

Romans Chapter One

Introduction:

Six of Paul's thirteen letters were written during his second and third missionary journeys. Four were written during the two years he was in prison in Rome, two were written after he was freed and had left Rome, and the last was written to Timothy when he was imprisoned in Rome for a second time. All were written at least 18 years after he was converted.

If we were to try to study them chronologically; we would need to begin with the two letters to the church at Thessalonica. Four or five years later he wrote the letters to the church at Rome, two to the church at Corinth and one to the church at Galatia. Then four or five years after that he wrote the four letters from his Roman prison; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Coming last, another four or five years later still, are the three letters to Timothy and Titus.

This epistle was written during Paul's three month stay in Corinth during his third missionary journey in about A.D. 58. In it he states his interest in visiting the church in Rome and perhaps was even paving the way for such a visit. Paul had not been connected with the Christians there. The church was either established by those who were present at Pentecost when the church of Christ began or was established by those who had moved from other churches to the Roman capital.

Even though this epistle is sixth in the chronological order of Paul's epistles it has been placed first in the New Testament perhaps because of its doctrinal importance or perhaps because it was addressed to Christians that lived in the capital of most of the world.

"No student of the Bible will deny that Paul's epistle to the church of Rome is hard to understand. The inspired apostle Peter said of the writings of 'our beloved brother Paul' that in them 'are some things hard to be understood' (**II Peter 3:15-16**). The difficulty of the task, however, should deter no one from a faithful study of this great epistle." *T. Q. Martin, Preface "A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles" by David Lipscomb, edited with additional notes by J.W. Shepherd*

Read Romans 1:1-7 - Greeting

v.1 "PAUL, A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST, CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE, SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL OF GOD," (ASV)

Romans Chapter One

Paul, as one writing to those that did not know him, first presents his credentials. First of all, he characterizes himself as a servant of Jesus the Messiah. All Jews for centuries had looked forward to the coming of the promised deliverer, Paul declares that he has come; and that he is His servant. Secondly he assures them that he has been called to be his apostle; as is recorded in:

Acts 13:2 “AND AS THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD, AND FASTED, THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, SEPARATE ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK WHEREUNTO I HAVE CALLED THEM.” (ASV)

Luke writes in this scripture that Paul and Barnabas were “SEPARATED”, set aside for a special purpose, a purpose that the Lord had revealed to Ananias when he was sent to baptize Paul:

Acts 9:15 “BUT THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, GO THY WAY: FOR HE IS A CHOSEN VESSEL UNTO ME, TO BEAR MY NAME BEFORE THE GENTILES AND KINGS, AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL:” (ASV)

v.2 “WHICH HE PROMISED AFORE THROUGH HIS PROPHETS IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,” (ASV)

Just as Luke emphasized several times in his writings; just as Peter and John preached in the temple in Jerusalem long before Saul was converted:

Acts 3:21 “WHOM THE HEAVEN MUST RECEIVE UNTIL THE TIMES OF RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS, WHEREOF GOD SPAKE BY THE MOUTH OF HIS HOLY PROPHETS THAT HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD.” (ASV)

This Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, raised as a carpenter’s son in Nazareth in Galilee was indeed the Messiah promised to the patriarch Abraham (implied **Galatians 3:8**), spoke about and written about for centuries by the prophets of God. Just one example:

Romans Chapter One

Isaiah 2:2-3 “AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LATTER DAYS, THAT THE MOUNTAIN OF JEHOVAH'S HOUSE SHALL BE ESTABLISHED ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND SHALL BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HILLS; AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT. AND MANY PEOPLES SHALL GO AND SAY, COME YE, AND LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF JEHOVAH, TO THE HOUSE OF THE GOD OF JACOB; AND HE WILL TEACH US OF HIS WAYS, AND WE WILL WALK IN HIS PATHS: FOR OUT OF ZION SHALL GO FORTH THE LAW, AND THE WORD OF JEHOVAH FROM JERUSALEM.” (ASV)

v.3 “CONCERNING HIS SON, WHO WAS BORN OF THE SEED OF DAVID ACCORDING TO THE FLESH,” (ASV)

The angel had told Mary when he told her that she would bear a son and that he would be called JESUS:

Luke 1:32 “HE SHALL BE GREAT, AND SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH: AND THE LORD GOD SHALL GIVE UNTO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID.” (ASV)

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle John tells us that he was the “WORD” the “ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER” **John 1:14**. Peter confirms the prophecy in **Psalms 132:11** by David that the Messiah would be of his “seed” in his sermon on Pentecost:

Acts 2:30 “BEING THEREFORE A PROPHET, AND KNOWING THAT GOD HAD SWORN WITH AN OATH TO HIM, THAT OF THE FRUIT OF HIS LOINS HE WOULD SET ONE UPON HIS THRONE;” (ASV)

v.4 “WHO WAS DECLARED TO BE THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD; EVEN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD,” (ASV)

