

# **The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans**

A Bible commentary and study guide for students  
and teachers compiled and written by Pastor Rick Brentlinger.

## **Introduction**

Paul wrote his epistle (letter) to the Romans in the winter of AD 57-58, from the rowdy port city of Corinth, where sexual immorality and prostitution were openly practiced. Yet Rome was even more idolatrous than Corinth. Sporting events in the Circus Maximus and fertility goddess worship in hundreds of pagan temples echoed the adulation of idolatrous Romans. Rome was a city wholly given to idolatry.

Throughout ancient Rome thousands of bronze and marble statues honored false gods. Carved friezes decorated building facades, depicting everything from daily activities to pagan gods. Wall, floor and ceiling murals in homes and commercial buildings depicted erotic sexuality. Painted pottery portrayed pornographic pictures

Sensuality and lust were part of daily life in ancient Rome. Paul's letter to the Romans addresses the lack of righteousness in the lives of Romans, God's wrath at their unrighteousness and God's remedy for their sin problem. Paul does not shy away from the first century realities of Roman idolatry, fertility goddess worship and shrine prostitution. Romans is not theoretical. It is practical and focused on what Roman Christians encountered every day they lived in Rome.

Beyond the erotic and salacious, ancient Rome was an incredibly modern city. In the first century AD, six aqueducts, drawing on 130 outlying reservoirs, supplied water to homes and businesses and to 170 free public bath houses and 500 fountains.

The Circus Maximus in first century Rome seated 150,000 spectators. It was enlarged by Emperor Trajan after AD 98 to accommodate 250,000 spectators on marble seats. Its immense size, approximately 680 yards long and 160 yards wide, provided room for spectacular events. Flooded, the stadium provided a watery battleground for ships. Drained, there was a huge oval track for chariot races.

Above the Circus Maximus, Cybele's temple loomed on the Palatine Hill. The white stone steps of Cybele's temple caught the eye of every spectator in the Circus Maximus. In the dim light of dawn and the fading light of sunset, Cybele's Temple seem to float in the air above Rome. The idolatry and shrine prostitution practiced in Cybele's Temple is the specific historical and religious context of Paul's letter to the struggling Christians in Rome.

Over the 2000 years since Paul's day, Rome has built up the land around the Palatine Hill so that today, it hardly seems like a hill. Ancient Rome is now buried beneath as much as 40 feet of fill dirt.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why should we study Paul's letter to the Romans, 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17?
2. Some churches teach that, to keep from learning false doctrine, people should only study the Bible under the guidance of a priest. What does the Bible say about this, 1 John 2:27, John 16:13, 1 Peter 2:5-9?
3. The first word of Romans tells us the name of the human author. Who wrote Romans? \_\_\_\_\_ What do we mean when we say Paul was the human author of Romans?
4. What is Saul/Paul doing when we first see him in the Bible, Acts 7:58, 8:1?
5. Before he got saved, Saul was devoutly religious, zealous for God and a passionate defender of Judaism, yet he was completely wrong - his life changed radically when he got saved.
6. If a man as educated, passionate and devout as Saul could be unsaved and completely wrong, how can you be sure you are right in your religious beliefs?
7. When you read the story of Saul's conversion in Acts 9:1ff, what encourages you to believe his conversion was genuine?

8. When you hear about someone getting saved today, what encourages you to believe their conversion is genuine?

9. Have you had a genuine experience of salvation, of being saved by the living Christ, in your own life?

The great theme of Romans is Righteousness.

1. God requires righteousness
2. We lack righteousness
3. God provides righteousness as a free gift

### **Righteousness and the Gospel in Romans**

- 1:1-3:20 - Man's need of righteousness
- 3:21-26 - God's provision of righteousness
- 4:1-25 - By faith, man receives this righteousness
- 5:1-21 - Jesus Christ is this righteousness
- 6:1-8:39 - Righteousness is produced in us by the Holy Spirit
- 9:1-11:36 - Why Israel rejected this righteousness
- 12:1-16:27 - Practical righteousness in the Christian life

### **Extended Outline of Romans**

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1–15)
- II. Theme (1:16-17)
- III. Condemnation: The Need of God's Righteousness (1:18–3:20)
  - A. Unrighteous Gentiles (1:18–32)
  - B. Unrighteous Jews (2:1–3:8)
  - C. Unrighteous Mankind (3:9–20)
- IV. Justification: The Provision of God's Righteousness (3:21–5:21)
  - A. The Source of Righteousness (3:21–31)

B. The Example of Righteousness (4:1–25)

C. The Blessings of Righteousness (5:1–11)

D. The Imputation of Righteousness (5:12–21)

V. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God’s Righteousness (6:1–8:39)

VI. Restoration: Israel’s Reception of God’s Righteousness (9:1–11:36)

VII. Application: The Behavior of God’s Righteousness (12:1–15:13)

VIII. Conclusion, Greetings, and Benediction (15:14–16:27)

### **Paul’s reasons for writing Romans**

1. He wrote to prepare the way for his first visit to Rome and his missionary journey to Spain, 1:10–15; 15:22–29.
2. He wrote to present the righteousness of God - that the gospel of Christ teaches, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, to a church that had not yet received the teaching of an apostle.
3. He wrote to explain the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in God’s plan of redemption. Jewish Christians were being rejected by Gentile Christians (see 14:1) because Jewish believers still observed Jewish dietary laws and holy days, 14:2–6.

Romans is unique in that most of Paul’s other letters were written to churches in which he had personally ministered. Yet although he knew many Christians in Rome and lists their names at the end of his letter, Paul had never visited Rome.

In Romans Paul lays the doctrinal foundation of Christianity, that God requires righteous and mankind lacks righteousness, therefore, God provides righteousness as a free gift to all who will receive it. Romans and the revelation of the righteousness of God in the gospel is Paul's doctrinal masterpiece.

It is interesting to note that the apostle John wrote to seven churches which are in Asia, Revelation 1:4. The apostle Paul also wrote to seven churches: Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse and Rome.

The opening sentence of Romans contains 126 words in the KJV. Long complex sentences are characteristic of Paul's writing style, Galatians 1:1-5, Ephesians 1:3-14. The Apostle John's writing style is different; short and simple yet profound sentences, 1 John 4:8-19.

This illustrates how God used the education, linguistic ability, personality and thought processes of the human authors of the Bible to color what they wrote, yet what they wrote is free from error and exactly as God intended, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16-17. Each human author of the Bible had his own unique style yet God used them to record exactly what the Lord wanted to be included in His word. In a similar way, God uses our individuality, our personality, our gifts and talents, to serve God and minister to others.

Romans begins with the name of its human author. **Paul** was originally called Saul, his Jewish name. After his dramatic conversion to Christ in Acts 9, he began using his Roman name, Paul. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Romans 11:13, 15:16, Acts 9:15, 22:21, Galatians 1:16, Ephesians 3:8, 1 Timothy 2:7, this name change was appropriate. **Paul** begins his letter by telling us he was:

**1) 1:1 - Paul, a servant** = a slave of Jesus Christ. This is an amazing statement when we consider Paul's background as a free born Roman citizen, Acts 7:58, 8:1-3, 9:1-2, 1 Cor 15:9, 1 Tim 1:13-15 and when we discover that Paul was apparently a man of wealth, Acts 28:30. What do you think about that? If Paul was not rich, what other ways could he have afforded to rent a house for two years while a prisoner of the Romans?

In the first century AD, the population of Rome was about one million to one and a quarter million people. Of this number, about one third were slaves, most of them from countries Rome conquered in battle.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul call himself a servant? Matthew 20:25-27, 23:11, Luke 22:27, Philipians 2:5ff. Was it because Jesus was a servant? Was it because Paul was an authentic disciple of Jesus? See #3.
2. What happened to Paul that he willingly became a servant of God? Acts 9:1ff.
3. What does it mean when Paul tells us to follow him as he followed Christ? Acts 26:29, Romans 11:14, Galatians 3:1, 4:12, 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1, 1 Thess 1:6, 2 Thess 3:7, 9, 1 Tim 1:16, 2 Tim 3:10-14

When Jesus began His earthly ministry in Matthew, He was dealing with bearded, circumcised, law keeping, pork-abstaining, Sabbath worshipping, Moses following, gospel rejecting unsaved Jews in the land of Israel who refused to receive Him as their Messiah.

When we get to Acts, God is still dealing with the Jews but is also beginning to segue to ministry to Gentiles, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8. In the Acts period, we witness a gradual turning away from Israel because Jews as a nation rejected the gospel, Acts 13:45-46, 18:5-6, 28:17, 23-28.

The Pauline epistles tell us to follow Paul as He followed Jesus instead of simply telling us to follow Jesus because we are on the grace side of Calvary (OT Law vs. NT Grace). That is because Jesus was the Jewish Messiah to Israel, Isaiah 53, who ministered signs and wonders to Jews living under the law of Moses in the land of Israel, Romans 15:8. Paul was Jewish but he was also the apostle to the Gentiles, Romans 11:13. As Christians we certainly witness to Jews about Jesus. God gladly saves individual Jews who accept Jesus but Israel as a nation has been removed from the place of blessing in this age because as a nation, they rejected their Messiah, Romans 11:25.

4. What does it mean to be on the grace side of Calvary, Rom 6:14?
5. Does God really expect us to follow Paul?
6. Does God really expect us to be His servants?

Saul of Tarsus was a great enemy of the early Christian church. In order to reject Jesus and the Bible, critics of Christianity must explain away the conversion of Paul. George Lyttelton, 1709-1773, studied Paul's dramatic conversion in an attempt to disprove Christianity. He became a Christian as a result of studying the life and conversion of Paul. In his essay, "Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul" (This article is found in the classic set, The Fundamentals, edited by R.A. Torrey and A.C. Dixon and others, Vol. II, page 353.) Lyttelton lists four possibilities for what happened to Paul on the Damascus road in Acts 9.

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

B. Paul was a fanatic with a vivid imagination (he sincerely thought he saw the risen Christ but really did not).

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

D. Paul's conversion happened the way he described it, therefore Christianity is true. (Paul really did see the risen Christ and Christianity is true because Christ is alive).

7. Discuss problems you see with possibilities A, B and C.

**2) 1:1 - an apostle** = a special calling, gift and office. Are there any biblical apostles today? No, there are no biblical apostles today in the sense of men who were chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ to fill the scriptural office and who possess biblical apostolic authority and the apostolic office, Matthew 10:1ff., Corinthians 12:28.

Although some Christians believe that apostles working wonders, with signs and miracles, has been "normal Christianity" for the last two thousand years, the facts of history and scripture rightly divided, strongly disagree. Since those who profess to be apostles today use the book of Acts to prove that they are also apostles, wise Christians will keep the following facts in mind.

**A.** The book of Acts is a transitional book, segueing from ministry to Israeli Jews to ministry to Gentiles outside Israel.

**B.** When events in Acts 2 occurred, the New Testament had not been written. For that reason, God used signs and wonders to authenticate the preaching of the apostles whom Jesus had chosen.

One of the signs God used was speaking in tongues. No one spoke unintelligible gibberish at Pentecost, Acts 2, because the biblical gift of tongues is the ability to speak a real earthly language not previously learned; not a heavenly language, not a personal prayer language.

**C.** The Greek word, ἀπόστολος (apostolos or apostle) is found 81 times in 80 verses in the Greek New Testament. In the KJV, it is usually translated as some form of our English word, apostle.

**D.** Jesus is no longer in His earthly ministry to Israel, as he was 2000 years ago when He personally chose twelve men to fill the office of apostle as they ministered to Israel before the crucifixion and resurrection.

For these reasons, it is wise to remember that there are no apostles today filling the biblical office as in Matthew 10, Luke 6, Acts 2, 1 Cor 12:28.

a. The original twelve apostles were personally chosen by our Lord, Luke 6:12-13 and given the spiritual gift of apostleship, 1 Corinthians 12:31.

b. The original twelve apostles had personally participated in our Lord's earthly ministry for 3.5 years, Acts 1:21.

c. The original twelve apostles had received the baptism of repentance by John the Baptist, Acts 1:22.

d. The apostles Jesus chose personally witnessed their resurrected Lord and Savior, Acts 1:21-22.

There are a few others in the Bible who were called apostles but there is no biblical record that they exercised the same apostolic authority as

the original twelve. The original Twelve plus Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:23-26, and the apostle Paul were "**apostles of Christ**," 2 Cor 11:13, 1 Thess 2:6 (Greek, pseudapostolos and apostolos)

Barnabas and others listed below were called apostles in the sense of messengers sent by God and were **apostles of the churches**, 2 Cor 8:23 (Greek, apostolos).

a. Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:23-26 - "*Matthias... he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*" See also Ac 6:2, Luke 24:9, 33.

b. The apostle Paul, 1 Cor 15:9 - was "*the least of the apostles*" whose apostleship was "*out of due time*," 1 Corinthians 15:8. Paul had a special gift and calling from God to be an apostle on a level with the original twelve, Rom 1:1.

c. Andronicus and Junia, Romans 16:7, "who are of note among the apostles." - apostles of the churches.

d. Barnabas, Acts 14:4 - "the apostles, Paul and Barnabas." - Barnabas was an apostle of the churches.

e. James, the Lord's brother, Galatians 1:19 - "the apostles... James the Lord's brother." - James was an apostle of the churches.

f. Jesus Himself, Hebrews 13:1 - "Jesus the Apostle..."

Judas is the only one of the original twelve apostles who was replaced. He was replaced by Matthias, Acts 1:23-26. There is nothing in the Bible which indicates any other of the original twelve apostles was replaced when he died.

If it was God's will that there constantly be apostles on earth like the original twelve, we would expect to see the apostle James replaced after his death in Acts 12:2. However, nothing in the Bible indicates that James was replaced.

The language of 1 Corinthians 12:28, using the word "first..." and then the words, "after that," indicates chronological progression in time, not that the church would always have men with the same gift of apostleship that Jesus gave His original twelve apostles.

Paul refers to himself as "the apostle of the Gentiles," not an apostle of the Gentiles. In plainer words, in the Bible, there was one apostle to the Gentiles, not many apostles to the Gentiles, even though many of Paul's companions were sent to the Gentiles.

The narrowly focused specific definition of a biblical apostle denotes the scriptural office as an apostolic gift, 1 Cor 12:31. That gift must be differentiated from the more general use of the word, apostle, in which a Christian sent by God can be called an apostle, meaning simply: one whom God has sent.

Calling someone an apostle in the general sense does not mean that individual holds the office of an apostle or possesses the spiritual gifts of apostleship, including power to do sign gifts, wonders and healings, which Jesus gave to His original twelve apostles.

For example, we might say of someone who is especially kind and loving, "(S)he is an angel." We don't literally mean an angel in the sense of that race of created beings who dwell with God in heaven. We are using the word angel in a general sense when we describe a fellow human being.

In the same way, we can refer to some Christians as apostles in a general sense without intending to convey the impression that they hold the biblical office of an apostle, with the biblical authority and implications and powers that conveys.

Are we making an artificial distinction? No, we are making a biblical distinction. In 1 Cor 12:29, Paul asks rhetorical questions, to all of which, the correct answer is, No.

"Are all apostles?" The correct answer is No, all are not apostles. We can certainly say that all Christians are chosen of God and sent for specific purposes, Ephesians 2:10, but according to the Bible, all are

not apostles because believers have not been given the gift of apostleship since the original apostolic age almost 2000 years ago.

Christians are told to "covet earnestly the best gifts," indicating that the gifts Paul listed in 1 Cor 12, including being an apostle, are gifts not possessed by every Christian. The Bible also warns of "*false apostles*," 2 Cor 11:13. The way to tell a false apostle is found in 2 Cor 12:12. False apostles must fake their power. They cannot perform real signs, wonders and miracles.

*"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."*

A true apostle had authority and spiritual power from God to perform miracles which glorify God (not the apostle) and which authenticate the biblical message because the New Testament had not then been completed, Acts 5:12-16, Romans 15:18-19, Acts 19:11-12, Hebrews 2:4.

In Ephesians 2:20, apostles are the foundation, not the entire building. A foundation is laid one time at the beginning of a building project. Today, no one has apostolic qualifications because an apostle was one who had been baptized by John the Baptist, had walked with Jesus in His earthly ministry and had seen the risen Christ, Acts, 1:22, 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8-9 and Acts 1:22. The replacement for Judas had to have seen Christ in His earthly ministry, 1 John 1:1. Christ does not appear to men today, John 16:10, 1 Peter 1:8, because He has ascended into heaven.

