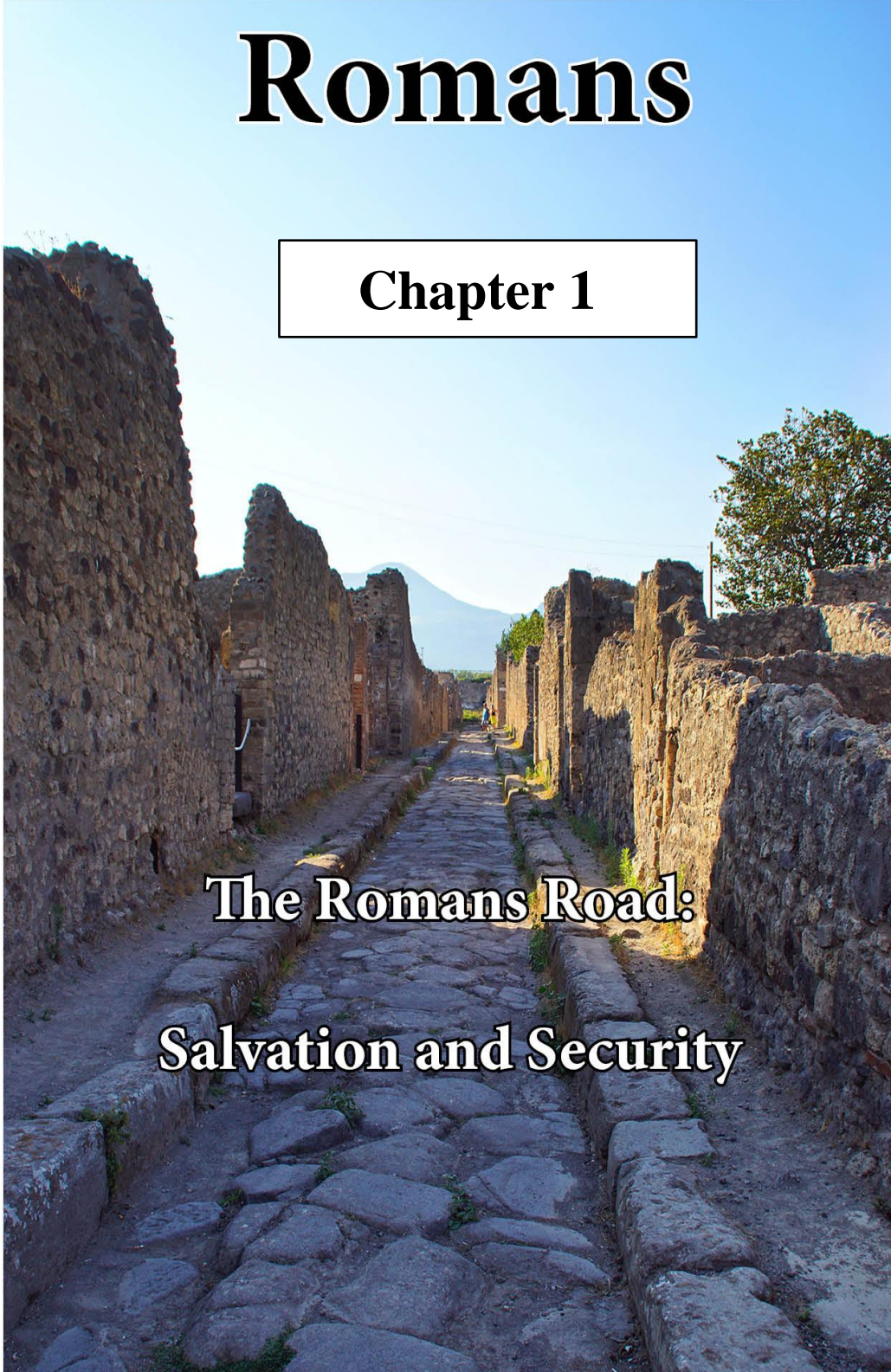


Journeys With God

Romans

Chapter 1

**The Romans Road:
Salvation and Security**



Romans

Chapter 1 Summary

Romans 1:1 - Our Master's Slave

Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

Truth to Learn

All Christians need to recognize that they are God's slaves.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated "slave" is *doulos*, which means, "a slave, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another."

The words "called an apostle" are translated from *kletos apostolos*. *Kletos* is an adjective meaning "one who is called, invited, or appointed." The word *apostolos* means "one who has been sent with a message." Hence, Paul is saying that he was specifically called out by God and sent with a message.

"Separated" is from *aphoridzō*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning "from" and *horidzō*, meaning "to define." It means "to separate" or "to select to some office or work." The Pharisees, the sect that Paul was part of before his conversion, got their name from this word. Paul is probably making a play on words here in the opening of this letter.

The word "gospel" is the Greek word *euangelion*, which is a compound word made up of *eu*, meaning "good" and a form of *angellō*, which means "to proclaim a message." Hence, the word translated "gospel" really means "good news" or "a good message."

Meaning Explained

Paul starts off his epistle (letter) in the manner which was customary for a teacher or person of authority, that is, by identifying who the epistle is from. Usually within the opening phrase, the writer and the intended audience were both identified. Paul deviates from this, however, by giving a thorough treatise on why he is the appropriate person to be sending this doctrinal letter. He doesn't get to who this epistle is written to until verse seven.

You will notice that he uses his Greek name (Paul) rather than his Hebrew name (Saul). This is either because he wants to show that as a result of his conversion to Christianity he is a completely new creation (see **2 Corinthians 5:17**), or because he is the recognized apostle to the Gentiles and he is writing to Christians in the Gentile world of Rome.

He, like other New Testament writers, refers to himself as a slave. We Christians all need to remember that we have been bought with a price and we are no longer our own, but we are the property of our Master. That's easy to forget when we wander through this life seeking our own satisfaction, but we need to remember whose we are and constantly submit our will to His.

The thing that I want us all to take away from today's verse is the fact that even the great Apostle Paul recognizes and makes a specific point of the fact that he is not the master but the servant. Our sin nature, along with the lustful "pride of life" stimulated so strongly by worldly advertisements, is constantly trying to make self the master, not the slave.

Application

Anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior not only receives salvation but, at the same time, gives Lordship to Jesus Christ. In other words, when we were saved from our sins, we became the permanent property of our Lord, and we should not be seeking our own desires and will but His. His will is that we obey Him and submit to Him.

Are you a submitted slave today?

Romans 1:2 - The Promised Gospel

which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

Truth to Learn

The good news of Christ was promised to us in the Old Testament.

Behind the Words

The words “promised beforehand” are translated from the Greek *proepangellomai*. This is made up of *pro*, meaning “before, in time or place” and *epangellomai*, which is itself a compound word made up of *epi*, used as an intensifier and *angellomai*, meaning “to announce.” Hence, *epangellomai* means “to make a public proclamation or promise.” With the prefix *pro* added, this word means to announce or promise ahead of time.

Meaning Explained

Paul says in today’s verse that it was promised beforehand, but what is the “it” he is talking about? Paul is referring to “the gospel of God” which he mentioned in the previous verse. In yesterday’s study we learned that the word “gospel” means “good news,” but what, specifically, is the good news? In **1 Corinthians 15:1-5** Paul states very clearly what he means by the “gospel”

And, brothers, I make known to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, and in which you stand; by which you also are being kept safe, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you in the first place that which I also received, **that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.**

There are two key elements to this “good news.” The first is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Though He is 100% God, He also became 100% man and lived a sinless life. He, therefore, did not need to die to pay for His own sins, since He hadn’t committed any. As a result, He could die a substitutionary death to pay for the sins of others. The proof of His death is the fact that He was buried.

The second key element of the gospel is that He rose again. Only God can give life, and only God can raise someone from the dead. The resurrection is the power behind the death. It is, in effect, the verification that his life was sinless and, therefore, worthy of paying for the sins of others. The proof of His resurrection is the fact that He was seen by Cephas (Peter) and by the other disciples.

Paul tells us that God promised this good news beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. He is not introducing a new doctrine. He is about to present the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, which was clearly taught in the Old Testament, and he will demonstrate so in this letter.

Application

The real question for us is not so much, “Do you know the gospel?” as it is, “Do you believe the gospel?” To know the historical fact that Jesus was crucified some 2000 years ago is really

inconsequential. To believe the gospel, to accept the fact that you are a sinner and need payment for your sins, which payment Jesus Christ gave for you when He was crucified, is life giving salvation. And not mere physical life, but spiritual life, for eternity!

Do you believe?

Romans 1:3 - Son of a King

concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to flesh,

Truth to Learn

Jesus, the focus of the gospel message, the Christ, the Messiah, is descended from King David.

Behind the Words

The words “was born” come from the Greek, “*tou genomenou*” which means “the one who was brought into being” or “the one who became.”

The word translated “seed” is the Greek word, “*spermatos*”, which is both revealing and self explanatory.

“according to flesh” comes from the Greek, “*kata sarka*”, which means, “with respect to that which is flesh and bone.”

Meaning Explained

In verses one and two, Paul talked about the good news that God promised through His prophets. But even more important than who proclaimed this message in the past is who this good news is about. In today’s verse, He tells us who this gospel is about, “His (God’s) Son.” The importance of this verse cannot be overlooked. Paul is making it very clear from the start of this epistle who the central figure is.

He now goes on to declare the pedigree of the one he is talking about. Paul says that Jesus “was born of the seed of David;” that is, Jesus Christ took on human flesh as a descendent of King David (of the sperm of David).

The expression “according to flesh” is an interesting one in that it is used of no one in the Bible except Jesus. But why is this never used to describe anyone else? Saying that he came into being with respect to flesh and bone implies that there is another aspect (another nature) of His being that is not flesh and bone that already existed. This is only true of one who existed before He became flesh and blood and that is not true of any man except Jesus, who is eternally God. He has always had His divine nature and He took upon himself a human nature.