Romans Chapter One

This Jesus of the Galilean village of Nazareth was declared to be the Son of God; first by God's messenger to Mary, his mother, (**Luke 1:35**), then by John the Baptizer (**John 1:34**), by the miracles and power that he displayed, by the demons and devils that he cast out of people who were possessed (**Matthew 8:29, Mark 3:11**, et al), even by the heathen soldier at the cross (**Matthew 27:54**), by God at his baptism (**Matthew 3:17**), by God at his transfiguration (**Matthew 17:5**), a fact sealed by his resurrection and return to heaven. This resurrection is the seal of our hope, our faith in God and our inheritance (**I Peter 1:3-4**).

v.5-6 "THROUGH WHOM WE RECEIVED GRACE AND APOSTLESHIP, UNTO OBEDIENCE OF FAITH AMONG ALL THE NATIONS, FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE; AMONG WHOM ARE YE ALSO CALLED TO BE JESUS CHRIST'S;" (ASV)

It was through Jesus Christ, and none other, that Paul had received the grace of God, forgiveness of his sins and his appointment to the work of an apostle. Jesus sent Ananias to Saul:

Acts 9:17 "AND ANANIAS DEPARTED, AND ENTERED INTO THE HOUSE; AND LAYING HIS HANDS ON HIM SAID, BROTHER SAUL, THE LORD, EVEN JESUS, WHO APPEARED UNTO THEE IN THE WAY WHICH THOU CAMEST, HATH SENT ME, THAT THOU MAYEST RECEIVE THY SIGHT, AND BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT." (ASV)

In spite of being one who had persecuted the church, put Christians in prison, voted with the Sanhedrin Council for their death, yet when Paul was converted he was accepted because those in the early church understood the working of the grace of God:

Galatians 2:9 "AND WHEN THEY PERCEIVED THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN UNTO ME, JAMES AND CEPHAS AND JOHN, THEY WHO WERE REPUTED TO BE PILLARS, GAVE TO ME AND BARNABAS THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP, THAT WE SHOULD GO UNTO THE GENTILES, AND THEY UNTO THE CIRCUMCISION;" (ASV)

And Paul includes all of those in the church at Rome to whom he is writing as partakers of that grace, the called out or church of Jesus Christ.

v.7 "TO ALL THAT ARE IN ROME, BELOVED OF GOD, CALLED TO BE SAINTS: GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." (ASV)

Romans Chapter One

Paul addresses his greeting to all those that are in Rome, all that are Christians and therefore beloved of God. He wishes for them Grace and Peace, grace that their sins be forgiven and that they be made acceptable to God as his children, peace that they may live, work and worship God in peace. Peace that is a rare commodity for Christians in the age of persecution, in which Paul is writing.

Read Romans 1:8-16 – Paul’s desire to visit Rome

v.8 “FIRST, I THANK MY GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU ALL, THAT YOUR FAITH IS PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD.” (ASV)

Paul offers his thanksgiving to God for the Roman Christians and as we all are instructed he offers those thanksgivings through Jesus Christ just as he instructed the church at Colossae:

Colossians 3:17 “AND WHATSOEVER YE DO, IN WORD OR IN DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.” (ASV)

Secondly Paul commends them for their faith that was known throughout the known world. Remember that on his second missionary journey Paul had met Priscilla and Aquilla in Corinth, Christians that had been expelled from Rome. Being in Rome, communication with and travel to and from Rome was common and constant, even with the primitive means available to them because it was the center of the Roman Empire and its government.

v.9 “FOR GOD IS MY WITNESS, WHOM I SERVE IN MY SPIRIT IN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON, HOW UNCEASINGLY I MAKE MENTION OF YOU, ALWAYS IN MY PRAYERS;” (ASV)

Paul prayed for these Christians and their spiritual wellbeing constantly, just as I’m sure he prayed for all those who were children of God. Having no greater to call on; he calls on God as his witness to these constant prayers.

Paul also tells them that he serves God with his spirit; what does he mean?

Romans Chapter One

John 4:23-24 “BUT THE HOUR COMETH, AND NOW IS, WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH: FOR SUCH DOTH THE FATHER SEEK TO BE HIS WORSHIPPERS. GOD IS A SPIRIT: AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.” (ASV)

We are to worship and serve according to the direction and commandments provided by the Holy Spirit with the entire spirit of our being.

v.10 “MAKING REQUEST, IF BY ANY MEANS NOW AT LENGTH I MAY BE PROSPERED BY THE WILL OF GOD TO COME UNTO YOU. (ASV)

Paul has made constant petitions to God that he be allowed to visit Rome, a visit that is recorded in the last two chapters of Acts. Not a prosperous journey, by anyone’s analysis, but a journey that was successfully completed. We also are reminded that things we petition God to provide, if He thinks we need them and doesn’t answer our petitions with a “No”, are provided in God’s own good time. From the time that Paul wrote these words until he actually saw Rome was somewhere between five and six years.

v. 11 “FOR I LONG TO SEE YOU, THAT I MAY IMPART UNTO YOU SOME SPIRITUAL GIFT, TO THE END YE MAY BE ESTABLISHED;” (ASV)

