

Romans, Chapter 1:1—Introduction

V 1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”

The “Gospel of God” is the subject of Romans. “God” is the universal Name of God, and all men are born into this world as His “offspring”. The gospel Paul is referring to is a gospel for the whole world, but also, because of its peculiar character, Paul also calls it “his”, or “my gospel.”

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device” (Acts 17:28-29).

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Rom. 2:16).

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom.16:25).

“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” (2 Tim.2:8).

Paul was raised up as a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ for this special work. The Lord Jesus gave the twelve Apostles an administration of the “Kingdom gospel.” He Himself also preached the gospel of the Kingdom while walking here. We could say that the Kingdom gospel “featured” the Jew while Paul’s gospel “featured” the Gentiles. However Gentiles will be blessed by the Kingdom gospel after the church is raptured, and Jews who believe Paul’s gospel now, are blessed.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt.9:35). Then, in chapter 10, He sends the twelve with this same message, but only to Jews.

“And when he had called unto [him] his twelve disciples, he gave them power [against] unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt.10:1).

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded

them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt.10:5-7).

Then, in Matthew 28, He commissions the remaining eleven apostles to go into all the world with this same gospel. “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them...And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen” (16-20).

It is important to notice that *power*, *signs*, and *miracles* are connected with the *Kingdom Gospel*— healing in this life. In *Paul’s gospel* the great power mentioned is *resurrection*, although he did use miracles and such like things to confirm his apostleship.

“And declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom.1:4).

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might” (Eph.1:18-21).

The Kingdom gospel is connected with *earth*, Paul’s gospel, with *Heaven*.

v 2 “(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures)”

Old Testament prophets promised blessings for the Gentiles.

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isa.11:10).

“And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa. 49).

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name [shall be] great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense [shall be] offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name [shall be] great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 1:11).

Thus “*the gospel of God*” was promised to Gentiles, not however, what is identified by Paul as “*his gospel*” — this was not revealed in the Old Testament.

vv 3, 4 *“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:”*

The gospel based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord is for the whole world. *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me” (Jn. 12:32).* Of course any and all blessing for man is based upon the sacrificial death of Christ, and dependent upon His being raised from among the dead.

v 5, 6 *“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:”*

As already mentioned, “Paul’s gospel” features “all nations” not just the Jews. Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles is insisted upon.

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we [should go] unto the heathen, [nations] and they unto the circumcision (Gal. 2:9).

Paul received grace. This was a “gift” to him, “and apostleship” is authority, towards others.

v 7 *“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”.*

The Roman believers were “*called to be saints*” —

what they were by the calling of God, not what they were to *become*. That is, they were saints already, they were not going to *become* saints at some later time. They were *saints* already by the call of God.

There were also believers alive in Jerusalem who were called by Paul, “*poor saints*.” These too were “*saints by calling*.” — Not by something they did or their physical condition; but they merited their being called saints by the call of God, as well.

“For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26).

v 8 *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”*

It is a good thing for others to speak of our faith. Our faith that others see and speak of is the result of the public display in our lives of the *faith* that we believed. *The faith* is what we believe, that is, it is the truth of that which forms true Christianity.\

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

Paul’s prayers for the Roman saints was related to “the gospel”, not simply their health, work or present circumstances. This was his chief concern—how were they getting along spiritually.

v 10 *“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.”*

The Apostle’s desire was to see them personally, because of his interest in their spiritual growth. Yet, though this was his personal desire, he felt the need of asking the Lord, in prayer, to grant him the fulfillment of his desire. The desire to know how believers were getting along was a common concern that Paul had for all the saints of God. We read in Acts 15:36; *“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, [and see] how they do”.*

v 11 *“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be estab-*

lished;”

Paul knew, as his being an apostle to the Gentiles, he had ministry from Christ the ascended Head, for the establishing of the saints of God.

“And he gave some, apostles;... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” (Eph.4:11,12).