And why is it important for Paul to establish that Jesus was a direct descendent of King David? Because the Jews have been waiting for the One who was to come and rule eternally. This One was predicted numerous times in the Old Testament, most notably in David’s instruction to his son Solomon shortly before his (David’s) death which is recorded in **1 Kings 2:1-4**. In order for Jesus to be declared the Christ, the Messiah of the Old Testament, He must be a descendent of King David.

According to the nineteenth century preacher Albert Barnes, “To a Jew there could be scarcely any honor so high as to be descended from the best of their kings; and it shows how little the Lord Jesus esteemed the honors of this world, that he could always evince his deep humility in circumstances where people are usually proud; and that when he spoke of the honors of this world, and told how little they were worth, he was not denouncing what was not within his reach.”

Application

And yet we, who have so much less to boast about in our own lineage, find it so hard to be as humble as He who had so much about which He could have boasted!

Romans 1:4 - Divine Resurrection Declaration

and declared *to be* the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;

Truth to Learn

Jesus was resurrected from the dead, declaring that He is God.

Behind the Words

The word translated “**declared**” is the Greek word *horidzō*, which means “to mark out the boundaries or limits, as of a field.” Hence, it means “to determine, constitute, ordain, or decree.” As used here it means to designate someone for an office or function or to declare that designation.

“**Power**” is translated from the Greek *dunamis*. It describes “something that is powerful.” It is the word from which we get our English word “dynamite.”

The word “**dead**” is translated from *nekros*, which refers to “a dead person.” It is expressed here in the plural, however. This, coupled with the lack of the preposition *ek* (out of) tied to the word “dead” indicates that the translation could be “of the dead (ones)” or “from the dead ones.”

Meaning Explained

Yesterday’s verse was one in which the Apostle Paul declared the humanity of Jesus. In today’s verse he declares the divinity of Jesus. This verse starts out with, “**who was declared to be the Son of God.**” The three persons of the Godhead determined in eternity past who would be the Father, who would be the Son, and who would be the Holy Spirit. Paul’s statement here is not a reference to that determination, but to the declaration of that determination. And, this declaration was done “with power.” The way in which Jesus was declared to be the Son of God was with a powerful act.

The next phrase “**according to the Spirit of holiness**” is not a reference to the third person of the godhead (the Holy Spirit) as may be implied by the capitalization of the word “spirit.” This expression is grammatically tied to the expression “according to the flesh” in the previous verse. So we see that Paul is conjoining the fact that Jesus was a descendent of David (demonstrating his humanity) and the Son of God (demonstrating his divinity).

Finally, the declaration of his divinity was demonstrated by a powerful act: the resurrection of the dead. However, there are several people in the Bible who are described as having been resurrected from the dead, including Lazarus and the widow’s son who was resurrected by Elijah. But these people eventually died again. Jesus did not. His resurrection to eternal life is the declaration that He is the Son of God. And because He is alive, we know that His promise of our own resurrection from the dead is real. The fact that He remains alive is our assurance that someday we too, will be resurrected unto a life that will never end!

Application

There are many today who do not believe that Jesus was a real person. There are also many people who believe that Jesus was a real person, but they don't believe that He is God. They deny that He was resurrected from the dead; therefore, they don't believe the good news (gospel), and they are destined for an eternity in the lake of fire for their unbelief. But we know that Jesus did rise from the dead and He is alive today! That is the glorious message that we have to proclaim to all. He's alive!

Romans 1:5 - Working for God

Through whom we received grace and apostleship to obedience of faith among all nations for His name,

Truth to Learn

Paul received his salvation and apostleship from Jesus.

Behind the Words

“Received” is from the Greek verb *lambanō*, meaning “to take” or “to receive.”

The word translated “to” is the Greek word *eis*, which means “to or toward.” The root meaning of this word is “rendering something to or toward an end point or conclusion.” It focuses the attention not so much on the process as on the end result.

The word translated “obedience” is *hupokoē*, which is made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” and *akouō*, meaning “to hear.” So, literally it means “to hear under.” This is a picture of a student learning from his teacher. It carries the idea of one who is “listening attentively and obeying what he is taught.”

Meaning Explained

Paul has been talking about the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. He now says, “**Through whom we received grace and apostleship.**” This grace has been shown to all of us who are saved, as he tells us in **Ephesians 2:8**:

For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,

Not only did Paul receive grace just as you and I did when we were saved, but he claims that he received apostleship from Jesus as well. We find this described further in Paul’s letter to the Galatian Christians:

But on the contrary, having seen that I have been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, even as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter (for He working effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), (**Galatians 2:7, 8**)

The next phrase in today’s verse is a little bit awkward in English: “to obedience of faith among all nations” In the original Greek text there is no definite article (the) before the word “faith.” Based on this and on our interpretation of the word *eis* (see Behind the Words), we should translate this as, “**resulting in obedience of faith among all nations.**” That is, God’s plan for Paul’s salvation and apostleship is ultimately to produce obedience and faith among all nations.

Finally, Paul gives the credit and glory to whom it belongs, “**for His name;**” Paul recognizes that the whole purpose of the Christian faith is not our personal glory or satisfaction. It is not simply to obtain a free ticket into heaven. In the final analysis it really has nothing to do with us at all; it has everything to do with God! It is for the glory of His name. The whole purpose of our salvation--totally undeserved and freely given to us by the grace of God--is to bring praise and glory to God Himself.

Application

As Paul tells us in the Ephesians verse quoted above and the verses that follow, we have been saved by grace. Our salvation is a gift from God. We didn't do any works to deserve it. In fact, God's purpose for our salvation is that the works we do, we do for His glory.

So our sole responsibility as Christians is to be hard at work for Him, and He will get all the glory. That should humble us all.

Romans 1:6 - God's Saving Call

among whom are you also the called ones of Jesus Christ;

Truth to Learn

Every Christian is one of God's special called ones.

Behind the Words

The word translated "nations" in the previous verse is *ethnos*, (from which we get the English word ethnic) meaning "a race of people," and in the New Testament it implies a "non-Jewish people." Hence, it is sometimes translated as "gentiles."

"Among" is translated from the Greek word *en*, which denotes "a fixed position in place, time, or state." It implies a condition at rest, not changing or moving.

The words "the called ones" are translated from the Greek word *klētos*, meaning "those who have been called."

Meaning Explained

The "among whom" in this verse refers to "all nations" from the previous verse. Paul is making a subtle, but very profound, statement about the Roman Christians in this verse. They were Roman citizens, which means that they were among the most powerful and dominant people of their time. The Roman people of that day knew this to be true and were likely to be arrogant about it, just as Americans have been for the past 100 years of so.

Spiritually, however, Paul tells them they were simply "among" the other nations. He is telling these people that politically they may have been the elite, but in terms of spirituality, they were not of the chosen tribe of Israel; therefore, they were no better off spiritually than any of the other gentiles. But he immediately makes a different distinction about them spiritually. He refers to them as "the called ones."

When we think of calling someone today we simply think of calling out their name without any implication as to their response or lack thereof. This Greek word, however, has a different meaning. It carries with it the notion of a command with the implication that there has been a positive response. Paul explains this calling later in this letter. In **Romans 8:28-30** he says:

And we know that all things work together for good to those loving God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. Because whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the firstborn among many brothers. And whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

It is very clear from this passage that those who have been called by God (the called of Jesus Christ) have already been justified (saved) as well. Hence, we see that Paul is telling these particular Roman citizens that although they are no better spiritually than any other nation due to their heritage; they are very special to God because they are among his "chosen" ones.

Application

Anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is one of God's chosen ones. Rather than making us lazy in our Christian walk, though, it should both humble us and motivate us to commit ourselves to Him and the work He has for us to do.

Romans 1:7 - The Called Saints

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

Truth to Learn

All Christians have been called by God, and we are all saints.

Behind the Words

“Beloved” is translated from *agapētos*, meaning “one who is loved.” It is from the verb *agapaō*, which means “to love with a self-sacrificing love.”

The word “called” is from the Greek word *klētos*, meaning “someone who is called, or invited.” It is not a verb, but an adjective. In other words, Paul is not saying that the Romans are referred to as saints, but that they are saints who have been invited.

The word translated “saints” is the Greek word *hagios*, which means “something which is pure and set-apart for God’s use.”

Meaning Explained

As I said when we looked at the first verse of this letter, it is customary for such a letter to contain a salutation in the opening portion identifying both the sender and the intended audience. Paul identifies himself right away, but not until verse seven does he identify his intended recipients. This epistle was written to the Christian believers who were at that time living in the city of Rome, center of the great Roman Empire. This letter was written around the year 58 AD, which would be very early in the reign of Nero (the Christian hater) as Emperor.

From the English translation it appears that Paul is saying that he is writing to everyone in Rome, proclaiming them to be beloved of God and to be given the title of saints. That’s not what the Greek sentence construction says, however. It says, “to the ones who are in Rome, who are beloved of God, who are saints that are called ones.” In other words, the letter is to those people in Rome who are both beloved of God and who are called. This is the same calling that is referred to in the previous verse.

For those of you who don’t believe in the doctrines of election and eternal security, I want to be very clear. The Apostle Paul believed in both of these doctrines and taught them as truth. He believed that genuine Christians are those who were “chosen in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him” (**Ephesians 1:4**). We are not Christians because we did something; we are Christians because God did something. For that reason, Paul says that we are “saints” who have been called by God.

And yes, every Christian is a saint! It does not require special canonization by the church for us to be saints. The Bible teaches very clearly that all believers are saints. I want to emphasize, as we pointed out in the previous verse, that Paul is not saying that the beloved of God are referred to as saints, rather that we are called by God to be saints.

Paul then completes this verse with a standard blessing of grace and peace from both God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Application

The thing I want us all to take away from today's verse is the privilege and honor we have as Christians that we have been specifically selected by God and called to a life of holiness and service to the King of Kings. What a great honor! Anything less than complete submission and obedience to Him does not meet His expectation of us and is a waste of time and effort.

