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## Romans 1: Introduction and Condemnation of the Gentile World

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## Chapter 1 Introduction and Condemnation of the Gentiles

Romans always appears first in any collection of NT epistolary writings, though not chronologically the first epistle written by Paul. This suggests that it was esteemed very important. From the Reformation to all the great revivals through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an in depth knowledge of Romans has been the transforming factor of the worldview and the understanding of “so great a salvation”<sup>1</sup> that is ours in Christ. Every theme of Romans is as contemporary today as it was in the first century. Paul describes the morality of his day as though he were writing of the 21<sup>st</sup> century describing adultery, fornication, homosexuality, murder, lying, hating, and civil disobedience. He wrote of the intellectual conflict through the development of a reprobate mind, which has distorted man’s worldview. Romans describes the true psychological freedom that comes as man is delivered from his guilt of sin. It details the responsibility to human government and the imperative of reaching all people groups with the amazing message of complete forgiveness. It describes the future of the earth and the plans for Israel. It reveals the relationship between the flesh and the spirit of man, delineates the difference between law and grace, legalism and libertinism, and clarifies the distinction between works and faith. The greatest revelation of Romans, however, is clarity of the Person and character of God.

### I. Introduction to Romans (1:1-17)

Through revelation and Holy Spirit guided inspiration, the Apostle Paul wrote the clearest and most indispensable knowledge of the good news of the grace of God for sinners. Here we can find forgiveness, victory over selfishness, absolute removal of guilt, and hope with purpose in this life and eternal glory with Christ all in this epistle to the Romans.

#### A. Greetings and Salutations (1:1-7)

The typical format of a letter in the 1<sup>st</sup> century began with the naming of the author, identifying the recipient(s) and a salutation. This formula is the pattern of all the NT epistles except Hebrews and 1 John. Some say that the entire book of Romans is synthesized into these first seven verses.

<sup>NET</sup> **Rom 1:1** From Paul, a **slave** of Christ Jesus, **called** to be an **apostle**, **set apart** for the gospel of God.

<sup>2</sup> This gospel he **promised** beforehand through his prophets in the **holy scriptures**,

<sup>3</sup> concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> who was **appointed** the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Through him we have **received** grace and our **apostleship** to bring about the **obedience of faith** among **all** the Gentiles on **behalf of his name**.

<sup>6</sup> You also are among them, **called to belong** to Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> To all those **loved by God** in Rome, **called to be saints**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

**1:1 Paul begins with a three-fold description of himself:** these are his chief values of his mission in life. (1) His proudest self-proclaimed title was to be a “**slave**” of Christ Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Heb 2:3

(*doulos*, metaphor: “one who gives himself up to another’s will, devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests”), that is, one of unquestioning obedience. According to Gal 1:10 what is one way to show that one is really not a “slave” of Christ?

(2) Paul, “called” to be an apostle, refers to Paul is unique apostolic authority, which enabled him to write about his “insight into the secret of Christ” (Eph 3:4). There were only thirteen men called as Apostles (the Twelve, including Matthias who replaced Judas and Paul). Though Paul had a special calling that would serve the whole church, everyone has been called to serve somewhere. How are all believers “called” by Christ according to Rom 1:6? (Check out 1 Thess 2:12, 14 for more on the “call”).<sup>2</sup>

(3) Paul was “**set apart**” for the gospel of God (*aphorize*, perfect passive: past completed action with present consequences – “to mark off from others, limit by boundaries, cut off”). The gospel message was so important to Paul that ostracism by others or his total commitment to the gospel was his life. Why was this so important according to 2 Cor 4:3?

<sup>2</sup> This gospel he **promised** beforehand through his prophets in the **holy scriptures**,

**1:2 The gospel was promised earlier through the prophets in the holy Scriptures.** This was not a NT Pauline invention, but the gospel was God’s eternal plan for sinful man. The “holy Scriptures” refers to the OT. Paul will show how his teachings are in perfect harmony with the OT writings. Even after being taught by Jesus for three years, some of His disciples still did not understand how He fulfilled the OT prophecies. What continued to be a problem even with his disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25, 27)?

<sup>3</sup> concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> who was **appointed** the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**1:3-4 The divine Sonship of Christ is the core of the gospel message,**<sup>3</sup> without which there can be no forgiveness from a Holy God. Since the Scriptures teach that He is both the eternal Son of God as well as the human-born son of Joseph and Mary, the issue is not His divinity, but in what sense He is God’s Son. As a proven direct descendant of David through both parents (Mary in Luke 3:23, 31 and Joseph in Matt 1:6; 16; Luke 1:27), thus Jesus has the right to rule over David’s kingdom, the promised kingdom without end (see Isa 9:7). MacArthur quotes the Roman historian Tacitus who reported in AD 114 (*Annals* 15.44) that Jesus was the founder of the Christian religion and that he was put to death by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Emperor Tiberius {MacArthur 1991:14}. Others who wrote of Jesus’ life were a Roman statesman and prosecutor, Pliny the Younger, and the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote a biographical sketch of Jesus of Nazareth (*Antiquities*, vol. 2, book 18, chap. 3). How did John describe anyone who would deny that Jesus came in the flesh in 1 John 4:2-3?

- If He never came in the flesh, then He never could have died physically on the cross, thus His blood would have never been shed and He never would have suffered the wrath of God for sin and sinners. The end result would be that sinners are still hopelessly in their sin and guilt before God. How do these verses indicate that Jesus

<sup>2</sup> The author’s persuasion is that the model of Christ going about “calling” disciples to follow Him is not saying that He would continue to do this mystically, but rather He set the model for how people should come into the ministry: a gifted, mature leader looking for others who have a heart for God, spiritual ministering gifts, and a love for the Word, then “calls” them to be his disciple until they are trained *in* the ministry (not *for* the ministry).

<sup>3</sup> This is the most offensive aspect of the gospel and the NT according to the Muslims. They think of the incarnation as a gross sacrilege to consider God (Allah) having a son through a sexual relationship (as they see it).

was always divine before, during and after the incarnation?

Phil 2:5-8

John 17:5

John 1:2-3

John 1:14

<sup>5</sup> Through him we have **received** grace and our **apostleship** to bring about the **obedience of faith** among all the Gentiles on **behalf of his name**.