We too have some measure of ministry for the saints of God. *“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”* (Eph.4:16).

v12 *“That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”*

Though Paul was an Apostle, what he shared with all saints was *“the mutual faith”*. Whatever differences there may be, even God given differences, we all are Christians by means of *“the mutual faith.”* We are saved by faith. Here I think it is a reference to what we might call personal faith, rather than the doctrines believed in Christianity.

v13 *“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.”*

Here we learn we may desire, and even make plans for a journey, and find ourselves hindered from going, for some unknown reason. (to us). Still, no doubt, the motive and reason for Paul’s desire was good. Sometimes the Lord hinders us and sometimes Satan does. All of course, allowed by our God and Father. But as here, we do not always know who, or what is hindering us. Fruit for Christ was Paul’s desire, in all of His labors, but he says, that I might have some fruit. He did not want to labor in vain.

“Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1 Thess. 2:18)

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6).

v14 *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Bar-*

barians; both to the wise, and to the unwise”.

Because of Paul’s calling to the apostleship amongst the Gentiles, He was a debtor to these Gentiles. They would be the ones producing the fruit that he desired to have amongst them as a result of his apostolic labors. He is indebted to them for this fruit.

v15 *“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also”*.

It is good to be ready to preach the gospel even though we may be hindered in doing so.

v16 *“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”*.

Paul never lost the sense in his soul of the preciousness, and value of the gospel. In the last days, when he, the chief minister of this gospel, was a prisoner, many became ashamed of him and the Lord’s testimony.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim.1:8).

“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim.1:16).

Remember that in the end days what is really of God that may be seen outwardly, takes the form of something man is naturally ashamed of. In Nehemiah’s day of ruin it was said of the work of God, *“What do these feeble Jews?...will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?...Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall”* (Neh.4).

God’s judgment on Jerusalem was solemn, and devastating, but faith went back to rebuild what had been destroyed by the Gentiles. This was the work of God. It is good to retain God’s view and estimate of things for the gospel is His power.

v17 *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

The “righteousness of God” is revealed in the gospel of the grace of God. The righteousness of man was revealed in the law.

“and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which [would be] on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which [is] of God through faith,” (Phil.3:9). When a believer takes the law for his “rule” of life, he is exchanging the righteousness of God he has by means of the gospel for his own righteousness which is by means of the law.

v 18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”

Since “the wrath of God from heaven” has been revealed against all unrighteousness, how wonderful to have the righteousness of God, who administrates His wrath upon all unrighteousness. No wonder we should never be ashamed of the gospel of God, for it delivers us from the wrath of God.

Take seriously this principle that in the end of any dispensation, that which is really of God, looks feeble or poor, and its counterfeit, looks like something to be admired. The Chief Cornerstone was looked at, in this way, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3).

That which had been given up to man—“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Mt. 23:36)—was something which drew out the admiration even of our Lord’s own disciples. “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to [him] for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mt. 24:1-2). The fox, had a better home than the Lord did.

vv 19,20 “Because that which *may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them 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: (19-20)

Creation, could have, and can, teach man that God created it. The eternal power and Godhead are, you might say, invisible, yet from creation, there is plain testimony, to both His power, and His eternal Being. If

you said, there was a great explosion in Des Moines, and as a result all of the automobiles in Des Moines were made by that explosion. People would think you insane to believe such a thing could happen.

Likewise this marvelous creation, had to be created, yet man cannot duplicate, or create any part of it. Even what he seeks to imitate, he can only do so by use of some substance already created by God. God alone can create out of nothing. Man can really only make, God does both, *create* and *make*.

The following quotes are from Mr. Darby’s translation. There are different Hebrew words for *made*, and *create*.

“For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed” (Exo. 20:11).

“For thus saith Jehovah who created the heavens, God himself who formed the earth and made it, he who established it,...not as waste did he create it: he formed it to be inhabited:...I [am] Jehovah, and there is none else” (Isa. 45:18).

(**note here:** God did not create the world “waste”, and “void” in its original creation. Verse 2 of Gen. one, is something the earth became after its original creation.)

We may also note that in Gen. one, after the first verse, nothing is spoken of as being “created” except for creatures, (including man,) that which had a “living soul.”

V 21 “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.”

