

Romans 1

Who wrote this book (v. 1)? Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth as he wintered there on his third missionary journey. Paul's other New Testament letters focus more on the church and its challenges and problems. The Letter to the Romans focuses more on God and His great plan of redemption. It is first and foremost a book about *God*. Romans is the Mt. Everest of the New Testament!

What is special about the gospel (vv. 1-2)? It was promised, not just prophesized, long ago through His prophets. This gospel is not new, and it is not a clever invention of man.

Who is the gospel primarily about (v. 3)? The gospel centers on Jesus Christ and His dual nature, both human (descendant of David according to the flesh) and divine (declared to be the Son of God).

What evidence demonstrated Jesus' relationship to God (v. 4.)? His resurrection from the dead. Jesus had always been the Son of God, but the Father reaffirmed Him to be the Son by the resurrection.

What is the relationship between obedience and faith (v. 5)? Faith precedes obedience. Obedience is a consequence/product of saving faith.

Paul addressed the believers as saints (v. 7). Some believe saints are exceptionally good Christians who have died.

How does the Bible define "saints?" Saints is a common term for believers in the New Testament. The Greek word for saint means "set apart" – by God for His purposes. In God's eyes, we are saints even though we still sin.

How did Paul describe their faith (v. 8)? It was widely known throughout the whole world. Paul was thankful for the good reputation of the church in Rome. Because of its location, this church had a special visibility and opportunity to glorify Jesus throughout the Empire.

What request did he make regarding them (v. 10)? He prayed he might come to visit them. We are reminded that the real work of the ministry is prayer (vv. 9-10). Preaching is more a result of the ministry of prayer than it is a ministry itself.¹

Why did Paul want to come visit this church (vv. 11-12)? To encourage them....but also that he might be encouraged. Mutual edification is a product of a healthy church.

Why was Paul obligated (v. 14)? Because he had the Gospel of Christ and anyone who has the Gospel has the answer to the world's deepest needs. He had the cure for the disease of sin, the way to escape eternal horrors of hell and the guarantee of everlasting happiness with God. This put him under solemn obligation to share the good news with people of all cultures and degrees of learning – wise and unwise.²

To whom did he seek to preach (v. 14)? To Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. The terms "Greek" and "Barbarian" distinguish Gentiles by language and culture. This was a standard way of describing all races and classes within the Gentile world. The "wise" and "foolish" distinction divides people intellectually.³

Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel (v. 16)? He realized its supreme importance and potential impact – *"...it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."* The Gospel is not merely a concept or philosophy. It is the power of God. It changes hearts and minds. It reconciles man to God.

Application: Give examples of things we will (or will not) do if we are not ashamed of the gospel.

What condition is stated for salvation (v. 16)? The gospel's power for salvation comes to everyone who believes. Note that Paul mentioned no other condition besides believing the good news (4:5). He said nothing about our having to do anything in addition, such as undergoing baptism, joining the church, pledging commitment, etc. The issue is believing the good news and trusting Christ. Either a person does or does not do so.⁴

What does the gospel reveal (v. 17)? The gospel reveals a righteousness that comes from God and is received by faith. Which contradicts the Pharisees teaching that righteousness came through keeping the Mosaic Law. Paul is portraying righteousness as a position of permanence. A right standing before God that lasts forever. **What supporting Old Testament passage is quoted in v. 17?** Habakkuk 2:4: *"The righteous shall live by faith."*

What did ungodly men do (v. 18)? Suppressed the truth of God. Every truth revealed to man by God has been fought against, disregarded, and deliberately obscured by the ungodly. **How might people today be guilty of this?**

In what ways has God made Himself known (v. 19-20)? His invisible attributes are clearly seen. God has revealed His eternal power and divine nature through creation, by the things that are made. This is general revelation -- It is truth about God that is immediately "evident" to every human being. General revelation is a limited revelation, in that it does not give sufficient information for mankind to experience salvation. That is why everyone needs to hear the gospel (the gospel falls under the category of "special revelation)." People are not condemned for rejecting a Savior they have never heard of, but rather for being unfaithful to what they could know about God through creation. They are "*without excuse*."

Application: What attributes of God can be known through general revelation?

Despite the evidence, what error did people commit (v. 21)? Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God. The problem is not that man did not know God, but that he *did* know Him – yet refused to glorify Him as God. Therefore, mankind is without excuse. Light rejected is light denied. Those who don't want to see lose the capacity to see.

How did these people view themselves? How did God describe them (v. 22)? They professed to be wise but were in reality fools.

Man is not improving physically, morally, intellectually or spiritually. The pull is downward. Of course, this contradicts all the anthologies of religion that start with man in a very primitive condition as a caveman with very little intellectual qualities and move him up intellectually and begin moving him toward God. This is absolute error. Man is moving away from God, and right now the world is probably farther from God than at any time in its history.⁵

Application: Does this description fit any people today? Explain how people may be similarly guilty today.

How did these errors affect people's idea of God (vv. 23, 25)? They exchanged the truth of God for the lie of their own choosing and worshipped images and created things rather than the Creator.

How did God respond (vv. 24, 26)? What was the consequence? God "gave them over" to the sin of their evil heart's desire, i.e. sexual impurity, allowing them to experience the self-destructive result of sin. This phrase is so important Paul repeated it three times in this passage. This "freedom" to disobey should be seen as an expression of God's judgment and wrath, not His kindness; those who engage in such acts of sexual immorality and idolatrous worship are receiving in themselves the penalty of their error.

What practice is described (vv. 26-27)? Paul uses homosexuality – both in the female and the male expressions – as an example of God giving mankind over to uncleanness and lust. Paul wrote to a culture where homosexuality was accepted as a part of life for both men and women. For some 200 years, the men who ruled the Roman Empire openly practiced homosexuality often with young boys.

What are some penalties that this error leads to (v. 27)? Sometimes it is the penalty of disease, sometimes it is the penalty of rebellion, resulting in spiritual emptiness and all its ramifications.

To what did God give them over (v. 28)? A depraved mind. The laundry list that follows details the manifestations of a depraved mind (vv. 29-31).

Why is it "righteous" for God to so judge such people (v. 32)? They know they deserve death but in a state of constant rebellion, they continue to do these reprehensible things. **Besides those who practice such things, who else is also worthy of punishment (v. 32)?** Those who approve.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobilechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 19

² Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 1677

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobilechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 20

⁴ Ibid. p. 22

⁵ Ibid. p. 29