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a *Grace Notes* course

## **The Epistle to the ROMANS**

an expositional Bible study

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### **Lesson 1**

**Introduction to the Study**  
**Romans 1:1-32**

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*Grace Notes*

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# The Epistle to the Romans

## Lesson 1

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## The Epistle to the Romans

So often pastors, expositors, Bible teachers are asked what book of the Bible they would chose to have if they could only have one book for the remainder of their lives. The consensus is consistent in the answer...the book of Romans.

Of the thirteen epistles written by Paul, Romans includes the second longest introduction.

This introduction extends from v 1 through to v 17. It is only exceeded by the first two chapters of Galatians that comprise Paul's introduction of that letter. Galatians however needed a longer introduction because it was Paul's first epistle and it dealt with a problem in the Galatian churches, the problem of legalism.

Here, the epistle to the Romans does not deal with a specific problem. But Paul had never been to Rome at the time of its writing. So he includes a longer introduction to explain who he is, not so much by credentials (as in Galatians), but by person, who he is and why he is writing.

If we were to take a broad overview of Romans we would see two major themes separated by a parenthesis regarding Israel.

Romans 1-8, Our relationship to God

Romans 9-11, Paul's desire for Israel to be saved

Romans 12-16, Our relationship one to another

If we look at this epistle chronologically, as it fits into sequence with the other letters of Paul we can see a pattern:

Galatians: 48 AD, a strong stand for grace. Legalism having no part in the Christian way of life.

I and II Thessalonians: 52 AD, the individual relationship of believers to one another and the believer's anticipation of the return of Christ

I and II Corinthians: 56 AD, the cooperative responsibilities of believers in the local church. These are the epistles on ecclesiology, the function of the local church.

And then Romans: 57 AD, written from Corinth to a church Paul had never visited. The letter is somewhat impersonal but objective. It deals with

the doctrine by which we function as Christians, such as:

- Justification by faith
- Living by grace and power of the Spirit
- Serving the Lord with one another

In Ecclesiastes we note that Solomon's major theme was that we, as believers, enjoy life as we obey God's Word.

And these are not antithetical concepts. The reason we can enjoy life is because Christ has set us free from the Law and the oppressive laws of man. And that truth, which is explained in practical terms in Galatians, is now explained in theological terms in Romans.

Romans is without a doubt the crown jewel of the epistles.

It has changed the course of Christian history more than once. During the reformation it was the one letter that Martin Luther used to defend his position that we are saved by faith alone, that we live by faith alone, and we live according to the Scriptures alone.

Of this letter Luther said: "It is the true masterpiece of the NT, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as daily bread for man's soul. It can never be too well read or studied. The more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes."

The French expositor Godet observed: "The reformation was undoubtedly the work of the epistle to the Romans as well as that of Galatians. Spiritual revival in the church will be connected to a deeper understand of this book."

Harry Ironsides said of Romans: "It is the most scientific statement of the divine plan for the redemption of mankind. It is the orderly setting forth of the Gospel that the mind of man craves, the declaration of man's need along with the gracious plan of God's salvation which culminates in His glorification."

It has been said that Romans is not an epistle about the Gospel it is the Gospel and to be ignorant of Romans is to be ignorant of Christianity.

## Chapter 1

### Romans 1:1

"Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."

The style in which ancient letters were written differs from ours. The old world letter began with a three part salutation which included the writer's name, the person addressed, and a word of greeting.

Anything else added in this portion of a letter was seen as being very important.

Consider that in v 1 Paul states his name, then it is not until v 7 that he mentions the ones addressed and not until then to we find the cordial word of greeting.

So everything after the word PAUL in v 1 and prior to the phrase the beloved of Rome, in v 7 is an unusual addition to the salutation.

BUT IT IS A VERY IMPORTANT ADDITION because it tells us of the real writer behind the letter, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So even as he identifies himself, Paul does so in Christ. He begins with his name, Paul.

His Hebrew name was Saul, meaning "asked for". But he used his Roman name Paul, which means "little".

Use of this name shows an orientation to grace, he did not try to make anything out of himself that he was not. Paul was little, the Lord was great.

"A bond-servant of Christ Jesus"

Three statements of who Paul is. (Remember, while some knew him many others did not):

A bond-servant of Christ Jesus: As Paul begins this letter to those he did not know he takes the low road, not trying to impress them with who and what he is but with what the Lord Jesus has done in his life.

Paul has freely given himself as a bond-slave to Christ. Even when he was stopped on the

Damascus road he responded to Christ by calling Him Lord.

The word bond-servant is DOULOS, which means "slave". The gentile mind of the Romans would see this as a bond-slave, one who serves under debt, so the translation is accurate.

The greatest bond-servant in history was the Lord Jesus Christ. He is described prophetically in the OT as God's servant.

In Philipians 2:7 we are told that Jesus Christ emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

More than 50 times in the NT the believer is referred to as a SERVANT.

But we are also referred to as Saints, Children of God, the Beloved of God, Christian (taking the very name of Christ), Priests, Ambassadors, Friends of Christ, and many other titles much more noble than that of Servant.

But the first way Paul identifies himself is as a Servant.

BECAUSE THERE IS GREAT NOBILITY in being the servant of the King of kings and Lord of lords:

A Servant can be described in five ways:

- 1) The master has a legitimate expectation of obedience from his slave.
  - 2) The slave has a legitimate expectation of provision from his master.
  - 3) The slave's primary duty is to serve his master.
- Ephesians 6:7, "With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men."
- 4) The secondary duty is to serve the ones his master directs him to serve:

Galatians 5:13, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

- 5) Therefore, as slaves of Christ we are to please Him, while we serve one another.

"called as an apostle"

Paul then identifies himself as one who is called an apostle.

This office established by the Lord Jesus Christ at his ascension was the highest ranking office of the church age.

It was given to the eleven disciples and to a few others. The apostles to the church such as Paul and John had authority over a number of churches. The last apostle was John who died in about 95 AD.

Here again he is directing attention away from himself and to the Lord.

The word CALLED can be used for an official or royal invitation and for the discharging of the duties of an office.

Both aspects are in view here. Paul was called or invited by Christ to this office and as a servant he would then discharge the duties of this office.

This word CALLED which is KLEITOS is an adjective which is descriptive of the one who is called. It is found 10 times in the NT, three times in the salutation of this epistle.

We are all as believers called by Jesus Christ (v 6) and we all are called to a position, that of Saints (v 7).

This word CALLED and the corresponding verb has three directions:

- 1) Looks back to our calling at salvation
- 2) Looks ahead to our calling into eternity
- 3) Looks now at our calling to service:

**PRINCIPLE:** Our calling or purpose in life is directed by God, we are in his hands. What he calls us to be and what he calls us to do is far more important than what man calls us to be and do or even what we call ourselves to be and to do.

**AND HERE IS THE POINT:** Our identity must be determined by Him, not by others or by self.

Paul's identity was that of a Servant, and as an Apostle.

