

# Book of Romans



## Chapter 1

*Theme: Paul's personal greetings; Paul's purpose; Paul's three "I ams"; a natural revelation of God;*

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## Romans Chapter 1

**THEME:** Paul's personal greetings; Paul's purpose; Paul's three "I ams"; a natural revelation of God; sub natural response of man; unnatural retrogression of man

This opening chapter is an inclusive as it embraces the introduction, the missionary motives of the great apostle, the definition of the gospel, and the condition of man in sin which necessitates the gospel. This chapter furnishes the tempo for the entire epistle.

Romans teaches the total depravity of man. Man is irrevocably and hopelessly lost. He must have the righteousness of God since he has none of his own.

It is interesting to note that this great document of Christian doctrine, which was addressed to the church at Rome to keep it from heresy, did not accomplish its purpose. The Roman church moved the farthest from the faith which is set forth in the Epistle to the Romans. It is an illustration of the truth of this epistle that man does not understand, neither does he seek after God.

Verses 16 and 17 have long been recognized as the key to the epistle. These two verses should be memorized, and the meaning of each word digested. The words will be dealt with individually when we come to them.<sup>1</sup>

I don't know any letter that is more fundamental and foundational than Paul's letter to the Romans. It is unquestionably the greatest of all of Paul's letters and the widest in its scope. It is most intent and penetrating in its insight into the understanding of truth; therefore, it is one of the books of the New Testament that every Christian ought to be thoroughly familiar with. If you haven't mastered the book of Romans and aren't able to think through this book without a Bible before you, then I urge you to set that as your goal.<sup>2</sup>

The subject matter of the Book of Romans necessarily lends itself to much interpretation, application, and preaching. We won't be shying away from any of it,

**BKC:** Epistolary greetings (1:1-7)

The customary formula for letters in ancient times included (a) naming and identifying the author, (b) naming and identifying the recipient, and (c) a word of salutation. Paul followed this formula in this letter to the Romans despite the lengthy digression precipitated by the word "gospel." The same formula is used in all the New Testament letters except Hebrews and 1 John. (See the chart, "Paul's Introductions to His Epistles.")<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.raystedman.org/commentary/romans/1>

<sup>3</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**Verses 1-7:** The preamble to the letter to the Romans

**<sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,**

**Missler:** The opening words are: From Paul. I know some translations like the CJB, the say Sha'ul, but that is not correct. In Greek his name is *Paulos* or Paulus. All throughout the Book of Romans he calls himself *Paulos* (we change that to Paul in English); but never is his Hebrew name Sha'ul (or Saul) used.

**“Paul”** = the least; the little one. He really understood the grace of God. “I am the chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1:12-15). Significantly, the most devoutly religious man who ever lived! (Phil 3:1ff). [So God has already saved one who is far worse than you or me!... Who loved Him most in Luke 7:39-43?]

**“Servant”** (*doulos*) means slave, a person owned by another; specifically, a bondsman. Paul reveled in this title (Gal 1:10; Titus 1:1), an Old Testament designation of a slave who, in love, binds himself to his master for life (Ex 21:2-6).

**“An Apostle”:** one sent with delegated authority (cf. Mt. 10:1-2)—a position to which he was called. (Lit., the Greek is, “a called apostle.”) Founding apostles had to be an eyewitness (1 Cor 9:1; 15:1-9). This calling was from God (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:1), though it was acknowledged by men (Gal. 2:7-9). (The “least”; 1 Cor 15:9. And yet he dominates the Book of Acts and wrote 14 of the 21 epistles in the NT!)

**Separated:** It involved being “set apart” for the gospel of God, the message of good news from God that centered on “His Son” (Rom. 1:2, 9) which Paul was “eager to preach” (v. 15) without shame (v. 16).

This “setting apart” did not keep Paul from independent employment (“making tents”) to support himself and his companions (Acts 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8) nor from mingling freely with all levels of pagan society.

[It was a “setting apart” to something—a commitment and dedication, not from things in isolation like the Pharisees. Interestingly the word “Pharisee” means “separated one” in the sense of being isolated and segregated.]

When? Before birth! Jer 1:5; John 15:16; Eph 1:4.<sup>4</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

**Servant or Slave:** Paul begins by calling himself a slave of the Messiah Yeshua. Some English versions have changed the term slave to servant or bond-servant. Bond-servant is a mistranslation; it is often the preferred term, however, because of the modern-day, Western gentile world's abhorrence to the institution of slavery. But it must be stated that the word chosen in Greek, *doulos*, slave, was also a hot button word and highly derogatory in ancient Roman society. Being a slave in the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire was a most shameful thing and for Paul to call himself a slave immediately lowered his status in the eyes of gentiles, even though he says that he was a slave to his god. Obviously, Paul's intent is not to lower his status as his immediate goal is to establish his authority, so this means we must cross-examine this term in the Hebrew cultural context to get the correct sense of it.

So right out of the gate we see the Jewish Paul explaining and communicating in Jewish thought pattern, but he is confined to having to use the Greek language to do it since his letter recipients were Greek speakers. Paul is thinking in Hebrew societal and theological terms but

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<sup>4</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

having to use the best available Greek words to translate. And as any translator will tell you, this can be a difficult task as there aren't always precise parallel words between languages and cultures, so often the meaning gets a bit skewed. In Hebrew society a "slave" was a title or status that was actually honorable and admirable when that person was described as being a slave of YHWH God. The Hebrew word for slave is *eved*; it meant both servant and slave because they were seen as essentially the same thing. Moses was called a slave of YHWH in Joshua 14:7, the Prophet Elijah was called a slave of YHWH in 2 Kings 10:10, and David was regularly called a slave of God. This was, in Hebrew thought, high praise. There many more examples of this in Scripture.

Westerners spontaneously recoil from the term slave (less so from servant) because of our historical moral tug of war with the institution of slavery, which more often than not amounted to the enslavement and mistreatment of another and different race of people from us that, for our convenience and conscience, we declared were inferior. Servants, however, were seen as an honorable and valuable institution of the lower classes serving the upper classes in typical European aristocracy. So, the older the English Bible, the more we'll see the word servant inserted where the word ought to be slave. The point is that while it appears to the gentile Christian mind that Paul is deeply humbling himself by using the denigrating designation "slave" (denigrating to a Westerner), in reality in the Biblical Hebrew society of his day being a slave of God was a position of special honor that he was ascribing to himself. It would be somewhat like saying I'm a Priest of God. That is why Paul immediately follows up the "slave of Yeshua" label (an especially honorable title) by adding the equally honorable, but different, title that he is also an emissary (an apostle) because God has set him apart for a special purpose. Let me be clear: to the average gentile Bible reader the 1st verse of Romans 1 looks to be Paul humbling himself; he's not. He's actually claiming that he holds a high position of great authority due to his special association with God.

Let me also point out that surely Paul expected this letter to be received by a Jewish Believer in Rome who would read and explain it to the gentile Believers. Otherwise if a gentile had received it and read it by himself, Paul would have been seen as a major turn off to the Roman gentile Believers because he characterized himself as a slave. Yet as we move forward in our study we will see that he obviously sought to impress the Believers' community of Rome with his letter, such that they would accept his authority and spiritual leadership.<sup>5</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

**Apostle:** Let's talk for a bit about what the term Apostle means. Apostle is an English word; in Greek the word is *apostolos* and interestingly in the Roman world of Paul's day it applied to sending out merchant ships and military expeditions. So once again it is critical that we understand this Greek term in its Hebrew sense as opposed to its Roman sense. *Apostolos* is an attempt to translate the concept behind the Hebrew term *shaliach* into Greek, although *shaliach* and *apostolos* aren't precise synonyms (a typical translation problem). *Shaliach* carries the concept of agency in it; that is, a 3rd party is empowered to perform business on behalf of the person sending him. So, the agent is given the power of his employer who sends him in his stead; the agent is thus to be viewed by those he is dealing with as the equal of his employer in whatever narrow or wide area of authority he has been given.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

So, an Apostle in the Hebrew/Jewish world carried as much authority as the one who sent him; he wasn't merely a glorified messenger. This is why Christ would say to some of his original 12 apostles (12 *shaliach* actually):

**John 14:12-13** CJB 12 Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever trusts in me will also do the works I do! Indeed, he will do greater ones, because I am going to the Father. 13 In fact, whatever you ask for in my name, I will do; so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Before Yeshua leaves and departs this earth He is empowering his original 12 as His agents (His *shaliach*). And as agents they carry their master's power and authority as Yeshua makes clear to them. Paul is Yeshua's agent to the gentiles and so carries Yeshua's full power and authority on earth. Paul clearly understands this, and the Jewish readers of his letter would as well because they would understand his lofty position within a Jewish cultural context. But Paul's gentile readers in the Roman cultural context would not think of his position as particularly lofty; they would see him more as a regular *apostolos* (a glorified messenger who is sent by his master) who merely carries out his master's orders but has not been given the degree of autonomous authority that an agent receives.

Paul is an agent of Yeshua, not merely a messenger of Yeshua. I hope you are already starting to get what I'm aiming to show you. In the Book of Romans, the culturally Jewish Paul is going to converse in rabbinical Hebrew thought patterns throughout. Yes, his thoughts will largely have to do with gentiles. And yes, if a Roman gentile unversed in Jewish culture read this letter on his own and tried to carry it out as he understood it from a Roman cultural viewpoint it would be different from how Paul intended it. This is what has happened with the Christian Church in general when it comes to reading and understanding Paul's letters over the centuries; and it is why the Bible commentator James D.G. Dunn felt compelled to say that if Christians insist on continuing to perceive Paul, and interpret Paul, in any other than in his true, real, rabbinical Jewish self, it "condemns the interpretation of Paul to confusion and contradiction".

So already we've turned the first verse of Romans upside down from its traditional Christian understanding by recognizing Paul's Jewishness. Paul is not humbling himself; he is making a case for his readers to accept his God-given authority. This is because Paul sees himself as the 13<sup>th</sup> Apostle. The terms apostle and disciple are not synonymous. A disciple is a follower; any follower. An Apostle, as we've seen, is an agent for the master. The first 12 Disciples of Christ were also considered Apostles. Why 12 original Apostles? One for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. So why did Yeshua add a 13th Apostle some years later, in the person of Paul? Because in actuality there weren't 12 tribes of Israel, there were 13. When we look at the list of 12 tribes, Levi is not included. Levi is not counted among the other tribes because of their special position as Yehoveh's priests. But, at the same time, indeed they are a tribe produced by Jacob and they are a tribe of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

**ESV: Servant.** See note on the first-century institution of "bondservant" (Gk. *doulos*, "servant, slave, bondservant") at 1 Cor. 7:21. This designation indicates that Paul is a slave of Christ, but at the same time the title recalls the honored servants of God in the OT, such as Moses, Joshua, David, and the prophets (Josh. 14:7; 24:29; 2 Kings 17:23; Ps. 89:3). Apostle emphasizes that Paul's authority is equal to that of the 12 apostles chosen by Christ. The apostles were specifically called by Christ (Matt. 10:1-7; Acts 1:24-26; Gal. 1:1) and had seen the risen Lord Jesus (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-9). They established and governed the whole church, under

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

Jesus Christ, and they had authority to speak and write the words of God, equal in authority to the OT Scriptures (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:2, 15-16). Paul was called to be an apostle when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road (Acts 9; 22; 26; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8–9; Gal. 1:13–17), and the unusual timing of his call led Paul to conclude that no more apostles would be chosen after him (1 Cor. 15:8). Gospel (Gk. *euangelion*) means “good news.” This included not just a call to initial saving faith but Paul's entire message about Jesus Christ and how Christ's saving activity transforms all of life and all of history.<sup>7</sup>

**ESV: The gospel of God:** Other New Testament letters focus more on the church and its challenges and problems; Romans focuses more on God. “God is the most important word in this epistle. Romans is a book about God. No topic is treated with anything like the frequency of God. Everything Paul touches in this letter he relates to God. In our concern to understand what the apostle is saying about righteousness, justification, and the like we ought not to overlook his tremendous concentration on God.” (Morris)

The word “God” occurs 153 times in Romans; an average of once every 46 words – this is more frequently than any other New Testament book. In comparison, note the frequency of other words used in Romans: law (72), Christ (65), sin (48), Lord (43), and faith (40). Romans deals with many different themes but as much as a book can be, it is a book about God.

There are many important words in the vocabulary of Romans we must understand. Bruce quotes Tyndale’s preface to Romans: “First we must mark diligently the manner of speaking of the apostle, and above all things know what Paul meaneth by these words – the Law, Sin, Grace, Faith, Righteousness, Flesh, Spirit, and such like – or else, read thou it ever so often, thou shall but lose thy labor.”<sup>8</sup>

**BKC:** Paul identified himself first as a servant of Christ Jesus. “Servant” (*doulos*) means slave, a person owned by another. Paul wore this title gladly (Gal. 1:10; Titus 1:1), reveling in the Old Testament picture of a slave who in love binds himself to his master for life (Ex. 21:2-6). Paul also identified himself as an apostle—one sent with delegated authority (cf. Matt. 10:1-2)—a position to which he was called. (Lit., the Gr. is, “a called apostle.”) This calling was from God (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:1), though it was acknowledged by men (Gal. 2:7-9). It involved being set apart (from *aphorizō*; cf. Acts 13:2) for the gospel of God, the message of good news from God that centered on “His Son” (Rom. 1:2, 9) which Paul was “eager to preach” (v. 15) without shame (v. 16). This setting apart did not keep Paul from making tents to support himself and his companions (Acts 20:34; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8) nor from mingling freely with all levels of pagan society. It was a setting apart to something—a commitment and dedication, not from things in isolation like the Pharisees. (Interestingly the word “Pharisee” means “separated one” in the sense of being isolated and segregated.)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>9</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

## **<sup>2</sup>(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)**

**Missler:** “Holy Scriptures”: refers to the Old Testament and occurs only here in the New Testament (2 Tim 3:15 uses different Greek words for “holy” and “Scriptures”).

“Promised afore.” God is distinctive in His keeping His promises. [vs. Allah, et al...] Prophecy = an undeniable authentication of His Word.

“To Him give all the prophets witness...” Acts 10:43. [Inaccuracy resulted in death, Deut 18:20. There were lots of rock piles in Israel!]

What “had been promised afore?” The Gospel! (= a person!) His first promise of redemption (Gen 3:15). Messianic details: family, birthplace, etc.

Hidden in Genesis 5 (cf. Isa 53:11; Jer 23:6; 33:16; 1 Cor 15:1-8). Philip’s use of Isaiah 53:7-8 with the Ethiopian eunuch is a good example (Acts 8:30-35; cf. Luke 24:25-27, 45-47). Paul will also use Gen 18 and 22 in chapter 4<sup>10</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Next, our thoroughly Jewish Paul says that the origination of the Gospel, the Good News of Messiah Yeshua that he is bringing to gentiles, is taken from the holy writings; the Hebrew Scriptures and specifically the Prophets. Let me remind you that as of this time we are 150 years away from having a Christian New Testament ordained into existence. So, whatever talk we hear from Paul about scriptures and holy writings refers to the only holy writings that existed in Paul’s day: what we call the Old Testament. Some of the Gospel accounts about Christ and some of Paul’s letters would indeed start circulating among Believing congregations even by the time of the Book of Romans. But to call them holy writ or the New Testament is reading something back into the Bible that wouldn’t exist until well over a century later. To be clear: Paul says that the Gospel is an Old Testament concept. But the point that he is making to gentiles is that it was a HEBREW religious concept taken from the HEBREW holy book.<sup>11</sup>

**BKC:** The phrase Holy Scriptures refers obviously to the Old Testament and occurs only here in the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:15 uses different Gr. words for "holy" and "Scriptures"). Paul did not quote any prophets where the gospel was promised, but Philip's use of Isaiah 53:7-8 with the Ethiopian eunuch is a good example (Acts 8:30-35; cf. Luke 24:25-27, 45-47).<sup>12</sup>

## **<sup>3</sup>Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;**

**Missler:** This asserts Christ’s deity as basic to His person and prior to His Incarnation, since His identification with David’s line “came to be,” the literal rendering of the participle *genomenou*, translated “was made.”