### **Application - Acts 2:42**

Today we do not have apostles who operate in that biblical office but we do have the DOCTRINE or the TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES as recorded in the New Testament. Today we do not have the Apostle Paul but we do have the DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL, namely the book of ROMANS and his other writings in the New Testament.

**3) 1:1 - Separated unto the gospel of God** - There is a negative aspect to separation (separation from sin and false religion) but this verse emphasizes one of the positive aspects (not separation FROM

but separation UNTO). Paul's dedication 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.

**The gospel of God** and the righteousness of God are important ideas Paul emphasizes in Romans. The word gospel occurs 101 times in 95 verses in the King James Bible New Testament. The word gospel is not used in the Old Testament yet according to Galatians 3:8, the gospel WAS preached unto Abraham. Our English word gospel comes from the Greek word, εὐαγγέλιον, euangelion or yü-än-ge'-lē-on, meaning good news.

In classical Greek, a eu-an-ge-los was a messenger who brought good news of victory (like Ahimaaz in 2 Samuel 18:19-31) so eu-an-ge-li-on became a message of victory, good news for all who believe on Jesus Christ as their Substitute, who paid the penalty for their sins.

We were lost sinners under the curse of the Law, unable to satisfy the justice of God by paying sin's penalty ourselves. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus became our substitute. He took our place, dying as us for us, paying the penalty for our sins, appeasing the wrath of God, Romans 1:16-18, 3:24-26, Isaiah 53:4-6, 8, 11. God signaled us that He accepted Jesus' payment by raising Jesus from the dead.

The bleeding Lamb upon the Cross  
Bore all God's wrath that day;  
The guiltless for the guilty, slain,  
To take my sins away. - rb

*"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:" - Galatians 3:13*

What wondrous love is this  
O my soul, O my soul?  
That Christ should leave his heavenly bliss  
And take upon himself the curse,  
For my soul, for my soul!

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus took our place and paid the sin penalty we owed by taking our sins upon Himself, thus becoming a curse for us. *"The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity (sin) of us all."* - Isaiah 53:6

Paul skillfully and systematically presents the gospel of God in Romans. Today there is much confusion as to what the gospel really is and how it should be presented. Let's carefully study how Paul defined, explained and presented the gospel, and may we never forget that Paul got his gospel from God, Galatians 1:11-12. The gospel is clearly stated in 1 Cor 15:1-8.

### **The gospel is a defined set of facts**

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1. Christ died for our sins - v. 3
2. according to the scriptures - v. 3
3. Christ was buried - v. 4
4. Christ rose from the dead the third day - v. 4
5. according to the scriptures - v. 4
6. Christ was seen by 500+ eyewitnesses - vs. 5-8

### **What the gospel is called**

**1. The gospel of God - Rom 1:1** - God is the source of the gospel. He did all the work to make it possible for us to be saved, while we were still his enemies, Rom 5:10.

**2. The gospel of Christ - Rom 1:16** - Jesus dying on the cross for our sins is the focus of the gospel, not joining a church or getting baptized or trying to clean up our life.

**3. The gospel of the grace of God - Acts 20:24** - The gospel leaves no room for human works. Getting saved is all about God's incredible free gift of grace, not something we can earn.

**4. The gospel of peace - Eph 6:15** - Salvation brings us peace with God, Rom 5:1, through our Lord Jesus Christ because when we believe the gospel we are justified by faith.

**5. My gospel - Rom 16:25** - The gospel we preach started with Paul and is for the church age. It is distinctively different from other gospels, like (a) the gospel of the kingdom which was preached during the earthly ministry of Christ and (b) the everlasting gospel which will be preached in the tribulation and (c) the false gospels of religious pretenders.

### **Christians reject false gospels**

1. Acts 15:1 - the false gospel of works of the law like circumcision
2. Galatians 1:6-10 - the false gospel of law-keeping brings damnation
3. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 - the false gospel of Satan who blinds people to the glorious gospel of Christ, telling them they can get saved just by being a good person.
4. A false gospel focuses on getting rid of guilt by positive thinking or having a better life with Jesus (Your Best Life NOW!) or Jesus as God's prosperity gospel genie who grants all your wishes. A false gospel talks about heaven (positive) but rarely mentions hell (negative).
5. A legalistic false gospel focuses on what you can do: turn from all your sins or get baptized in water or make Jesus Lord of your life or prove you got saved by doing good works. Those things should happen after you get saved but they are not part of the gospel, they are not part of getting saved or staying saved. Rather, they are a result of getting saved.

The entire book of Romans should be read through the lens of the gospel of God and the righteousness of God. When we obey the gospel and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, hell and the wrath of God, three things happen immediately.

1. We receive forgiveness of sin: *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* - Ephesians 1:7

2. We receive Christ's righteousness: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* - Romans 4:5, 2 Cor 5:21

3. We receive eternal life: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* - John 3:16

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is the gospel whatever anyone thinks it is or is the gospel a defined set of facts?
2. Does the gospel contain both positive and negative truth?
3. If we leave out the negative truth, that our sins were so horrific that Jesus had to die, suffering God's wrath to pay the penalty, have we truly shared the gospel?
4. Is the gospel the power of God unto salvation or is it just another religious story?
5. Who is the center of the gospel, Jesus or human beings?
6. Is there any gospel apart from Jesus?
7. In which Bible verses is the gospel found?
8. Have you believed the gospel and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, hell and the wrath of God?
9. Will you learn to share the gospel with people who need it?

**1:2 - Which he had promised afore... in the holy scriptures** - The gospel was previewed in the Old Testament in Genesis 22, Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. Jews who read their OT with a believing heart were looking for their Messiah. Yet the gospel was not explicitly laid out in the OT. As we will see in vs. 16-18, God reveals His righteousness and His wrath in the gospel. Those aspects was not known in the OT.

**1:3-4 - Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord** - What is the Gospel all about? According to 1:3 the gospel concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is the heart, soul and center of the biblical gospel - Romans 1:9 calls it "the gospel of his Son." Without Jesus there is no gospel. Any preaching that is not Christ-centered is not real gospel preaching. Getting the gospel right is the most basic, the most foundational thing. God gives dramatic warning about people who preach a false gospel, Galatians 1:3-9.

**made of the seed of David** - The humanity of Jesus, John 1:14, Matthew 1:1, 1 Tim 2:5. Through Mary, Jesus was a real human man, a direct descendent of King David, part of the most illustrious royal family of Israel.

**according to the flesh** - He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. Galatians 4:4 - God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. His flesh or humanity did not exist in eternity past. Jesus became human at a point in time, Gal 4:4. His humanity was made, not declared, Matthew 1:18.

Why did God need to take on human flesh, to become a man? Galatians 4:5, Hebrews 2:9.

**and declared to be the Son of God** - The deity of Jesus, John 1:1, 20:28, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, 1 John 5:20. Deity refers to the fact that Jesus was God, 1 Timothy 3:16. Jesus was fully man and fully God. He did not cease to be God when He became a man. His title, Son of God, describes the deity of Jesus Christ and that is precisely how first century Jews understood the term, Son of God, John 5:17-18, 10:30-33. Jesus was eternally God, therefore His deity was declared, not created or made.

Cults like Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and false religions like Islam teach that Jesus was not God. They say He was a created being or simply a great prophet.

How much did the Jews understand about the humanity and deity of Christ during the earthly ministry of Jesus? Matthew 22:41-46.

The Jews admitted to Jesus that Messiah would come from the line of David, Matthew 22:42. The Jews understood Psalm 110:1 to refer to Messiah: "The LORD (meaning Jehovah or God the Father. Whenever Jehovah is used in Hebrew, the KJV translates it as LORD, using all capital letters) said unto my (referring to David, the writer of the Psalm) Lord ("Adonai" meaning "Lord" or "Master," here referring to Messiah or Christ). The Jews were baffled by the question Jesus asked, Matthew 22:45-46. Here is Jesus' question boiled down to its essentials.

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

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Did Jesus become God when He was born to the virgin Mary?
2. Did Jesus become the Son of God when He was born to the virgin Mary?
3. Was Jesus half man and half God or fully man and fully God?

**with power... by the resurrection from the dead** - The resurrection is the final proof that Jesus Christ was everything He claimed to be, Matthew 12:38-40, John 2:18-21 and that God's wrath against sin was appeased, Romans 1:18, 3:24-26.

Some people try to explain away the bodily resurrection of Christ. Do these theories have any basis in fact or in scripture?

1. The disciples stole the body of Jesus, Matthew 28:11-15.
2. The body of Jesus was removed by Joseph of Arimathaea and hidden somewhere, Matthew 27:57-60.
3. The women and then everyone else went to the wrong tomb.

4. The eyewitnesses who claimed to see Christ were victims of mass hallucinations. They thought they saw Christ but really didn't.

5. Jesus did not really die on the cross and when they put Him in the tomb He was still alive, so His resurrection was a fraud.

In the Old Testament, when God wanted to point out His great power He spoke of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Deuteronomy 4:37, 26:8, Exodus 32:11, 2 Kings 17:36.

In the New Testament, when God wants to point out His mighty power, He points to the resurrection of Christ, Ephesians 1:19-20; Philippians 3:10.

When God wants us to see His love He points to the cross, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:10. When God wants us to see His power He points to the empty tomb.

**by the spirit of holiness** - As "according to the flesh" referenced the humanity of Jesus, so "by the spirit of holiness" references the deity of Jesus. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus was not tainted with sin. He was holy and when He saves us, He sanctifies us, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 5:26, Hebrews 2:11, 10:10, so that we can be holy.

**Romans 1:5 - By whom we have received grace and apostleship,** - Grace is God's undeserved favor, his unearned, unmerited kindness. Paul knew he did not deserve to be an apostle, 1 Cor. 15:9-10 and Eph. 3:8. Paul is introducing himself to the Romans, citing his apostolic authority and worldwide calling - that GOD had saved, called and sent him by grace. Paul knew his spiritual purpose in life.

1. What does it mean to be saved, called and sent by God?
2. Is God's purpose in our lives significant or insignificant?
3. Are you saved, called and sent by God?
4. Are you aware of the grace of God in your life?
5. Can you give examples of the grace of God in your life?
6. Do you know your spiritual purpose in life?
7. Can you describe God's spiritual purpose for your life?

**for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:**

Paul in Acts 16:30-31 - What must I do to be saved?

1 John 3:23 - What is the first commandment a sinner must obey?

Hebrews 11:6 - What is the first thing a sinner must do to please God?

Acts 17:30 - What is God's command and to whom is it given?

Are disobedience and unbelief significant or insignificant? John 3:18, 3:36, 8:24, 16:9, 2 Thess 1:8-10

**among all nations** - Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8

To whom should the gospel be preached?

**1:5 - for his name** - Paul's concern was for the Name, glory and reputation of His Lord and Savior, 1 Cor 10:31, 3 John 7

What does Paul mean by: obedience to the faith among all nations?

Should Christians preach the gospel?

**1:6 - Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:**

**among whom** = among all nations, v.5

What is God doing in the world today that is different from what He did in the world of the Old Testament?

Why is the NT message different than the OT message?

Today God is visiting the nations (Gentiles), taking out of them a people for His Name, Acts 15:14, 22:21. Christ is building His church, Matthew 16:18. The word church, Greek - ecclesia - means a called-out assembly. God is calling people into the fellowship of His Son, 1 Cor. 1:9.

Has God called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, 1 Peter 2:9?

Do you know anyone who needs the light of the gospel?

**1:7 - To all that be in Rome,** - Paul is writing to Christians in the capital of the Roman Empire in one of the most wicked cities on earth. First century Rome had hundreds of pagan temples to false gods and scores of thousands of idolaters who worshiped and offered sacrifices in those temples.

**beloved of God,** - Ephesians 1:5-6 - What does it mean to be beloved of God?

It means you are adopted into God's family, Eph 1:5-6

It means you are saved and redeemed, Eph 1:7

It means your sins are forgiven, Eph 1:7

Beloved is how God the Father describes Jesus - God describes those of us who are saved the way He describes Jesus, Ephesians 2:4, Matthew 3:17, 12:18, Mark 1:11, 9:7, Luke 3:22, 9:35, 20:13

**called to be saints:** - Greek word - ἅγιος - hagios - it means to be holy, to be set apart for God, to be consecrated to God. The KJV New Testament translates it holy 161x, saints 61x, Holy One 4x.

Saints are: Called to be holy, called to be set apart for God, called to serve God. Paul tells Christians in a wicked pagan city that they are called to be saints, called to be holy, Revelation 4:8.

God's covenant is holy - Daniel 11:28

God's mountain is holy - Daniel 9:16

God's city is holy - Daniel 9:24

God's people are holy - Daniel 12:7

God is holy - Hosea 11:9

God's name is holy - Amos 2:7

God's temple is holy - Jonah 2:7, Acts 21:28

God's land is holy - Zechariah 2:12

God's angels are holy - Matthew 25:31

Jesus is holy - Luke 1:35, Acts 4:30

God's prophets are holy - Luke 1:70, 2 Peter 1:21, 3:2

God's Spirit is holy - Luke 11:13

God's scriptures are holy - Romans 1:2, 2 Tim 3:15

God's law is holy - Romans 7:12  
Our bodies should be holy - Romans 12:1, Eph 1:4  
The temple of God (our body) is holy - 1 Cor 3:17  
God's apostles and prophets are holy - Eph 3:5  
God's church is holy - Ephesians 5:27  
Our hands are holy - 1 Timothy 2:8  
Our calling is holy - 2 Timothy 1:9  
Bishops should be holy - Titus 1:8  
The brethren are holy - Hebrews 3:1  
Our high priest is holy - Hebrews 7:26  
Our priesthood is holy - 1 Peter 2:5  
We are holy - ! Peter 1:15-16  
Our conversation should be holy - 2 Peter 3:11

**1:8 - First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.** - From an ungodly city like Rome, their faith was known throughout the Roman Empire because they lived for Jesus and were separated from the world. Rome was a travel hub and first century Romans were great travelers. Roman roads and ships and the Roman army made travel possible in the first century AD and aided the spread of the gospel.

Is our faith known to anyone?  
Is anyone thankful for our faith?  
Were people in China aware of faithful Romans?

**1:9 - For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;**

Prayer is a powerful yet rarely used weapon in the Christian life. Here are nine truths we learn about prayer from Paul's example.

**1. Prayer begins with thanksgiving from a thankful heart - 1:8**

Read Romans 1:21 - neither were thankful. Pagans are not thankful to the true God. What are you thankful for?

The Roman church of the first century was famous for their faith. What is the Roman church of the twenty first century famous for?

The Roman church today is famous for traditions of men, sacraments, robes, ritual, papal leadership, false teaching but is not famous for evangelism and the gospel. Paul was thankful that in the capital of the pagan Roman empire in AD 58, there were born again Christians who worshiped God.

## **2. Prayer is through our Lord Jesus Christ - 1:8**

- a. Because Jesus is our ONLY Mediator - 1 Tim 2:5
- b. Because Jesus is the only Way - John 14:6
- c. Because Jesus told us to ask in His Name - John 14:14

## **3. Prayer should be consistent - 1:9**

“pray without ceasing” - 1 Thess 5:17, Luke 18:1

What does it mean to pray without ceasing? To pray without ceasing means consistency and constancy. It is recurring prayer, not nonstop talking. Such prayer reflects a heart burden that stays with us all day long. Paul’s prayerful concern for the Roman believers was something that was always with him.

Praying without ceasing means: When you are tempted, you bring the temptation to God and ask for His help. When you experience something good and beautiful, you immediately thank the Lord for it. When you see evil around you, you ask God to make it right and to use you toward that end, if that is His will.

When you meet someone who does not know Christ, you pray for God to draw that person to Himself and use you to be a faithful witness. When you encounter trouble, you trust God as your Deliverer. Thus life becomes constant communion with God: thoughts, deeds and circumstances become an opportunity to commune with your heavenly Father. In that way you constantly set your mind "on things above, not on things that are on the earth," Colossians 3:2.

## **4. Prayer should be genuine, not a side show - 1:9**

- a. God witnessed the genuineness of Paul’s prayers
- b. The faith of the Roman church was Paul’s proof
- c. What proof do you have that God answer’s your prayers?

## **5. Prayer is intervening on behalf of another - 1:9, Eph 6:18**

- a. Paul prayed for people by name - 16:1ff.
- b. Paul won souls by preaching and by praying
- c. For whom do you pray?