**1:5 Paul received grace for salvation and his special apostleship for ministry** “among all the Gentiles,” thus the urgency of his ministry and eventual trip to Rome, the capital of the Gentile world.

- “Grace” means “favor that is unmerited or undeserved.” Later he will explain how salvation can only be on the basis of grace, since no human being (except Jesus) has ever or could ever be good enough to merit God’s salvation (we are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” Rom 3:24). What are the different descriptions in Eph 2:8-9 of the salvation by grace?
- Paul likewise received the gift of apostleship (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). All together there were thirteen officially appointed as Apostles. From the following verses describe the task of the apostles:  
Eph 2:20  
Rom 1:5  
Heb 2:3-4
- Paul lived “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (1:5b). There is no dichotomy between faith and obedience, that is, genuine faith (absolute trust in the Word of God) always produces obedience (practical response from trusting in His Word). If God’s Word says it, the believer trusts it; if God’s Word commands it, the believer who trusts it, obeys it. Read Rom 16:25-26 and Eph 2:10 then explain the relationship between faith and obedience.<sup>4</sup>
- “...among all the Gentiles on behalf of his name” (1:5c). Paul lived for two things: (1) to proclaim Jesus Christ to all the Gentile nations or *ethnos*, “ethnic people groups” and (2) to represent the Savior in the proclamation of His message: “on behalf of,” that is “in place of” or “for the sake of” to show personal representation of our Savior. How does Philemon 13, “in your behalf” help clarify this meaning?

<sup>6</sup> You also are among them, **called to belong** to Jesus Christ.

**1:6 Paul addressed the readers in Rome saying, “you” were “among them,”** which is a reference back to unsaved Gentiles (1:5) from whom they had been “**called to belong to Jesus Christ.**” This verse indicates that perhaps the majority of the church at Rome may have been Gentiles, though much of the content of this epistle is directed to Jewish readers. Regardless, the calling of all believers alike is to “belong to Jesus Christ.” How do these verses help clarify how Christ calls us to belong to Him?

1 Cor 1:9

<sup>4</sup> The phrase *hupakoēn pisteos* is a genitive phrase which has a variety of interpretations: (1) if it is an objective genitive it means, “obedience to the faith;” (2) if it is a subjective genitive it means, “the obedience that faith produces;” (3) if it is an attributive genitive, it means “believing obedience;” (4) if it is a genitive of apposition it means “obedience, that is, faith” (where faith further defines obedience). Some take it as deliberately ambiguous.

2 Thes 2:14

2 Tim 1:9

<sup>7</sup> To all those **loved by God** in Rome, **called to be saints**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

**1:7 “To all those loved by God” or “beloved of God”** appear to be a broader group than the reference to the Gentile believers in v. 6, so this overarching concept included the believing Jews in the congregation as both groups being **“loved by God.”** Notice how richly this concept is expressed in 2 Thes 2:13. (See also 1 John 3:1)

- “Called to be saints,” that is literally, **“called saints,”** which is not merely giving them the title as “saints,” but effectively communicating the message to their conscience and understanding that they are unique and have a special purpose in life. Any and all who respond in transforming faith become God’s **“saints”** (*hagios*, “to be set apart for or by God, consecrated”). In the OT many elements of the Tabernacle and Temple were “set apart” for the exclusive use of their religious ceremonies, and thus were considered “holy,” yet this is not directly related to sinlessness. In the New Covenant there are no holy utensils, holy Temple, holy priesthood, etc. Today the only “holy” things on earth are His people, which encompasses all the former concepts: we are His Temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:21) and His priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Whether we like the term or not, when we believe in Him, He, in turn, sets us apart as His very own, thus we become “holy” or “saints.”
- As a classic benediction to Paul’s salutation remarks he adds, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” These two attributes of a personal relationship with God are mentioned 16 times in every epistle of Paul and Peter.

## **B. Plans for Establishing the church at Rome (1:8-15)**

Paul typically begins his epistles with a word of thanks to God for the readers, a specific prayer, and a brief personal encouragement to the readers.

### **1. Prayer of thankfulness**

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

**1:8 Before Paul begins a lengthy and in-depth doctrinal study of salvation and the Christian life, he opens his heart to share his inner motivations.** Typically Paul describes his prayers for the readers and his commendations for their faith as he does here. He is rejoicing over the wide spread fame of their “faith,”<sup>5</sup> even though he had nothing to do with the origin of their faith. Some have a hard time rejoicing in the fame of other’s successes, because of a selfish interest in wanting the fame for themselves. As their fame spread so the **“proclamation”** (*kataggello*, present tense: “continually...to proclaim publically, make known”) of their faith spread as it explained the transformation in their lives. The “whole world” is a hyperbole referring to the Roman Empire. What is involved in this proclamation in Col 1:28?

<sup>5</sup> Different manifestations of faith: (1) Gift of faith (1 Cor 12:9); (2) Fruit of faith (Gal 5:22); (3) Household of faith (Gal 6:10); (4) Doctrine of faith (Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:6); (5) Prayer of faith (James 5:16); (6) Conquering power of faith (Heb 11:33); Defensive tool of faith (shield: Eph 6:16; breastplate: 1 Thes 5:8), and other usages to be discerned.

## 2. Prayer of remembrance

<sup>9</sup> For God, whom I serve in my spirit by preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually remember you

**1:9 Paul's sincerity is expressed** in "I serve (*latreuo*, present tense: "continually... to render in religious service, worship") my spirit," that is, his ministry was also his worship. This is the same word used in Rom 12:1, "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice... which is your *reasonable service*" (this latter phrase translates the same word). Paul served with his whole being. He knew the insincerity of the leaders of Judaism and paganism who often performed superficially through external routines. Paul was not interested in pleasing men (Gal 1:10) or himself (Rom 15:1). How did Jesus demand true worship in John 4:23-24?

- **"Make-mention" prayers** (*poieo mneia*, present tense: "continually... to remember, bring to mind") was a constant habit of Paul mentioned 4 times in the NT (Eph 1:16; 1 Thes 1:2; Phm 4). The term **"continually"** (*adialeiptos*, "without intermission") means that he was constantly reviewing the churches in his mind and he would mention as many as possible by name (1 Thes 1:2; 2:13; 5:17). There are other types of prayer, but this one flows out of a heart committed to Christ's interests, His Church. As we read this verse, we have to ask ourselves, who and how many are we daily praying for?

