

## **A Study in Romans**

### **Study One Romans 1:1-32**

#### **Day One**

1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-  
2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures  
3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David,  
4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

v. 1 – First and foremost Paul identified himself as a servant, a slave, of Jesus. Then he designated himself an apostle for the gospel. The word “apostle” simply means “sent forth one.” Paul was a Jesus’ servant, constituted or designated an apostle to preach the gospel. It is good to know who you are and what you were created to do. Paul certainly knew and his knowledge enabled him to be effective in his life purpose. Do you know your purpose?

vs. 2&3 – Paul saw himself historically connected to the people of God in the Old Testament. The gospel Paul preached was a continuation of what God had prophetically promised He would do. This good news pertained to Jesus, the Son, who was, according to human bloodlines, a descendant of King David of the tribe of Judah.

v. 4 – The ultimate proof of Jesus’ “Son-ship” was his resurrection from the dead. The resurrection established Jesus’ Lordship over all creation. Paul quickly established that Jesus is the focus of his letter. Is Jesus the focus of what you do?

#### **Day Two**

5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.  
6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.  
7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 5 – Paul was establishing his authority because he had never visited the Roman church, nor had he been involved in that church’s founding. Paul had a direct relationship with the churches or people to whom he sent his letters, except for Colossians and Romans.

It is interesting to me that Paul referred to his life purpose—preaching the gospel to the Gentiles—in every one of his epistles. Yet he never referred to his occupation, which was making tents. Paul did not take his identity from what he did to earn money, but rather what God created him to do. From what do you derive your identity?

v. 6 – Since Paul worked with Gentiles and the Romans were Gentiles, he felt that they were within his jurisdiction, so to speak, and so he wrote them this letter. Paul was in some ways explaining why he felt the freedom to write them.

v. 7 – In the first seven verses, Paul mentioned Jesus’ name four times. As stated in previous studies, Paul was not writing to form or maintain his ministry; Paul was writing as an apostle to teach about Jesus. It would be good for all of us to mention Jesus as often as possible in what we do, or at least to keep Him uppermost in our minds and thoughts.

I go to many churches where the people will greet one another with the words “Grace and peace.” I am always concerned that this greeting can take on religious overtones, void of meaning, when people use it repeatedly. Paul ultimately wanted the churches to experience a heavenly grace and peace that came from God. That should be the goal of ministry—grace and peace. Do you have grace and peace? Do you distribute grace and peace? Is it a residue of your presence in the will of God?

There have been some saints and leaders I have encountered and afterwards I have felt the love of God and great peace. Then there are others who take what grace and peace I may have. I want to give peace and not confiscate grace.

### **Day Three**

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

9 God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you

10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong- 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

v. 8 – The Roman church had a world reputation and it was because of their faith. What a wonderful distinction to have! I have found that faith is contagious; when someone believes God, others are encouraged to do the same. That is why we share our faith testimonies. Do you have a recent faith testimony? If you do, have you shared it? If not, why not?

Vs. 9&10 – Paul served God with his whole heart. When he said that, he was not boasting, but stating fact. Paul’s whole life was focused on his purpose and he made a tremendous impact. It is estimated that by the end of Paul’s third missionary journey there were a half million believers in the Empire.

Paul was praying for the Roman church and had obviously never been to Rome or at least not since he had become a Christian. Where would you like to go? Are you praying that the way would be opened to you?

vs. 11&12 – Paul had the church’s best interests at heart and wanted to build them up by his visit. But he also wanted to receive something from them. Ministry should be mutual. But that I mean the giver of ministry should also be the receiver of ministry in any situation. I don’t ever want to be in a situation where I am a taker or a giver exclusively. I want there to be a flow of love, faith and encouragement between those among whom I minister and me. I must remember that I need to learn from others just as they may be learning from me.

#### **Day Four**

13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.

15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

v. 13 – It seemed that Paul felt a visit to Rome was imminent at long last. He had made efforts to visit there in the past but to no avail. The Lord had not opened the way for him to come.

v. 14 – Paul was obligated to preach to everyone, but he was most effective when he was preaching to the Gentiles. He bore witness to the Jews but had little harvest among Jews, but a great harvest among Gentiles. What is your area of greatest effectiveness? How can you be even more effective?

v. 15 – Paul’s strategy was to go to an area and work with the major city of that region so that a hub for the gospel would be established. From there, he expected that the gospel would spread. His strategy was successful. Preaching at Rome, the hub of the Empire, would be a way to multiply his ministry many times over, but the Lord had not permitted him to do this up to the point of writing this letter. No matter how wise you are and how good your strategy is, your success is ultimately in God’s hands.

“So he said to me, This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

But simply because it is God who gives success doesn't mean that you don't need a strategy to fulfill your purpose. Do you have a strategy? What are you willing to do to develop one? Get someone to help you? Write it out?

v. 16 – The Roman church undoubtedly had both Jewish and Gentile members. Paul introduced one of his main themes for the letter and that was that *anyone* who puts their faith in Christ can attain salvation.