## **6. Prayer should be specific - 1:10**

Paul prayed specifically for a prosperous journey. Be specific in your requests to God. If God is concerned about feeding the sparrow and clothing the lily, then He is concerned about specifics in our lives. "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 to God- 1:10**

- a. By the will of God - we all struggle with submission
- b. So prayer requires humility

## **8. Prayer requires right motivation - 1:11**

- a. Why did Paul want to go to Rome?
- b. What hindered Paul from traveling to Rome?

## **9. How did God answer Paul's prayer?**

Paul arrived in Rome in an unusual way. God does not always answer our prayers the way we imagine He will. Paul's prosperous journey, Romans 1:10, involved a shipwreck on the Mediterranean Sea, nearly drowning while swimming to shore hugging a piece of driftwood, a soggy sojourn on a chilly island, being bitten by a poisonous viper and arriving in Rome as a prisoner, Acts 27-28.

God moves in mysterious ways  
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.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

- William Cowper, 1774 (1731-1800)

### **1:13 - that I might have some fruit among you**

- a. We have a spiritual purpose in life, Acts 20:24
- b. God has eternal purposes in mind for us, Eph 2:10
- c. Those purposes provoke opposition from Satan, Rom 1:13

**1:14 - I am debtor** - I owe something to someone. I have an obligation I must fulfill. I have a gospel duty. My life is about more than myself, my wants, my desires. 1 Corinthians 9:16-26.

Do you owe a gospel debt to anyone? 2 Corinthians 5:17-21  
How will you pay your gospel debt?

**To the Greeks, and to the Barbarians** - There were two classes of Gentiles. Greeks were those under the influence of Greek culture and language, Acts 17:12.

**Koine Greek** was the common language or the trade language of the Roman empire. Paul's letter to the Romans was written in common or Koine Greek, not classical Greek, not Latin and not Hebrew. Koine Greek was more practical than classical Greek, focused on clarity instead of eloquence, with simpler grammar and sentence construction. Koine Greek was the language of life while classical Greek was the language of education and oratory.

Barbarians were foreigners who often spoke koine Greek but were not as strongly influenced by Greek culture, Acts 28:2,4.

Paul owed the gospel to everyone. Before he was saved, Saul of Tarsus felt an obligation to persecute as many Christians as he could, Acts 22:19, 26:11; but now Paul felt an obligation to preach the gospel to everyone.

How do we preach the gospel? With our life, with our loving heart, with our words. We converse about restaurants, movies, TV shows, health, cars, politics, sports. Why not converse about the gospel too?

**1:15 - I am ready** - Why was Paul so confident? Acts 26:15-20.

There is a sense in which being ready to preach the gospel is as natural as talking about the weather. Paul had been praying about coming to Rome for years. Desire, planning and prayer helped get him ready and help get us ready to preach the gospel.

1. Am I ready to preach the gospel?
2. Do I need a pulpit in a church to preach the gospel?
3. Where can I preach the gospel?

**Preach the gospel** - evangelize, share the good news of salvation in Christ, proclaim the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as the cure for our sin problem.

**1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ**

I AM debtor - v. 14

I AM ready - v. 15

I AM not ashamed - v. 16

- Paul fled Damascus under cover of darkness to escape an assassination attempt and was let down the city wall in a basket, Acts 9:25, 2 Cor 11:33
- he was stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead, Acts 14:19
- he was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, Acts 16:19-25
- he was run out of Thessalonica and Berea after causing a riot, Acts 17:5-14
- he was mocked by Athens intellectuals, Acts 17:32
- his teaching caused another riot in Ephesus, Acts 19:29, 20:1

Yet Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Crazy circumstances and vicious attacks couldn't discourage him from preaching the gospel. Paul had a great attitude on life, Acts 23:10-12. By the time Paul arrived in Rome, he had been a prisoner for more than two years, Acts 24:27, 25:10-14, and in Rome, he faced two more years as a prisoner, Acts 28:30.

### **Did disobeying God have consequences for Paul?**

Paul prayed for the "will of God" in his life, Romans 1:10. Do you pray for God's will in your life? God intended Paul to get to Rome to preach the gospel, Acts 23:11, 27:24. But several years before he went to Rome, Paul stepped out of the will of God by going to Jerusalem, Acts 19:21. The Lord warned Paul NOT to go to Jerusalem, Acts 20:22-23, 21:4, 21:10-12. Paul went anyway and therefore, did not have a "prosperous journey" to Rome, Romans 1:10, for which he had prayed, although God still got him to Rome.

The will of God will never lead you  
where the grace of God cannot keep you.

But that doesn't mean it will be an easy journey. Instead of sailing to Rome first class, Paul arrived as a prisoner. He suffered a fierce two week storm on the Mediterranean, was shipwrecked and floated to shore on broken pieces of the ship, Acts 27:39-44. The soldiers wanted to kill Paul and the other prisoners so they couldn't escape in the storm but God intervened through the Roman Centurion in charge of Paul, to save him from that fate.

Many Christians around the world have suffered for the gospel over the last two thousand years and many more have suffered because, like Paul, they disobeyed God. What we do, decisions we make sometimes affect God's answers to our prayers. It is God's job to get us back on track when we get out of His will but sometimes it's a long and difficult journey for us.

1. Has preaching the gospel or disobedience to God ever caused you to suffer or cost you something? \_\_\_\_\_
2. If the sheriff put you in jail for preaching the gospel and witnessing for Jesus, would you expect God to get you out right away? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If you were in jail for two years, would you think God had forgotten you? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long was Paul imprisoned before and during his trip to Rome? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you got beat up before they put you in jail or again while you were in jail, how would you react to that? Read Acts 16:19-34.

Read Luke 9:26 and 2 Timothy 1:8,12. We should not be ASHAMED of the gospel and we should not be a SHAME to the gospel by living contrary to God's will. That is easier said than done when times get hard.

**for it is power of God** - 1:16 = Greek word dunamis - where we get our English word dynamite although Paul wasn't thinking about dynamite when he wrote Romans. The same Greek word is translated "ye shall receive power" in Acts 1:8. In general, dynamite or power is useless until you use it - the same with the gospel. See 1 Cor. 1:18, 24.

Creation was finger play - easy for God, Psalm 8:3 but our redemption required the mighty arm of God, Isaiah 53:1. Who is the arm of the LORD? \_\_\_\_\_

Creating the universe cost God very little.  
Redemption cost the life of His only begotten 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 every sinner, Colossians 1:13 and Acts 26:18.

6. How has God transformed your life since you got saved?

**unto salvation** - 1:16 - Everyone who believes the gospel is saved, Luke 8:12, John 5:24, 6:47, Acts 16:30-31, 1 Cor 1:21, 15:1-2

**to everyone** 1:16 - God's gospel is not for a select few; it is for ALL.

7. Since it's for everyone, do I have a responsibility to preach the gospel to the lost, Matthew 28:18-20? \_\_\_\_\_

**that believeth** - 1:16 -- The gospel must be believed - Believing the gospel is our human responsibility, Mark 1:15. God does the saving - we do the believing. Faith is when we believe in our heart. Believing in our heart is when we receive God's gift of salvation, Romans 6:23. Heart belief = acting on our belief of the gospel.

8. What is the difference between intellectual belief and believing unto salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

You can have intellectual belief without acting on your belief. Heart belief moves beyond intellectual belief because heart belief compels you to act on your belief and receive Jesus as your Savior.

**to the Jew first** - 1:16 - An amazing demonstration of God's grace. The Jews rejected their Messiah, John 1:11, and cried out for Him to be crucified, Matthew 27:22, Luke 23:21, John 19:14-16.

9. Why did the Jews as a nation reject their Messiah? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are disobedient Christians in the twenty first century in danger of doing to Jesus exactly what the Jews did, Luke 19:14? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do we call Jesus Lord yet rebel against His leading? \_\_\_\_\_

God sent His good news to the Jews first. Jews heard the beginning of the gospel in Acts 2:5-11. Gentiles got the gospel in Acts 10. Today the gospel goes to everyone without distinction, Romans 10:12-13.

*"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.*

## **Why was it necessary that the gospel go to the Jews first?**

**1.** The gospel had to go to the Jews first because "SALVATION is of the JEWS," John 4:22. Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Since salvation is of the Jews it is fitting that the glorious message of salvation should go FIRST to the Jews.

**2.** The gospel had to go to the Jews first because of Matthew 1:21. "He shall save his people from from their sins."

**3.** The gospel had to go to the Jews first because it was the Jews who were given the Hebrew Scriptures, the 39 books of our Old Testament, Romans 3:1-2, 9:4.

The Jews, of all people, should have recognized their Messiah and should have acknowledged Him as their Lord. Paul's habit on the Sabbath was to go into the Jewish synagogues to reason with them from the scriptures, showing them clearly that Jesus of Nazareth was their promised Messiah.

**4.** The gospel had to go to the Jews first because of God's incredible grace. Did the Jews deserve to hear the gospel FIRST? They were the ones who rejected and crucified their Messiah, 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.

Perhaps in fairness, the Jews should have been the last to hear the gospel. They had rejected their Messiah but God did not reject them. How gracious of God to reach out first to the Jews. When Israel's sin was greatest, God's grace was greater, Romans 5:20.

### **Review Questions**

1. Who wrote the book of Romans? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximately what year was Romans written? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where was Paul when he wrote Romans? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Had Paul ever been to Rome? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Had Peter ever been to Rome? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How large was the population of first century Rome? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Was ancient Rome Christian or pagan? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Was ancient Rome friendly to the gospel of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is an apostle? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are there biblical apostles today? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Paul was (1) a servant, (2) an apostle and (3) separated unto the gospel. Which two of those are you? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is the Greek word for gospel? \_\_\_\_\_
13. εὐαγγέλιον or euangelion or yoo-ang-ghel'-lee-on means good news or gospel. T or F?
14. Summarize the gospel in your own words, 1 Cor 15:3-8.
15. What is the great theme of Romans? R\_\_\_\_\_
16. What is the central message of Christianity? \_\_\_\_\_
17. What is the gospel of God? \_\_\_\_\_
18. How many times is gospel used in the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_
18. What is the good news of salvation? \_\_\_\_\_
19. What message did Paul preach wherever he went? \_\_\_\_\_
20. How did the church's greatest enemy become the church's greatest apostle? \_\_\_\_\_
21. What caused the amazing transformation described in Galatians 1:23? \_\_\_\_\_
22. How did Saul the persecutor become Paul the "servant of Jesus Christ," Rom 1:1? \_\_\_\_\_
23. 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. \_\_\_\_\_
24. Did Paul have a personal encounter with Jesus?
25. Name the three I AMs of Paul in Romans i. \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. \_\_\_\_\_ iii. \_\_\_\_\_
26. Name two things revealed in the Gospel, 1:16, 18.  
The \_\_\_\_\_ of God.  
The \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
27. Circle the one thing that is the power of God unto salvation, 1:16.  
  
Sincerity - Love - Faith - Truth - the Gospel - Respect - Happiness
28. Why was Paul NOT ashamed of the Gospel, 1:16? \_\_\_\_\_
29. Are we ever ashamed of the Gospel?
30. Is preaching the gospel a weak or powerful way to witness? \_\_\_\_\_
31. Is saying, God loves you, preaching the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_
32. Is inviting someone to Bible study preaching the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

33. Why did Paul describe the gospel as powerful? \_\_\_\_\_
34. Does God always answer prayers in the way we think He will? \_\_\_\_\_
35. Does our disobedience sometimes cause us to take long detours from God's perfect plan for us? \_\_\_\_\_
36. How can we avoid long detours from God's plan? \_\_\_\_\_
37. What is revealed in the gospel, Romans 1:17? \_\_\_\_\_
38. How does the gospel reveal the righteousness of God? \_\_\_\_\_
39. Because Jesus is the Son of God, was Jesus the murdered victim of a cosmic child molester? \_\_\_\_\_

**Calvary** is where God makes everything right. For four thousand years of OT history, from Adam to Christ, God had been forgiving sins based on animal sacrifices. At the appropriate time, in the fullness of time, Galatians 4:4, God sent His Son.

Upon the cross where Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied;  
His blood was shed for you and me,  
Amazing grace has set us free!

The bleeding Lamb upon the Cross  
Bore all God's wrath that day;  
The guiltless for the guilty, slain,  
To take our sins away. - rb

**Therein** - in the gospel (see v. 16). How is the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

**The righteousness of God** - We do not have any righteousness that God will accept, Rom 3:10, and we need that kind of righteousness , 1 Cor 6:9. How can we get the righteousness we need?

**from faith to faith** - God's righteousness is only received by faith. God used Romans 1:17 to open the eyes of Martin Luther. As he meditated 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 church rituals or religion but only by faith in Jesus Christ. Luther 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." - Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans

**from faith to faith** - Repetition of words and thoughts is a Hebrew poetic device, Psalm 16:11, 42:7, Jer 4:19, 6:14, 8:11, Ez 7:26. Paul sometimes repeats words and thoughts for emphasis, to intensify the idea he describes so that it sticks in our minds, for example: Rom 4:18, hope to hope and 2 Cor 2:16, death to death and life to life.

**from faith to faith** - We are saved by faith and then we live our Christian life by faith, Gal 2:20, Heb 11:6. Faith is essential to our spiritual growth. If you're not walking by faith, you're not experiencing much spiritual growth.

Some believe Paul means from Old Testament faith to New Testament faith, from the law to the gospel. If that is his meaning, he compares and contrasts the works righteousness of the OT with the grace righteousness of the NT. Under OT law, they did not have the imputed righteousness of Christ that Christians enjoy after the resurrection of Christ. OT works righteousness came from living it and was earned in the OT vs. imputed in the NT - Deu 6:17-18, 25, 1 Kings 8:32, 2 Chr 6:23, Job 27:6, Ps 18:20, 112:3, 9, Isa 38:3, Ez 18:20, Lu 1:6

**the just shall live by faith** - righteousness by faith alone was foreshadowed in the OT by men like Abraham and in verses like Hab 2:4. Living by faith means we stop having faith in our religion and our works righteousness. We stop trying to earn salvation. Instead, we trust the righteousness of another, the Lord Jesus, a righteousness we do not deserve and did not earn for ourselves.

### **What happened on the cross for everyone who is saved?**

God treated Christ as if He had lived our wretched sinful life so that He could treat us as if we had lived Christ's spotless perfect life. Discuss.

Our sins were imputed to Christ, as if He had committed them and He suffered the wrath of God as our Substitute, enduring punishment we deserved. Conversely, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us who

believe, as if we had lived the holy sinless life of Christ and we stand before God fully justified, as righteous as Jesus Christ.

**If we deny** that our guilt was transferred to Christ and He bore its penalty, we deny the gospel and the basis of our justification by faith. If our guilt was not transferred to Christ and paid for on the cross, if Jesus didn't suffer the wrath of God that we deserved, how can Jesus' righteousness be imputed to us for our justification? For that matter, what happened to the wrath of God if Jesus didn't suffer God's wrath on the cross? If Jesus didn't appease the wrath of God by His death on the cross, God's wrath is still unappeased yet 2 Cor 5:14-21 is clear that God is reconciled, meaning His wrath is appeased.

This doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH became one of the three great pillars of the Protestant Reformation. The other two were THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE and THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS.

**Romans 1:18 - The wrath of God** - God's love is much more popular than God's wrath. That Jesus had to die to appease God's wrath is an incredible revelation both of God's wrath and God's amazing grace.

Love sent my savior to die in my stead;  
Why should He love me so?  
Meekly to Calvary's cross He was led;  
Why should He love me so?

Nails pierced His hands and His feet for my sin;  
Why should He love me so?  
He suffered sore my salvation to win;  
Why should He love me so?

O how He agonized there in my place;  
Why should He love me so?  
Nothing withholding my sin to efface;  
Why should He love me so?  
Why should He love me so?  
Why should my Savior to Calvary go?  
Why should He love me so?  
- Robert Harkness, 1880-1961

## The logic of God's wrath

**A. First the diagnosis, then the cure.** The bad news is God hates sin. The good news is God loves sinners. But we must start with His hatred. First the diagnosis, then the cure. There is no reason to seek treatment if you don't know you are sick. Learning of God's wrath encourages us to receive the free gift of God's grace, Romans 5:17.

This is not "God hates the sin but loves the sinner." Does that silly phrase mean God's displeasure is against sin but not against the sinner? Would anyone argue that God is displeased with murder but feels no displeasure toward murderers?

God loves sinners, not in the sense that he does not hate them along with their sin, but in the sense that he also seeks their salvation in Christ. *"For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."* Isaiah 9:12, 21. God's attitude toward sinners is antagonism and wrath while at the same time his good will toward them actively seeks their repentance and salvation.