## 3. Prayer of reunion

<sup>10</sup> and I always ask in my prayers, if perhaps now at last I may succeed in visiting you according to the will of God.

**1:10 From unceasing prayer to "I always ask in my prayers"** reiterates the need to pray for the saints. The following verses from Paul's prayer ministry describe the purpose and objective of praying for others:

2 Thess 1:11-12

1 Thess 5:17

Eph 6:18

Rom 15:30

Eph 3:14—19

Eph 4:15

- **Paul's prayer for his trip to Rome** reveals several implicit aspects of Paul's attitude toward God and life in general: (1) his consistency in making requests ("always ask...") over long periods of time ("now at long last"); (2) his prayers did not give him insight into the future ("if perhaps now at last...") yet he persisted as if he thought it was in line with God's purpose ("I may succeed in coming to you ...") and eventually it happened; (3) his patience over a significant period between beginning to asking for something and having to wait a lengthy period ("if perhaps now...") until things begin to work out; (4) his personal efforts were exhausted before God intervened ("at last I may succeed"); (5) his faith in "the will of God," which he sees as controlling the events of life, however, Paul was not told what this sovereign will of God was, so he had to pray; (6) his persistent plans were made for the trip ("now at last I may succeed...") without knowing what God was going to do or when; (7) his implicit trust in whatever the will of God unfolded for him ("...according to the will of God"); (8) his prayers were for the spiritual benefit of others ("succeed in visiting you..."), not any physical benefit to himself.

- Notice there is no manipulation or demands placed on God to do anything, but rather a simple asking God to help Paul accomplish God's will regardless of what that might be. Paul concludes this epistle with a request for them to "join fervently with me in prayer to God on my behalf...so that by God's will I may come to you with joy..." (Rom 15:30, 32). As we pray for one another, how has this discussion helped you set some priorities and attitudes in your prayers?

#### 4. Longing for ministry (1:11)

<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you,

**1:11 The motive for the ministry is to benefit someone else.** Anyone who seeks personal satisfaction or benefits, praise, fame, or recognition in the ministry will face a more painful and inevitable dissatisfaction or disillusionment in his vain quest. Paul said, "I long to see you," even though he had never been there. He addressed 26 individuals directly in this epistle whom he evidently knew from his travels or earlier from Jerusalem. How many people could you name in your home church? How about any other church? Notice how Paul described his motivations for the ministry in these verses:

Col 1:28-29

1 Thess 2:7-9

2 Cor 12:15

- The desire to "impart ...some **spiritual gift** to strengthen" them. This could not refer to the "**spiritual gifts**," which are given by the Holy Spirit without human intervention (1 Cor 12:11,18), so this is a reference to a spiritual benefit through preaching, teaching, exhorting, comforting, discipling, praying, and mentoring them to "**strengthen**" them (*sterizo*, aorist tense, "to make stable, set fast, fix") stand firm for the Lord in a hostile environment. Notice how this establishing ministry is accomplished in Rom 16:25. Here are some verses where the term *pneumatikos*, "spiritual gift," is used. Do you see a parallel?  
Rom 15:27 (1 Cor 9:11) How were these "spiritual things" sown?  
Eph 1:3

#### 5. Anticipating mutual comforting (1:12)

<sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually comforted by one another's faith, both yours and mine.

**1:12 Paul clarified the previous verse** linking the two with "That is" (*touto de*, "the point is this," GINGRICH). Paul's spiritual gift usage or blessings were going to be mutual. As much as he edified, he hoped to be edified by them. We see no hint of apostolic superiority, but rather a mutual benefiting of the Holy Spirit's gifting and working in each other's lives. How is this principle worked out in 2 Cor 1:4-6?

#### 6. Zealous to bear fruit (1:13)

<sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often intended to come to you (and was prevented until now), so that I may have some fruit even among you, just as I already have among the rest of the Gentiles.

**1:13 Paul was calling attention to the fact that he wanted them to know** that he had "**often**" (*pollakis*, "frequently, many times") intended to go to Rome, but had been "**prevented**" (*koluo*, "hinder, forbid, deny"). Paul was sensitive to the leading of the Spirit

even when he wanted to do something else. The same word is used in Acts 16:6.<sup>6</sup> The objective of Paul's interest was to "**have some fruit**" among them as with other Gentiles. "Fruit" is used in several ways in the NT – this is what Paul sought to produce in Rome:

- (1) **Fruit of the Spirit or Christ's character** in the inner man of believers (Gal 5:22-23) which Paul sought to generate in the believers as they matured in Christ.
- (2) **Fruit of godly actions:** (giving generously, Phil 4:16-17); (righteousness in obedience to God's Word – Heb 13:15)
- (3) **Fruit of reproducing other believers** by communicating the Gospel to unbelievers (Col 1:6).

- Everywhere Paul went he left behind men and women who were strong in the Lord and able to minister to others effectively.<sup>7</sup> What fruit are you seeking to leave in lives?

### 7. Serious as a debtor (1:14)

<sup>14</sup> I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

**1:14 Paul felt under a moral obligation to be involved ("I am a debtor...").** He felt that he had received so many undeserved benefits that were offered to all believers if they only could hear about it, that he could not just take advantage of it without sharing it as well. It is the obligation of warning someone whose house is on fire or of casting a life preserver to someone drowning. How can you not do something? The couplets "Greeks and barbarians" are in parallel to the "wise and the foolish." The Greeks were well-educated, sophisticated and had an advanced culture, while they looked on the rest of the world as "**barbarians**," (*barbarous*, "stammering, stuttering, uttering unintelligible sounds...foreign, uncivilized person") or those not "**Hellenized**," ("made after Hellen," *el*-"sun" + *las*-"rock," thus "land of sun and rock," a metaphor for the culture and language of Greece). Thus Paul sought to minister to the educated and the uneducated, the cultured and the unsophisticated. He had to be equipped for any eventuality. Who were the first two people to whom Jesus spoke the "good news" in John 3 and John 4? Do you see the comparison?

