

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"The only hope of Christianity is in the rehabilitating of the Pauline theology. It is back, back, back, to an incarnate Christ and the atoning blood, or it is on, on, on, to atheism and despair" (the late Francis L. Patton, godly and able president of Princeton University).

"The epistle to the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. It can never be too much or too well read or studied, and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes" (Martin Luther).

Paul wrote this letter about 56 A. D. when he was in the city of Corinth. Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome. He wanted to go there and he prayed that God would make this visit possible (Rom. 1:10-12; 15:23-24). This makes the letter to the Romans unique. Most of Paul's other letters were written to churches where he had personally ministered. But here was a church (the church at Rome) where Paul had not been and where Paul had not taught. We might ask this question: When Paul gets to Rome what is he going to teach? Here in the book of Romans Paul gives a doctrinal **preview** of the content of his teaching ministry. What Paul unfolds in these 16 chapters is nothing less than a doctrinal masterpiece. What is Christianity all about? What is its central message? What is the true gospel of God? What really is the good news of salvation? What kind of message did the church's greatest apostle preach wherever he went? To find the answer to all these questions we must turn to the greatest doctrinal book in the New Testament -- the epistle of Paul to the Romans.

The influence of the Book of Romans is incalculable. A group of scholars once made a list of the fifteen greatest books, books that were great based upon their beneficial influence upon humanity. Included in this list were John Wesley's *Journal*, Luther's *95 Theses*, Augustine's *City of God* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. As his *Journal* reveals, Wesley was an unsaved preacher until he read the book of Romans and understood God's way of salvation. Luther, a Catholic monk, was greatly influenced by Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith," which opened his eyes to the truth of justification by faith. Augustine's *City of God* was founded on his study of the Book of Romans. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was written after reading the Book of Romans in prison. It became the best selling book of all time, next to the Bible. Among the greatest books of the world, four which come near the top of the list were all directly influenced by the Book of Romans. Has the Book of Romans changed your life?

Romans 1:1

Note the first sentence (where do you find the first period?). It is 126 words long in the KJV. This is the characteristic style of Paul (see Eph. 1:3-14). The Apostle John had a different style (short, simple yet profound sentences) -- see 1 John 4:8,19 etc. The correct doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture goes far beyond the

idea of mere mechanical dictation. Instead the personalities and styles of the human writers are clearly observable, and yet what they wrote is free from error and exactly what God intended--see 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Tim. 3:16. Each Bible writer had his own unique style and characteristics, and yet God used them as His penmen to record exactly what the Lord wanted to be included in His Word.

In verse 1 Paul tells us three things about himself:

1) SERVANT= slave, bond-servant, love-slave of Jesus Christ

This is an amazing statement when we consider Paul's past background (see Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13-15). Saul of Tarsus was the church's greatest enemy. How did the church's greatest enemy become the church's greatest apostle? How can we explain the amazing transformation described in Galatians 1:23? How can Saul the persecutor become Paul the "servant of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1)? SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED!!

According to the New Testament, what happened to cause such a change? What caused the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? See 1 Corinthians 9:1 -- "have I not SEEN Jesus Christ our Lord" and compare Acts 9:3-6 and 1 Cor. 15:8. Hostile critics of Christianity must come up with a satisfactory explanation for the conversion of Paul. George Lyttelton (1709-1773) studied the conversion of St. Paul in an attempt to disprove Christianity. He was converted as a result of his research. In his remarkable paper, "Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul" [This article is found in the classic set called *The Fundamentals* edited by R.A. Torrey and A.C. Dixon and others, Vol. II, page 353] he sets forth four propositions which seem to exhaust all the possibilities in the case:

Paul was an impostor who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive (he really didn't see the risen Christ, but he said he did).

He was a fanatic ("enthusiast") who suffered from the force of an overheated imagination (he sincerely thought he saw the risen Christ, but he really did not).

He was deceived by the fraud of others (others somehow tricked him into thinking he saw the risen Christ).

What he declared to be the cause of his conversion did actually happen, and therefore the Christian religion is a divine revelation (Paul really did see the risen Christ and therefore Christianity is true and Christ is alive!).

What problems do you see with the first three possibilities?

2) Apostle =one who is sent on a mission

God had a unique and special ministry for Paul and the other apostles. ARE THERE STILL APOSTLES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

In Eph. 2:20 the apostles are said to be "foundational" men. A foundation is only laid once at the beginning, of a building project. The apostles were needed in the beginning of the church age to fulfill their special "foundational" ministry.

No one today can meet the qualifications of an apostle, because an apostle must have SEEN the RISEN CHRIST (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9 and Acts 1:22 -- finding a replacement for Judas). Christ does not appear to men today (1 Peter 1:8; John 16:10).

Application: see Acts 2:42. Today we do not have apostles but we have the DOCTRINE or the TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES. We do not have the Apostle Paul today, but we do have the DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLE

PAUL, namely the BOOK OF ROMANS (and his other writings that are now part of Scripture).

3) Separated unto the gospel of God

There is a negative aspect to separation (separation from sin, from the things of the world, etc.) but this verse emphasizes one of the positive aspects (not SEPARATION FROM but SEPARATION UNTO). Paul's **dedication** and **devotion** to the gospel of God is seen in Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:17-18; 2:1-2; 9:16; 15:1-4; Eph. 6:19-20; Acts 20:21,24.

Key phrase in the book of Romans = THE GOSPEL OF GOD (this is what the book of Romans is all about)

GOSPEL= good news, glad tidings

Nowhere in the Bible is the good news of salvation more clearly unfolded than in the book of Romans. Paul skillfully and systematically presents the gospel of God in this epistle. Today there is much confusion as to what the gospel really is and how it should be presented (See What is the True Gospel?). Let's carefully study how Paul defined and explained and presented the gospel, and may we never forget where Paul got his gospel from (see Galatians 1:11-12). Also let's be on the alert for FALSE GOSPELS (see Galatians 1:6-9).

Romans 1:2

The Gospel is not something NEW (newly revealed). The Gospel was revealed even in the Old Testament Scriptures (compare Galatians 3:8).

The glorious facts about the death and resurrection of Christ are not now being revealed for the first time. In the book of Romans (in which Paul sets forth the gospel of God) Paul constantly quotes from the Old Testament (61 times). For examples of Paul's usage of the Old Testament, see Romans 3:10-18 and Romans 4:1-3. The good news concerning Christ is found in the Old Testament (compare Luke 24:26-27,44). Isaiah 53:6 (the first part of the verse) sums up Romans 1-3 (All men condemned before a holy God). Isaiah 53:6 (the last part of the verse) sums up Romans 4-5 (Christ died to save and justify sinful men).

Romans 1:2

"Holy scriptures (writings)" -- compare what is written on the cover of most Bibles (HOLY BIBLE). Holy = set apart. The Bible is set apart and different from all other books. It is in a class of its own. As a book it is totally unique. It is the only "God-breathed" (inspired) book (2 Timothy 3:16). As someone has said, "I believe the Bible from cover to cover and I even believe the cover (HOLY BIBLE)!" May we always handle the Bible with care, knowing that it is God's Holy Word. A Tribute to the Bible

Romans 1:3-4

What is the Gospel all about? According to Rom. 1:3 the GOSPEL **concerns** God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. IT IS A CHRIST-CENTERED GOSPEL. (compare Rom. 1:9 "the gospel of his Son"). The gospel concerns Christ and apart from the Person and work of Christ there is no gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:1-4 where we have the gospel in a nutshell). Any preaching that is not Christ-centered is not true gospel preaching. The true gospel is a CHRIST-CENTERED GOSPEL, and God gives very strong warnings concerning those who preach any other gospel (Galatians 1:3-9).

When you think of the PERSON OF CHRIST you should think especially of two things:

1. **His humanity** (ROMANS 1:3 and see also John 1:14; Matthew 1:1; 1 Tim. 2:5). He **was made** (see John 1:14) of the seed of David according to the flesh. Christ was in the kingly line, a descendant of David. Why did God become a man? Hebrews 2:9 helps us with this question.

