

## A GENERAL CONSIDERATION OF THE ENTIRE EPISTLE

### *Preliminary Remarks*

It will be our procedure to follow the outline as given on the preceding chart, and to enlarge upon the points of the chart by way of illumination and explanation.

To receive the most good from this section of the study, the book of Romans must be read carefully. Follow this study with your mind open, and the real meaning of our comments will be readily understood.

## PART ONE

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS, 1:1-15

#### SALUTATION, 1:1-7

#### *Text*

1:1-7. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; 6 among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's: 7 to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### REALIZING ROMANS, 1:1-7

Summaries, paraphrases, and commentaries are all fine; *but they are no substitute for your own knowledge of the inspired book.* What do *you* think of the salutation of this book? I refer to verses 1-7 of the first chapter. Here are a few questions that are framed to stir up your sincere mind; answer them before you read farther.

1. Why not refer to himself first as an apostle and then as a servant?
2. Are not a servant and an apostle the same?
3. When was Paul called to be an apostle?
4. Are you an "apostle" in any sense of the term? Look up the meaning of the term before you answer in the negative (cf. Acts 14:14).

5. Specify several features of the "good news that was promised afore by the prophets in the holy scriptures." (We could give you references to look up, but this would not develop *your* initiative.)
6. He was "born of the seed of David." Of what special significance is that?
7. What is the "spirit of holiness" here spoken of? Would it be accurate to say "Holy Spirit"?
8. In what sense did the resurrection proclaim Jesus as the Son of God? Are we not all sons of God?
9. Who is the "We" of verse five? Do not be too quick to answer, "Paul and the other apostles." Who was with Paul when he wrote?
10. What is there in "the faith" to obey? Can it be law? How then can it be faith? Is God's salvation dependent upon man's obedience?
11. "For His name's sake"—We often say, "for Jesus' sake." Is this the same? What is a name's sake? Do not look these answers up in a commentary (even if it is mine). Do your answering and writing and thinking BEFORE you read someone else's comment and conclusion. After all, they are only men — fallible like yourself, sincere, intelligent, but *not* infallible. Think for yourself: you are no parrot!
12. In what sense do we belong to Jesus? How much of us? Is this really true or just a fine phrase?
13. You *are* a saint. All the Christians in Rome were saints. What does this word mean? Or perhaps we should say, what *did* it mean?
14. If the saints in Rome received what Paul wished for them as in verse seven, what would it mean to them? Just what is the "grace" God and Christ were to give them?

### *Paraphrase*

1:1-7. Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, and an apostle called expressly as the other apostles were, and separated by him to preach the good news from God,

2 Which he promised before, by his prophets in the holy scriptures, should be preached to the Gentiles,

3 Concerning the coming of his Son to save the world, who, as it was foretold, was born of a woman descended from David, the king of Israel, with respect to his flesh,

4 But was declared the Son of God, with great power of evidence, with respect to his holy spiritual nature, by his resurrection from the dead, after he had been crucified by the Jewish rulers for calling himself the Son of God, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

5 From whom, since his resurrection, I have received miraculous powers and apostleship, in order that through my preaching him as the Son of God, the obedience of faith may be given to him, among all the Gentiles, on account of his being the Son of God.

6 Among the number of which Gentiles are also ye the called disciples of Jesus Christ.

7 Being thus commissioned, I write this letter to all who are in Rome; and more especially to those who are the beloved of God, on account of their faith, to the called seed of Abraham, to the saints by profession. May grace be multiplied to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *Summary*

Paul, a called apostle, is set apart to preach God's gospel, which he had before promised, through the prophets, in the holy Scriptures. The gospel respects his Son, who was born of the seed of David, as to his flesh, but determined, by power, to be God's Son, as to his spirit, by the resurrection of the dead. This Son is Jesus Christ our Lord. From him Paul received favor in becoming a Christian, and the office of an apostle, both these being received to induce men in all nations to believe and obey Christ. He writes this Letter to all the holy who are in Rome.