**B. Disease before deliverance.** No one seeks deliverance from the disease of sin until confronted with the wrath of God which is the consequence of sin. The wrath of God convinces us we need a Savior.

**C. Bad news before good news.** Understanding the bad news helps the good news make sense. If there is no bad news, then we don't need the good news but if there is bad news, we desperately need the good news. Why tell the good news if people don't yet understand the bad news? A man needs to know he is lost and under the wrath of God before he can understand he is a sinner who needs to be saved from sin, hell and the wrath of God. Remember Romans 4:15 - *the law worketh wrath* and Galatians 3:24 - *the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

If you will not have Christ as your Savior,  
you will have Him as your Judge! Acts 17:30-31

## What is the wrath of God?

The wrath of God is His eternal, holy and righteous hatred of all evil, sin and unrighteousness: Psalm 5:5, 11:5, 45:7, 119:104, 128, Proverbs 6:16, 8:13, Isaiah 61:8, Jeremiah 44:4, Amos 5:15, 21, Romans 1:18, Revelation 2:6, 15. God's wrath and justice reflect the holiness of God stirred to action against sin, Deu 7:1-5, resulting in punishment of evil-doers, 2 Thess 1:9, Revelation 20:11-15.

1. Which is better, a God who hates sin or a God who loves sin? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Would a God who loves sin be just and holy? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Would a God who loves sin be trustworthy? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does the God you worship hate sin? \_\_\_\_\_

### Please discuss how God's wrath is different from human wrath.

God is holy and perfect in righteousness. He is not a sinner, therefore God's wrath is never an out of control emotional response. Human beings are sinners, born with a sin nature, Romans 5:12. We are not perfect and since human wrath is always emotional and often fallibly sinful, human wrath always contains an element of our sinful self.

### The wrath of God - Romans 1:18

**1. The FACT of God's wrath** - It is a revelation from God, known because He chose to reveal it to us, unknowable any other way. Notice, God chose to reveal His wrath by linking His wrath to the glorious gospel of Christ and the death of Christ on the cross.

In plainer words, the gospel illustrates the the wrath of God because Jesus, God in the flesh, 1 Tim 3:16, willingly suffered the Father's wrath against our sin, became our Substitute, took upon Himself the punishment we deserved. Now, no one has to suffer the wrath of God because at Calvary, God made a way for all of us to escape the wrath of God. The greatest example of God pouring out His wrath was when He put His own Son on the cross to bear our sins and the Father's wrath, so that He cried out in agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46 - That is the cry of a lost man in hell!

Jesus submitted to capital punishment because God cannot just brush aside our sin. God's righteous judgment must be satisfied.

**2. The FOCUS of God's wrath** - all ungodliness and unrighteousness, yours, mine, your grandmother's, your pastor's - ALL.

**3. The FURY of God's wrath** - Isaiah 42:5, 51:17, 51:22, 59:18, Jeremiah 30:23, 32:37, Ezekiel 5:15, 36:18, Daniel 9:16  
God's judgment of Christ on the cross sums up all human history.

**4. The FINALITY of God's wrath** - everlasting fire, 2 Thess 1:8-9, Revelation 20:9-15 - God's wrath against sin is a fait accompli, a done deal. It has already happened; has already been decided. Nothing we think about it now has any impact on God or truth or human history.

**5. The PROPITIATION of God's wrath** - Jesus appeased or propitiated God's wrath by Himself enduring that wrath to pay for our sins.

\*\*\*\* Propitiation, from the Greek word ἱλαστήριον *hilastērion*, means: a sacrifice that appeases God's wrath. Jesus was our substitute, dying as us for us, appeasing God's wrath against our sins.

**6. The FREEDOM from God's wrath** - *God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Romans 5:9. Paul's purpose in Romans chapters 1-3 is to confirm that faith alone is the only means of receiving the righteousness offered in the gospel.

Before the cross, God's wrath was against us. Upon the cross, God's wrath is appeased and we are not appointed to wrath. The cross is the only place where the wrath of God could be appeased. God's wrath was not forgotten and our sins were not ignored. Instead, God's wrath was appeased by the sacrifice of Christ and based on Jesus being our Substitute who took the wrath of God upon Himself in our place, we no longer face the wrath of God.

### **Bible study on the wrath of God**

1. John 3:16, What did God do for the human race? \_\_\_\_\_

2. John 3:36, What is on you if you do not believe? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do saved people not have to worry about the wrath of God?
4. In John 1:29, who is the Lamb of God? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In Exodus 12:3-5, the Jews in Egypt were told, each house was to give a lamb, as a blood sacrifice to God. In Exodus 12:6 and 21, what did God tell each household to do with their lamb? \_\_\_\_\_
6. In Exodus 12:22, the lamb's blood was to be struck on the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the door. God required blood sacrifice to show how serious sin is and how serious God is about obedience.
7. In Exodus 12:23, what would God do when He saw the blood of the pass-over lamb on the lintel and side posts of the door? \_\_\_\_\_
8. In Exodus 12:23, was God's wrath averted if they refused to put the blood of the lamb on the lintel and side posts of the door? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Every Jew who heard John the Baptist preach about the Lamb of God, John 1:29, associated the lamb with the passover lamb in Exodus 12 and with God's lamb in Genesis 22:8 - "God shall provide \_\_\_\_\_ a lamb for a burnt offering."
10. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Christ our \_\_\_\_\_ is sacrificed for us and in Isaiah 53, "all we like \_\_\_\_\_ have gone astray and the LORD hath laid on him" - Jesus - "the iniquity of us all... he will bear their iniquities."
11. Do you remember what John Baptist called Jesus in John 1:29?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Compare Psalm 32:1
12. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, what is Jesus called? \_\_\_\_\_
13. In Ephesians 2:3, unsaved people are called \_\_\_\_\_
14. According to Romans, what two things are revealed in the gospel?
  - a. Romans 1:17 - the \_\_\_\_\_ of God

b. Romans 1:18 - the \_\_\_\_\_ of God

15. In Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7, what did John the Baptist warn the Pharisees and Sadducees to flee from? \_\_\_\_\_

16. In Romans 1:18, what is revealed from heaven? \_\_\_\_\_

17. In Romans 2:5, what are unsaved people treasuring up for themselves? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Romans 2:8, what do people get who refuse to obey God? \_\_\_\_\_

19. How does the law work wrath in Romans 4:14?

a. It exposes my sin, Romans 7:5, 10, Galatians 3:24

b. It reveals that I am condemned, John 3:36, Eph 2:3

c. It warns of judgment, Acts 17:30-31, Rom 2:5, 8, Rev 16:19, 19:15

20. In Romans 5:9, name one thing we are saved from? \_\_\_\_\_

21. In Romans 5:9 we are saved from wrath through \_\_\_\_\_?

22. What did Jesus do to save us from God's wrath? \_\_\_\_\_

23. From whose wrath did Jesus save us when He died on the cross?  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. In Ephesians 2:3, before we got saved, we were all the children of \_\_\_\_\_.

25. In Ephesians 5:6, what comes upon the children of disobedience?  
\_\_\_\_\_

26. In Romans 5:9 how does obeying the gospel and receiving Jesus as Savior save us from God's wrath against sin? \_\_\_\_\_

27. In Colossians 3:5-6, what sins bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience? \_\_\_\_\_

28. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, what did Jesus deliver us from? \_\_\_\_\_
29. In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, God promises that we are not appointed to \_\_\_\_\_ but to obtain \_\_\_\_\_ by our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. Does getting saved deliver us from the wrath of God? Yes or No?
31. Does that mean Jesus took God's wrath for us? \_\_\_\_\_
32. In Hebrews 3:11 and 4:3, God swears in his wrath that some will not enter into His rest. Who will not enter into his rest? \_\_\_\_\_
33. In Revelation 6:16, unsaved people fear the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lamb. What happened in Revelation 4:1 (Romans 5:9 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) to saved people? \_\_\_\_\_
34. In Revelation 6:17, we learn that the great day of God's \_\_\_\_\_ is coming. Who gets the wrath of God, saved or unsaved? \_\_\_\_\_  
When we ignore biblical teaching about the wrath of God, it is impossible to understand the gospel teaching that Jesus bore the wrath of God as our substitute. That lack of understanding inevitably leads to a false gospel which is not the biblical gospel.
35. Is it possible to talk about the need for a Saviour without talking about God's wrath? \_\_\_\_\_

**Post-modern Christians** prefer to ignore the fear of God, the wrath of God, the judgment of God and what Jesus taught about hell. They approach the Bible with skeptical unbelieving hearts. Their rejection of biblical truth affects their view of how God deals with our sins and His wrath against our sins. Post-modern thought makes God a sentimental old fool who never gets mad at anything. That is not the biblical view of God and His wrath.

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea.  
A great high Priest whose Name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands,  
My name is written on His heart.  
I know that while in Heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free.  
**For God the Just is satisfied  
To punish Him and pardon me.**

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,  
My perfect spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I AM,  
The King of glory and of grace,

Once in my Lord I cannot die.  
My soul is purchased by His blood,  
My life is hid with Christ on high,  
With Christ my Savior and my God!

- Before The Throne of God Above, Charitie Bancroft, 1863

### **What does it mean to be postmodern?**

Postmodern is a word used to describe changes in how people think today, vs. how our ancestors thought, especially the way people today view reality and truth. Before the modern era, the world was considered pre-modern. What are the differences between pre-modern, modern and post-modern?

**In the pre-modern world, from Creation to 1650,** religion or the Bible were the primary source for truth and reality. God's existence and His truth in the Bible were widely accepted.

**In the modern world, 1650 to 1930,** science became the primary source for truth and reality. Religion and morality came to be viewed as subjective while science was viewed as objective.

**In the post-modern world, 1930 to today,** for many people, the authoritative source for truth and reality is individual opinion or preference.

In post-modern thinking, individualism and relativism shape one's approach to truth and reality. Personal history, social class, gender, culture and religion shape one's personal narrative. Because those factors are different from one person to another, the narrative and meaning of our lives are viewed as culturally embedded localized social constructions without any universal application. This is sometimes stated as, "Your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth so we can agree to disagree because truth is always relative." Post-moderns are suspicious of anyone who makes universal truth claims. Any claim of universal truth is viewed as an effort to marginalize and oppress the rights of minorities.

As a worldview, post-modern thought rejects any single defining source for reality and truth. That is why it can be so difficult to use the Bible in witnessing. Post-moderns, often without realizing they are doing it, reject the Bible as God's exclusive source of truth because that exclusivity seems unfair to Buddhists, Jews, Muslims and minorities.

Post-moderns are all about tolerance. They can tolerate almost everything except absolute truth because to them, absolute truth is intolerable. And so, post-moderns reject the absolute truth of the Bible. Post-modern Christians back away from biblical literalism and insist the Bible does not mean what it says. They reject the common sense plain meaning of the words of scripture and insist that the Bible really means the opposite of what it says.

For post-moderns, God is all love and no wrath. For post-moderns, the gospel is inclusive, not exclusive, meaning there are many ways to God. For post-moderns, getting saved is about doing your best instead of trusting Jesus alone.

For post-moderns, Jesus' claim in John 14:6, to be the exclusive way to God means the opposite, that there are many ways to God. For post-moderns, the Jesus of the Bible was a religious teacher like Buddha and Mohamed but he was not God. For post-moderns, rejecting the Bible as God's truth is not as dangerous as believing the Bible literally. For post-moderns, building your world view on what the Bible says in context is a crack-pot way to live. *From Steven W. Cornell and Rick Brentlinger*

1. Is post-modern thinking the correct way to view the Bible?
2. Does post-modern thinking tend toward belief or unbelief?
3. How can we guard against post-modern thinking in our Bible study?

**To avert from men God's wrath,  
Jesus suffered in our stead;**

By an ignominious death  
He full atonement made;  
And by His most precious blood  
Brought us, sinners, nigh to God.  
- attributed to the martyr, John Huss, 1369-1415

Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered;  
**the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered**

- Ah Holy Jesus - Johann Heerman, 1630

Was it for crimes that I have done,  
he groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!  
And love beyond degree!  
Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, Thine—  
And bathed in its own blood—

**While the firm mark of wrath divine,  
His Soul in anguish stood.**

- Alas and Did My Savior Bleed - Isaac Watts, 1707

Guilty I stand before Thy face;  
**On me I feel Thy wrath abide:**  
'Tis just the sentence should take place,  
'Tis just—but O, Thy Son hath died!

For me I now believe He died!  
**He made my every crime His own,**  
Fully for me He satisfied:  
Father, well pleased behold Thy Son.  
Wherewith, O Lord, Should I Draw Near, Charles Wesley, 1740

**For what you have done His blood must atone:**  
The Father hath punished for you his dear Son,  
The Lord, in the day Of his anger, did lay  
**Your sins on the Lamb, and he bore them away.**  
All Ye That Pass By - Charles Wesley, 1707-1781

Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,  
An all sufficient ransom paid.  
O matchless price! His precious blood  
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.  
Jesus the sacrifice became  
**To rescue guilty souls from hell;**  
**The spotless, bleeding, dying Lamb**  
**Beneath avenging Justice fell.**  
Enslaved In Sins and Bound By Chains, Anne Steele, 1760

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
**in my place condemned he stood,**  
sealed my pardon with his blood:  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!  
Man of Sorrows, What A Name, Phillip P. Bliss, 1875

## **Do not shove God's wrath into the closet!**

As we consider God's wrath, let's forget our human notion of someone with an angry demeanor who throws a temper tantrum at the slightest provocation. God is holy and God's wrath is part of His holy nature. God's wrath is His determined and active opposition to all sin. If God loves righteousness, He must also hate evil.

A God who is all love and no wrath would not be God at all because He would be unrighteous. We know this based on human experience. A judge who is all love and hugs towards cold-blooded murderers and child molesters would not be a righteous judge. We would vote him off

the bench. Even though human anger easily slips from righteous to unrighteous, everyone knows that anger is the proper response to certain sins. In the same way, God would not be holy or good if He did not react to evil with wrath and righteous judgment.

In the OT, twenty Hebrew words are used more than 580 times to refer to the wrath of God, Dr. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, p. 131. In the NT the Greek word for wrath is ὀργή orgē, pronounced or-gay. The old King James Version NT translates orgē as wrath, 31x, anger, 3x, vengeance, 1x, indignation, 1x.

"One of the most striking things about the Bible is the vigor with which both Testaments emphasize the reality and terror of God's wrath."  
- J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, pp. 134-135

A quick look at a concordance demonstrates there are more references in the Bible to the anger, fury and wrath of God than there are to God's love and tenderness. Perhaps it is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath that we tend to believe sin does not provoke the wrath of God

*"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* - 2 Timothy 4:3-4

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Does the truth about God's wrath embarrass or offend you?
2. What can we do to line up our thinking with God's truth?
3. Since Jesus took the wrath of God against my sins and God accepted the payment for sins Jesus made, is God still angry with me over my sins? Yes - No - Discuss.
4. The blood of Jesus paid my sin debt and turned God's righteous wrath away from me. That is propitiation. True or False

5. In preaching the gospel, Paul included the bad news with the good news. Why did he do that? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is God's wrath fair, Ezra 9:6-13, Jeremiah 21:14, Romans 3:5?

7. Does the resurrection prove God's wrath was appeased? \_\_\_\_\_

From our doctor, we expect an examination and diagnosis before we are presented with the cure. We need God's righteousness, v. 17, but we deserve God's wrath, v 18. Before a man is ready for salvation he must see and understand 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, v. 18** - In the first three chapters of Romans we see how ungodly and unrighteous we really are. Romans convincingly argues that all of us deserve God's wrath.

Because God is the judge of all the earth, Genesis 18:25, His job is to judge all sin and unrighteousness.

## **Always keep the balance between God's love and God's wrath**

Compare Romans 1:18 with 2 Corinthians 5:14. Both God's love and God's wrath are real. Both represent God's truth yet the motivating force causing us to witness for Jesus is God's amazing love. It doesn't say the wrath of God constrains us.

Jesus bore God's wrath against sin which should have fallen on us. He suffered for our sins so we wouldn't have to. We must keep a balanced view and keep the scriptural tension when we think about and present the wrath and grace of God in our witnessing to the lost.