2. **His deity** (Romans 1:4 and see also John 1:1; 20:28; Tit. 2:13; 1 Jn.5:20, etc. He became a man but He never ceased being God. The term "Son of God" points to the full deity of Christ. This is how the Jews of the first century understood the term (see John 5:17-18). The Deity of Christ

Note: Read Matthew 22:41-46. The Jews knew that the Messiah must come from the line of David (Matt. 22:42). The Jews also understood Psalm 110:1 as being a reference to the Messiah: "The **LORD** (Jehovah, referring to God the Father) said unto **my** (the pronoun "my" refers to David, the writer of the Psalm) **Lord** ("Adonai" meaning "Lord" or "Master", and here referring to the Messiah or the Christ). The Jews were baffled by our Lord's question (Matthew 22:45-46) which is simply this: HOW CAN DAVID'S SON ALSO BE DAVID'S LORD? Paul answers this question in Romans 1:3-4.

In His humanity ("according to the flesh") He is the Son of David (Romans 1:3). **In His deity** He is the Son of God (Romans 1:4), and thus He is David's Lord. His resurrection was the final proof that He was everything that He claimed to be.

He did not become God at the incarnation, nor did He become the Son. The incarnation was the point at which God's eternal Son assumed our humanity, without ceasing to be God. The Son of God became the Son of Man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26). May we ever be filled with wonder and praise for His condescending love and grace by which He stooped so low in order to raise us so high! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Compare Romans 1:3-4 with Romans 9:5 (do you see the emphasis on His humanity as well as the emphasis on His deity?).

"By the resurrection" -- The resurrection was the final proof that Jesus Christ was everything He claimed to be (compare Matthew 12:38-40 and John 2:18-21).

Either Jesus Christ rose again from the dead or He did not. Explain the problems and inadequacies of the following false theories:

1. The disciples stole the body of Jesus (compare Matthew 28:11-15).
2. The body of Jesus was removed by Joseph of Arimathaea (see Matthew 27:57-60).
3. The women and then everyone else went to the wrong tomb.
4. The people who claimed to see Christ actually had hallucinations and visions. They thought they saw Christ but they really didn't.
5. Jesus did not actually die on the cross, and when they put Him in the tomb He was still alive.

"With power" -- In the Old Testament, whenever God wanted to point out His great power He pointed to the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea (Deut. 26:8; Exodus 32:11; Deut. 4:37; 2 Kings 17:36; etc.). We do not find this in the New Testament. Today when God wants to point out His mighty power, to what great event does He draw our attention (Eph. 1:19-20; Philippians 3:10)? When God wants us to see His love He points us to the **cross** (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10); when God wants us to see His power He points us to the **empty tomb**.

When you think of the WORK of Christ you should think especially of two things: 1) His **crucifixion** 2) His **resurrection**. You will find these two key events mentioned in each of the following passages: Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; and 1 Thess.4:14.

Romans 1:5

Romans 1:5

To whom should the gospel be preached? Paul's answer: "ALL NATIONS" (compare Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8). The term "grace" refers to God's undeserved favor and unmerited kindness. Paul realized how undeserving he was and that he did not deserve to be an apostle (see 1 Cor. 15:9-10 and Eph. 3:8). "For obedience to (of) the faith"—The gospel must be OBEYED. It is BY FAITH that a person obeys the gospel. Please note the following:

1. Read Acts 16:30-31 and notice that verse 31 is a command!
2. Read 1 John 3:23. What is the first commandment that a sinner must obey? What is the first thing that a person must do in order to please God (compare Hebrews 11:6)?
3. Acts 17:30. What is God's command? Who is given this command?
4. 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Unbelievers are those who **obey not** the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Unbelief is a very serious thing: John 3:18; 3:36; 8:24; 16:9; etc.

Paul's MOTIVE -- "for His Name". Paul's only concern was for the Name and glory and reputation of His Lord and Saviour (compare 1 Cor. 10:31; 3 John 7).

Romans 1:6

What is God doing in the world today?

"Among whom" = among the **nations** (v.5)

Today God is visiting the Gentiles (nations) and taking out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). Christ is building His church (Matthew 16:18). The term "church" (Greek-ekklesia) refers to God's called-out assembly. God is calling people unto the fellowship of Himself (1 Cor. 1:9). Has God called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Romans 1:7

The recipients of Paul's letter were the Roman believers:

1. They were "beloved of God" greatly loved by God. We will learn more about God's great and amazing love in Romans 5.
2. They were "called to be saints". A saint is "a holy one, a set apart one, a person who is separated from sin and separated **unto** the service of Christ." Every believer is a saint, but sometimes believers do not live very saintly. We will learn how to live saintly in Romans 6 and following.

Romans 1:8-13

AN IMPORTANT LESSON ON PRAYER

(with Paul as our example)

There are at least eight things we learn about prayer from these verses:

1. Prayer Should Include Thanksgiving (Verse 8).

Paul was thankful to God for the Christians who lived in Rome, and he was especially thankful for their FAITH. These people were FAMOUS FOR FAITH. Their faith had gained them a world-wide reputation (compare 1 Thess. 1:8 where we learn that the Thessalonian Christians were also famous for their faith). What is FAITH? There are two simple Bible definitions of faith found in Romans 4:21 and Acts 27:25. [Contrast the first century church of Rome, the one Paul wrote to, with the Church of Rome today. The Church of Rome today is also famous -- famous for its traditions, sacraments, ritual, papal leadership, etc. -- but not famous for faith in

God and His Word]. Paul was thankful that in the capital of the pagan Roman empire there were those who worshipped and believed the true and living God.

2. Prayer Must Be "Through Jesus Christ" (Verse 8).

We can come to God in no other way (John 14:6). He is our great MEDIATOR (1 Tim. 2:5) and apart from Him prayer would be impossible. This is why we pray "in Jesus' Name."

3. Prayer Should Be Constant (Verse 9).

Paul prayed for the Romans "without ceasing" (verse 9 and compare 1 Thess.5:17). This same Greek expression was used to describe a HACKING COUGH (coughing without ceasing). Just as a hacking cough stays with a person throughout the day, so Paul's prayerful concern for the Roman believers was something that was always with him.

4. Prayer Should Be Genuine (Verse 9).

God was Paul's witness. God knew what kind of prayer life Paul really had. Other people cannot witness your prayer life; only God can. Paul was not just pretending to be a man of prayer. Paul knew that his prayer life was genuine and he knew God knew.

5. Prayer Should Involve Intercession (Verse 9).

Paul made personal mention of these Roman believers. Paul reached many souls with his preaching and he also reached many souls with his praying. Who did Paul mention in his prayers? In Romans chapter 16 we find 26 names given! (Did Paul use some kind of a prayer list?) For whom do **you** pray? Paul faithfully obeyed the command found in Ephesians 6:18.

6. Prayer Should Be Specific (Verse 10).

Paul made a specific prayer request. He prayed for a "prosperous journey." There is no detail in life that is so trivial that we cannot make it a matter of prayer. If God is concerned about feeding the sparrow and about clothing the lily, then He certainly was concerned about Paul's trip to Rome. *"O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!"*

7. Prayer Should Be Submissive (Verse 10).

Note the key phrase: "by the will of God." Compare the prayer of Jesus in Luke 22:42. Paul did not demand of God or order God or dictate to God what he wanted. He simply made a request and wanted the request granted only if it was the will of God.

8. Prayer Should Be Rightly Motivated (Verses 11-12).

Did Paul have good reasons for requesting a "prosperous journey" to Rome? Why did Paul want to go to Rome? 1) He wanted to do God's will (verse 10); 2) He wanted to **establish** (strengthen, confirm) the Roman believers on the Rock, Christ, Jesus (verse 11); 3) He wanted to comfort and encourage these believers (as well as be comforted and encouraged by them) -- (verse 12). Paul's reasons were good reasons. He was concerned for the glory of God and the good of others.