He was genuinely human too, as declared by His linkage with David and (v.4) His resurrection from the dead.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>12</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>13</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

In verse 3 Paul explains that this Good News (evangelion in Greek) is directly about, and tied to, God's Son. Now the term God's son or son of God was used in Hebrew culture in a number of settings. Sometimes it referred to Israel as a whole, other times to the kings of Israel, even at times to angels. Thus, it would take some additional definition by Paul to better explain who this Son of God is that he speaking about and what, exactly, that means. So, the next attribute of who the Good News is about is that he is descended from King David physically. So, this person is spiritually tied to God, and physically tied to King David. These two attributes are essential to the expected Messiah of Israel. But what positively identified this person who is the subject of the Good News as Yeshua of Nazareth is that He was resurrected from the dead. Then Paul adds yet another attribute to this person at the center of the Good News; the Gospel: this person is also Lord. It is one thing to be the Messiah who liberates Israel from their oppressors; it is another to be Israel's Lord because it adds the attribute of divinity to the Messiah. Who would understand such a thing? Gentiles (even if they are Believers)? Heavens no; only Jews would understand even the thrust of Paul's assertion whether they agreed with it or not, because a Messiah and his nature are uniquely Hebrew concepts.<sup>14</sup>

**Guzik:** Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord: This is the center of Paul's gospel, the "sun" that everything this else orbits around. The center of Christianity is not a teaching or a moral system, it is a Person: Jesus Christ.

This Jesus has both a human origin (born of the seed of David according to the flesh), and an eternal existence (declared to be the Son of God). The evidence of Jesus' humanity is His human birth; the evidence of His deity is His resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus shows His divine power because He rose by His own power: Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again (John 2:19).

"There is a sense in which Jesus was the Son of God in weakness before the resurrection but the Son of God in power thereafter." (Morris)<sup>15</sup>

**ESV:** Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecy that a descendant of David would rule forever, and hence he is the Messiah (see 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Psalm 89; 132; Isa. 11:1–5; Jer. 23:5–6; Ezek. 34:23–24). The eternal Son of God assumed humanity to become the messianic King.<sup>16</sup>

**BLC: 3-4:** God's good news concerns His Son, identified as Jesus Christ our Lord. This asserts Christ's deity as basic to His person and prior to His Incarnation, since His identification with David's line "came to be," a literal rendering of the participle *genomenou*, translated was. He was genuinely human too, as His tie with David and His resurrection from the dead show. That resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God because it validated His claims to deity and His predictions that He would rise from the dead (John 2:18-22; Matt. 16:21). This declaration was made through (lit., "in accord with") the Spirit of holiness. This is the Holy Spirit, and not, as some have suggested, Christ's human spirit.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>16</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>17</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**<sup>4</sup>And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:**

**Missler:** The resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God because it validated His claims to deity and His predictions that He would rise from the dead (Jn 2:18-22; Mt 16:21).

“The Spirit of Holiness”: This is the Holy Spirit, and not, as some have suggested, Christ’s human spirit.<sup>18</sup>

**FCSB:** Appointed the Son of God. Paul’s notion of sonship was likely Jewish and Messianic, and rooted in the Scriptures (see Ps 2:7; see also word study on Lk 2:11). At the same time, such a claim was a direct challenge to Caesar, who declared he was the “son of god”<sup>19</sup>

**ESV:** Jesus was declared by God the Father to be the Son of God in power when he was raised from the dead (see Matt. 28:6) and installed at God’s right hand as the messianic King. As the eternal Son of God, he has reigned forever with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But this verse refers to Jesus as the God-man reigning in messianic power (“Son of God” was a Jewish title for the Messiah), and this reign began (i.e., was declared or initiated) at a certain point in salvation history, i.e., when Jesus was raised from the dead through the Holy Spirit. according to the Spirit of holiness. Christ’s great power is always connected to the holiness of the Holy Spirit as he works in the new covenant age.<sup>20</sup>

**<sup>5</sup>By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:**

**Missler:** Paul’s ministry from Jesus was “among all the nations,” which included the Romans, whom Paul addressed not as a church but as individual believers.

Paul was the human agent from and for Christ he received “the grace of apostleship” (cf. 12:3; 15:15), but the calling (God’s summons to salvation; cf. 8:28, 30) came from the Lord and set his readers apart as “saints.”

“**Obedience to the faith**” = Objective genitive: obedience (produced by) faith. Obedience and faith are often linked (cf. 15:18; 16:26; also cf. 1 Peter 1:2). Obedience to the Lord as our King is too often overlooked as the essential in our Christian walk!<sup>21</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 5 has Paul explaining that Yeshua is the mediator of this Good News. Thus, it is from Yeshua that grace and authority have been given to Paul of being the Apostle (or better, *shaliach*, agent) to the gentiles.<sup>22</sup>

Paul’s mission is to all people groups. His goal is to bring about the obedience of faith (cf. 16:26). Obedience is required, but it is an obedience that flows from saving faith and is always

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<sup>18</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>19</sup> NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes

<sup>20</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>21</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

connected to ongoing faith. Although Paul can speak of people's initial response as obeying the gospel (10:16), it is unlikely that "obedience of faith" here refers only to initial saving faith, because the purpose of Paul's apostleship was not merely to bring people to conversion but also to bring about transformed lives that were consistently obedient to God. Paul's ultimate goal in preaching to the Gentiles is for the sake of his name, that is, that Jesus Christ will be glorified. "Name" here means reputation or honor.<sup>23</sup>

**BKC: 5-7.** Paul's ministry from Jesus was among all the Gentiles, which included the Romans, whom Paul addressed not as a church but as individual believers. Paul was the human agent (from and for Christ he received grace and apostleship, i.e., "the grace of apostleship"; cf. 12:3; 15:15) but the calling (God's summons to salvation; cf. 8:28, 30) came from the Lord and set his readers apart as "saints." Obedience and faith are often linked (cf. 15:18; 16:26; also cf. 1 Peter 1:2). Just as Paul was a "called" apostle, so the believers in Rome were called to belong to Jesus Christ (lit., "called of Jesus Christ") and called to be saints (lit., "called saints"). Paul's salutation like that in all his epistles, expressed the desire that they enjoy God's grace and peace.<sup>24</sup>

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

**Missler:** Just as Paul was a "called" apostle, so the believers in Rome were "called of Jesus Christ" to be saints .<sup>25</sup>

#### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

In verse 6 Paul extends that authority to include the gentiles of Rome. Let's be clear about what is happening here. I said in the first part of my message today that Paul finds himself in an awkward position vis a vis the congregation of Rome. He did not establish any of the Believing congregations in Rome. He did not hand pick and install the elders nor did he establish the doctrines they should observe. In fact, he has never even been to Italy, let alone Rome. But his goal is to convince the Believers of Rome to accept him as their ultimate earthly religious authority; especially the gentiles but clearly the Jewish Believers, too. Now watch Paul's impeccable logic at work. Point 1: it was Yeshua that appointed Paul as the 13th Apostle. Point 2: this 13th Apostle was to act as Yeshua's agent to the gentiles. Point 3: it was this same Yeshua who called (elected) the gentile Believers of Rome to the faith. Point 4: therefore, since points 1, 2 and 3 are true, then it follows that the gentiles of Rome must be subject to Paul's Apostleship.

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<sup>23</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>24</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>25</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Paul is playing hardball. Yet, what he says is true. He is right. But around 4 years later when Paul finally does get to Rome, it is as a prisoner. And when he finally meets the leadership of the Rome Jewish community, we read this exchange in Acts chapter 28:

**Acts 28:20-22 CJB**

20 This is why I (Paul) have asked to see you and speak with you, for it is because of the hope of Isra'el that I have this chain around me."

21 They said to him, "We have not received any letters about you from Y'hudah, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. 22 But we do think it would be appropriate to hear your views from you, yourself; for all we know about this sect is that people everywhere speak against it."

While it is my speculation, it would seem that Paul's effort to be accepted as the long-distance authority over the Believers in Rome didn't take hold. Although the implication from the Book of Acts is that these Jews Paul met with were probably not Believers, it is not possible that they had no dealings at all with the Believing community of Jews and gentiles in the same city.

What we also see in this excerpt from Acts 28 is that the Jews of Rome of course looked to Judea (specifically meaning Jerusalem) as their religious authority, as they tell Paul they've heard nothing bad about him from Judea. So since he is here they want to hear directly from Paul. There is no hint that these Jews knew anything about any letter Paul had sent to the Romans about 4 years earlier.

But interestingly what we find as the Book of Acts comes to a close is that some of these Jews who came to meet with Paul believed Him and so accepted Yeshua as their Messiah. And, so, Paul has accomplished something of great importance to him and to the Lord; he has established a community of Believers in Rome with him as its unquestionable head. What of the community of Believers that Paul addressed his letter to the Romans to some 4 years earlier? We don't know; there is no mention of them in Acts 28 and no specific mention of them in other New Testament books. But clearly Paul teaching and leading this new Believer's community that he personally established even as a prisoner must have survived and thrived as did all the other ones that he had personally established in Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and so on. This is because within just a couple of more years, the unstable Nero will begin a vicious campaign of persecution against Believers in Rome in order to try to draw attention away from himself as the one who started a fire that burned a huge portion of Rome to the ground, and instead blame it on the Believers.<sup>26</sup>

**FCSB:** Paul's audience. It's important to note that Paul's primary audience was Gentile Christians who were likely worshiping and/or interacting with the Jewish community in Rome, some of whom were believers in Christ, others who were not. The church probably met in homes and worshiped in the synagogue. This reality is essential for understanding the specific tone and instructions that Paul gave to the Gentiles and his warnings against Gentile arrogance over and against the Jewish community.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>27</sup> NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes

**<sup>7</sup>To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Missler:** Paul's salutation, like that in all his epistles, expressed the desire that they enjoy God's grace (Gr. *charas*) and peace (Heb. *shalom*). Written to believers: the unsaved are never named God's "beloved."

Not preaching to the unsaved; teaching the saints:

**Saints:** "A group of displaced persons, uprooted from their natural home, and on their way to an extraterrestrial destination; not of this planet, neither in roots nor in its ideals." —Barnhouse.<sup>28</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

The words of verse 7 are basically the way Paul starts most of his letters. It is a customary greeting and it states to whom the letter is intended. Although without doubt this letter addresses mostly the gentile Believers of Rome, it also includes the Jewish Believers. So when Paul says "to all in Rome whom God loves, who have been called by Yeshua and set apart for him", it is referring to all Believers in the city of Rome, Jew and gentile.

Notice something important at the end of verse 7; Paul refers separately to God the Father and to Yeshua the Messiah. Paul sees the Father and Yeshua as two distinct entities. Or perhaps as two identifiable parts of a whole. Thus for Christians who believe that essentially the essence of the Father has been rolled into the essence of the Son (Christ), and thus the Father has either retreated from the scene or is no longer relevant, that is certainly not how Paul sees it. Some in Christianity make this claim of irrelevance of the Father in modern times because of Yeshua's statement in John 14 that if "you've seen me you've seen the Father". They are wrong. Rather it is that just as Paul is an agent of Yeshua, but still is subordinate to Him, so we find Christ pronounce that while He has been given all authority on earth and in heaven, He is still effectively an agent of God and thus subordinate to His Father. I don't want to get hung up here on a controversial theological issue of the substance and nature of God. However just know that Paul's theology does not allow for the Father and the Son to be the same person or for one to have abdicated his position. Both exist, both are relevant, and both have their own attributes and functions. There is a definite hierarchy with the Father at the top.

Now one other important item. The CJB doesn't do a good job with verse 7 as it leaves out a word; the word is *hagios*. Typically, *hagios* is translated into English as "saints". "Beloved of God" and "saints" are essentially synonyms and they are Old Testament terms used of God's chosen people, the Hebrews. So, Paul is extending the use of those terms to Believers, Jew and gentile. The reason I point that out is that it is often erroneously claimed in Christianity that "saints" is a more or less a new and exclusive term coined for New Testament Believers in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

**ESV:** Loved by God and called. God shows his love by effectually calling his people to himself. Saints refers to all Christians; all believers stand before God as his "holy ones." Grace means God's unmerited favor. Peace is not just the absence of conflict but echoes the OT concept of *shalom*, where a person's life with God and with everything else is in ordered harmony, both physically and spiritually, and "all is well."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>30</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

**Guzik:** To all who are in Rome: Paul had never been to Rome, and he did not found the Roman church. This makes the Book of Romans different because most of Paul's letters were to churches he founded. It seems the church in Rome began somewhat spontaneously as Christians came to the great city of the Empire and settled there. There is also no Biblical or historical evidence that the Apostle Peter founded the church in Rome.

Acts 2:10 describes how there were people from Rome among the Jews present at the Day of Pentecost; so when they returned home, there was a Christian community in Rome. Beyond that, the origins of the church in Rome are somewhat obscure, but Christians continually migrated to Rome from all parts of the Empire. It shouldn't surprise us that a church started there spontaneously, without being directly planted by an apostle.

Even so, through mutual acquaintances or through his travels, Paul knew many of the Christians in Rome by name because he mentions them in Romans 16. Even if Paul only knew many of the Roman Christian by acquaintance, he knew two things about them and every true Christian. He knew they were beloved of God and that they were saints.

Called to be saints: "You notice that the words 'to be' are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense. These believers in Rome were 'called saints.' They were not called because they were saints; but they became saints through that calling." (Spurgeon)<sup>31</sup>

**<sup>8</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**

**Missler:** Paul made a practice of beginning his letters with a word of thanks to God, a specific prayer, and a personal message to the recipients.

For the Romans he rejoiced that news of their faith had spread all over the (known) world, a hyperbole meaning throughout the Roman Empire. This was done without radio and television; travel without railroads or aircraft; without even newspapers or cassette tapes...<sup>32</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

In verse 8 thanksgiving is Paul's priority (as it should be for all of us in all of our prayers). What is Paul thanking God for? It is for the living reality of the trust exhibited by some Jews and gentiles in Rome to accept Yeshua as Messiah. But what ought to draw our attention is where Paul says "I thank my God through Messiah Yeshua". This word through (dia in Greek) is there in all extant Greek manuscripts of the Book of Romans and I am yet to find an English translation that leaves it out. I'm sure Paul didn't mean to create a heated doctrinal argument by inserting that word "through", but he did.

If he means what he said (and I see no reason to believe otherwise), then he envisions Christ as an intermediary between God and Man. Now while some Jews today claim that such a concept as there being a heavenly intermediary is a show-stopper, in fact in the non-Biblical but authoritative Jewish writings of Enoch and Tobit, and a few other ancient Jewish sources, 2nd Temple Judaism believed that archangels were intermediaries between Man and God. And perhaps if "intermediary" isn't the perfect English word to use, then maybe "intercessor" helps to define what is meant. We could spend significant time on this theological issue, but I

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<sup>31</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>32</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

don't want to get parked here. What is unambiguous as it appears in ALL NT versions is that Paul is rendering thanksgiving NOT to Yeshua, but rather to the Father THROUGH Yeshua (with Yeshua providing the understood mediating role that many Jews in the 2nd Temple era took for granted). So the issue that Judaism would have had with Paul is not the concept of there being an intermediary; but rather who or what fulfilled that role? And Paul says that it is Jesus Christ who is the intermediary (at least He is from now on).