One of the reasons that Paul wants to go to Rome is to impart some measure of the Holy Spirit to the Christians found there. We don’t know if they had anyone that had any special powers for teaching or preaching the Word of God or not. With the list of those that Paul mentions in chapter 16, there are several that have been associated with him in other places so they probably did have these powers. At the same time there was no encouragement as strong as having an apostle of Jesus Christ present, teaching and leading them directly.

v.12 “THAT IS, THAT I WITH YOU MAY BE COMFORTED IN YOU, EACH OF US BY THE OTHER'S FAITH, BOTH YOURS AND MINE. (ASV)

Another purpose for Paul making the journey to Rome is so that they can enjoy the mutual support and comfort that comes from Christian fellowship, especially if one of those participating in that fellowship is an apostle. This is one of the reasons that some missionaries today that live in the U.S. make regular trips to areas of the world where other missionaries or native preachers are working. Their coming, teaching and encouragement is a major means of edifying those brethren.

Romans Chapter One

v.13 “AND I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU IGNORANT, BRETHREN, THAT OFTENTIMES I PURPOSED TO COME UNTO YOU (AND WAS HINDERED HITHERTO), THAT I MIGHT HAVE SOME FRUIT IN YOU ALSO, EVEN AS IN THE REST OF THE GENTILES.” (ASV)

Many times Paul has purposed, proposed and wanted to go to Rome. The third reason for this desire is to produce fruit for the kingdom of God, to instruct, teach and convert others to Christ just as he has among other Gentile people. Everywhere he goes he has that same burning desire; that passion that has driven him throughout his life since his conversion:

I Corinthians 9:16 “FOR IF I PREACH THE GOSPEL, I HAVE NOTHING TO GLORY OF; FOR NECESSITY IS LAID UPON ME; FOR WOE IS UNTO ME, IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL.” (ASV)

We would to God that we could find that same zeal among more of our brothers and sisters today.

v.14-15 “I AM DEBTOR BOTH TO GREEKS AND TO BARBARIANS, BOTH TO THE WISE AND TO THE FOOLISH. SO, AS MUCH AS IN ME IS, I AM READY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOU ALSO THAT ARE IN ROME.” (ASV)

Paul uses terminology here that is understood by all who would read him in that day. The Greeks called anyone who was not learned enough to speak Greek a barbarian, the Romans spoke of those who did not speak Latin the same way. Paul was a debtor to all. His purpose for existence, his mission in life, his redemption and preservation by God was to preach Jesus Christ to Gentile peoples. He declares that Jesus himself gave him this mission in **Acts 22:21**.

Read Romans 1:16-18 – The Foundation of Romans

v.16 “FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL: FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH; TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.” (ASV)

This verse and verse 17 are called the foundation of Paul's letter. What had the gospel given Paul in terms of this world's goods, honor, prestige or value? Absolutely nothing at all! In fact, it had brought him suffering, persecution, and disgrace in the sight of many. So, why was it so great to him? What does this man's words tell us about his value system and our values today? Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; it burned like a fire in his mind, it was something that he had to share with everyone that would listen to him.

Romans Chapter One

How many of us seek opportunity to tell the good news of Jesus Christ to those whom we meet, work with, associate with or come in contact with on a day to day basis? We have the most precious commodity on the face of the earth, the most valuable possession known to mankind in his history. We risk losing our souls if we don't share it but do we? Or do we try to ignore the souls of the people we find around us and our obligation to teach Jesus Christ?

God, in his wisdom saw no other way to save man from sin. It is only through the means of the gospel we can be turned from sin, forgiven, have our sins washed away, be in Christ who is a source of endless blessings, be accepted as a child of God and be transformed to live with him forever. It is only through "THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING" "FOOLISHNESS OF THE MESSAGE PREACHED" (NKJV) that God has chosen to save mankind from his sins. (**I Corinthians 1:21**). Oh, that doesn't mean that we will be sinless. To save us from our sins is to save us from the love and habitual practice of sin. We will still sin, we will still make mistakes, we will still not do things that God expects and commands us to do but we won't do this on a continuous, habitual basis.

Our souls, and those whom we teach and bring to obedience to God's will, will be purged from the guilt of sin and consequently from all the results, effects and penalties of sin. God has revealed no other provisions, there is no other pattern, there will be no other plan; there will not be another revelation. The words of the book we call the New Testament are final and will carry on forever. Jesus said "MY WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY" (**Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33**).

This salvation from sin is available to everyone who believes it; but believes it how? How do we know if we or someone else believes the words of this book or not? Why does Paul talk about "OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH AMONG ALL NATIONS" in verse 5 and in **Romans 16:26**? The Apostle John explains it for us:

John 14:15 "IF YE LOVE ME, YE WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS." **v23**. "JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORD: AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM." **v.31** "BUT THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW THAT I LOVE THE FATHER; AND AS THE FATHER GAVE ME COMMANDMENT, EVEN SO I DO. ARISE, LET US GO HENCE." (ASV)

John 15:10 "IF YE KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, YE SHALL ABIDE IN MY LOVE; EVEN AS I HAVE KEPT MY FATHER'S COMMANDMENTS, AND ABIDE IN HIS LOVE."