HOW DID GOD ANSWER PAUL'S PRAYER? Paul had a great desire to go to Rome (see verse 11 -- "for I long (earnestly desire) to see you" -- compare 1 Peter 2:2 where the same word is used of a new believer's longing for God's Word). See also Romans 15:23-24. Many times Rome was included on Paul's travel itinerary, but again and again Paul was hindered from making this trip (Rom. 1:13 and Rom. 15:22). One reason Paul wanted to go to

Rome is found in Romans 1:13. Another reason is suggested by Acts 9:15. Paul knew that God had given him a special ministry "to kings" and there was no better place to find a king than in Rome. THE KING (Caesar! The Roman Emperor!) lived there!

Did God answer Paul's prayer? Did Paul eventually get to Rome? Yes he did, but he got there in a very unusual way. God does not always answer our prayers as we think He should. Paul's *prosperous journey* (see Romans 1:10) turned out to be one of the most treacherous and dangerous trips across the Mediterranean Sea you could ever imagine (described in detail for us in Acts chapter 27). Certainly the trip was not what Paul expected. Also Paul came to Rome under very unusual circumstances. HE WAS ESCORTED THERE AS A PRISONER! Paul's prayer was answered but in a very unusual way! As the hymnwriter has said:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Romans 1:14

"**Debtor**" = I owe something! I have an obligation! I have a gospel duty! Compare 1 Corinthians 9:16.
 "**Greeks and barbarians**" were two classes of Gentiles. "Greeks" were those under the influence of Greek culture and language (the Greek language was the universal and "common" language of the Roman empire, and Paul's letter to the Romans was written in common [Koine] Greek, not in Latin and not in Hebrew). "Barbarians" were foreigners, those not under the direct influence of Greek culture (see Acts 28:2,4).

Paul owed the gospel to every member of the human race. At one point in his life Paul (Saul of Tarsus) felt an obligation to **persecute** every Christian; but now Paul felt an obligation to **preach** to every creature (Paul was probably familiar with Mark 16:15). What obligation or gospel duty do you have (see 2 Cor. 5:17-21)? Those who are recipients of God's good news feel burdened and obligated to pass it on to others! If you were a medical researcher and you discovered a cure for cancer, would you keep it a secret? *Life is short; death is sure; sin the cause, CHRIST THE CURE!*

Romans 1:15

"**Ready**" = ready, willing and eager (compare Acts 17:11 – "with all readiness of mind").
 "**Preach the gospel**" = evangelize, announce the good news, proclaim the gospel. Compare the word "evangelical" (an evangelical church is supposed to be a church that believes God's good news and faithfully proclaims this message of salvation)

Romans 1:16

Notice the THREE GREAT "I AM'S" of the Apostle Paul:

"I AM DEBTOR" (verse 14)

"I AM READY" (verse 15)

"I AM NOT ASHAMED" (verse 16)

"**Not ashamed**" -- Paul was not ashamed to go to prison for the sake of the gospel and he was not ashamed to die

for the sake of the gospel. See what our Lord said in Luke 9:26 and compare 2 Timothy 1:8,12. Christians should not be **ASHAMED** of the gospel and they should not be a **SHAME** to the gospel (by living contrary to its principles).

"**Power of God**" = Greek word DUNAMIS (cf. Eng. -dynamite!). See 1 Cor. 1:18,24. **Creation** was mere finger-play to God (Psalm 8:3) but **redemption** required nothing less than the mighty arm of God (Isaiah 53:1)! Creation cost God very little; redemption cost God His only Son. It took the power of God to transform Saul (the chief persecutor) into Paul (the chief apostle). It takes the power of God to save and transform any sinner (compare Colossians 1:13 and Acts 26:18).

"**Everyone**" -- God's gospel is not for a select few, it is for everyone

"**Believeth**" -- The gospel must be believed (human responsibility). God does the saving but man must do the believing. Faith is the hand of the heart which reaches out and receives God's gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23).

"**Salvation**" -- Everyone who believes the gospel is saved (compare Acts 16:30-31; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Luke 8:12; John 6:47; etc.).

"**To the Jew first**" -- Here we have an amazing demonstration of God's grace. The Jews were the very ones who rejected their Messiah (John 1:11) and crucified Him (John 19:14-16). Yet these same people were the first ones to hear God's good news! The gospel went first to the Jews. Those who heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) were all Jews. The Gentiles did not hear the gospel until Acts chapter 10. Today the gospel is to go to all men without distinction (see Romans 10:12-13).

To the Jew First

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that **the word of God should first have been spoken to you**: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Paul used very strong language here: "IT WAS NECESSARY!" It was absolutely essential that the gospel go to the Jew first. Here are several reasons why the word of God had to be first proclaimed to the Jews:

1. The gospel had to go to the Jew first because "SALVATION is of the JEWS" (John 4:22). The Savior Himself was a Jew. Since salvation is of the Jews it is only fitting that the glorious message of salvation should go FIRST to the Jews.
2. The gospel had to go to the Jew first because Christ came into the world for the purpose of saving "His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "His people" is a clear reference to the people of Israel (compare Matthew 2:6 and compare Acts 10:42 where "this people" is most probably a reference to the Jews). It was only fitting therefore that the message and blessings of salvation should go first to Israel (compare Acts 3:26).
3. The gospel had to go to the Jew first because it was the Jews who were given the Hebrew Scriptures (the 39 books). See Romans 3:1-2 and 9:4. They of all people should have recognized the promised Savior and should have acknowledged Him as the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. It is not strange, therefore, that it was Paul's custom to go into the synagogues of the Jews on the Sabbath day and reason with them from the Scriptures, showing them clearly that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. God sent the gospel to the Jews first because they should have been the FIRST to recognize the Christ of the gospel as the One who was promised afore in the law and the prophets.
4. The gospel had to go to the Jew first because God wanted to show that He was a gracious God. Did the

Jews deserve to hear the gospel FIRST? They were the ones who rejected and crucified their Messiah (see Matthew 27:22; Acts 2:23; 2:36; 3:14-15; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; 1 Cor. 2:8; Zech. 12:10; **1 Thess. 2:14-16**). They should have been the last to hear. In fact, they did not deserve to hear at all. They rejected their Savior but God did not reject them. How gracious God was to reach out first and foremost to the undeserving Jewish people. When Israel's sin was greatest, God's grace was greater (compare Rom. 5:20).

C.H.Mackintosh beautifully explains God's gracious dealing with the Jews:

He tells them to "begin at Jerusalem." Yes, Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified; where every indignity that human enmity could invent was heaped upon His divine Person; where a murderer and a robber was preferred to "God manifest in the flesh"; where human iniquity had reached its culminating point in nailing the Son of God to a malefactor's cross—there the messengers were to begin their blessed work; that was to be the centre of the sphere of their gracious operations; and from thence they were to travel to the utmost bounds of the habitable globe. They were to begin with "Jerusalem sinners"—with the very murderers of the Son of God, and then go forth to publish everywhere the glorious tidings, so that all might know that precious grace of God which was sufficient to meet the crimson guilt of Jerusalem itself.

How glorious is all this! The guilty murderers of the Son of God were the very first to bear the sweet tale of pardoning love, so that all men might see in them a pattern of what the grace of God and the blood of Christ can do. Truly the grace that could pardon Jerusalem sinners can pardon any one; the blood that could cleanse the betrayers and murderers of the Christ of God can cleanse any sinner outside the precincts of hell. These heralds of salvation, as they made their way from nation to nation, could tell their hearers where they had come from; they could tell of that super abounding grace of God which had commenced its operations in the guiltiest spot on the face of the earth, and which was amply sufficient to meet the very vilest of the sons of Adam. (CHM, *The MacKintosh Treasury*, p. 779, in the article "The Great Commission).

For a more detailed study of the phrase, "To the Jew first" please contact George Zeller at the Middletown Bible Church.

Romans 1:17

"**Therein**" = in the gospel (see verse 16). The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel.

"**The righteousness of God**" -- Man lacks righteousness (Rom.3:10) and man needs righteousness (compare 1 Cor. 6:9). How can men get the righteousness that they need?