And Apostleship was defined by credentials and obligation:

- 1) His credentials were validated and authenticated by the miracles he performed:

II Corinthians 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

2) His obligation was to evangelize and to edify believers by laying a foundation of Bible doctrine for the church.

Ephesians 2:19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone."

And it is that obligation that he now mentions at the end of verse 1.

"set apart for the gospel of God."

The third thing Paul says about himself is found in this phrase.

First, the word "gospel", which is found more than 100 times in the NT, refers to Good News. And that good news is the truth that God has for believers and unbelievers. It is not limited to salvation information, but to the full counsel of God's good news to man.

The word SET APART is AFORIZO, "to mark off boundaries".

It is a perfect tense in Greek, indicating that this had been done in the past and the results continue in the present.

Paul was a marked man, marked by the Lord for the Gospel.

Our English word HORIZON comes from this Greek word; the horizon is that which marks off the boundary between earth and sky.

So Paul was marked off by God for a ministry and that was to evangelize and to build up the church.

Paul was marked off by the Holy Spirit in Antioch for ministry.

Acts 13:2, "And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

**NOTE:** He was ministering already. He had left Tarsus and was involved in the service to the church in Antioch and then was called by God.

**NOW SOME APPLICATION:**

1. Paul knew who he was, do we know who we are?

2. Paul did not try to promote himself or use his human assets to influence others.
3. Paul's personal sense of identity was wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. He could see himself as a bond-servant, under the obligation of obedience. He could also see himself as an apostle, of the highest rank in God's service. He could claim that he was set apart for specific service, yet without boasting.
5. This accurate understanding of self is only possible when we see ourselves from divine viewpoint.
6. Paul knew his position in Christ, his place in the Lord's service, his purpose in the Lord's calling...do we?
7. Whether it is our self image, our personal identity, knowing ourselves, or finding ourselves, none of this is of value unless it is from divine perspective.

Galatians 6:3, "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

I knew a man once who had spent considerable time as an unbeliever "finding himself", and to a certain extent he did. He came to accept his place and purpose in the world, to be comfortable with his values and ethics. Then he accepted Christ as Savior. He told me it was like starting all over again. Concentrating not on what he thought but what the Lord thought...and that is a real key to the Christian life!

1. Spiritual identity results in humility.
2. Spiritual identity results in unconditional love.
3. Spiritual identify results in service.
4. Spiritual identify eliminates legalism and arrogance.
5. Spiritual identity allows for acceptance, graciousness, and forgiveness towards others.
6. Spiritual identify allows the believer to relax in life.
7. Spiritual identity allows the believer to enjoy life.

**PRINCIPLE:** Apart from spiritual identity, defining who you are by what God thinks, the

believer will be uptight, miserable, without service to others, and will burn out in the flesh trying to live a life he can never live.

### **Romans 1:2,3a**

"Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures", concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord...

Paul uses three prepositions in this verse to make three points about the Gospel. He uses "through", "in", and "concerning" to tell us the how of the Gospel, the where of the Gospel, and the who of the Gospel.

1. How the Gospel came to us - God promised it previously in the Old Testament through His prophets. God predicted it and we now see a continuity and unity of the Old Testament and the New. Promises were made through men who also, as Paul, were called by God. The Gospel did not just suddenly burst upon the scene of history with the advent of Christ. It was the theme of words of the prophets and the works of Christ.
2. How was the Gospel given to man? In the holy Scriptures.

The word SCRIPTURES is the word GRAFW, a word that was never used for oral communication, only that which was written down and could be read and studied.

This statement prepares his readers for the extensive reference Paul will make to the OT in this epistle.

We see a channel of inspiration: From the ultimate source of God, through His prophets, preserved for mankind in the holy Scriptures.

This verse confronts any who would say that the Bible is inaccurate. It is accurate because God revealed the Gospel, His Good news, through the prophets who were under obligation to accurately record what God revealed.

3. The Who of the Gospel is mentioned in verse 3: "Concerning His Son..."

The preposition is PERI, which means fully around, as in perimeter.

Hence, the Lord Jesus is not just a part of the Gospel, He is the Gospel. He fully engulfs the Good News of God.

The Gospel in the Old Testament was promised, promises that were revealed in part. When the part that was revealed was believed by faith, man was saved.

But now all these promises, found in direct statements regarding the Messiah, in the sacrificial system of the Law, in typology, in analogy, are fulfilled in a person...God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

**THE FIRST ISSUE OF FAITH:** Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, as promised in the holy Scriptures, and that He died for your sins, according to the Scriptures?

If you do, you are saved. That is it, faith alone in Christ alone.

v 3b Who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

READ verse 4.

"Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Verses 3 and 4 develop three parallels between the humanity of Christ and His Deity.

Verse 3	Verse 4
Born	Declared
According The Flesh	According To The Spirit
Of The Seed Of David	By The Resurrection From The Dead

In verse 3, the humanity of Christ emphasized. He was born as a descendant of David according to the flesh.

The word "born" is GINOMIA which means "to become". It is used of a transition from one state or form to another.

Hence, the eternal God the Son "became flesh" rather than was born flesh.

This points to a historical change or transition that occurred at the virgin birth when the divine person took on a human nature.

The words PERSON and NATURE are important in that statement because the God the Son did not take on a human person but became a unique person, fully God, and at the same time, fully man.

John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This unique person, Jesus Christ, was a descendant of David as we see in Matthew, chapter 1. This looks at Jesus' royalty. He was a King, the King of kings.

In Revelation 22:16 we see that the New Testament closes with this same thought, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."

So at the beginning of Matthew, the beginning of Romans, and at the end of Revelation, across the entire New Testament, we are reminded that Jesus is the King.

God would never have us forget that Jesus is the King of all kings. His royalty is from David and from His work on the Cross in addition to His divine royalty.

Every servant needs a master and our Master is a King.

The mention of FLESH in no way includes SIN:

Three things are seen in this reference to FLESH:

1. Limitations: Being flesh he was limited. This included His deliberate setting aside of His divine attributes. He was surprised, there were things he did not know, there were things that caused him to grieve and to be troubled.
2. Weaknesses: Physically the flesh caused Jesus to hunger, to be tired, to be worn out, to be thirsty, to have blisters and callous and sore feet.
3. Temptations: In the flesh He had human volition and was tempted to sin.

Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,

but One who has been tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin."

But in the Flesh he also had three others things:

1. The Word of God resident in His soul: As a boy he learned the word and increased in wisdom and knowledge.
2. The filling and leading of the Holy Spirit; He depended upon the Holy Spirit for power and direction.
3. And in the flesh He had human volition which was set to obedience to the Father:

John 8:28, "Jesus therefore said...I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."

SO Jesus, JUST LIKE US, had limitations and weaknesses; but also, just like Him, we have the power of the Word and the power of the Spirit and we can decide who we will obey.

#### Romans 1:4

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;

The emphasis here is on Christ's deity. While the word "born" (or became) in verse 3 shows us how the eternal son of God entered into His humiliation, the word "declare" in verse 4 shows us how He entered into His exaltation.