### 8. Eagerness to preach (1:15) the gospel at Rome.

<sup>15</sup> Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

**1:15 Paul knew the risks** (Acts 20:24), but his excitement over the Gospel compelled him to speak it boldly. He was "**eager**" (*prothumos*, "willing, ready") to "**preach**" the Gospel (*euaggelizo*, "announce good news"). When one is in love with something he can't help but talk about it. Yet few Christians today can explain the Gospel and far fewer are eager to share the gospel message with the lost. As an apostle-evangelist he sought to practice Eph 4:11-12. Can you compare these two verses and describe a ministry plan that motivated Paul in this text?

### 9. Unashamed because of the power and righteousness-plan (1:16-17)

<sup>NET</sup> **Rom 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

<sup>6</sup> Where the Spirit prevented Paul from entering into the provinces of Asia at that time (the Spirit would allow him to enter Asia through Ephesus a few years later) and Mysia and Bithynia, which were later reached by Peter (1 Pet 1:1).

<sup>7</sup> Every believer should be taught how to evangelize, disciple, mentor and counsel, with which they become a fruitful child of God. This is particularly the training task of pastors in Eph 4:11-12.

**1:16 Paul now introduces the theme of the epistle to the Romans** how that God has placed in the hands of men the transforming truths that can change man in time and for eternity. Paul was “not **ashamed**” (*epaischunomai*, present tense: “continually...” - “fear of embarrassment that one’s expectations may prove false, reluctance through fear of humiliation”) though he had been smuggled out of Damascus, stoned in Lystra, imprisoned in Philippi, fled from Thessalonica, snuck out of Berea, ridiculed in Athens, declared a blasphemer and destroyer of Mosaic law in Jerusalem, and demeaned by kings in Caesarea, and brought to Rome in chains. Christianity was accused by pagans of everything from atheism (only one God) to cannibalism (misrepresentation of the Lord’s Supper). Powerful leaders sought to intimidate Paul, but he would not back down. How can you be embarrassed by knowing the truth, the only way God has provided for sinful man a perfect salvation? Few sins are worse than being ashamed of our Lord Jesus, but we have all preferred to remain quiet instead of saying a word for Christ when we knew it was opportune. It is difficult to be the one to expose the sinfulness of man, his lostness and unworthiness of salvation, before showing how a gracious God has dealt with every sin and offers a full cleansing and His own righteousness – amazing! In the following verses think of how not to be embarrassed the next time an opportunity to witness appears.

Rom 5:5

2 Tim 1:8 (Note the command)

2 Tim 1:12

1 Peter 4:16 (Note the command)

- The gospel “is God’s **power** for salvation” (*dunamis*, “inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature”) to save men from their sins, bond them together with Christ in an inseparable union, generate a new life within them and give them eternal life. The Sadducees missed the importance of the preaching of Jesus and failed to recognize their Messiah because “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God” (Matt 22:29). Only the power of God within a believer can overcome the tendency to sin and enable them to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Biblical salvation is a fusion of God into the individual life of every believer. What can you discover in these verses on the power of God in salvation?

John 1:12

Rom 16:25

1 Cor 1:18, 25

1 Cor 2:5

Eph 1:19

Eph 3:7, 20

- **The availability of this salvation is “to everyone who believes.”** The word “**salvation**” (*soteria*, “deliverance, preservation, safety”) is used by Paul 19 times in Romans and 11 more times in the other epistles to describe how God rescues people from the penalty and addiction of sin which has separated them from His presence and acceptance, and will result in an eternity of torment in isolation from God. The consequences are horrible, as the Scriptures reveal, but they were not designed for man (Matt 25:41), unless man chooses to follow Satan’s leading. How do these two verses describe “salvation?”

2 Thess 1:8

Col 1:13

- **The offer is free to those who “believe”** (*pisteuo*, present tense: “continue to...to think to be true, place confidence in, depend upon”), not to those who **behave** in a certain manner. Salvation is not merely professing to be a Christian or doing what

Christians do, and certainly not trusting vainly in your own goodness as though your sins were insignificant, but rather it is an exclusive trust and dependency in the Word of God which describes what Christ did on the cross as full and just payment for all your sins. Faith is taking God at His Word and believing Him completely. The offering is universal: Jews and Greeks without limitations, except that they would hear, understand and believe. This implies that someone first must go to them with the message of salvation. What meaning for “believing” can you see in Eph 2:8-9?

<sup>17</sup> For the righteousness of God is **revealed** in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, “The righteous by faith will live.”

**1:17 The key to understanding *salvation* is to understand “righteousness.”** Salvation is the **revelation** (*apokalupto*, “uncover, lay open what has been veiled, make known”) of the “righteousness of God.” This is something man would never have imagined if it were not revealed to us, i.e. all the religions of the world have humanized gods (if any). There are two aspects of this revelation: (1) the drastic contrast between God’s righteousness and man’s sinfulness (see Rom 3:23); (2) the incredible offer of God to grant to sinful men His own perfect righteousness, which results in a state of justification, as a gift to all who believe in Him (Rom 4:5). How does Paul describe this gift of righteousness in Phil 3:8-9?

- The phrase “from faith to faith” has a variety of interpretations, but the basic idea is that the righteousness of God comes “out of,” *ek*, faith, and is “designed for,” *eis*, faith. Perhaps the dual implication means that the only way God’s righteousness is accessible is *by* faith and it is transmitted *to* those who believe *through* faith. One thing is certain: the only way any sinful human being will ever be acceptable before God is through the granting of His righteousness to the sinner because of his faith. The Hebrew from Habakkuk 2:4 personalizes the faith, “the righteous man shall live by **his** faith.” See Rom 4:3 about how Abraham acquired God’s righteousness.

## II. The Condemnation of the unrighteous or lost (1:18-32)

Someone might ask, Why all the fuss? Why doesn’t God just accept everyone into heaven? Every element of His character rejects this universalism because sin is real and must be dealt with, and God is holy (beyond our understanding) and just, requiring that sin’s penalty must be paid and sinful man be made acceptable to God. From Rom 1:18 through 3:20 Paul will describe the condemnation of man and his desperate need of salvation.

