

ROMANS

Chapter 1

Greeting

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ch 1 Luther: “It is right for a preacher of the gospel in the first place by revelation of the law and of sin to rebuke and to constitute as sin everything that is not the living fruit of the Spirit and of faith in Christ, in order that men should be led to know themselves and their own wretchedness, and to become humble and ask for help. This is therefore what St. Paul does. He begins in chapter 1 to rebuke the gross sins and unbelief that are plainly evident. These were, and still are, the sins of the heathen who live without God’s grace. He says: Through the gospel there shall be revealed the wrath of God from heaven against all men because of their godless lives and their unrighteousness. For even though they know and daily recognize that there is a God, nevertheless nature itself, without grace, is so bad that it neither thanks nor honors God. Instead it blinds itself, and goes steadily from bad to worse until, after idolatry, it blatantly commits the most shameful sins, along with all the vices, and also allows others to commit them unreprimanded” (AE 35:372). (TLSB)

1:1–7 Formal greeting. Paul identifies himself, his divinely given authority, and his message. He addresses the recipients, describing them as God sees them. Finally, he blesses them with grace and peace. Gk letters typically employed this general structure, but Paul is careful to focus on the triune God and His grace, setting the Epistle’s tone. (TLSB)

1:1 *Paul*. † In ancient times writers put their names at the beginning of letters for the convenience of the addressee(s), since letters were written on scrolls. (CSB)

The standard form used for beginning a letter differed somewhat from what we’re accustomed to. We place the author’s signature at the end of the letter; the ancients put it up front. The letter to the Romans opens with the first word of the first verse identifying Paul as the author. A second item always stated up front in ancient letter was an indication of whom the letter was intended for. That comes in verse 7 of Paul’s letter, where the recipients are identified as “all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” The third standard item in every ancient letter was a greeting. Here in Romans the greeting, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” is very similar to the phrase that opens virtually all of Paul’s NT letters. (PBC)

He was born in an observant Jewish home and given a Hebrew name at birth. There are several explanations as to how Saul went to being Paul. One is that Paul had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. His Jewish name was Saul and his Greek name was Paul. A second is that God would change people’s name after he had an encounter with them. Several examples are:

- Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of many) – Genesis 17:5
- Sarai (princess) to Sarah (princess of many nations – serve the Lord’s purpose) – Genesis 17:15
- Jacob (deceiver) to Israel (struggled with God and with men and have overcome) – Genesis 32:28

They may have also followed the custom common among Diaspora Jews of adopting a Greek or Latin name which had a sound similar to that of the Hebrew name given at birth. The name “Paul” means little which also well describes his physical stature. Paul was a “in your face kind of guy.” You could say he was obsessive compulsive and today might be a candidate for prozac. This shows itself in some of his writings where repeats certain points he wants to make. (Ephesians 2:8-9 is but one example.)

Switching to name that means “little” reminds me of the words of John the Baptist in John 3:30, “He must become greater; I must become less.” In order for Christ to shine through we must also decrease.

servant. The Greek for this word means (1) a “slave,” who completely belongs to his owner and has no freedom to leave, and (2) a “servant,” who willingly chooses to serve his master. (CSB)

Or slave. Paul belongs to Christ and lives to serve Him. (TLSB)

OT (ebed – Job 7:2) NT (doulos) – In earthly terms a slave didn’t even earn wages. He was the property of his master and was completely bound to his master’s will. Since the slave received no wages, all he had to look forward to after a hard day’s work was rest under the shade tree or in a shelter. For Judaism in the time of Jesus, as for the Greek world, the slave was on a lower level of humanity. By law the slave was classified with immobile goods, had no rights at law and could not own property. Even his family did not belong to him; it was the property of his master, who might be given him a favorite slave in marriage. They had no genealogies, and therefore there was no possibility of controlling their origin. Since a slave was a chattel, his master could do with him as he desired (even mutilation); there was none to hinder the master. (Kittel – Volume 2, pages 275,6)

With this word Paul confesses that he belongs to and is totally at the disposal of his Lord. It is an expression of humility, a title that Paul shares with all believers (Rom 6:22; 14:4, 8). But there is in this title also a high claim. Great and singularly favored men of God were in the OT called servants of God: Moses (Joshua 1:2), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (Ps.78:70), and especially the prophets (Amos 3:7; Jer 7:25; Dan 9:6). And Jesus had applied this high title to the disciples and apostles whom He had called and sent (Matt 10:24-25; John 13:16). With the self-designation “servant,” Paul is joining the ranks of those to whom the Word of the Lord came, men who were chosen to be the proclaimers of the Word and will of God. There is no personal pride in this for Paul; he is confessing what God by His call has made of him. The call of God that had summoned Abraham and Israel and the prophets to their place and their task in a history controlled by God (Gen 12:1-3; Ex 3:10; Is 6:8-9; Jer 1:4-5) had come to Paul and given him his work to do. (Franzmann)

The Greek finds his personal dignity in the fact that he is free. In the doulos the free world always sees its own antitype, and sees the perversion of its own nature. Hence the Greek can only reject and scorn the type of service which in inner outer structure bears the slightest resemblance to that of the slave. (Kittel – Volume 2, pages 261, 2)

The status of the Christian, on the other hand, is characterized by the fact that by the death of Jesus he is rescued from the “slavery” of powers which aimed to subjugate him and to separate him from God. (Kittel – Volume 2, page 275)

Jesus models and teaches this clearly on the night of the Last Supper. In this episode Jesus makes it quite clear to His disciples that His office as He sees it consists in His being as a slave rather than in striving for power and glory. We do not properly understand the scene, or the intention of Jesus, if we do not realize that washing feet was one of the duties of slaves, and indeed of non-Jewish rather than Jewish slaves. In performing this service, Jesus puts Himself in the position of a slave who must unthinkingly fulfill his office. (Kittel – Volume 2, page 277)

called – Paul did not appoint himself; God called him (Ac 9:15–16). (TLSB)

