mentioned here actually possessed the truth but simply did not practice it. *Katechō* (<G2722>), the verb translated “hold,” is better translated in this context “hold back” or “restrain.” This use of the word is also found in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7, where *katechō* is translated “withholdeth” and “letteth,” respectively. These ungodly attempt to restrain the truth through unrighteousness.

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament - Romans 1:18

Verse 18. *For.* This word denotes that the apostle is about to give a *reason* for what he had just said. This verse commences the argument of the epistle, an argument designed to establish the proposition advanced in Romans 1:17. The proposition is, that God's plan of justification is revealed in the gospel. To show this, it was necessary to show that all other plans had failed; and that there was need of some *new* plan or scheme to save men. To this he devotes this and the two following chapters. The design of this argument is to show that men were sinners. And in order to make this out, it was necessary to show that they were under law. This was clear in regard to the Jews. They had the Scriptures; and the apostle in *this* chapter shows that it was equally clear in regard to the Gentiles, and then proceeds to show that *both* had failed of obeying the law. To see this clearly it is necessary to add only, that there can be but *two* ways of justification conceived of: one by obedience to law, and the other by grace. The former was the one by which Jews and Gentiles had

sought to be justified; and if it could be shown that in this they had failed, the way was clear to show that there was need of some other plan.

The wrath of God-οργη θεου. The word rendered *wrath* properly denotes that earnest appetite, or desire, by which we seek anything, or an intense effort to obtain it. And it is particularly applied to the desire which a man has to take vengeance who is injured, and who is enraged. It is thus synonymous with revenge. Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and *wrath*," etc. Colossians 3:8, "Anger, *wrath*, malice," etc. 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1:19. But it is also often applied to God and it is clear that when we think of the word as applicable to him it must be divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of *revenge*. As he cannot be *injured* by the sins of men, (Job 35:6-8,) he has no motive for vengeance, properly so called; and it is one of the most obvious rules of interpretation that we are not to apply to God passions and feelings which, among us, have their origin in evil. In making a revelation, it was indispensable to use words which men used; but it does not follow that when applied to *God* they mean *precisely* what they do when applied to *man*. When the Saviour is said (Mark 3:5) to have looked on his disciples with *anger*, (Greek, *wrath*, the same word is here,) it is not to be supposed that he had the feelings of an implacable man seeking vengeance. The nature of the feeling is to be judged by the character of the person. So, in this place, the word denotes the *Divine displeasure or indignation* against sin; the Divine purpose to *inflict punishment*. *It is the opposition of the Divine character against sin*; and the determination of the Divine Mind to *express* that opposition in a proper way, by excluding the offender from the favours which he bestows on the righteous. It is not an unamiable or arbitrary principle of conduct. We all admire the character of a father who is *opposed* to disorder, and vice, and disobedience in his family, and who *expresses* his opposition in a proper way. We admire the character of a ruler who is *opposed* to all crime in the community, and who expresses those feelings in the laws. And the more he is *opposed* to vice and crime, the more we admire his character and his laws; and why shall we be not equally pleased with God, who is opposed to *all* crime in all parts of the universe, and who determines to express it in the proper way for the sake of preserving order and promoting peace. The word Divine *displeasure or indignation*, therefore, expresses the meaning of this phrase. See Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7, 21:23, John 3:36, Romans 2:5,8, 3:5, 4:15, 5:9, 9:22, [12:19](#); Romans 13:4,5, Ephesians 2:3, 5:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:16, etc. The word occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament.

Is revealed. That is, revealed to the Jews by their law; and to the Gentiles in their reason and conscience, as the apostle proceeds to show.

From heaven. This expression I take to mean simply that the Divine displeasure against sin is made known by a Divine appointment; by an arrangement of events, communications, and arguments, which evince that they have had their origin in heaven; or are divine, How this is, Paul proceeds to state, in the works of creation, and in the law which the Hebrews had. A variety of meanings have been given to this expression,

but this seems the most satisfactory. It does not mean that the wrath *will be sent* from heaven; or that the heavens declare his wrath; or that the heavenly bodies are proofs of his wrath against sin; or that Christ, the executioner of wrath, will be manifest from heaven, (Origen, Cyrill, Beza, etc.); or that it is from God *who is in heaven*; but that it is by an arrangement which shows that it had its origin in heaven, or has proofs that it is divine.