Humbling, isn't it? Are you up to the challenge?

Romans 1:8 - World Renowned Faith

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Truth to Learn

Living as a Christian in the midst of paganism takes faith.

Behind the Words

The word “first” is translated from the Greek *prōton men*. The word *prōton* is an adverbial form of a word that means “foremost in time, place, order, or importance.” So we might easily interpret this as “of primary importance.” However, the word following *prōton* is *men*, which is often translated as “on the one hand” and is usually followed by a secondary clause indicated by the Greek word *de*, meaning “on the other hand.” The use of *men* with the word *prōton* indicates that Paul means to say “Before I say anything else, I thank God for your faith.”

The word translated “spoken of” is *katangellō*, which is composed of *kata*, used as an intensifier, and *angellō*, which means “to declare a message.” Put together the word means “to proclaim loudly or to announce with celebration.” It’s not something that is just casually mentioned, but proclaimed!

Meaning Explained

Having completed the salutary portion of this epistle to the Christians in Rome, Paul now says a prayer of thanksgiving for them. He is thankful to God, through Jesus Christ, that the faith of the Roman Christians is a world renowned faith. Imagine that, a group of people with such a strong faith that it has been celebrated through the known world. Now that’s a witness!

Notice that it is God (the Father) that Paul prays to through Jesus (the Son). Paul does not pray **to** Jesus, but **through** Jesus. The Greek text is very clear that Paul is thankful to God through Jesus Christ. In the book of Matthew, when Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray, he instructed them:

**In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
(Matthew 6:9)**

We know that God listens to the heart, not to the words. But when someone begins their prayer with “Dear Jesus,” I suspect their intentions are good, but they are misinformed or uninformed. We are to pray to the Father, not the Son. There is a distinct order set-up within the Godhead with the Son willingly submitting himself to the Father and the Spirit willing submitting Himself to both the Father and the Son. It serves as an example to us of how we are to submit to authorities both within the church and in civil government. Therefore, though the Father and Jesus are equal, God has set-up a specific order. We should be directing our prayers to God the Father in the name of Jesus (with His authority) or, as Paul says it, through Jesus.

The primary subject of Paul’s prayer here is the faith of the Roman Christians. What we often overlook is that the Christians in Rome were living in one of the most pagan, Christian-hating societies that ever existed. To live a life of Christian faith in the midst of that society took a lot of faith.

Application

The world we live in today is becoming more and more like first century Rome every day. Everywhere we look we see signs of pagan humanism and a bias against true Christianity. To live in a world like this, submitted to the one true God, takes faith and not just a little bit. How strong is your faith?

Romans 1:9 - Unceasing Prayer

For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how without ceasing I make mention of you in my prayers,

Truth to Learn

Paul was a prayer warrior and prayed for others constantly.

Behind the Words

The word “**witness**” is translated from the Greek word *martus* from which we get our English word “martyr.” The Greek word means “one who has information or knowledge of something, and therefore, one who can give information, bring to light, or confirm something.”

“**Serve**” is the translation of *latreuō*, the basic meaning of which is “to minister.” Hence, Paul’s service is really a ministry performed for God.

The word “**in**” is a translation from *en*, which is a preposition which denotes position and, by implication, instrumentality. Therefore, the most natural translation would be “**in**.” Paul is saying that he serves God in his spirit; in other words, he is claiming that this is a spiritual service over and above a physical service.

“Without ceasing” is from *adialeiptos*, which means “continually or without omission.”

Meaning Explained

This verse tells us that Paul prayed constantly for the Roman believers. He starts out by saying, “**For God is my witness.**” Paul is making a very strong appeal that the following statement is, indeed, true. He calls on the witness of Him who has knowledge of all things, God himself. Obviously the readers of this letter can’t check out the facts of his statement by asking God, but that’s not the point. The point is that Paul does not swear, since the Lord Jesus himself taught that swearing is wrong (see **Matthew 5:33-37**); rather, he appeals to a reliable witness.

Paul then states that he serves God in his spirit. He is saying that his service to God is not just on the surface but is with the very essence of his being, his spirit. Paul then explains that his service is in the gospel of Jesus Christ whom he describes as God’s Son.

Finally, he tells the Roman Christians that he prays for them constantly. Paul was known for being a prayer warrior. He prayed a lot and a lot of his prayers were for churches, both those which he helped start and those he had never visited (like the Roman church). Evidence of Paul’s prayer life is also found in **Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:3-4; and 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.**

Application

How does your prayer life stack-up against Paul’s? If you’re like me, you feel woefully inadequate compared to him. Paul apparently had a daily routine that included considerable time in prayer, and it wasn’t because he had nothing else to do. With everything we pack into our

days, it seems silly that we can't even find 15 minutes each day to pray for ourselves and for others.

Why don't we do something about that?

Romans 1:10 - Focused on Serving

making request if, by any means, now at length I shall be blessed by the will of God to come to you.

Truth to Learn

Paul's singular focus in life was serving God.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated "making request" is *deomai*. This appears to be a middle voice (subject acting upon himself) of the word *deō*, meaning "to bind." In that sense, therefore, it indicates a person being personally bound up. It is interpreted by most Greek scholars to imply a lack for oneself and, therefore, is often translated as "to make a request for one's own needs." Therefore, the translation "making request" makes a lot of sense.

Meaning Explained

Today's verse is a continuation of yesterday's verse. You really need to read the last phrase of verse 9 along with verse 10, thus:

that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by any means, now at length I shall be blessed by the will of God to come to you.

As we mentioned in our study of the previous verse, Paul is a real prayer warrior. We don't know if Paul regularly prayed at a particular time of the day (every morning or every evening) or if he simply prayed all day long. Certainly, he had to take some time to study the Old Testament scriptures, the writings of other Apostles, and he had to take time to prepare the marvelous messages that he preached. It is entirely possible, however, that whenever he was not specifically engaged in some other spiritual activity, Paul was praying, and he always prayed for the Roman Christians.

One of his constant prayers regarding the Christians in Rome was,

making request if, by any means, now at length I shall be blessed by the will of God to come to you.

Paul had never been to Rome, therefore he asked God to fulfill that lacking which he felt. He really wanted to see and meet the Christians in Rome, possibly because of the reputation they had regarding their faith. More likely, as he says in the next verse, it was because he had further teaching that he wanted to impart to them. Personally, I would love to go to Rome, to see all the historical places, but that's not what was on Paul's heart. His heart was for the believers in Rome. Once again, I am humbled by his singleness of purpose. Paul was so sold out to God that serving Him was all he cared about.

As we learn in the book of Acts, God answered Paul's prayer, and he finally got to see Rome approximately three years after writing this letter. However, it surely wasn't in the manner that Paul expected, for he arrived in chains. In spite of the ignominy of Paul's condition, however, many Roman Christians came out and walked the last day or two of the trip with Paul as they welcomed him with honor into their city.

Application

Is your devotion to God and your desire to serve Him so strong that you can think of nothing else? Or is your desire for everything else so strong that you seldom think about serving Him? That's something that we all need to pray about ... without ceasing!

Romans 1:11 - A Firm Standing

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—

Truth to Learn

Paul was filled with a desire to teach God's truths to others.

Behind the Words

“Long” is from the Greek verb *epipothēō*, which is made up of *epi*, used as an intensifier, and *pothēō*, meaning “to yearn.” Thus this word means “to desire strongly.”

The word translated “impart” is the Greek word *metadō*. This is a compound word made up of *meta*, which implies association, often translated as “with” and a form of *didōmi*, meaning “to give.” Hence Paul is saying that he wanted to give something to them and share it with them at the same time.

“Gift” is from the Greek word *charisma*, which is the noun form of the verb *charidzomai*, meaning “to show favor.” Hence, *charisma* refers to a gift of grace. That is, a gift which was not earned and is not deserved.

The word translated “established” is the Greek word *stērichthēnai*, the passive form of *steridzo*, meaning “to stand fast” or “to fix firmly in place.” The passive form means that Paul wanted this to be done **to** the Roman Christians. That is, he wanted them to be firmly fixed in place (spiritually) as a result of the gift that he wanted to give to them.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul confessed that he longed to see the Christians in Rome. He now explains why; he wanted to share something with them. In the Christian church we often talk about “sharing” an experience with someone else. That is, we want to tell it to them in a way in which they will share in the joy or sorrow of the experience. This is precisely what Paul is talking about. He wants to give the Roman Christians something that can be shared among them.

Paul then tells them that what he wants to share with them is a “spiritual gift.” Some have claimed this means that Paul wanted to impart a “miraculous gift of the spirit,” which supposedly the apostles had the power to give to others. However, this interpretation is unnatural and forced as there is no place in the scriptures where this expression denotes the power of working miracles. In fact, the explanation of this gift is given in the next verse, “**that I may be comforted together with you through the faith of one another, both yours and mine.**” Paul simply wanted to share more truths of the Gospel and the glories of a life in Christ with the Christians in Rome. He wanted to encourage them by teaching them about a life of faith, and he wanted to be encouraged by their own accounts of faithful living.

His purpose in wanting to do this is, “**so that you may be established.**” That is, Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to have a firm doctrinal footing. He knew that faith in Christ and the surrendered life are essential for Christians. He also knew that learning the truth of God's word would result in these Christians becoming firmly grounded in their faith, able to withstand any storm of life.

Application

Is that where your faith is today? Do you feel firmly fixed in your faith and in your daily walk with God, or does God often feel far away? If so... who do you think moved?

It is possible to feel firmly fixed in your faith, but it requires regular, careful reading and study of the Bible. It also requires a consistent commitment to live your life God's way, instead of your own way.

Romans 1:12 - Encouragement Needed!

that is, that I may be comforted together with you, through the faith in one another, both yours and mine.

Truth to Learn

The Apostle Paul needed comforting at times as we all do.

Behind the Words

“That is” is translated from the Greek *touto de estin*. Literally, this would be translated as “and this is.” This phrase implies not just an explanatory repetition of the previous phrase but a delicate characterization of why Paul wants to share a spiritual gift with them.