Romans Chapter One

When Paul wrote these Roman brethren he called obeying these commandments obeying a body of teaching or a "FORM OF DOCTRINE" a term that most of our apostate brethren hate.

Romans 6:17 "BUT GOD BE THANKED, THAT YE WERE THE SERVANTS OF SIN, BUT YE HAVE OBEYED FROM THE HEART THAT FORM OF DOCTRINE (body of teaching) WHICH WAS DELIVERED YOU."

John goes further in his first epistle and affirms and assures us that we can know that we know God the Father:

I John 2:3 "AND HEREBY WE DO KNOW THAT WE KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS."

So why is it so important that we know that the doctrine or body of teaching that we're hearing and obeying is God's word, the Bible? Again the Apostle John tells us:

I JOHN 2:4-5 "HE THAT SAITH, I KNOW HIM, AND KEEPETH NOT HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM. BUT WHOSO KEEPETH HIS WORD, IN HIM VERILY IS THE LOVE OF GOD PERFECTED: HEREBY KNOW WE THAT WE ARE IN HIM."

Can it be little wonder then that the beloved Apostle John warned us with words hard to be misunderstood:

II John 1:10-11 "IF THERE COME ANY UNTO YOU, AND BRING NOT THIS DOCTRINE, RECEIVE HIM NOT INTO *your* HOUSE, NEITHER BID HIM GOD SPEED: ¹¹FOR HE THAT BIDDETH HIM GOD SPEED IS PARTAKER OF HIS EVIL DEEDS.

This form of doctrine, this body of teaching that would provide salvation was to be made available "TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK", thereby to all mankind. This was God's plan, the pattern that God expected the apostles to follow. Jesus and the apostles that followed him offered this saving grace of God to the Jews first and the, in due time, when God was ready, to the Gentiles. Paul followed the same pattern wherever he went. At Antioch in Pisidia, when the Jews refused to hear Paul, what did he tell them?

Romans Chapter One

Acts 13:46 "...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."

v.17 "FOR THEREIN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH: AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

"FOR THEREIN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED"; where? In the gospel, the entire gospel, the New Testament, not just the "core gospel" as some of our apostate brethren teach. God's plan for making man righteous is through faith generated by the revelation of His Word. God's righteousness is revealed to us, God's purpose is revealed to us, God's commandments for our obedience are revealed unto us, through the rest of His Word, the Holy Bible, God's nature and all of his other attributes are revealed to us.

The fact that God will justify the believer is given unto us as an inducement for us to believe. It is expressed in another way by the Apostle Paul in the following:

Galatians 2:16 "KNOWING THAT A MAN IS NOT JUSTIFIED BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW, BUT BY THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, EVEN WE HAVE BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST, THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE FAITH OF CHRIST, AND NOT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW: FOR BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED."

But wait a minute! Didn't we just study that justification, salvation and all the benefits of being a child of God come as a result of our knowledge and obedience to God's commandments? Which way is it; faith, belief or knowledge and obedience? Most of the denominations and many of our wayward brethren teach that we are saved by "grace only." They teach that we cannot by our own efforts add "one whit" to our soul's salvation (*The Second Incarnation*, page 207; Rubel Shelley, Randall Harris). So what's the truth of this matter?

First of all we must know and understand the context of **Galatians 2:16**. Paul was not speaking of the Law of Christ but rather the Mosaic Law. That Law; that Covenant that God gave the Israelite nation could not relieve men of sin.

Romans Chapter One

Hebrews 10:1 “FOR THE LAW HAVING A SHADOW OF GOOD THINGS TO COME, *and* NOT THE VERY IMAGE OF THE THINGS, CAN NEVER WITH THOSE SACRIFICES WHICH THEY OFFERED YEAR BY YEAR CONTINUALLY MAKE THE COMERS THEREUNTO PERFECT. **v.4** “FOR *it is* NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND OF GOATS SHOULD TAKE AWAY SINS.”

So, what's the truth of this matter?

The fact is that we must have both faith and obedience. God through his grace has provided mankind with the opportunity to become his children. Through our faith, through our belief, in the WORD of God – we then obey the COMMANDMENTS that God has given us. We follow the PATTERN that God has laid out for us; we understand and adopt his PLAN for our everyday living. When we do this we not only enjoy God's richest blessings, but KNOW that we KNOW and KNOW why we KNOW that we are indeed God's chosen, God's children.

Paul tells us that the righteous live by faith and without faith none can live spiritually because without that faith we have no basis for our actions other than our own whims and desires. This is the way most people live and they're very happy with that. Truth does not mold the character of man unless it is practiced. To see a truth, to believe a truth, does not change the character of a man. In order for a truth to change the character of a man he must not only believe that truth but change the conduct of his life, incorporate that truth into this way of living. This is the reason that the writer James asks the question in:

James 2:20 “BUT WILT THOU KNOW, O VAIN MAN, THAT FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD?”

v.18 “FOR THE WRATH OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN AGAINST ALL UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN, WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS;”

God's nature has been revealed to us down through the ages through the writings of Moses and the prophets. The impossibility of God being able to justify mankind in their unrighteousness and sin is well known to anyone who will but read and study the revelation He has provided.