Chosen not for good in me,  
**Wakened up from wrath to flee,**  
Hidden in the Saviour's side,  
By the Spirit sanctified,

Teach me, Lord, on earth to show,  
By my love how much I owe.  
- Robert Murray M'Cheyne, 1813-1843

Notice how carefully Paul presents the gospel in Romans 1:15-18. He reminds us of God's wrath from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness. When we understand the enormity of God's wrath, we can understand the enormity of God's grace and love. Discuss.

### **Scriptural Reasons for God's wrath**

1. People know truth yet reject and hold it unrighteously
2. Their claims that "we didn't know" are a feeble excuse
3. They could have known because God revealed Himself to them
4. Their argument therefore, insults God and calls Him a liar

### **How to Witness and Present the Gospel**

Paul presents the good news and the bad news so that we can understand how desperately we need the glorious gospel of God's amazing grace. There are two popular ways to present the gospel.

**1. On the basis of personal benefit** - How can the gospel benefit me? What are the advantages of being a Christian? Will the gospel make me healthy, wealthy and wise? This is not a good method.

**2. On the basis of personal need** - We are sinners under the wrath of a holy God. If we don't get saved we will be eternally lost because we have incurred God's wrath and rejected His remedy. Modern gospel presentations are too often focused on personal benefit. Here is an example of a personal benefit 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 lots 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." There is a tiny grain of truth in this approach - Satisfaction, happiness, freedom and many other benefits are found in Jesus Christ but should we present the gospel on this basis while ignoring the wrath of God in our presentation? Is this the way Jesus and Paul witnessed? Discuss.

There are many unsaved people who are happy being unsaved. Things are going well for them and they enjoy life. They are satisfied and see no reason why they should become a Christian. "Christianity is fine for you if it makes you happy but I'm quite happy with my life just like it is." They do not see their NEED for Christ.

**Analogy:** Suppose the hospital contacts you and says, "Why don't you come in tomorrow and have surgery? This is our slow season and we want to keep the staff busy. We will operate on you, check you out and sew you up again. After a few days you'll feel great and 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 go in for surgery? Why not? Yet suppose your doctor said you have a deadly spreading cancer that will soon kill you. Would you go in for surgery then? People must see how NEEDY they are for salvation in Christ before they see their need to get saved.

The first three chapters of Romans tell us we have a deadly cancer of sin in our soul and there is nothing we can do to heal ourselves. The only cure is Christ. Life is short, death is sure, sin the cause, Christ the cure!.

If people come to Christ on the basis of personal benefit, they may be coming for the wrong reason. Jesus came to save us from our \_\_\_\_\_ Matthew 1:21, not from unhappiness, loneliness or our unsuccessful way of living.

These other things are surface symptoms of a deeper and more fundamental problem. Because of sin, we are not born in right relationship with his Creator. When our problem of alienation from God because of sin is solved then surface problems can be addressed. Sadly most people are ignorant of their real problem. The thing they are

concerned about the least is the thing which should concern them the most - their sin problem. How can we get through to them?

**Hold the truth, v. 18** - Hold = hold the truth unrighteously, know what is right but refuse to do right on the issues God is dealing with you. The people Paul describes were not ignorant of the truth, they were not without knowledge of the truth. They had the truth but they suppressed it. Suppressing truth is a conscious act, a deliberate rebellion against God. Like a Jack in the Box toy, Jack pops up but they push him back down into the box and close the lid. That is how people suppress God's truth.

The way a man responds to God's truth in the Bible tells a lot about his character. Are you holding God's truth in unrighteousness by keeping God in your own personal box? Discuss.

### **What is Paul's grand purpose in Romans 1?**

Paul's purpose is to prove that men cannot be justified by their own righteousness, in order to prepare them to receive the righteousness of God as a free gift, Romans 5:17. Diagnosis first - then the cure.

**Romans 1:19 - Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them** - That is an absolutely true statement or it is a lie. It cannot be both. God says He revealed Himself to them, therefore they are without excuse.

1. Do you believe God revealed Himself to them? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you believe they are therefore without excuse? \_\_\_\_\_

Even without the Bible, people know enough to be guilty; they know enough to be responsible for their sins. Here is Paul's argument. We can see God through His creation. One way we learn about God is by observing how God's world operates. We need not be deep thinkers to observe the world and discover this universal truth:

**In the world, suffering always follows sin  
and sin always has consequences.**

\* Break the laws of agriculture - reap a failed harvest.

- \* Break the laws of architecture - the building collapses.
- \* Break the laws of health - the body suffers sickness.
- \* Break the law of gravity - go splat on the pavement.
- \* Break God's law of salvation - reap eternal punishment.

God built His universe to operate by laws. Gravity is the operative law regardless whether people agree with it or understand it. In high school science class we studied the truth of Newton's Third Law of Motion, that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. When we observe the universe God created, it teaches us about God. God's creation is faithfully consistent. If you plant acorns you never get apple trees. Acorns always and only produce oak trees. If you breed dogs, you never get cats. Dogs always and only reproduce after their kind. When you plant roses, you never get ferns. Roses always and only reproduce roses.

There is an order about God's creation which, to thoughtful observers, teaches lessons about God. Job had no written scriptures but he was a keen observer of creation. Are you a keen observer of God's marvelous creation, Job 12:7-9, Psalm 33:5 and Proverbs 6:6? Why or why not?

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**that which may be known of God** - Paul means that which may be known of God apart from or without the written revelation of God in the Bible, what we can know about God simply by viewing creation. In plainer words, what we know about God before we read the Bible, what we observe about God in nature, the fields and flowers, the streams and deserts, the oceans and mountains, the insects and animals, Acts 14:15-17. Knowledge from observing creation tells us there is a God but does not tell us how to get saved, Acts 17:22-23.

God created the world to function in an orderly way and He continues to keep things in order, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3. His handiwork is present everywhere for all to view. There is a difference between what we can observe about God in creation and what we can only know about God if He chooses to reveal it to us in the written scriptures of truth, the Bible.

## Consider this comparison.

Without the Bible vs. With the Bible  
Natural religion vs. Revealed religion  
What man thinks about God vs. What God has revealed of Himself  
Human speculation vs. Divine revelation  
Thus supposes man vs. Thus saith the Lord  
Assumption vs. Assurance  
Conjecture vs. Revealed written truth

We learned in verse 18 that people are not ignorant of truth about God. The people Paul describes had truth about God but they suppressed the truth they had. It is important to remind ourselves that Creation and natural religion do not reveal how to get saved. Knowledge about how to get saved is only available through the written revelation from God in the Bible. In Romans 1:19 we learn that God has made Himself known to people but God's revelation through creation is not enough to save anyone, in that creation does not reveal God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

1. How does God show it unto them or make Himself known to the human race?
  - a. In creation - the earth, the heavens, the stars, Ps 19:1-6
  - b. In conscience - God's law written on our hearts, Ps 19:7-14
  - c. In the Bible - by revelation and unknowable otherwise
  - d. In the Imago Dei - Image of God, Gen 1:26-27, Rom 1:22-23
  - e. All of the above

Our condemnation, the fact that we are under the wrath of God, rests on the fact that we have sinned against the light we have, not against the light we never received. Most Gentiles did not receive the full revelation of Moses' Law in the Old Testament but they did receive enough illumination to know what was right, Genesis 20, and they were wont to do wrong anyway. People are condemned because they sin against the truth they have, not the truth they didn't have. Discuss.

2. Will God condemn us for what we didn't know, for knowledge He never revealed to us? Discuss.

3. Will God judge the innocent heathen who have never heard about Jesus?

The answer is, there are no innocent heathen. Everyone has sinned against the light he had and all will be judged according to what they knew, not what they didn't know, Romans 2:11-12, Jeremiah 10:25.

4. Is all the world condemned before a holy God? Yes or No?

As mankind stands before God, the righteous Judge of the Universe, Genesis 18:25, what is the verdict? In Romans 1, Paul proves that heathen Gentiles are guilty, lost and without excuse. In the first part of chapter 2, Paul proves that moral men are guilty, lost and without excuse. In the last part of chapter 2 and in chapter 3, Paul proves that the Jews are guilty, lost and without excuse. If a doctor diagnoses you as having cancer, the doctor isn't being mean. Paul isn't being mean in Romans 1. His purpose is to diagnose the disease of sin so that people can logically accept God's cure for sin, God's free gift of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Let's review what we've learned.**

Romans 1:16, 18 - The Gospel reveals righteousness and wrath

Romans 1:17 - We NEED the righteousness of God

Romans 1:18 - We DESERVE the wrath of God

God's grace gives us, as a free gift, the righteousness we need, Romans 3:24, 5:17, 5:20-21. God's mercy saves us from the wrath which we deserve, Romans 5:9, 11:32. When the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, God's wrath against our sins fell upon Him, Romans 5:6-10. Consider this: God allowed Jesus to be my Substitute, to die in my place, as me for me.

Jesus' death propitiated or appeased the wrath of God against my sins, Romans 3:25-26. When I believe on Christ and receive Him as my Saviour, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to me, meaning Christ's righteousness is given to me as a free gift of God's amazing grace, Romans 3:21-22, 4:1-5, 5:15-21.

Jesus took my sins and gave me His righteousness. You've seen the bumper sticker: *I got a fishing boat for my wife. It was a good trade.* Swapping my sins for Christ's righteousness was a good trade.

Notice what verse 19 says. Men have knowledge of God because God has made Himself known to them. How has God made Himself known?

**Romans 1:20 - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen**

That men can clearly see the invisible things of God is a paradoxical statement, intended to point out how God makes Himself known. The invisible God wants men to clearly see Him, Psalm 19:1-14.

**Being understood by the things that are made** - Creation makes known the Creator. The visible things that are made point to the invisible Creator. Evidence of design in nature points to a great Designer. The "things that are made" point to the divine Maker. Job had no written scripture and yet he knew about and worshiped God. We learn two things about God from His Creation: 1. His eternal POWER, 2. His GODHEAD or deity.

**Illustration:** Consider Mount Rushmore in South Dakota and the huge sculpture of the heads of four Presidents, Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt. Each head is 60 feet tall. Suppose Joe Smoe visited Mount Rushmore for the very first time and no one told him anything about how the heads were formed. What might Joe think?

- a. He might think the heads were formed by chance, that somehow the sculpture happened accidentally.
- b. He might think the forces of nature - wind, rain, snow, carved the heads over thousands of years of time.
- c. He might think that intelligent men planned and carved such a massive sculpture.

By simply looking at Mount Rushmore, Joe Smoe could learn things about the men who planned and carved it even though he never saw 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 huge project that took sixteen years to complete.
- 3) These men must have had POWER to be able to carve and shape hard granite.
- 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 God's Creation, we can learn many things about our Creator. Here are some of the things we can learn about God.

### **What Creation teaches us about God**

1. GOD'S ARTISTRY – glorious sunsets, peacock feathers, colors on tropical fish and birds, flowers and herbs
2. GOD'S POWER - thunderstorms, tornados, lightning, tidal waves
3. GOD'S GOODNESS - rain from heaven, fruitful seasons, sunshine enjoyed by all, Acts 14:17; Matthew 5:44-45
4. GOD'S ORDERLINESS - Our God created natural laws so that things run smoothly and efficiently, like the law of gravity and all the other unchangeable laws of nature.
5. GOD'S GREATNESS - The vastness 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; Jeremiah 31:37; 33:22; Psalm 147:4
6. GOD'S INTELLIGENCE - the human brain is far more complex and complicated than any computer even though computers are made by intelligent men, see Psalm 139:14

7. GOD'S CREATIVITY - His unlimited ability to design and create with amazing variety and originality - every snowflake is a six-sided crystal and yet no two are alike; no two people or fingerprints are identical and there are differences even among identical twins

8. GOD'S WISDOM - the All-Wise God created the world in such a way that everything is perfectly scaled for life on earth. 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, gravity, solar orbit, etc.

9. GOD'S CARE - Matthew 6:26-30; 23:37 - birds feeding, the lilies of the field perfectly clothed; chicks protected and nestled by the hen.

10. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS - the dependable day-night cycle and dependable cycle of seasons, Genesis 8:22; Jeremiah 31:35-36; 33:20.

### **God's Two Books**

How has our Creator revealed Himself to us so we can know Him? Because God intended to reveal Himself to men, He has written TWO BOOKS. These TWO BOOKS tell us about our Creator. God wants men to read BOTH of these books so they will come to know Him.

**Book 1 = The Creator's Work - Creation, Psalm 19:1-6**  
**Book 2 = The Creator's Words - The Bible, Psalm 19:7-11**

All men read God's Creation Book but few read God's Bible. Think of Children's books. Some contain words but some contain only pictures. Creation is God's 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 discover the world around him.

1. Which book can be read and understood even by those who are illiterate, Psalm 19:2-4? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which book is written in a universal language understood by all who have eyes to see? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which book teaches us about the heavens, Genesis 1:1? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which book teaches us about how to get to heaven, John 14:6?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Which book can make us wise unto God's power, greatness and glory, Rom. 1:20? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which book can make us wise unto salvation, 2 Timothy 3:15  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Which book is able to convert the soul, Psalm 19:7? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which book will pass away, Matthew 24:35? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Which book will never pass away, Matthew 24:35? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which book do all scientists read? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Which book do few scientists read and study? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Which book can help us know about God in a personal way? \_\_\_\_\_

What about the heathen in the middle of the jungle? What about those who cannot read the Bible? God's surprising answer is: they DO KNOW, Romans 1:19-21, they ARE RESPONSIBLE, Romans 2:11-12 and they HAVE HEARD, Romans 10:13-18 with Psalm 19:1-4.

Bible examples of Gentiles who found God, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-29, and the Roman Centurion, Acts 10:2, 44, 48. When the heart is seeking truth, God makes His truth known.

### **Notice Paul's argument in Romans 10:13-18**

Men need to hear, v. 14  
the gospel must be preached, v. 15  
the gospel must be believed, v. 16-17  
everyone has heard, v. 18 (Creation Book)

God's Creation Book is not enough to save us but it is enough to get us interested. Creation is enough to get us pointed in the right direction.

God's Bible Book leads us to Christ our Savior but God's Creation Book is enough to render man WITHOUT EXCUSE, Romans 1:20.

### **Consider a hammer and nails**

Does God give man brains to see truth in His creation and does man then refuse to seek after God? Sadly, the answer to both questions is Yes. God gives man enough brains to smelt iron and make a hammer head and nails. God grows a tree and gives man strength to cut it down and brains to fashion a hammer handle from the wood. And when man has the hammer and the nails, God puts out His hand and lets man drive a nail through it into the cross in supreme demonstration that the human race is without excuse. Men hold the truth in unrighteousness even to the point of crucifying the Creator and Savior who loves them, John 1:3.

**Romans 1:21 - they knew God** - What do we do with our knowledge of God? Unsaved people often reject the light God gives them. Saved people often ignore the light God gives them. Both actions can bring spiritual disaster and both actions can have lifelong consequences.

What does God do when we reject the revelation He gives of Himself?

The human race started with knowledge of God. ADAM had knowledge of God and walked with Him in the garden of Eden. NOAH and his family had knowledge of God. But when men rejected the light they had, Romans 1:21, "their foolish heart was \_\_\_\_\_."

***The main difference between saved people and unsaved is how they respond to truth.***

### **Is God a neurotic Nut?**

Some people think God is obsessed with being in charge or with getting His own way or getting glory for Himself. Why does it upset God that men refuse to be thankful, refuse to give Him glory, refuse to receive Him and worship Him?

- a. God knows the grave consequences of their choices
- b. Refusal to give glory and thanks to God = rebellion  
= spiritual disaster

- c. They became fools by making foolish decisions - Rom 1:22
- d. Changed the glory = made idols - Rom 1:23, Ps 106:20

1. Why is it wrong to make and worship idols? Discuss.
2. What does idol worship tell us about the worshipers? Discuss.
3. Should we hold interfaith services with idolaters? Discuss.

God is the only Sustainer of life, Colossians 1:16-17, Hebrews 1:3, 1 Cor 8:6, yet they turned their backs on Him. Even pagan Greek poets admitted the truth, Acts 17:28. They have knowledge yet they still reject God.

In Romans 1 Paul describes man's degeneration or devolution - a willing walk away from God - into idolatry. Sometimes we human beings are our own worst enemy. Remember Psalm 14. A worldly man is wrong in his first principle because he has rejected God; therefore any actions which spring from rejecting God, are also corrupt and wrong.

- a. They are morally corrupt.
- b. They knowingly left God's truth.

God is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" - 2 Peter 3:9. Contrast that with Romans 1:20-23 and answer the questions.