### *Comment*

The apostle begins his epistle with a beautiful and solemn salutation in the form of one sentence containing 126 words (in the American Standard Version). Note this very helpful outline of the salutation. In this outline you can note the marvelous progression of connected thought.

1. Paul. vs 1a
  - a. A servant (slave) of Jesus Christ.
  - b. Called to be an apostle (one sent).
  - c. Separated unto the gospel.
2. The Gospel. vs 1b-2a
  - a. Of God.
  - b. Promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures.
  - c. Concerning his son.

3. His Son. vs 2b-5a
  - a. Born of the seed of David according to the (his) flesh.
  - b. Declared to be the Son of God with power according to the (his) (pure) holy spirit (or his inward man), by the resurrection from the dead.
  - c. We (Paul and others) have received from him grace and apostleship.
4. Our grace and apostleship. vs 5b  
For the obedience of the faith among all nations for his name's sake.
5. All the nations. vs 5c-6
  - a. Obedient to the faith.
  - b. Romans among them.
  - c. Belong to Jesus Christ.
6. Greetings to those in Rome. vs 7
  - a. Beloved of God.
  - b. Called saints.
  - c. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here are a few comments on these verses. Our purpose will be to place a devotional, evangelistic emphasis upon these truths:

*Paul.* How very many expressions the apostle could have used to describe himself. What a man thinks of himself in the revealing light of God's presence is a true indication of his spiritual stature. The first relationship Paul felt he sustained to Christ was not that of an apostle, but rather a servant or slave. The term "slave" is used sometimes in an official capacity of one who represents another in an official sense. This is *not* the use made of the word here. Paul places himself along with all other servants of Christ. He is just another common slave of Christ. Paul feels that he has been bought and paid for by Christ Jesus. To use his own words, he "is no longer his own; he has been bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

How do we think of ourselves? What is my first answer to the question, "Who am I?" Do I think of myself first of all as a preacher, an elder, a deacon, a teacher? If I do, I am not thinking as I should. I am first of all, and most of all, a slave to King Jesus.

It might come as a shock to some to learn there are *seventeen* apostles in the New Testament! Yes, there are! Here they are; count them up: (1-12) The Twelve apostles; (13) Matthias; (14) Barnabas, Acts 14:14; (15) James, the Lord's brother, Gal. 1:19; (16) Christ, Heb. 3:1; (17) Paul.

This use of the term "apostle" is easily explained in the meaning of the word. "Apostle" means "one sent." In a very special sense, the Twelve were *sent* by Christ to "the lost sheep" of the house of Israel. Paul was *sent* "far hence to the Gentiles" (Ac. 26:17, 18). Barnabas was *sent* by the church at Antioch (Ac. 13:1-3). Evidently James was *sent* by the church in Jerusalem (Ac. 15:13). Christ was *sent* by God, our heavenly Father (Jn. 3:16). Matthias was apparently *sent* by the church in Jerusalem.

Paul never forgot the heavenly vision by which he was called and sent forth (Ac. 26:1ff). Have not many of us forgotten the heavenly vision of our conversion in which we were called and sent into the world to bear fruit unto God?

Saul of Tarsus was not only a slave of Jesus Christ, and one who was called to be sent, but he was also *sanctified*, or *separated*.

Paul was separated unto something. It was not a negative separation, but he was separated *unto* something. Paul's separation was for a purpose — that he might proclaim the "good news."

*The Gospel.* Somehow, we do so miss the impact of this word. Our message needs to be of the *good news*. The joy of the angel's announcement at Bethlehem needs ever to grip our hearts. Oh, for the exuberance of the youngster who bursts through the doorway to shout out in short exclamations the joy of some childish "good news." No, we need more, the unspeakable happiness of a released prisoner who has found pardon instead of condemnation. To Paul, the message he preached could vary according to the needs of his hearers or readers, But however varied, it was always a word that would finally produce happiness! Our message can only be *good news* to others when it is indeed this to us.