### A. General revelation of God’s reality (1:18-20)

<sup>18</sup> For the **wrath** of God is **revealed** from heaven against **all** ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who **suppress** the truth **by** their unrighteousness,

**1:18 The reason that the sinfulness of man is such an issue** is because God’s Word and Nature demand that His wrath be satisfied against sin. Sinful humans do not appreciate a God of wrath because we do not appreciate how repulsive sin is to Him, i.e. even a *little* sin like eating a fruit from a forbidden tree, to a holy God. A humanized god would call the sin in the garden a failure in human judgment and would give them another chance to try again, but the only God who is there condemned the entire human race and all of creation for one sin! Paul considered the fear of eternal condemnation should be the first motive for seeking God’s salvation in Christ, as well as the chief motive for the reaching all the people groups of the world. He will spend three chapters clarifying the truth that all human beings are condemned in their sin and can never do anything in themselves to improve their status before God. The remedy (“good news”) can never be appreciated until the prognosis of the “bad news” of man’s sinful condition is fully understood and accepted. There are no second

opinions, but there is a free prescription if you are willing to trust it. The “**wrath**” (*orge*, “agitation of the soul, violent emotion, and determined indignation”) of God is “**revealed**” (same word as in the previous verse) “from heaven” as the second revealed attribute of God. We would never imagine God as He is revealed. We would humanize Him as the pagans without revelation did (this is called *idolatry*). Until a person is told and believes that he has cancer and will soon die, he will never appreciate or partake of the remedy to be cured. So it is with sin. Here are a few verses to investigate the nature of the wrath of God, with whom there are no exceptions.

Ps 2:5, 12

Ps 76:6-7

John 3:16, 36

1 Cor 16:22

Eph 5:6

2 Thess 1:7-8

- The target of God’s wrath is “**all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people**” without preferential treatment of any race or religion. Jews and Greeks are all condemned under this wrath against sin, because they have all sinned (Rom 3:9,23). Certainly, some are better than others, but regardless, all are guilty of sin. “**Ungodliness**” (*asebia*, “lack of reverence towards God, impiety”) refers to actions that reject any accountability to, or respect for, God and “**unrighteousness**” (*adikia*, “disregard for divine law”) refers to lawlessness and unrestricted self-will. John MacArthur states, “Men treat other men the way they do because they treat God the way they do. Man’s enmity with his fellow man originates with his being at enmity with God” {MacArthur 1991:66}. Do you agree that God should be wrathful against sin?
- By their action they “**suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.**” Every human being has a natural tendency to follow sin and reject the true God. Jesus said, “The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). They “**suppress**” the truth (*katecho*, “hold back, check, prevent”) because they prefer whatever they want in life. God is not convenient in their lives. How did David describe these people in Ps 14:1?

<sup>19</sup> because what can be known about God is **plain** to them, because God has **made it plain** to them.

**1:19 Every person on earth has enough knowledge of God around him** to be led to Christ somehow. In 2 Cor 5:11, Paul wrote, “Because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people...” to indicate that one of the prime motivations for witnessing is that God is going to do just what He said: the lost go to a place called “hell,” unless persuaded to trust Christ’s payment on the cross for their sins. This is why this author spent 30 years in the jungles and cities in South America sharing the Gospel. However, it is because men refuse to respond positively to the evidence they are exposed to that God’s condemnation is just. “**What can be known**” indicates that not all about God can be deduced from nature, but enough can be known to seek for more answers, if one is honest with the evidence and desires the truth.<sup>8</sup> “**God has made it plain to them,**” implies a universal (not selective) self-revelation, at least sufficient to provoke a search. How did this work out in these verses?

Acts 14:15-17

<sup>8</sup> Does nature give evidence of a Designer or does it prove that random chance is flawless and powerful enough to produce all the variety and balance of life?

Acts 17:23-28

John 1:9

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world his **invisible attributes**— his eternal **power** and divine **nature**— have been **clearly seen**, because they are **understood** through what has been made. So people are **without excuse**.

**1:20 The specific content of the general revelation in creation demonstrates “His invisible attributes,”** that is, the circumstantial evidence of His existence is sufficient to convince any honest investigator that a powerful Designer is behind all that is life. Specifically these are **“His eternal power”** (e.g., creation, seasons, planetary orbits, the human body, etc.) and his **“divine nature”** (e.g., gracious provisions, humorous variety in creation, perfect ecology, beautiful designs and spectacular panoramas, etc.). The earth and all it contains is beyond human imagination. To believe that all this divergence and complexity had occurred by random chance over a period of time is so absurd that truly only a “fool” would believe it, that is, one who does not want to consider a Divine Designer. The logic of the Psalmist is obvious: “Does the one who makes the human ear not hear? Does the one who forms the human eye not see?” (Ps 94:9). If we can hear, then surely the one who made us can hear... If we can think, then clearly the mind of our Creator can think, reason and relate as well. Jeremiah said, “You will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). As the Ethiopian eunuch was searching for God, the Spirit sent Philip to witness to him and he let the eunuch to Christ. Cornelius and his family were seeking the truth and God led Peter to go and preach to him the Gospel (Acts 10:2, 44, 48). If any man wants to know the truth God will undertake to bring it to him. For the believer, sensitivity to God’s leadings can be strategic. This author was led to two tribes in the jungle of Colombia that came to accept Christ who were waiting for a messenger. We are so glad we went. Are people condemned because they rejected the Gospel? Is there another reason in John 3:36?

### **B. Man’s response to God’s general revelation justifies God’s wrath (1:21-23)**

<sup>NET</sup> **Rom 1:21** For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened.

**1:21 Because man is “without excuse”...he tries to deny his accountability to the All-powerful God.** Man has either sought to change God’s description to be more compatible with man’s ideas of how they think God should be or deny that He is even there, or instead they choose to worship man himself. Within all men there is the innate knowledge that God is there, but likewise, in general, man has always been inclined to reject this truth for a variety of reasons, which they prefer to believe. This verse shows four ways man demonstrates his rejection of God:

**(1) They do “not glorify him as God”** – Fallen man has most exhibited his pride by diminishing, distorting or denying the character of God. To “glorify” God means to recognize His works in creation and experience His presence daily, give Him the honor He is due, and celebrate all His amazing attributes. See Ps 19:1; 29:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31; Rev 4:11. Note the mission of Israel in 1 Chron 16:24-29.