Paul did not choose to become a Christian. Rather God called him. When Ananias, the pious Christian whom the Lord sent to minister to Paul in his blindness, objected to going near this flagrant persecutor, God told him, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15). (PBC)

of Christ Jesus – Because of such a great Lord he is to be received with the same reverence as if he were Christ Himself, Christ who says (Luke 10:16): “He who hears you.” (Luther)

apostle. One specially commissioned by Christ. (CSB)

One called directly by Christ to proclaim the Gospel everywhere. (TLSB)

Not an intruder or interloper, driven by ambition, like a false apostle, who “does not enter ... by the door but climbs in by another way.” These false apostles come by their own temerity, therefore they are thieves and not shepherds, as John 10 tells us. Heb. 5:4: “One does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, as Aaron was.” (Luther)

Though he did not, as the Twelve, travel about with the Lord during His lifetime, he yet lacked none of the other prerogatives of the apostleship, the eye witness and the ear witness. Paul had seen the resurrected Lord with his eyes and had received direct instruction from Him concerning the things he should teach. (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3) (Stoekhardt)

set apart – Paul as a Pharisee (separated) was set apart from the broad mass of his people for a scrupulous devotion to the fulfillment of the Law. God had reversed this Pharisee’s course and had set him apart for the proclamation of the Gospel. (Franzmann)

Consecrated, chosen to proclaim the Gospel. (TLSB)

“Taken away from preoccupation with other things, I have been dedicated to, initiated in, and sanctified for, this one office, that I teach the Gospel, just as a priest is set apart and separated to offer the sacrifice.” (Luther)

Each Christian is set aside for witnessing to the gospel. Individual Christians can and do go where pastors are unable to go. Each needs to see how God is using them (family – neighborhood – work). None of us live where we do or go where we go by accident. – Christus Magister (A Teacher come from God.” John 3:2).

gospel. From the Old English *godspel*, “good story” or “good news,” which accurately translates the Greek. The good news is that God has provided salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (CSB)

The Good News of salvation through faith in Christ. Paul’s call is to proclaim Christ’s grace. (TLSB)

The good news which Mark and the other Gospel writers report centers in Jesus of Nazareth. Mark calls him Jesus Christ the Son of God. (PBC)

Among the Romans it meant “joyful tidings” and was associated with the cult of the emperor, whose birthday, attainment to majority and ascension to power were celebrated as festival occasions for the whole world. The reports of such festivals were called “evangels” in the inscription and papyri of the Imperial Age. A Calendar inscription from 9 BC found in Priene in Asia Minor, says of the emperor Octavian (Augustus): “the birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings which have been proclaimed on his account. This inscription is remarkably similar to Mark’s initial line and it clarifies the essential content of an evangel in the ancient world: an historical event which introduces a new situation for the world. In this perspective the Roman would understand Mark’s proclamation of Jesus the Messiah. Beginning with the inauguration of Jesus’ public ministry, Mark announces Jesus’ coming as an event that brings about a radically new state of affairs for mankind. (Lane)

Law & Gospel

Law
What man is to do and not to do

Gospel
What God has done and still is
doing for man in Jesus Christ

Demands – Judges – Accuses – Pounds
Damnation

Offers – Promises – Pardons –
Comforts – Salvation

The Gospel must predominate. In Romans the first 8 chapters deal with doctrine of salvation and the last four deal with Christian living.

The Good News of God (1:2–5)

The second striking element of the opening is the manner in which 1:2–6 interrupt the typical format and begin to unpack the phrase which ends 1:1. Certainly much more is to come about εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, but these verses draw immediate attention to “the Good News of God.” The insertion of 1:2–6 is probably explained by the fact that Paul has not yet visited Rome and many of his addressees have not yet heard him personally proclaim the Gospel. It also makes clear that the Good News is the basis of his apostleship and the heart of his message. So, it is all about the Gospel! Already here in the opening greeting, εὐαγγέλιον is clarified, both briefly and precisely, as a number of significant aspects are laid out. (CC)

1:2 The Gospel is not something new; it is God’s eternal will, first proclaimed in the Hbr Scriptures. God always planned to send Christ to save us. (TLSB)

promised before hand – He says this so that we should not think that this gift has been received on account of our merits or that it is the result of human wisdom. This is the greatest power and the proof of the Gospel, that it has the witness of the old Law and Prophets that it

would be so in the future. For the Gospel proclaims only what prophecy has said it would proclaim, so that we may say that it has been ordained by God's previous decision to be so before it should happen, and thus God alone should receive the glory for this doctrine and not our own merits and endeavors, obviously because this Gospel was ordained before we existed. (Luther)

Revealing this promise is His plan and not a result of a blind accident, fate, or determined by the stars. (Luther)

Amos 3:7 reads: "The Lord God does nothing without revealing beforehand, etc.," so that our glorying may cease." (Luther)

Luke 21:33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

The Gospel is news of God's new creation in the world's last day. But new as it is, it has behind it a long history. It is the culmination of God's revelation; it is the fulfillment of His promises. Paul shares with all the men of the NT the believing conviction, implanted by Jesus Himself, that the OT is the foreword to the New, that the life and death and resurrection of Jesus all took place as the fulfillment of the ancient promises of God, that "all the promises of God find their Yes in Him" (2Cor 1:20). (Franzmann)

prophets. Not just the writers of the prophetic books, for the whole OT prophesied about Jesus (see Lk 24:27, 44). (CSB)

Holy Scriptures. The OT. (CSB)

This is wonderful proof of the grace of God, that above and beyond the eternal promises He gives the promise also in human words, not only in spoken words but also in written ones. (Luther)

1 Timothy 2:4 "who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

1:3 *concerning his son* – This is the Gospel, which deals not merely with the Son of God in general but with Him who has become incarnate and is of the seed of David. In effect he says: "He has emptied Himself and has become weak. He who was before all and created everything now has a beginning Himself and has been made."