Has *God* spoken to your heart and mind? Paul knew his message was from God. Do you? Do I? We are not speaking of direct communication to us, as to the inspired spokesmen. But we do speak God's truth; we have God's message. (1:1-7)

### Text

1:8-13. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers 10 making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12 that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by

the other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles.

### REALIZING ROMANS, 1:8-13

15. Who proclaimed "the faith" of the Romans? Were other churches and Christians talking to Paul about the faith of the Roman church? In what other way could the faith of the church at Rome be made known?
16. What is meant by "the whole world" as used by Paul? Had he been in "the whole world"?
17. Why did Paul call God to witness the truth of his statement? Would not the Romans believe him?
18. Paul served God in, or with, "his spirit." What is meant? Jesus said "to worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24). Is this what Jesus had in mind?
19. Paul refers to his prayers for many Christians. If he prayed "unceasingly" for the Romans, (28 persons mentioned in chapters 15-16), for the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Corinthians, and others, he must have spent a good deal of time just calling out the names in his prayers. Is this a fair evaluation of what he meant?
20. "If by any means . . . I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you" (vs. 10). What does Paul mean by "*means*"? Can you think of some specific *means* through which the will of God was working out? Is the will of God working out in your life? Read carefully Jas. 4:13-15 in this connection.
21. What is the "spiritual gift" Paul wanted to impart to the saints in Rome? Let us have no hasty answers. Are you sure you do not know? There are some definite possibilities as to meaning. Name one. Perhaps there is only one.
22. Please note now that verse 12 explains or enlarges on verse 11. How could the faith of Paul "comfort" the saints? Vice versa? Is there a better word than "comforted" to use here? Use one, and then look up the original from one source or another.
23. Who "hindered" Paul—Satan or God? Consider this question in light of the one we asked on "any means" (Ques. No. 20).
24. What "fruit" did Paul expect? Was it the fruit of the Spirit in the saints or the fruit of salvation in sinners? It does seem to me that more weight is to be found on one side of this question than on the other. Which is it?

*Paraphrase*

1:8-13. And first, I thank my God through Jesus Christ, on account of all of you who have embraced the gospel, that your faith in Jesus Christ is so conspicuous, that it is spoken of throughout the whole Roman empire.

9 In saying I am thankful for your conversion, I speak the truth; for I call God to witness, whom, with the utmost earnestness, I serve in the ministry of the gospel of his Son, that constantly I make affectionate mention of you.

10 Always in my prayers, requesting that by some means, now at length, I may have a prosperous journey to Jerusalem, (ch. xv. 25) by the will of God, under whose direction I execute my ministry, and then to come to you.

11 For I greatly desire to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, in order that ye may be established against the heathens, who wish to bring you back to idolatry, and the Jews, who would subject you to the law.

12 And this is proposed, that I may be comforted together with you, through the mutual faith both of you, whose faith will be confirmed by these gifts, and of me, whose faith will be confirmed when I see unbelievers converted by these gifts.

13 Now, brethren, lest ye should be surprised that I, who am the apostle of the Gentiles, and who have expressed such a desire to see you, have never yet preached in Rome, I would not have you ignorant, that oftentimes I purposed to come to you, (though I have been hindered hitherto), in order that I might have some fruit of my ministry among you, the idolatrous inhabitants of Rome also, even as among the other Gentiles.

*Summary*

Paul is thankful that the belief of the disciples in Rome is spoken of everywhere. He always mentions them in his prayers, and desires at some time a prosperous journey to them. He longs to see them, and to impart to them some spiritual gift to strengthen them. From their mutual belief, he hopes to derive much comfort. Paul had often purposed to come to them, and had been hindered. He desired some fruit among them, such as he had in the other nations.