The word "declared" is ORIZW, from the same root used for "set apart" in verse 1. It means "to mark off". Jesus Christ rose from the dead, never to die again. This marked off His humiliation from His exaltation.

This marking off did not make him the Son of God but "declared" Him to be what He eternally was already, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity.

The term "with power" describes the SON OF GOD, not the declaration or marking off. This further looks at the uniqueness of His resurrection, it gave Him power as the God-man forever in heaven and on earth. He continues in His uniqueness even now; and that quality of unique existence is with power.

POWER is the word DUNAMIS which is a noun indicating it was received by the Lord from the

Father. In the New Testament, DUNAMIS always refers to a supernatural power.

In Philippians 3:10, this power is also made available to the believer in Christ

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

It is simple to say we serve a risen Savior. But the significance of that is as complex as it is powerful. The Cross demonstrated the Love of God for us, and the resurrection demonstrates that the power of God that is also for us.

The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is revealed in what happened after Christ was seated at the right hand of God - the Holy Spirit came to indwell every believer.

"according to the Spirit of holiness"

This is a Semitic title for the Holy Spirit who was at work in the humanity of Christ incarnate and in the resurrection.

Christ's full title is: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul uses this full title ten times in Romans:

1. Jesus: Recognition of his humanity and historical beginning (v 3)
2. Christ: Recognition of his deity and His mission as the Messiah.
3. Our Lord: Recognition of his sovereign Lordship over us.

In verse 3 Paul dealt with His humanity. In verse 4 he dealt with His deity. And in verse 5 Paul examines His Lordship over us.

#### Romans 1:5

"Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake."

The words "through Him" describe man's only link with God and introduce the ministry of Christ as our mediator with God.

The pronoun "we" refers to Paul and the other apostles. So Paul, in describing the sovereign lordship of Christ uses himself as a personal example. He establishes this principle from the Scriptures (verse 2) and from what he knows to be true in his Christian experience. As he develops

this epistle he will expand this concept to all believers.

The verb "received" is a Greek verb in the aorist tense, indicating that God has given grace in a point in time.

Application:

1. Now what God gives cannot be taken away, for he is immutable, never changing.
2. GRACE is given to man based upon what Jesus Christ has done. Ephesians 4.
3. We cannot earn it nor do we deserve it, we can only employ it, tap into it so to speak.
4. Too often we get into a rut of thinking that we have to earn more grace, even if the earning is by some supposed non-meritorious means. But that is not the character of Grace - grace is given in full, it is ours, we need only put it to use.
5. God chose to deal with mankind in grace, that never changes. The problem of living by grace is our problem, not God's.
6. In James 4:6, which is the only passage that seems to indicate a sliding scale of grace, He gives more grace. The contrast is to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and we have even more grace than that. "God resists the arrogant but gives grace to the humble." The verb "gives" is present tense, not to show increase but the consistency of God's plan
7. Therefore, grace is yours, use it.

As Paul illustrates this he mentions both grace, God's policy towards man, and Apostleship, God's gift and appointment to Paul and the other apostles.

ANYONE OF US COULD make the same statement by replacing the word apostleship with the spiritual gifts God has given us and the positions of service to which we have been appointed.

So while the illustration is personal, the application is universal to all believers.

Now, what is it that allows us to tap into GRACE?

Paul mentions it next in verse 5, not by way of a mechanical process; that will come later, but by way of illustration.

"To bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles for His (Jesus Christ our Lord's) name's sake."

These two words "obedience" and "faith" are in apposition to each other. Paul is looking at obedience as that which BELIEVES something, not that which DOES something.

The major theme of Ecclesiastes is, enjoy what God has given you today.

HOW? By obedience to the Word of God: Eccl 12:13, "Fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person."

SOUNDS GOOD BUT HOW? By faith, not by doing something but by believing something.

Principles:

1. Faith is a volitional decision to trust God
2. That decision is made in relationship to other things and systems we could trust in: self, others, government, a human leader, a spouse, a job, an education, health, wealth.
3. We make a decision that we will trust God instead of trusting in other things.
4. We make that decision once, then it is tested over and over again.
5. Daily we have opportunity to trust God instead of other things, and when we continue in that resolve of faith-trust, we can enjoy life that day.
6. At times we will put our trust in a specific promise we know from the Word. At other times our trust is placed in a person we know, God.
7. That is how to be obedient, when we start trying to be obedient by what we do we end up trying to earn grace, which is impossible.

Paul then mentions the Gentiles because the large majority of his readers are Gentiles rather than Jews:

Acts 18:6 Paul states "From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."

In this we see that Paul understood his ministry and destiny in life and was pursuing what God wanted him to do. See Romans 1:14,15.

The motivation for this ministry is described in the phrase: "For His name sake."

Principle: Our highest motive is the person of Christ and His Grace.

The word NAME means much more than just what a person is called, it means their reputation, their character, their accomplishments, the sum total of who and what they are.

We can see this is the little phrase often said by believers but not really understood - for Christ's Sake.

Matthew 16:25, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Matthew 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Here is a contrast to proper motive:

John 12:9, "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead."

Here was fascination over the miracles of Christ

II Corinthians 12:10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Principle: When we do what we do motivated by the person of Christ we are motivated by grace and that is the more excellent way for you as a believer.

### **Romans 1:6**

"Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ."

Now Paul is ready to shift his attention to the recipients of this letter.

In using himself as an illustration he does not want to make himself and the other apostles exclusive; these Gentile believers in Rome have also been called of Jesus Christ.

These believers belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who has called them unto salvation.

As we saw at verse 1, this word looks at both an invitation and the discharging of a duty. The duty is the decisions of faith-trust we put in God and His Word.

These believers in Rome belong to Jesus Christ just as much as Paul or any of the apostles do and we do too.

### **Romans 1:7**

"To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Note: The Grace Notes course in History is a prerequisite of this study. It contains an extended overview of the history of the Roman Empire. If you have not taken this course, you can request it from Grace Notes.

Now Paul gets back to the salutation.

It is the beloved IN Rome, not the beloved OF Rome. And since the conclusion of the epistle seems to indicate that there were three local churches in Rome, this title looks both at our citizenship in heaven and our sojourn here on earth. WE are a heavenly people, we happen to live for a time on earth.

Paul does not, as he often did, use the term CHURCH. That term does not appear until Romans 16. The broader terms BELOVED and SAINTS indicate that there were a number of churches in Rome and internal evidence shows that these are made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

Regarding these churches, we do not know how the Gospel of Salvation originally came to this capital city of the ancient world. No Apostle had yet visited Rome.

Acts 2:10 does indicate that on the Day of Pentecost there were visitors in Jerusalem from Rome. Perhaps they carried the message of Christ home with them.

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, towards the end of his third missionary journey. This time and place of writing allows us to date the letter in either the late winter or early spring of either AD 57 or 58.

While Paul was writing this impressive epistle, he was also faced with a personal decision - where to

go next. By all indications in the book of Acts he should have gone onto Rome, but he instead went to Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that God arranged circumstances that eventually got Paul to Rome but as a prisoner, under arrest, awaiting trial.