John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

was descendant of David – The Messiah came, as prophesied (cf Dt 18:15), from David's line (cf 2Sm 7:12–13). (TLSB)

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, ^d who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

When the NT church says this of Jesus Christ (Paul is probably quoting an early creed-like summary of the Gospel), the church is saying: “He came from the realm of God to us of His own free will; He took upon Himself the flesh of man for us men and for our salvation.” (Franzmann)

1:4 Spirit of Holiness – An expression found in early Christian Aram for the Holy Spirit, given by the resurrected Christ. It shows Jesus’ power and testifies to Christ’s identity. (TLSB)

was declared – Lit, “made Son of God” in the sense of an appointment to an office. (TLSB)

by his resurrection – Jesus’ bodily resurrection affirms His deity and the completion of His saving work. (TLSB)

our Lord – Confession of faith: they believe in Jesus. These verses have the character of an early Christian creed. (TLSB)

1:5 grace and apostleship – Christ saved Paul (by grace) and called him into service (apostleship). (TLSB)

obedience of faith – Lit, “by the listening of faith,” i.e., to trustingly hear and follow what someone says. Not sanctification (obedience that results from faith) but justification (obedience that consists of faith). Faith hears and believes the message, then responds appropriately (cf 10:17; 15:18; Heb 11:1). (TLSB)

Paul knows of no obedience, in the religious sense, which is not of faith. (Franzmann)

all nations – Salvation is not for the Jews alone, but for all (cf Mt 28:18–20). God called Paul esp to reach the Gentiles. (TLSB)

Called Saints in Rome (1:6–7)

The impact of the εὐαγγέλιον in Paul’s life was expressed in 1:5. Then in 1:6 it reaches out to other specific people, those to whom Paul writes this letter. The emphatic ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς, “you, you also, are,” reinforces their inclusion within the call of Christ. The believers in Rome are also “called of/by Jesus Christ.” On the one hand, those in Rome do not have the same apostolic calling as Paul. Yet the essential point is that they too have been given faith and called to be “among” those “whom” (ἐν οἷς, 1:6) Jesus calls his own redeemed people. (CC)

1:6 are called to belong to Jesus Christ – God calls Christians to faith and incorporates us into His body. We passively receive His grace. (TLSB)

1:7 loved by God and called – The initiative is God’s; He loved, called, and saved us. (TLSB)

saints.† The basic idea of the Greek for this word is “holiness.” All Christians are saints in that they have been declared holy (righteous) by God and are being made increasingly “holy” by the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

Always plural in Paul’s Letters. Those declared holy because of Christ’s saving work, i.e., the community of believers God calls and sets apart by faith. (TLSB)

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη—Instead of the typical Greek salutation χάρειν, “greetings,” Paul employs χάρις, “grace.” “Jewish letters often began with variations of the traditional Jewish greeting:

‘Peace to you’ (*shalom*). Paul combined the two greetings, producing what becomes his characteristic opening.” (CC)

peace. See notes on Jn 14:27; 20:19; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2. – Peace is the state of whole and sound well-being, the divine health, which God’s grace creates, bestows, and perpetually renews. (Franzmann)

grace...peace – The grace of God which saves us will always lead to peace. You can’t have true peace without grace. There is a bumper sticker which says it well, “No Jesus, No Peace,” “Know Jesus, Know Peace.” – Grace was the common greeting in the Greek-speaking world. Peace (*Shalom*) was, and is, the standard greeting in the Jewish world. Since this letter was written to an ethnically mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles, both of these greetings are appropriate. Coming from Paul’s pen, however, these two terms are far more than just a commonplace secular greeting. In Paul’s Christian vocabulary, grace is the quality that makes God willing, even eager, to give good gifts to believers. And God’s gifts – such as forgiveness of sins, a good conscience, and the certainty of heaven – bring peace to those who are the objects of God’s grace. Thus grace and peace go together as cause and effect. (PBC)

1:1–7 Paul affirms three callings from God: he is called to be an apostle, the Romans are called to belong to Christ, and they are called to be saints. We sinners are prone to think that we control every aspect of our lives, and we tend to live only for ourselves. Knowing the futility of this, Christ Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross that we might be redeemed. He calls us out of sin and death and into life. Praise God! We are called to belong to Him and to love and serve others. • Lord Jesus, thank You for making me Your own and for all of Your gifts. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul’s Longing to Go to Rome

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Thanksgiving and Prayers (1:8–10)

In secular letters of the day, the opening greeting was typically followed by “a statement that the sender has been wishing for or praying for the recipient’s good health.” A thanksgiving is much less common. Paul does occasionally mention his prayers in behalf of his addressees (Rom 1:9–10; Eph 1:16–17; Col 1:3). However, in most of his letters, Paul’s greeting is immediately followed by a thanksgiving in which he again turns the focus away from sender and addressee and back toward God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, the use of “God” (θεός) in 1:8 is already Paul’s fifth use of the noun, with two more to come in 1:9 and 1:10 (see previously 1:1, 4, 7 [twice]). Additionally, four pronouns are used with God as the referent in 1:1–10 for a total of eleven references. As in 1:7, the Father and the Son are immediately linked. Rom 1:1–10 has five occurrences of “Christ Jesus” (1:1) or “Jesus Christ” (1:4, 6, 7, 8), plus three additional

references to him as God’s Son (1:3, 4, 9). Here the thanks to God is directed “through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1:8). This is in keeping with Jesus’ invitation to pray to the Father in his name with the assurance that our requests will then be granted (e.g., Lk 11:2; Jn 14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:23–24). (CC)

Paul also typically uses his thanksgivings to point ahead toward the purpose of his letters, and Romans provides no exception. In 1:8 the thanksgiving to God is “concerning” (περί) those in Rome. A ὅτι clause gives the reason: “because your faith is being announced in the whole world.” Aside from the reference to the Romans who had travelled to Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:10), the origin of the church in Rome remains a mystery and, aside from what Paul writes in his letter, little else is known about the Romans when he does so. Later in the letter, Paul praises the believers’ goodness, knowledge, and ability to instruct one another (15:14), but these specific characteristics do not seem to be the basis for his expression of gratitude here. More relevant is the well-known saying “all roads lead to Rome.” The fact that there are believers in Rome, the center of the empire in virtually every way, is reason enough. (CC)