Whose fault is it that the lost are lost, that the unsaved are unsaved? Who is to blame for their condition?

- a. It is God's fault
- b. It is society's fault
- c. It is their parents fault
- d. It is their own fault
- e. It is the church's fault

Their ears heard God's truth - Their eyes saw God's truth  
Their mind/heart had God's truth - They rejected God's truth.

They are willfully deaf, willfully blind, willfully ignorant. They had spiritual heart trouble. Their spiritual blindness and deafness made them willing to believe anything except what God said to them. Truth is

available to everyone. The more truth you receive, the more truth God shows you. Yet God does not overrule our free will and save us against our will or force us to believe what He says in the Bible.

1. Do you have spiritual ears willing to hear God's truth?
2. Do you have spiritual eyes willing to read God's truth?
3. Do you have a spiritual heart willing to obey God's truth? Isa 44:20

**Rom 1:21 - became vain in their imaginations** - Discover what the Bible says about becoming vain in their imaginations by reading Jeremiah 2:5, 10:3-8, 14-15, Ephesians 4:17-18. What does it mean to become *vain in their imaginations*? Discuss.

**their foolish heart was darkened - v. 21** - John MacArthur writes: "While we often relate heart to our emotions (e.g., "He has a broken heart"), the Bible relates it primarily to the intellect (e.g., "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Matt 15:19. That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" Prov 4:23. In a secondary way, however, heart relates to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions." (Drawing Near. Crossway Books)

MacArthur adds that "In most modern cultures, the heart is thought of as the seat of emotions and feelings. But most ancients—Hebrews, Greeks, and many others—considered the heart to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom. The New Testament also uses the heart in that way. The heart was considered to be the seat of the mind and will, and it could be taught what the brain could never know. Emotions and feelings were associated with the intestines, or bowels." (Ephesians. Page 44. Chicago: Moody Press). Job 30:37, Ps 22:14, Jer 4:19.

Rejecting the light God provides in creation and in the Bible leaves you in spiritual darkness. The solution? Change your mind - believe God!

**Romans 1:22 - Professing themselves to be wise** - Who are you going to believe? God says He has revealed Himself in creation. Fools say in their heart: There is no God, Psalm 14:1.

Fools were saying: "There is no God," 3000 years ago. If the Bible is true, fools deny God in spite of the overwhelming evidence of creation.

**changed the glory - 1:23** - Compare Psalm 106:20, Deu 4:16-18, Psalm 115:4 - this entire section is about idols, idolaters and idol worship. Paul doesn't mention lesbians or gays or transgendered people at all in Romans 1.

**Illustration:** A native in the jungle 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 splits half of the trunk to make a canoe. As creator of the canoe, he knows he is greater than the canoe. He then uses the other half of the same tree to make an idol and he worships the idol. The contrast and contradiction seems entirely lost on him. He should have cried from his heart, "I want to know the One who made this tree and this world!" - Isaiah 44:9-20

Will God honor a sincerely seeking heart, Jer 29:13, Heb 11:6, Acts 17:27? - Yes, God honors and answers hearts hungry for truth!

### **Discussion and Review Questions**

1. Why does Paul begin his gospel presentation by explaining the righteousness and the wrath of God, Romans 1:17-18?
2. Discuss reasons why we should be honest and real with people about the righteousness and the wrath of God.
3. Is the way Paul presents the wrath of God as a natural part of the gospel, from God or is it just random chance he wrote it that way?
4. Does it matter if people are guilty for rejecting God and the gospel?
5. How does complacency, disobedience, sin and problems in my life affect my witnessing for Jesus?
6. What sins is it okay I excuse in my own life while condemning the same sins in others?

7. How can I live for and love Jesus in a way that demonstrates His grace and love so my witnessing is more effective?
8. Why does God require righteousness? Isn't it enough to just be a really good person who does lots of really good things?
9. If God were to ask you: "Why should I let you into heaven?" what would you tell Him?
10. Paul says the gospel is the power of God, Romans 1:16. Discuss some ways the gospel is powerful.
11. Does believing the gospel clean us up enough so we go to heaven or does it provide a righteousness we need and didn't have?
12. How should people respond to God's revelation of Himself in creation, Romans 1:20-23?
13. When people do not respond, should God force them to be saved?
14. Shouldn't God just chill out and ignore sin? Discuss.
15. Would lost people agree with Paul's description of the sinful human race in Romans 1:20-23?
16. What's wrong with being unthankful and not glorifying God, 1:21?
17. What is the difference between a wise man and a fool, Psalm 14:1, Romans 1:22?
18. What's wrong with worshiping idols instead of God, 1:23? Are idol worshipers spiritually enlightened or in spiritual darkness?
19. If you read carefully, can you find any gay men and lesbians in Romans 1:18-23? Which words indicate gays and lesbians?
20. Is the context of Romans 1:18-23 (1) lesbians and gays or is the context (2) idolatry - idol worshipers and worshiping false gods?

21. In Romans 1:24, "*God gave them up?*" Who is them? Is "*gave them up*" also found in Romans 1:26 and 28?

22. If there are no lesbians and gays in vs. 18-23, then can we honestly say the context of those verses is lesbians and gays? Yes or No?

23. What is the context of Romans 1:18-23? \_\_\_\_\_

Repeating three times that "*God gave them up,*" 1:24, 26, 28, is Paul's way of tying this section and his argument together. Paul carefully lists three causes linked to idolatry (not homosexuality, not lesbians, not gays), in which the Gentiles exchanged truth for error. Just as carefully, Paul then lists three corresponding effects of idolatry, in which God gives up the Gentiles to their unbelief.

Since Paul was talking about idol worshipers and idolatry and not lesbians and gays, he ties the rest of the section together by repeating himself three times, to show continuity in his argument, so his readers will know he hasn't abandoned his idolatry argument to take a wild and crazy shot at lesbians and gays. Many Christians believe falsely, that Paul suddenly injected into his Romans letter, a universal condemnation of lesbianism and homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27, a condemnation unrelated to idolatry. Context shows he did not. Discuss.

**Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness - akatharsian 1:24 - gave them up** - Notice what it does NOT say. It does not say: God gave up on them! It says God gave them up. Remember the heart-rending cry of our Lord Jesus from the darkness of Calvary, Matthew 27:45-46. "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" Cp. Isaiah 50:8. That is the cry of a lost man in hell! Jesus' death was for all, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, and therefore included the people Paul describes in Romans 1:24. God giving them up because of idolatry is not necessarily eternal. As long as idolatrous men are alive, God will save them if they call upon Him. That is the incredible good news of God's amazing grace. They are capable of being saved and God will joyfully save them if they call upon him. Cf. Acts 14:16, Ephesians 4:19, 2 Peter 3:9. Paul isn't making things up. He is quoting the Old Testament, 1 Kings 14:15-16, 23-24, 2 Chronicles 28:3, 23-25, 30:7, 29:5, Psalm 81:12, Micah 5:3, Hosea 4:17

1 Kings 14:16 - *"he shall give Israel up"*  
2 Chron 30:7 - *"gave them up"*  
Psalm 81:12 - *"so I gave them up"*  
Micah 5:3 - *"therefore will he give them up"*  
Acts 7:42 - *"then God turned and gave them up"*  
Rom 1:24 - *"God also gave them up"*  
Rom 1:26 - *"God gave them up"*  
Rom 1:28 - *"God gave them over"*

1. Was Jesus' death for everyone or only for the elect? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Can Jesus save the worst sinners, including idolaters? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Should we witness to lost folks or just hope someone else cares enough to witness to them? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does God expect me to witness and share the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

The people Paul describes willfully deserted God therefore He gave them what they wanted. He abandoned them or gave them over to self-will and self-destruction. That is the price of man's free will and moral freedom. Three times Paul uses *paredoken*, the parsed form of the Greek word, *paradidomi*, Romans 1:24, 26, 28. Paul repeats it three times to link the entire section together as one coherent argument.

**Paul's words ring like clods upon the coffin  
as God abandons men to their own wickedness.**

The awful responsibility of free will is that its use can destroy freedom and man becomes a slave to sin. Sin is a fearful master. Every sinner thinks his sin will make him happy but in the end, sin ruins sinners in this life and in eternity. Have you ever observed anyone who is a slave to sin? Jesus can deliver them if they will call upon Him. Paul is writing to Rome from Greece, the twin pinnacles of ancient civilization.

The more civilized men become, the more vacuous and vicious becomes their idolatry. Some of these people were sacrificing their infant children to false gods. Some Romans raised abandoned children to be sex slaves of the fertility cults. And yet, Jesus said: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* John 12:32. They could get saved, as some of them did, Rom 6:19, because they have free-will.

**Freewill** is found 17 times in 17 verses in the KJV. Lev 22:18, 21, 23, 23:38, Num 15:3, 29:39, Deu 12:6, 17, 16:10, 23:23, 2 Chron 31:14, Ez 1:4, 3:5, 7:13, 16, 8:28, Psalm 119:108

Never forget that in the solemn scenario Paul presents about the consequences of idolatry, the condition of the Gentiles is not hopeless. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, Romans 11:13, 15:16. All of us live our lives wrestling with sin and sacredness. Understanding the wrath of God in context helps us better understand the gospel of grace and share it with others. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation because, Romans 4:5, God justifies the ungodly!

## **Salvation is not a reward for the righteous. It's a gift for the guilty! Romans 4:5**

In Romans 6:18-20, *akatharsia* is used again and we discover that some of the people Paul describes in 1:24 did get saved, to the glory of God! The same thing happened in Thessalonica, where pagan idolaters got saved out of their idolatry, 1 Thess 4:7, where the Greek word, *akatharsia*, is used. While God's wrath is against sin, God's grace and mercy extend to the most defiled, including idolatrous ancient Egypt, epitome of sin in the Old Testament, Lev 18:3, Isa 19:20-22, Ez 16:26, 23:20.

**to uncleanness** - So no one will be confused about his meaning, Paul uses a familiar Greek word, *akatharsian*, in Rom 1:24, which we translate as, uncleanness. For two hundred years before Paul wrote Romans, *akatharsian* was used in the Septuagint or LXX, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, to describe idolaters and idol worship and the activities of shrine prostitutes. That is not its only meaning but is one of its primary meanings. In the Septuagint, the Greek word *akatharsian* also described moral and spiritual uncleanness.

On p. 118 of his book, *Jews and Christians*, William Horbury writes: "The latter sense (moral license) is represented at Rom. 1:24, where the word sums up the moral consequences of idolatry... For post-biblical writers *akatharsia* appears in Israel, especially through the license and ritual malpractices of rulers and priests (Ps. Sol. viii. 12, 22; Test. Levi xv 1); but it is characteristic of Gentile idolaters."

On p. 94 of his book, *Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics*, James W. Thompson writes: "Sexual offenses (or offenders) appear in all of the vice lists in the Pauline literature... Like Hellenistic Jewish writers (cf. Wis. 14:12), Paul associates these offenses with idolatry (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9; Gal. 5:20)..."

**There are 42 uses of akatharsia** in the Septuagint, aka, LXX. Leviticus 5:3; 7:20, 21; 15:3, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31; 16:16, 19; 18:19; 19:23; 20:21, 25; 22:3, 4, 5, Numbers 19:13; 2Sa 11:4; 2 Chronicles 29:5, 16; Ezra 6:21; 9:11; Proverbs 6:16; 24:9; Jeremiah 19:13; 32:34; Lamentations 1:9; Ezekiel 4:14; 7:20; 9:9; 22:10, 15; 24:11; 36:17, 25, 29; 39:24; Hosea 2:10; Micah 2:10; Nahum 3:6.

Paul's intentional use of akatharsian reminded his readers of the link between idolatry and temple prostitution in the Old Testament and the idolatry and temple prostitution practiced in first century Rome. Paul's use of the Greek words akatharsian and akatharsia in AD 58 conveyed the commonly understood meaning of idolatry and worshiping pagan gods.

Paul uses the Greek word, akatharsian, nine of the ten times it occurs in the New Testament, Romans 1:24, 6:19, 2 Cor 12:21, Gal 5:19, Eph 4:19, 5:3, Col 3:5, 1 Thess 2:3, 4:7. That Paul used akatharsian in his letters to other churches besides Rome indicates he was denouncing idolatrous sexual worship of false gods, including Cybele, the Phrygian mother goddess whom he'd already encountered growing up in Tarsus and in his missionary journeys, Acts 14ff. Paul was not denouncing or even referencing gays or lesbians or transgendered people. He focused his argument on idolatry.

Worship of the mother goddess was common in all of Asia Minor where Paul preached the gospel, evangelized lost pagans, won souls and started churches and that is why he uses the word akatharsian. His argument is carefully targeted at idolaters and idolatry, not gays, not lesbians and not transgendered people. The Greek word akatharsian described idolatry, not two gay guys or two gay gals who fall in love and spend their lives in committed partnership. Paul was not talking about lesbians and gays at all in Romans 1.

**Dishonor their own bodies** - Modern commentators say this refers to lesbians and gays but compare Jeremiah 13:27, where the Septuagint uses the same Greek word, akatharsia, to describe shrine prostitutes. Cf. Acts 7:41-43, 58, where Saul/Paul heard Stephen mention Molech or Moloch. Paul makes the undeniable link to shrine prostitution by using akatharsian. First century Jews like Philo of Alexandria, linked Molech and Lev 18:22 and 20:13, and Cybele, to shrine prostitution.

Matthew Henry writes in 1710: "The crying iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, for which God rained hell from heaven upon them, became not only commonly practised, but avowed, in the pagan nations. Perhaps the apostle especially refers to the abominations that were committed in the worship of their idol-gods, in which the worst of uncleannesses were prescribed for the honour of their gods; dunghill service for dunghill gods: the unclean spirits delight in such ministrations."

### **Paul's Idolatry Argument Summarized**

- a. Paul's choice of words - akatharsian - indicates idolatry and shrine prostitution - it's not an accident Paul chose this word.
- b. Paul's frame of reference - Paul compares Gentile idolatry in the OT and Roman idolatry in mid-first century AD Rome.
- c. Paul's memory of hearing Stephen preach, Acts 7:41-43.
- d. Paul's carefully tailored idolatry argument based on Stephen's last sermon, using the same terminology.
- e. Paul's use of akatharsia or akatharsian in his letters to Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, Colosse and Ephesus indicates this is a major theme of his apostolic teaching.
- f. Context, Context, Context! Paul used akatharsian in his letters to six churches, to denounce pagan worship of the Phrygian goddess. There are no gays or lesbians in Romans chapter 1 or in Paul's letters to the other churches. It is all about idolatry.
- g. Remember, Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen and never forgot Stephen's sermon about idolatry and Moloch worship, Acts 7:41-43, 58.

*The Bible cannot mean **NOW**  
What it did not mean **THEN!** -rb*

*Scripture only settles matters  
about which it speaks plainly. - Richard Hooker*

**Changed the truth of God - 1:25** = Only Jesus our Creator is worthy of worship and all creation should worship Him!

**into a lie** = *worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.* Satan 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.*" Compare 2 Thess 2:11 - "a lie." Same devil - same lie.

**worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator - v. 25** - Paul uses an interesting Greek word here for, served, *latreuō* λατρεύω. When this word is used in the Septuagint or LXX, it refers to worshiping false gods or idols. Deu 12:2, 29:25, Josh 24:2, 14, Jud 2:11, 13, 3:6, 10:6, 16, 2 Kings 17:12, Dan 3:12. Paul uses it with purpose, just like he used *akatharsian* in v. 24, to remind his readers he is talking about idol worship and shrine prostitution.

Paul uses the Greek words for man (*arren* or *arsen*) and woman (*thēlys*) in vs. 26-27, the same words used in the Septuagint version of the Genesis Creation story for male and female, to indicate women and men abandoned their Creator to worship and serve false gods. Paul never argues that they abandoned their Creator to become lesbians and gays or that God gave them up to become lesbians and gays.

### **Lies people tell themselves to escape accountability to God.**

- 1. I can ignore the claims of Christ upon my life and still be okay.*
- 2. I can do things my way and my life will still count for something.*
- 3. I can live the good life without allowing God to harsh my buzz.*
- 4. God will never call me to account for my rebellious heart and life.*
- 5. The Bible is a crutch for weaklings and I don't need it in my life.*

God is worthy of worship but we should not worship God's creation. Peter refused worship, Acts 10:25-26, the apostles refused worship, Acts 14:11-15, angels refused worship, Rev. 19:10, 22:8-9.

