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God's Revelation: The Gift Of Revelation

Romans 1:19-20 (NASB), **“because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 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.”**

Most people assume that God is not justified in His wrath towards those who have never heard the gospel. This makes the wrong assumption that people are innocent if they have not heard the truth proclaimed. Actually the opposite is true, we are not good in anyway. Romans 3:10-11 says, **“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”**

God is indeed justified in His wrath against sinners because of the revelation of Himself to all mankind. Romans 1:18-2:16 specifically pertains to the Gentiles, who unlike the Jews did not have the benefit of God's revealed Word. Israel was of course doubly guilty because they not only rejected God's natural, universal revelation of Himself in creation and in conscience but they even rejected God's special and unique revelation through Scripture.

To that end there are several elements to God's revelation and the first is the gift of revelation. Verse 19 says, **“because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them.”**

Paul's point here is that even pagans who have never heard the gospel know about God because **“that which is known about God is evident within them.”** How? Because **“God made it evident to them.”** The Lord is testifying through the apostle Paul that His outward, visible manifestation of Himself is universally known by man. He also writes that it **“is evident within them”** as well as outside of them. All of humankind has evidence of God, and what their physical senses can perceive of Him their inner senses can understand to some extent. The Philistines both saw and acknowledged God's power, as did the Canaanites, the Egyptians, and every other people group who have lived on earth. The rebels who built the Tower of Babel both saw and acknowledged God's greatness, as did the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. All people know something and understand something of the reality and the truth of God. They are then responsible for a positive and proper response to that revelation. Any wrong response is **“inexcusable.”**

Theologian Augustus Strong in his 1979 book *Systematic Theology* wrote, “The Scriptures... both assume and declare that the knowledge that God is, is universal. God has inlaid the evidence of that fundamental truth in the very nature of man, so that nowhere is He without witness.” Ephesians 2:12 says that the unregenerate man has **“no help and [is] without God in the world,”** not because he has no knowledge of God but because he naturally rebels against the knowledge of God that he already has. In Romans 1:18 Paul has already stated that sinful humankind naturally suppresses God's truth with his or her own unrighteousness.

None of us can find God on our own initiative or by our own wisdom or searching. God has never then left us to our own initiative and understanding but has graciously provided abundant evidence of Himself. He has sovereignly and universally **“made”** Himself **“evident”** to men. None of us therefore can then plead ignorance of God, because apart from Scripture God has always revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself to man. God is perfectly just and therefore could not rightly condemn those who are totally ignorant of Him. But as Paul asserts here, no person can rightly claim ignorance of God, and therefore no person can rightly claim that God’s wrath against him is unjust. Every person is accountable for the revelation of God that may lead one to salvation.

The story of Helen Keller is one that many are familiar with. Helen had no sight, hearing, and speech. Through her teacher Anne Sullivan’s tireless and selfless work, Helen finally learned to communicate through touch even learning to talk. When Miss Sullivan first tried to tell Helen about God, the girls’ response was that she already knew about Him – she just didn’t know His name.

“That which is known” could be rendered as “that which is knowable.” Obviously, finite man cannot know everything about God even with the perfect revelation of Scripture. Paul’s point is that **“that which is”** capable of being **“known about God”** apart from special revelation is indeed known by fallen mankind. The characteristics of God that are reflected in His creation give unmistakable testimony to Him.

In Acts 14:15-17 Paul says while ministering in Lystra, **“who made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”** The very goodness of life testifies to the goodness of the God who provides it.

In Acts 17:23-28 Paul tells the pagan philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, **“For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’”**

In other words God controls the nations, their boundaries, and their destinies. He controls time, the seasons, and every other aspect both of heaven and earth. Even more remarkable that that, Paul says, because God has so graciously chosen to make Himself known and make Himself approachable, **“He is not far from each one of us.”**

In John 1:9 John refers to Jesus as **“the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”** John was not writing of the saving knowledge of God, which comes only through faith, but of the intellectual knowledge of God, which comes to every human being through God’s self-manifestation in His creation. Every person has a witness of God, and therefore every person is accountable to follow the opportunity to respond to Him in genuine faith. What have you done with this revelation?