**(2) They do not “give him thanks”** – When we now look at the universe and see that earth is the only planet inhabitable by humans in this expansive universe, how perfect earth’s environment is for a vast population, the beauty of nature, and the provision of rain, sun, and the cycles of all kinds of life, some still prefer to see such magnificence as the consequence of random chance. See Acts 14:15-17. They refuse to acknowledge He created anything at all.

**(3) They “became futile in their thoughts”** – The term **“thought”** (*dialogismos*, “inward reasoning, a man deliberating with himself, questioning about what is true”) has the idea of speculations or imaginations, which become **“futile”** (*mataioo*, “make empty, foolish”)

leading them to believe fantasies and fairy tales that feed their unbelief and sinfulness.<sup>9</sup> See 1 Chron 28:9 and Prov 6:18.

**(4) “Their senseless hearts were darkened”** – The “senseless” heart (*asunetos*, “unintelligent, stupid”) is not free and enlightened, but “darkened” which forces them to cling to anything they can imagine, touch or feel for some sort of security or identity. Unless it is perceived by the senses (as a person groping in the darkness) they consider it unreal. Paul warned the Colossians, “Be careful not to allow anyone to captivate you through an empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ (Col 2:8).

How does Eph 4:17-19 describe the consequences of these four rejections of man?

<sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

**1:22 These next two verses describe man’s rationalization and religion.** In their futile thoughts and unintelligent imaginations (v. 21) they thought themselves to be “wise” (*sophos*, “experts, cultivated, learned”) through their hypothetical explanations that supposedly eliminated the need for God. The result was that they “became fools” (*moraino*, “prove to be foolish, be insane”), the origin of the English word, “moron.” By rejecting revelation, man is limited to his senses as a man groping about in the dark, without any recognition or acknowledgement of anything beyond his senses. A whole new world appears when the light is turned on. Without a reference point of God’s truth, which is given by revelation (someone turned on the light!). There is no basis for discriminating between truth and falsehood or right and wrong. Gifted writers and speakers articulate plausible theories where fantasy and reality are blended and indistinguishable as in the case of evolution, an unproven theory that is touted as scientific fact. Many Christians are intimidated into adapting God’s revelation to man’s imaginations in the areas of morals, mind-games, and parapsychology. The conflicting theories of psychology, philosophy, sociology and anthropology are elevated above the *primitive* concepts of God’s revelation through His Design. Every institution that seeks to accommodate the world’s speculative systems drifts further and further from God’s truth to become acceptable to *wise-fools* who have rejected God from reality. Without an in-depth knowledge of God’s Word even the Christians are deceived and conformed to a false system without knowing the difference. Examine how Paul treated the wisdom of this world in 1 Cor 1:18, 20, 25.

<sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

**1:23 The final stage of rejecting God is the creation of man-made religions** in every culture. Some want to say that all religions lead to the same God and heaven, but they are totally incompatible. For example, *nirvana* (Buddhism) or *moksha* (Hinduism) is not a conscious bliss, but a desireless state or nothingness through absorption back into the cosmic energy without any personal awareness or personal god. Humanistic philosophies, psychologies and theologies revere religion as the evidence of man’s upward evolution starting with primitive ignorance, going on to animism to poly-demonism, then polytheism, and then to monotheism. Just the opposite is true: human religions are evidence of man’s downward slide from monotheism into man’s imaginations. Soon after the Fall, “men began to worship the Lord” (Gen 4:26), because He was the only deity they knew. However, their lust for sin was not abated and the flood prevented them from degenerating further into sin. The first mention of idolatry was in Abraham’s family background (Josh 24:2). After the

<sup>9</sup> The fable of the Frog Prince, a German fairy tale, is a story of how a frog was permitted to enter the palace and is transformed in an instant into a handsome prince by the kiss of the princess (the story is in the *Annotated Brothers Grimm* series). The only difference between this fairy tale and evolution is time: with sufficient time according to evolution, the frog changes to a prince or man as well.

flood, as men drifted away from the true God, they began to represent God by different images and creative imaginations until the true God became unrecognizable. Even the Jews fell before the temptation of idolatry until their two Captivities (BC 722-Israel and BC 586-Judah), after which they never again were idolaters. Read how they practiced exactly what the pagans had taught them in Isa 44:9-17.

- Sinful man rejected the true Creator for a god more like them, who acted like man and coincided with their image of how a god should be. The first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me." <sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below." <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God." (<sup>NET</sup> Exodus 20:3). Have you heard someone say, "In my opinion god would not do this..." Their idea of a god is so exalted that if they do not think the biblical God is comparable, He is rejected. This is idolatry. Unaware people are being "seduced" by demons to believe a lie" How did Paul describe the chief function of demonic activity in 1 Tim 4:1?
- The pagan gods are either (1) **human-like** (Greece's mythological creatures) (2) **birds** (eagle in Rome and the stork and hawk in Egypt), (3) **4-footed animals** (multitudes like the bull-god Apis in Egypt; cat-goddess Bubastis, cow-goddess Hathor, hippopotamus-goddess Opet and the wolf-god Ophois, in Israel, the golden calf or (4) **crawling creatures** as in Egypt which deified the scarab beetle and dung beetle and many countries worshiped snakes. Other pagan practices that are substitutes for God are the use of horoscopes, and occult advisers. Man's downward spiral began with foolish thinking, moral insensitivity, and then religious stupidity in idol worship. Man becomes like whatever he worships. Furthermore, a worshipper takes an inferior position to the object of worship. Though created in the image of the All-Mighty God, foolish idol worshippers assume a position lower than animals and serpents! What do these verses indicate awaits these idol worshippers?  
Gal 5:19-21  
Eph 5:5  
Rev 9:20

### C. God's consequences to man's response (1:24-32)

God's condemnation of mankind, who are committed to suppressing truth, ignoring revelations, and perverting God's glory, is foreseen in His abandonment of mankind to their passions. Three times God declares that He "gave them over" or "abandoned" them to their corruption that further deserved God's wrath and sentence of death (1:32).

