

Romans Chapter 1

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Introduction:

1. We have used the delightful *New Living Translation*, developed by 90 translators, for this study. The NLT follows a combination of formal equivalence (word-for-word) and dynamic equivalence (thought-for-thought) methods of translation.
2. Romans is about *God* more than any other New Testament book. The word *God* occurs 26 times in just the first chapter. Paul's Epistle to the Romans deals with many different themes, but as much as a book can be, it is a book about *God*.
3. **William Barclay** points out:

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he was writing to a church which he did not know personally and in which he had never been. He was writing to a church which was situated in the greatest city in the greatest empire in the world.
4. Romans is written in Greek. Paul is sending a letter to the very heart of the Latin-speaking world and used Greek! It makes sense. Outside of Palestine, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX) was used exclusively in the Jewish synagogues. It had been translated about 250 B.C. and was widely available in the market place. Coming to Christ had been a two-step process for many Jews and Gentiles. Through reading the LXX they had learned of God's plan to send a Messiah to save the world. When they heard Him preached as having come, they left the synagogue and formed a church. In their years in the synagogue, the gentiles sat in back with their LXX scrolls and could not participate. When Jews and Gentiles left the synagogue to form the church, they had been made brothers



in Christ were equals in the life of the congregation. Paul could write:

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Ephesians 2:19 NLT.

There were people problems because of their integration and Paul addresses these after he finishes his main point of Romans.

5. While Paul is the author, he actually dictated the book.

I, Tertius, the one writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as one of the Lord's followers.

(Romans 16:22 NLT)

6. After the letter was completed, it was delivered to Rome by one of the ladies in the church at Cenchrea near where Paul was located at Corinth when he wrote.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

(Romans 16:1-2 NLT)



GREETINGS

(1:1.) This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach His Good News.

- Documents written on scrolls had the name of the author in the first sentence so the scroll did not have to be unrolled to see who wrote it.
- **Paul** had been chosen by **Jesus** and had developed into a **slave** of **Christ** with the sole purpose of **preaching** the **Good News** that all mankind can be saved from our sins. The Prophets of old revealed in the designation of slave (or servant) of God. Cases include Moses (Joshua 1:2), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), and all of the prophets (Jeremiah 7:25). So **Paul** was in this select band. Beyond being a **slave**, he was an **apostle** -- one sent with a commission from **Christ**.
- Paul was not one of the original Twelve Apostles so he affirmed his standing as an **Apostle**. He had been **chosen** directly by God (Acts 9:15).

But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is My chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. Acts 9:15
NLT

- **Moses E. Lard** comments on Paul's pedigree -- or lack of pedigree:
He alludes to his father once, and mention is made in Acts 23:16 of his sister and her son, both of whom appear to have been living at the time in Jerusalem. How deeply we regret this want of even one full historic line touching his mother. That must have been a noble woman to whom God gave so noble a son.

(2.) God promised this Good News long ago through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.

- The **Good News** is a frequent promise by the **prophets** of old. King David was a **prophet** and he spoke of coming **Good News**. Isaiah was a **prophet** and he spoke of the **Good News**. Jeremiah spoke of it, too.

(3.) The Good News is about His Son. In His earthly life He was born into King David's family line, (4.) and He was shown to be the Son of God when He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.

- The **Son**, the Living Word, was before time and space

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1 NLT)

- He also began an **earthly life** when He was born of Mary, a descendant of **King David**. God was his Father and named Him (Matthew 1:21). His heavenly nature was proven by **His resurrection**. The virgin birth of Jesus is implied in these two verses.

(5.) Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey Him, bringing glory to His name. (6.) And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.

- Paul was keenly aware of his **authority** as an **apostle** and especially towards **Gentiles**. Under the Law of Moses, there was little energy directed toward Gentiles. There was a place for them to worship in Solomon's Temple and Herod's Temple, but the Jewish leaders had used it for a market place during the days when Jesus was there. He cleaned it out a couple of times. Paul's assignment from the Lord has been to **take the story** to the **Gentiles**.