1:8 *thank.* † Paul usually began his letters with thanks (see 1Co 1:4; Eph 1:16; Php 1:3; Col 1:3; 1Th 1:2; 2Th 1:3; 2Ti 1:3; Phm 4). (CSB)

Thanksgiving is always first; thanksgiving, Luther says, is the fire in the censer that makes the incense of our petitions rise with a find and joyous buoyancy to the throne of God. (Franzmann)

through Jesus Christ. The Christian must go through Christ not only for requests to God (see Jn 15:16) but also to give thanks. (CSB)

because of your faith – He gives thanks for their faith; faith is so central to the Christian life. The faith of the Romans must have been an active, working, and witnessing faith, the kind that James calls for (James 2:14-26), for it has made news. (Franzmann)

Others are thankful that God brought the Romans to faith. Paul focuses on the fact that they have faith, not on its strength or on their works. (TLSB)

all over the world. Every place where the gospel has been preached. (CSB)

Christians everywhere knew of their brothers and sisters in Rome. (TLSB)

Paul values the church of Rome as allies to aid him in his apostolic task of bringing about the obedience of faith among all the nations. (Franzmann)

1:9-10 Paul repeatedly prayed for the opportunity to visit the Roman Christians. (TLSB)

1:9 *I serve* – Gk *latreuo*, to serve or worship. Paul used this term of worship to describe his special ministry on behalf of the congregation. Cf 2Co 1:11. (TLSB)

with my spirit. Paul was not bodily present with them, so he served them in prayer. (TLSB)

gospel of his Son. The same as the “gospel of God” (v. 1). (CSB)

without ceasing I mention you – Paul’s preaching and suffering men can see; only God knows of his unceasing prayers, and only He can witness them. Paul makes clear in passing that his prayers for all churches everywhere are an essential part of his work (the word used here for

“serve” has suggestions of a priestly ministry; cf 15,16), which he performs in his spirit, inwardly, to God. (Franzmann)

Paul has been praying for the Romans. God, who hears prayer, is Paul’s witness. (TLSB)

1:10 *by God’s will.* Paul could go to Rome only if God wanted him to, so he prays for God’s help. (TLSB)

Paul has long desired to come to Rome: the strength of his longing and the fervency of his prayers that he might reach Rome are apparent in the choke-up vocabulary of his prayer here. But he is an apostle by the grace of God, by the will of God, and by the call of God prays that he may come “by God’s will.” His plans are under the will of God, not his own to make as he wills. (Franzmann)

Why Paul Yearns to Be Together with the Romans (1:11–15)

The reason why Paul desires to be among the Romans is specified by a ἵνα clause (“so that …”) in 1:11. First, Paul states that he wants to give a spiritual gift over to them. In comparison with Paul’s other discussions on the subject, two things are of interest here. First, this is the only time in the Greek NT that both the noun χάρισμα, “gift (of grace).” The second interesting facet of Paul’s reference to a “spiritual gift” in Rom 1:11 is that he does not appear to define it explicitly. (CC)

1:11 *I long.* God is in charge, but Paul is eager to visit this Church at Rome that he loves. (TLSB)

impart to you some spiritual gift – He desires to serve the churches of Rome by enriching them with some gift that the Spirit has given him, for their strengthening. We are uncertain of exactly the gift was. The entire purpose and thrust of the Letter to the Romans suggests that the spiritual gift meant here might be a prophetic revelation that would create in the Romans a deepened sense of their missionary opportunity and responsibility. (Cf. Acts 13:1-2) (Franzmann)

Paul does not identify specific gifts here (as he will in 12:6–8), but promises that God will bless them. John Chrysostom: “He does not say that I may teach you, that I may instruct you ... but, ‘that I may impart;’ showing, that it is not his own things which he is giving them, but that he was imparting to them what he had received” (NPNF 1 11:345). (TLSB)

Rom 1:12 begins with another unique Greek expression, which further expands upon the previous verse: “and this is to be mutually encouraged.” (CC)

1:12 *mutually.* Paul’s genuine humility is seen in his desire to be ministered to by the believers at Rome as well as to minister to them. (CSB)

A blessing esp of the Gospel, as forgiveness is shared (see SA III IV). (TLSB)

An apostle is not, for all his authority, over the church (cf. 2 Cor. 1:24); he is in the church, a member of the body, among members who all “have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25). Therefore, if Paul edifies the church, he will himself be edified. The spark of missionary fervor he kindles in the men of Rome will grow into a fire that warms him too. (Franzmann)

each others faith – This strengthened faith may be the “spiritual” gift described in v 11. Both Paul and the Church will be blessed as they serve each other. (TLSB)

The formulaic “I do not want you to be without knowledge” (οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν) is often used by Paul to introduce an important point. While the double negative, literally, “not ... not to know” (οὐ ... ἀγνοεῖν) is awkward, Paul wants to make sure that the Romans *do know* that he has planned many times “to come to you” (ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 1:13). Up to the present time Paul has been hindered or prevented from coming, but he does not explicitly state by what. (CC)

1:13 brothers. Not exclusive to men; it includes all siblings. An affectionate greeting (used 10 times in Rm) showing Paul’s kinship with the believers—men and women—in Rome. As children of one Father, Christians are members of one family. (TLSB)

prevented. Paul does not specify what hindered him. He used the same verb (“hindered”) in 15:22, see note. God had work for Paul to do before he could visit Rome. (TLSB)

harvest. New converts as well as spiritual growth by those already converted. (CSB)

To see God’s work in their lives (cf Mt 9:37–38; 1Co 3:6–9). (TLSB)

among you ... among the other Gentiles. Suggests that the church at Rome was predominantly Gentile. (CSB)

Paul’s primary mission was to evangelize Gentiles. He had seen God’s work in other Gentile communities; now he wants to see it in Rome. (TLSB)