As an application then, to whom do we direct our prayers? The Father or to the Son? Are we to pray to Yeshua or are we to pray to the Father? Or does it make any difference? Yeshua knew with His advent that this was already an issue among His disciples, so rather than leave them hanging He told them (and us) exactly how we should pray. I'll use the King James Version because it is by far the most familiar to Christians.

**Matthew 6:9-13** <sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Just as Yeshua instructed us in the previous chapter of Matthew (chapter 5) that He did NOT abolish the Law, here in Matthew 6 He instructs us to pray to the Father. Pretty definitive. So it is as Paul said: we pray to and deal with the Father; but we do it through the agency of Yeshua. How that all happens and is processed in the Heavens I don't know. But the protocol and what our mindset about it is to be clear. The Father remains not only relevant, but supreme; nothing has changed. And why would it? The Father has always had a Son, since eternity past. It is only that at history His Son, Yeshua, became flesh and appeared on earth.<sup>33</sup>

**ESV:** Paul typically follows the greeting in his letters with a thanksgiving (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1–9; Phil. 1:1–8; Col. 1:1–8; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philem. 4). He is thankful not for any personal benefit but because he sees here the fulfillment of his goal in life, which was for the kingdom of God to advance throughout all the world. Paul likely means that the gospel is no longer confined to the Jews but has also spread to the Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>34</sup>

**Guzik:** I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world: Paul was thankful for the good reputation of the church in Rome. Because of its location, this church had a special visibility and opportunity to glorify Jesus throughout the Empire.

These Christians had to be strong. “The Christians of Rome were unpopular – reputed to be ‘enemies of the human race’ and credited with such vices as incest and cannibalism. In large numbers, then, they became the victims of the imperial malevolence – and it is this persecution of Christians under Nero that traditionally forms the setting for Paul’s martyrdom.” (Bruce)

“The Romanists urge this place to prove Rome the mother church; but without reason: the church of Thessalonica had as high a eulogy: see 1 Thessalonians 1:8.” (Poole)

“No wonder that they prospered so well when Paul always made mention of them in his prayers. Some churches would prosper better if some of you remembered them more in prayer.” (Spurgeon)

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>34</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

For God is my witness is perhaps Paul's acknowledgment of how easy it is to say you will pray for someone, and then fail to do it. He wanted them to know that he really prayed.<sup>35</sup>

**BKC: 8-15.** Paul made a practice of beginning his letters with a word of thanks to God, a specific prayer, and a personal message to the recipients. For the Romans he rejoiced that news of their faith had spread all over the world, a hyperbole meaning throughout the Roman Empire. His constant intercession for them (vv. 9-10) had the new note of petition for his projected visit, a heart-desire of long standing that finally was definitely on Paul's agenda (v. 10; cf. 15:23-24). This visit would be mutually beneficial spiritually; he desired to minister for three purposes: (a) to the strengthening of the Romans (1:11; to impart... some spiritual gift means either to exercise his own spiritual gift on their behalf or to bestow on them spiritual favors, i.e., blessings); (b) to see some spiritual fruit (a harvest, v. 13) among them and, in turn, (c) to be strengthened by them (v. 12). In this sense Paul's ministry at Rome would be the same as in other centers of the empire.

As a result of his "apostleship" (v. 5) to the Gentiles Paul felt obligated (lit., "I am a debtor") to the entire human race to proclaim God's good news (vv. 14-15). The word translated non-Greeks is literally, "barbarians," all other human beings from the viewpoint of the Greeks (cf. Col. 3:11). Parallel to it is the word foolish (*anoētois*; cf. Titus 3:3) in the next couplet, which has the significance of uncultured. Paul's sense of debt to the Gentile world produced an eagerness (I am so eager, Rom. 1:15) to evangelize it, including Rome, capital of the empire.<sup>36</sup>

**<sup>9</sup>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;**

**Missler:** Paul's service was not "soulical" (not *psychikos*, but *pneumatikos*: 1 Cor 2:14). He did not depend upon music, architecture, or oratory. Simply the truth of the Word and the results of the Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Paul tells the Believers in the city of Rome that not only is he aware of them, but that they are important to him such that he prays for them. Remembering that Paul is a Pharisee, then when he says that he regularly remembers them "in his prayers", what he is referring to is the standard 3 times per day prayers that the most pious of Jews (the Pharisees) followed as a tradition. I'll repeat what I'm about to tell you at regular intervals because it is the Rosetta Stone for what we are studying: Paul thinks like a Jew, and behaves like a Jew, because he is a Jew. When we read his writings, we need to see them from his Jewish viewpoint. Thus when he writes his letters (his Epistles) he unconsciously does so from a Jewish perspective. Why? Because he is not a gentile, even though he has some familiarity with gentiles. More, as he has stated plainly, he is a Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee of Pharisees; he is among the most pious and most strict of Jews. He said this many years after becoming a Believer and an Apostle. His zealous and highly educated Jewishness is the underlying context atop which he has layered the meaning and impact of the arrival of the Messiah. It is the context upon which he understands what a Messiah is, what a Messiah does, and how people are to relate to the Messiah. Paul's Pharisee training under Gamaliel is also his underlying context upon which he builds an understanding of who Messiah

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<sup>35</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>36</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>37</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

is in relation to God. And, Paul believes that Yeshua, as Messiah, is the Son of God who sits at the Father's right hand (he got this from Daniel). This is not the Tom Bradford perspective; it is what Paul says. And very recently this is also the so-called new perspective on Paul that has been adopted by many eminent Bible scholars such as E.P. Sanders, Douglas Moo and James D.G. Dunn.

This won't be the last time I say these things to you because I know firsthand how difficult it can be to let go of the Christian doctrines we've been taught most of our lives in exchange for the Scriptural truth. We unconsciously read the Bible through the lens of gentile Western Christianity as formed and defined by our early Church Fathers. They were right about much of it; but wrong about some critical areas that their anti-Jewish bias blinded them to. And it has fallen to us, in this present generation, to try to right these wrongs so that we can see God for who He really is, His plan of redemption for what it really is, His Jewish people for who they are to Him, and where we (as His followers) fit in to all that. Why is this revelation happening now, in our day? I think it is a sure sign that Messiah is getting ready for His return, and the Holy Spirit is preparing us.<sup>38</sup>

**<sup>10</sup>Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.**

**Missler:** His constant intercession for them (vv. 9-10) had the new note of petition for his projected visit, a heart-desire of long standing that finally was definitely on Paul's agenda (v. 10; cf. 15:23-24).<sup>39</sup>

#### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

At the end of verse 10 Paul expresses his desire to come to Rome to visit this congregation. He indeed will, in about 4 years, go to Rome; but it will be in chains and there is no evidence that he ever had contact with those to whom he was writing this letter. He follows this up by explaining why he's so eager to come to Rome; he wants to impart some spiritual gift that may encourage and strengthen them. I've read many comments about exactly what Paul has in mind here but I think it is a general comment that comes from a Jewish mindset of his day and that Paul fully expects that no matter which congregation he visits he will, through God's grace, impart a spiritual gift at God's discretion because he is, after all, Yeshua's Apostle to the gentiles.<sup>40</sup>

**<sup>11</sup>For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;**

**Missler:** We must keep the "personal letter" spirit of Romans before us if we are to be truly benefitted by it. Just as Paul told Timothy to teach, exhort, charge, command, rebuke, to be urgent in season and out of season—so must we exhort, command, rebuke, etc.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>39</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>41</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

This concept of spiritual gifts is not a New Testament concept. The Essene community at Qumran believed in spiritual gifts and wrote about it. When I compare what I read in the Dead Sea Scrolls with certain words and terms used by both Yeshua and Paul, it is clear there was close contact between them. I'm in no way saying that Paul or Yeshua were Essenes. At the same time, Essene theology is very close to New Testament theology and clearly Yeshua and Paul were familiar with it. Listen to this short excerpt from one of the **Dead Sea Scrolls called 1QS**.

*And these are the ways of these Spirits in the world. It is of the Spirit of truth to enlighten the heart of man, and to level him in the ways of true righteousness.....and to it belongs the Spirit of humility and forbearance, of abundant mercy and eternal goodness.....and almighty wisdom with faith in all the works of God and trust in His abundant grace.....and the spirit of knowledge in every design and zeal for just ordinances.....Such are the councils of the Spirit to the sons of truth in the world.....The fountain of righteousness, the reservoir of power, and the dwelling place of glory but God has given them an everlasting possession to those who He has chosen. He has granted them a share in the lot of the Saints....*

To our ears this sounds like it could have come straight out of the New Testament. It is full of truths and principles and terms that, for centuries, have been said to exist only in the New Testament. But the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed all that. So, Paul had something rather culturally familiar in mind when he spoke about imparting spiritual gifts to the Believers in Rome and it would have fallen along the lines of what I just read to you.<sup>42</sup>

**<sup>12</sup>That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.**

**Missler:** This visit would be mutually beneficial spiritually; he desired to minister for three purposes:

- (a) to the strengthening of the Romans (1:11; “to impart some spiritual gift” means either to exercise his own spiritual gift on their behalf or to bestow on them spiritual favors, i.e., blessings);
- (b) to see some spiritual fruit (a harvest, v. 13) among them and, in turn,
- (c) to be strengthened by them (v. 12). In this sense Paul’s ministry at Rome would be the same as in other centers of the empire.<sup>43</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Interestingly in verse 12 we find Paul backtracking a bit on what he just said. Rather than defining the spiritual gifts as something rather ethereal that he will bestow upon them he now says that what he meant to say was that there would be mutual encouragement from what they give to each other. There have been a number of theories as to what Paul was backtracking from. The one that makes the most sense to me is that he realized that gentiles would have had no

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>43</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

understanding of what he means by spiritual gifts (such a thing is only known within Jewish society). So, he sort of redefines his term “spiritual gifts” as meaning a gift of mutual encouragement that Believers ought to give one another.<sup>44</sup>

**<sup>13</sup>Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.**

Cf. Rom 15:19, 22, 23.

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Paul proceeds to explain why he hasn't shown up in Rome. He says that he has wanted to come for some time, but circumstances have conspired to prevent it. Anyone with Paul's aspirations would of course want to establish a congregation in the capital of the known world: Rome. But because unforeseen conditions arose to prevent Paul from going, other evangelists went and established the Believing congregations. This meant that they would have also planted their doctrines and their understanding of Yeshua. Paul wanted in. As he says, he was hoping to come and to have some fruit in their congregation, just as he has fruit in so many other congregations where gentiles are a part. Translation: I'd like to have a role in your congregation so that my efforts and teaching would directly produce some good and righteous outcomes.

Let's never forget that as inspired a man of God as Paul was, he was just a man. Paul felt much ownership for the gentile congregations that were established. He was used to selecting the leadership and laying down the rules and regulations, and it was his doctrinal viewpoints that were adopted. The truth is, what little reward on earth that he would ever get for his hard word and dedication was that he would see good fruit come from it. He didn't want Rome to be the exception, especially when (outside of Jerusalem) it was the most important and influential place on earth at this time.<sup>45</sup>

**<sup>14</sup>I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.**

**Missler:** As a result of his “apostleship” (v. 5) to the Gentiles Paul felt obligated (lit., “I am a debtor”) to the entire human race to proclaim God's good news (vv. 14-15).

[Contrast this with Moses in Num 11:11-15!]

To the Jew, the whole world was divided into Jews (*Ioudaioi*) and Greeks (Hellenes), religious prerogative being taken as the line of demarcation.

To the Greek and Roman, the world was similarly divided into Greeks (Hellenes) and Barbarians (*Barbaroi*), “non-Greeks,” civilization being the criterion of distinction. (Cf. Col 3:11, Scythians being an extreme example of savageness.)

Parallel to it is the word foolish, unwise, (cf. Titus 3:3) in the next couplet, which has the significance of uncultured.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>46</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

In verse 14 Paul continues his explanation by essentially saying, “Sorry but I’ve been very busy”. And because he had begun his letter by describing himself in the lofty term “slave of Messiah Yeshua”, he continues this thought by saying that he has an obligation (to Yeshua) to go to both civilized Greeks and uncivilized barbarians. In our CJB where it says “uncivilized people”, that is incorrect. The Greek says barbarians. Barbarians were first and foremost people who didn’t speak Greek. Non-Greek speakers were considered less civilized according to the worldview of the Roman Empire. Together Greeks and barbarians constituted the gentiles of the world. Paul then adds that he is also to bring the Gospel to both the educated and uneducated. So, every gentile, regardless of language or intelligence or status, is entitled to hear the Gospel and he intends to see to it that it happens. He concludes that thought by saying that therefore he is also eager to proclaim the Good News to citizens of Rome. In other words, they certainly fall within the definition of the people he is obligated to evangelize.<sup>47</sup>

**Guzik:** I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise: Paul recognized he had something of a debt to Rome. The Roman Empire brought world peace and order; they brought a common cultural, and an excellent transportation system to the world. Paul used all these in spreading the Gospel; so he can best repay this debt by giving Rome the good news of Jesus Christ.

Paul was a tireless evangelist, working all over the world because he believed he had a debt to pay, and he owed it to the whole world.<sup>48</sup>

**<sup>15</sup>So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.**

**Missler:** Paul’s sense of debt to the Gentile world produced an eagerness to evangelize it, including the capital of the known world, Rome. Talk of guts! Rome shook the entire world: it was the center of everything. And Paul went there with “just the Gospel...”<sup>49</sup>

**Guzik:** I am ready: Spurgeon wondered if Paul didn’t use the words “I am ready” as his motto. Almost the first words out of his mouth when he was saved were, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

- Paul was ready to preach and to serve (Romans 1:15)
- Paul was ready to suffer (Acts 21:13)
- Paul was ready to do unpleasant work (2 Corinthians 10:6)
- Paul was ready to die (2 Timothy 4:6)<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>49</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

**<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

**Missler:** The theme of the letter. Paul gladly proclaimed it as God's panacea for mankind's spiritual need. He identified it as the infinite resources (*dynamis*, "power," spiritual ability) of God applied toward the goal of salvation in the life of everyone who believes regardless of racial background.

Paul's eagerness to evangelize sprang also from his estimate of his message, the gospel. (1 Cor 15:1-4) [This is the 4th of 5X Paul used the word "gospel" in these : vv. 1, 9, 15-17.]

"The power of God unto salvation..." Not unto reformation, education, progress, nor development, nor "fanning an innate flame." It is for lost man and no other. Men are involved either in salvation or in its opposite, perdition (Phil 1:28).

He acknowledged, however, a priority for the Jew expressed in the word first, which has sufficient textual support here and is unquestioned in 2:9-10. Because the Jews were God's Chosen People (11:1), the custodians of God's revelation (3:2), and the people through whom Christ came (9:5), they have a preference of privilege expressed historically in a chronological priority. Jesus stated it, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). In Paul's ministry he sought out the Jews first in every new city (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). Three times he responded to their rejection of his message by turning to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:25-28; cf. comments on Eph. 1:12). Today evangelism of the world must include the Jews, but the chronological priority of the Jews has been fulfilled. There is now no distinction between Jew and Greek either in the fact of sin (Rom 3:22) or the availability of salvation (Rom 10:12). Cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.<sup>51</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Clearly verses 16 and 17 are the powerful theme of the entire letter. The principle emphasis is on the saving power of the Gospel. But the "why" of it is also briefly explained; that is, why is the Gospel able to save? The answer is that the Gospel manifests God's righteousness. These verses (and what follows) are so dense with theological principles that are the heart and soul of our faith that we'll take as much time as needed to flesh them out.