Against all ungodliness. This word properly means *impiety* failed to honour the true God, and had paid to idols the homage which was due to him. ἀσεβειαν. Multitudes also in every age refuse to honour him, and neglect his worship, though they are not idolaters. Many men suppose that if they do not neglect their duty to their fellow-men, if they are honest and upright in their dealings, they are not guilty, even though they are not righteous, or do not do their duty to God; as though it were a less crime to dishonour God than man, and as though it were innocence to neglect and disobey our Maker and Redeemer. The apostle here shows that the wrath of God is as really revealed against the *neglect* of God as it is against positive iniquity; and that this is an offence of so consequence as to be placed *first*, and as deserving the Divine indignation more than the neglect of our duties towards men. Comp. Romans 11:26, 2 Timothy 2:16, Titus 2:12; Jude 1:15,18. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

Unrighteousness of men. Unrighteousness, or iniquity *towards* men. All offences against our neighbour, our parents, our country, etc. The word *ungodliness* includes all crimes against God: this, all crimes against our fellow-men. The two words express that which comprehends the violation of all the commands of God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc., and thy neighbour as thyself," Matthew 22:37-40. The wrath of God is thus revealed against *all* human wickedness.

Who hold the truth. Who *keep back*, or *restrain* the truth. The word translated *hold* here, sometimes means *maintain*, to *keep*, to *observe*, (1 Corinthians 7:30, 2 Corinthians 6:10) but it also means *to hold back*, to *detain*, to *hinder*. Luke 4:42, "The people sought him, (Jesus,) and came to him, and *stayed* him." (Greek, the same as here.) Philemon 1:13, "Whom I would have *retained* with me," etc. 2 Thessalonians 2:6, "And now ye know what *withholdeth*," etc. In this place it means also that they held back, or restrained the truth, by their wickedness.

The truth. The truth of God, in whatever way made known, and particularly, as the apostle goes on to say, that which is made known by the light of nature. The truth pertaining to his perfections, his law, etc. They *hold it back*, or restrain its influence.

In unrighteousness. Or rather, *by* their iniquity. Their *wickedness* is the cause why *the truth* had had so little progress among them, and had exerted so little influence. This was done by their yielding to corrupt passions and propensities, and by their being therefore unwilling to retain the knowledge of a pure and holy God, who is opposed to such deeds, and who will punish them. As they were determined to *practise* iniquity,

they chose to exclude the knowledge of a pure God, and to worship impure idols, by which they might give a sanction to their lusts. Their vice and tendency to iniquity was, therefore, the reason why they had so little knowledge of a holy God; and by the love of this, they *held back* the truth from making progress, and becoming diffused among them.

The same thing is substantially true now. Men hold back or resist the the truth of the gospel by their sins in the following ways:

- (1.) Men of influence and wealth employ both in directly opposing the gospel.
 - (2.) Men directly resist the *doctrines* of religion, since they know they could not hold to those doctrines without abandoning their sins.
 - (3.) Men who resolve to live in sin, of course, resist the gospel, and endeavour to prevent its influence.
 - (4.) Pride, and vanity, and the love of the world also resist the gospel, and oppose its advances.
 - (5.) Unlawful business—business that begins in evil, and progresses and ends in evil—has this tendency to hold back the gospel. Such is the effect of the traffic in ardent spirits, in the slave-trade, etc. They begin in the love of money, the root of all evil, (1 Timothy 6:10;) they progress in the tears and sorrows of the widow, the orphan, the wife, the sister, or the child; and they end in the deep damnation of multitudes in the world to come. Perhaps there has been nothing that has so much *held back* the influence of truth, and of the gospel, as indulgence in the vice of intemperance, and traffic in liquid fire.
 - (6.) Indulgence in vice, or wickedness of *any kind*, holds back the truth of God. Men who are resolved to indulge their passions will not yield themselves to this truth. And hence all the wicked, the proud, and vain, and worldly are responsible, not only for their own sins directly, but for hindering, by theft example and theft crimes, the effect of religion on others. They are answerable for standing in the way of God and his truth; and for *opposing* him in the benevolent design of doing good to all men. There is nothing that prevents the universal spread and influence of truth but sin. And men of wickedness are answerable for all the ignorance and woe which are spread over the community, and which have extended themselves over the world.
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Christological Commentary - Romans 1:18