"**By faith**" -- Men must receive and appropriate this righteousness BY FAITH. God used this verse (Romans 1:17) to open the eyes of Martin Luther. As he was thinking on this verse it suddenly dawned on him that justification was BY FAITH, not by human effort, not by good works, not by sacraments, not by rituals or by any

such thing, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Luther himself said, "For God does not want to save us by our own (righteousness) but by an extraneous righteousness, one that does not originate in ourselves but comes to us from beyond ourselves, which does not arise on earth but comes from heaven" (*Lectures on Romans*). This doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH became one of the three great pillars of the Reformation (the other two were THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE and THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS).

Romans 1:18

"**The wrath of God**" -- The subject of God's wrath is sadly ignored in most religious circles today. God's love is frequently mentioned but God's wrath is rarely spoken of. In presenting the gospel Paul knew that he must present the bad news before presenting the good news. We need God's righteousness (verse 17) but we deserve God's wrath (verse 18). Before a man is ready for salvation he must see his NEED for salvation. See Luke 5:27-32. People don't go to the doctor unless they have a need. People don't go to the Saviour unless they see themselves as needy sinners.

"**Ungodliness and unrighteousness**" -- In these first three chapters of Romans (especially chapter 3) we are going to see how ungodly and unrighteous we really are! We will learn that we deserve God's wrath to the full!

God must judge and pour out His wrath against all that does not measure up to His standard of righteousness. How do you measure up against the standard of God's perfect righteousness? 1) Do you measure up when compared with Jesus Christ, the only man who was truly righteous? 2) How do you measure up next to God's righteous law (the 10 Commandments in particular)? Have you faithfully kept all of these commandments? If we are honest before God end with ourselves, what must we conclude (Romans 3:10)?

Note: It is important to note carefully *how* Paul presents the gospel. He begins with God's wrath from heaven coming against the unrighteous and the ungodly! Before presenting the good news he presents the bad news so that we will understand how desperately we **need** God's gospel. There are basically two ways to present the gospel: **1) ON THE BASIS OF PERSONAL BENEFIT** (How can the gospel benefit me? What are the benefits and advantages of being a Christian? Will the gospel make me happy? successful? satisfied? etc.); **2) ON THE BASIS OF PERSONAL NEED** (Man is a helpless and hopeless sinner under the wrath and condemnation of a holy God, and therefore he needs to be saved or else he is eternally doomed).

Very often today the gospel is presented on the basis of personal benefit. Here is an example of such a presentation taken from a gospel tract:

You want fun, freedom, and life, don't you? Good! You're just the person I want to talk with. I feel just as you do. You ask, "How can you feel like me? I thought you were a Christian." I am. But still I have basic human desires, such as satisfaction, happiness, freedom, and a score more. And I find all these fulfilled in my best friend, Jesus Christ. From experience, I know it pays to be a Christian right here and now. Even if there were no heaven or hell (which there is), I would still be a Christian today. Why? Because I know that the Christian life is the best. It's the only life worth living.

Now we must admit that these things are true. Satisfaction, happiness, freedom and many other benefits are all found in Christ Jesus and the Christian life is certainly the only life worth living. But should we present the gospel on this basis? Was this Paul's approach? There are many, many unsaved people who think that they are very happy. They are relatively satisfied with life, things are going well for them and they enjoy what they are doing. They are satisfied with their

lifestyle and they do not see any compelling reason why they should become a Christian. "Christianity is fine for you if it makes you happy," they say, "but I'm comfortable and quite happy with the way I am now living." They do not see their NEED for Christ.

Illustration: Suppose the hospital contacts you and says, "Why don't you come in tomorrow and have an operation? We are not very busy these days and we want to keep our staff busy. We will put you under the knife and cut you up and check you out and sew you back together again. It will do wonders for you. After a few days you'll feel great! You'll enjoy wonderful health! You'll get more out of life! All these benefits will be yours if you let us operate on you." Would you volunteer? Why not? On the other hand, suppose some medical experts told you that you had a deadly, spreading cancer in your body that would soon kill you unless it was removed. Would you submit yourself to the operating table then? Why?

People must see how **NEEDY** they are. People must see how much they *need* the salvation which is offered in Christ. After reading the first three chapters of Romans you will realize that you have a deadly cancer in your soul (sin) and that there is nothing you can do to heal yourself. The only cure is found in Christ ("Life is short, death is sure, sin the cause, Christ the cure!").

One other thought: If people come to Christ on the basis of personal benefits, they may be coming for the wrong reason. Jesus came to save us from our _____ (Matt. 1:21), not from our unhappiness or our loneliness or our unsuccessful way of living. These other things are but surface symptoms of a much deeper and more fundamental problem: man is not in a right relationship with his Creator because of **SIN**. When this fundamental problem is solved then the minor surface problems will be corrected as well. Sadly most people are ignorant of what the big problem really is. The thing that they are concerned about the least is the thing which they should be concerned about the most: **THE SIN PROBLEM!**

(Romans 1:18 continued) "**Hold**" = hold down, suppress

Please notice that these people were not ignorant of the truth and they were not without the knowledge of the truth. They had the truth but they suppressed it. (Think of a "Jack-in-the-box". Jack pops up but they push him back down and hold him down, put the lid back in place and pretend he is not there. This is what people do to God's truth.)

Romans 1:19

We learned in verse 18 that these people were not ignorant of the truth. They had the truth but they suppressed it. Now Paul is going to carefully explain how these people had possession of the truth concerning the true God. In Romans 1:19 we learn that God has made Himself known to these people. He has manifested Himself and revealed Himself to them. How has God done this? Verse 20 explains.

Note: The first 3 chapters in Romans deal basically with one simple question: Is all the world condemned before a holy God? Is all the world lost? As mankind stands before God the righteous Judge, is the verdict **GUILTY** or **NOT GUILTY**? For a preview of the answer see Romans 3:9,19,23. In Chapter 1 Paul proves that the heathen man is lost and without excuse. In the first part of chapter 2 he proves that the moral man is lost and without excuse. In the last part of chapter 2 and in chapter 3 he proves that the religious man (the Jew) is lost and without excuse.

Don't Forget! Let's quickly review what we have already covered:

Romans 1:17 -- This is what we NEED (the righteousness of God)

Romans 1:18 -- This is what we DESERVE (the wrath of God)

As we will learn later, **God's grace** will give us the righteousness that we need (Rom. 3:24; 5:17; 5:20-21) and **God's mercy** will keep us from the wrath which we deserve (Rom. 5:9; 11:32). When the Lord Jesus died on the cross *God's wrath* came down upon Him (Rom. 5:6-10) and when I believe on Christ and receive Him as my Saviour by faith the *righteousness of God* is put to my account (Rom. 3:21-22; 4:1-5; 5:15-21).

Romans 1:20

Remember the context of verse 19. Men have the knowledge of God. God has made Himself known to them. How has God done this? Verse 20 explains.

"**Of Him**" = of God Notice the paradox: men can clearly see the invisible things of God! The invisible God wants men to see Him! God is invisible but He is clearly seen!

"**By the things that are made**" -- CREATION MAKES KNOWN THE CREATOR. The visible things that are made point to the invisible Creator! Design in nature points to a great Designer! The "things that are made" point to the divine MAKER.

Note the two things that we can learn about God from Creation: 1) His eternal **POWER**; 2) His **GODHEAD** (deity).

Illustration: Consider Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, where there is a huge sculpture of the heads of four Presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt). Each head is 60 feet high! About 3 million people visit this interesting national memorial each year. Suppose Mr. Sam Smith visited this mountain for the very first time and no one told him anything about how the heads were formed. What would Sam think?

- a. He would think that the heads were formed by CHANCE. The sculpture somehow just happened.
- b. He would think that all the forces of nature (winds, rains, snow, storms, etc.) had their effect upon this mountain for thousands and thousands of years until finally the rocks were accidentally shaped in just the right way.
- c. He would realize that **intelligent men** must have formed and carved out such a massive sculpture.

