

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME I // BURDEN OF PROOF
MAY 23, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Do you think nature/creation provides evidence for the existence of God? Why or why not?

Key Text: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:18-20)

No Excuses

The following is a collection of actual excuses given by people to police and insurance companies following car accidents:

Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and struck a tree I haven't got.
I had been driving for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.
I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.
I don't know who was to blame for the accident; I wasn't looking.

God's Wrath

Some excuses may sound better than others, but Paul asserts in our text that no one will be excused for the sin of refusing to acknowledge the existence of God. God has plainly shown what is knowable about Him through what He has made—His creation. Paul says the real reason some people are resistant to belief is that they don't *want* to believe. The problem is not that truth is unavailable; the problem is that truth is being “*suppressed*,” which means “covered over” (v.18). Paul tells us that God's response to sin is wrath: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*” (v.18). The word “wrath” in verse 18 does not refer to an impulsive explosion of anger such as a child's temper tantrum; rather, it describes a controlled anger. God does not lose His temper—His anger is measured, steady, and perfectly righteous. Why is God angry at sin? Because He created a perfect world, and He knows that sin destroys everything, harms us and separates us from Him, and causes wars, hatred, violence, and injustice.

Notice that God is angry at two aspects of sin in particular: 1) “*Ungodliness*” (v.18) which is sin against God. It refers to living as if God doesn't exist. Many people believe that God exists, but they don't live like it. 2) “*Unrighteousness*” (v.18) which is sin against others. It refers to living wickedly, selfishly, with no rules or concern for others.

Discuss: How does sinning against God eventually lead to sinning against others?

God's Creation Tells Us about God

God is revealed in creation: *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them"* (v.19). Attempting to avoid knowing about God is useless. God has made Himself plain to everyone—including those who disobey or even deny Him. Disobedience and denial are not a result of ignorance; they are caused by rebellion.

Paul says that we can easily learn some things about God through creation. Based upon what is visible, we can be informed about what is invisible—what we can see teaches us about what we cannot see. *"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse"* (v.20).

God has eternal power.

"...his eternal power..." (v.20)

It would certainly require eternal power—endless, inexhaustible power—to create our universe and everything that is in it!

God has a divine nature.

"...his...divine nature..." (v.20)

Such a powerful Creator must also be divine and not merely human, and therefore we must answer to Him at some level.

Discuss: Besides learning that God has eternal power and is divine, what else do you learn about God just by observing His creation?

Willfully Ignorant

If human beings ignore and suppress God's revelation of Himself through creation, and refuse to seek Him from there, then God insists that they are *"without excuse"* (v.20) since they are willfully ignoring the obvious.

Discuss: Why do you think many people willfully ignore and even suppress the evidence and obvious truth of God's existence as revealed in creation?

For Further Study:

The Reason for God by Timothy Keller

Articles and videos at www.answersingenesis.org

"The Existence of God" article at www.thegospelcoalition.org

"There's No Evidence That God Exists" video at www.whatwouldyousay.org

"Is Atheism More Rational than Belief in God?" video at www.whatwouldyousay.org