The figure of the harvest for missionary achievement was probably familiar to the church from the words of Jesus (Matt 9:37–38), and Paul himself uses the figure elsewhere (1 Cor 3:6–9; 9:10–12; 2 Tim 2:6). This work would be a continuation of Paul’s particular mission to the Gentiles; the church of Rome is characterized hereby as Gentile. (Franzmann)

In Rom 1:14 Paul describes the target of his mission work as “Greeks” and “barbarians” (Ἕλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάρους). This phrase refers to those who had been Hellenized, that is, who knew Graeco-Roman language and culture, as well as to those “barbarians” who did not. These two groups together could encompass all people, including Jews, since they, at least from a Greco-Roman perspective, would fit into one group or the other. But the emphasis, springing from the end of 1:13, is Paul’s outreach farther and farther into the Gentile world. (CC)

1:14 I am under obligation – “So I am eager”; the obligation rests on Paul (he uses the even stronger term “necessity” in 1 Cor 9:16) is the velvet yoke of the controlling love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14–15). It does not, therefore, destroy his freedom; rather, it crease true freedom. (Franzmann)

God called Paul to minister to the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul must do this work (cf v 15). (TLSB)

Gentiles. Those Gentiles who spoke Greek or followed the Greek way of life, even though they may have been Latin-speaking citizens of the Roman empire. (CSB)

barbarians. A word that probably imitated the unintelligible sound of their languages to Greek ears. They were the other Gentiles to whom Paul ministered. (CSB)

Hellenistic rhetoric. Those who spoke Gk (including the Romans) considered themselves to be the world's wise, civilized, and cultured people. "Barbarians," who spoke other languages, were considered foolish and contemptible. Such human judgments are irrelevant; Paul intends to proclaim the Gospel to all. (TLSB)

The grammar at the beginning of 1:15 is difficult, but the meaning is clear enough. The translation "thus the eagerness on my part" reflects Paul's ongoing desire to reach Rome. As far as it concerns him, he has been all too ready to come to them for far too long. But his work in the east has hindered him. Paul now anticipates that, so long as it is within God's will, the time has finally arrived. (CC)

1:15 *eager to preach the Gospel* – The obligation to preach the Gospel is a joyful opportunity. Renewed by the Spirit, Paul is compelled to preach. (TLSB)

1:8–15 Paul was sent to the Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and foolish. Today, we may be tempted to keep the Gospel to ourselves or limit it to people who are like us. However, Jesus did not limit His work. He redeemed the whole world—even barbarians and fools like us. He commissions us to reach out to all people. • Triune God, strengthen me to be Your witness to all people. Amen. (TLSB)

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

1:16–17 The theme of the entire book. (CSB)

The significance of these two verses (1:16–17) cannot be overstated. If Romans were published by Paul today, the book might not be titled "Romans," but "the righteous person will live from faith" (1:17). His subtitle would be comprised of the remainder of 1:16–17. These verses introduce and contain many of the key words and phrases which will be developed throughout the rest of the letter. As a result, they deserve to be explored in detail. (CC)

1:16 *not ashamed*. Not even in the capital city of the Roman empire (see v. 15). (CSB)

The Gospel appears foolish to the world, which may ridicule or persecute Christians, but we are proud of what Christ has done (1Co 1:18). (TLSB)

Paul knew how the Gospel looked to outsiders, to those who had not yet been brought to the obedience of faith by it. He had seen how the Jew stumbled at the Gospel of a crucified Messiah and called Jesus the Accursed. He had seen how the Greek shrugged off the Gospel and called it foolishness (1 Cor 1:23). He would meet both Jew and Greek again in Rome. (Franzmann)

Paul begins 1:16 by asserting, "I am not ashamed." This doubly negative statement ("not ashamed" = "honored") complements the positive eagerness Paul just expressed about proclaiming the Good News in Rome (1:15). To be sure, he remains a debtor to do so (ὀφειλέτης in 1:14; see 1 Cor 9:16), but this obligation is not one that causes him to bear shame. (CC)

gospel. From the Old English *godspel*, “good story” or “good news,” which accurately translates the Greek. The good news is that God has provided salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (CSB)

The Greek background of this word is informative, where εὐαγγέλιον “is a technical term for ‘news of victory.’ ” The arrival of the message “does not merely declare salvation; it effects it.”¹¹ The imperial cult of Rome used εὐαγγέλιον most significantly in relation to the emperor, who supposedly embodied divinity, good fortune, and salvation in himself (θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, τύχη, and σωτηρία). Thus the proclamation of the emperor’s birth, his coming of age, and especially his accession to the throne are all heralded as εὐαγγέλιον. His enthronement, “which introduces a new era and brings peace to the world, is a gospel for men.” (CC)

One can almost shudder in amazement as Paul, in a letter addressed to those in the capital of the empire, begins by boldly proclaiming another “Good News.” For him it is in fact *the* one and only true εὐαγγέλιον, and it comes through the one who is truly the Son of God. (CC)

power of God for salvation. The reason for Christian confidence. The Gospel is not simply words; the Spirit works faith and brings us salvation through it. God does this work, not us. “Justification happens only through the Word” of the Gospel (Ap IV 67). (TLSB)

The power is in the revelation that takes place. It is powerful because it has the force of revelation. In revelation, according to the Bible, God enters men’s lives and determines their lives. In news there is a report of an event that has taken place; in revelation the event is not only reported but presented, made a present reality, effectively active in the life of man. (Franzmann)

No power to save or to deliver is given to man, nor is it possible for man to attain such a power; and that power is grounded in the omnipotence of God alone. In the message of Christ we thus have the power of God which is the power of salvation. The power of God in the Gospel consists in the fact that it mediates salvation, that by the Gospel God delivers man from the power of darkness and translates him into His kingdom. (Kittel – 308-309)

salvation – The word “salvation” is for us a worn coin; for Paul and his readers, fresh from their OT, it still had a sharp image and a clear superscription. It meant radical deliverance out of a desperate situation. What Israel had experienced at the Red Sea, when all help was cut off before and behind and only a vertical miracle from on high could save, that was salvation. (Franzmann)