*Comment*

After this, he then expresses his personal desires for those in Rome in a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer on their behalf, and a statement of his desire to visit them for the purpose of mutual help-

ness. In speaking of his desired but hindered visit, he mentions that the purpose of his visit would be to "have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles." (1:8-13)

### Text

1:14-15 I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

### REALIZING ROMANS, 1:14-15

25. Why separate the Greeks from the Barbarians if he was debtor to all?
26. What particular debt would Paul owe to the Greeks? Would it be different from that to the Barbarians? Of course, we know he owed the gospel to both of them, but he felt an individual debt to each. What was it?
27. Suppose the foolish laughed at him, and the wise snubbed him—what then?
28. Did Paul have any doubts about what he had to offer? Then why did he say, "*as much as in me is*"?
29. What were the circumstances that made Paul "ready" to preach?

### Paraphrase

1:14-15. Being the apostle of the Gentiles, I am bound to preach both to the Greeks, however intelligent, and to the Barbarians; both to the philosophers and to the common people.

15 Therefore, notwithstanding your great proficiency in the sciences, I am willing, according to my ability, to preach the gospel even to you unbelieving Gentiles, who are in Rome.

### Summary

He is debtor to preach the gospel to all men, and therefore to those at Rome.

### Comment

This thought led him to say that he was debtor to both Greek and Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish, and hence ready to preach or bring glad tidings (the gospel) to those at Rome also. (1:14-15)

1. Without referring to previous material, give the general outline of Part One.

## PART TWO

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN THE GOSPEL, 1:16-11:36

## The Proposition Stated, 1:16-17

*Text*

1:16-17. For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.

## REALIZING ROMANS, 1:16-17

30. Is there any "natural" tendency to be ashamed of the good news? How can we call it "*good news*" and be ashamed?
31. The gospel is God's power. The power of God is manifested in other ways in this material world; but there is a real difference in the power of creation and the power unto salvation. What is it?
32. What is included in the word "believeth" as in vs. 16? There is more to believing than a mere mental assent. Just what is the nature of believing?
33. Was the gospel God's power to salvation for the *Jew first*? If so, in what sense was this true?
34. The good news reveals God's righteousness. Is this a revelation of the righteous character of God, or is this a revelation of some action by God in providing righteousness for man? Please do not forget the "good news", or gospel, is defined by Paul in I Cor. 15:1-4.
35. How is the word "faith" used as in verse 17? Note please that one faith leads to another. Explain how this is true. Do not just mentally "throw up your hands" with the thought you can't explain this. This is as much your job as anyone else's. What does it mean? To start with, you might remember that the word "faith" is used in several ways in the New Testament (Cf. Jude 3; Heb. 11:1, 2; Rom. 14:23; 10:17).
36. The last statement of verse 17 states that the righteous (who are they?) shall *live* by faith. What life is this discussing? Remember, please, you are under no obligation to accept *any* man's conclusion. But you *are* under obligation to God to attempt to understand His Word: otherwise He would never have "delivered it once and for all to the saints" (Jude 3). If scientists will spend years and years of life—to say nothing of millions of dollars—to discover the laws of God in the physical world, is the thought incredible that we should spend much time and energy in

thought and prayer that we might comprehend His higher moral and spiritual law as revealed in His Word?

### *Paraphrase*

1:16-17. For although the learned among you think it foolishness, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God (I Cor. 1:24), the powerful means which God makes use of for working out salvation to every one who believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

17 First, the gospel is the power of God for salvation, to every one who believeth; because the righteousness of God's appointment by faith is revealed in it, in order to produce faith in them to whom it is preached. And to this righteousness the Jews cannot object, since it is written, But the just by faith shall live.

### *Summary*

He is not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to all who believe. In it is revealed God's justification by belief in order to induce belief.

### *Comment*

In these two verses we have a proposition stated that takes nearly the whole book to develop. In verse 16a "the gospel" is spoken of as of great importance. In verse 16b we find that the gospel is of importance because "it is the power of God unto salvation". "In it" or "therein" (that is, in the gospel) is revealed "a righteousness of God" which is imputed (attributed) to man by his faith in the gospel. Simply stated, the gospel contains God's answer to Job's question, "Can a man be just before God?" The gospel contains God's method for making man just in His sight.