By simply *looking* at Mt. Rushmore, Mr. Smith could learn certain things about the men who formed and carved it (even though he had never seen or met these men):

- 1) These men must have had INTELLIGENCE to be able to plan and design such a monument.
- 2) These men must have had WISDOM to be able to carry out such a great project. Indeed it took more than six years to complete;
- 3) These men must have had POWER to be able to carve into hard granite (using dynamite, etc.).
- 4) These men must have had SKILL to be able to transform a rugged cliff into an artistic masterpiece.

In the same way, by simply **looking** at Creation, we can learn many things about the Creator. Here are some of the things we can learn about God:

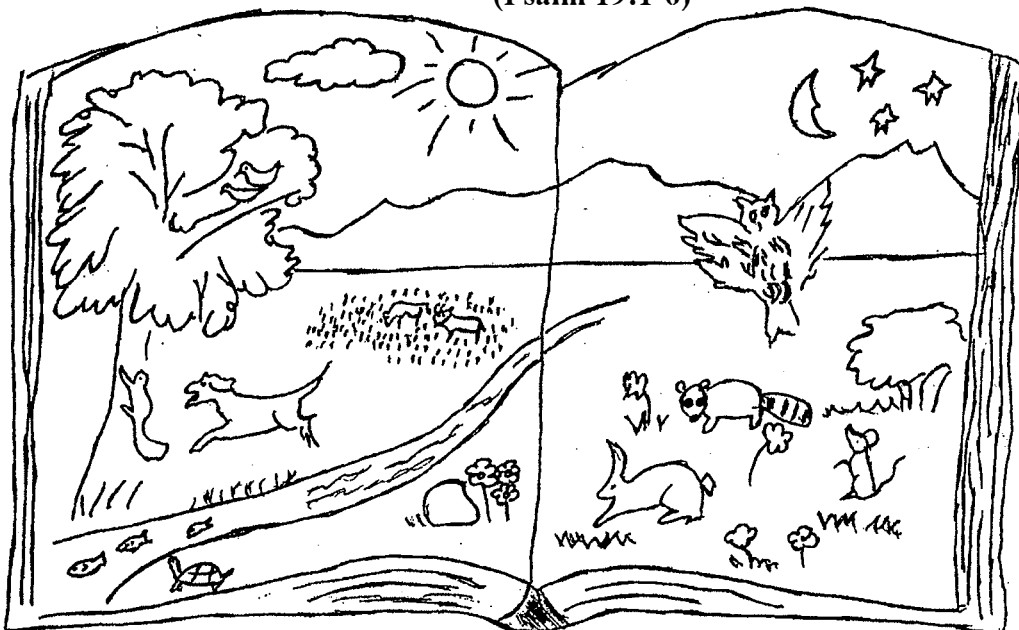
- 1) **GOD'S ORDERLINESS** (He is a God of law and order) -- the law of gravity and all the other unchangeable laws of nature;
- 2) **GOD'S ARTISTRY** – colorful sunsets, peacock feathers, colors on tropical fish;

- 3) **GOD'S POWER** -- thunderstorms, tornados, tidal waves;
- 4) **GOD'S GOODNESS** -- rain from heaven, fruitful seasons, sunshine enjoyed by all (Acts 14:17; Matthew 5:44-45);
- 5) **GOD'S GREATNESS (BIGNESS)** -- the vast dimensions of our universe. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, contains 300,000,000 suns. We can't even count all the galaxies, much less all the stars (Psalm 8:3-4; Genesis 15:5; Jer. 31:37; 33:22; Psalm 147:4);
- 6) **GOD'S INTELLIGENCE** -- the human brain is far more complex and far more complicated than any computer that man has ever made, and computers are made by intelligent men (see Psalm 139:14);
- 7) **GOD'S CREATIVITY** (His unlimited ability to create and design with amazing variety and originality) -- every snowflake is a six-sided crystal and yet no two are alike; no two people are alike and there are differences even among identical twins;
- 8) **GOD'S WISDOM** (the All-Wise God created the world in the very best way) -- the sun is not too far from the earth and not too close to the earth, planet earth has just the right amount of water, oxygen, etc.
- 9) **GOD'S CARE** (see Matthew 6:26-30; 23:37) -- birds feeding, the lily clothed; the chick protected and nestled by the hen;
- 10) **GOD'S FAITHFULNESS** -- the day-night cycle; the seasonal cycle (see Genesis 8:22; Jer. 31:35-36; 33:20).

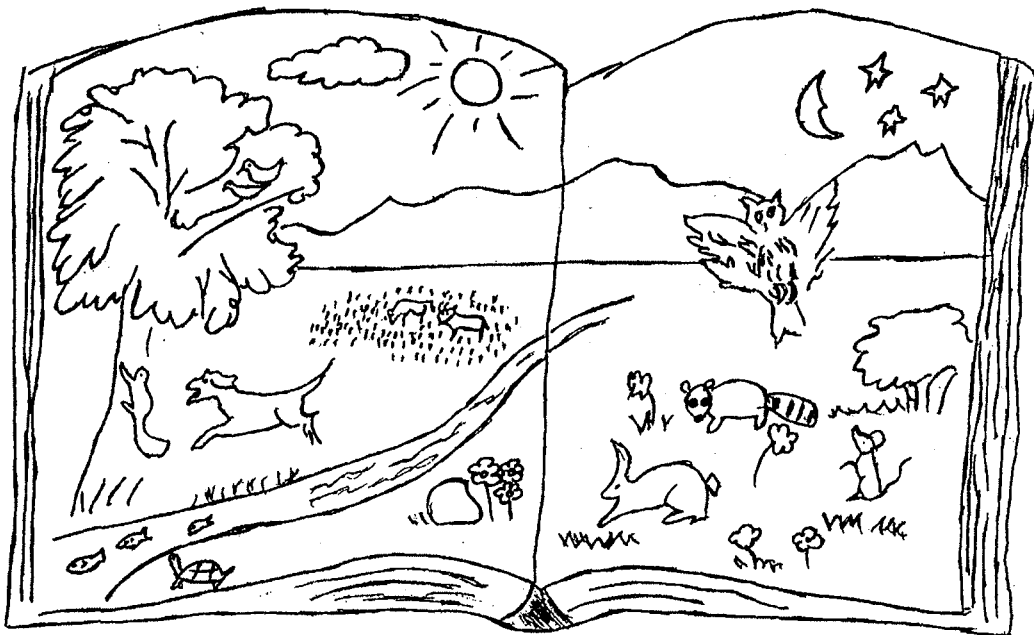
God's Two Books

How has the Creator revealed Himself to us that we might know Him? Because God wants to *make Himself known* and *reveal Himself* to men, He has written TWO BOOKS. These TWO BOOKS tell us about the Creator! God wants men to read BOTH of these books so that they will come to know Him.

Book 1 – The Creator's Work (Creation) (Psalm 19:1-6)