The words “comforted together” are a translation of the Greek word *sumparaklethenai*, which is made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and a form of *parekaleo*, which is a verb meaning “to call alongside as a counselor, an encourager, or a comforter.”

Meaning Explained

This verse explains why Paul wanted to visit Rome and the Christians there and why he wanted to share with them a gift of spiritual truths. He wanted to see them more firmly established in their faith, and he wanted to jointly be comforted with them. It is clear from the grammatical construction that Paul was not chastising them for needing more spiritual gifts. He knew that these people were living in the midst of a pagan society that was so focused on national expansion and the riches that it brought that they were in need of the truth of God’s word. In the middle of this type of sensual and indulgent living, the Roman Christians had shown themselves to be of remarkable faith in pursuing their Savior, but it was not easy any more than it is easy to be a Christian in today’s western society. They needed some encouraging and comforting as did Paul.

This may come as a surprise to some of you, but the Apostle Paul needed to be comforted and encouraged. Sure, he was a giant of the faith (though apparently short in stature). Sure, he could perform miracles. Sure, he had an understanding of spiritual truths with a clarity that few men of the time had and that few have had since, but the apostle also had a sin nature like you and I do. He will even explain some of his inner struggles with that sin nature later in this letter. He needed to be with other Christians, and he needed to be comforted.

As Christians, we all need comforting at times. God knows this and has sent us a special comforter, the Holy Spirit. Jesus even referred to Him as our *parakletos*, our comforter:

And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, (John 14:16)

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and shall remind you of all things that I have said to you. (John 14:26)

Application

The next time you are inspired by a sermon or a word of encouragement from someone you look up to spiritually, remember that they need encouragement and comforting too. But they may be so busy encouraging and comforting others that they don't recognize that need in themselves. This week why not encourage and comfort someone who has blessed you.

Romans 1:13 - Focused Zeal

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that I often planned to come to you (but was held back until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other nations.

Truth to Learn

Paul had intended to visit Rome several times, but it wasn't yet part of God's plan for Paul.

Behind the Words

The word "ignorant" is translated from *agnoeō*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning "not" and *noeō*, meaning "to perceive" or "to understand." Therefore, we can see that *agnoeō* means "ignorant or unaware."

"Planned" is from the Greek word *protithēmi*, composed of *pro*, meaning "before, in time or location" and *tithēmi*, meaning "to place." It means "to place before, in the mind." In other words, it means "to give thought to ahead of time, to intend, or to plan ahead of time."

The words "held back" are from the Greek verb *kōluō*, meaning "to hinder, weaken, prevent, or restrain."

Meaning Explained

I really enjoy the tenderness that Paul shows toward other believers. He could easily have started off this verse with, "You, brothers and sisters, are ignorant of the fact that I have often intended to come visit you ..." but in such matters he is much kinder. He says, "I do not want you to be ignorant." The implication is very clear, they were ignorant, and he didn't want that to be the case.

Paul had wanted to visit Rome for some time, and apparently had made plans to do so on numerous other occasions, but he was prevented from doing so. We don't know specifically what hindered Paul. It is likely that it simply wasn't God's timing.

His reason for wanting to be with the Roman Christians, as we said earlier, was to share a spiritual gift, probably a message of strengthening and encouragement. He elaborates a little more on his reason for wanting to come in today's verse, "that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among other nations." Paul was not looking to share a plate of dried figs with them, that's not the type of fruit that he is talking about. He's talking about the fruit that comes about as a result of the Spirit of God working in people's hearts.

You will notice that Paul's objective is to do that which will ultimately bring praise to God, not what will ultimately bring praise to Paul. This Paul is dramatically different from Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted Christians for personal gain and because of personal zeal. He is still a zealot, but now that zeal is focused on the *work of God* rather than on the *work of Paul*.

Application

Are you a zealot today? Is there something that you are so totally committed to that you place it above all else in your life? If so, what is it? Is it your children? Is it your business? Is it your husband or your wife? Is it your health? Is it your retirement? These are all good things to be

zealous about, but they are all the wrong things if you're not first zealous about serving God, and doing so His way.

It's good to be committed to a cause but don't let that commitment take you in a direction other than where God wants you to go!

Romans 1:14 - Indebted to God

I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

Truth to Learn

Paul was compelled to preach to the Gentiles because of what he owed to God.

Behind the Words

“Debtor” is from *opheiletēs*, meaning “one who owes a debt or a favor.”

The Greek word that is translated “barbarians” in today’s verse is *barbarois* which literally is “barbar ones” or “those who say barbar.”

The word translated “wise” is *Sophos*. The meaning of this word in the New Testament is someone who is godly wise as opposed to worldly wise. It denotes a fear of God and an understanding of His ways. Secondly, it refers to the possession of a certain practical ability in applying learning and truth.

“Unwise” is from *anoētos*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and *noeō*, referring to “things of the mind,” that is, comprehension. This, *anoētos* refers to someone who is lacking intelligence.

Meaning Explained

This is an interesting verse from the apostle Paul. On the surface it appears that Paul is saying that he owes a debt to a number of people, but I don’t think that’s what he means. Paul was called by God specifically to be the apostle to the Gentiles (nations), that is, to non-Jews. We see this later in Romans:

For I speak to you, the Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, **(Romans 11:13)**

In fact, Paul did not have an option as to whether or not he was to preach the gospel. He was compelled to do so by God. He owed it to God because of what God had done for him (salvation) and because he was called by God to do it.

For if I proclaim the gospel, it is no glory to me, for necessity is laid upon me; and woe is to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! **(1 Corinthians 9:16)**

That’s why Paul calls himself a debtor. He felt like he owed a great debt to God, and it was only by being obedient to God’s call that he could pay off that debt. He expresses that debt in terms of people because it was to people that he was compelled to preach.

In today’s verse Paul says that he is “debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians,” but what does he mean? We have to remember that when Rome conquered any land, those who were conquered were permitted to retain their local language, but they were also required to use the common language of the Empire. This common language was Greek. Hence, anyone who spoke Greek was considered civilized. Anyone who did not speak Greek sounded like someone uttering, “bar, bar, bar ...” Thus, they were called barbarians.

Paul then expresses these two classes of people in another manner as further explanation, “to wise and unwise.” A literal translation of this phrase would be “to the wise and the

unintelligent.” I think he makes this distinction so that it is clear that he is not talking about a political difference, but a social difference. He wants to show that he is not bound or prohibited to preach to people based on social class, because the gospel is to all people regardless of social class.

Paul felt a strong constraint on himself to do what God had called him to do. He felt a deep seated conviction that he was called to preach. He also clearly believed that all who are saved are called to serve. Paul goes into much more detail about this notion in Romans chapter eight.

Application

What has God called you to do for Him? Do you know? Do you feel compelled to obey Him the way Paul does?

Romans 1:15 - Listening and Ready

So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

Truth to Learn

Paul was ready to risk his life to obey God's call in his life.

Behind the Words

The expression "I am ready" is translated from *prothumos*, which is a compound word made up of *pro*, meaning "before or forward" and *thumos*, which refers to "a temperament, passion, or mindset." This word means "predisposed, willing, or ready" to do what is expected.

"Preach the gospel" is from the Greek word *euangelidzō*. This is another compound word which is made up of *eu*, meaning "good or well" and *angellō*, meaning "to announce, proclaim, or tell." Hence, *euangelidzō* refers to "proclaiming or telling the good news" that Christ has paid our sin debt for us by His death on the cross.

Meaning Explained

Paul continues on with the idea that was started in the previous verse. He is compelled to preach the Gospel to the Greeks and the barbarians, and now he is saying that he is also ready to preach the good news to the people in Rome. Paul was completely submitted to God and committed to whatever God wanted him to do! Keep in mind that this was written during the reign of Nero who hated Christians. Yet Paul was willing to risk his life to proclaim the gospel message.

In yesterday's verse I asked you if you knew what God has called you to do and whether or not you feel compelled to do it. I'm sure that some of you responded with the question, "How do I know what God has called me to do?" That's a question that many Christians wrestle with today.

The only way to know what God has called you to do (or what God is calling you to do) is to be in constant communication with Him. Now, I can already hear some of you saying, "But I pray to Him constantly!" and I'm sure some of you do. But you will notice that I said "communicate with" not "talk to." Communication requires a two way conversation. Sometimes we Christians get so busy talking to God that He can't get a word in edgewise and even if He did, we wouldn't hear it because we are so busy talking.

"OK," you say, "what do I need to do to hear God's message for me?" The first thing you need to do is to be quiet. Then you need to listen. Note that "listen" is an active verb not a passive verb. Listening is something that we do intentionally and it takes effort. We need to listen to God speaking to us when we hear a sermon. We need to listen to God when we read and study our Bible. We need to listen to God when we are praying. Sometimes, the best way to listen to God is to get away from all the distractions of life and just listen. It could be in a quiet, out of the way place outside somewhere, or it could be while you are sitting in the bathtub or standing in the shower preparing for the day ahead.

Application

Remember the story of Mary and Martha (**Luke 10:38-42**)? Martha was so busy she didn't have time to listen to the Lord. Mary, on the other hand, sat at His feet and listened.

Are you busy, or are you listening?

Romans 1:16 - Powerful Message

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first and also to Greek.

Truth to Learn

There is eternal life giving power in the gospel message.

Behind the Words

The word “ashamed” is from the Greek *epaischunomai*, which is made up of *epi*, meaning “upon” and *aischunō*, meaning “to be ashamed.” Hence, it means “to feel shame upon oneself.”

“Greek” is translated from *hellēn*, the word used to describe anyone from the Grecian peninsula. However, in the first century it was used in a generic sense of anyone who spoke the Greek language. And Jews of the first century, like Paul, referred to anyone who was not a Jew as a Greek (Gentile). This is the sense in which Paul uses the term in this verse.