The apostle's proposition, stated accurately in fewer words, could very well read, "Justification by Faith in the Gospel." We repeat again this condensed proposition with explanation given in parentheses: Justification (being declared to be as if we had never sinned) by (through or by the means of) faith (which includes repentance, confession and baptism) in the gospel (which contains the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. These facts are the basis for God being both just and justifier.). (1:16-17)

2. Where do we find the proposition of the book of Romans?
3. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
4. Why is the gospel called "The power of God unto salvation"?
5. What is the brief statement of Paul's proposition to this book?
6. What is the meaning of justification? Of "by"? What does "faith" include?
7. What three facts are contained in the gospel? What basis do they form for God?

*Rethinking in Outline Form*

## PART ONE

## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS, 1:1-15

- I. Salutation. 1:1-7
  - 1. The Author. vs. 1
  - 2. The Gospel in Review. vs. 2-6
  - 3. Greetings. vs. 7
- II. Personal Desires. 1:8-15
  - 1. Prayer of Thanks. vs. 8
  - 2. Prayer for them. vs. 9-10
  - 3. Desire to Visit them. vs. 11-13
  - 4. Indebtedness to All. vs. 14-15

## PART TWO

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN THE GOSPEL, 1:16-11:36

- I. Proposition Stated. 1:16-17
  - 1. Not ashamed of the Gospel. vs. 16a
  - 2. The Gospel Defined. vs. 16b
  - 3. What is Revealed in the Gospel. vs. 17
- II. Proposition Needed, 1:18-3:20
  - 1. Needed by the Gentiles. 1:18-32

*Text*

1:18-25. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; 19 because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: 21 because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: 25 for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

## REALIZING ROMANS, 1:18-25

37. *Where* is God's wrath revealed? Not *from* where, but *where*? To say simply "*from heaven*" will not answer the whole question. If you wanted to show someone the revelation of God's wrath, where would you look?
38. Is there some difference between "ungodliness and unrighteousness," or was this said only for emphasis?
39. You will observe that Paul says certain men "hinder" the truth—a most interesting word. Look up (even in our text here) a fuller meaning of the word. What does the word "hinder" suggest as to man's responsibility to the truth?
40. Mark carefully the phraseology in verse 19. Knowledge of God is manifested in *two* places: *to* man, and *in* man. Does this mean that man is born with some innate knowledge of God, *or* that he is born with the faculty by which he can learn of God? Could it mean both? If so, how? Come on, friend. Do not bog down in your thinking processes. This is too important a matter to be treated lightly. This is most intriguing: think it out! Verse 20 will help you.
41. What two things about God can we learn from nature? What two things *can't* man learn from nature?
42. What should be the *natural* response of man upon viewing the "handiwork" of God? (Cf. Psa. 19:1-6)
43. If it is natural for man to understand some things about God through the creation, then it would be fitting to say that they were "senseless" who failed to acknowledge these things. How is it that the thought entered some persons' minds that they could attribute creation to some other source?
44. Will you note the use of the term "heart" in verse 21. Compare it with Psa. 14:1. Note that man does not say with his *mind* "there is no God." What causes a man to become "a fool"? Read verse 22.
45. In what way is God "incorruptible"? Is there some order in the idolatry described in verse 23?
46. I thought God never gave up, and taught us never to give up. Here it is stated that God *did* give up. (Cf. vs. 24) With today's emphasis upon the physical body, there is a real danger that men will fall into the same trap. How is the body dishonored?

*Paraphrase*

1:18-25. Next, the gospel alone is the power of God for salvation, because it alone grants pardon to sinners on repentance: wherein the law of nature, vs. 32 and in the law of Moses, the wrath of God is

plainly revealed against all impiety and unrighteousness of men; who conceal the truth concerning God from the vulgar, by their unrighteous institutions.

19 Of this crime, all the Greek legislators, statesmen, and philosophers, have been guilty: Because that which may be known of God, is known among them; for God hath manifested it to them, by his works of creation.

20 For his invisible attributes, even his eternal power and God-head, though not discernible by the eye of the body, ever since the creation of the world, are clearly seen by the eye of man's mind, being understood by the things which he hath made; so that they are inexcusable. (The apostle means that the Greek legislators and philosophers were inexcusable.)