So while he is used of the Spirit to communicate great doctrines of grace, in his personal life and in his personal decisions he makes choices that follow his plan rather than God's plan.

Principle: God is the one who is faithful and God honors His word even when it is found in weak vessels of clay.

#### TWO TITLES GIVEN TO THESE BELIEVERS

1. **BELOVED:** This title is found eight times in the synoptic Gospels and there applied only to the Lord Jesus Christ. It shows the relationship of divine love between the Father and the Son. Not until after Pentecost and the start of the Church is this title applied to believers in Christ.

"Beloved" is a term that describes the relationship of God's love for us and our love for one another. Paul was fond of the term especially for those he had lead to the Lord. It speaks of and reminds us of our relationship to God, He loves us, and to one another, we are to love one another in Spiritual love. So this title is relational.

2. **SAINTS:** Here we have a title that is positional. At the moment of salvation we are set apart unto God.

It was a very high and lofty term in the Greek cultic religions. It looks at separation, purity, cleanliness, consecration.

The term is so sacred that it can only be applied to the believer as his life is found in Christ.

Displaying the qualities of being a saint would be impossible for anyone outside of Christ. But we share this position in Christ.

In the New Testament, all believers are called Saints with no regard to behavior. All are saints in Christ.

No individual in the New Testament is ever called a Saint; it is used only collectively for our position in Christ.

**SUMMARY:** The terms "beloved" and "saint" remind us of our relationship to God and one another and the basis for that relationship, that we are in Christ.

The Formal Greeting:

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The greeting of GRACE was common to the Gentiles. The greeting of PEACE was common to the Jews. Paul brings them both together.

Paul includes these two words, sometimes adding the word MERCY, in each of his thirteen epistles.

The order is important, it is always GRACE then PEACE.

Peace is that which flows from Grace...

1. Grace is the unmerited favor of God to man. But it is more than that. It is the bestowal of favor where there should be wrath. It is grace given to those who are not only undeserving but deserving of the opposite, judgment.
2. Grace then is not aided by merit or hindered by demerit.
3. Peace is a condition not a feeling.

Romans 5:1 "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. The condition is constant, the feeling of peace may come and go.
5. We have a sense of the condition of peace even when the feeling is absent.

This peace is not from man but from a divine source - from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Romans 1:8-17: PAUL'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENTILES

In verses 1-7 Paul established his official relationship to the church as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now he establishes his personal relationship to these believers in Rome.

These verses might be seen as six windows into Paul's heart. How he felt about them and his ministry.

Each window is introduced by a verb phrase:

- v 8 I thank
- v 9 I serve
- v 11 I long
- v 13 I have planned
- v 14 I am under obligation
- v 15 I am eager

**Romans 1:8**

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

The word "first" is not followed here by the word "second". Here the word "first" implies importance rather than the beginning of some numeration or list.

Paul sees his attitude of thanksgiving because of these believers as being of first importance.

In ten of Paul's thirteen letters, he states that his relationship to others is one that causes him to be thankful.

"I thank my God through Jesus Christ"

Other than the Lord Jesus when He was on the Cross, Paul is the only New character that speaks of God as "my God".

This shows us the intensely personal relationship Paul had with God. God was not at a distance for Paul; He was close, He was his Father and his Friend.

Not only does the believer have a right to offer prayers to God because of Jesus Christ, but also he has a right to claim God as "MY GOD" because of Jesus Christ. There is nothing that we have and nothing that we can do in our relationship with God that is not through Jesus Christ.

All of our approach to God is based upon our acceptance in the person and work of Christ.

This phrase also demonstrates the divine order for prayer. All prayers are to be offered to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

**THE REASON FOR HIS THANKFULNESS**

"Because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."

There are many things we can be thankful for when it comes to other believers. And many of these may cause us to pray for them. Paul picks out their FAITH above their salvation, their growth, their gifts, or their unity.

The reason is, is that FAITH is the distinctive by which we live. We are to live by faith (see v 17), we walk by faith, we relate to others by faith.

Faith is a decision a person makes, and many believers make consistent decisions of faith.

When we encounter believers who live by faith, who make decisions in life based upon the Bible teaching they have, and seeing that doctrine cause them to depend upon God in faith, we should be thankful. Paul knew enough about these believers to know that they were men and women and even children who lived by faith.

"Being proclaimed throughout the whole world."

This FAITH was well known to others.

"Proclaimed" is a very strong verb meaning "to be advertised". This was not some passive mention, but a strong proclamation of how the believers of Rome lives, by faith.

By this time persecution was beginning, Christians were being harassed, and it would get worse. This present reality, however, did not deter these believers, they kept on living by Faith.

Faith must always be in something, and for these believers, faith was in the Lord Jesus Christ and what they were coming to know about him in the Word of God.

Their faith was proclaimed in the world. The emphasis is not on the strength of their faith nor on the genuineness of their faith but on the publication of their faith, that others heard about it.

**Romans 1:9a**

"For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you."

This is the second window into Paul's soul.

The verb "serve" is LATREUW which means "to serve as a priest". It is translated that way in the

Septuagint (LSS) and is translated "worship" in Philippians 3:3.

Service is worship. When we serve the Lord as Servant Kings, every act of service is also an act of worship.

This understanding effectively removes the false idea of some things being Secular and other things being Sacred. All is sacred to the believer who is in service to the King.

Paul's service is in the Gospel and we already noted that this word is not limited to the Good News of salvation alone but includes the full counsel of God's good news to the believer.

Paul is a servant to the Word of God and to what Bible doctrine can do; it can bring the believer into a continually increasing personal relationship with God.

The word "preaching" is in italics indicating that it is not part of the original text, but by including it the translators show us how we serve in the Gospel.

We communicate it, we pass it on, we preach it, we teach it. It should be on our lips we rise up and throughout our day, to the time we bed our head. It is our priority in life and when something is our priority in life we begin to build our lives around it.

Paul says he serves God in his spirit.

The word "spirit" is sometimes used for the soul, but not always. Here it is used for the human spirit that is given to man at the moment of salvation.

Man is born with body and soul and born again with body, soul, and spirit.

The body is the environment of the senses. The soul is the environment of ideas and thought. The human spirit is the environment of divine relationship.

Hence, to serve God in spirit is to do so not merely formally through some physical activity nor according to one's own ideas and thoughts, but according to God's purpose and plan and based upon what God provided.

Three things are involved in Paul's service in communicating the Gospel:

1. The Delineation of the Gospel: Romans

2. The proclamation of the Gospel: Acts
3. The protection and defense of the Gospel: Galatians

Then Paul calls upon God to be a witness to what he is saying:

"For God...is my witness ..."

Paul only does this a few times in his writings. Here, in II Corinthians 11:11 and in Philippians 1:8. The common thread in these passages is that Paul is trying to convey his intensely personal affection for those to whom he is writing.

Does this then imply that normally Paul may have appeared on the surface to be unloving, uncaring - perhaps so.