The phrase “into salvation” (εἰς σωτηρίαν, 1:16) expresses the result of God’s active power. It is directed toward and confers eschatological salvation. Here, again, we see a word whose secular usage had imperial connotations, though the title σωτήρ, “savior,” was also applied more broadly to physicians, philosophers, and statesmen as well. The Greek noun σωτηρία and the verb σῶζω have a fairly broad range of meanings, encompassing to “snatch others by force from serious peril,” as well as “to keep, benefit, or preserve.” (CC)

everyone who believes – While the Gospel always has God’s power, we receive its power through faith. (TLSB)

Faith is simply acceptance, receiving. When I believe, I accept God’s saving act as done for me. I let it count for what is in my life – I breathe the free air God’s liberating act has created. (Franzmann)

first.† Not only in time but also in privilege. “Salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22), and the Messiah was a Jew. The “very words of God” (3:2), the covenants, law, temple worship, revelation of the divine glory, and Messianic prophecies came to them (9:3–5). These privileges, however, were not extended to the Jews because of their superior merit. It was necessary that the invasion of this world by the gospel begin at a particular point with a particular people, who in turn were responsible to carry that gospel to the other nations. (CSB)

People are saved only by grace through faith. (TLSB)

1:17 *righteousness*. The state of being “in the right” in relation to God. (CSB)

The Gospel is neither human righteousness nor a characteristic of God. It identifies everything that God does to save His people through Christ. Luther: “At first I clearly saw that the free grace of God is absolutely necessary to attain to light and eternal life; and I anxiously and busily worked to understand the word of Paul in Rom. 1:17: The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. I questioned this passage for a long time and labored over it, for the expression ‘righteousness of God’ barred my way. This phrase was customarily explained to mean that the righteousness of God is a virtue by which He is Himself righteous and condemns sinners. In this way all the teachers of the church except Augustine had interpreted the passage. They had said: The righteousness of God, that is (*id est*), the wrath of God. But as often as I read this passage, I wished that God had never revealed the Gospel; for who could love a God who was angry, who judged and condemned people? This misunderstanding continued until, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I finally examined more carefully the word of Habakkuk: ‘The just shall live by his faith’ (2:4). From this passage I concluded that life must be derived from faith.... Then the entire Holy Scripture became clear to me, and heaven itself was opened to me. Now we see this brilliant light very clearly, and we are privileged to enjoy it abundantly” (WLS § 2600). (TLSB)

This is an action by God. The “righteousness of God” and “Jesus Christ our Lord” are intimately connected. It is the revelation of the “righteousness of God” that makes the Gospel a power to save; if it connotes an action, it is a gracious, redeeming action that is meant. (Franzmann)

righteous shall live by faith – Faith is God’s gift created by the Gospel, and faith receives the gifts of the Gospel. It is entirely God’s work. *righteous ... faith*. Or, “the one who is righteous by faith shall live.” Hab 2:4, quoted here, shows that this teaching is not new but was proclaimed in the OT. See p 1902. *by faith*. Not a description of how we live but rather how we are righteous. “The righteousness of faith ... is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the gracious adoption of the poor sinner for the sake of Christ’s obedience and merit alone” (FC SD III 54). Melancthon: “We shall be just not when we look to the Law, not when we set out virtues and deeds before God, but when we declare that God is propitious to us by faith ... that he hears us, wants to save us, and that we expect salvation” (*Romans*, p 71). (TLSB)

1:16–17 Many of us have, at times, been embarrassed about our faith or have hidden our Christian identity. We have yielded to the world’s pressures and may have been ashamed of our Savior, but He is not ashamed of us. He bore our sin, guilt, and shame on the cross and gives us His life and forgiveness. Receiving those gifts by faith, and empowered by the Spirit, we are no longer ashamed of the Gospel. We know it is God’s power “for salvation to everyone who believes.” • Jesus, thank You for redeeming me and giving me Your righteousness. In faith, I will boldly proclaim Your name. Amen. (TLSB)

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,[g] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

1:18–32 The chief sin Paul addresses here is idolatry, from which other sins emerge. (TLSB)

1:18–3:20 In developing the theme of righteousness from God (1:17; 3:21–5:21), Paul sets the stage by showing that all have sinned and therefore need the righteousness that only God can provide. He shows the sin of the Gentiles (1:18–32) and the sin of the Jews (2:1–3:8) and then summarizes the sin of all—Gentile and Jew alike (3:9–20). (CSB)

1:18–20 No one—not even one who has not heard of the Bible or of Christ—has an excuse for not honoring God, because the whole created world reveals him. (CSB)

1:18 *wrath of God*. Not a petulant, irrational burst of anger, such as humans often exhibit, but a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes his holy nature and will. (CSB)

Gk *orge*, “anger,” “revenge.” The opposite of God’s grace; a just and holy response to human rebellion. Sin deserves punishment and destruction. “The New Testament keeps and urges this <office of the Law>” (SA III III 1 (TLSB)

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, for the radical rescue out of a desperate situation. And the situation of man is a desperate one; man is under the wrath of God. God’s wrath, His fearfully destructive reaction to evil, strikes all ungodliness and wickedness (literally, “unrighteousness”) of men. (Franzmann)

is being revealed. God’s wrath is not limited to the end-time judgment of the wicked (1Th 1:10; Rev 19:15; 20:11–15). Here the wrath of God is his abandonment of the wicked to their sins (vv. 24–32). (CSB)

God expresses His wrath, allowing sinners to experience some of the consequences. The following verses show some of the ways this happens. (TLSB)

It strikes them, for it is “revealed against them.” When God reveals Himself, He is going into action; revelation means not “There it is, see it!” but “Here it is, have it, feel it!” When God reveals Himself, whether in wrath or in mercy, He takes over. (Franzmann)

against all ungodliness – By rejecting God and His Word, all people reject the truth. Because the truth does not change, it continues to accuse and convict sinners who have rejected God. (TLSB)

and unrighteousness – This is the denial and violation of divine law, the norm for man’s conduct. They do the opposite of truth. Thus they hinder truth. They hinder its effect so that it does not take root in their hearts and influence their lives. (Stoeckhardt)

the truth. The truth about God revealed in the creation order. (CSB)