Romans Chapter One

God's inability to justify unrighteousness and tolerate sin is proven to us again by His provision of His only begotten Son as the sacrifice to cleanse our sins from our souls. But God has at the same time told us that there will be not be any more opportunity hasn't he? His patience with mankind has been long, 6,000 years long as man counts time. God has done all that could be done by a righteous God and now it's our choice to accept or reject Him and there will not be another gospel, another sacrifice for the sins of mankind, the last one has been given!

“THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE THEREFORE GOD OVERLOOKED; BUT NOW HE COMMANDETH MEN THAT THEY SHOULD ALL EVERYWHERE REPENT: INASMUCH AS HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY IN WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THE MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.” **Acts 17:30-31** (ASV)

“PUT TO DEATH THEREFORE YOUR MEMBERS WHICH ARE UPON THE EARTH: FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS, PASSION, EVIL DESIRE, AND COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY; FOR WHICH THINGS' SAKE COMETH THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE:” **Colossians 3:5-6** (ASV)

Read Romans 1:19-32

v.19-20 “BECAUSE THAT WHICH IS KNOWN OF GOD IS MANIFEST IN THEM; FOR GOD MANIFESTED IT UNTO THEM. FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING PERCEIVED THROUGH THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS EVERLASTING POWER AND DIVINITY; THAT THEY MAY BE WITHOUT EXCUSE:” (ASV)

At one time all mankind knew God. This fact is revealed to us through the writings of the Old Testament. Yet mankind did not want to know God. They turned their back on him and became so wicked that he destroyed the earth by water and the flood. Even with a fresh start by eight individuals who were dedicated to God's will it didn't take man long to fall again under the influence of evil. This wisdom of man has continually lead to his downfall.

Romans Chapter One

Though we today say that we can look at the wonders of God's creation around us and know that there is a God, would we know that fact if we had never been told that there was a power, a supreme being called God? If someone had not told us about God, his creation of this world and all of the things found therein; could we look at the wonder of the construction of something as simple as a leaf and determine that a higher power created it? I submit to you that we could not, this knowledge had to be revealed to us.

Under the patriarchs and under Moses even this revelation was only in part. Man did not fully understand God's plan or his purpose until Christ came because it had not been fully revealed. These Gentiles did not have the revealed will of God and were those:

“THAT YE WERE AT THAT TIME SEPARATE FROM CHRIST, ALIENATED FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL, AND STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANTS OF THE PROMISE, HAVING NO HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.” **Ephesians 2:12** (ASV)

“FOR SEEING THAT IN THE WISDOM OF GOD THE WORLD THROUGH ITS WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD, IT WAS GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE THROUGH THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE PREACHING TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE.” **1 Corinthians 1:21**

This is the reason that Paul tells us:

Romans 10:17 “SO BELIEF COMETH OF HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST. (ASV)

All of these things had been hidden, they were a mystery, (and Paul uses that term freely); from the beginning of the world. But they have been revealed to us today and manifested unto us today through whom? Jesus Christ!

“NOW TO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO ESTABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN KEPT IN SILENCE THROUGH TIMES ETERNAL, BUT NOW IS MANIFESTED, AND BY THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF THE ETERNAL GOD, IS MADE KNOWN UNTO ALL THE NATIONS UNTO OBEDIENCE OF FAITH:” **Romans 16:25-26** (ASV)

Again: turn and read **Ephesians 3:3-9**

Romans Chapter One

v.21 “BECAUSE THAT, KNOWING GOD, THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD, NEITHER GAVE THANKS; BUT BECAME VAIN IN THEIR REASONINGS, AND THEIR SENSELESS HEART WAS DARKENED.” (ASV)

Paul in this verse is talking about all men knowing God. How is it that God, who seemed to be known only to the Hebrews for so many hundreds of years could be known to all men? God had revealed himself to all men, at the beginning with Adam and Eve and later during the flood with Noah and his descendants. Some of these peoples had knowledge of God through direct revelation, through his relationship with them (such as Esau and his descendants), others as descendants of Noah or as a part of their tradition. Even the Chinese language has a word in their writing that is built around eight people in a boat, the universal flood.

“THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD” – Mankind, even though they knew God was God indeed, did not glorify or honor him as God; did not give reverence to his laws and commandments, did not glorify his name, his power, his holiness, his presence nor did they worship him as the Maker and Ruler of this universe.

“NEITHER WERE THANKFUL” – They were not thankful for the multitude of blessings that are given through God’s providence; the material things of this earth, our talents and abilities, the millions of natural processes that have been established and sustain our very being.