21 Because, though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, by teaching the people what they knew concerning him; neither did they give him thanks, by making him the object of their worship; but became foolish by their own reasonings concerning the worship fit for the vulgar; and their imprudent heart was darkened, so as to relish idolatry equally with the vulgar.

22 Thus, the Grecian statesmen and philosophers, who assumed the pompous title of wise men, became fools in their public institutions of religion:

23 For they misrepresented the perfections of the incorruptible God, by an image made in the likeness of corruptible men, and of birds, and of beasts, and of reptiles, and thereby led the vulgar to believe that God was like the animals whose images they worshipped.

24. Therefore also, as the just punishment of their impiety in likening him to men and beasts, God, through the lusts of their own hearts impelling them, gave these pretended wise men up to every sort of uncleanness; whereby they dishonored their own bodies between themselves.

25 I speak of the legislators, philosophers, and priests, who changed the truth concerning God into falsehood, by likening him to men and beasts; and who, pretending to worship God under these symbols, worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is to be praised for ever. Amen.

### *Summary*

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the impiety and injustice of all men who keep down the truth. The Gentiles had the truth, for God had made it known to them. But when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God. By their reasonings they be-

8. Paul has now presented the universal plan for salvation. What is his next logical step?

came foolish, and dull in heart, and exchanged the honor due to God for the worship of idols. For this, God gave them up to base passions, and as the result, they dishonored their bodies among themselves.

### *Comment*

Since Paul has just laid down a universal plan for obtaining justification, it is only logical to read in the ensuing verses of the universal need for this plan, thus giving the reason for its inception. In verse 18 we find the general heading for the development of the thought of the universal need. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." We will find as we examine the lives of men universally that they deserve nought but the wrath of God; and that this heavenly vengeance is brought upon man by his disobedience to what he knows to be God's law.

The Gentiles (the heathen) were (and are) desperately in need of this justification found in the gospel, for they held the truth down or hindered it by their unrighteousness. Notice that they were not ignorant of the truth, but, having the truth, they did not choose to obey it, but rather to suppress it (vs. 18). Paul then tells us of the truth they possessed. He speaks of their knowledge of God's everlasting power and divinity which they attained from the material creation about them. Paul remarks that this truth about God has thus been accessible from the creation of the world.

In view of God's wrath which he must visit upon them, such persons have no excuse to offer, for even though they knew God to be the one of all power and the one truly divine being, they did not choose to accept him as such, and gave him neither glory nor thanks. They looked rather to their own accomplishments and wisdom, and thus became not humble before this great Creator, but vain, and with this false use of their senses their heart was darkened.

Though such action appeared as the mark of wisdom to the Gentiles, it was rather the mark of folly, for they thus exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the glory of corruptible man and

9. Why is God's wrath brought upon man as suggested in verse 18?
10. What truth regarding himself did God manifest to the Gentiles?
11. In what manner did God reveal this truth to the Gentiles? For how long?
12. Why were the Gentiles spoken of said to be without excuse?
13. What would you say was the primary cause of their sin? the secondary? the result?
14. With what attitude did these Gentiles regard themselves?
15. For what did they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God?
16. What was the awful act committed throughout this whole descent?
17. They are said to have exchanged the truth of God for a lie. What was the truth and what was the lie?

even of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. In this whole descent, there was the awful act of exchanging what they knew to be truth (that God was the creator and thus the natural object of worship) for what they knew to be a lie (that man, the creature was to be worshipped). Such action led them to participate fully in the lusts of their hearts, which brought about uncleanness and dishonoring of the body, and God had to give them up. (1:18-25)

*Text*

1:26-32. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. 28 And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: 32 who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

REALIZING ROMANS, 1:26-32

47. Are there some passions that are not vile? Is it true that "there is nothing good or bad; only thinking makes it so"?
48. Isn't a sexual pervert or deviate sick? Should we censure people who are ill? Paul attributes the responsibility of sexual perversion to whom? It would amaze you to know the statistics on sexual perversion in your own "Christian America." Is there any hope for these people? Do you truly believe your answer?
49. Oh, to constantly have God in our knowledge! This is the answer to this sordid picture. Read carefully verses 28-32, and see if you can divide and subdivide the words into some sort of ladder downward. Show how one leads to another—if they do.
50. Verse 32 reveals the worst quality of these people. What is it?
51. Why does Paul give us this description as in verses 18-32? Do you believe Paul met such people in his travels? Were there any in some of the churches who formerly "walked in these things"? Specify.