Meaning Explained

Paul has been talking quite personally to the Roman Christians about his desire to see them and to give them a gift of great spiritual value. He has just told them that he is under debt to God to preach the gospel to all people. He now makes a subtle, albeit significant, turn in his message from one of introduction and consolation to one of open proclamation. Paul is just starting his sermon. Let’s listen carefully!

He says he was not bringing shame on himself by preaching the good news of Jesus. But why should anyone consider him to have been ashamed? Think about this: the Jews had cast Paul off, regarding him as an apostate. And by the wise among the Gentiles he had been persecuted, despised and driven from place to place, and regarded as the filth of the world. He had every reason to feel personally shamed. Nonetheless, he was not ashamed of the gospel.

Why was Paul so confident in his stand on the gospel? Because as he says here, “**it is the power of God to salvation to everyone believing.**” The power in the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ died to pay the price for your sins and mine, is the power of God Himself. God, who demands absolute righteousness from each of us, cannot accept us into His presence if our righteousness is any less than perfect. Since none of us is righteous in and of ourselves (**Romans 3:10**), we are condemned to eternal separation from God. Belief in the gospel, however, results in God crediting us with the righteousness of Christ. Hence, the gospel **IS** the power of God resulting in salvation to everyone who believes! Praise God!

Paul then goes on to say that this salvation was offered to the Jews first and then to the rest of the world, whom Paul refers to as Greeks. If you carefully read the book of Acts you will see that Peter and the other apostles focused their preaching entirely on the Jews, and Paul’s early ministry was to Jews. In whatever city he entered, Paul went first into the synagogues to deliver the gospel message to the Jews there. But because the Jews rejected His message, Paul then turned to the Gentiles.

Application

The power of God is packaged in a very simple message. We are all sinners; therefore, our righteousness falls short of God's standard. Our sin and lack of righteousness earns us death (both physical and spiritual). But Jesus' death pays our penalty, and we receive His righteousness when we accept His payment. Then, through God's power we receive eternal life!

Romans 1:17 - Confident Faith

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; even as it has been written, "The just shall live by faith."

Truth to Learn

From salvation to service, we reveal God's righteousness.

Behind the Words

The phrase "from faith to faith" has been hotly debated for centuries. The Greek is *ek pisteos eis pistin*. As I have said before, Greek is a very descriptive language. It is an inflected language, meaning that the "case" of nouns and adjectives tells us how the nouns or adjectives are used. The two nouns in this phrase, *pisteos* and *pistin*, are both inflected forms of the noun *pistis* which means "faith." The first of these, *pisteos* is in the Genitive case, which means "of faith" or "from faith" and the second, *pistin*, is in the Accusative case, which means that it is the direct object of the verb.

Now, since the case of a noun does not always give a precise indication of its meaning, prepositions were added to the Greek language to make the meaning clearer. In this example, *ek pisteos* uses the proposition *ek*, which means "out of" or "from" implying "the result of" (that is, the outcome of faith), and *eis pistin* uses the preposition *eis* which means "into" or "unto," implying that it leads, or continues, into faith (you could say it results in faith).

Meaning Explained

I give you my apology up front for the technicality of today's discussion. I hope you didn't get lost in the Greek grammar lesson here. Technical as it is, it is important for a complete understanding of this verse.

What Paul is saying in this verse is that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel first of all as the result of faith. That is, we are declared righteous when we believe the gospel message, just as Abraham was declared righteous when he believed God regarding the promise of many descendants (see **Genesis 15:6**). We see from this that righteousness is revealed from (as the result of) faith. Paul is then saying that this righteousness, which God has now given us, is also revealed when we live by faith after we have been saved. That is, righteousness is revealed unto (resulting in) faith. One way of putting it is to say that the righteousness of God is revealed from saving faith which results in a daily living faith.

By way of firmly reinforcing what he means (that the righteousness that God gives us results in daily living faith), Paul then says, "as it has been written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" This is a quote taken from **Habakkuk 2:4**. Both the Septuagint translation of this passage in Habakkuk and the original Hebrew carry the meaning, "the righteous person shall live by his confidence in God."

Application

This gospel message that we are to proclaim to the world contains the most powerful truth ever declared. Belief in this truth results in God's righteousness being applied to us, and it results in us having the faith to serve with humility and to continue on with confidence. Through this confident faith in God, we can face anything that happens to us in this life knowing that God truly loves us and will care for us.

Does your life of faith reveal the righteousness of God?

Romans 1:18 - Truth Bullies

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

Truth to Learn

Sinfulness suppresses and hides God's truth. Our job is to reveal that truth to the sinful world around us.

Behind the Words

The word translated "wrath" is the Greek word *orgē*, meaning "anger." However, there is another Greek word often translated as anger. This word is *thumos*, meaning "indignation" or "wrath." According to Aristotle, "*ogrē*, anger, is desire with grief", so we can say, it is anger directed at those with whom God does not desire to be angry, namely mankind.

"Ungodliness" is from *asebia*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning "not" and a form of *sebomai*, meaning "to hold in reverence" or "to worship." Therefore, we could easily translate this word as "irreverence." It does not imply non-religious actions, but the practice of actions which are different than what God demands.

The word "unrighteous" is translated from *adikia*, made up of the privative *a*, meaning "not" and a form of *dikē* which refers to "that which is right." In other words, this word refers to those actions which are not right in God's sight.

"Suppress" is from the Greek word *katechō*, made up of *kata*, meaning "down" and *echō*, meaning "to have or to hold." Hence, it literally means "to hold down." It is the picture of a bully holding down a weaker child just because he can and he wants to.

Meaning Explained

Paul just talked about how the righteousness of God is revealed to man through the gospel message. He now looks at the other side of the equation, the wrath, or anger, of God. We Christians are often quick to grasp hold of God's truth and God's love, claiming it as the reason God has revealed his Son to us. But, we are just as quick to shun the notion that God gets angry.

This grievous anger of God is revealed against "**all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.**" This is the very opposite of the godliness and righteousness of God Himself. These are people who don't give God the reverence He deserves, though they may claim to be Christians. And, Paul says, they aren't doing the things which God wants them to be doing. Instead, they are holding down, or suppressing, the truth about God by their irreverent and unrighteous ways, and that makes God angry!

Now, before we get too condemning of others, let's remember that before we were saved we were just like them. We didn't give God the reverence He deserves, nor did we act in a way that was right in His eyes. And, even now that we have been saved, it's not our own righteousness that God sees (for we are all unrighteous), but the righteousness of Christ, which He has credited to our account.

Application

Our job as unrighteous sinners, who have been granted the righteousness of Christ, is to shine like beacons to the world around us, displaying the truth about God, not hiding it. But the light we are to project has nothing to do with our own actions or obedience. It has everything to do with the work that God has done through His Son on the cross. And that beacon has nothing to do with what we are doing for Him. It has everything to do with what He is doing through us.

Romans 1:19 - Our God Revealed

because what may be known of God is evident among them, for God has revealed *it* to them.

Truth to Learn

God does not hide Himself from mankind.

Behind the Words

The phrase, “the thing which may be known” is from the Greek *to gnoston*, which literally means “that which is knowable.”

“Evident” is translated from the Greek word *phaneros*, which means “to cause to shine” or “to cause to appear.” Therefore, it could be translated as “made to appear” or “revealed.” The words “has revealed” are translated from the verb form of this same word.

The word “among” is translated from the Greek preposition *en*, which denotes a position in place or time. As it is used here it implies “in the presence of.” So, even though some translations read “in them” or “within them,” it could also be translated as “among them.” Paul is not saying “that which may be known of God is revealed inside each person” rather, he is saying “that which may be known of God is revealed among mankind.” This interpretation is further supported by the following verse.

Meaning Explained

The reason that God’s anger is revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men is because they suppress and deny the truth about God. “But,” you may ask, “how can they suppress and deny the truth about God if they don’t know the truth in the first place?” In other words, “How can God hold men accountable before Him if they never know Him?”

Paul anticipates this question and answers it in today’s verse and the verse to follow. Not all things about God are apparent or even knowable by the finite minds of humans. However, there are many things about God that are knowable such as His godliness, His presence, and His power. The reason we know that God is revealed among mankind, according to Paul, is because God has personally revealed Himself among mankind. In the next verse, Paul will go on to explain how God has revealed Himself among us.

The point is that our God does not want to be separated from us. He doesn’t want to be hidden from us. He wants to have a personal relationship with us. As we will see in the next verse, He has revealed Himself to all of mankind through creation. In spite of that, most of mankind chooses to ignore the evidence of creation and refuses to acknowledge Him. Therefore, God sees mankind as unrighteous and irreverent. Nonetheless, He still sent His Son to die on the cross so that we could become righteous and experience close, personal fellowship with Him. And we can experience this personal relationship with Him, not just for a few years, but for all of eternity.

Application

Paul is telling us in these verses that God has already revealed Himself to all of mankind and, as a result, all of mankind is without excuse. We, who have believed the additional revelation about Jesus Christ, have been credited with a righteousness that we didn't earn and that we don't deserve. These facts alone should cause all Christians to fall to their knees praising God for His mercy and His revelation!

Romans 1:20 - Created Evidence

For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, both His eternal power and Godness, so that they are without excuse,

Truth to Learn

God reveals much about Himself in His created world.

Behind the Words

The word in today's verse translated "invisible" is from the Greek word *ahoratos*, which is a compound word made up of *a*, implying negation, and a form of *horaō*, which means "to see" or "to behold." Hence, *ahoratos* means that which is unseen, or invisible.

The words "clearly seen" are from the Greek, *kathoratō*, which is a compound word made up of *kata* meaning "down" (as in this case, it is often used for intensity) and a form of *horaō*, which we just learned means "to see." So *kathoratō* could mean "to look down upon" but more accurately means "to see distinctly or clearly."

"Understood" is translated from *noieō*, a form of *nous*, meaning "the mind." *Noieō* implies an exercise of the mind. That is, it means "to comprehend or understand."