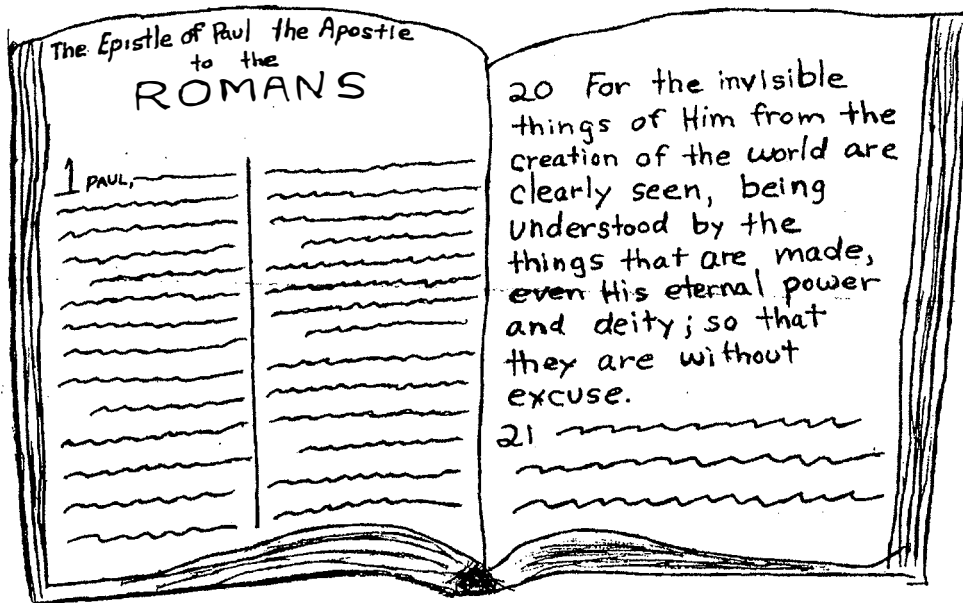


BOOK 1 – CREATION



BOOK 1 - CREATION

**Book 2—The Creator’s Words (The Bible).
(Psalm 19:7-11)**



BOOK 2 - THE BIBLE

All men read BOOK 1, but very few people really read BOOK 2. BOOK 1 is THE CREATOR’S WORKS (CREATION) and is described in Psalm 19:1-6. BOOK 2 is THE CREATOR’S WORD (the BIBLE) and is described in Psalm 19:7-11. Illustration: Think of Children’s books. Some contain words but some just contain pictures. BOOK 1 is a PICTURE BOOK. There are no words. Man only needs to LOOK and SEE (Rom. 1:20 – God’s power and deity "are clearly SEEN") . A baby begins to read BOOK 1 when he first opens his eyes to explore and to discover the world around him.

Which book can be read and understood even by those who are ILLITERATE (see Psalm 19:2-4)? _____

Which book is written in a universal language (no translation problem because it is written in a language that can be understood by all)? _____

Which book teaches us about the heavens (Genesis 1:1)? _____

Which book teaches us about how to get to heaven (John 14:6)? _____

Which book can make a person wise unto God's power and greatness and glory (Rom. 1:20)? _____

Which book can make a person wise unto salvation (see 2 Timothy 3:15) _____

Which book is able to convert the soul (Psalm 19:7)? _____

Which book will pass away (Matthew 24:35)? _____

Which book will never pass away (Matthew 24:35)? _____

Which book do all scientists read? _____

Which book do few scientists read and study? _____

Which book can help us to know about God and which book can help us to REALLY KNOW GOD IN A PERSONAL WAY? _____

What about the HEATHEN? What about those in the middle of the jungle? What about those who do not know and have never heard? God's surprising answer is this: THEY DO KNOW (Romans 1:19-21) and THEY HAVE HEARD (Romans 10:13-18)! Notice Paul's argument in Romans 10:13-18. Men need to hear (verse 14); the gospel must be preached (verse 15); the gospel must be believed (verses 16-17); but then verse 18 emphasizes that **everyone has heard!** God has reached everyone **at least with Book 1**. Book 1 is not enough to bring man salvation (Book 2 is needed for that) but Book 1 is enough to render man WITHOUT EXCUSE (compare Rom. 1:20). If men reject the message of Book 1 (see Romans 1:21), is God obligated to give men Book 2? [However, having said this we should remember Romans 1:14 – "debtor". Every Christian should feel an obligation to get the gospel to all men.] Earthly illustration: A rich man sees a poor man in need of food for himself and his family. Out of compassion he gives the man \$20.00. He intends to give him more, but he gives him only \$20.00 to see what he will do with it. The poor man immediately spends it on drink and drugs. Knowing this, would the rich man be likely to give him \$100.00? If we don't handle what we are given in the right way, we may not be given more.

Romans 1:21

"THEY KNEW GOD" – but what did they do with this knowledge? God had made Himself known (verses 19-20), but they willfully rejected this revelation. Remember, according to Biblical history, **mankind started with the knowledge of the one true God**: ADAM had the knowledge of the one true God. NOAH and his family had the knowledge of the one true God. But somewhere down the line this knowledge became corrupted, even as described in this verse. They rejected the light that they had and the result was that "their foolish heart was _____."

"Glorified Him not" -- failed to honor Him for who He was

"Neither were thankful" -- failed to thank Him for what He had done. They did not honor Him as the Creator and did not thank Him as the Sustainer of Life (Acts 17:28). They ate from the gracious hand of their Creator every day, but they refused to give thanks (compare people today).

Verse 21 shows us man's DEGENERATION (man going down, not up, man regressing not progressing). It's the very opposite of evolution. [The theory of evolution, when applied to religion, teaches that man started with very primitive notions about God and that he gradually evolved from polytheism (many gods) to monotheism (belief in one God). The Bible disproves this theory, showing that man from the very beginning (Adam, later Noah) started with a knowledge of the one true God and that religious beliefs degenerated from there.] Mankind started with a knowledge of the Creator but that knowledge was rejected.

"Vain" = empty, instead of filling their minds with worthy thoughts of God they turned to vanities

"Darkened" --- They had light, but they rejected the light which they had, so there was nothing left but darkness.

Romans 1:22

"Fools" = morons, very stupid persons. Compare Psalm 14:1--"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Creation reveals the fact that there is a God; whereas the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." It's a denial in spite of overwhelming evidence. This would be like a man who is given a tour of the world's greatest computer and then says, "No one made this computer. It just happened to pop into existence!" What a fool!

Illustration: The jungle native is wise enough to know that the one who makes something is greater than the thing made. What does he do? He cuts down a tree and with half of the trunk makes a canoe. He knows that as the maker of the canoe he is greater than the canoe. He then uses the same tree to make an idol and he worships it! Instead he should have cried out from his heart, "I want to come to know the One who made this tree and this world!" Does God honor the seeking heart (Jer. 29:13; Heb. 11:6)? For a modern example of men professing to be wise but really being fools, see the September 1976 National Geographic article entitled "The Awesome Worlds Within a Cell" . On page 358 the authors describe the utter complexity of the cell. There is no such thing as a **"simple one-celled organism"**! Even the simplest cell has turned out to be "a micro-universe" (p.358). Then on p.388 we read, "...this really is the major problem of biology. How did this complexity arise?...biologists still confront the deep, basic mystery of science: How did it all begin?" Then on page 390 the "experts" answer this by crediting it all to CHANCE and saying that given enough time even the IMPOSSIBLE can happen! With time, chance and evolution all things are possible !!! "They have become fools" -- Romans 1:21-22.

Romans 1:23

The word **"changed"** means "exchanged." Man started with the true religion: the worship of the glorious Creator-God. This quickly degenerated into CREATURE-WORSHIP (compare verse 25). Such creature-worship, is clearly and strongly prohibited by God -- Exodus 20:4-5; Deut. 4:15-19; 5:8-9.

Compare Romans 1:23 with Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11 (no wonder it says they "became fools"--verse 22).

Even in the apocrypha such sin and folly was held up to scathing ridicule:

An experienced woodcutter will cut down a tree that is easy to handle. Skillfully he strips off all its bark. And then, with pleasing workmanship, he makes a useful article that serves life's needs . . . But he takes a castoff piece, one that is good for nothing, a stick crooked and full of knots. He carves it with care...and causes it to resemble a man. Or he makes it to look like some worthless animal, giving it a coat of red paint, and with paint covering every blemish . . .Then he makes for it

a suitable niche, sets it in the wall, and fastens it with iron. He takes care that it does not fall, because he knows that it cannot help itself, for it is only an image and in need of help. Then he prays (to it) about possessions and his marriage and children. . . For health he appeals to a thing that is weak. For life he prays to a thing that is dead. For aid he entreats an object that is thoroughly inexperienced . . . He asks strength of a thing whose hands have no strength (Wisdom of Solomon 13:11-19, abbreviated).

Man did not do very well in this "exchange." Man gave up the glory of the incorruptible God and he ended up with something quite worthless (a helpless and hopeless idol). Notice that this is not evolution, it is DEVOLUTION (retrograde evolution, degeneration). Man is not progressing, he is regressing. Man is going backwards, not forwards. This is not man going up, up up, but it is man going down, down, down. It is not man getting better and better but man getting worse and worse. It is not man reaching the heights, it is man plummeting to the depths. Romans chapter 1 is totally contrary to "the evolution of religion" as commonly taught. Man did not gradually reach the heights of monotheism. Man began there and fell from there.