1:18-20 Paul continues and says that the wrath of God is being revealed. And the Greek ἀποκαλύπτεται (*apokaluptetai*), can mean it's presently being revealed or is about to be revealed. And in a sense maybe both, but I think he is looking at the final revelation of God's wrath. It is not His quick temper, but it's His righteous, persistent wrath of judgment. It's being revealed, or about to be revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness, and upon the unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth by their wickedness. So he is looking at the Gentile world as it suppresses the truth. Paul says "that which is known of God is manifest among them for God has shewed it unto them". That is, his unseen things from the creation of the world, are being clearly perceived. The word he uses in the Greek reflects this revealing. This knowledge of God is being very vividly and clearly perceived from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made. So the Gentiles are guilty because God has revealed the unseen things, to them in creation namely his eternal power and deity. So they are without excuse. So when they look at creation, they look at the stars, they look at the moon, and they must realize that there is a supreme Creator who has infinite power. Instead of bowing down before Him though, they do something different. And so Paul is saying that all humanity stands guilty because instead of recognizing the eternal power and divinity of God, they make idols and they do not worship God, rather they worship idols and not the true and living God.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans - Romans 1:18

VERSE 18. Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ Θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.* The apostle's object is to prove the doctrine of the preceding verse, viz., that righteousness is by faith. To do this it was necessary to show that men in themselves are exposed to condemnation, or are destitute of any righteousness which can satisfy the demands of God. His argument is, God is just; he is determined to punish sin, and as all men are sinners, all are exposed to punishment. Hence this verse is connected by γάρ to the preceding one. Men must be justified by faith, *for* the wrath of God is revealed, etc.

The wrath of God is his punitive justice, his determination to punish sin. The passion which is called anger or wrath, and which is always mixed more or less with malignity in the human breast, is of course infinitely removed from what the word imports when used in reference to God. Yet as anger in man leads to the infliction of evil on its object, the word is, agreeably to a principle which pervades the Scriptures, applied to the calm and undeviating purpose of the Divine mind, which

secures the connection between sin and misery, with the same general uniformity that any other law in the physical or moral government of God operates.

Is revealed. Ἀποκαλύπτω is properly to *uncover*, to bring to light, and hence to make known, whether by direct communication, or in some other way. A thing is said to be revealed, when it becomes known from its effects. It is thus that the thoughts of the heart, the arm of the Lord, and wrath of God are said to be “revealed.” It is not necessary therefore to infer from the use of this word, that the apostle meant to intimate that the purpose of God to punish sin was made known by any special revelation. That purpose is manifested in various ways; by the actual punishment of sin, by the inherent tendency of moral evil to produce misery, by the voice of conscience. Nor do the words “from heaven” imply any extraordinary mode of communication. They are added because God dwells in heaven whence all exhibitions of his character and purposes are said to proceed. It is however implied in the whole form of expression, that this revelation is clear and certain. Men know the righteous judgment of God; they know that those who commit sin are worthy of death. As this is an ultimate truth, existing in every man’s consciousness, it is properly assumed, and made the basis of the apostle’s argument.

This displeasure of God is revealed *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; that is, against all impiety towards God (ἀσέβεια) and injustice towards men (ἀδικία). This distinction is kept up in the following part of the chapter, in which the apostle proves first the impiety, and then the gross immorality of the heathen.

Who hold the truth in unrighteousness. The word ἀλήθεια is used in the Scriptures in a more comprehensive sense than our word *truth*. It often means what is right, as well as what is true; and is therefore often used in antithesis to ἀδικία, *unrighteousness*, as in Romans 2:8; see Galatians 3:1; 5:7. It is used especially of moral and religious truth; see John 3:21; 8:32; 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:12. It is therefore equivalent to true religion, that is, what is true and right, in reference to God and duty. As κατέχειν sometimes means to have in the sense of possessing, as in 1 Corinthians 7:30, this clause may be rendered, ‘Who have the truth, together with unrighteousness;’ *i.e.*, although they possess the truth, are unrighteous. Comp. James 2:1, μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν. The sentiment is then the same as in ver. 21, where the heathen are said to know God, and yet to act wickedly. But as κατέχειν also means to detain, to repress or hinder, 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7, the passage may be translated, Who hinder or oppose the truth. The great majority of commentators are in favor of this latter interpretation. The words ἐν

ἀδικία may either express the means of this opposition, and be rendered, *through unrighteousness*; or they may be taken adverbially, Who unjustly, or wickedly oppose the truth. The former is to be preferred.