Meaning Explained

Paul now explains what he meant in the previous verse when he said, "because what may be known of God is evident among them, for God has revealed it to them." It has already been pointed out that not all things about God are apparent or even knowable by the finite minds of humans. However, there are things about God which are knowable even though they are not visibly apparent.

"But," you may ask, "what are these invisible things?" Paul answers that question in the latter part of today's verse, "His eternal power and Godness (Divinity)." Mankind understands the fact that God is who He says He is and understands His immeasurable power because they can be seen in creation. Paul says that these things are "clearly seen" and "understood" by the created things (which includes mankind).

Let me say it again, God's power and Godness, though invisible, are clearly perceived and understood by His creatures by viewing all that God created. We cannot actually see God's limitless power, but we can see the result of it in creation. We cannot see the Godness of God but we can see the effect of it in mankind himself. Anyone who has ever seen the birth of a child is confronted with the power and dominion of God and to deny it is to suppress the truth.

Therefore, Paul says, people who hold down the truth about God are without excuse! Much of the world today refuses to believe in the God of creation. Instead, they have a god they call science. Some day they will stand before the creator and He will be undeniable. I believe it takes more faith to believe that everything we see came into existence through a "scientific" process that cannot be seen, much less proven, than to believe that God created it.

Application

The next time you gaze at a sunset, a mountain, a river, a beautiful flower, the starry sky on a clear night, or the miracle of conception and birth, be in awe. This is evidence of God, Himself! And, this God of creation wants to have a close personal relationship with you. Yes, even you!

Romans 1:21 - Fools in Darkness

because, having known God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were *they* thankful, but their reasonings became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Truth to Learn

Those who reject God become fools living in darkness.

Behind the Words

The word translated, “**reasonings**” is the Greek word, *dialogismos*, from which we get our English word “dialog.” The Greek word refers to “discussion and reason, or debate.”

The words “**became futile**” are translated from the Greek word *mataioō*, which means “to become destitute of real wisdom” or “to become foolish.” The word is expressed in the passive voice indicating that it is something that was done **to** them. That is, they were made destitute of real wisdom.

Asunetos is the Greek word translated “**foolish**.” This is a compound word made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and *sunetos*, which means “to have mental discernment and good judgment.” Thus, *asunetos* means “not having insight or understanding.”

“Were darkened” is translated from the Greek verb *skotidzō*, which means, “to be obscured, or darkened.” Again, this word is in the passive voice meaning that it, too, was done **to** them.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul said that the invisible things about God (His eternal power and Godness) are clearly seen and understood by the creatures (mankind) so that they are without excuse. He now goes on to give clarification regarding that statement.

He says, “**Because, having known God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were they thankful.**” Paul makes it very clear that all of mankind has known God, but some have not given Him the glory, that is the worship, that He is due. Neither did they give Him the thanks that He justly deserves. The previous verse makes it clear that those who reject God recognized His power and Godness but willingly reject Him.

The next phrase is very interesting. It says, “**but their reasonings became futile.**” As discussed in “Behind the Words,” someone else made them void of wisdom after they rejected God. The implication is that God made fools of them because they rejected the real truth. Their very ability to reason with regard to God has been made to be without wisdom. Paul also says, “**their foolish hearts were darkened.**” In the Apostle John’s first letter he says,

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (**1 John 1:5**)

Those who reject God do not have this spiritual light; instead, they live in darkness. Consider this, the real pain of Hell for those who reject God will not be that of the heat and flame. It will be the darkness created by the total absence of God and the knowledge that He is gone from them for eternity!

Paul's message is quite clear in this verse. Those who reject God do so of their own will after having comprehended the existence and power of God. As a result of that rejection, God has made them unable to understand Him, and He has removed His light from their hearts. In a very real sense, God has already judged them because they have rejected who and what He really is. In fact, in John's Gospel he says:

The one believing into Him is not condemned; but the one not believing has already been condemned, for he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (**John 3:18**)

Application

Throughout the Old Testament it is proclaimed that God is a jealous God and we are to worship no one or nothing other than Him. Yes, He is a loving God, but He is also a jealous God who expects us to recognize Him for who and what He is. Those who neglect to do so are destined for a torturous and dark eternity!

Romans 1:22 - Foolish Wisdom

Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Truth to Learn

The wisdom of this age is the message and teaching of fools.

Behind the Words

The word translated, “professing” is the Greek word, *phaskontes*, which means “to assert or affirm or claim.”

“Wise” is translated from the Greek word *sophos*. This is a title that wise men of old attached to themselves. Later they changed this to *philosophos* (he who loves wisdom) who, although claiming to have all knowledge and wisdom, denied the one true God.

The words “they became fools” are a translation of a single Greek word *mōrainō*, which means “to become a moron or a simpleton.” This, again, is in the passive voice indicating that it is something that was done **to** them by someone else. We could paraphrase this verse, therefore, as:

Claiming to be wise people, they were made to be fools.

Meaning Explained

Remember, in the last verse we learned that those who rejected God, even though the evidence of His presence was made known to them, were not thankful, and they did not glorify God for whom and what He is. As a result, they were made void of wisdom in their reasoning and discussions, and their hearts were darkened.

Paul now puts an exclamation point on that thought by saying, “Professing to be wise, they became fools.” Not only did God make their reasoning and discussions void of any real wisdom, He then turned them into fools; all the while they are proclaiming how wise and intelligent they were. This is precisely what Isaiah said would happen:

For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hidden. (**Isaiah 29:14b**)

King David started out the fourteenth Psalm this way:

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” (**Psalms 14:1a**)

And, in his first letter to the Corinthian Christians, Paul said:

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (**I Corinthians 3:19**)

If you listen to the message of the intellectuals and scientists of today you will hear loud proclamations that there is no God. They will tell you with certainty that everything came into existence billions of years ago at the “big bang” and that we have evolved into the species we are today. But, Scripture makes it very clear that God is in control and is not mocked by those who deny His existence and power. In today’s verse, Paul tells us that instead of being mocked by them, God makes them to be the fools they think others are. A just sentence for someone who claims to be smart and at the same time rejects Almighty God, don’t you think?

Application

It is easy for us to feel overwhelmed by the constant message of the wise ones of our world. It's easy to feel like a fool when we proclaim Biblical truth and the gospel message. But don't back down! We know who the real fools are, and they desperately need to hear the Good News!

Romans 1:23 - Idol Worship

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into a likeness of an image like corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Truth to Learn

We tend to worship corruptible things that we can see, rather than our eternal God who we can't see.

Behind the Words

“Incorruptible” is translated from the Greek word *aphthartos*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and a form of *phtheirō*, which means “to waste away, to spoil, or to corrupt.” Hence, *aphthartos* means “that which does not waste away, spoil, or corrupt.” Later in this verse the word *phthartos* is translated “corruptible.” Man is corruptible and wasting away (dying, if you will), but God remains the same forever.

The word translated “image” is the Greek word *eikōn*, from which we get our English word icon. It means “a likeness, representation, or image of something else.” And, the word “like” is from *homoīōma*, meaning “a form or a resemblance.”

Meaning Explained

Paul is talking about those men (and women) who suppress the truth about God. They deny His power and His very existence even though God has made Himself known to them through his creation. And because they refused to thank Him or to glorify Him, He gives them up to foolish reasoning, though they think themselves to be wise.

Paul continues on in today's verse to describe some of their actions after the light of truth has been removed from them. Instead of worshipping the true God, these ungodly people choose to worship the creatures instead of the creator. The Old and New Testaments are filled with examples of animals and their images that have been worshipped throughout the ages. The Greek gods were nearly always in the form of humans with supernatural abilities. The Egyptian Gods, on the other hand, were in the form of birds, animals, and reptiles. Rome had adopted all of these as acceptable deities to worship. Secular history records the numerous creatures that have been the focus of man's religion, and it continues on to the present day.

Today, one of the most prevalent forms of image worship is secular humanism. Though they would claim to not worship any god, it is themselves that they make to be the gods. In order to do this they claim that there is no God, so, instead, God turns them into fools believing in such things as “the big bang” and “evolution,” all the while promoting the supremacy of mankind.

Let me repeat what I said a few days ago. God is not mocked! Just because these unbelievers claim there is no God does not make it so, and Paul will continue in the next verse to describe what God's response to their “wisdom” has been, and continues to be.

Application

It is easy for us to put our faith, trust, hope, and comfort in things other than God. It could be money, a job, a home, family, a worthy cause, even our church. Keep in mind that if it's not the eternal, unchanging God of creation, it's an idol. And ... our God is a jealous God!

Romans 1:24 - God Gives Up

Through which God also gave them up to impurity, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Truth to Learn

God deals directly and harshly with those who deny Him.

Behind the Words

The expression “gave them up” is translated from the Greek word *paredoken*, which is a compound word made up of *para*, meaning “alongside” or “to a place beside” and a form of *didomai*, which is the verb meaning “to give.” This word means to “give over to someone or something” or to “surrender something to another.”

“Impurity” is translated from *akatharsia*, which is a compound of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and a form of *kathairō*, meaning “to cleanse, either physically, morally, or spiritually.” In this case Paul is referring to moral uncleanness.

Meaning Explained

Back in verse 21 we said that these people became vain and that their hearts were darkened. We noted at that time that these actions were expressed in the passive voice, indicating that these things were done **to** them. The previous verses implied that it is God who did these things to them. In today’s verse it is no longer an implication, but a clear statement.

Today’s verse says that because these people have decided to worship idols of created things instead of the creator of all things, God “gave them up.” And what did God give them up to? He surrendered them to the uncleanness of their own lusts. God did not force them to indulge in unclean practices, fulfilling their wicked lusts; He simply stopped preventing them. He allowed them. In effect, He let go of the reins and let them do what their own inner desires were driving them to do. Today’s text tells us that in satisfying their own inner lusts these people “dishonor their bodies among themselves.” The actions of their lusts involve their bodies in a way that is dishonoring to themselves and even against nature itself, according to verse 26.