Paul begins with the strange statement that he is "not ashamed" of the Gospel. What does that mean? Very likely it is a Jewish expression. First, understand that there is a difference between being shamed, and being ashamed. Being shamed is a social condition. Middle Eastern societies were shame and honor societies. That is, perhaps the supreme societal goal of all the people was to be living in a state of honor. The worst thing that could happen was to be shamed and thus have the social status of "shame" assigned to you. Shame was so serious of a societal status that there was literally no limit on how far one would go to regain their honor; it often involved killing the person who brought shame upon you.

Ashamed, far from being a social status, is a psychological condition. It involves guilt, the deepest sense of regret, and feeling very badly about yourself for having done something, or somehow being associated with something, which society says is socially unacceptable. Being ashamed does not change your societal status, and one cannot do something to solve being ashamed since indeed it is a state of mind and not a state of your actual status among your community. In a shame and honor society, being in a state of shame means that people will shun you; you have lost your place in the community.

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<sup>51</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

So Paul is not talking about being ashamed of the Gospel in the sense of shame and honor; it has nothing to do with social status. Many language experts believe that this was a well-known expression in Paul's day, even if it has been lost to history, because one would have to ask why anyone might feel a sense of deep regret or guilt (be ashamed) over the Gospel message? It doesn't fit. Rather, very likely it is a negative way of communicating that one has the fullest confidence in the Gospel, or perhaps only to confess or declare the Gospel. It is not uncommon in English to use the negative to express something positive. For instance: I was not unimpressed means I was impressed. I was not disappointed means I was pleased. So I maintain that Paul was using a negative (not ashamed) to express a positive (I have confidence in) as merely a figure of speech or a manner of speaking in his day.

The next clause in verse 16 is not expressed well in the CJB. A more literal translation is: for it is the power of God to everyone who believes. What does this mean? To Paul "the power of God" is a mysterious, but real, force that has the ability to bring about a strong, transforming effect on human beings. This is not the only place that he uses the term "the power of God" or "God's power" or "power" in relation to God.

**1Corinthians 1:18 CJB** 18 For the message about the execution-stake is nonsense to those in the process of being destroyed, but to us in the process of being saved it is the power of God.

**1Corinthians 2:3-5 CJB** 3 Also I myself was with you as somebody weak, nervous and shaking all over from fear; 4 and neither the delivery nor the content of my message relied on compelling words of "wisdom" but on a demonstration of the power of the Spirit, 5 so that your trust might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power.

**2Corinthians 6:6-7 CJB** 6 We commend ourselves by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by the *Ruach HaKodesh*; by genuineness of love 7 and truthfulness of speech; and by God's power.

Paul uses this "power of God" concept in several more places as well. Even more this same force, this "Power of God", is a continuing divine force that sustains the new and better life that it creates.

So, the saving nature of the Gospel is a transformative force that only God wields. But the main point is that it is from God the Father. One can trust in Christ for salvation; but the actual force that brings about salvation is the Father's. The idea that God's word has actual power to transform and save is an Old Testament idea and one of the most obvious references has to be in Psalm 107. There we find this:

**Psalms 107:19-20 CJB** 19 In their trouble they cried to ADONAI, and he rescued them from their distress; 20 he sent his word and healed them, he delivered them from destruction.

There is a change, however, in Paul's idea of the concept of salvation as it refers to Christ and to His Believers. In the Old Testament, saving or delivering was about being rescued from an actual situation. There was danger, but the person was rescued from that danger. There was a probability of death, but the person was rescued from that deadly circumstance. In the context of the Gospel salvation is a spiritual matter. In fact, its immediate effects may be minimal from an earthly perspective. One can be in a dire situation, receive salvation in the forgiveness of sins, but yet one's physical life might not be delivered. In fact, Paul tends to see the primary importance of salvation as a delivery from a future judgment of God that occurs in the End

Times. So while one can be “saved” immediately, its most important effect (being spared from eternal death) will not come until later.

There is another interesting, and I think nearly lost, aspect of salvation that regards the person who is being saved. While it is long held Christian doctrine that “trust” in Yeshua as Savior is the requirement to obtain salvation, that is not exactly what Paul says. Here the CJB gets it correct as opposed to most other English translations that say, “salvation to everyone who believes”. The Greek verb used is in the present tense; so this means that we have a continuing action. One must continue, persistently, to keep on trusting or believing. The doctrine of Eternal Security, once saved always saved, essentially says that one can believe briefly, and then it simply doesn’t matter from that time forward. If I believed for awhile, but now I fell away and stopped believing, I’m still saved because “once saved, always saved”. That is not what Paul says; he says that salvation continues only so long as we continue trusting. If our trust ends, our salvation ends.

I have heard all manner of theological apology for the once saved always saved doctrine and it usually revolves around a severe twisting of God’s Word and instead injecting a personal opinion. The most common rebuttal is that once a person is saved, they would never recant their salvation at any time, ever, for any reason either because 1) they have lost the freedom to make such a choice, or 2) if they do recant (they renounce Christ) then they never actually believed in the first place; they were just pretenders. And why is that? In a circular argument it is because it is not possible for a person who believed to stop believing. Nowhere in the Scriptures is that idea supported, but in many places the opposite is said. Here is a very small sampling.

**Matthew 7:21-23 CJB** 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. 22 On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

**Hebrews 6:4-6 CJB** 4 For when people have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become sharers in the *Ruach HaKodesh*, 5 and tasted the goodness of God's Word and the powers of the '*olam haba*- 6 and then have fallen away- it is impossible to renew them so that they turn from their sin, as long as for themselves they keep executing the Son of God on the stake all over again and keep holding him up to public contempt.

**James 5:19-20 CJB** 19 My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return, 20 you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.

**2Peter 2:20-22 CJB** 20 Indeed, if they have once escaped the pollutions of the world through knowing our Lord and Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah, and then have again become entangled and defeated by them, their latter condition has become worse than their former. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the Way of righteousness than, fully knowing, to turn from the holy command delivered to them. 22 What has happened to them accords with the true proverb, "A dog returns

to its own vomit." Yes, "The pig washed itself, only to wallow in the mud!"

The Bible never contemplates the idea of pretenders. It never considers that all one has to do is trust momentarily and then wander away and never trust again but still remain eternally secure. Rather, one must continue to trust and believe.

Paul ends verse 16 by saying "to the Jew especially, but equally to the gentile". Clearly Paul says the Gospel is God's Power of Salvation for both Jews and gentiles. This means that the supposed Two Covenant Theology, whereby there are two routes to salvation, is nonsense. The Two Covenant concept is that the Jews are saved by following the Laws of Moses (the Mosaic Covenant) and gentiles are saved by following the New Covenant (the Covenant in Christ). That concept is utterly put to shame right here. The Gospel of Yeshua is for both Jew and gentile; there is no other option. But the other thing that we must see is that in the words "to the Jew especially" reflects a heavenly priority. Jews had, and continue to have, a priority over gentiles when it comes to salvation. The people of Israel are the bearers of the promise contained in the Abrahamic covenant that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Gentiles (the nations) are a recipient of that blessing; but it happens THROUGH Israel.

Please also notice that Israel was also Christ's priority. He took his message to Jews, not to gentiles. That duty would fall, in time, to his Apostles. In a famous story when Yeshua went to the northern coastal region of Sidon and Tzor, gentile territory, a gentile woman approached him **and here was the exchange.**

**Matthew 15:21-24 CJB** 21 Yeshua left that place and went off to the region of Tzor and Tzidon. 22 A woman from Kena'an who was living there came to him, pleading, "Sir, have pity on me. Son of David! My daughter is cruelly held under the power of demons!" 23 But Yeshua did not say a word to her. Then his talmidim came to him and urged him, "Send her away, because she is following us and keeps pestering us with her crying." 24 He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Isra'el."

Yet after the woman begged and pleaded, Yeshua relented and healed the woman's daughter. Immediately Yeshua left and went back to the Galilee. The meaning is obvious. The Jews have priority. But, for gentiles who have faith in Him, Yeshua will save them, too, if asked. How ironic that for 1900 years Christianity has switched up God's priority and made it "to the Gentiles especially", but NOT to the Jews.<sup>52</sup>

**FCSB:** First to the Jew, then to the Gentile. This phrase is the clue to Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament, his theology of Christ's ultimate mission and his approach to proclaiming his message. It is important to note that Paul did not reject Jews in favor of Gentiles, even though many Jews refused to believe Paul's message.<sup>53</sup>

**BKC:** Paul's eagerness to evangelize sprang also from his estimate of his message, the gospel. (This is the fourth of five times Paul used the word "gospel" in these opening verses: vv. 1, 9, 15-17.) Many consider this the theme of the letter, which it is in one sense. At least Paul gladly proclaimed it as God's panacea for mankind's spiritual need. He identified it as the infinite resources (*dynamis*, "spiritual ability") of God applied toward the goal of salvation in the life of

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>53</sup> NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes

everyone who believes regardless of racial background. He recognized, however, a priority for the Jew expressed in the word first, which has sufficient textual support here and is unquestioned in 2:9-10.

Because the Jews were God's Chosen People (11:1), the custodians of God's revelation (3:2), and the people through whom Christ came (9:5), they have a preference of privilege expressed historically in a chronological priority. As the Lord Jesus stated it, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). In Paul's ministry he sought out the Jews first in every new city (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). Three times he responded to their rejection of his message by turning to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:25-28; cf. comments on Eph. 1:12). Today evangelism of the world must include the Jews, but the priority of the Jews has been fulfilled. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

**<sup>17</sup>For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.**

**Missler:** The theme of the letter = The righteousness from God is revealed. The subjective genitive (lit., "of God") identifies this as a righteousness that God provides for people on the basis of and in response to faith in the gospel (cf. 3:22). The Greek proposition *ek*, "out of, or "from." God declares men righteous not by faith as the procuring cause, for the blood of Christ was that; not by faith as the putting forth of a certain faculty innate in man, much less by the keeping of divine commands, however holy and just; but out of reliance upon His own word as true, and that alone. In response to faith this righteousness is imputed by God in justification and imparted progressively in regeneration and sanctification, culminating in glorification when standing and state become identical. Cf Rom 8:29-30.

"Righteousness" and "justify," though seemingly unrelated in English, are related in Greek.

"Righteousness" = *dikaioσune*, and

"Justify" = *dikaioo*.

Paul used the noun many times in his epistles, including 28 times in Romans,<sup>4</sup> and he used the Greek verb 15 times. To justify a person is to declare him forensically (legally) righteous. Here also is the linkage with the other two epistles of this trilogy on Hab 2:4:

"The Just Shall Live by Faith"

The Just... (Who are they?) Romans (Rom 1:17)

...Shall live (How?) Galatians (Gal 3:11)

...By Faith! Hebrews (Heb 10:39)<sup>54</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

We are going to spend most of this lesson looking at but one word: righteous. I have so much to say to you today about that term and what it means that we won't review last week's lesson except to say that verses 16 and 17 outline the theme not just for chapter 1 but for the entire Book of Romans. What Paul says in those 2 verses essentially defines his basic understanding of his Messianic faith and especially so when it comes to the role of the word righteous or righteousness. While several of the terms he uses to express his faith, understanding are

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<sup>54</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

commonly used in Christianity, I think if I asked most of you to explain them I would get silence or a startled look. I don't fault you for that; most Bible scholars glide right by those terms without bothering to define them either. And those scholars who do define those terms don't necessarily agree with one another. So this is my way of saying to you that this is another of those worms that we're going to allow to crawl out from our can of worms before we carefully close the lid back.....for the time being.

Open your Bibles to Romans 1 and we're going to read verses 16 and 17.

**Romans 1:16-17 CJB** 16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile. 17 For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust- as the Tanakh puts it, "But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust."

There's that word "righteous" that we'll focus on today. Let me begin by saying that as fond as I am of the CJB, in verse 17 too much liberty has been taken with the original Greek and it has created a poor translation that leads us off in the wrong direction. I'll give you a much better translation shortly but first let's take a short detour. Although I've discussed Bible versions and translations with you before, it probably makes sense for me to say it again: there is no such thing as the one best, most accurate, Bible version. And the main reason I say this is because any version we read in English is more than a translation; it is necessarily a redaction due to the translation process. A translator's job is to make the meaning of the Scriptures in their original language understandable to English speakers (or in whatever language they are translating in to). Therefore, they must make choices about what English words to use and often those choices consciously or unconsciously reflect personal theological viewpoints, biases, and cultural norms. I'm sorry, but in the end if you want to obtain the most accurate possible Bible version, you have to use the original language manuscripts. Of course, very few people are true language scholars; it is a full-time vocation preceded by many years of University preparation. But there are some wonderful Bible programs that allow people with only limited Hebrew or Greek knowledge to learn the nuances of those words so that they can compare them against the many English and other Bible translations to try to reach the best possible interpretation.

I field a never-ending stream of requests from folks to advise them of the "best" Bible or one that is a direct word for word, literal translation. And I'm here to tell you that such a thing would sound so odd in English that it would be near to impossible to make sense of it. The grammatical structures of Hebrew, Greek and English are quite different from one another. Many words in Greek and Hebrew don't have precise, one to one, English equivalents. But even more, as concerns the New Testament, behind those Greek words are the Hebrew thought patterns of their Hebrew authors who were attempting to express themselves about their Hebrew religion. But because (as in Paul's case) the writers were usually sending their letters to Greek speakers in the Diaspora, they couldn't use their Hebrew language to express themselves or the recipients wouldn't be able to read it.

So the reason for the existence of the scores of different Bible versions, in English alone, has to do with what choices a particular Bible translator or board of Bible editors made about how to define certain Greek and Hebrew words. Since almost all translators are beholden to one denomination or another, they will quite naturally use words that best uphold their theological beliefs (even if they might be atheists). The CJB is no different. So why do I use it? Because it reads so well when spoken out loud and because it inserts some words and names in Hebrew to

constantly remind us that the Bible is a Hebrew document from Genesis to Revelation. Although a helpful tool, the CJB is not the greatest study Bible. The best solution for most students of God's Word is to use a variety of Bibles, with the CJB as just one of them. On paper, one of the better technical translations is the KJV. But the problem with it is that it uses an antiquated dialect of English that was spoken 500 years ago and so many of the English words used in the KJV had a very different meaning then than it does for us who use modern English. There is one translation that I encourage people to avoid: the NIV. It is clearly an agenda driven Bible that will add or delete words and phrases and portions of verses to assure that its particular humanistic worldview is put forward.

So, with that, what is the better and more accurate translation of Romans 1:17 than the CJB? We find it in the English Standard Version (and it is spoken essentially this same way in many other familiar English versions):

**ESV Romans 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "**The righteous shall live by faith.**"

Remember how our CJB translated this verse: 17 For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight;

Did you hear the substantial difference between the two? The ESV speaks of the righteousness of God. The CJB speaks of the righteousness of people. I know where the CJB is trying to go with this approach but it is not true enough to the original language and so it muddles the picture on a matter of extreme importance to Believers.

There is probably no word that means fundamentally more to Judaism and to Christianity than righteous. And if we don't know how God intends for us to understand that term, then we have a major hole in the understanding of our faith and in our relationship with Him. So: what is the righteousness of God? What does that mean? What is God's righteousness? But even before we answer that, what does righteous mean in a generic sense? I'll tell you upfront that the answer to that question, not surprisingly, is found in the Torah. In fact, the best explanation of the critical term righteous can be found in the Book of Exodus. I'll tell you a bit more about that momentarily. But first, in order to come to an informed and useful understanding of what righteous and righteousness mean in our Bibles, we need a very brief lesson in Greek and Hebrew.