Consider Hosea 4:1. Why are people without the knowledge of the true God? Did they never have this knowledge or did they have it and reject it? Hosea 4:6 answers this clearly (this was true of the nation Israel here in Hosea, but the same principle is obvious in Romans chapter 1).

God's Three Deliveries (Introduction to the Next Section)

Three times in this next section we read, "**GOD GAVE THEM UP**" (see Romans 1:24,26,28). It is the same Greek word each time and it means "to hand over, give over, deliver, turn over, give up a person." It is used of Judas who delivered over or betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:21,23,24; 27:3; etc.). Here it is used of God giving men over to their own lusts. Compare Psalm 81:12--"So **I gave them up** unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." In judgment God gives them up and abandons them to their own sinful way. They abandoned God so He abandoned them. In judgment God gave them up, delivered them over to their own lusts (sinful desires), took away restraint (as a dog let loose from his leash) and let sinful men have just what they want.

Romans 1:24

"**Wherefore**"--this points back to the previous verses (21-23). Why did God give them up? Because they gave God up and exchanged His glory for a dumb idol. See Psalm 115 which illustrates the folly of idolatry. Those who make the idols are just as dumb as the idols!

"**Uncleanness**"--this is what they wanted so God let them have it. Illustration: Dress up a pig, clean him up for the county fair, but the moment you "give him up" and let him go, he will go right back to the mud hole. As to its nature the pig loves uncleanness. Men love their sin (compare John 3:19).

"**Dishonor their own bodies**"--this will be explained later in Romans 1:26-27.

Romans 1:25

"**Changed**" = exchanged. Instead of embracing the truth they gave it up in exchange for the lie.

"**THE TRUTH**" = **The Creator alone is worthy of worship!**

"**THE LIE**" = **The creature is worthy of worship.** The devil tempted Jesus with this lie in Matthew 4:9 ["fall down and worship me (a creature)"]. Jesus answered the devil with the truth in Matthew 4:10 ["Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve" -- God alone is worthy of worship].

Compare the teaching of the Jehovah's Witness cult. They teach that Jesus is a mere CREATURE [an exalted angel whom God originally created, and then they teach that through (by means of) this angel God created

everything else.] Jehovah Witnesses then are faced with a serious problem. If Christ is a CREATURE (as they teach) and if CREATURE-WORSHIP is condemned by God (Romans 1:25-and many other places in the Bible), then why is CHRIST-WORSHIP accepted and even demanded? Consider the following:

1. **The Bible clearly teaches that worship belongs to God alone and is never to be rendered to any creature**, no matter how exalted that creature might be. For example, the apostles refused worship (Acts 14:11-15), Peter refused worship (Acts 10:25-26), angels refused worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9), Christ commanded men to worship God alone (Matthew 4:8-10) and men are punished for accepting what belongs only to God (Acts 12:21-23).
2. **Yet this same Bible teaches that Christ is to be worshipped as God:**
 - a. Christ accepted and encouraged such worship (Matthew 14:31-33; 15:25-28; 28:9-10; 28:16-18; John 9:35-39).
 - b. Christ demanded such worship (John 5:23).
 - c. The Father commands such worship of Christ (Hebrews 1:6). Compare also Psalm 2:12 ("kiss" = worship, do homage to).
 - d. Christ will actually be worshipped by the host of heaven (Revelation 5:8), that is, angelic creatures.
 - e. This worship of Christ will finally become universal (Philippians 2:10-11). Saved and unsaved alike will bow the knee to Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord.

Conclusion: The Jehovah's Witnesses err greatly in their understanding of WHO JESUS CHRIST REALLY IS. The Bible teaches that He is the CREATOR-GOD Who is worthy of worship. As Romans 9:5 says, Christ is the One who is OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOREVER (Jehovah's Witnesses try to get around this verse by re-punctuating it, and some other Bible translations also do the same. We will study this verse in detail when we get to Romans chapter 9).

For a detailed study on these issues, see **The Deity of Christ**

In Romans 1:25 Paul made it very clear that he worshipped the Creator! In this verse he bursts into a doxology of praise (very similar to Romans 9:5). As Paul here praises the Creator he may have had the second Person of the Godhead (the Lord Jesus Christ) particularly in mind (see those passages which identify Jesus Christ as the Creator: Colossians 1:13-16; John 1:1-3; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

Additional note on Romans 1:25: There is one other passage in the New Testament which specifically mentions "THE LIE." It is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:11. In the context we again see that "the lie" is the same as in Romans 1:25. **The lie is that the creature is worthy of worship.** Notice that creature-worship is described in verse 4. The man of sin (a mere man) will put himself in the place of God and present himself as an object of worship (for an enlargement of this prophecy see Revelation chapter 13). Indeed, he will demand such worship and punish those who refuse to do so.

Romans 1:26

Romans 1:26

These people rejected THE TRUTH and embraced THE LIE. They gave up the truth and therefore God gave them up. They abandoned God and God abandoned them (gave them over to their own lusts and passions).

"**Affections**" = passions

"**Vile**" = When you think of this word, think of three words that begin with the letter "**D**": **D**ishonorable, **D**egrading, **D**isgraceful.

"**Women**" = a specific word meaning "females"

"**Change**" = exchange (they made a bad trade, exchanging the God-given use of their bodies for that which is perverted and "against nature")

"**Natural use**" = natural and normal sex relations, God-ordained sex relations (compare Hebrews 13:4). Only God can define what is normal and what is abnormal, what is moral and what is immoral.

"**Against nature**" = unnatural, abnormal, perverse, improper

Romans 1:27

"**Men**" = a specific word meaning "males"

"**Natural**"-that which is natural, normal, proper and right in God's sight (God is the One who sets the norms and standards.)

"**Burned**" = they were inflamed sexually, boiling with desire (not love but lust).

"**Men with men**" = homosexuality

"**Unseemly**" = shameful

"**Receiving**" = getting just what they deserve because of what they have done

"**Recompence**" = reward, penalty

"**Meet**" = necessary, inevitable (such sin cannot go unpunished)

Biblical Teaching on Homosexuality

1. According to Romans chapter 1, homosexuality is the natural result of a society that fails to honor God and recognize His truth (v. 18,21,etc.).
2. To know what is abnormal we need to know what is normal. To know what is unnatural, we need to know what is natural. How do we know what is right or wrong, proper or improper, holy or sinful in the realm of sex, love and marriage? What STANDARD has God given to us? Read Matthew 19:3-8 and note especially the word "BEGINNING" in verses 4 and 8. According to Christ, the standard for what is right and holy and proper is what God did at

the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6). This takes us back to Genesis chapter 2 (especially verses 21-25). In other words, Genesis 2 is the norm and the standard. What we find in Genesis 2 is normal, right, holy and beautiful. It is exactly what God intended and what God ordained and established for the good of mankind and for the propagation of the race. **Anything that deviates from what God instituted in Genesis 2 must be considered as abnormal, unnatural, improper and contrary to God's perfect design and plan for a man and woman.**

It is very obvious that in the beginning God did not bring a man to Adam. [It was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.] It is also quite obvious physically and sexually that men are not made for men and women are not made for women. It would be like trying to fasten something using two bolts or by using two nuts. The bolt was made for the nut and the nut was made for the bolt. The nut was not designed to fit into another nut. The whole thing is nutty. Likewise, a man is not designed for another man and a woman is not designed for another woman. The woman was made for the man (1 Cor. 11:9).

3. Historically, don't forget the great sin of Sodom and the judgment of God that came upon this city because of this sin (Genesis 18 and 19). This sin was forever memorialized by the word "sodomy."
4. God's Word strongly condemns homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13). See also 1 Timothy. 1:9-10 (homosexuality is contrary to sound doctrine).
5. There is great hope even for homosexuals (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

"Effeminate"--one who is soft (Greek *malakos*; compare the English term "sissy"), effeminate, especially a catamite (a man or a boy who allows himself to be used homosexually), a male who submits his body to a homosexual, taking the female or passive role. This is a PASSIVE homosexual.