The Lord Jesus Christ accepted worship, Matt 14:31-33, 15:25-28, 28:9-10, 28:16-18, John 5:23, 9:35-39, Rev 5:8-14.

**Worship of Christ** will become universal, Philippians 2:10-11. Saved and unsaved will bow the knee to Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord.

**Why is God worthy of worship? Discuss.**  
**Why do men refuse to worship God? Discuss.**

- a. He sacrificed Himself to save the human race
- b. He bore His own wrath to satisfy His justice
- c. He accomplished redemption by rising from the dead
- d. He gives us salvation and eternal life as free gifts

### **Paul provides two illustrations of his idolatry argument**

To illustrate his idolatry argument, Paul chooses the worst possible transgression of pagan Gentiles so that Jews in his reading audience will be saying, "Yes, Yes, they're guilty!" Then Paul will spring his rhetorical trap in 2:1 when he declares that Jewish idolatry is just as sinful as Gentile idolatry and therefore, in Romans 3:23, everyone is guilty. To make clear that all are sinners, Romans 3:23, Paul references idolatry, pointing out the idolatry of Gentiles who worshiped false gods and by implication, the idolatry of Jews because in the OT, Jews also broke God's law and worshiped the false gods of the Gentiles. Their particular worship of false gods involved same sex rituals, Lev 17:7, 18:3, 21-22, 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 13, Deu 23:17-18.

**For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: - v. 26 -**

**gave them up** - Acts 14:16 - **a.** This is a permissive giving up - God permits them to go their own way and live in sin. **b.** This is a withdrawing of God's restraining hand. Because He is sovereign, God is actively involved in His universe. He restrains sinful men yet sometimes He removes His restraining hand.

Think of a canoe in the river, the current gently tugging. You're holding it with one hand and when you remove your restraining hand, the current pulls the canoe down the river. **c.** This is a judicial giving up, meaning that God's judgment on idolaters is to let them suffer the consequences of their idolatry.

What is Paul talking about in Romans 1:26-27? We know Paul was not talking about lesbians for two important reasons.

"This verse is therefore an amplification of the idea expressed in Romans 1:24. The reasons why Paul refers in the first instance to the sins of uncleanness, in illustration and proof of the degradation of the heathen, probably were, that those sins are always intimately connected with idolatry, forming at times even a part of the service rendered to the false gods; that in turning from God and things spiritual, men naturally sink into the sensual; that the sins in question are peculiarly degrading; and that they were the most notorious, prevalent, and openly acknowledged of all the crimes of the heathen world." Charles Hodge, *Commentary on Romans 1:26*, 1835.

1. Lesbians are not mentioned or condemned in the OT, therefore Paul could not base his alleged condemnation of lesbians on an OT command against being lesbian.

2. Jewish oral tradition in the first century AD understood that the Tanakh, our OT, did not condemn lesbians. Therefore Paul could not base his alleged condemnation of lesbians on Jewish oral tradition since it was also silent about lesbians.

**for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: - v. 26**

**Possible meanings of 'against nature'  
for women in the first century AD**

1. Shrine prostitution - fertility cult anal sex
2. Street prostitution - sex with multiple men
3. Roman orgy sex in multiple ways with multiple partners
4. Sex with animals - bestiality - Leviticus 18:23
5. Sex during menstruation - abomination - Lev 18:19
6. Sex with a male relative - abomination - Lev 18
7. Sex with angels - Testament of Naphtali 3:3-5
8. Anal sex with her husband - not procreative
9. Anal sex with a man not her husband
10. For Gentile women, sex with a Jewish man
11. For Jewish women, sex with a Gentile man

12. Sex where the woman is aggressive instead of passive
13. Sex when a woman is barren - Philo condemns it
14. Sex when a woman is already pregnant
15. Sex when a woman is past child-bearing
16. Lesbian sex with a female partner
17. Lesbian sex with multiple partners
18. Lesbian sex with a female relative
19. Lesbian sex with a female prostitute
20. Anal sex or anal rape

Old Testament Law never mentions or condemns lesbians and never prohibits lesbian partnerships. Therefore there is no basis in Jewish Law or the Law of Moses to condemn lesbians. Jewish oral tradition in the first century AD, with which Paul was familiar, also did not condemn lesbians. In light of those rock solid biblical facts, **Paul wrote:**

*"Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." -Romans 4:15 "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law." -Romans 5:13*

--- Keeping **the Law of Nature** - trusting one's natural goodness and doing good works - will not justify Gentiles or anyone else.

--- Keeping **the Law of Moses** - offering animal sacrifices and doing good works - will not justify Jews or anyone else.

Gentiles and Jews need a better way of justification before God than keeping the Law of Nature or the Law of Moses. God justifies us when we believe the gospel. That is the argument Paul makes in Romans 1 and 2. God's justification is forensic, not intrinsic, Romans 4:17. It comes from outside you, not from within you. It comes from God, not from any effort you make.

**Are you following Paul's argument?** Because the Law of Moses and Jewish oral tradition in the first century AD do NOT condemn or prohibit lesbianism, Paul had no factual basis in Jewish Law to condemn lesbians. Jewish Law does not condemn lesbians, therefore Paul cannot and does not condemn lesbians in Romans 1:26.

Since the Law of Moses does not condemn lesbians, there is absolutely no reason to assume that Paul suddenly goes off on a wild eyed tan-

gent from his argument against idolatry to condemn lesbians in Romans 1:26. His tightly reasoned argument against idolatry indicates he is NOT arguing against lesbians and gay men. Instead, Paul mentions female and male shrine prostitution as examples of idolatry and compares what the women were doing in v. 26 with what the men were doing in v. 27, "*likewise also the men.*"

**Keep following Paul's argument.** Since Paul is not condemning lesbians in Romans 1:26, Paul cannot be condemning gay men in Romans 1:27 - "*Likewise also the men.*" Instead, Paul describes female and male shrine prostitutes who worshiped the fertility goddess, not lesbians, not gay men, not bisexuals and not transgendered people. What Paul condemns in Romans 1:26-27 is idolatry, illustrated by female and male shrine prostitution, common activity in first century Rome. Paul makes no condemnation or mention of gays or homosexuality.

\*\*\* One early Christian writer, Anastasios, mid 200s AD, clearly dismisses the view that Paul was referring to lesbianism in his comments on Romans 1:26 - Clearly they (the females referred to in Romans 1:26) do not go into one another, but rather offer themselves to the men. (Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses To Female Homoeroticism*, 1996, p. 337n)

\*\*\* Augustine, AD 354-430, continues this line of thought. "But if one has relations even with one's wife in a part of the body which was not made for begetting children, such relations are against nature and indecent. In fact, the same apostle earlier said the same thing about women, "For their women exchanged natural relations for those which are against nature." quoting Romans 1:26, Marriage and Desire, 20.35"

**I. Paul links the sexual behavior of females in Romans 1:26** to the sexual behavior of males in Romans 1:27 by saying "*likewise also the men.*" Whatever Paul is talking about, both females and males were engaging in the same behavior. In the OT, see 2 Kings 23:1ff.

**II. Paul links their sexual behavior to his idolatry argument.** The point of Romans 1 is idolatry and forsaking the true God. Paul links his argument together by saying, "*God gave them up*" three times - vs. 24, 26, 28. Then he creates another link by saying: "*For*

*this cause...*" which links his idolatry argument in vs. 20-25 with vs. 26-27. Whatever Paul is talking about involves rejecting God and worshipping idols, in other words, idolatry. Paul describes idolatrous behavior beginning in Romans 1:20ff.

**III. Paul's beliefs as a Jew and a Christian are rooted in the Old Testament.** Whatever Paul is talking about is prohibited behavior based on what the Tanakh or Jewish Old Testament actually says. Paul is not grabbing ideas out of thin air and making up new sins. He is talking about sins with which his first century Roman readers were familiar and which fit the context of his idolatry argument.

**Likewise also the men - v. 27** - The men were doing the same thing the women in v. 26 were doing. Let's factor in context. Has Paul been talking about lesbians and gay men previously? No, Paul's argument from v. 20 on has been about idols, idolatry and idol worshipers.

**leaving the natural use of the woman - v. 27** - St. John Chrysostom, AD 347 - 407, understands vs. 27 to refer to heterosexual men engaging in homosexual sex with men. That fits Paul's illustration of female and male shrine prostitutes, most of whom were heterosexual but not the modern false teaching that Paul was talking about lesbians and gay men.

No one can say "that it was by being hindered of legitimate intercourse that they came to this pass, or that it was from having no means to fulfill their desire that they were driven into this monstrous insanness. For the changing (from heterosexual) implies possession (of heterosexual desires). Which also when discoursing upon the doctrines he said, 'They changed the truth of God for a lie.' And with regard to the men again, he shows the same thing by saying, "Leaving the natural use of the woman."

"And in a like way with those, these he also puts out of all means of defending themselves by charging them not only that they had the means of gratification, and left that which they had (heterosexual practice), and went after another, but that having dishonored that which was natural, they ran after that which was contrary to nature... And next, having reproached the women first, he goes on to the men also, and says, "And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of

the woman." - St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, Homily IV, around AD 395.

**burned in their lust one toward another** - Some people suggest that if they burned in lust, that means they were gay men enjoying the sex and not heterosexual shrine prostitutes doing sexual service to the goddess. But note that Matthew Henry, a conservative heterosexual pastor, writing in 1710, linked shrine prostitutes to Romans 1:27.

"They were dotingly fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful unnatural lusts, **Romans 1:27**. They were mad upon their idols, Jeremiah 50:38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves, 1 Kings 18:26,28... Justly therefore were they given up to their own hearts' lusts." - *Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible*, commenting on Isaiah 57, 1710

**men with men** - Paul's use of the Greek word, arsen, men with men = arsenes en arsesin, meaning the male gender and théllys, the female gender, instead of using the Greek words for man - aner and woman - gyne, provide another textual clue. The natural understanding is that Paul has Leviticus in mind where the Greek word, arseno, is used in the Septuagint, the 250 BC Greek translation of the Old Testament. Paul's use of arsen in Romans 1:27 points to the Septuagint's use of arsenos in Lev 18:22 and 20:13, to describe shrine prostitution.

The knee jerk reaction of some people is to assume Paul is talking about gay men yet gay men are nowhere to be found in Romans 1. Men with men describes male shrine prostitutes and their pagan partners in sexual worship of the fertility goddess. From start to finish in Romans 1, Paul is talking about shrine prostitutes, not homosexuals.

**Easton Bible Dictionary, in 1893**, linked Romans 1:27 with cult or shrine or temple prostitutes, also called sodomites in the Old Testament.

"**Sodomites** - those who imitated the licentious wickedness of Sodom (Deut. 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; **Rom. 1:26, 27**). Asa destroyed them

"out of the land" (1 Kings 15:12), as did also his son Jehoshaphat (22:46)." *Easton Bible Dictionary*, entry on Sodomite, 1893.

***Unger's Bible Dictionary, in 1957***, linked Romans 1:27 with cult or shrine or temple prostitutes, also called sodomites in the Old Testament. "Sod'omite (Heb. qadesh, consecrated, devoted). The sodomites were not inhabitants of Sodom, nor their natural descendants, but men consecrated to the unnatural vice of Sodom (Gen. 19:5; **comp. Rom. 1:27**) as a religious rite. This dreadful "consecration," or, rather, desecration, was spread in different forms over Phoenicia, Syria, Phrygia, Assyria, Babylonia. Ashtaroth, the Greek Astarte, was its chief object.

The term was especially applied to the emasculated priests of Cybele, called Galli, perhaps from the river Gallus in Bithynia, which was said to make those who drank from it mad. In Deut. 23:17, the toleration of a sodomite was expressly forbidden, and the pay received by a sodomite was not to be put into the temple treasury (v. 18)." *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, entry on Sodomite, 1957.

**Marti Nissinen**, heterosexual Finnish Bible scholar, comments that Paul is referring to heterosexual individuals who made themselves homosexuals. Paul is criticizing heterosexuals who abandoned their natural orientation. He is not criticizing homosexuals. *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, p. 109, 2004.

### **Possible meanings of 'against nature' for men in the first century AD**

1. Shrine prostitution - fertility cult sex - man on man
2. Street prostitution, for money
3. Roman orgy sex in multiple ways with multiple partners
4. Sex with male slaves - one third of the inhabitants of first century Rome were slaves
5. Pederastic sex with an underage male
6. Pederastic sex with an adult male
7. Sex with angels - Testament of Naphtali 3:3-5
8. Men making themselves up as females - Seneca
9. A fat inactive lifestyle - Seneca
10. Sleeping late, not rising early - Seneca
11. Greed - Seneca

12. Desire for notoriety - Seneca
13. Taking hot baths - Seneca
14. Keeping potted plants - Seneca
15. Enjoying banquets after sunset - Seneca
16. Being a night owl - Seneca
17. Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach - Seneca
18. Homosexual practice in a same sex relationship
19. Anal rape

**working that which is unseemly, - v. 27** - We have seen that Paul is not talking about two gay guys who fall in love and covenant to spend their lives together as a couple. *That which is unseemly* is repeated anal sex with multiple men, to worship the fertility goddess, not being lesbian and having sex with your wife or being gay and having sex with your husband.

**and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. - v. 27** - This is said by some anti-gay commentators to refer to AIDS, that gay men get AIDS because of their sin. AIDS is said to be proof that this verse is talking about gay men yet most of the people who have AIDS are heterosexuals. Discuss.

If it is referring to STDs, due to the number of sexual partners a male shrine prostitute would have had, disease becomes more likely. However, it better fits Paul's argument to view "*receiving in themselves that recompense of their error*" as part of Paul's idolatry argument. God didn't give them up to be lesbian or gay. They were given up or left alone to practice their sin of idolatry, with all that implies, from STDs or STIs to being slaves to their lust.

### **Three linguistic clues and three citation clues**

Paul provides at least three linguistic clues and three citation clues in Romans 1 which indicate he is focused on shrine prostitutes, not gay men and not lesbians.

1. In Romans 1:24 - akatharsian is linked to shrine prostitution in LXX
2. In Romans 1:25 - latreuo is linked to shrine prostitution in the LXX
3. In Romans 1:27 - arsenes en arsesin links to Leviticus and LXX

4. In Romans 1:24, 26, 28 - Paul three times quotes the OT phrase, "God gave them up," so readers will know he is referencing shrine prostitution.

1 Kings 14:16 - "he shall give Israel up"

2 Chron 30:7 - "gave them up"

Psalms 81:12 - "so I gave them up"

Micah 5:3 - "therefore will he give them up"

Acts 7:42 - "then God turned and gave them up"

Rom 1:24 - "God gave them up"

Rom 1:26 - "God gave them up"

Rom 1:28 - "God gave them over"

1. Based on this list, is Paul citing Old Testament examples of God giving people up to idolatry in Romans 1:24, 26, 28? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Should we ignore the fact that Paul quotes the OT three times, thus linking his argument to idolatry and not lesbians and gays? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is Paul linking OT idolatry with idolatry in Rome? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does this support or undermine the argument by anti-gay Christians which says Paul was talking about gays and lesbians? \_\_\_\_\_

Readers whose minds are already made up will ignore this evidence of Paul's argument because their anti-gay agenda is more important to them than God's truth. If they are saved, God will confront them again with this evidence at the judgment seat of Christ, Rom 14:10, where they will lose rewards because they rejected God's inspired truth.

### **Can we draw any conclusions about Paul's argument?**

Now we are in a position to evaluate the possible interpretations of Romans 1:26-27 and draw conclusions about what Paul means based on biblical cultural doctrinal historical linguistic and religious context. There is one kind of illicit sexual activity which occurred in the Old Testament and in first century Rome which fits the context of Romans 1. The prohibited sexual activity is using anal sex to worship the fertility goddess, also known as cult or shrine or temple prostitution.

The behavior Paul mentions is something both women and men were doing. Female and male devotees of the fertility goddess allowed themselves to be used for anal sex as part of their pagan worship. That perfectly matches Paul's idolatry argument. This sexual worship of the fertility goddess fits the context of Paul's *"likewise also the men"* in v. 27, which equates the sexual activity engaged in by female and male temple prostitutes, Romans 1:26-27.

- 1.** The behavior Paul uses to illustrate his idolatry argument must involve rejecting the true God and must involve pagan idolatry because that is the point of Paul's argument in Romans 1.
- 2.** Shrine prostitution fits the context of rejecting God, worshiping idols and practicing idolatry which Paul describes and references, which was practiced by devotees of the fertility goddess in Old Testament times and Roman fertility goddesses in first century Rome.
- 3.** The behavior Paul prohibits must be behavior prohibited in the Old Testament. Cult or shrine or temple prostitution is prohibited in the Old Testament, for women and for men.