*Paraphrase*

1:26-32. I say, because they changed the truth concerning God into a lie, God left them to be led by the most shameful lusts. For even their women changed the use of their bodies into that which is contrary to nature, burning with lust towards one another.

27 In like manner also, the men, forsaking the natural use of the women, burned with their lust towards one another, men with men working habitually that which is shameful, whereby they received in their own minds and bodies that punishment for their error concerning God which was fit. The idolatry whereby they dishonored God, naturally led them to dishonor themselves, by lascivious practices, in imitation of their gods.

28 And as the Grecian legislators and philosophers did not approve of holding the knowledge of God with that worship which is due to him, God delivered them and their people over to a dead conscience, so that they practiced habitually those things which are not suitable to human nature:

29 Being not slightly tinctured, but filled with every kind of injustice, uncleanness, treachery, covetousness, malicious dealing; full of envy, murder, strife, cunning, habitual bad disposition, whispering evil of their neighbors.

30 Revilers, haters of God on account of his purity, insolent towards their inferiors, proud, boasters of qualities which they did not possess, inventors of unlawful pleasures, disobedient to parents;

31 Imprudent in the management of affairs, having no regard to the faith of covenants, without natural affection to their children and relations, implacable towards their enemies, unmerciful to the poor:

32 So utterly corrupt are they, that although they know the law of God, that they who practice such things shall be punished with death, they not only commit these crimes themselves, but even take delight in and encourage those who practice them; which is a demonstration that their wickedness is not to be cured by their own natural powers.

*Summary*

Being abandoned of God, both their men and women degraded themselves by their vile practices. They received in their own bodies the due reward of their error. They rejected God from their knowledge, and he rejected them. After this they became filled with every vice and crime. These they not only practiced themselves, but even

18. Why did God give them up? What was the recompense for their sin?

19. To what extent did these Gentiles indulge in sin?

had delight in others for practicing them. All this they did, knowing the decree of God, both against their sins and against themselves. They therefore sinned willfully and recklessly.

### *Comment*

Why did God give them up? Because they refused to have him in their knowledge. How could they have him before their mind while they indulged in such vile passions as attributed to both men and women in verses 26-27a? In all this free reign of lust there was to be found the sure recompense of their error in their own bodies (27b). Because they abandoned their minds to sin and gave God no place in their knowledge God gave them up to do those things which are not fitting (28). The Gentiles were (and are) "filled" with the terrible catalog of sins described in verses 29-31.

The final toll of the bell of doom in all of this willful sin is that they who knew the law of God and realized that they who did such things under such conditions were worthy of the penalty of the wrath of God, actually encouraged others to do the same (32). (1:26-32)

### *Rethinking in Outline Form*

#### II. Proposition Needed. 1:18—3-20

##### 1. Needed by the Gentiles. 1:18-32

##### a. Needed by the Gentiles because they were under the wrath of God vs. 18a

(1) They were objects of God's wrath for the following reasons:

- (a) Although they had a knowledge of God's power and divinity through creation, they through their sin stifled this truth. 18b-20
- (b) Deliberately ignoring their knowledge of God they entered into vain speculation. This ended in the worst type of idolatry. 21-23
- (c) God had to give them up because of their absolute moral degradation. 24-32

##### 2. Needed by the Jews. 2:1—3:9a

### *Text*

2:1-11. Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou are that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practice such things. 3 And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the 20. What is the final word of condemnation given against the Gentiles?