1:19 *can be known about God is plain* – Those who do not know the Gospel (v 17) still receive some of God’s revelation and should know God exists. *shown.* Knowledge of God through creation is not random; God chose to reveal Himself in this way. (TLSB)

They do suppress the truth; they are not ignorant but rebellious; not atheists, without God, but anti-theists, against God. For God has shown them the truth, Himself. (Franzmann)

1:20 *invisible qualities* – God is not visibly present, but the universe shows His existence and nature. (TLSB)

his eternal power – When one views the great, formal structure of the world, his first impression is that there is a God, who is exalted over the world and time, and that the eternal God has created the ends of the earth. (Stoeckhardt)

Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

creation. Nature testifies to God’s existence and character. His “fingerprints” are everywhere. (TLSB)

The invisible God is seen in that He, since the creation of the world, is perceived through the works of creation. (Stoeckhardt)

they. Paul begins to speak more specifically about the Gentiles, who had not believed the Gospel. (TLSB)

1:21 *knew God.* From seeing his revelation in creation (vv. 19–20). The fact that these people were idolaters (v. 23) and knew God only through the creation order indicates that they were Gentiles. (CSB)

Creation demonstrates that God truly exists (v 19). (TLSB)

Paul’s point is not how much the Gentiles knew or how clearly they knew God. His point is that they went against what they did know. For in God’s creation they could see His visible qualities of eternal power and divine nature, but they refused to glorify Him or acknowledge that they owed Him thanks for the many temporal blessings that came their way day after day. (PBC)

give thanks. For earthly blessings, such as sun, rain and crops (see Mt 5:45; Ac 14:17). (CSB)

God's existence was clear, but the nations did not recognize or respond to Him. (TLSB)

became futile in their thinking – Their reason and thoughts are fallen. Without God, they are separated from the greatest reality and so fail to understand many things. (TLSB)

Man refuses to be bound by God, even if he is to be bound by cords of love. When the tie with God is broken, man's whole existence goes askew. The thinking of man now has no anchor point to save it from futility. (Franzmann)

hearts were darkened. In addition to failing minds, their hearts are affected. They did not respond to God mentally or emotionally. Even when the most ingenious and learned people on earth read or hear the Gospel of God's Son and the promise of eternal salvation, "they cannot by their own powers perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true" (FC SD II 9). (TLSB)

1:22 An example of suppressing the truth (v 18). Unbelievers reject the most important things in life, thinking they are wise. In reality, they are foolish. (TLSB)

to be wise – After darkness and foolishness came intellectual conceit. (Stoekhardt)

they became foolish – The emancipated mind, delivered from the wholesome awe and discipline of communion with God, is free to pursue wisdom, free to go down the road of infinite bewilderment and un-hemmed questioning that leads to folly. (Franzmann)

1:23 *exchanged.* Gk *allasso*, "change," "alter." Unbelievers naturally substitute false gods for the one true God (cf v 25). "The knowledge of God from the Gospel is far different from that which is taught and learned from the Law. Even the pagans, to a certain extent, had a knowledge of God from the natural law. But they neither knew Him nor glorified Him correctly" (FC SD V 22). (TLSB)

glory. God's unique majesty (see Is. 48:11), which fallen mankind has lost sight of and for which they have substituted deities of their own devising, patterned after various creatures. (CSB)

Ps 106:20 uses similar language to describe Israel's idolatry with the golden calf (Ex 32). False gods cannot compare to the glory of the true God. (TLSB)

images resembling mortal man – Idols of any kind. (TLSB)

Emancipated man cannot quite endure the freedom he has chosen; he needs a deity of some sort after all. He documents the folly of his freedom by taking to himself ersatz-gods, images of man and beast. (Franzmann)

1:24, 26, 28 *God gave them up.* God allowed sin to run its course as an act of judgment. (CSB)

Although God does not force the unrighteous to sin, He does not prevent their sinful, degrading acts. Thinking they are free, humans choose the harmful bondage of sin. (TLSB)

One of the sobering truths about our holy God is that, although He is unalterably opposed to sin and evil, He does not forcibly keep people from sinning. Fallen humanity retains the awful ability to defy God. And when people insist on doing wrong and opposing God, He does not prevent them. That does not mean that it goes unnoticed or unpunished. (PBC)

Through His Spirit God disciplines and holds sinful men in check, at least outwardly. He instills them with fear and terror of sin. One who has inwardly conceived wicked plans, He warns concerning the actual deed, as He warned Cain before he became a murdered. The Lord admonished the conscience. If, however, man despises these divine exhortations and increases ungodliness, God withdraws His Spirit and all limits and hindrances. Then He completely gives the ungodly up to his sins, so that nothing stands in the way of the gratification of his lusts. (Stoekhardt)

2 Peter 3:9-10, “⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

Ezekiel 18:23, “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”

1 Timothy 2:4, “who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

impurity. Idolatry in the ancient world frequently involved sexual immorality (cf 1Co 6:9; Gal 5:19). Any sin makes people impure as they reject the purity that God gives in Christ. (TLSB)

In doing what they want to do, they become the executors of God’s wrath upon themselves. God gives them up to the defilement of their unleashed sensuality, so that they cease to have any honor in one another’s eyes; the culture or the society that tolerates marital infidelity and prostitution still has no place of honor for those who practice adulterous relationships and the prostitute, especially not when a career of sensuality has riddled their bodies. (Franzmann)

1:25 *worshiped and served created things* – worshiping something God made and not God Himself. (TLSB)

Amen. Can mean either “Yes indeed, it is so” or “So be it.” (CSB)

Paul’s theological argument evokes a confession of faith and worship. (TLSB)