Luke 10:40, Martha accused the Lord of not caring about her because he engaged her sister in conversation while Martha was slaving away in the kitchen.

So Paul calls upon God to validate his statement.

#### **Romans 1:9b, 10**

"As to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you."

Paul's prayers of thankfulness were followed by a prayer of petition or request, that he may come to Rome...

In Acts 19:21, prior to Paul going to Corinth where he is writing this epistle, he said: "I must also see Rome".

The only problem was that he ended up putting his own agenda into the plan and he would decide to go to Jerusalem first. But we know that God got him to Rome.

Principle: God will answer our prayers, be careful what you pray for.

#### **Romans 1:11**

"For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;"

The third window into Paul's soul sees his desire...Paul, at this time, wants to see them.

On a number of occasions he had set out for Rome only to be hindered and frustrated in his journey. But he continued to pray for the opportunity to go to Rome.

This was his desire but up to this time it had not been God's will for him to go.

His purpose is to impart to them some spiritual gift. The pronoun is indefinite, notice the translation "some".

So this does not look at our spiritual gifts that will be discussed later in Romans 12. Paul uses this word in a general sense. This gift was the Word of God that was effective both for the salvation of the lost and the building up of believers.

The word "impart" is an aorist tense verb looking ahead to a point in time of communicating truth.

The Greek word METADIDWMI, means "to give", as in the sense of giving an offering. So it is the giving of that which one has to another. Paul has doctrine and wants to give that to the believers of Rome.

THE PURPOSE: "that you may be established."

"Established" is STEIRIZW and it is an aorist passive infinitive, and the grammar teaches us a great deal about this process.

The "establishing" occurs at points in time: the time of gospel hearing, the time of accepting by a faith decision, and the time applying the God's communicated Word..

The passive voice shows that we are established or set firmly in place by the Word, not by ourselves. The Word of God acts on us; we receive this stability.

The infinitive looks at a result; stability is a result of the hearing, understanding, and believing in or trusting in and the applying of the Word. It is initiated in us by the Word not by ourselves.

The word "stability" is often used for steadfastness of mind, the mental resolve and steadfastness that comes from the mind being influenced by BD.

SO PAUL PLACES THE EMPHASIS on what he wants to share with them, not on what he can do. He will bring the gift of Bible teaching; then it is the doctrine, not Paul, that will establish them.

### Romans 1:12

"that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."

The communicator, Paul, is encouraged when others become established.

An interesting principle is involved here. Giving that which God has given to you does not impoverish you but enriches you.

Normally when we give we think in terms of loss. But here Paul see that when he has the opportunity to teach positive believers he is blessed.

This is emphasized by the word "encouraged". In the Greek, it is preceded by the prefix SUM which means that this will be a joint encouragement.

This is the only use of this word in the Greek New Testament. Zodhiates defines it as receiving (passive voice) solace, comfort, encouragement in the society of other believers.

This kind of godly encouragement is something that can only be done in the community of the Local Church.

The motivation for this joint encouragement is found each other's faith. Paul was impressed and encouraged when he saw others who lived by faith.

None of us faces the same challenges and difficulties in life, but we do face similar situations. It is an encouragement to us when we come to see how others live by faith, firmly established in the Word, facing similar situations.

In other words, our faith rubs off onto other believers.

### Romans 1:13

"And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you, and have been prevented thus far, in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles."

The Fourth Window into Paul's soul:

"I have planned..."

Here Paul is assuring them that his longing to come to them is not merely in words; he has

planned to come to Rome, but to this time he has been prevented in doing so.

The word "planned" means to make something a priority. This mission to Rome had, at times, been a priority to Paul.

The verb is aorist tense, middle voice, indicating that this trip would be for his benefit as well as theirs, as stated in the prior verse.

Romans 15:23, But now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you.

The word "prevented" is a passive verb indicating that HE did not prevent this mission from occurring but was prevented by outside sources.

Several things can prevent us from doing what we desire.

1. Satan can hinder our plans.

I Thessalonians 2:18, For we wanted to come to you - I, Paul, more than once - and yet Satan thwarted us.

2. Satan can hinder us; yet even when that happens we know that God is greater and He is in control. When this occurs it is because God allows it.

3. God can hinder our plans.

Acts 16:6-10, And as they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

4. Our present responsibilities can keep us from fulfilling our desires.

Romans 15:20-22, And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, They who had

no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand. For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you.

5. But we can also see that accepting a responsibility that is not our own can also hinder us:

Romans 15:24-26, Whenever I go to Spain - for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while - but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

So what stands between you and following God's plan for your life? You do, no one else, nothing else. God is in control except when we take control from Him.

The best way for a Christian to operate is found in:

Proverbs 16:9, The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.

"That I may have some fruit among you also."

Paul desires to come to them so that he can have fruit or production among them:

Two things can be said of fruit:

1. Fruit is born naturally, it is unforced and comes about as a result of proper conditions.
2. Fruit denotes that which is genuine. Plastic bananas are easy to identify and they don't taste very good.

The production we seek, the fruit we desire to bear, will come not because we are trying to make fruit but because we observe the proper conditions of faith.

And it will be genuine fruit when it comes from faith.

#### **Romans 1:14**

"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."

The fifth window to Paul's soul states that He is under obligation. Paul understood his mission in life, his job as an apostle.

An obligation looks at a debt that is owed. And yet we are the recipients of the grace of God. How does grace line up with being under debt?

1. God has accomplished for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus came to pay a debt that he did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay.

The wages of sin is death, and we owed that debt of death.

2. But grace did not end there. At salvation more than 40 things were given to us by the grace of God including our spiritual gifts.
3. God has given to us the untold riches of His grace yet He never demands repayment.
4. The debt or obligation is not demanded by God but should be accepted by us.

Corinthians 6:20, For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

5. Paul accepted this obligation and placed himself under debt to fulfill the will of God in his life and ministry.

The extent of this obligation is found in the next phrase:

"To Greeks and to barbarians, to the wise and foolish."

Jesus Christ is an equal opportunity Saviour. No distinction whether by language (Greek or other Gentile languages) or by culture (wise or foolish).

### Romans 1:15

Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

The sixth window into Paul's soul proclaims that he is ready for whatever God has for him

"For my part" is the same as saying "as far as I am concerned".

"Eager" means "to be ready", As he would later say to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:2, Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

"Prech" is an infinitive which views it as a result.

Today's preaching is often sharing of one's heart but true biblical preaching is a result of knowing the heart of God.

Preaching is the objective proclamation of what God has given us in His Word.

### Romans 1:16

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16-17 indicate Paul's attitude regarding his mission, ministry, and the proclamation of the Gospel.

You can see the progressive flow of these verses.

Paul: I am eager to preach the gospel in Rome.

Question: Paul, why are you so eager?

Paul: Because I am not ashamed of the Gospel.

Question: And why are you not ashamed of the Gospel?

Paul: Because it is the power of God for salvation.

Question: And why is it the power of God for salvation?

Paul: Because it reveals the righteousness of God.

This pattern is common to Paul. He loves to make a statement and then add to it logical support. The Greek language makes it very easy to do this.