Expositor's Greek Testament, The - Romans 1:18

Verse 18f. The revelation of the righteousness of God (Romans 1:17) is needed in view of the revelation of His wrath, from which only δικ. θεοῦ (whether it be His justifying sentence or the righteousness which He bestows on man) can deliver. ὀργή in the N.T. is usually eschatological, but in 1 Thessalonians 2:16 it refers to some historical judgment, and in John 3:36 it is the condemnation of the sinner by God, with all that it involves, present and to come. The revelation of wrath here probably refers mainly to the final judgment: the primary character of Jesus in Paul's Gospel being ὁ ρυόμενος ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Romans 5:9; but it is not forcing it here to make it include God's condemnation uttered in conscience, and attested (Romans 1:24) in the judicial abandonment of the world. The revelation of the righteousness of God has to match this situation, and reverse it. ἀσέβεια <G763> is "positive and active irreligion": see Trench, *Syn*, § 66. τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων may mean (1) who possess the truth, yet live in unrighteousness; or (2) who suppress the truth by, or in, an unrighteous life. In the N.T. ἀλήθεια <G225> is moral rather than speculative; it is truth of a sort which is held only as it is acted on: cf. the Johannine expression ποιεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Hence the latter sense is to be preferred (see Wendt, *Lehre Jesu*, II., 203 Anm.). διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ κ. τ. λ. There is no indisputable way of deciding whether γνωστὸν here means "known" (the usual N.T. sense) or "knowable" (the usual classic sense). Cremer (who compares Philippians 3:8 τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως, Hebrews 6:17 τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς, Romans 2:4 τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, and makes τοῦ θεοῦ in the passage before us also gen poss.) favours the latter. What is meant in either case is the knowledge of God which is independent of such a special revelation as had been given to the Jews. Under this come (Romans 1:20) His eternal power, and in a word His (eternal) divinity, things inaccessible indeed to sense (ἀόρατα), but clear to intelligence (νοούμενα), ever since creation (ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου: for ἀπὸ thus used, see Winer, 463), by the things that are made. God's power, and the totality of the Divine attributes constituting the Divine nature, are inevitably impressed on the mind by nature (or, to use the scripture word, by creation). There is that within man which so catches the meaning of all that is without as to issue in an instinctive knowledge of God. (See the magnificent illustration of this in Illingworth's *Divine Immanence*, chap. 2, on The religious influence of the material world.) This knowledge involves duties, and men are without excuse because, when in possession of it, they did not perform these duties; that is, did not glorify as God the God whom they thus knew.

Holman Concise Bible Commentary - Romans 1:18

God's Wrath (1:18-32)

Before Paul set forth his message of righteousness by faith (3:21-8:31), he showed the need for it. The human race stands condemned, helpless, and hopeless apart from God.

Even though God had given sufficient revelation of his existence and power in the world through creation, men and women had nevertheless become idolatrous and polytheistic with resulting moral degradations. Paul claimed that God gave them up to their dishonorable lusts, passions, conduct, and all kinds of evil. The refusal to acknowledge and glorify God results in a downward path: worthless thinking, moral insensitivity, and religious stupidity.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary - Romans 1:18

Why This Divinely Provided Righteousness Is Needed by All Men

Verse 18. For the wrath of God—His holy displeasure and righteous vengeance against sin.

is revealed from heaven—in the consciences of men, and attested by innumerable outward evidences of a moral government.

against all ungodliness—that is, their whole *irreligiousness*, or their living without any conscious reference to God, and proper feelings towards Him.

and unrighteousness of men—that is, all their *deviations from moral rectitude* in heart, speech, and behavior. (So these terms must be distinguished when used together, though, when standing alone, either of them includes the other).

This Wrath of God, Revealed Against All Iniquity, Overhangs the Whole Heathen World

Verse 18. who hold—rather, "hold down," "hinder," or "keep back."

the truth in unrighteousness—The apostle, though he began this verse with a comprehensive proposition regarding men in general, takes up in the end of it only one of the two great divisions of mankind, to whom he meant to apply it; thus gently sliding into his argument. But before enumerating their actual iniquities, he goes back to the origin of them all, their stifling the light which still remained to them. As darkness overspreads the mind, so impotence takes possession of the heart, when the "still small voice" of conscience

is first disregarded, next thwarted, and then systematically deadened. Thus "the truth" which God left with and in men, instead of having free scope and developing itself, as it otherwise would, was obstructed (compare Mt 6:22, 23; Eph 4:17, 18).