Paul will spend the next few verses giving a more detailed explanation of what these dishonoring practices are. The point of this verse is, because these people refuse to give God his rightful place in their lives, God lets them have their way and allows them to be completely controlled by their sinful desires.

Notice that this is just the first of God’s “giving them up.” In this verse He gives them up to impurity. In verse 26 it is to dishonoring passions and in verse 28 it is to a worthless mind. This explains a lot about what is happening in Western society today as secular humanism has continued to spread. We, as a society, have not given God His rightful place and, as a result, He has allowed our society to decline into a state where satisfying self is the prime directive.

The real tragedy is that this type of thinking has even pervaded the Church and the lives of Christians!

Application

Let us not allow ourselves to be seduced into thinking like the world system. God did not create us to serve our own lusts. He created us to serve Him. Instead of serving ourselves, let us give God His rightful place through our worship and praise of Him and through our submission to His will.

And let us be a beacon of light in a world of darkness!

Romans 1:25 - The Truth or The Lie

who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the created thing rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Truth to Learn

We all choose to believe either the truth about God or the lie.

Behind the Words

“Exchanged” is translated from *metallassō*, which is made up of *meta*, denoting “a change of place or condition” and *allassō*, meaning “to change.” The word, *metallassō* means “to convert from one state to another.”

The word translated “glory” in verse 23 is “*doxan*,” the root of which is “*doxa*.” According to the Complete Word Study Dictionary, “the word primarily means thought or opinion, especially favorable human opinion, and thus in a secondary sense reputation, praise, honor (true and false), splendor, light, perfection, rewards (temporal and eternal).”

In today’s verse, the phrase “truth of God” is a Hebraism (an idiomatic Hebrew phrase) meaning “the true God” or “the truth that He, and He alone, is God.”

Meaning Explained

On first glance it appears that this verse is a restatement of verse 23, but there are a couple of significant differences here. In verse 23 Paul said they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God” and in this verse he says they, “exchanged the truth of God.” Thus verse 23 says that they changed the reputation or splendor of God into an image. So we see that in verse 23 those who deny God and His power use an image for worship, which is a representation of a created thing. In this verse they have progressed to the point where they deny the truth that Jehovah is the one and only God who is to be revered and worshipped. Paul says that these who deny God’s existence convert that truth into a lie (actually, the Greek text says “the lie”).

These non-believers, according to Paul, both worship and serve the created thing more than the creator of all things. Why do they do this? It’s because they don’t want to submit to Almighty God. Instead, they are willing to submit to a false god, knowing all the time that it really is no god at all. In the case of secular humanism of today, they make man the god and worship and serve self rather than the creator. Hence, the lie that is being subtly propagated today is, “since we have evolved from lower life forms and there is no proof of a creator, we are the supreme beings (i.e. we are gods).

Paul now does an interesting thing in this verse. As he finishes this comparison of false gods and the true God, he is so focused on the divinity, majesty, and holiness of God (the *doxa* glory of God), that he is compelled to proclaim a “doxology” ascribing praise to God. It is almost as if he is once again so struck with the very truth he is proclaiming that he is compelled to give God the glory He is due. And he follows it with a proclamation of *amen*, meaning “it is so!”

Application

Let me ask you, have you bought into the lie that we are the highest form of evolved creatures? Or, do you find yourself awestricken by the divinity, majesty, power, love, and holiness of God? Or do you find yourself somewhere in between, not accepting the lie but not in awe of our Creator God?

How you answer these says a lot about your relationship with the God who sent His Son to die so that we can know Him personally.

Romans 1:26 - Disgraceful Passions

Because of this God gave them up to dishonorable passions, for even their females exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Truth to Learn

Paul makes it very clear that homosexuality is sinful.

Behind the Words

The phrase “gave them up” is from *paredoken*, meaning “to give up to” or “to surrender something to.” This is the same word found in verse 24 and verse 28.

“Dishonorable” is from the Greek word *atimios*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and a form of *timaō*, which means “to give honor.” Hence, *atimios* means “dishonorable” or “disgraceful.”

The word translated “females” is *thēlus*. This is the word which is used in expressing a sexual gender distinction from men. The usual word for woman or wife is *gunē*.

The expression “natural use” is from the Greek words *psukikēn krēsin*. *Psukikēn* refers to the natural, or physical, body. *Krēsin* is from the verb *chraomai*, meaning “to use.” Hence, *krēsin* refers to the use of something. Together, we see these words refer to the natural physical use. Its predominant use is in reference to sexual activities.

The expression “against nature” is from the Greek words *para psusin*. The word *para* means “beside, alongside, or against” and *psusin* means “to bring forth as in child birth.” Hence, these two words refer to that which is “against the natural use for reproduction.”

Meaning Explained

Paul is talking about those who have rejected the evidence of the one true God and have decided to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator. In verse 24 Paul said because they exchanged the glory of God for idols, God “gave them up” (He surrendered them) to the uncleanness that is in their hearts, driving them to dishonor their bodies between themselves.

Now, because they refuse to acknowledge their creator, God surrendered them to unnatural and disgraceful passions. And what are these disgraceful passions? One of them is, “**their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.**” What Paul is saying is that these women gave up normal sexual intercourse within the confines of marriage for a form of sex that is contrary to that which would produce children.

Paul is saying that these women developed a view of sex that is simply a physical act rather than an expression of deep devotion between a husband and a wife. With this unnatural view of sex, all kinds of perversion become possible to the depraved mind of Godless people. Based on the specific words used here and what Paul says in the verse that follows, it is quite certain that he is referring to female homosexuality.

Paul will get even more graphic, though tastefully so, in the next verse about what the men have done.

Application

God is very clear in this series of verses that homosexuality is wrong. It is sinful! But we need to be careful that we Christians learn to love the sinner even though we hate their sin. Someone engaged in this sinful practice **can** be saved, but once saved they must reject their sinful ways.

Romans 1:27 - Wicked Sinfulness

And in the same way also the males, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, males with males committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Truth to Learn

God says homosexuality is shameful, indecent, and obscene.

Behind the Words

The words, “**in the same way**” are a translation of the Greek word, *omoios*, which means, “of equal degree or manner and denoting perfect agreement.” It is sometimes translated as “likewise.”

In the previous verse we learned that, “**natural use**” is from the Greek, *psukiken kresin*, which is a reference to normal sexual intercourse.

The word translated “**lust**” is not the word that is normally used for strong physical desire, *epithumia*. Instead Paul uses the word *orexis*, which also means a strong desire or lust but it carries with it the notion of “reaching out after an object with the purpose of drawing it to oneself and appropriating it.” This is a lust with a selfish possessiveness mixed in.

“**Males**” is not translated from the generic word for a human person, *anthropos*. Rather, it is the word *arsēn*, which specifically means “males” as distinguished from females.

The word “**shameful**” is from the Greek word *aschēmōsunē*, a form of *aschēmōn*, meaning unbecoming or indecent. Hence, *aschēmosunē* means “shamefulness, indecency, or obscenity.”

Meaning Explained

Notice the way Paul has carefully described the wickedness in this verse, being descriptive enough to make it absolutely clear what he is talking about without getting graphic to the point of crudity.

In the previous verse he leveled a clear condemnation against women who have rejected God and His truth by describing their sexually perverse use of their bodies as objects of sexuality for pleasure’s sake (especially homosexuality). He now describes in even more detail the sexual wickedness of men when the restraints of decency and morality have been cast off.

He starts out with “And in the same way.” These are conjunctive words which by themselves each imply a joining of the previous text with this verse. The presence of these conjunctive words together indicates a very strong connection between the two verses. In other words, the actions of the women and the actions of the men are equally joined together in their wickedness and filthiness in God’s eyes.

What he says about the men, however, is even more descriptive of homosexuality than what he said about the women. Paul says that these men have put aside the natural use of women for sexual intercourse and have turned to other men to satisfy their overpowering selfish sexual passion.

Application

There is absolutely no doubt what Paul (therefore, God) thinks of homosexuality. He says it is shameful, indecent, obscene, and disgraceful! Yet, in our Western society, the gay rights activists are trying to convince us that there is nothing wrong with it, that it's simply a personal preference.

God says it is wicked sinfulness!

Romans 1:28 - Lost Discernment

And as they did not approve to have God in *their* knowledge, God delivered them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Truth to Learn

Those who reject God risk having a mind that can't discern between good and bad.

Behind the Words

The words, “they did not approve” come from two Greek words, *ouk edokimasan*. *Ouk* is the Greek particle indicating absolute negation. The other word, *edokimasan* is a past tense form of *dokimadzo*, which means to “judge or examine with the intent of finding good.” It is the word used of testing gold to determine its value. It is often translated as “test” or “approve.”

“A depraved mind” is translated from *adokimon noun*. *Noun* refers to “the mind, intellect, or understanding.” *Adokimon* is made up of *a*, implying negation, and a form of *dokimadzo* which we just looked at above. Hence, *adokimon* means a mind or intellect that is incapable of discerning (or judging) appropriately.

The words “not proper” are translated from *me kathekonta*. *Me* is the conditional negative particle and *kathekonta* means “that which is right, or fitting, or convenient.” So we see that *me kathekonta* means “that which is not right or not fitting.” In other words, “that which is inappropriate or abominable.”

Meaning Explained

In today's verse we see the result of sinful man resisting the love of the Almighty God to the point where God eventually stops restraining man, giving man what he claims to want. Paul is saying that these people who have rejected the position and power of God, of their own volition, determined that they would not believe in God and determined that they do not approve of any knowledge of Him.

As a result, according to Paul, God delivered them over to a mind which is incapable of discerning good. Do you see the play on words here? Paul is saying that since these rejecters of God have determined, or judged, (*dokimadzo*) not to have God in their knowledge, God surrendered them to a mind that is incapable of judging right (*dokimadzo*). As a result they will do those things which are inappropriate and they become even more ungodly.