BUT WHY DOES PAUL NEED to make this statement? Would he be caused to be ashamed of the Gospel? What occasion prompts him to say this?

1. Rome was the capital of the world. Perhaps the place he was going might cause him to be ashamed. It was the seat of world culture and pride, the essence of pomp and power. Almighty Rome, the city set upon seven hills. Many may consider themselves far too refined to listen to the words of a preacher regarding some itinerant Jew who died on a Roman cross.
2. Paul may also be tempted to be ashamed because of the opinion of the wise. Even in Athens, the academic center of thought and wisdom his message was rejected with scorn. Would the wisdom of Rome intimidate Paul?

But Paul says NO, he will not be ashamed of the Gospel because unknown to man it is the very power of God.

MEN NEED THE SAVIOUR, THEY NEED THE GOSPEL and Paul knows there is only one thing that can bring about salvation and that is the Gospel of God.

In Latin the word "Rome" actually means power and might, and Paul is going to set the power and might of the Gospel of God against the very Power of Rome.

Paul uses salvation here for the salvation of the unbeliever from sin and death and a destiny in Hell.

This is, as we will see, the only time he uses this word for our initial salvation in Romans. But here the unbeliever is in view...first the Jew and then the Greek

The order of these two groups of people looks at chronology, not priority. The Gospel first went to Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and the uttermost ends of the earth.

NOW WHAT BRINGS ABOUT THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL: It is given to everyone who believes...Faith is what unleashes the power of God.

NOW NOTICE SOMETHING IS THESE first 17 verses: We have faith in verse 5, in verse 8, and again in verse 12, then "believe" (same root as a verb) in verse 16. And now in verse 17 ...

### **Romans 1:17**

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, But the righteous man shall live by faith."

That which we find at there very center of salvation and sanctification, in deliverance and in death, in our walking with the Lord and in our waiting upon Him...Faith.

Hebrews 11:6, And without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Romans 14:23, Whatever is not from faith is sin.

And here in Romans 1:17, The just shall live by faith.

When you were saved faith alone in Jesus Christ alone was the issue. Now that you are a Christian ...

Colossians 2:6, As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

HOW ARE WE TO WALK IN HIM...by Faith.

Verse 17 describes the full scope of the Christian's life..

The pronoun "it", which is neuter singular, looks back to the word "gospel" in verse 16.

In the Gospel, the revealed good news from God, the righteousness of God is revealed.

"Revealed" is present tense, indicating that God's perfect righteousness is revealed, not only when it is taught but also when it is applied by the believer.

1. God's righteousness demands our righteousness
2. But man is incapable of perfect righteousness, the best he can do is a righteousness that is relative to man.
3. Therefore, God provided a way He can give or impute to us His own righteousness.

READ 2 Cor. 5:21.

4. At salvation this is done as a result of our faith in His Son
5. And in the Christian way of life, it is accomplished the same way.
6. Faith is what unleashes the power of God in the life of the one who believes.
7. This shows us the power of God in doing for us that which was impossible for us and through this being able to have a relationship with us.

The revealing of the righteousness of God is said to extend from Faith to faith.

Paul quotes a passage from Habakkuk 2:4 which he had previously quoted in Galatians 3:11 and would be quoted by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:38.

The righteous man or just man (same word that we saw on Sunday used for Joseph) shall live by faith.

God originally said this to the prophet Habakkuk when He was condemning Israel.

FAITH has always, from the time of the fall, been the way man can both live unto God in God's power and please God.

Psalm 51:16-17, For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

In this Psalm, David was not saying "do away with the sacrifices" but "do not see the mechanics of sacrifice as the way to approach God". The broken, repentant heart that approaches God by faith is what pleases God.

Would you care to guess how many times Paul will use the word FAITH as either a verb or noun in the book of Romans? More than 50 times in sixteen chapters.

In the NASB the word is found in nearly 500 verses. We could spend the next couple of years just studying that one word.

If you want to see faith in the Word you will see it, but if you do not, you never will.

Paul, in quoting Habakkuk 2:4 gives us the key to the CCL, we are to live by faith.

Faith was the only thing you could do at salvation and it is the only thing you can do now.

Get the order wrong and you will be either a fatalist. Take faith out or put some work in prior to faith and you become a legalist.

From Sin you are drawn to faith and then you put faith in the Cross and you are Saved or Restored.

Satan's great tactic against unbelievers is to keep them from believing in Christ; and he attacks Christians by trying to keep us from faith.

The verb "shall live" is the future, middle, indicative of ZAW.

We live "out from" or "upon the basis of" faith.

This life of faith benefits us, we can enjoy life by faith.

This verse is what all of Romans is built around.

We need the righteousness of God. How do we get it? By faith

Remember the simple outline:

Romans 1-8 our relationship with God.

Romans 12-16 our relationship to one another.

In the first eight chapters Paul establishes a need on behalf of man that man cannot fulfill himself. In doing this he shows that man must turn to God if he wants eternal life.

In Romans 1:18 to 3:20 we see Human History and Human nature as God views them and in doing so we see God's case against man, in three parts:

Romans 1:18-32 God's case against the Pagan Man

Romans 2:1-26 God's case against the Moral Man

Romans 2:17-3:8 God's case against the Religious Man

The result of this argument is that all are under sin. And we can do nothing about it.

### **Romans 1:18**

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

While there is a future aspect of the wrath of God in the Scriptures, the wrath of God here is revealed present tense.

The word "revealed" is the same as in v 17 where God's perfect righteousness is revealed. But in verse 18, "wrath" is revealed.

Wrath is ORGEI, the wrath of God or His Holy Indignation.

1. Aristotle said of this word that it was anger mixed with desire and grief.
2. When used of God it looks at the abhorrence of sin but also shows a longing that is mixed with grief for those who live in sin.
3. In the New Testament, wrath is to be avoided by the believer.
4. The wrath of God is expressed not to the believer but to the unbeliever as a result of their condition separated from God:

John 3:36, He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall

not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

5. Paul will later in Romans tell believers that their faith in Christ has removed from them God's wrath:

Romans 5:9, Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

This word "wrath", then, describes the other side of God's righteousness. If God loves, God will also have anger in the sense of rejecting and punishing ungodliness and unrighteousness.

In the OT the figure used for this was often "the hand of God."

Psalm 48:10, As is Thy name, O God, So is Thy praise to the ends of the earth; Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

If the right hand of God's righteousness finds you in faith, there is benefit and blessing. If it finds you in ungodliness and unrighteousness (as an unbeliever, without faith), there is wrath.

**PRINCIPLE:** For God's love to be of value it must have conditions and thus, it must also be the opposite of wrath. God wants to love his creatures, man, but if man rejects His provision of salvation, then there is wrath.

**APPLICATION:** Man must be adjusted to the Justice of God at salvation and the only way to do that is by having God's righteousness.

**NOTICE SOMETHING ELSE:** Paul does not begin with the solution which is Christ, but with the problem, man's sin. It is essential that man recognize his need prior to the consideration of God's solution.