Paul was not ashamed of and did not apologize for the simplicity of this truth that was offensive to so many.

v. 17 – In this verse, Paul introduced what seems to be the predominant theme of his letter: faith. I would assume that Paul had heard of some issues in the Roman church that disputed this vital truth. Paul decided to write a letter to address this issue, knowing that the church at the capital city had great influence throughout the Empire. Many people came to and went from Rome and so could carry what they heard and learned to their home area.

Paul referred to a “righteousness” that is by faith. The word “righteous” comes from an Old English combination of words “right wise ness.” True wise-ness where “right” is concerned involves faith. If you want to please God, you must trust Him, first for salvation and then for everything else that He may do or provide.

### **Day Five**

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,  
19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

vs. 18&19 – These next verses explain the source of much of the world's perversity, wickedness and sexual impurity. It all starts when men suppress the truth—truth that is plain for all to see. There are always implications when we suppress the truth—someone once said if you don't deal with what's in you, what's in you will deal with you. If I hate, but suppress the truth that God wants me to see, then that hate will manifest itself in other ways. God's wrath will ultimately rest on that hatred and it will come to light, perhaps through slander, bitterness or even murder.

God makes things plain for all to see, but I make things complicated so that I won't have to face the truth. That is the human condition—God is pursuing man, but man is running from God, from the truth.

Are you suppressing the truth in any area? Are you avoiding your purpose, or something that God wants you to do? Are you ignoring a heart issue that bubbles to the surface every now and then to beckon you to deal with it?

v. 20 – This verse refers to what theologians call “general revelation.” All creation speaks to the existence of God. It is possible for someone to sit on a hillside, look up at the stars and the expanse of heaven, and conclude that there is a God. Someone else may see a baby born, or the vastness of the oceans and determine that there is a God. Either of these are examples of general revelation. General revelation cannot reveal God's plan for salvation or the need to put faith in His Son, but it can point men to the knowledge of God's existence.

And obviously, God holds men accountable to come to the proper conclusion of His existence from this general revelation.

v. 21 – Men who knew God refused to glorify Him or give thanks. When that happens, the mind becomes darkened and logic leads to futility. If God isn't given His proper place, over time all men's efforts lead to foolishness. That is certainly the condition of the modern world.

### **Day Six**

22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools  
23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.  
24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.  
25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.  
26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

vs. 22&23 – The foolishness of denying God does not lead to atheism, but idolatry. We have a God-sized hole in our being and we all try to fill that hole with something. If we choose not to fill it with God, then we will try to fill it with false gods—either physical or mental.

The consequences of idolatry are accurately portrayed in Psalm 115:

4 But their idols are silver and gold,  
made by the hands of men.  
5 They have mouths, but cannot speak,

eyes, but they cannot see;  
6 they have ears, but cannot hear,  
noses, but they cannot smell;  
7 they have hands, but cannot feel,  
feet, but they cannot walk;  
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.  
8 Those who make them will be like them,  
and so will all who trust in them.

It seems that we become like what we worship. That is why we reflect the glory of God when we worship Him, for we become more like Him when we are face-to-face with Him. But if we face something else in worship, we will become dead, just like the thing we worship.

vs. 24-26 – Notice that this passage does not say that God caused the sexual perversity that stemmed from their denial of Him and resultant idolatry. He simply turned them over to the consequences of their decision to deny Him. While there can be many causes of sexual immorality (childhood abuse, demonic oppression, pornography), the root cause seems to be in idolatry. Until we deal with that issue of idolatry, we cannot see people set free from the sins of the flesh that may torment them.

### **Day Seven**

27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.  
28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.  
29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,  
30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;  
31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.  
32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

v. 27 – This is straightforward teaching condemning the practice of homosexuality and explaining its cause. Notice here that the devil is not blamed or mentioned as a source. This is a condition that man brought on himself by denying God. It's as simple as that.

v. 28 – Not only did God turn mankind over to a depraved body, but also a depraved mind. Christians often complain about the conditions of the world, but what can we expect? We cannot expect Christian behavior from non-Christians! You cannot expect kindness or fairness from anyone who doesn't acknowledge God as supreme.

vs. 29-31 – Paul spelled out an exhaustive list of evil that resulted from denying God. While the list is self-explanatory, one thing in Paul’s list catches my attention. He wrote that men would “invent ways of doing evil.” Man is a creative being, but creativity that isn’t rooted in God will turn perverted as well. Not all the evil that exists is from the devil. Man has devised his own evil without Satan’s help.

v. 32 – There is what could be called “evil evangelism.” Those who do evil are recruiting others to do the same, approving of their wicked ways. That is why the church needs to be recruiting as well, for the agents of evil are enlisting as many as possible to their cause. You and I are in a competition for the hearts and creativity of men and women. We must reach as many as possible with our message of God’s love, for without that knowledge, people will be susceptible to the lures of idolatry and that can only lead to depravity of mind and body.

Are you up to the task? Are you willing to be a recruiter for righteousness, knowing that the competition is intense, sometimes even deadly? I hope you are, for the stakes are high and many are lost every day, unable to find any freedom from sin because they cannot get right with God.

Paul wrote about this 2,000 years ago, but it seems to apply to this generation more than ever before. The answer is not counseling, prescription medications or self-help gurus. The only answer to the ills of modern society is a proper foundation in and understanding of God. And it is up to you and me to declare that truth so that as many as possible can escape the wrath of God.