There is a warning here from a loving God who has sacrificed His own son to reconcile sinful man to Himself. If we continually reject His offer, at some point He will give us up to our own sinfulness so that we can no longer make accurate judgments about what is right and wrong.

“But,” you may ask, “how can a loving God give up on anyone?” The answer is that God knows our heart, and if we are determined to reject Him and His message, He will allow us to do just that, with eternal consequences! And that's not just what some theologian says; it's what the Apostle Paul teaches. Yes, our God is a loving God. He sent His only Son to die a horrible death so that you and I can have a personal relationship with Him. But He is also a jealous God, and if a person resists and rejects His love enough, He will judge them with eternity in Hell.

Application

Only God knows who has rejected Him to the point where He has given them a mind that can't discern good and bad. Our responsibility is to declare the gospel message to everyone!

Romans 1:29 - Stuffed With Sin

being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers,

Truth to Learn

When we reject God we are filled with all kinds of sin.

Behind the Words

“being filled with.” (*plēroō*) – to fill-up completely. The sense is that it is filled up as completely as possible, stuffed full. It is expressed here in the passive voice, meaning that it is something that was done **to** them.

“unrighteousness” (*adikia*) – that which is not conformable with justice, or that which is wrong.

“sexual immorality” (*porneia*) – The root of the English word pornography – fornication, lewdness, or any sexual sin.

“wickedness” (*ponēria*) – evilness, wickedness, maliciousness, of an evil disposition.

“covetousness” (*pleonexia*) – covetousness or greediness and, by implication, fraudulency or extortion.

“maliciousness” (*kakia*) – badness. That is, wickedness as an evil habit of the mind.

“envy” (*phthonos*) – envy or jealousy. Particularly the pain felt at the sight of excellence or happiness of someone else.

“strife” (*eris*) – strife, contention, or constant arguing.

“deceit” (*dolos*) – to bait, implying trickery, deceit, and fraud.

“evil-mindedness” (*kakoētheia*) – bad character or disposition.

“whisperers” (*psithuristēs*) – secret slanderers.

Meaning Explained

In yesterday’s verse we learned that since these rejecters of God did not what to retain God in their knowledge, He surrendered them to a condition where they became incapable of making good judgments. The result of this is that they do those things which are inappropriate.

Paul now says that these people, after they were surrendered by God to a mind incapable of discerning what is right, were then filled with a host of personal characteristics as described above. Is it any wonder that the foes of God in this world will go to any length to discredit and destroy the church and anyone who professes a relationship with God? And this is only a partial list of personal characteristics of those who reject God.

Lest we get too high on our own pedestal, however, let me remind you that all of us are capable of these things. They are part of our sin nature, and any of these things can rear its ugly head in any one of us when we get away from that close relationship with God, our Father. The difference is that we know God, and we can confess our sinfulness to Him, knowing that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one, whose blood cleanses us from all sin.

They, on the other hand, have rejected God and have no one to turn to for cleansing or mercy. And someday they will face the Judge, the One whom they have rejected!

Application

We can all think of people who are filled with one or more of these selfish sins, perhaps even people in the church! But let's all look at our own lives and ensure that we are not controlled by any of these things. And, instead of shaking our finger at others in a condemning manner, let's pray for them.

Romans 1:30 - Active Hatred

slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Truth to Learn

Those who reject God and show an open hatred for Him are fools.

Behind the Words

“Slanderers” (*katalalos*) – One who openly slanders others.

“God haters” (*theostugēs*) – (*theos*) God + (*stugeo*) to hate or abhor – one who hates God.

“Insolent” (*hubristēs*, from which we get our English word “hubris”) – Arrogant insulter, insolent persecutor of others, one who shames or humiliates another.

“Arrogant” (*hyperēphanos*) – (*hyper*) above + (*phaino*) to shine – arrogant and proud.

“Boasters” (*aladzōn*) – boaster, bragger.

“Inventors of evil things” (*epheuretas kakōn*) – inventors of bad things or of worthless things.

“Disobedient to parents” (*goneusin apeitheis*) – to parents - unwilling to be persuaded, unbelieving, disobedient.

Meaning Explained

Paul continues his list of characteristics of the mind filled to the brim once God has surrendered those who reject Him to their own sinfulness.

We can see many of the characteristics that we were guilty of ourselves before we were saved and to which we gravitate when we are not under the control of the Holy Spirit. The first one is very similar to the last one in yesterday’s list. The difference between whisperers and backbiters is primarily a matter of volume. By that I mean that whisperers go quietly behind someone else’s back and say gossipy things (it doesn’t matter whether they are true or not). Backbiters, on the other hand, are more brazen and their message is always negative.

The worst of these listed in today’s verse, I suppose, is “God haters.” This word means not just to feel hatred but to show hatred as well. That anyone would openly hate the all powerful Creator of all things and the Judge of all mankind is foolish. It is also the most self-condemning action a person can do. To disbelieve in the existence of God is one thing, but to hate God you have to believe that He exists, otherwise there is no object of your hatred. Remember that Paul began this part of his message back in verse 20 where he said,

For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, both His eternal power and Godness, so that they are without excuse,

According to this, there really is no such thing as an atheist (one who doesn’t believe that there is a God), only those who claim to be atheists. One day at the Great White Throne Judgment they will stand before the very God they claim doesn’t exist (the one they hate) and they will be condemned to eternity in hell for their unbelief!

Application

Christians should exhibit the extreme opposite of the people being described here. The most obvious of our actions should be a love for God. Do your actions demonstrate an active love for the one who has given you eternal life?

Romans 1:31 - Paul's Pun

undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

Truth to Learn

We all fight a battle against our own sinful nature.

Behind the Words

“Undiscerning” (*asunetous*) – without insight or understanding, unintelligent, foolish.

“Untrustworthy” (*asunthetous*) – breaker of a covenant or agreement, treacherous.

“Unloving” (*astorgous*) – without family love, hard hearted toward kindred, especially toward ones own children.

“Unmerciful” (*aneleamonas*) – Unmerciful, not compassionate.

Meaning Explained

Paul now completes his list of characteristics that fill the mind of those who reject God. But, before we look at Paul's meaning, notice his use of alliteration (all these words begin with the Greek letter alpha). Also, his word choice of the first two (*asunetous* and *asunthetous*) is actually equivalent to our modern day pun (same or similar sounding words with vastly different meanings). Paul, it seems, had a sense of humor!

This verse ends an extensive three verse list of selfishly sinful characteristics. I dare say there are few people, if any, who display all of these characteristics. It's bad enough that they should be filled with only a few. This is the sin nature at war against God Himself, a sin nature that we all have. And, this is a description of Rome at the time Paul was writing. Seneca, one of the purest moralists of Rome, who died in 65 A.D., says of his own time:

All is full of criminality and vice; indeed much more of these is committed than can be remedied by force. A monstrous contest of abandoned wickedness is carried on. The lust of sin increases daily; and shame is daily more and more extinguished. Discarding respect for all that is good and sacred, lust rushes on wherever it will. Vice no longer hides itself. It stalks forth before all eyes. So public has abandoned wickedness become, and so openly does it flame up in the minds of all, that innocence is no longer seldom, but has wholly ceased to exist.

Our own society is heading that same direction today. It becomes more obvious with each passing year. We Christians must maintain a witness and not be sucked into these same characteristics. But only through the power of the Spirit can we resist our natural sinful tendencies to do all of these things.

Application

Take a few minutes to go back over this entire list from verses 29 through 31 and honestly ask yourself if you have a problem with any of these things. I'm sure with most of them, when you read them you will say, "I would never do that!" But there may be one or two of these that are a problem for you.

If so, take the time to confess them to God and ask for the power of His Holy Spirit to give you victory over them so that your witness will shine like a beacon in the night!

Romans 1:32 - Rejection Fellowship

who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those practicing such things are worthy of death, not only do them but also approve of those who practice them.

Truth to Learn

Those who reject God are comfortable with others who feel the same way.

Behind the Words

“Knowing” is translated from the Greek word *epiginōskō*. It is made up of *epi*, meaning “upon or over” and *ginōskō*, meaning “knowledge.” Hence it is more than mere knowledge about something, it is knowing upon something. In other words, recognizing or realizing the truth about something.

The words, “righteous judgment” are a translation of *dikaiōma*, which roughly means, “a righteousness proclamation.”

The word translated “practicing” is a form of *prassō*, meaning “to perform an action continually, repeatedly, or habitually.”

The words “approve of” are from the Greek word *suneudokeō*, a compound word made up of *sun*, meaning “together,” *eu*, meaning “good” or “well” and *dokeō*, meaning “to think.” So we see that *suneudokeō* means, “to jointly think well with others” or “to take pleasure along with others.”

Meaning Explained

Paul now gives a final word of condemnation concerning those who deny God. He says that those who reject Him are not only filled with all kinds of sinfulness, but they also know better. Paul says they know the righteous judgment of God. That is, they recognize, or realize, that God has already proclaimed something to be true.

And that something is explained in the next phrase, “that those practicing such things are worthy of death.” These God haters know that those who do the things they are doing (not just occasionally, but repeatedly) are guilty of sins that are worthy of death in God’s mind.

But Paul doesn’t stop there. He says that these people not only do these things themselves, but they take pleasure in others who do the same. So what Paul is telling us is, not only do these people realize what God thinks of the things they are doing habitually (that such sins are worthy of death), but they feel gratified with others who practice such things as well. In other words, they feel camaraderie with other sinners who are doing the same things.

The interesting thing is that when these people are in the presence of someone living a life submitted to God, they don’t feel camaraderie, they feel conviction! They don’t want the light of God shining on their darkness. This is precisely what our Lord said regarding those who reject Him:

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their works were evil. (John 3:19)

When we witness (either by word or by deed) to those who are sold out to sin, it convicts them and they don't like it (or us).

Application

Now let me ask you a question, "When you are in the presence of people whom you know are living in defiance of God, do they welcome you, or do they want you to leave?"

Think about it!