Mark 2:17 Jesus said...It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Do we know that we are sick? The only way we know is by what God has revealed.

This verse also tells us the source of this wrath: It is from heaven. This is idiomatic indicating that this wrath comes from the very throne of God.

First wrath comes against ungodliness: ASEBEIA.

This is a word that is primarily used to describe a category of unbeliever. They are said to mock God, to reject God, refuse to believe God.

The word GODLY which is EUSEBOS is taken from a root word meaning "to honor" and "to adore". In the cultic Greek religions it was used for approaching the gods with a gift and that gift being accepted.

As we transfer it to the NT we can see in this word an approaching of God and fellowship or friendship relationship with Him.

**HENCE:** UNGODLINESS rejects the relationship man can have with God through faith in Christ.

Second, wrath comes against "unrighteousness."

Unrighteousness is ADIKIA in Greek and refers to sins that are against man. It points to immorality and the acts of sins perpetuated against others.

The INHUMANITY of man is not INHUMAN at all, it is ungodly.

Man abuses his fellow man, hurts the innocent and the ones unable to defend themselves because he has first rejected God and then secondly, God's creatures.

Jesus talked of the wrath of God coming against those who would abuse the innocent in Matthew 18:

Matthew 18:6, But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:10, See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.

The words OF MEN expand this concept of wrath beyond the category Paul is immediately addressing. He will look at those who are in paganism and idolatry first, but so much of what is said in each category can apply to the others. There are those who reject a relationship with God and sin against the innocent in every category of mankind.

THE LAST PHRASE sets up how ungodliness and unrighteousness is developed - "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

The word SUPPRESS can mean to hold onto in a good sense or as it is used here, to hold down, to cover up, to suppress.

Man can cover up the truth of God, hold it down, but man cannot destroy it.

In order to suppress something, you must be aware of it, you must know it exists. This is not an ignoring but a suppressing of the truth of God.

The PAGANS of the ancient world had come, as we will see, to God consciousness. But they suppressed the idea of there being a creator and worshipped the created things of this world.

This suppression first come at the point of God consciousness.

The word UNRIGHTOUSNESS describes the manner in which the truth is suppressed. It is done influencing others through sin. The pagans would abuse others, child sacrifices, forced prostitution, molesting children, inflicting pain upon others. All part of the pagan rituals that suppressed the truth of God.

The next five verses (vv 19-23) describe man's journey from reality to religion. Here God the creator providing for man in grace, and man ended up worshipping animals and images. Man goes from the grandeur of God and ends up on the garbage heap of his own devices.

### Romans 1:19

"Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."

This tells us why it is suppression and not ignorance.

This also answers the question regarding the heathen or those who have never heard about Christ. Are they responsible, why do they receive the wrath of God?

Because there is an evidence within them:

When we speak of revelation from God we normally think only in terms of the written word, the Bible. But there are other categories of revelation:

1. Here we have man's inner consciousness. Man, in any culture, in any society, at any time in history, can examine himself. He is created being. And as a created being to some extent he establishes norms and standards, right and wrong.

This tells us a number of things. If I am a created being there must be a creator. If I can establish what I think is right and wrong then there must be an absolute right and wrong. There must be a standard that is higher, greater, grander than myself.

The standard of morality in some cultures may not be very high, but it is still there. Certain things are evident, murder, violence, abuse. Man can quickly figure out that these things are wrong. And if there is a wrong there must be a right and then there must be a standard higher than man.

2. In the next verse (v 20) God revealing himself through nature.

Now with these two we must recognize that they can make man aware that God exists, this type of revelation can even make man aware of the power and therefore, the judgment of God...but they cannot lead man to the love of God.

3. That can only be revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2, God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

4. Jesus Christ incarnate is the revelation of God. He revealed to man the glory and the love of God. He is the living Word of God.
5. Now that Jesus is risen and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, the written word contains the mind of the living word.

The Bible is the mind of Christ.

### Romans 1:20

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.

Pretty straight forward isn't it. Nature reveals God. This is not even hidden, but is clearly seen.

First, we have in this verse the consistency of this revelation:

For since the creation of the world.

This shows us that every man who has ever lived has witnessed this revelation. Also that in nature, man's major opportunity is to gain a knowledge of God.

Second, we see the message of this revelation.

His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature.

Creation, nature, is a reflection of its creator. God's fingerprints are all over creation.

Psalm 19:1, The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

The message is first general: God's invisible absolute attributes. Second it is specific: His attribute of power. Third it is tells of God Himself: His divine nature.

Third, we see the clarity of the message.

"They have been clearly seen ..."

This is an oxymoron. We have something that is invisible and yet at the same time it is clearly seen.

The unseen is God - The Seen is what He has created - The clearly seen is what creation reveals.

Not only are they SEEN they are also UNDERSTOOD.

Therefore, man is without an excuse.

This revelation cannot lead to salvation nor to a personal relationship. But it can lead man to a longing that comes from an unmet need to know the one who has created him and all around him.

At this point, man is conscious of God, and that consciousness of God demands a volitional decision.

Do I seek God my creator or degrees to creation itself?

Do I seek the one who made the tree or do I worship the tree?

### Romans 1:21

"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

"They knew God": That is from the revelation of consciousness and nature.

This refers to the knowledge of a fact apart from allowing the fact to become personal.

Instead: They did not honor Him as God or give thanks.

Two things here, they refuse to believe that the creator whose fingerprints are seen in nature is God. Therefore they did not have an attitude of thankfulness towards Him for how He made them or Creation.

David saw it, he knew it, and he gave thanks:

Psalm 139:14, I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well.

Consider the one who is behind all this - Satan.

Satan's objective with an unbeliever is to obscure the knowledge of God. To hide that which is revealed by creation. So he removes God from creation and makes all this just a product of evolution.

Or, as we will see in the next verses, he gets man to hug the tree and worship what is created.

So rejecting what is evident result in the rejector become futile in his speculations.

FUTILE is a word that means "to render foolish". It can also be translated "vain" or "empty". So they become foolish or fools, vain and empty, in their thinking.

SPECULATION is a word that is used for imagination, what one thinks, but also for discussion and debate.

So this picture those who have rejected any idea of God as an all powerful creator sitting around discussing what is all around them in creation and trying to come up with some explanation, any explanation, other than the fact that God is the Creator and sustainer of all things.

**Romans 1:22**

Professing to be wise, they became fools.

PROFESSING means to assert, and it is active voice. They are not deemed wise by others; no, they will tell you how wise they are.

Wisdom is SOPHOS, but really they are FOOLS which is MORAINO, morons. And that is grammatically set as a verb because God wanted us to be able to see that this is passive voice and therefore, His estimation of what they assert themselves to be.

**Romans 1:23**

And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

And from this human wisdom (self-asserted) the unbeliever rejects the revelation of God and moves toward human religion.

Here we have idolatry. I think in the popular psychological approach to problems today we have some what obscured what idolatry is.

We seem to want to label anything and everything as idolatry. So sin become idolatry, distraction become idolatry.