With apologies to true language scholars (whom I admire beyond words), I'm going to explain this in easier terms that non-language scholars can understand. As we find it in the New Testament, the English word "righteous" (and its variations such as righteousness) is a translation of the Greek word *dikaioo*. *Dikaioo* has a few variations as well, such as *dikaios*, *dikaioyne*, and there is a couple more. But they all have the same basic root meaning. English translators say that in English the root meaning is righteous. However how did the Greek word *dikaioo* get chosen for this passage? In our case it seems that Paul chose it. My contention is that without fail Paul is always expressing Hebrew thought patterns in his writings, so we need to understand what this word meant in Hebrew society. So in this particular case of verse 17, is there a way to prove my contention?

Fortunately, more than 250 years before Christ was born, the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, (what we call the Old Testament) was translated into Greek; that translation is called the Septuagint. We know from a very ancient document called the Letter of Aristeas that this translation project took place in Alexandria, Egypt, where there was an enormous Jewish population of almost 1 million. And the letter tells us that some of the Jerusalem Temple's finest scholarly priests were sent to Alexandria to both supply Hebrew Bible scrolls for the effort and

to participate in the translation process so that it would remain as true as possible to the original intent (understanding that there will always be imperfections and some loss of precision in translations). Therefore, when we compare the word for word Greek of the Septuagint to the word for word Hebrew Bible, we should be able to see exactly which Greek word those ancient Hebrew scholars chose to translate any particular Hebrew word. And when we do that, and we find that same Greek word from the Septuagint used in a similar context in the New Testament (also written in Greek), we have ourselves a kind of Biblical Rosetta Stone; a voice from the past telling us what the ancients meant to convey from a Hebrew language and cultural viewpoint and how to carry it across to an entirely different language and culture. Or, in another sense, we have a means to find out from an Old Testament Hebrew perspective what the New Testament writer is attempting to convey to us.

What we find is that the Greek word *dikaioo* was the word chosen by the original writers/translators of the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term *tzedek*. Therefore, if we want to truly know what *dikaioo* (righteous) means in the New Testament, we need to study the Hebrew word *tzedek* in the Old Testament. That way we will understand what the Hebrew Paul had in mind in his native Hebrew thought pattern. I hope you are following me because it is critical for Believers to explore the proper and intended meaning of the term "righteous".

The first thing to understand is that righteousness (*tzedek*) as it applies to God (God's righteousness) is quite different from how it applies to humans (my righteousness or your righteousness). As it applies to humans it is fairly straightforward. Righteous (*tzedek*) can indicate a person who is "right" with God. That is, righteous is our desired status before the Lord. Or it can also mean DOING what is right; it describes a proper action or behavior. Thus, the word righteous also has a direct connection to the concept of covenant. A covenant is a document (oral or written) in which two parties agree to do certain things, and to behave in certain agreed to ways. Therefore, from a covenant perspective, DOING what is right in the Hebrew worldview means to DO what God says to do. And where does God tell us what to do and not to do? The Covenant of Moses (the Law). Righteous can also mean right in an ethical sense (right versus wrong, fair versus unfair, as we deal with our fellow man), and it can mean right in the sense of a person being in general conformity with God's known standards and rules.

In Hebrew culture there was an everyday term for a person who was considered to be very pious because they carefully followed the terms of God's Covenant with Israel: The Law of Moses. This person was called a Tzadik (a righteous one). Notice how *tzadik* and *tzedek* come from the same root. So, all of this comes into play when ascertaining what Paul was envisioning when he used the term *dikaioo*: righteous.

Conversely, the term unrighteous is only ever used in the Bible to speak of a human and never of God. And usually it means to convey the idea of a person being unethical.

Righteousness as concerns God is more complex. A couple of well-known places where *dikaioo* (righteous) is used in the Septuagint as it applies to God sheds some light on how we are to understand what God's righteousness is. In Psalm 51:14 David says in a prayer, "Deliver me from those who seek my blood, O God, the God of my salvation; my tongue will rejoice in your righteousness". In Isaiah 46:13 we hear this: "I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation will not delay". So righteousness used in these two instances (and there are several other similar instances) makes salvation and righteousness parallel terms; that's a key understanding so let me say it again. As it concerns God, salvation and righteousness are parallel terms. So in one sense God's personal righteousness is His saving intervention for the sake of those who worship Him.

And those who worship Him are (in Biblical terms) always His covenant people. So now we see this organic connection develop between salvation, righteousness, and covenant; at least we see it in Hebrew thought. However, as you are probably starting to see, it doesn't always translate over to Greek thought or English-speaking cultures and so we lose an important understanding of some important faith principles.

Psalm 31 gives us a slightly different aspect of God's righteousness. In verse 1 we read: "in your righteousness deliver me and lead me out". So here God's righteousness seems to indicate God's faithfulness to the promises He has made to His people that He will be their deliverer from trouble and danger.

Another interesting aspect of God's righteousness is highlighted in Psalm 50. In verse 6 we see: "The heavens declare His righteousness, for God himself is judge". Following this verse, the subject of Psalm 50 continues, and it is that Israel has gone astray and she is being called to repent or face God's wrath. So, we see here that God's righteousness is wrapped up in His justice of which He is the supreme judge. He will show mercy and deliver those who are faithful to His covenant with Israel, but He will punish and even reject those who aren't. God is the sole judge of this determination.

So, then what does Paul mean by "God's righteousness" or the "righteousness of God" in verse 17? He means it in 3 senses: 1) as a divine attribute of God such that He will always do right and be just. Or 2), a description of God's activity of establishing right within humans and punishing those who are wrong. Or 3), speaking of God's process of moving those humans who are in a position of wrong before Him into a position of being right before Him (Christians would call this "being saved"). I see God's righteousness as embodying all three of these attributes.

The common point of intersection in all of these various aspects of righteousness is salvation. So, the bottom line is this: in Paul's theology God's righteousness is His saving will towards His people. Anywhere and everywhere in Holy Scripture that we see the term God's righteousness or the righteousness of God, it means His saving will towards His people. In order that we not get bogged down here, I want you to know that there is more to it and it can be found in Exodus 21. We have not discussed the important aspect of God's justice in relation to God's righteousness, which is a pretty serious study all in itself. But if you want to understand this in a much more complete way, go online to study the Torah Class lesson for Exodus chapter 21. There justice and righteousness are discussed and how they relate to one another.

But let's take this a step further. When we look at verses 16 and 17, we see four key phrases or terms used: 1) The Gospel. 2) The power of God. 3) Salvation. And 4) God's righteousness. To Paul, and in Hebrew thought, these terms are roughly equivalent. The power of God refers to salvation. The power of God is an actual force even though it is invisible (like magnetism or gravity), not simply an ideal. Salvation happens by the power of God; that is, salvation happens by a divine force. God's righteousness expresses His will to save. And the essence of the Gospel is contained and manifested only in the power of God. We're not going to delve any deeper into the nuances of each of these terms for now. For the time being it is enough to understand as we go forward in our study of Romans that to Paul the terms Gospel, power of God, salvation, and God's righteousness are tightly interconnected. They are terms that are not quite, but almost, interchangeable.

The final words of verse 17 are: "**the righteous will live by faith**". This is a phrase taken from Habakkuk 2:4. Various English translations have slightly different ways of expressing what Paul said. The KJV has a more literal translation of this verse from Habakkuk and it reads: KJV

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Notice that in the CJB where we have the words "the righteous will live by faith"; but in the KJV of Habakkuk the words are: "the just shall live by his faith". Since Habakkuk is part of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and written in Hebrew, then we see that the Hebrew word used is Tzadik; and this more literally means "righteous one". We discussed this term a few minutes ago, and it is a commonly used Hebrew term that refers to especially righteous and zealous Jews who are known to follow the Law of Moses scrupulously. So naturally, even though this verse is given to us in Greek in Roman 1:17, nonetheless since it is a direct quote from the Old Testament we know exactly what Paul meant. He was picturing a Tzadik; a person who diligently followed the Law of Moses. Thus, we should properly have it read: "And the righteous one shall live by his faith".

Notice something else: Habakkuk was a Prophet and a contemporary of Jeremiah. He lived and prophesied before the Babylonian Exile of 600 B.C. So, Paul's thought that the righteous ones (the *Tzadikim*) live by faith (implying faith in the God of Israel) is in no way a New Testament invention. Even more, Habakkuk was essentially quoting Genesis:

**CJB Genesis 15:6** He (Avram) believed in ADONAI, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

So the same exact strand of Hebrew thought that began with Abraham, picked up and re-phrased by Habakkuk, is now directly brought forward to Paul's day in the Book of Romans as Paul explains the Believers relationship with God and especially as it concerns Christ. And we need to understand it in Romans in its original Old Testament Hebrew terms and not try to redefine it for a Greek or gentile Christian viewpoint.<sup>55</sup>

**BKC:** The theme of the letter is expressed in the phrase a righteousness from God is revealed. The subjective genitive (lit., "of God") identifies this as a righteousness that God provides for people on the basis of and in response to faith in the gospel (cf. 3:22). (niv's by faith from first to last renders the Gr. *ek pisteōs eis pistin*, lit., "out of faith in reference to faith.") Such a righteousness is totally unachievable by human efforts. This righteousness is not God's personal attribute, however, since it comes "from God," it is consistent with His nature and standard. Robertson happily calls it "a God kind of righteousness" (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943, 4:327). In response to faith this righteousness is imputed by God in justification and imparted progressively in regeneration and sanctification, culminating in glorification when standing and state become identical. "Righteousness" and "justify," though seemingly unrelated in English, are related in Greek. "Righteousness" is *dikaioσynē*, and "justify" is *dikaioō*; Paul used the noun many times in his epistles, including 28 times in Romans (1:17; 3:21-22, 25-26; 4:3, 5-6, 9, 11, 13, 22; 5:17, 21; 6:13, 16, 18-20; 8:10; 9:30; 10:3-6 [twice in v. 3], 10; 14:17). And Paul used the Greek verb 15 times in Romans (2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30 [twice], 33). To justify a person is to declare him forensically (legally) righteous. "Declared righteous" is the way the niv translates *dikaioō* in 2:13 and 3:20 and "freed" is niv's rendering in 6:7.

Paul's closing words in 1:17, The righteous will live by faith, are a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, also quoted in Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. As a result of faith (cf. "believes" in Rom.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

1:16) in Christ, a person is declared "righteous" (cf. 3:22) and is given eternal life. What a marvelous work of God!<sup>56</sup>

**<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;**

### **God's Righteousness Revealed against Pagan Humanity**

**Missler:** The first step in the revelation of the righteousness that God provides for people by faith is to set forth their need for it because they are under God's judgment. We are born into a fallen race.

The human race stands condemned before God and is helpless and hopeless apart from God's grace.

This next section looks at the human race prior to the call of Abram and the establishment of a special people of God. This persists in the pagan world of the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews.

[And it persists as a Sardis (Rev 3:1) condition everywhere, "a name to live, while dead;" as iniquity abounds, the love of many professing Christians is waxing cold...]

God never condemns without just cause. Here 3 bases are stated for His judgment of the pagan world:

- 1) For Suppressing God's truth (v.18)
- 2) For Ignoring God's revelation (vv.19-20)
- 3) For Perverting God's glory (vv.21-23)

#### **1) For Suppressing God's Truth**

This verse serves as a topic sentence for this entire section and it stands in contrastive parallel to verse 17. The verb is in the present tense: continuing revelation; "is being revealed";

"The wrath of God" is an expression of His personal righteousness (which also "is being revealed," Gr., v.17) and is in opposition to human sinfulness. Therefore, people need the continuing revelation of "a righteousness from God" (v. 17) that He provides.

God's wrath is directed "against all the godlessness" (*asebeian*, "lack of proper reverence for God") and wickedness (*adikian*, "unrighteousness") of men, not against the men as such. (God's wrath will also be revealed in the future; cf. 2:5.) God hates sin and judges it but loves sinners and desires their salvation.

[The more you discover yourself to be a common sinner, the more you will realize God's uncommon grace!] Failure to give God His due inevitably results in failure to treat people, created by God in His image, the right way. Conversely, people (in their unrighteousness toward others) continue to suppress (*katecovntwin*, lit., "holding down") the truth (cf. 1:25; 2:8) concerning both God and man. People had God's truth but suppressed it, refusing to heed it. And these wicked ones did this in an attitude of wickedness (*en adikia*). This suppression of the truth is Paul's first reason for God's condemnation of the pagan world.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>57</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Let's move on. Paul now begins to flesh out this question: if the Gospel of Yeshua is the Power of God for salvation for those who believe and have faith, then what of those who do NOT accept the Gospel? The short answer? They receive God's wrath. God's wrath is not far from a taboo subject in many congregations. The rationale is that Jesus can't be both love and wrath at the same time. Therefore since "God is love", and since we are supposedly all New Testament Believers with Jesus as our new God, then divine wrath must be a thing of the past. The Old Testament God was full of wrath; but the New Testament God is only love. Paul makes a liar of that absurd position in verse 18.

Let me say this as well; Paul is expressing that the same Gospel and the same Power of God that saves ALSO produces God's wrath from heaven for the unrighteous. Why is that? Because the Gospel is just. How can anything be considered just if a) there is no distinction between, and definition of, wrong behavior versus right behavior and b) if there is no consequence for wrong behavior or blessing for right behavior? Where does the definition of right and wrong come from? Where is it written so that we can know what it is? In the Torah; the Law of Moses specifically.

**CJB 1 John 3:4** Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah- indeed, sin is violation of Torah.

Or, as the KJV puts it:

**KJV 1 John 3:4** Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Notice that the Apostle John's New Testament definition of sin (violating the Law of Moses) is precisely the same as the Old Testament definition of sin. Christ pays the price for our wrong behavior; He has no need to pay anything for our right behavior. So once again the tight connection between the Gospel and the Covenant of Moses is made by both Paul and John.

Notice in Romans 1:18 that "suppressing the truth" is one of those wrong behaviors that the ungodly and the unrighteous do. What is the truth? God's Word is the truth. God's covenants, and God's Gospel are truth. As much as I'm for Israel and the Jewish people, the sad reality is that mainstream Judaism is exactly who this verse is pointing a finger towards: those who suppress the truth. It is virtually a crime with possible jail time involved for telling the truth of the Gospel in Israel. If you are a Believing Jew who wants to immigrate to Israel, every effort will be made by the Israeli government to prevent you from coming UNLESS you will renounce the Gospel in front of a Rabbi who will certify it.

So that we don't lose the forest because of the trees remember that Paul is writing this letter to Roman Believers in the city of Rome. Many are gentiles, but many more are Jews. And he is telling them that the Jews of Rome who refuse to believe and who make being a Jewish Believer difficult are making themselves the targets of God's wrath. Why is this important? Because Judaism taught that simply having a Jewish heritage was enough to be in good stead with God.<sup>58</sup>

**Guzik: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven:** The idea is simple but sobering – God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the human race, and the human race deserves the wrath of God.

The wrath of God: We sometimes object to the idea of the wrath of God because we equate it with human anger, which is motivated by selfish personal reasons or by a desire for revenge. We must not forget that the wrath of God is completely righteous in character.

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

“It is unnecessary, and it weakens the biblical concept of the wrath of God, to deprive it of its emotional and affective character... to construe God’s wrath as simply in his purpose to punish sin or to secure the connection between sin and misery is to equate wrath with its effects and virtually eliminate wrath as a movement within the mind of God. Wrath is the holy revulsion of God’s being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness.” (Murray)

In Romans 1:16, Paul spoke of salvation – but what are we saved from? First and foremost, we are saved from the wrath of God that we righteously deserve. “Unless there is something to be saved from, there is no point in talking about salvation.” (Morris)

The wrath of God: In this portion of the letter (Romans 1:18-3:20), Paul’s goal is not to proclaim the good news, but to demonstrate the absolute necessity of the good news of salvation from God’s righteous wrath.