Man was not created not knowing God. This unbelief and denial of God, is a consequence of man’s actions and mind. Rejecting the testimony of creation, (vs. 19) was serious, but now, they advance in sin, by not glorifying God, when they knew Him. Consequently their foolish heart was darkened. Sin leads to darkness.

vv 22 “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,”

Man, ever infatuated with his own mind, thinking

himself to be wise, actually became a fool. Again, here I think it is a result of mans actions and thoughts.

v23 *“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”.*

It seems amazing to me that man, who denies the eternal power and Godhead, sets about making images, (idols) depicting their thoughts of God. Then he worships the god he created, while denying the God, Who created him. Also, it seems remarkable that while denying the testimony of creation, he makes his idols, after the pattern of that which is created.

v 24 *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:”*

Man’s heart was darkened because of his rejecting the testimony of creation, and because of his refusal to glorify God now God acts in His governmental ways and gives man up to his own uncleanness. That is a result of our fallen lusts. When God gives us up, it is so serious. It is a result of apostasy. But this act of Go the giving them up to their own uncleanness, follows their giving up God in their thoughts.

v 25 *“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.”*

I take it, “the truth of God” here was the truth about God that was knowable from creation. While men worshiped creation, they denied the Creator. This idolatry brought on another act of God, in His governmental ways with man. God’s government is simply, *“whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”*, and his reaping is upon earth, in this life.

v 26 *“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:”*

God created man in His own image then it says, *“Male and female created He them”*. The purpose of this “male” — “female” creation is stated. *“God said to them , Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth..”* This required the man and the woman remaining in their God appointed roles. Rejecting God, God gives them

up, and they apostasize from nature. They leave. or change the natural use of their being. They had changed the truth of God into a lie, (in their minds) now they change the “natural use” into that which is against nature.

v 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 recompence of their error which was meet.”*

It is of interest to me that here, in this matter, the woman (vs.26) is first mentioned for it says of her *“Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.”* (1 Cor. 11:9) The woman was not created for another woman, but for the needs of a man. When she abandons her role in nature, there are far reaching consequences. This is not to excuse the man. The violation of natural order is always harmful, and leads to sin, often of grossest forms. Still, men are responsible, and they receive the just judgment of such departure from nature.

v 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;”*

All of our morals are formed by our relationship with God. Societies, or cultures generally, (if not always) are the direct reflection of the relationship men have with God. Their concept of Him. It is why it is so important to stay close to the Word of God, where He is revealed.

v 29 *“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,”*

Here we see the two great manifestations of fallen man, Corruption, and violence. We see them in there extremes here because it is the description of man in an apostate condition. All lost men, are not apostates in this sense. But these verses are about men who are spoken of as *“knowing God”* (vs.21).

v 30 *“Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,”*

Our relationship with God, affects our relationship

with all, including ourselves, and especially, it seems to me, those who are in our lives, as authorities from God. (here parents.) But of this class it says elsewhere, “*But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous [are they], selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities*” (2 Pet.2:10). “*Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*” (Jude1:8). But it is solemn, no doubt this begins in the home, with parents and their children.

vv 31,32 “*Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful*” “*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*”.

We little realize what a wholesome affect the Word of God has as an influence on a culture, even when a vital spiritual relationship with God is not known.

We have seen also in this chapter, the importance of nature in the formation of a life lived for God. How important for a family to have a happy natural relationship. 1 Timothy teaches that in latter times there would be a special attack upon lives relating to the denial of nature, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart (apostates) from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*” (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

This departure in the realm of nature leads to far grosser things, and in 2 Tim. we read. “*But this know, that in [the] last days difficult times shall be there; for men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vain pretensions, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it: and from these turn away. For of these are they who are getting into houses, and leading captive silly women,*

laden with sins, led by various lusts, always learning, and never able to come to [the] knowledge of [the] truth. Now in the same manner in which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, thus these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, found worthless as regards the faith” (2 Tim. 3:1-8).

What began with denying God given marriage, and food, (in a pretense to have a superior spiritual relationship with God.) led into this last condition. It is especially solemn that even knowing of the judgment of God upon such departures from God, and what He has ordained, even in nature, still man in defiance of God, either does such things himself, or takes pleasure in those who do.

Magazine racks, and other means of communication, bear abundant testimony that men love to see humans corrupting themselves, and take pleasure in it. Such is the sad testimony to the heart of fallen man. But to such came this wonderful “*Gospel of God.*”

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