(6.) I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be His own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

- Paul was not writing just the Jewish component or just the Gentile component of the church at **Rome**, but to **all of** them. **God loved all** of them (John 3:16). **God's** purpose is for **all** who obey Him to become **His own holy people**. These **holy people** will receive favor and live in **peace**.

PAUL IS THANKFUL FOR THESE BELIEVERS

(7.) Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in Him is being talked about all over the world. (9.) God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about His Son.

- We know little about some congregations of believers, but the **faith** of these Christian in Rome was **being talked about all over the world**. Paul **thanked God** for this answer to his daily **prayers**.
- As a side note, we learn how often Paul prayed. For us to *remember* everyone's needs, requires a prayer list. The scribe writing this lesson has a set time to pray *with a list* and also prays when he encounters needs as his day unfolds.

(10.) One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. (11.) For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. (12.) When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

- Paul had in mind to **visit** his brethren in Rome. He wanted to **encourage** them and **be encouraged** himself. He *will* get to Rome, but not as a free man. He will go to Jerusalem, be arrested and tried in Roman courts and then will appeal his case to Caesar in Rome. Following a very slow and dangerous sea trip, he will finally get there.

- One purpose of visiting the church at Rome will be to convey a **spiritual gift**.

J.W. McGarvey writes:

Paul here sets forth the reason why he so earnestly desired to visit the church at Rome; it was because he wished to enjoy the blessedness both of giving and receiving. Spiritual gifts are those wrought by the Holy Spirit, and of these Paul had two kinds to bestow :

1. extraordinary or miraculous
2. ordinary Christian graces.

No doubt he had the bestowal of both of these gifts in mind, for no apostle had yet visited the church to bestow the former, and, from the list of gifts recorded at 12: 6-8, it appears that that of prophecy was the only miraculous one they possessed ; and the context, especially verse 12, indicates that the latter, or ordinary gifts, were also in his thoughts. (This is also the view of **Moses E. Lard**)

PAUL HAD WANTED TO VISIT THE CHURCH

(13.) I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles.

- This church is mainly **Gentile**. Paul knew from experience that he would be able to bring **spiritual fruit** among them if he could be present.

(14.) For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. (15.) So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

- Paul knew that he was the apostle to the nations. He would reach people wherever he could get a listener.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THE POWER OF GOD

(16.) For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes -- the Jew first and also the Gentile.

- Paul speaks of the (explosive) **power of God** being **at work** to save all **believers** -- first **Jews**, but also **Gentiles**. This was the way he approached each city with the Gospel. He went **first** to where **Jews** were congregated in the the synagogue.

(17.) This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

- This teaching of **faith** is rooted in the Old Testament. Listen to the prophet Habakkuk:

Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God. (Habakkuk 2:4 NLT)

The proud *trusted* in themselves and that would not let them live. They deceived themselves. Habakkuk was concerned about how the people who served God were going to escape the *temporal* punishment that was coming. But God had a plan to save **righteous** and that was to **trust** Him. He doesn't explain *how*.

Paul makes the application to *eternal* matters here in Romans. Eternal salvation is by **faith** in God. ***This is accomplished from start to finish by faith.*** Paul's application of **faith** to eternal matters is like that of the Hebrews writer who sees a Sabbath rest that remains for the children of God. Those dealing with the Sabbath in the Old Testament weren't thinking about heaven but the Sabbath does foreshadow our great rest.

- Beginning at this point, Paul describes the predicament the world is in.

GOD IS ANGRY WITH THOSE WHO IGNORE HIM

(18.) But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. (19.) They know the truth about God because He has made it obvious to them. (20.) For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities -- His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

- The **God of love** (John 3:16) is also a **God of anger** against **people** who look at His **truth and suppress** it. The **earth and sky** hold overwhelming evidence of our Creator **God**. We cannot make even one tiny item without borrowing the materials from Him. Paul echos the Psalmist:

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship. (Psalms 19:1 NLT)

Paul himself had used this truth when preaching to people who did not have any written scripture:

... but He never left them without evidence of Himself and His goodness. For instance, He sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts." (Acts 14:17 NLT)

Anyone ignoring the evidence that **God** exists has only himself to blame and for the consequences that follow, even if he does not have the written word.