The wrath of God is not revealed in the gospel, but in the facts of human experience.<sup>59</sup>

**BKC:** This verse serves as a topic sentence for this entire section. In addition, it stands in contrastive parallel to verse 17. The continuing revelation (the verb is being revealed is in the pres. tense) of the wrath of God is an expression of His personal righteousness (which also "is being revealed," Gr., v. 17) and its opposition to human sinfulness. Therefore, people need the continuing revelation of "a righteousness from God" (v. 17) that He provides. God's wrath is directed against all the godlessness (*asebeian*, "lack of proper reverence for God") and wickedness (*adikian*, "unrighteousness") of men, not against the men as such. (God's wrath will also be revealed in the future; cf. 2:5.) God hates sin and judges it but loves sinners and desires their salvation.

Failure to give God His due inevitably results in failure to treat people, created by God in His image, the right way. Conversely, people (in their unrighteousness toward others) continue to suppress (*katechontōn*, lit., "holding down") the truth (cf. 1:25; 2:8) concerning both God and man. People had God's truth but suppressed it, refusing to heed it. And these wicked ones did this in an attitude of wickedness (*en adikia*). This suppression of the truth is Paul's first reason for God's condemnation of the pagan world.<sup>60</sup>

**<sup>19</sup>Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.**

### **Missler: 2) For Ignoring God’s Revelation**

These verses declare that knowledge concerning God is available to all as it is seen in the created world, accessible to the entire human race. [The first step of wisdom is to listen to the worst that God says about us. We were born into this lost race.]

“Manifest” = (*phaneros*), visible, clear.

“Shewed it unto them” = (*ephanerousen*), the verb related to the noun.

[Some scholars translate the phrase “to them” as “in them,” insisting that verse 19 is speaking of the knowledge of God within the being of man through conscience and religious consciousness.

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<sup>59</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>60</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Preferable is the position that verse 19 states the fact of natural revelation and verse 20 explains the process. One support for this view is the word “for” which begins verse 20 and indicates a tie between the verses.]<sup>61</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Paul also says that if you don't know who God is, it's because you don't want to. God has shown you who He is in the awesomeness of His creation; and in some ways that itself ought to suffice. So, don't blame God if you receive His wrath; blame yourself. Understand; there is no evidence of atheism in these times. As a matter of fact, it seems that, historically, atheism is a new phenomenon that began in Europe in the 1700s as a result of the Enlightenment philosophers. So when we read in verse 19 that God has made Himself known to everyone, it doesn't mean that people in the Bible days were making a decision as to whether there was such a thing as a god. The issue for them was: who is God?

Let me make something plain: anyone who argues against Creation as a product of the God of the Bible; a universe and everything that exists, seen and unseen that is a Creation that is little more than an expression of God's will; then that person has taken hold of a deception that will leave them deceived about almost everything else that involves God. When I hear of a Christian who says that they do not accept the Creation story; that Creation was not of God but rather was something from the natural realm, I have serious concerns about their claim of salvation. If God says that the prime evidence of Him is His Creation, and you don't believe in a divine Creation, then you are rejecting the prime evidence of God. How that can possibly co-exist with salvation I can't fathom. If to you Creation is not the truth, why would you believe the Gospel? I say you can't; rather you have deceived yourself to believe that you are saved.

Even more, Paul says that in reality God's existence IS evident to everyone including the unrighteous. So, what a denier is doing is actively working at not believing in God because the evidence is so clear and powerful that it takes real effort NOT to believe. As a young person, I scoffed at this statement of Paul; but the older I get the more I see the absolute truth of it.<sup>62</sup>

**BKC:** Paul called this knowledge plain (*phaneron*), which means visible or clear. This is true because God has made it plain (*ephanerōsen*, the verb related to the noun *phaneron*). Some scholars translate the phrase to them as "in them," insisting that verse 19 is speaking of the knowledge of God within the being of man through conscience and religious consciousness. Preferable is the position that verse 19 states the fact of natural revelation and verse 20 explains the process. One support for this view is the word "for" which begins verse 20 and indicates a tie between the verses.<sup>63</sup>

**<sup>20</sup>For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:**

**Missler:** Paul may have intended a play on words between the noun translated “invisible things,” (*aoratos*) and the verb translated “clearly seen,” (*kathoratai*), because they share a common

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<sup>61</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>63</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Greek root. Both the verb “clearly seen” and the participle “being understood” are in the present tense, which emphasizes the continuous nature of the action.

“Things that are made” = (*poiema*), workmanship; poem. The Creation is God’s great epic poem. Cf. Eph 2:10. [Design evidences, conclusively, the presence of a Designer...] Paul connects observing Creation, which all people see, as revealing God’s unseen character—the all-powerful Deity. Cf. Old Testament parallel to these verses is Psalm 19:1-6. (A cosmic code which nobody can erase!) Also, Psalm 8:1-4. Cf. Psalm 148, (paraphrased).

Paul’s conclusion to this description of natural revelation is important—all men are without excuse. The witness to God in nature is so clear and so constant that ignoring it is indefensible. Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they do have (Cf. Pharaoh, Ex 10:16; Philistines, 1 Sam 4:7,8; 5:7, 8, 11; King of Nineveh, Jonah 3:7-9).

It is significant that our society militantly insists on teaching our young people bad science to perpetuate the myth of spontaneous biogenesis, etc., which is the basis of our philosophy, psychology, political theories, and our culture.

[Cf. Michael Denton, *Evolution A Theory in Crisis*, Adler and Adler, Bethesda MD 1986; Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box*, Simon and Schuster, New York NY 1996; Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove IL, 1993. Also, the delightful presentations by Kent Hovind (Creation Science Evangelism, Pensacola, FL, [www.drdino.com](http://www.drdino.com)).]<sup>64</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Paul continues his argument against any excuse for non-Believers in verse 20 and continues to base it on the reality of Creation itself. Let me paraphrase: Paul says that although the power of God is invisible, the result of what that power wrought (the Universe) can be easily seen. No reasonable person can believe that the Universe just "happened" without there being something or someone who made it happen. Thus, what we can see as we step outside and look all around us, is all the proof that anyone needs to know that God exists and what many of His qualities are. Listen to the beginning of a beautiful Psalm of David.

Psalm 19:1-7 CJB

**CJB Psalm 19:1** For the leader. A psalm of David: 2 The heavens declare the glory of God, the dome of the sky speaks the work of his hands. 3 Every day it utters speech, every night it reveals knowledge. 4 Without speech, without a word, without their voices being heard, 5 their line goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them he places a tent for the sun, 6 which comes out like a bridegroom from the bridal chamber, with delight like an athlete to run his race. 7 It rises at one side of the sky, circles around to the other side, and nothing escapes its heat.

The Creation is God's truth every bit as much as God's Word is God's truth. To deny one is to deny the other. But equally important to grasp is that the Biblical truth is not merely something to which our intellects agree. Rather it is something that we are to have faith in and we are to obey. From God's perspective sin is a denial, a rejection, or a rebellion against the divine truth.

We have spent an inordinate amount of time in chapter 1 of Romans, but today we'll conclude it. In some ways today might be the most emotionally and culturally challenging of the several

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<sup>64</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

lessons we've had on this chapter because Paul, never one to mince words, deals head-on with sin and especially with sexual perversion. And I believe that sexual perversion and sexual immorality is the single most serious and dominant issue of our time. And this is because while terrorism is a danger to life and limb, sexual immorality is a danger to our souls and to our eternal futures. It is an issue that has not just divided the world and our nation; it has divided and deeply damaged the Church. In an astounding turn away from God and His commandments, some of the longest standing and most recognized Christian denominations have recently split over the issue of sexual immorality.

I want to begin by quoting a portion of a Psalm that is quite poignant and pertinent to our lesson today.

**Psalm 50:16-23 CJB** 16 But to the wicked God says: "What right do you have to proclaim my laws or take my covenant on your lips, 17 when you so hate to receive instruction and fling my words behind you? 18 When you see a thief, you join up with him, you throw in your lot with adulterers, 19 you give your mouth free rein for evil and harness your tongue to deceit; 20 you sit and speak against your kinsman, you slander your own mother's son. 21 When you do such things, should I stay silent? You may have thought I was just like you; but I will rebuke and indict you to your face. 22 Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to save you. 23 "Whoever offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me; and to him who goes the right way I will show the salvation of God."

What right, this Psalm asks, does anyone have to depend on God's covenants, when we hate to receive God's instructions and "flings (God's) words behind you"? Let me say that in modern terms: you say you have been saved in the name of Jesus Christ, but you don't want to obey God's laws or comply with the truth of the Bible. It is the person who does right that God says He will guide to salvation. How do we know what right is if we shun God's Word, and turn our backs on His Torah where right and wrong are clearly defined in as many as 600 case examples of human activity?

Let me give you Paul's bottom line to this portion of Romans chapter 1: it is that the man who rebels against God, and denies his dependence upon God and His commandments, inevitably becomes subject to a process of moral degeneration. Often this moral degeneration is not something that the man realizes is happening. And equally as often it is because his or her degenerative condition looks to be healthy and fully in tune with self-satisfied local society and a government that believes that it is the source of moral truth. In other words, all looks fine and well to the degenerating man because everybody else is doing the same thing and looks the same way.

Please also notice that Paul is not speaking only to gentiles or only to Jews; rather it is a general statement that relates to all humanity in general, and yet since his letter is specifically to the Believers in Rome apparently some of them may be caught up in this moral degeneration. So, he is not picking out any particular group to rail against; this applies to everyone (especially the Believing community) in light of the Gospel message.

And in another sense, what we see is that in verse 18 when Paul speaks of God's anger against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, later towards the end of this chapter Paul defines what godlessness and wickedness looks like and that people have no one else to blame for their

degenerative moral condition than themselves. Many decades ago a comedian named Flip Wilson often used a famous line in his skits: "the Devil made me do it". And while it was always funny, it seems that many Christians indeed believe that their own bad behavior or the wickedness of others is the result of Satan's activity in their lives. Paul makes no such claim, and neither does the Bible in general. The Devil may tempt, but he does not have the power to coerce action. Humans willingly do evil. And so this entire section of Romans chapter 1 places the responsibility for godlessness and wickedness not upon Satan, but rather directly upon the shoulders of each sinner.

Although we lightly touched on it last time, I want to repeat that from Paul's viewpoint no one can plead that they did not know they were rebelling against God because what needs to be known about God that they might do right in His eyes is revealed in God's Creation. Let me say that using a different term. God's attributes are revealed in nature (assuming we understand that nature is everything that is visible and tangible and that is the result of God's Creative force). There has been much debate over just what Paul means by this and whether such a thought is even reasonable. After all, how can some isolated tribe in the middle of the Amazon jungle be expected to know God? But without doubt this is not some new doctrine that Paul has come up with; Judaism in general in his day believed the same way because it was a basic tenet of the Hebrew Bible. Some refer to this as natural law, and that is an appropriate label. A good example of this is found in Psalm 19.

**CJB Psalm 19:1-5** 1 For the leader. A psalm of David: 2 The heavens declare the glory of God, the dome of the sky speaks the work of his hands. 3 Every day it utters speech, every night it reveals knowledge. 4 Without speech, without a word, without their voices being heard, 5 their line goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

So, God has acted in way that only He could in order to disclose Himself; and this disclosure is the Creation. In fact the Creation....the earth, the sky, the Universe, and humanity..... Nature...so closely resembles God's attributes that it is possible to say that Creation is like a shadow of God passing by. Are we not told in Genesis 1:27 that God made mankind in His image? Man is of God's Creation, and so we are an image (a shadow) of Him. But the shadow itself is not the Creator; the shadow is merely the result of the existence and presence of the Creator. A shadow can never generate itself and cannot exist by itself. A shadow has no life of itself; whatever life it seems to have is actually contained in the creator of the shadow. And because this is true, God had to breathe life from Himself into the human shadow, Adam, after He formed him.

Therefore, Paul can say with confidence that all humans have an innate understanding not only of God's existence but of His basic attributes because they can be seen in nature itself. How often I look into the night sky and stand awestruck at the infinite nature of it, and at the variation and extent of the black ether and those millions of pinpoints of light. Even more often I'll pause to gaze out of my office window at the glorious blue of the water, and the stunning greens of the plants and trees, and wonder at how beautiful it is and yet can a creation be more beautiful and magnificent than its Creator? Never! And yet, ironically, when humanity depends solely upon taking our cues from nature as concerns God we get bad results. We are supposed to worship and glorify God. Instead we can wind up worshipping the created things...things such as nature.... instead of the Creator. Essentially humans, because of our evil inclinations that began in the Garden of Eden with the fall of Adam and Eve, are wired to reject a true knowledge of God and

turn instead to gods of our own making. This is the human dilemma and the only cure for it is the Gospel of Christ.<sup>65</sup>

**ESV:** God's wrath is expressed for good reason since his power and divine nature are clearly revealed through the world he has made, and yet he is rejected by all people. These verses show that salvation does not come through "general revelation" (what is known about God through the natural world) since Paul emphasizes the universality of sin and concludes that "no one seeks for God" (3:11). things that have been made. The entire natural world bears witness to God through its beauty, complexity, design, and usefulness. without excuse. No one should complain that God has left insufficient evidence of his existence and character; the fault is with those who reject the evidence.<sup>66</sup>

**BKC:** "What may be known about God" (v. 19) is now called God's invisible qualities and identified as His eternal power and divine nature. Since "God is spirit" (John 4:24), all His qualities are invisible to physical eyes and can be understood by the human mind only as they are reflected in what has been made, that is, in God's creative work. The self-existent God, however, is the Creator of all things, and therefore since the Creation of the world His "invisible qualities" have been clearly seen. Paul may have intended a play on words between the noun translated "invisible qualities" (*aorata*) and the verb translated "clearly seen" (*kathoratai*) because they share a common Greek root. Both the verb "clearly seen" and the participle "being understood" are in the present tense, which emphasizes the continuous nature of the action. The word *theiotēs*, translated "divine nature," occurs only here in the New Testament and embraces the properties which make God God. Creation, which people see, reveals God's unseen character—the all-powerful Deity. An Old Testament parallel to these verses is Psalm 19:1-6.

Paul's conclusion to this description of natural revelation is important—men are without excuse. The witness to God in nature is so clear and so constant that ignoring it is indefensible. Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they have.<sup>67</sup>

**<sup>21</sup>Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

“Will you kindly notice, that, according to my text, knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice? ‘They knew God.’ It was no good to them to know God, for ‘they glorified him not as God.’ So my theological friend over there, who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines, it does not matter what you think, or what you know, unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful.” (Spurgeon)

### **Missler: 3) For Perverting God’s glory**

This reason for God’s condemnation of the pagan world builds on the preceding verse just as that verse is built on the first. The relationship is seen in the use of the same Greek connective (*dioti*) at the beginning of verses 19 and 21, in the latter translated “because.”

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>66</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>67</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

People's suppression of the truth is seen in their rejecting the clearly visible evidence of God as the sovereign Creator and, unable to free their conscience, turned their perversion of that knowledge into idolatry.

The clause "although they knew God" refers to an original experiential knowledge of God such as Adam and Eve had both before and after the Fall. How long this knowledge of God continued before it was perverted is not stated, but God was known by people. This fact makes human actions all the more reprehensible. One would suppose that to know God would be to honor Him, but these people "neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him." They turned from the very purpose for which God made them.