Matthew Henry Concise - Romans 1:18

The Sins of the Gentiles Set Forth: Part 1 (1:18-25)

The apostle begins to show that all mankind need the salvation of the gospel, because none could obtain the favour of God, or escape his wrath by their own works. For no man can plead that he has fulfilled all his obligations to God and to his neighbour; nor can any truly say that he has fully acted up to the light afforded him. The sinfulness of man is described as ungodliness against the laws of the first table, and unrighteousness against those of the second. The cause of that sinfulness is holding the truth in unrighteousness. All, more or less, do what they know to be wrong, and omit what they know to be right, so that the plea of ignorance cannot be allowed from any. Our Creator's invisible power and Godhead are so clearly shown in the works he has made, that even idolaters and wicked Gentiles are left without excuse. They foolishly followed idolatry; and rational creatures changed the worship of the glorious Creator, for that of brutes, reptiles, and senseless images. They wandered from God, till all traces of true religion must have been lost, had not the revelation of the gospel prevented it. For whatever may be pretended, as to the sufficiency of man's reason to discover Divine truth and moral obligation, or to govern the practice aright, facts cannot be denied. And these plainly show that men have dishonoured God by the most absurd idolatries and superstitions; and have degraded themselves by the vilest affections and most abominable deeds.

Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible - Romans 1:18

He proceeds to prove the principal proposition laid down in the foregoing verse; the causal particle *for* implies as much. Men must be justified by the righteousness of God, because they have no righteousness of their own to justify them, they themselves are all unrighteous. This he proves both of the Gentiles and Jews. He begins with the Gentiles, and proves it upon them, from this verse to

Ro 2:17; and then he proves it upon the Jews also, from thence to the end of the 3rd chapter (Ro 2:18-3:31).

The wrath of God is revealed; it is revealed in the word of God, or rather, by the judgments which he inflicteth. *From heaven*; i.e. from God in heaven. Plagues and judgments spring not out of the dust, proceed not originally from second causes, much less do they come by chance.

Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: the abstract is put for the concrete; he means unrighteous and ungodly men; but he chooseth this way of speaking, because God, when he punisheth, aims at the sins of men; and would not punish their persons, but for their sins. By *ungodliness*, understand sins against the first table, which are mentioned Ro 1:21, 23: by *unrighteousness*, sins against the second, of which there is mention at large, from Ro 1:26 to the end of the chapter.

Who hold the truth in unrighteousness: by *truth*, understand all that light which is left in man since the fall. There are in all men some common notions of God, his nature and will; some common principles also of equity and charity towards men, which nature itself teacheth, and upon which the consciences of the Gentiles did accuse or excuse them. These natural notions concerning God and their neighbour they did not obey and follow, but wickedly suppressed them. They imprisoned the truth which they acknowledged, that they might sin the more securely. The metaphor is taken from tyrants, who oppress the innocent, and imprison them: so the Gentiles did by the truth which they had by nature, they kept it in and under.

People's New Testament, The - Romans 1:18

18-32. For. Now follows a declaration of the world's unrighteousness, of the wrath of God against unrighteousness, and hence the need of the righteousness of God through the gospel received by faith in order to salvation. The “for” introduces an argument which shows that Christ's gospel is the world's only hope. **The wrath of God.** His displeasure. **Is revealed.** Not only by the declarations of the Holy Scriptures, and his judgments, but by nature's teachings, and by the human conscience. **Ungodliness.** Irreligiousness. This is the fountain of unrighteousness. **Hold the truth in unrighteousness.** There is a measure of truth revealed to every man. See next verse. Many refuse to profit by the light they have, and love the darkness rather than the light. All who do not live up

to the knowledge they possess, who do worse than they know, hold the truth in unrighteousness. They obstruct the truth, rather than let it have free scope.

Romans Verse-by-Verse - Romans 1:18

It will not only fail to help us, but will seriously harm us, to study the awful arraignment of God against human sin, unless we apply it to ourselves, thereby discovering *our own state by nature*. Therefore we have sought to make plain these terms which Paul uses, in view of today's sin. Christendom is rapidly losing sin-consciousness, which means losing God-consciousness; which means eternal doom: "As were the days of Noah... as it came to pass in the days of Lot... *they knew not*." Because iniquity abounds, the love of many professing Christians is waxing cold; so that we see a Sardis condition everywhere, "a name to live, while dead": on many faces, the horrid lack of spiritual life; the lightless, sightless eyes; the chill,—the corpse-like chill, of the lifeless, the unfeeling.

On the other hand, among God's real saints, those born from above and indwelt by the Spirit of God, there is everywhere, thank God, a gathering, an eagerness, a hunger for His Word, for news from Home,—for their citizenship is in Heaven!