IGNORING GOD LEADS TO A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

(21.) Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. (22.) Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. (23.) And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-

living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

- Soon they **worshiped** the **idols** *they* made instead of the **God** who made *them*. The steps downward from the **worship** of **God** include worshipping **idols** that look like **people**, then **birds and animals** and finally **reptiles**. The Psalmist captured the picture:

The idols of the nations are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell. And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them. (Psalms 135:15-18 NLT)

- **J.W McGarvey** describes the degrading:
The Greeks and Romans preferred the human form as the model for their idols, but the Egyptians chose the baser, doubtless because, having been longer engaged in the practice of idolatry, their system was more fully developed in degradation. The ibis, the bull, the serpent and the crocodile of the Egyptians give us the complements of Paul's catalogue.

HOMOSEXUALITY PLUS

(24.) So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. (25.) They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator Himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. (26.) That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.

- This **vile** conduct ends their generational family line. **God abandoned** them because not even **God** can fix them. Their acquired sexual preferences include a form of idolatry. Their

objective was to have a **sexual** climax without a male. We call it lesbianism.

- Homosexuality among women opens the door to sexually transmitted diseases including human papillomavirus (HPV)—specifically genital warts—squamous intraepithelial lesions, trichomoniasis, syphilis, and herpes simplex virus (HSV).
- Paul was in or near Corinth and Corinth was a world center for sexual vice. He wrote to his brethren living in Rome. Some of the political leaders of the empire living right in Rome were homosexuals. (See the *Wikipedia* entries for “Nero” and “Homosexuality in Ancient Rome.”)

(27.) And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

- God designed **men** to have **sex** with **women**, but these “fell in love” with other **men** and **lusted** after them. Homosexuality was the outcome. There was a penalty attached. This was more than a simple “attraction” to homosexuality, it was the actual practice.
- Homosexuality was not common in Palestine during the years of Jesus’ ministry. However, as the message spread in the pagan world, cases of homosexuality appeared. Paul addressed the practice at Corinth.

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality . . . (1 Corinthians 6:9 NLT)

Paul also pointed to the change of direction for former abusers of sex including homosexual:

Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made

right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

(1 Corinthians 6:11 NLT)

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, spoke about homosexuality:

And don't forget Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and serve as a warning of the eternal fire of God's judgment. (Jude 1:7 NLT)

- There are built-in **penalties**. The *U.S. Health and Human Services* website lists: gonorrhea, genital herpes, human papillomavirus infection, HIV/AIDS, chlamydia and syphilis.
- Observe that the Scriptures do not have a category tag named “gay.” While God is opposed, He doesn’t put people in a category for the rest of their lives. People can change.

WHEN GOD GIVES UP

(28.) Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, He abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. (29.) Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. (30.) They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.

- Every **parent** wants to be proud of their children, but these children are **disobedient**.
- The list of verses 29 and 30 form the content of much commercial entertainment in current society. For this reason, this writer avoids drama presentations because some of these sins are easy to embrace and difficult to be rid of.

- **Jack Cottrell** summarizes:

The knowledge Paul attributes to the Gentiles here is twofold. First, they know that such things as he just mentioned are wrong.

Second, they know that those who do such things “deserve death.” In other words, they know not only the *commandments* of the moral law, but also its *penalty*. They are indeed without excuse.

(31.) They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. (32.) They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

- The **promise breakers** are also activists. In the United States, there are school teachers who promote sexual wickedness among the children they teach while concealing it from their parents.

A popular kind of wickedness currently is to convince a child to identify as the opposite sex. They are given a name for the opposite sex and encouraged to do whatever is necessary to make the sex change but all of the while concealing this from their parents. It can even go so as far as taking hormones to force the body to make irreversible changes on its own.

MUSIC BOX

Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)

Verse	Link:	Put in Browser:
1	<i>Up From the Grave He Arose</i>	http://bitly.ws/oxHe

The Gentile world has some who plumbed the depth of wickedness. In the next chapter, Paul examines those who have *not* descended to these extremes.