“BUT BECAME VAIN IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS” – They were puffed up with the conceit of their own wisdom (the tower of Babel). Man in his wisdom today says that there is no God; that there was no creation; that this BOOK (our Bible) is not his will for mankind. They claim that life generated itself out some miserable pool of mud and primitive soup and they campaign constantly to remove and destroy all mention of God in our society and culture. They are much the same as those in Jeremiah’s day:

“NEITHER SAID THEY, WHERE IS JEHOVAH THAT BROUGHT US UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, THAT LED US THROUGH THE WILDERNESS, THROUGH A LAND OF DESERTS AND OF PITS, THROUGH A LAND OF DROUGHT AND OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, THROUGH A LAND THAT NONE PASSED THROUGH, AND WHERE NO MAN DWELT??” **Jeremiah 2:5**

In contrast the Ephesian brethren were just the opposite, especially after having been taught about Christ:

Romans Chapter One

Ephesians 4:17-18 “THIS I SAY THEREFORE, AND TESTIFY IN THE LORD, THAT YE NO LONGER WALK AS THE GENTILES ALSO WALK, IN THE VANITY OF THEIR MIND, BEING DARKENED IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING, ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD, BECAUSE OF THE IGNORANCE THAT IS IN THEM, BECAUSE OF THE HARDENING OF THEIR HEART;” (ASV)

“AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED” – The different powers of thinking, reasoning, understanding, loving, hating, having purpose, desire, rejoicing, sorrow, believing, etc. are attributed to the heart; not referring to the blood pump we have in our chests; but rather, the spiritual or inner man, our intellect. This part of man has become darkened, having been denied the light of God’s word.

v.22-23 “PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, AND CHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR THE LIKENESS OF AN IMAGE OF CORRUPTIBLE MAN, AND OF BIRDS, AND FOUR-FOOTED BEASTS, AND CREEPING THINGS. (ASV)

“PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE’ – They, as many men do today, imagined themselves wise enough to live without God. Or as frequently the case today among those who claim to worship God, they devise works and worship after their own wants and wishes and present that to God as worship or honor, expecting God to accept it. Don’t they understand the lesson behind Cain’s failure to receive God’s approval? Or they try to adapt God’s word and God’s way to their own thinking rather than accepting the instruction that God has given. History tells us through *Antiquities*, Book I, Chapter IV by the Jewish historian Josephus that by the time of Nimrod (grandson of Ham, great-grandson of Noah; fourth generation after God had destroyed the entire world by flood for its wickedness) mankind had already abandoned God entirely.

“THEY BECAME FOOLS” The Holy Spirit tells us through the pen of Paul that whenever men think they are able to live above God, or without God, they are fools. Man’s intelligence is no safeguard against folly, in fact it is the source of much that is foolishness in God’s sight.

“AND CHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD” By following their own wisdom; mankind changed from the worship of the true and living God to the worship of images of man, animals and creeping things; the very things that God created. And, oh how soon man turns! We remember that God by miracles freed his people from Egyptian bondage, led them across the Red Sea, and defeated Pharaoh’s armies, yet without Moses for just a few days:

Romans Chapter One

“THEY MADE A CALF IN HOREB, AND WORSHIPPED A MOLTEN IMAGE. THUS THEY CHANGED THEIR GLORY FOR THE LIKENESS OF AN OX THAT EATETH GRASS.” **Psalm 106:19-20** (ASV)

Several hundred years later the Israelites of Ezekiel’s day were no better; he describes what God shows him as follows:

Ezekiel 8:10 “SO I WENT IN AND SAW; AND BEHOLD, EVERY FORM OF CREEPING THINGS, AND ABOMINABLE BEASTS, AND ALL THE IDOLS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, PORTRAYED UPON THE WALL ROUND ABOUT.” (ASV)

God tells us through the pen of Luke and the words of Paul that this will no longer be tolerated:

“THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE THEREFORE GOD OVERLOOKED; BUT NOW HE COMMANDETH MEN THAT THEY SHOULD ALL EVERYWHERE REPENT: INASMUCH AS HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY IN WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THE MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.” **Acts 17:29-30** (ASV)

v.24 “WHEREFORE GOD GAVE THEM UP IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS UNTO UNCLEANNES, THAT THEIR BODIES SHOULD BE DISHONORED AMONG THEMSELVES:” (ASV)

Mankind became so corrupt that God gave up on them. They refused to worship him and worshipped idols; so God gave them up to whatever vile and unclean practices their lusts could devise. Sound familiar?

Should we be surprised that God can and does give up on people? Is there any example or scriptural record that this kind of thing could happen? What about the Israelites – God gave up on a whole generation and allowed them to wander and die in the wilderness of Sinai. We read about this in the book of Exodus and in the sermon of Stephen in Acts 7.

God did not cause their impurity. He simply abandoned them to the natural results of the lusts already in them. When men are completely unrestrained by any reverence for God’s Word or God’s creation; when they lose their sense of accountability what do we have as a result? We see the result of this condition on our TV news broadcasts every day.

What is one of the lusts that Paul is talking about?