"Abusers of themselves with mankind"--a male homosexual, one who practices anal intercourse, a sodomite. Literally this Greek word (*arsenokoitai*) is made up of two parts: (1) male; (2) bed (euphemism for sexual intercourse). Thus the term means one who goes to bed with a male. It carries with it the idea of a man lying with a man as one would with a woman (compare Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13). This is an ACTIVE homosexual.

"And such were some of you"-some of the Corinthians were once homosexuals, but Christ had made a great difference. A homosexual can be saved and changed! By the grace of God he can be completely

delivered of this sin.

If homosexuality were some kind of genetic, inborn tendency within a person, then there would be no hope for change. If homosexuality were some kind of sickness, then again there would be no hope for change because there is no pill or cure or operation for such a sickness. If homosexuality is a sin, then there is all the hope in the world. This is because there is a cure for sin, even our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing better can happen to a homosexual than to encounter the life-changing gospel of Christ. [For a helpful summary of the true gospel of Christ, see our study on **The Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.**]

There is great blessing for those who abide within the framework of God's norms and standards (Hebrews 13:4 and compare Proverbs 5:18-19). There is unhappiness and eventually the judgment of God for those who disregard God's standards and violate the sexual laws which God has established (Hebrews 13:4 and compare Proverbs 5:20 and the Seventh Commandment found in Exodus 20:14).

For a more complete and more detailed study of what the Bible teaches on this subject, see our booklet on **Homosexuality**

Romans 1:28

Here we have the third divine "delivery" -- "God gave them over" or "God gave them up". In the Greek there is actually a word play (pun) which in English might be brought out as follows: "They **reprobated** the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a **reprobate mind**" or "They **cast out** the knowledge of God, so God gave them up to a **cast-out mind!**" They abandoned the knowledge of God and so God abandoned them. This is a terrible judgment: to give men up so that they follow the impulses of their own corrupt minds, and so that they follow the desires of their own depraved hearts! "So **I gave them up** unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Psalm 81:12).

Romans 1:29-31

Paul now gives us (in verses 29-31) one of the most terrible and sobering lists of vices found anywhere in the Bible. He gives us an appalling catalogue of the crimes of these people. What we actually have here is "GOD'S X-RAY of the human heart" (compare Jeremiah 17:9 and the words of Jesus in Mark 7:21-23). As we examine this list, search your own heart. After reading each description ask yourself, "Lord, is it I? Have I been guilty of this? Is this a description of me?"

FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS -- a general word (see verse 18) which involves any kind of wrong thinking, speaking, acting or living.

FILLED WITH ALL FORNICATION -- This word is missing from some of the Greek manuscripts, and this is why it is not found in some translations. We get our word "pornography" from this Greek word. It is a general word for any kind of illicit sex (anything contrary to what God

established in Genesis 2).

FILLED WITH ALL WICKEDNESS -- wickedness, evil, those who delight in doing what is wrong

FILLED WITH ALL COVETOUSNESS -- literally, "to have more", the craving to have more and more and more. The opposite of covetousness is contentment and satisfaction. Thus it refers to people who are not satisfied with what they have (greedy people).

FILLED WITH ALL MALICIOUSNESS -- wickedness, depravity, badness in general

FULL OF ENVY -- jealousy (over what someone else has)

FULL OF MURDER -- remember, Jesus said that we can also be guilty of "mental murder" which involves hatred and anger (Matthew 5:21-22).

FULL OF DEBATE -- strife, arguments, fightings, a quarrelsome disposition

FULL OF DECEIT -- a person who tricks and deceives and uses cunning

FULL OF MALIGNITY -- evil disposition, bad manner or character, someone who makes the worst out of the best

WHISPERERS -- secretly whispering about others (the Greek word is **psithuristes** which when pronounced almost sounds like whispering), slandering others, spreading gossip, rumors, etc.

BACKBITERS -- the Greek word literally means "to speak against", to say mean or evil things about someone who is not there (if he were there you would never say it), open slander, false charges, false accusations.

HATERS OF GOD -- God-haters, as evidenced even by the way they use God's Name.

DESPITEFUL -- violent, one who brings harm or injury to someone (1 Tim. 1:13).

PROUD -- arrogant, literally "to appear above others, showing oneself above others"

BOASTERS -- those who brag

INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS -- they devise and contrive and plan what evil thing they can do next.

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS -- this may seem out of place in such a list, yet it shows us how serious a thing this is to God. Who among us could say that he has never been guilty of this?

WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING -- Void of understanding (stupid because they are unwilling to listen to God), foolish, spiritually blind

COVENANT BREAKERS -- faithless, they don't keep their word.

WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION -- unloving, heartless, lacking that natural love which parents should have for children, brothers for sisters, etc.

IMPLACABLE -- unforgiving (this word is missing from some Greek manuscripts, which explains why it is not found in some translations.)

UNMERCIFUL -- showing no mercy, ruthless, cruel

The late Dr. R. H. Graves of Canton, China, said that a Chinaman who read these verses declared that Paul could not have written it, but only a modern missionary who had been to China. It was such a perfect description of Chinamen!

Personal Question: Do any of the above words describe you? (I'm sure we do not need to travel to China to see these vices!). Taken together these words paint a comprehensive picture of man's total depravity. "Oh wretched man that I am!"

Romans 1:32

"**Who knowing**" = knowing fully

"**The judgment of God**" = literally "the righteous requirement, the decree, the sentence"

THE VERDICT = You are GUILTY!

THE SENTENCE = You deserve DEATH! (and they know this!)

"**They which commit such things**" = "those who practice such things." What things? The things that were just listed in verses 29-31.

"**Worthy**" = (think of weighing scales being balanced) The penalty must balance the crime, the penalty must weigh as much as the crime.

THE CRIME = see verses 29-31

THE PENALTY = "**worthy of DEATH**" (verse 32 and see also Romans 5:12 end 6:23)

Note: The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ paid this penalty when He died on the cross -- see Romans 5:6-9. Compare Romans 1:18 with Romans 5:6 as you think about the word "ungodly". Compare Romans 1:18 with Romans 5:9 as you think about the word "wrath".

PROOF that the heathen KNOW FULLY the judgment of God is found in Acts 28:1-4. These barbarians knew that murderers deserve death! (even though in this case they were mistaken about Paul.)

Notice the end of verse 32. They practice these crimes themselves (even though they know it will bring the death penalty) and "have pleasure" or applaud or congratulate others who do these things. They enjoy sin and they enjoy the company of sinners!

Summary of Romans Chapter 1:

1. Man lacks and needs the righteousness of God (verse 17).
2. Man deserves and has earned the wrath of God (verse 18).
3. God has clearly revealed Himself to man through Book #1 (CREATION) so that man is without excuse (verses 19-20).
4. Man **knew** God but **rejected this knowledge**. Man failed **to honor God for who He is** and man failed **to thank God for what He has done** (verse 21).
5. Because man abandoned God, God in turn abandoned man and let man go his own sinful way (see the three "divine deliveries" in Romans 1:24,26,28 -- "**God gave them up.**")
6. Man is unrighteous and ungodly (verses 29-31) and thus deserves God's wrath (verse 18).
7. As God the righteous Judge looks down upon man,

The **VERDICT** is: **YOU ARE GUILTY!** (and without excuse).

The **SENTENCE** is: **YOU DESERVE DEATH!** (verse 32).

Key Words In Romans Chapter 1:

1. **RIGHTEOUSNESS, UNRIGHTEOUSNESS** (see verses 17,18,29)

Man lacks the righteousness which he needs in order to be acceptable before a righteous and holy God.

2. **KNOW** (see verse 19,21,28,32)

They knew God and they fully know the judgment of God, and thus they are without excuse.

3. **GOD GAVE THEM UP** (verses 24,26,28).

Remember, it was they who first gave God up!