1:26 *gave them up to dishonorable passions* – Paul is not condemning all passion or sexual desire. Only the misuse of God’s gift of sexuality brings dishonor. (TLSB)

their women. Not necessarily their wives. (CSB)

exchanged natural relations – Sin substitutes inferior things for God’s good gifts. (TLSB)

contrary to nature. As God’s existence and character are seen in nature (vv 19–21), so His Law is also evident. Homosexual activity, referred to here, is a departure from the natural order. (TLSB)

1:27 Homosexual practice is sinful in God's eyes. The OT also condemns the practice (see Lev 18:22). (CSB)

As in v 26, homosexual activity exchanges a natural desire for the opposite sex for an unnatural lust for one's own sex. (TLSB)

shameless acts. Homosexual behavior. (TLSB)

due penalty for their error. Participation in degrading, unnatural acts is, in itself, part of the judgment for sin. Paul's candid discussion of homosexuality may surprise or offend some readers. The Greco-Roman world was generally open to homosexuality, though there were critics, including Jews, Christians, and some philosophers. Homosexuality is an example of how something that seems obvious from nature (the relation of two sexes; the body was not designed for homosexual activities) is exchanged for something unnatural. This is a further effect of exchanging the worship of God for the worship of idols. Luther: "Holy Scripture declares that sin came from the devil, whom, contrary to God's Word, our parents obeyed. They became disobedient to God and thereby brought a terrible punishment upon themselves. For through this sin (of the Fall) not only our bodies have become so weakened that they have changed from immortal into mortal bodies, but the intellect, heart, mind, and will are entirely corrupted and turned evil (*verboset*). For man has lost the right and true knowledge of God. Moreover, his will is so entirely corrupted that he desires and wants nothing but that which is evil" (WLS § 4131). (TLSB)

1:28 *knowledge of God.* Though they saw the evidence, they refused to acknowledge God's authority. (TLSB)

a debased. The intent precedes the act (see v. 21; Mk 7:20–23). (CSB)

Their thinking (v 21) about these issues was taken to the lowest sinful level. (TLSB)

Defilement of the body, debasement in unnatural passions – these are the heavy hand of God on irreligious man. That hand bears hard also upon the communal life of man. When man refuses to acknowledge God, to honor Him and give Him thanks, man is turned in upon himself and insulated against his fellowman. God uses this false bent of man as the instrument of His wrath. Men who were created to live for one another in mutual ministrations are condemned to the hell of living against one another. (Franzmann)

1:29-31 – All seventeen of the vices listed here by Paul have this in common: they rend the fabric of society and make an agony of the common life that should in God's intent have been a blessing for mankind. (Franzmann)

These things disrupt the harmonious life and relationships that God would have us enjoy. Though some of these sins seem more significant than others, each one evidences idolatry and rebellion against God. This list shows that all have sinned (3:23). (TLSB)

1:30 *inventors of evil* – Note the sequence: The Gentiles had a knowledge of God that they didn't consider worthwhile to retain, so they refused God's guidance and struck out on their own evil course of action. In response God "gave them over to a depraved mind." What their depraved minds thereupon proceeded to do is the outline in the devastating list that follows. (PBC)

1:32 *they know*. Their outrageous conduct was not due to total ignorance of what God required but to self-will and rebellion. (CSB)

God's Law is on their hearts (2:15). (TLSB)

deserve to die. Any violation of God's Law merits death (6:23). (TLSB)

they. Unrighteous people depicted in vv 18–32. (TLSB)

approval. The extreme of sin is applauding, rather than regretting, the sins of others. (CSB)

It wasn't bad enough for these people to do these things themselves. They compounded their wickedness by propagandizing for their sin and recruiting other to join them. (PBC)

Matthew 23:13, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."

The practice of homosexuality served as Exhibit A for Paul in his case against the Gentiles. Certainly, homosexuality is not the only sin, nor before an impartial God necessarily the worst sin, but it still today serves as a graphic example of the wicked and perverse mind-set that Paul is describing in writing to the Romans. We live in an age when many people are no longer content to live an "alternative" lifestyle quietly. Rather, they openly advocate and promote it. We see organized marches and campaigns for "gay rights" as though that were something they are entitled to. In all of this, it's perfectly clear that those clamoring for change are merely seeking acceptance for themselves but are trying to gain advocates for their perversion. They "not only continue to do these very things but also approve of them who practice them." (PBC)

Paul is not accusing each man in the Roman world of every sin which he enumerates. But he is telling all men: These are the diseases of your culture, the blight upon the history in which you play your part. He bids each man see in them the symptom of his own deep disease – to see for instance, in his "envy" (v. 29) the same disease that in another man erupts in murder. He gives each man eyes to see in his history the revelation of the wrath of God. He is calling on all men to repent. (Franzmann)

In this present section, Paul now envisions a person who agrees with Paul's denunciation of these evildoers. In effect the person says, "You're right, Paul. People who things like that are definitely out of God's good graces. They deserve the dreadful fate that's in store for them." The moralist's approach rest on the principle that people have the lead better lives if their status before God is to improve. His assumption is that he himself knows what is better and that he is doing so. He fancies himself as having more righteousness than others. That's why he can criticize others and presume to give them advice on how to improve. Paul's response is, Wait a minute! Watch out – lest by the approach you're using, you actually condemn yourself. (PBC)

Homosexuality and Biblical Teaching

The Bible never provides a detailed psychological answer for homosexuality. However, Romans clearly condemns homosexuality as a corruption of God's created order. The male body is not designed to copulate with another male body. The female body is not designed to copulate with another female body. The fact that people crave such relationships proves that something has

gone terribly wrong with creation. Paul argues that homosexual behavior results from idolatry and a corrupt understanding of creation (1:26–28). (TLSB)

1:18–32 We love to condemn the sins of others. We might not have committed some of the acts Paul condemns here, but we all have sinned. We have exchanged God’s truth for human foolishness. Seeing sin, we ought not respond defensively but in confession. We know God’s response to sin: He sent His Son to die for sinners. • Lord have mercy on me, a sinner. Grant me sincere confession and compassion for other sinners. Amen. (TLSB)