Therefore let all who have ears to hear give the utmost attention to what God says about our state by nature. Do not apply the threefold "God gave them up" of Romans One to "the heathen," as most do. Behold, we are those of whom God says: "There is no distinction: all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ALL are brought under the judgment of God. O saints, beware of the "select" circles, the "we-are-better" societies of pride! For all human beings are alike sinners: for "The Scripture *shut up all things under sin*, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that *believe*" (Gal 3:22).

The more you discover yourself to be a common sinner, the more you will realize God's uncommon grace! And the more deeply you despair of man, of *yourself*, the more simple and easy it will be to rest in Christ and in His work of salvation for you.

Verse 18: Wrath revealed from heaven—This is the tenor of all Scripture as to God's attitude toward defiant sin. "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from

Jehovah out of heaven,” we read in Genesis 19:24. We know that “God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world” (Acts 17:31); that He will “visit with wrath” at that time (Rom 3:5). However, in the thrice-repeated “God gave them over” of verses 24, 26 and 28, there is to be seen the character, the beginning, and the working of God’s wrath *in this world*, in His judicial handing over of rebels to go further into rebellion. But the awful arraignment of humanity in Chapters One, Two, and Three; together with the particular account of their apostasy and lost condition, however terrible it be, is not a description of the finally damned, but of the at-present-lost: and, “The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Such were some of you,” says Paul to the Corinthians, after an enumeration of those who “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:11). “Effeminate, and abusers of themselves with men,” the very kind of sinners described in our chapter, are in this enumeration. Let us admit, therefore, the judicial “delivering over” of humanity which has “exchanged the glory” of the God they knew for horrid idolatrous conceptions,—a present judicial action of God on earth, where and when He “lets men go their own way.” But let us distinguish this apart from the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God from Heaven. At the Great White Throne of Revelation Twenty there will be no liberty left to the creature to indulge his lusts as in this present world. The lusts, indeed, will remain, and probably intensify forever: “He that is filthy, let him be made filthy yet more”; but the ability to indulge lust will be eternally removed, and the damned placed under the visitation of Divine anger. Thank God, we may still cry with Paul, “Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” Grace is still ready to reach the worst wretch on earth!

Note that **ungodliness** is direct *disregard of God*, which to the Jew would connect itself with the first table of the Law, the first four commandments; while unrighteousness has reference to *wickedness of conduct*, in itself and toward other men. Note further that it is distinctly said that the human race, in order to live an unrighteous life, **held down the truth**. The meaning of the verb translated “hold down” is seen in its use in 2 Th 2:6: “Ye know that which *restraineth*,” referring to the present restraining of the sin and wrath of man by the Spirit of God. It is also true, turning this about, that man in his wickedness restrains the truth he knows. (See also same word in Luke 4:42, “would have *stayed* Him.”) Almost all men know more truth than they obey. They call themselves “truth seekers”; but would they attend a meeting where Paul preached the facts of this first of Romans?

Word Pictures in the New Testament - Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed (*apokaluptetai gar orgē theou*). Note in Romans Paul's use of *gar*, now argumentative, now explanatory, now both as here. There is a parallel and antecedent revelation (see Romans 1:17) of God's wrath corresponding to the revelation of God's righteousness, this an unwritten revelation, but plainly made known. *Orgē* is from *orgaō*, to teem, to swell. It is the temper of God towards sin, not rage, but the wrath of reason and law (Shedd). The revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel was necessary because of the failure of men to attain it without it, for God's wrath justly rested upon all both Gentiles (Romans 1:18-32) and Jews (Romans 2:1-3:20).

Ungodliness (*asebeian*). Irreligion, want of reverence toward God, old word (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16).

Unrighteousness (*adikian*). Lack (*a* privative and *dikē*) of right conduct toward men, injustice (Romans 9:14; Luke 18:6). This follows naturally from irreverence. The basis of ethical conduct rests on the nature of God and our attitude toward him, otherwise the law of the jungle (cf. Nietzsche, "might makes right").

Hold down the truth (*tēn alētheian katechontōn*). Truth (*alētheia*, *alēthēs*, from *a* privative and *lēthō* or *lanthanō*, to conceal) is out in the open, but wicked men, so to speak, put it in a box and sit on the lid and "hold it down in unrighteousness." Their evil deeds conceal the open truth of God from men. Cf. 2 Thes. 2:6-7 for this use of *katechō*, to hinder.