But God places idolatry beyond these rather normal yet still harmful things that plague man.

Idolatry exchanges God's glory for that which is corruptible.

The exchange occurs in two phases:

1. Truth is exchanged for error: The Bible shows that religion is a direct result of man's departure from the true God. All the wisdom of Egypt, Greece, and Rome did not prevent these nations from falling into idolatry. When one rejects God and His truth the results is religion in its vilest forms.
2. The second exchange comes in the object of worship: Notice the digression in the objects of worship. From birds (they are in the air), to mammals, to reptiles.

Man, in rejecting God and His truth sets off on a path that ends up with the deification of animals, even snakes.

That is idolatry, going from rejecting God, rejecting truth, to an exchange of the true object of worship.

I think these extreme hazards of idolatry can be clearly seen in the next verses.

**Romans 1:24**

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Here we see God's response to their rejection of Him.

The word THEREFORE looks back and then ahead. Back to the rejection and ahead to dishonor and depravity.

Verses 24 and 25 form a paragraph: First, cultic immorality is a result of the exchange of God's glory for the worship of created things; second, because they exchanged truth for a lie, they result was immorality.

NOW, WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity..."

They chose to abandon God and in turn, God abandons them. There is a certain amount of common grace and mercy God extends to all mankind. This is removed and man ends up living out life trying to satisfy his own desires.

God withdraws himself from man and the results can be easily seen in the depravity of our age and even the age to which Paul writes.

LUST cannot be fulfilled by man. Instead it escalates, gets more and more extreme in its desire to satisfy that which cannot be satisfied.

The eventual result is for man to combine the depravity of lust with religion. Thus, in many cultures worship is expressed through sex, prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism.

In ancient Greece the belief was the gods would only be happy when they were having sex, and the only way they would have sex was to be inspired by the temple prostitutes and homosexual priests.

That is how perverse man can get when God is kept out of the picture.

This same principle is seen where God is said to "harden the heart" - which is a response of God to man's rejection of Him and His truth:

Ephesians 4:17-19, This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Man chooses to abandon God, God then chooses to abandon them.

Seven Downward Steps of Reversionism (Backsliding)

1. Playing around with sin:

Romans 13:13, Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

2. Yielding to sin and its power:

Romans 6:13 Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

3. Habitually serving sin:

II Peter 2:14 They are ones having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children.

4. Abandoning self to sin:

Ephesians 4:19 And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

5. Being abandoned by God to sin:

Romans 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Romans 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women

exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

6. Encouraging others to sin:

Romans 1:32 And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

7. Experiencing Hell on earth:

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

I Timothy 5:6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

AGAIN, GOD TURNS THEM OVER only after they have abandoned Him.

Lust of the heart vs. Lust of the flesh: The lust of the flesh may cease with age but the lust of the heart continues long after physical ability ceases.

**Romans 1:25**

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Here again we see the two exchanges, the truth for a lie is a parallel to the ones in verse 22 who profess to be wise.

The exchange of the worship of the Creator for the worship of the creature is parallel to the idolatry of verse 23.

The word LIE is preceded by a definite article, which makes it a specific lie. That lie is the lie that Satan has been trying to pass off as truth since the garden. It is the lie that is above all lies...that God is not God, hat other things, created things, even man himself, deserve the worship that is reserved only for the one true God.

In repeating what these rejectors do, three things are established:

1. It further explains the nature of the offense.
2. It reaffirms the grounds of God's condemnation
3. It vindicates the severity of God's punishment of man's perversion

"Who is blessed forever, amen". Reminds us of the eternal nature of God. These other things are temporal, they do not last, God does.

Now, look at the results in terms of personal immorality.

### **Romans 1:26**

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.

There is a word here that is not translated. It is the word EVEN, "For even their women..."

The last ones in a society to usually be effected by decaying morality are women. By using this illustration Paul is saying all virtue is gone.

The "natural" use is the relationship of man and woman. The use that is "against nature" is lesbianism.

This is the female expression of degrading passions.

In these two verse Paul uses ARSJN for men and QALUS for women. These are not nouns, they are descriptive adjectives which describe not the gender but the drive of a person. The same sexual drive that is described in animals by these two terms.

### **Romans 1:27**

And in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Paul affirms that male homosexuality is also unnatural and then goes a step further in saying that it consists of indecent acts.

It is an error or aberration and receives due penalty:

The word DUE PENALTY involves justice, receiving what one deserves.

NOW WITH THESE TWO SINS I want us to be careful:

The old saying hate the sin and not the sinner must be applied.

We as Christian people must not become homophobic, we must not hate the homosexual, just stand against what they do.

The only hope for the homosexual is the same hope for the adulterer, the thief, the slanderer. Jesus Christ provides salvation and the Spiritual life for the ones who are saved.

Christians are very good at becoming hate mongers, and we must not allow that to happen. There are many homosexual men and lesbian women who are very aware of their lack of fulfillment and are receptive to the truth of God if it is expressed with the love of Christ.

We will see in verses 28-32 that the expressions of abandoning God and His truth are not always cultic depravity and sexual immorality. This rejection can also find its expression in sins.

### **Romans 1:28**

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

The contrast is to the ones who, in verses 22-23, exchanged the glory of God for an image. Here we have the ignoring of God, not seeing fit to acknowledge Him.

The words ANY LONGER are not there. The translator stretched them out from the infinitive but that is a little too much of a stretch.

These are those who ignore God, who act as though he does not exist or matter. While the application could also be to the believer, Paul is dealing with the unbeliever who does not know God.

**RESULT OF THEIR SELF IMPOSED IGNORANCE:** God gave them over to a depraved mind.

The result is that they do that which is not proper or fitting.

**Romans 1:29**

being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

BEING FILLED is a perfect participle that points to a fixed condition.

The word ALL goes with the first four nouns:

1. Unrighteousness: As with verse 18 this is the acts of sins against others.
2. Wickedness: This is evil that desires to influence others with evil.
3. Greed: Basic meaning is to desire more. Not just with money but with anything in which man desires more and more as a result of not being satisfied with what he has.
4. Evil: The desire to injure and retaliate, to harm others for the supposed harm they have inflicted upon you.

With the words FULL OF, it is as if Paul draws a breath and says from these four conditions that fill man you have the following list of sins.

Now whenever a list of sins is given in the scriptures Commentators try to arrange the list, categorizing the sins. But they usually fail. Because sins by their very nature are disorderly and irrational.

**Romans 1:30,31**

Slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

So we have seventeen (17) sins listed:

These are applied to the unbeliever, but we have similar lists applied to the believer:

I Corinthians 6:9-10, Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity,

sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

I want you to notice that is every list of sins we have some things that are extreme and yet also some things that some people might think are rather minor.

Romans 1: Boastful, disobedient children, unloving

I Corinthians 6: Covetousness, getting drunk

Galatians 5: Jealousy, envy, disputes, carousing

I do not think that any of us can read these lists and exclude ourselves. To a perfectly righteous God, any sin is abhorrent.