*"None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute." NASV*

*"No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute." NIV*  
*"No Israelite, whether man or woman, may become a temple prostitute." NLT*

*"There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel." KJV*

Shrine prostitution or temple prostitution is the example Paul intended to describe and proscribe in Romans 1:26-27. And for the record, the word sodomites is never used in the Bible to refer to gays and lesbians. In the Bible, the words sodomite or sodomites always describe a shrine prostitute. Therefore, Romans 1 is not a negative blast at gays and lesbians. Paul and God are focused on pagan idolatry. The sexual activity mentioned in Romans 1:26-27 refers to fertility goddess wor-

ship, not two gay guys or two gay gals falling in love and committing to spend their lives together as a couple.

### **Summing up Paul's idolatry argument**

1. Gentiles are without excuse because God is knowable through His creation - v. 20.
2. Gentiles knew God but refused to glorify God - v. 21
3. Gentiles became idolaters, worshiped idols instead of God - v. 23
4. God gave them up to uncleanness - v. 24
5. They worshiped the creature, not the Creator - v. 25
6. God gave them up to vile affections so that their idolatrous women did what is against nature - v. 26
7. The idolatrous men did the same thing the idolatrous women were doing - v. 27
8. God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do things which are not convenient - v. 28

### **What is the context of Romans 1:26-27?**

1. Idolatrous people who rejected God - v. 19-21
2. Idolatrous people who made idols - v. 23
3. Idolatrous people who worshiped idols - v. 25
4. Idolatrous people who refused to worship God - v. 21, 25
5. Idolatrous women using sex in pagan worship - v. 26
6. Idolatrous men using sex in pagan worship - v. 27

### **Absolute Complementarians are wrong**

Absolute Complementarians are people who believe that the only marriage God will truly bless is a one man with one woman for life marriage. Anything else is viewed as wicked rebellion against God. Com-

plementarians say Paul is talking about lesbians and gay men in Romans 1:26-27. Let's review the Absolute Complementarian argument.

1. Men and women are anatomically and sexually complementary beings but a man and a man or a woman and a woman are not.
2. God never intended men to be gay or women to be lesbian.
3. Therefore, complementarians allege, Paul, in Romans 1:26-27, must have intended to condemn homosexuality and lesbianism in general.

Gays and lesbians happily agree with the first point. Men and women are physically and sexually complementary beings. It takes a man and a woman to make a baby. That's the norm and everyone understands that. But it does not logically follow that God makes everyone heterosexual.

Jesus, in Matthew 19:12 tells us that some eunuchs are born that way "*from their mother's womb.*" In ancient times, gay men and lesbians and even transgendered people were part of the group known as eunuchs.

4. Complementarians believe homosexuality is contrary to the intent of the Creator as expressed in Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18-24
5. Homosexuality is alleged to contradict the sexual complementarity of males and females in God's original design.
6. Homosexuality is alleged to contradict God's plan for male-female sexual union.
7. If everyone was gay, say absolute complementarians, the human race would die out.
8. Because gays don't reproduce, complementarians allege that homosexuality is a rebellious and sinful choice made by the individual. It is against nature, and therefore, scripture condemns it.

## **Gay Christians respond with truth and common sense.**

1. Scripture condemns same sex shrine prostitution, a pagan religious fertility practice but not lesbianism and not homosexuality. Things different are not equal.
2. Celibacy, 1 Cor 7:7-8, is as *against nature* as homosexuality.
3. Celibacy negates the sexual complementarity of males and females because celibate people do not reproduce.
4. Celibacy is contrary to the intent of the Creator as expressed in Genesis 2.
5. Celibacy intentionally rebels against God's original plan for male-female sexual union and procreation.
6. If everyone was celibate, the human race would die out.
7. If the Complementarian viewpoint is valid, we would expect scripture to condemn celibacy yet scripture commends celibacy, 1 Corinthians 7:7-8.

If celibacy is not mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2, does that make celibacy invalid? No, of course not. If gays and lesbians are not mentioned in Genesis 1 and 2, does that make our loving relationships and marriages invalid? No, of course not.

To drive home his idolatry argument in Romans 1:26-27, Paul cites examples of idolatry using the idolatrous behavior of Gentiles in the OT and similar idolatrous behavior which was part of everyday life in first century Rome. The idolatry Paul references was the unholy worship of Cybele, also called Minerva by some Romans and other names, depending on one's cultural heritage.

**Cybele as the Phrygian Great Mother** (Magna Mater), had five temples in mid-first century Rome. In her role as Minerva, consort of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, she also had another temple in Rome besides her five Cybele temples. Cybele was featured on Roman coins used in mid-first century Rome and throughout the empire.

Cybele was also called Mater Deum, Mother of the gods and Protectress of Rome. Paul illustrates idolatry by using an example with which all of his Roman readers would be familiar - Cybele worship. His intention wasn't to attack lesbians and gays. His intention was to support his idolatry argument with easy to recognize illustrations so that his Jewish audience will be nodding along as they read. "Yes, those wicked idolatrous Gentiles..." Then, just as his Jewish readers are saying, "Yeah Paul, tell it like it is!" Paul drops his bombshell in chapter 2:1ff. when he says, You Jews are just as guilty before God as the Gentiles.

So in chapter 1 Paul indicts and condemns Gentiles for the sin of idolatry. In chapter 2 Paul indicts and condemns Jews because, says the apostle, you do the same things the Gentiles do. In chapter 3:10-23, Paul concludes that all are under sin, both Jews and Gentiles.

That is the historical context, the religious context, the cultural context and the spiritual context of Romans 1. Idolatry is the focus of Paul's argument, not gays and lesbians. The cultural and religious context is unfamiliar to some modern readers because many modern readers are unfamiliar with Roman history and Jewish history in the first century AD.

**And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, - v. 28 - "They forgot God their savior" - Psalm 106:21**

This links back to Romans 1:21 - *they knew God, they glorified him not as God*. Their sin was rejecting God and God rejected them. Paul's argument is logical. He has not moved away from his idolatry argument. Instead, everything from v. 19 on is about idolatry. In plainer words, God did not give them up to become lesbian and gay. He gave them up to their idolatry so vs. 26-27 are examples of idolatry.

**God gave them over to a reprobate mind, v. 27 - God gave them over** ties the argument together. It lets us know that Paul is still talking about idolatry and God's judgment on idolaters. Paul's argument about Romans and shrine prostitution contains clear inter-textual echoes from 1 Kings 14:16, 2 Chron 30:7, Psalm 81:12, 106:20, Jeremiah 2:11 and Micah 5:3. These verses speak of Gentile idolatry which drew Israel away from God. The context of Psalm 106 is lust, v. 14, and God

giving sinful Israel what they want, v. 15. Then comes the description to which Paul alludes in Romans 1.

1 Kings 14:16 - "he shall give Israel up"  
2 Chron 30:7 - "gave them up"  
Psalm 81:12 - "so I gave them up"  
Micah 5:3 - "therefore will he give them up"  
Acts 7:42 - "then God turned and gave them up"  
Rom 1:24 - "God gave them up"  
Rom 1:26 - "God gave them up"  
Rom 1:28 - "God gave them over"

Psalm 81:12 - "*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.*"

...were mingled with the heathen... they served their idols... they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [Molech worship, Lev 18:21], And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan [Molech worship, Leviticus 18:21]" Psalm 106:20-38.

"*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory [changed the glory, Romans 1:23], for that which doth not profit.*" Jeremiah 2:11.

**to do those things which are not convenient; - v. 28** - The context is idols and idolaters who worshiped idols. Paul isn't railing on lesbians and gays. He is quoting the Hebrew Old Testament, citing examples where God gave up Israel because of idol worship. God did not give up Israel because of lesbians and gays. Those things which are not convenient could include:

- a. the alcohol and drugs used by pagan worshipers of false gods
- b. sex which accompanied worship of false gods, Rom 1:26-27
- c. self-castration by Galli priests of Cybele, Galatians 5:12
- d. the seared conscience by their sin of idolatry, 1 Tim 4:2

Vs. 29-32 contain a vice list of sins, committed not only by idolaters but sadly, sometimes committed by blood-bought children of God.

## Being filled with all unrighteousness, v. 29 - *adikia, ἀδικία*

What Paul lists here are fruits of unholy spirits, the fruit of rejecting God and being rejected by God. Christians should exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their life, Galatians 5:22-23.

1. How many fruits of the Spirit are there in Gal 5:22-23? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which list does your life reflect? \_\_\_\_\_

**Being filled** - "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*" Ephesians 5:18. Christians should be filled with the Spirit but never with all unrighteousness. Sadly, the lives of some saved people demonstrate these unholy fruits.

Same Greek word in 1:18 and here in v. 29. The great theme of Romans is righteousness. God demands it and we don't have it so He gives His own righteousness as a free gift to whosoever will receive it. To be filled with all unrighteousness:

- a. stirs God's wrath against, Rom 1:18
- b. shows our great need of righteousness
- c. shows God's amazing saving grace
- d. shows God's transforming power

**fornication** - The Greek word, *porneia πορνεία* - refers to sexual immorality so typical of pagan Gentiles, using sex to worship false gods yet while pagans did not view it as sin, God does view it as sin. Be honest before God. Are you guilty of the sin of fornication?

**wickedness** - *ponēria πονηρία* - depravity, malice, evil purposes and desires, Matt 22:18, Luke 11:39. Have you ever done or thought about doing something wicked? Do your actions and thoughts condemn you?

**covetousness** - *pleonexia πλεονεξία* - greed, desire for more, Eph 4:19, translated greediness & 2 Pet 2:14 - covetousness practices. Do you covet things others have?

**maliciousness** - *kakia κακία* - ill will, desire to hurt and injure, Acts 8:22, translated wickedness, Titus 3:3 - living in malice. Have you

ever wanted to get even with someone who hurt you? If the blood of Jesus has washed you from this sin, give Him glory!

**full of envy** - phthonos φθόνος - jealousy based on ill will. Have you ever envied someone for their friends, their looks, their knowledge?

**murder** - phonos φόνος - to slay, to slaughter, to murder, 1 John 3:15. You don't have to stab or shoot someone to be guilty of murder, Matthew 5:21-22. Do you commit this sin?

**debate** - eris ἔρις - contentions, 1 Cor 1:11, strife, Rom 13:13. Do you love to argue with other Christians or with your Lord and Savior? Remember Peter in Acts 10:13-14 - "*Not so Lord.*"

**deceit** - dolos δόλος - guile Jn 1:47, craft Mk 14:1, subilty Ac 13:10. Have you ever made someone believe something that wasn't true? Do you deal treacherously with friends or family?

**malignity** - kakoētheia κακοήθεια - bad character, depravity of heart and life, malicious craftiness. Does your inner anger make you treat the people in your life in unkind ways?

**whisperers** - psithyristēs ψιθυριστής - a secret slanderer - only here. Do you say things about people behind their back that you wouldn't say to their face?

**backbiters** - katalalos κατάλαλος - defamer, slanderer, evil speaker, only here. Do you slyly spread rumors and gossip about others?

**haters of God** - theostygēs θεοστυγής - exceptionally impious and wicked, only here. According to Jesus, Luke 16:13, this is a common sin. Can Christians commit this sin? Do you commit this sin?

**despiteful** - hybristēs ὕβριστής - insolent, insulting, injurious, 1 Tim 1:13. Do you look down your nose at some people and despise them for being different?

**proud** - hyperēphanos υπερήφανος - overweening self-importance. This sin trips up everyone. Humbling ourselves requires a conscious act of our will, 1 Peter 5:6. Do you humble yourself?

**boasters** - alazōn ἀλαζών - empty pretender, braggart. Everyone likes to embellish our personal stories to make ourselves look better. How can we change this aspect of ourselves so we don't commit this sin?

**inventors** - epheuretēs ἐφευρετής - contriver, only here  
**of evil things** - kakos κακός - Lu 16:25, wicked, destructive, bad. You may not be guilty of this. Most people emulate the sins of others because they aren't bright enough to invent their own sins.

**disobedient** - apeithēs ἀπειθής - unpersuadable  
**to parents** - goneus γονεύς - referring to mom and dad. This one gets all of us. Thank God for the blood of Jesus!

**without understanding** - asynetos ἄσύνετος - unintelligent, foolish, Rom 1:21, 10:19. Every decision we make is limited by our lack of complete knowledge so that we make decisions without understanding. In biblical matters, we make decisions about what we believe without understanding because we don't read and study the Bible enough to have the information we need, 1 Cor 2:12-14.

**covenantbreakers** - asynthetos ἄσύνθετος - faithless, only here. Have you ever given your word and then broken it? Have you ever assured someone you would do something and failed to do it? Aren't you glad Jesus never breaks His covenants with us?

**without natural affection** - astorgos ἄστοργος - hard-hearted toward kindred or family, unloving. In the Bible, this is never a reference to gays and lesbians who love each other. It refers to lack of love in families, something many gays and lesbians have experienced.

**implacable** - aspondos ἄσπονδος - a trucebreaker, 2 Tim 3:3. Are you impossible to please, so stubborn and self-willed that you won't give an inch? Do you refuse to let someone apologize to you? Do you refuse reconciliation when you could easily be reconciled if not for your stubborn pride?

**unmerciful** - aneleēmōn ἀνελεήμων - without mercy, ruthless, cruel, only here. God has given you break after break, grace after grace in your life. Unmerciful is you refusing to extend the same loving forgiving grace to others. What will it take to soften your heart on this issue?

**Who knowing the judgment of God, v. 32** - Where did we previously see the judgment of God in Romans 1 - v. 18? Contrast this vice list of sin with Romans 1:16-18. God has already judged the sins of the human race at Calvary. God has already poured out His righteous wrath against sin upon Jesus. The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross appeased the wrath of God forever for all who receive that truth. For anyone who is saved, all of the sins in this vice list are already paid for. For anyone who wants to get saved, all of the sins in this vice list will be marked, Paid In Full!

We don't escape the judgment of God by refraining from these sins. Is it true that Christians commit these sins too? \_\_\_\_\_ If every unsaved man stopped committing these sins, he would still go to hell. Quitting your sins is not how to get saved. Remember: Salvation is not a reward for the righteous. It is a gift for the guilty! Paul is contrasting the righteousness of God with the sinfulness of men who already KNOW the judgment of God.

No sinner understands all the implications of his sins but sinners know enough to know they are doing wrong. A man's conscience tells him right from wrong, Rom 2:14-15. About unsaved people, Paul says: They know enough to be guilty. They know enough to deserve judgment.

**that they which commit such things are worthy of death, - v. 32**

What an awful thing to say and yet, Paul says it because our real sins need to be dealt with by the real gospel so we escape the real judgment and real wrath of God. Paul uses the word, death, 22 times in Romans. When Paul mentions death in Romans, it is linked to sin 18 of 22 times. Sin and wrath and death are not popular with post-modern folk. Only people who love God's truth build their worldview around what the Bible says in context.

**not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. v. 32** - God never hints that there is good in all religions. That is a strange human belief, not something God endorses. God is not a back slapping, glad handing, can't we all just get along religionist. The god who teaches that is the god of every false religion but is not the God of

the Bible. The God of the Bible says: You're all guilty. You know you are sinning and you enjoy the pleasures of sin, Hebrews 11:25.

And yet, let's remind ourselves of the amazing grace of God in the glorious gospel of Christ - that is God's only remedy for sin. Jesus took upon Himself all the wrath of God against our sins when He died on the Cross. By His death, He appeased His Father's wrath. Sins were not excused or overlooked. They were paid for in full. Salvation is now offered as the free gift of God to all. "*Whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely,*" Revelation 22:17.

No one has to die and go to hell. No one has to live a sordid sinful life. No one is so bad that God cannot save him. Everyone can get saved and live a blessed, Spirit-filled life that is pleasing to God. We have the life saving, life changing glorious gospel of Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ, 2 Cor 5:20. That is our job, our mission, our purpose.

### **Discussion Questions For Romans 1**

1. What is the theme of Romans 1? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What does Paul say about God's gospel? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What does Paul say about God's wrath? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does Paul say about God's righteousness? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What does Paul say about the human race? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What does Paul say about idolatry? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What does God do to idolaters? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What does Paul say about gays in Romans 1? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What does Paul say about shrine prostitutes? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your favorite part of Romans 1? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What do you struggle with in Romans 1? \_\_\_\_\_