With such willful rebellion against God it is little wonder that their thinking became futile (*emataioitheisan*, lit., "became worthless, purposeless"; cf. Eph 4:17) ("became vain in their imaginations"), "and their foolish (*asynetos*, morally senseless; cf. Rom 1:31) hearts were darkened" (cf. Eph 4:18). When truth is rejected, in time the ability to recognize and to receive truth is impaired (cf. Jn 3:19-20; Mt 13:10-16).<sup>68</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 21 explains that it is the refusal of humans to recognize God for who He is and to worship Him as such that leads to them becoming futile in their thinking and having their hearts darkened.

We need to be aware that when Paul speaks of "knowing God" from nature that he means it in a very limited sense. From nature people can have an awareness of God but never establish a personal relationship with Him. Instead of seeking God and acknowledging God "as God", humanity instead tends to turn to idols; items of our own creation. In Greek thought to "know God" more meant to apprehend and perceive Him as He really is; it is a desire for intellectual knowledge. But in Hebrew thought to "know God" more means to actively acknowledge Him by worshipping and glorifying Him in a personal way. Thus, we see the shining evidence of Paul's Hebrew thought patterns especially apparent in his explanation of what knowing God amounts to and how it ought to manifest itself among humans as praise and worship. So those who think that knowing God is primarily an intellectual exercise have actually become futile in their thinking; even though they are so enamored with what they believe are their wise thoughts, in fact they are fools. The result of their foolishness is that they become self-deceived and begin to exchange the authentic for the fake. In all their supposed wisdom they choose to give glory to other human beings, or to birds, animals and reptiles. And usually this is done using images.... idols....of humans, birds, animals and reptiles.

This idea of the wicked exchanging the worshipping of the true God for worshipping fakes.....images of created things..... is a frequent Old Testament subject. An example is Psalm 106 when the subject is the Golden Calf created by the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt:

**Psalm 106:19-20 CJB** 19 In Horev they fashioned a calf, they worshipped a cast metal image. 20 Thus they exchanged their Glory for the image of an ox that eats grass!

So, to sum it up: Paul is saying that a human who refuses to acknowledge the God of Israel as the true God and Creator does so because they choose to do so. They do it from their own wickedness, and they have utterly no excuse for it because despite what they might say or do, they innately know of the true God. While atheism was not known until barely 300 years ago, in fact while atheists swear up and down that they don't worship any god at all, the fact that they

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<sup>68</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

celebrate themselves as the highest being in existence, the most superior of all living things, belies the truth that they are worshipping themselves. That they don't want anyone else displaying any evidence of God is because it pricks their conscience when they see it and they prefer to stay safely ensconced in their make-believe, self-made world. The religion of atheism is a worship of self. Even more, our so-called brilliant scientists who insist that the creation of the Universe and of life was spontaneous and self-produced are in modern times the fulfillment of Paul's words about those "claiming to be wise, they have become fools". While Paul would never have imagined of people who don't believe in gods and in the spirit world (no such people existed in his day), in fact the application couldn't be more spot on.<sup>69</sup>

“Will you kindly notice, that, according to my text, knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice? ‘They knew God.’ It was no good to them to know God, for ‘they glorified him not as God.’ So my theological friend over there, who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines, it does not matter what you think, or what you know, unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful.” (Spurgeon)

**BKC:** This reason for God's condemnation of the pagan world builds on the preceding one just as that one built on the first. The relationship is seen in the use of the same Greek connective (*dioti*) at the beginning of verses 19 and 21, in the latter translated for. People's suppression of the truth is seen in their rejecting the clear evidence of God as the sovereign Creator and their perversion of that knowledge into idolatry.

The clause although they knew God refers to an original experiential knowledge of God such as Adam and Eve had both before and after the Fall. How long this knowledge of God continued before it was perverted is not stated, but God was known by people. This fact makes human actions all the more reprehensible. One would suppose that to know God would be to honor Him, but these people neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. They turned from the very purpose for which God made them: to glorify Him for His Person and thank Him for His works. With such willful rebellion against God it is little wonder that their thinking became futile (*emataiōthēsan*, lit., "became worthless, purposeless"; cf. Eph. 4:17) and their foolish (*asynetos*, "morally senseless"; cf. Rom. 1:31) hearts were darkened (cf. Eph. 4:18). When truth is rejected, in time the ability to recognize and to receive truth is impaired (cf. John 3:19-20).<sup>70</sup>

## **<sup>22</sup>Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,**

**Missler:** When the true Source of wisdom is rejected (cf. Ps. 111:10), people's claim to be wise is an idle boast. Progressively "they became fools" (*emoranthesan*, lit., "became stupid"). That also describes our current culture...right now. Until man knows his state of sin, he wants no grace. If the evidence of guilt be insufficient or inconclusive, there is no need for a pardon!<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>70</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>71</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

**BKC: 22-23.** <sup>72</sup>When the true Source of wisdom is rejected (cf. Ps. 111:10), people's claim to be wise is an idle boast. Progressively they became fools (*emōranthēsan*, lit., "became stupid"), a reality demonstrated by the worship as gods of idols in the forms of people and animals (cf. Rom. 1:25). The ultimate irony in humanity's refusal to glorify the true God is the insanity or stupidity of idolatry described in Isaiah 44:9-20. Man's refusal to acknowledge and glorify God leads to a downward path: first, worthless thinking; next, moral insensitivity; and then, religious stupidity (seen in idol-worship).

**<sup>23</sup>And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.**

Incorruptibility is the essence of God's being. This foolishness is demonstrated by the worship of idols as gods in the forms of people and animals (cf. Rom. 1:25). The more you reflect upon the infinite glory and majesty of the eternal God, the more hideous will the unspeakable insult to Him of any kind of idolatry appear. The ultimate irony in humanity's refusal to glorify the true God is the insanity or stupidity of idolatry described in Isaiah 44:9-20, the worship of gods who are not and the demons who are.

Man's refusal to acknowledge and glorify God leads to a downward path: first, worthless thinking; next, moral insensitivity; and then, religious stupidity as seen in idol-worship. When the knowledge of the true and Living God is refused, false gods inevitably fill the vacuum.

And we become like the gods we worship! (Ps 115:8, 135:15-18.) Egypt, once ruling the world, adopted the worship of death, and the scarab—the dung beetle!

Are idols of stone cold, unresponsive, impersonal? If you worship them, you, too, will become cold, unresponsive, impersonal. Is the world materialistic, harsh and unforgiving? If you worship the world you, too, will become materialistic, harsh, and unforgiving.

And if you worship Christ, you will become like Him! ...Ah! Devoutly to be wished!

**The Tragic Results** - In a real sense the results of God's condemnation on rebellious humanity are nothing more than the natural consequences of:

Suppressing truth,  
Ignoring revelation, and  
Perverting God's glory.

However, God did more than simply let nature take its course. God acted by abandoning the people (the thrice-mentioned "gave them over" [vv. 24, 26, 28] is ("abandoned") to their expressions of a corrupt lifestyle which deserved God's wrath and the sentence of death (v. 32).<sup>73</sup>

**<sup>24</sup>Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:**

**Missler:** One aspect of mankind's corruption (to which God actively let people go) was sexual profligacy. The frequency of live-in lovers, wife-swapping, and group sex parties today only confirms this result of God's abandonment.

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<sup>72</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>73</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Sex within marriage is a holy gift from God, but otherwise sex is impurity (lit., “uncleanness”) and “the dishonoring of their own bodies” by using them contrary to God’s intent. [These lusts are deeper than mere lusts of the flesh: they are of the heart. They will exist forever...] <sup>74</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

But now we enter that portion of Romans chapter 1 that has been all but rejected by some denominations, Pastors, and a large and growing number of congregation members. It is that portion that I believe is perhaps the most important, dangerous and bedeviling of the modern era. The portion that deals with homosexuality and other forms of sexual perversion and severely denounces it. But before we deal with that, verse 24 says something important and controversial.

First, verse 24 explains that the reason that as some point God will turn people over to their sins. He does this because they have no excuse. Everything from verses 18 – 23 has set the stage for verse 24. Second, we have to face what it means by "God has given them up". Some English versions say abandoned, others say turned them over, and yet others say delivered them. These all translate the Greek word *paradidomi* and each one of these English translations fits well with the literal meaning of this word, so there is no need to quibble. What is being said is that God abandoned people to their moral degeneration and wickedness as a result of their intentional rejection of Him. But what does abandon or hand over mean? Does God just sort of let go and allow whatever is going to happen to happen (a rather passive action)? Or is He more active in the process? When we look in the Old Testament to where this same term "handed over" is used we find that often it speaks of Israel when they are in rebellion, and it is not simply that God suddenly merely turns his back on Israel and stops blessing them, but rather that He also gives them a nudge towards their enemies and their deserved punishment. It is like a judge who convicts a criminal and then hands him over to the jailor for incarceration.

What has God given these wicked people who reject Him over to? What is their earthly punishment? It is to be turned over to the morally depraved lusts of their hearts. Remember: when the term heart is used in Holy Scripture, it is referring to the seat of intellect, the human mind (which during the entire Biblical era was believed to occur in the heart organ). What Paul is expressing here is a well understood Jewish principle from 2nd Temple Judaism. It is that a man must serve either His Creator or serve his own evil inclination. That is, a human will always choose either to serve and obey God, or to serve and obey our self. There is no 3rd way and no middle ground. Yeshua accepted and taught this same principle that both the Pharisees and the Essenes agreed upon:

**CJB Matthew 6:24** No one can be a slave to two masters; for he will either hate the first and love the second or scorn the second and be loyal to the first. You can't be a slave to both God and money.

The Rabbis taught that either your heart controls you, or you control your heart. That is your heart either brings you under subjection, or you bring your heart under subjection with the idea being that when your heart (your mind) controls you, then God cannot. Why did the Rabbis say that a righteous person must bring their hearts into subjection? Because in Holy Scripture God taught them that:

**CJB Jeremiah 17:9** "The heart is more deceitful than anything else and mortally sick. Who can fathom it?"

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<sup>74</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

In the Jewish Midrash called **Genesis Rabbah 34** we read this commentary about Genesis 8:21: "AND THE LORD SAID TO HIS HEART (**Gen. 8:21**)." The wicked stand in subjection to their hearts (their passions and lusts). Thus, it says (in God's Word that) THE FOOL HAS SAID IN HIS HEART (**Ps. 14:1**), AND ESAU SAID IN HIS HEART (**Gen. 27:41**), AND JEROBOAM SAID IN HIS HEART (1Kings 12:26), NOW HAMAN SAID IN HIS HEART (**Est. 6:6**). But the righteous have their hearts under their control. Hence it is written: NOW HANNAH, SHE SPOKE AT HER HEART (**1Sam. 1:13**), AND DAVID SAID TO HIS HEART (**1Sam.27:1**), BUT DANIEL PURPOSED TO HIS HEART (Dan. 1:8), AND THE LORD SAID TO HIS HEART (**Gen.34:10**).

So, we must never listen to our heart and let our heart control us; rather we must bring our hearts (our minds) under subjection. Subjection to what? To our regenerated mind that has been healed by God's Word, God's truth, and God's light. The Bible warns against listening to our heart time and time again. And yet Christians, especially, often talk about how they follow their hearts or that their heart is telling them to do something and they think this is a good thing. The Holy Scriptures tell us the opposite.

The final words of verse 24 speak of the shameful misuse of each other's bodies. Obviously, this is speaking of sexual perversion; but the next few verses make it clear that the particular sexual perversion that Paul is addressing is homosexuality. It is not my intention to make the bulk of this lesson about the details and evils of homosexuality; the Bible itself ought to be sufficient enough to address it. That non-Believers enjoy and advocate for homosexuality and other sexually immoral outrages should not be surprising to us. They have no relationship with God, and therefore no moral compass or Holy Spirit to guide them. But what about professed Believers?<sup>75</sup>

This begins a passage where Paul describes the sin and corruption of the pagan world with an amazing directness – so direct that Spurgeon thought this passage unfit for public reading. “This first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a dreadful portion of the Word of God. I should hardly like to read it all through aloud; it is not intended to be so used. Read it at home and be startled at the awful vices of the Gentile world.” (Spurgeon)

**BKC:** One aspect of mankind's corruption (to which God actively let people go) was sexual profligacy. The frequency of live-in lovers, wife-swapping, and group sex parties today only confirms this result of God's abandonment. Sex within marriage is a holy gift from God, but otherwise sex is impurity (lit., "uncleanness") and the degrading of... bodies by using them contrary to God's intent.<sup>76</sup>

**<sup>25</sup>Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.**

The truth of God is not only the truth concerning God but also God's truth concerning all things, including mankind. This truth is that people are creatures of God and can find true fulfillment only in worshiping and obediently serving God the Creator.

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>76</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

A lie (lit., “the lie”) on the other hand says that the creature—angelic (Isa 14:13-14; John 8:44) or human (Gen 3:4-5)—can exist independent of God, self-sufficient, self-directing, and self-fulfilling. Mankind made himself his god in place of the true God: “humanism.”

Because God the Creator “is forever praised” (in contrast with creatures who are undeserving of worship), Paul added “Amen.” This word transliterates in both Greek and English the Hebrew word meaning “so let it be.” As an affirmation, it places approval on what has just been said.<sup>77</sup>

**BKC:** In a sense this verse repeats the truth of verse 23, but it expresses more. The truth of God is not only the truth concerning God but also God's truth concerning all things, including mankind. This truth is that people are creatures of God and can find true fulfillment only in worshiping and obediently serving God the Creator. A lie (lit., "the lie") on the other hand says that the creature—angelic (Isa. 14:13-14; John 8:44) or human (Gen. 3:4-5)—can exist independent of God, self-sufficient, self-directing, and self-fulfilling. Mankind made himself his god in place of the true God. Because God the Creator is forever praised (in contrast with creatures who are undeserving of worship), Paul added Amen. This word transliterates in both Greek and English the Hebrew word meaning "so let it be." As an affirmation, not a wish, it places approval on what has just been said (cf. comments on 2 Cor. 1:20).<sup>78</sup>

**<sup>26</sup>For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:**

**Missler:** Three Greek words used here are not the noble ones meaning men and women, but those denoting sex only, as in lower creatures.

The perversions that characterize our present society are nothing new; these perversions deliberately deny the presence of intentional design in our being... God gave them over to “passions of disgrace” (Lit.). This is not speaking of natural or normal appetites of the body, or even the abuses of these: adultery or harlotry. It is dealing with unnatural appetites in which all normal instincts are left behind. This involved, as the text states, both sexes engaging in homosexual instead of heterosexual relationships. Women deliberately exchanged natural relations (with men in marriage) for unnatural ones (with other women). This is the second “exchange” the unregenerate made (cf. v. 25).<sup>79</sup>

**Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

So, what I do want to address is the ever increasing bent of the Christian Church to accept homosexuality as a good and acceptable alternative lifestyle. We have a number of Church denominations and Jewish sects who now ordain gay ministers; other denominations have decided to perform gay marriages. I don't want to just throw that out there without specifics. The Conservative Jewish Movement, the Reform Jewish Movement, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Church of Christ have all made it Church or synagogue law to accept homosexuality as normal and good. They all ordain Gay leaders and perform same-sex marriages.

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<sup>77</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>78</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>79</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

The common refrain from these Churches and synagogues is that either the Bible is silent on the subject of homosexuality, or that such a prohibition no longer applies as it was only meant for ancient times (even if the prohibition is presented in the New Testament like here in Romans 1). The other primary argument is that because God is love, love trumps everything; so if love is involved sexual relations in any form (including among the same sex) it is good and Jesus heartily approves of it and condemns those who speak against it as unrepentant bigots.