#### 1. First abandonment of mankind: to idolatry and sexual depravity (1:24-25)

<sup>24</sup> **Therefore** God **gave them over** in the **desires** of their hearts to **impurity**, to **dishonor** their bodies among themselves.

#### 1:24 Men have tended to follow their own idea of how to worship since Cain (Gen 4:3-5).

We have abandoned the true God in the process, and, therefore, degenerated into the worse of sins, i.e. Cain murdered his brother. All men left to themselves tend to degenerate into all kinds of addictive perversity. The "therefore" ties this new section to the previous argument, which now reveals the consequences of their decisions. The message of Romans 1:24-32 is that when man chooses to abandon God, He grants their desires and abandons them to their selfish inclinations (1:24, 26, 28). God "**gave them over**" (*paradidomi*, aorist tense: "at one time in the past...to hand over, give over to the consequences of their choices") without any further intervention, or conviction of sin. Their inner sense would be

that there was nothing wrong with their actions; in fact, they would feel totally justified in all that they do. Men tend to be more concerned about the pain and suffering that result from sin, than with avoiding the cause of the problem. Everyone knows that unrestrained sex causes venereal diseases and HIV, but the idea of following God's standard of moral purity by abstinence before marriage and fidelity in marriage as a solution is unthinkable because few will do it. It is rare that anyone links loneliness, frustration, meaninglessness, anxiety and despair to any sinful origins that could have been avoided. It is preferred to treat the symptom instead of the cure, because sinful man prefers his sins. The root cause is the "**desires** (*epitumia*, "craving, desire for the forbidden, lust") of their hearts to **impurity**" (*akatharsia*, "uncleanness, lustful, luxurious, profligate living"). The consequences of man's selfish and rebellious heart is "to **dishonor** their bodies among themselves" (*atimazo*, present tense: "continually to...treat with contempt, disrespect, shamefully, esteem lightly"). In spite of the health movements men continue to abuse their bodies with unhealthy eating, or satisfying their immediate sensual appetites for pleasure, entertainment, sex, drugs, pornography or wealth, no matter what it might cost them or others. How common were these problems in the Early Church?

1 Thess 4:5

Eph 2:3

2 Cor 12:21

Eph 5:3

Ecc 9:3

<sup>25</sup> They exchanged the truth of God for a **lie** and **worshiped and served** the **creation** rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

**1:25 The core issue of fallen man is that he has "exchanged the truth of God for a lie."**

The biggest lie is to claim that God does not exist or is not necessary for life to exist. The refusal to believe the truth, and the ease with which man accepts any plausible explanation to avoid the implications of an All-Powerful God is impressive. The idea that life on earth has any purpose or design to it is not even considered by secular man, because the implications point to a personal, powerful God. Jeremiah wrote, "You have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood" (Jer 13:25) with the result that the nation was corrupted. Since men tends to worship something, having believed the lie that there is no God or He is not here, he turns his focus on the "creation" (man and nature) in different forms in different ages, but the emphasis is the same. Notice how these verses depict the lies of men:

John 8:44

Acts 5:3

2 Thess 2:10-11 (He helps them believe what they want to believe)

1 John 2:21

**2. Second abandonment of mankind: to degrading physical passions (1:26-27)**

<sup>26</sup> **For this reason** God gave them over to **dishonorable passions**. For their women exchanged the **natural sexual relations** for unnatural ones,

**1:26 The ultimate expression of man's moral degeneracy and perversion** is identified as homosexuality. Freedom from God is expressed in man's progressive perversion of every normal relationship. God gave them over to "**dishonorable [or shameful] passions**" (especially of sexual nature). First is mentioned the "**women**" (*thelus*, "female;" a word for the sexual gender) to emphasize the perversion factor. In most cultures women are the most reluctant toward sexual perversions, so this is to shock and astound the reader as to how far mankind will degenerate apart from God. Most societies recognize that homosexuality is abnormal or "unnatural" (*para phusin*, "contrary to nature"), except when the entire society

defines sophistication as the acceptance of any form of sexual activity. Notice one of the first evidences of anyone who belongs to Jesus Christ in Gal 5:24.

<sup>27</sup> and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were **inflamed in their passions** for one another. Men committed **shameless acts** with men and received in themselves the **due penalty for their error**.

**1:27 “Likewise” or “in the same way”** the “**men**” (*arren*, “males,” a word for the sexual gender) became consumed in the lust for homosexual encounters as did the inhabitants of Sodom. Even when struck with blindness they continued to grope for Lot’s door in their homosexual drive to abuse the new male-like angels who were visiting Lot (Gen 19:11). Their perversion made *Sodom* a term for immorality and *sodomy* a term in all languages for homosexuality. Psychologists, sociologists and legal systems now defend and protect this deviant behavior, yet the Bible condemns all such perversions. No unrepentant homosexual can be saved. The same condemnation is on fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous persons, drunkards, revilers or swindlers (1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; Jude 7). We can deduce from these condemnations, no one is “born a homosexual” and cannot help “what he is.” Rather decisions and preferences are made in man’s minds for self-identity or self-protection that increasingly change their behavior and desires. Anyone becomes an adulterer or homosexual by choice and is accountable for his decisions. Thus, each one will receive “in himself the due penalty for his **error**” (*plane*, “a wandering, straying about, mental straying”). The inevitable consequences for individuals include the destruction of any normal relationship, exposure to frightening diseases (AIDS and others), negative influence on society and eternal condemnation, yet sinful men persist in their lust for pleasure. A word that is used six times in the NT to describe these and other immoral acts is “**lasciviousness**” (*aselgeia*, “unbridled lust, shamelessness, indecent and outrageous sexual behavior”) that had crept into the church at Corinth (2 Cor 12:21). Today many churches want to ignore the Scriptures and ordain homosexual pastors. In many contemporary cultures there is no fear or respect for God’s Word and warnings, thus there is no limit to how perverse society will become.

### 3. Third abandonment of mankind: to a degenerate mind (1:28-31)

<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a **depraved mind**, to do what should not be done.