Romans Chapter One

I Corinthians 6:18 “FLEE FORNICATION. EVERY SIN THAT A MAN DOETH IS WITHOUT THE BODY; BUT HE THAT COMMITTETH FORNICATION SINNETH AGAINST HIS OWN BODY.” (ASV)

We have other examples in other areas of the New Testament; Jesus warns us what can happen; even to those who are God’s children:

Mark 4:19 “AND THE CARES OF THE WORLD, AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES, AND THE LUSTS OF OTHER THINGS ENTERING IN, CHOKES THE WORD, AND IT BECOMETH UNFRUITFUL.” (ASV)

Paul tells the Corinthians brethren that these were given to us as examples that we should NOT follow:

I Corinthians 10:6-7 “NOW THESE THINGS WERE OUR EXAMPLES, TO THE INTENT WE SHOULD NOT LUST AFTER EVIL THINGS, AS THEY ALSO LUSTED. NEITHER BE YE IDOLATERS, AS WERE SOME OF THEM; AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY.”

This abandonment of God’s will, God’s precepts, is so prevalent in the world today that even those who profess to be Godly have removed God’s influence from their lives to the extent that we have the most sin-sick society that this country has ever known. Babies are murdered without thought of remorse; homosexuality and lesbianism is preached as just another life style that should have the same rights under government mandate as race or nationality; corruption in government (our government, not the other governments of this world) has become so common place that it is merely another sound bite in the nightly news. We could go on but you understand what happens when God abandons people to their own devices.

v.25 “FOR THAT THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN.”

The KJV says that they ‘CHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD INTO A LIE’ the ASV says they “EXCHANGED” or traded the “TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE” no matter which translation we use; they gave up the truth of God and followed the reasoning of their own heart, which Paul calls a “LIE” and worshipped and served those things that God created rather than God.

Isaiah says that those who have done this don’t know the difference between right and wrong well enough but to eat ashes for food:

Romans Chapter One

“HE FEEDETH ON ASHES; A DECEIVED HEART HATH TURNED HIM ASIDE; AND HE CANNOT DELIVER HIS SOUL, NOR SAY, IS THERE NOT A LIE IN MY RIGHT HAND?” **Isaiah 44:20** (ASV)

Paul, on the other hand, describes the brethren at Thessalonica as an example of what the true gospel of Christ can do, even when those who obey were idol worshippers and practiced all of those things that Paul condemned.:

I Thessalonians 1:9 “FOR THEY THEMSELVES REPORT CONCERNING US WHAT MANNER OF ENTERING IN WE HAD UNTO YOU; AND HOW YE TURNED UNTO GOD FROM IDOLS, TO SERVE A LIVING AND TRUE GOD,” (ASV)

v.26-27 “FOR THIS CAUSE GOD GAVE THEM UP UNTO VILE PASSIONS: FOR THEIR WOMEN CHANGED THE NATURAL USE INTO THAT WHICH IS AGAINST NATURE: AND LIKEWISE ALSO THE MEN, LEAVING THE NATURAL USE OF THE WOMAN, BURNED IN THEIR LUST ONE TOWARD ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN WORKING UNSEEMLINESS, AND RECEIVING IN THEMSELVES THAT RECOMPENSE OF THEIR ERROR WHICH WAS DUE.”

Because they loved the lie rather than the truth of God and worshipped the idol gods rather than the creator; God gave them up to vile and unnatural passions.

Is this anything new? What was the first case of this kind of lust and sin that is recorded in scripture? What about Sodom and Gomorrah? Read **Genesis 19:4-8**. What was God’s reaction to their sin? Read **Genesis 19:23-25**

Paul’s purpose in this chapter is to show the state of the heathen world and its need for the preaching of the gospel of Christ. This establishes the foundation for his writing of this book and the reason for its existence. Hasn’t he not only described the world of his day but the world of today as well?

When nations and peoples forget or refuse to listen to God; they lose their sense of responsibility to him, they follow the degrading lusts into a depravity that is worse than brutal. These things that Paul refers to here were common in that day among the heathen. They were intimately connected with the rites of idolatry, especially with the worship of Venus and others goddesses and gods of spring or fertility.

Romans Chapter One

But is it really any different today? Just look at the world around us, tune in to the local newscasts for a few nights; the world, mankind, sin and depravity haven't changed one bit since the beginning of time. The acceptance of some of these vile and evil lusts into the fellowship of some of our so-called "Christian" religions of today as just a variation or an alternate lifestyle is but a mark their foundation in the wisdom of man rather than God.

v.28 "AND EVEN AS THEY REFUSED TO HAVE GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM UP UNTO A REPROBATE MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FITTING; (ASV)

Men who have given themselves over to fleshly lusts not only find that their entire being is absorbed in gratifying these lusts but that neither do they like to retain a knowledge of God. They don't want to hear about God, they don't want to hear God's warnings and admonitions. They don't want to think about anything or hear anything that would condemn or reprove what they're doing. Paul says that God "GAVE THEM UP TO A REPROBATE MIND."