Here is a recent statement made by one of the leaders of the Christian LGBT movement, Jimmy Creech, a 30-year United Methodist pastor. While he certainly doesn't speak for all Gay people who also claim Christianity, he speaks for a large group.

How do I view God's position on "homosexuality?" I believe lesbian, gay and bisexual people to be a part of God's wondrous creation, created to be just who they are, and completely loved and treasured by God. I believe God does not intend for anyone to be alone but to live in companionship. And I believe God expects healthy loving relationships to include sexual love. The Bible doesn't say this, of course. But neither does it deny it. I believe this to be true not only because of the Bible's emphasis on the goodness of God's creation and the supreme value of love, but because of the greater understanding of human nature that we have available to us today. I do not believe that God intends us to live in the small world of ancient biblical culture, but rather in God's larger evolving world informed by science, reason and experience.

The other argument that passes for truth in our time is that this bent against homosexuality is only a modern one and that what the Bible meant to ancient people in this Romans passage and in at least 5 other passages in the Old and New Testaments that are frequently quoted as anti-gay, actually, have nothing to do with homosexual behavior.

To that end I'd like to quote to you a passage from a commentary on the Book of Romans written by the early Church Father Severian of Gabala about 400 A.D. This regards the specific passage of Romans 1:27 that reads like this:

**CJB Romans 1:27** and likewise the men, giving up natural relations with the opposite sex, burn with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving in their own persons the penalty appropriate to their perversion.

Severian says this: Paul did not say this lightly, but because he had heard that there was a homosexual community at Rome.

In the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament, homosexuality was not only common it was fully accepted, even highly regarded. We get the modern term Lesbian from the notorious reputations of the homosexual women of the Isle of Lesbos. So as Severian says, Paul wasn't writing to the Romans about this because the thought just came to his mind. As the center of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome was ground-zero for sexual immorality and especially homosexuality. Rome's emperors were noted for it, and Nero turned it into an art form using the bodies of young boys. So, Paul was addressing a specific problem that Believers in Rome were facing (this was his protocol for all of his letters that we today call Epistles).

Another early Church Father, Chrysostom, who lived at the same time as Severian, says this as taken from his famous Homilies on Romans: This is clear proof of the ultimate degree of corruption, when both sexes are abandoned.....Notice how deliberate Paul measures his words. For he does not say that they were enamored of one another but that they were consumed with lust for one another.....The normal desire for sexual intercourse united the sexes to one another, but by taking this away and turning it into something else, the devil divided the sexes from each other and forced what was one to become two, in opposition to the laws of

God.....The devil was bent on destroying the human race.....Paul goes straight to the source of sexual evil: ungodliness which comes from twisted teaching, and lawlessness which is its reward.

So, first of all, the comments of these 2 Early Church Fathers is proof that the claim that it is only fairly recently that the Church began to say that homosexuality was wrong and to suggest that the Bible does not speak against it is simply a lie. But second, I think that the last sentence that I read to you from Chrysostom nails it: the real source of sexual evil is ungodliness which comes from twisted teaching and lawlessness.

What concerns me is not only that entire denominations have given in to the LGBT movement, but other denominations are teetering, or at least finding ways to be very tolerant of Gays and Transgenders. Pope Francis has recently issued an open apology to Gays and Transgenders for not inviting them into the Catholic Church and more fully embracing them and their sexual choices. How could the leader of the Catholic Church declare such a thing? By twisting God's Word and by being disobedient to God's laws (by being lawless).

What these passages in Romans chapter 1 tell us is that when people move far enough away from God (and I don't know exactly where that line is) He will turn them over to their sin. And he tells us that idolatry and sexual perversion go hand in glove. So, in verse 28 Paul more or less repeats the previous few verses, using a little different term to make his point. And the point that jumps out is that those who do not find God worth knowing will be given up to their worthless ways of thinking. And it is God's intention that the result will be doing the following laundry list of wrong things (vices). In a sense, the punishment is that God ceases restraining the individual from committing all manner of sexual perversion and becoming even more wicked by doing this list of vices.

I will tell you that many Bible commentators have a very difficult time with this section of Romans because they don't like what it implies. They worry that this will sound too harsh and turn off Seekers. They worry that this puts a chink in their thoughts that the New Testament God, Jesus, is supposed to be strictly a God of love and mercy but this certainly doesn't sound very compassionate or tolerant. They worry that it sounds too judgmental and too permanent. But folks, it says what it says; there's no candy coating it.<sup>80</sup>

**BKC: 26-27.** Also, God gave them over to shameful lusts (lit., "passions of disgrace"). This involved, as the text states, both sexes engaging in homosexual instead of heterosexual relationships. Women deliberately exchanged natural relations (with men in marriage) for unnatural ones (with other women). This is the second "exchange" the unregenerate made (cf. v. 25). Men... were inflamed with lust (*orexei*, "sexual lust," used only here in the NT and differing from the more common word for lust in v. 26).

The words translated women and men in these verses are the sexual words "females" and "males." Contemporary homosexuals insist that these verses mean that it is perverse for a heterosexual male or female to engage in homosexual relations, but it is not perverse for a homosexual male or female to do so since homosexuality is such a person's natural preference. This is strained exegesis unsupported by the Bible. The only natural sexual relationship the Bible recognizes is a heterosexual one (Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-6) within marriage. All homosexual relations constitute sexual perversion and are subject to God's judgment. Such lustful and indecent acts have within them the seeds of punishment (due penalty).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>81</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.**

**Missler:** Men were inflamed with lust (*orexei*, “sexual lust,” used only here in the NT and differing from the more common word for lust in v. 26).

The only natural sexual relationship the Bible recognizes is a heterosexual one (Gen 2:21-24; Mt 19:4-6) within marriage. All homosexual relations constitute sexual perversion and are subject to God’s judgment. Such lustful and indecent acts have within them the seeds of punishment (“recompense which was meet”; due penalty).

“God gave them over...” (3X: 25, 26, 28) The beginning of the working of God’s wrath in this world. This is not a description of the finally damned, but of the at-present-lost: a present judicial action of God on earth where He lets men go their own way. This is distinct from the Great White Throne (Rev 20) where there will be no liberty left to indulge their lusts as in this present world. The lusts will remain—and probably intensify—but the ability to indulge them will be eternally removed and the damned placed under the visitation of Divine anger. “He that is filthy, let him be made filthy yet more.” (Rev 22:11)

“Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor 6:2) Grace is ready to reach the worst wretch on earth!<sup>82</sup>

Not only homosexual acts but also such passions or desires are said to be dishonorable before God. Just as idolatry is unnatural (contrary to what God intended when he made human beings), so too homosexuality is contrary to nature in that it does not represent what God intended when he made men and women with physical bodies that have a “natural” way of interacting with each other and “natural” desires for each other. Paul follows the OT and Jewish tradition in seeing all homosexual relationships as sinful. The creation account in Genesis 1-2 reveals the divine paradigm for human beings, indicating that God’s will is for man and woman to be joined in marriage. Consumed (or “inflamed”) gives a strong image of a powerful but destructive inward desire. The sin in view is not pederasty (homosexual conduct of men with boys) but men engaging in sin with men. There is no justification here for the view that Paul condemns only abusive homosexual relationships. Due penalty could refer to the sin of homosexuality itself as the penalty for idolatry. Or, the “and” in and receiving may indicate some additional negative consequences received in themselves, that is, some form of spiritual, emotional, or physical blight. The “due” penalty refers to a penalty that is appropriate to the wrong committed.<sup>83</sup>

**Guzik:** Paul doesn’t even use the normal words for men and women here; he uses the words for male and female, using categories that describe sexuality outside of human terms, because the type of sexual sin he describes is outside of human dignity.

Paul categorizes the whole section under the idea of vile passions – unhealthy, unholy. Nevertheless, Paul lived in a culture that openly approved of homosexuality. Paul didn’t write this to a culture that agreed with him.

Paul wrote to a culture where homosexuality was accepted as a part of life for both men and women. For some 200 years, the men who ruled the Roman Empire openly practiced homosexuality often with young boys.

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<sup>82</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>83</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

At times the Roman Empire specifically taxed approved homosexual prostitution and gave boy prostitutes a legal holiday. Legal marriage between same gender couples was recognized, and even some of the emperors married other men. At the very time Paul wrote, Nero was emperor. He took a boy named Sporus and had him castrated, then married him (with a full ceremony), brought him to the palace with a great procession, and made the boy his “wife.” Later, Nero lived with another man, and Nero was the “wife.”

In modern culture, homosexual practice reflects the abandonment of giving them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. Statistics tell us that on average 43% of homosexuals say they have had 500 or more sexual partners in their lifetime, and only 1% of homosexuals say they have had four or less sexual partners in their lifetime.

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, 77% of homosexuals say they have met sexual partners in a city park; 62% in a homosexual bar, 61% in a theater, 31% in a public restroom. Only 28% of homosexuals said that they knew their partners for at least a week before participating in homosexual sex.

Homosexuals often seem to specialize in anonymous sex with no emotional commitment. At one time, London AIDS clinics defined a woman as promiscuous if she had more than six partners in her lifetime. They gave up trying to apply a workable definition to male homosexuals when it became clear that they saw almost no homosexual men who had less than six sexual partners a year.<sup>84</sup>

**28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;**

**Missler:** “Gave them over” = 3X...

Pagan humanity’s rebellion also included the rejection of the knowledge (“full knowledge”; cf. v. 32) of God. In a sense they put God out of their minds. God’s responding judgment was abandonment (cf. vv. 24, 26) to a depraved (*adokimon*, “disapproved”) mind, which expressed itself in attitudes and actions that ought not to be done (lit., “what is unfitting or improper,” a technical Stoic word).<sup>85</sup>

**BKC:** Pagan humanity's rebellion also included the rejection of the knowledge (*epignōsei*, "full knowledge"; cf. v. 32) of God. In a sense they put God out of their minds. God's responding judgment was abandonment (cf. vv. 24, 26) to a depraved (*adokimon*, "disapproved") mind, which expressed itself in attitudes and actions that ought not to be done (lit., "what is unfitting or improper," a technical Stoic word).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-1.cfm?a=1047001)

<sup>85</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>86</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

**<sup>29</sup>Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,**

**Missler:** The mental vacuum created by dismissing God was filled (the perf. tense implies filled full) with four forms of active sin: wickedness (*adikia*; cf. v. 18), evil (*porneiva*), greed, and depravity (*kakia*, “badness or malice”).

These four in turn express themselves in 17 more specific types of wickedness. (The first two, envy and murder, sound much alike in Greek: *phthonou* and *phonou*.)

Injustice: selfishness, enthroned against all rights of others; Destructiveness: same word is used to describe Satan and his hosts: “evil one” “hosts of wickedness” (Eph 6:12, 16); it denotes wickedness in hostile activity.

Covetousness: Lit. “itch for more.” Claiming more than one’s due, greedy, grasping; act of over-reaching by selfish tricks. Covetousness is idolatry (1 Cor 5:11; Eph 5:3, 5; Col 3:5).

Malice: malignity; maliciousness, desire to injure.

Full of envy: hate toward one who is above us, who is what we are not, or possesses that which we cannot have, or do not choose the path to attain.<sup>87</sup>

**BKC: 29-31.** The mental vacuum created by dismissing God was filled (the perf. tense implies filled full) with four forms of active sin: wickedness (*adikia*; cf. v. 18), evil (*ponēria*), greed, and depravity (*kakia*, “badness or malice”). These four in turn express themselves in 17 more specific types of wickedness. The first two, envy and murder, sound much alike in Greek: *phthonou* and *phonou*. Also, the four vices in verse 31 each begin with the Greek letter alpha (“a” in Eng.).<sup>88</sup>

**<sup>30</sup>Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,**

**<sup>31</sup>Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:**

Also, the four vices in verse 31 each begin with the Greek letter alpha (“a” in Eng.).<sup>89</sup>

**<sup>32</sup>Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.**

**Missler:** This whole pattern of evil becomes the lifestyle of people who continue to do (present tense implies continuing or habitual action) these very things in open defiance of God, a defiance aggravated

- (a) by fully knowing (*epignontes*; cf. v. 28) that such things deserve death and
- (b) by encouraging others in the same lifestyle.

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<sup>87</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

<sup>88</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary

<sup>89</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Such extremity of human rebellion against God fully warrants God's condemnation.<sup>90</sup>

### **Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:**

Verse 32 states that all these vices listed make the sinner worthy of death. Understand that from the Jewish perspective this not only means capital punishment, but it means eternal separation from God. For under the Law of Moses, which Paul still upholds, that is what it means. The Law is that if you have committed a sin that can be atoned for, then an animal sacrifice will do. But if you commit a sin that cannot be atoned for by an animal sacrifice, then no atonement of any kind whatsoever is possible. Your eternal fate is sealed; you die an unrighteous death and Hell is your eternal home. Now that Yeshua has come and gone Paul certainly understands that a person's sins can be forgiven by faith and trust in Yeshua. But that is not the point or the subject, here.

Make no mistake; there is not a hint in Paul's statement that a person could live the lifestyle of any of these vices and then simultaneously legitimately claim trust in Yeshua. In fact, what Paul has described is a person with a reprobate mind who has chosen NOT to know God, and as a result God has given them over to sexual perversion as well as these other sins. So, this modern day thought in some Christian circles that a person can enthusiastically live a homosexual lifestyle at the same time claiming Christianity is simply self-deception.

**Matthew 7:21-23 CJB** 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. 22 On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

Verse 32 also makes a simple claim that we need to not overlook. It is that people who do all these wrongs that Paul has spoken about know they are doing wrong. They don't have to be told that sexual perversion is wrong; nature itself tells us. They don't have to be told that slander, dishonesty, or planning evil schemes is wrong; knowing this is built into our DNA as humans created by a Creator God. Murderers don't murder because they don't know murder is wrong. Thieves don't steal because they think stealing is right. Adulterers don't practice adultery because they think it's good. And homosexuals don't practice same-sex sexual relations because they believe it is God's will for them. They do these things because they want to do them; because they listen to their hearts and want to fulfill their fleshly desires. They rationalize their wrong behavior because they have willfully exchanged truth for a lie, says Paul.

Paul ends this section of Romans by saying something else that has troubled theologians to no end. He says that to applaud others who do these heinous deeds is no different than doing them yourself. So, in the case of sexual perversion, if you are not a Gay or Transgender but you applaud and cheer them on in their destructive sin, you are counted as alongside them. I have read some pretty tortured attempts to make these few words out to be something else entirely; but they are not convincing.

While I must say that it is not an easy principle to understand why a person who only applauds and cheers others to do wrong is as guilty as the one who does the wrong, there is no other way to understand this saying of Paul. So as Believers it leaves us with only one option: accept it and understand that it is true even if it is a difficult truth especially in modern Western

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<sup>90</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

society and so our minds are uncomfortable with it. It is not up to us to put God's Word on trial; it is for us to learn from it, believe it, and obey it.<sup>91</sup>

**ESV:** People do not generally sin in innocent ignorance, for they know God's decree (at least in an instinctive way) that their evil deserves condemnation. Indeed, the evil goes further when people give approval and applaud others for their sin, probably because having others join in their sin makes them feel better about the evil course they have chosen.<sup>92</sup>

**BKC:** This whole pattern of evil becomes the lifestyle of people who continue to do (pres. tense implies continuing or habitual action) these very things in open defiance of God, a defiance aggravated (a) by fully knowing (epignontes; cf. v. 28) that such things deserve death and (b) by encouraging others in the same lifestyle. Such extremity of human rebellion against God fully warrants God's condemnation.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

<sup>92</sup> ESV Study Bible Notes

<sup>93</sup> The Bible Knowledge Commentary