**1:28 A God-rejecting mind, such as a secular worldview or philosophy is a “depraved”** mind (*adokimos*, “not standing the test, not approved,” especially used of metals and coins). The mind that finds God to be worthless becomes itself worthless to any moral value. They say like the men of Job’s day, “So they say to God, ‘Turn away from us! We do not want to know your ways.’”<sup>15</sup> Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? What would we gain if we were to pray to him?” (<sup>NET</sup> **Job 21:14**). Men can excel intellectually but morally they lack the basics of the “beginning of knowledge,” that is a fearful respect that God will do exactly what He says. The OT term for this condition is “fool.” Our English word “fool” actually translates three different Hebrew words that describe a progressive degeneration of a person into foolish thinking, which destroys his life. Discuss how Jeremiah (4:22) described the “foolishness” of Israel.

- <sup>29</sup> They are **filled** with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice. They are **rife** with envy, murder, strife, deceit, hostility. They are gossips,  
<sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, **contrivers** of all sorts of evil, disobedient to parents,  
<sup>31</sup> senseless, covenant-breakers, heartless, ruthless.

**1:29-31 Paul categorizes a general series of sins that are indications** of the vices of mankind. In general, they are “**filled**” (*pleroo*, perfect tense: completed action with continual effect – “to abound... carry through to the end, accomplish, carry out”). As in Luke 4:28 when the Jews were “filled with rage,” they were compelled to act in anger, so here to be “filled” with unrighteousness, people are controlled by these passions:

- **Wickedness** (*porneia*, “illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals, etc....metaphorically, the worship of idols). (see Eph 6:12).
- **Greed** (*pleonexia*, “covetousness, greedy desire to have more” than you have) (see Luke 12:15; Eph 5:3).
- **Evil** (*kakia*, “ill-will, desire to injure, naughtiness, malice”) (See 1 Cor 14:20; Titus 3:3; James 1:21).
- **Envy** (*phthonos*, “jealousy over the good success of another, desiring what another has, dislike or rejection of someone for a perceived undeserved benefit they may have) (See Gal 5:21; 1 Tim 6:4; James 4:5).
- **Murder** (*phonos*, “homicide, slaughter”) (See Matt 15:19).
- **Strife (debate or quarreling)** (*eris*, “contention, discord, rivalries, discord”) (See Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:19-20).
- **Deceit** (*dolos*, “deceit, guile, treachery, fraud;” used for bait for fish) (See Mark 7:21-23; 1 Pet 3:10).
- **Malice** (*kakoethei*, “a disposition for producing mischief, spitefulness, meanness or malicious craftiness”) (Only use in the NT).
- **Gossips** (*psithuristes*, “whisperer, secret slander, harmful gossip against another”) (Only use in the NT).
- **Slanderers** (*katalalos*, “a defamer, evil speaker, one who spreads evil reports”) (Only use in the NT)
- **Haters of God** (*theostuyes*, “exceptionally impious and wicked”) (Only use in the NT)
- **Insolent** (*hubristes*, “one who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong” or “violent aggressor, especially of one who takes a superior attitude and mistreats others out of his own revolt against God’s revelation of truth.”). This was how Paul described himself in 1 Tim 1:13 before he met Jesus.
- **Arrogant** (*huperephanous*, “haughty, proud, or an empty boaster who brags of his position and despises others”). This is one of the descriptors of the end times (2 Tim 3:2).
- **Boastful** (*alazon*, “empty pretender, arrogantly presumes too much about himself, braggart”). This is one of the descriptors of the end times (2 Tim 3:2).
- **Contrivers of all sorts of evil** (*epheuretas kakon*, “inventor, thinks up ways of doing things, contriver” – “wrong, harmful, injurious”). This is one of the descriptors of the end times (2 Tim 3:2).
- **Disobedient to parents** (*goneusin apeitheis*, lit. “to parents disobedient” or “not compliant, will not be persuaded to obey, rebellious”). This is also used to describe the characteristics of the end times (2 Tim 3:2), false teachers (Titus 1:6) and Paul himself before he was a Christian (Titus 3:3).

- **Senseless** (*asunetos*, “unintelligent, stupid, foolish”). It is used to describe the Gentile people groups that will be converted to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom 10:19; also 1:21).
- **Covenant-breakers** (*asunthetos*, “faithless, untrustworthy, not keeping a promise or bound by any agreement.”) This is one of the descriptors of the end times (2 Tim 3:2).
- **Heartless** (*astopgos*, “without natural affection, unsociable, inhuman, unloving” especially for close associates or family). This is a description of the end times (2 Tim 3:3)
- **Ruthless** (*aneleemon*, “no mercy, cruel”). (Only use in the NT)

<sup>32</sup> Although they **fully know** God's righteous **decree** that those who practice such things **deserve to die**, they not only do them but also **approve of those who practice them**.

**1:32 All men have been exposed to sufficient knowledge** from creation (1:19-21) to recognize His reality and to seek Him, but they do not because they do not want to know Him or His righteousness. They suppress the truth in their desire for unrighteousness (1:18). In most cultures of the world men know intuitively that the list previously mentioned are wrong, but they attempt to justify them, then rationalize them or blame them on other circumstances to deal with the inevitable guilt. The “better they deal with it” the more sin becomes normal. What is the problem with mankind that they don't seek to know the Lord according to these verses?

John 3:19-20

Rom 2:15

- What is worse than doing evil and justifying one's own sins is the general acceptance of the public, in fact, they “**approve** of those who practice them” (*suneudokeo*, “to be pleased together with, consent, agree to, to applaud”). The verb is used to describe the wife who is pleased to dwell with her husband (1 Cor 7:12, 13). Any society that openly accepts and exalts sexual promiscuity, infidelity, and openly defends homosexuality making it a “hate crime” to denounce such sins is only defining it's own dominance of sin and defiance of the will of God. This is evident by the degeneration of TV and movie moral standards, justification of public leader's immorality, the generally accepted pre- and extra-marital sexual activity and homosexuality all of which are humorously, depicted to build public acceptance under the guise of entertainment.
- Paul has described the general characteristics of the sinful degeneration (there is no such thing as moral evolution) of mankind to clarify why all men are condemned before a holy God and desperately need a Savior who can deal with both the addictive guilt of sin before God, and the remedy for victory over the horrible effect of sin in this life. This story will unfold in the rest of the epistle to the Romans.