This is the third giving up that Paul has mentioned. In **verse 24** Paul tells us that God gave them up to "UNCLEANNES", in **verse 26** "UNTO VILE AFFECTIONS [PASSIONS] and here in verse 28 he has given them up "UNTO A REPROBATE MIND". This describes one who is lost to any kind of virtue, wholly given over to sin, abandoned to error, lost to all sense of duty to anything but serving their own wants and desires. They're addicted to sin. Oh, they're addicted to other things as well, sex, drugs, gambling, booze; but that is a secondary addiction, their real addiction is to sin.

In the KJV it is translated that Paul says that they will "DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT", a term that we probably need to understand better today. The ASV translation is "DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FITTING". The original language means for them to do things which are not fit for man to do. In the next three verses Paul gives us a list of specific things that fall into this category.

Romans Chapter One

v.29-31 “BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, WICKEDNESS, COVETOUSNESS, MALICIOUSNESS; FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, STRIFE, DECEIT, MALIGNITY; WHISPERERS, BACKBITERS, HATEFUL TO GOD, INSOLENT, HAUGHTY, BOASTFUL, INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING, COVENANT-BREAKERS, WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, UNMERCIFUL:” (ASV)

“BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS” – their entire lives absorbed with injustice or iniquity in general. No good in them at all.

“FORNICATION” – sexual immorality of all sorts

“WICKEDNESS” – This includes the entire list of human crimes, there’s nothing beyond the capability of these people.

“COVETOUSNESS” – the unlawful desire for what belongs to another, to the extent that someone will go to any length, do unlawful things to get what someone else has: David and Bathseba.

“MALICIOUSNESS” – deep-seated hatred which takes pleasure in doing personal injury to others. Have you ever encountered this attitude? I have.

“FULL OF ENVY” – selfish ill will toward another because of their success, ability, talent, possessions, etc.

“MURDER” – unlawful killing of another human being (abortion)

“DEBATE, STRIFE” – angry contention, hostile struggling, fighting, conflict, the disposition to be quarrelsome and contentious, seeks to irritate.

“DECEIT” – a disposition to deceive or lead into error, usually to gain some material possession or advantage

“MALIGNITY” cancer is the malignancy of body cells, this is talking about the same kind of malignancy in the mind

“WHISPERERS” – Those who secretly and in a sly manner, by hints or innuendoes, blacken the name and character of others

“BACKBITERS” – those who openly speak evil of those who are absent

“HATERS OF GOD, HATEFUL TO GOD” – their minds are so devoted to sin that they hate God; they hate those who serve God and in turn are hated by God as well

“DESPITEFUL, INSOLENT” – grossly disrespectful, to what or whom they dislike, regardless of whether they trample underfoot the rights, property or lives of others.

“PROUD, HAUGHTY” – inordinate self-esteem, unreasonable conceit or feeling of superiority over others because of talents, beauty, wealth or accomplishments

“BOASTERS, BOASTFUL” – vainglorious about themselves or that which they possess, and not slow about proclaiming their own merits to those around them.

Romans Chapter One

“INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS” – so intent upon gratifying their passions that they seek after new evils to enjoy. Sort of like moving from “soft” drugs to “hard” drugs. The old things don’t give the kick of enjoyment or euphoria they once did, so they invent or move to new things that do.

“DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS” – that this sin should be mentioned in this black list of man’s misdeeds shows the light in which Jehovah regards it.

“WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING” – a dullness of mind in understanding anything that has to do with morals, spiritual relationships, etc. brought about by an unwillingness to hear or to retain God’s truth in the mind.

“COVENANT BREAKERS” – persons, who without any scruples whatever, will break even the most solemn covenant, agreement or contract.

“WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION” – should it be a surprise to anyone that those whose minds follow these evils would be void of the ability to feel or show any natural affection. With this in mind; should it be hard for us to understand that men can abandon their families, mothers their children, abuse them or even murder them in the womb before they are born?

“IMPLACABLE” – because this word appears only once in the KJV it was not in my study source but Webster’s 7th New Collegiate Dictionary says it means not capable of being satisfied, appeased or fulfilled. Just can’t ever get enough, especially of those things lusted after.

“UNMERCIFUL” – when people reach this level of evil they no longer have the capability of showing any mercy to the poor, the infirm, the helpless, or of showing a mercy to an enemy.

v.32 “WHO, KNOWING THE ORDINANCE OF GOD, THAT THEY THAT PRACTISE SUCH THINGS ARE WORTHY OF DEATH, NOT ONLY DO THE SAME, BUT ALSO CONSENT WITH THEM THAT PRACTISE THEM.”

“WHO” – those that Paul has just described, those who did not chose to retain God or God’s knowledge in their hearts

“KNOWING THE JUDGMENT OF GOD” – even though they knew better, understand that God considers them worthy of death, not only do these things but honor others who do them as well.

One author states that “a darker picture of human corruption would be difficult to conceive, but it is not an overdrawn picture of man”; this is not an exaggeration. As man has departed from God, he has degenerated spiritually; he has degenerated intellectually, and physically. For six thousand years, in every portion of the globe, among men of every color, tongue, race and kindred on earth the results of refusing “TO HAVE GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE” has produced the same fruit.

Read **Psalms 50:16-21** – the day will come when God will indeed set all things in order.