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INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

Background On Paul's Epistle To The Romans

During his **second missionary journey (A.D. 49-52)** Paul stayed at Corinth for about 18 months (Acts 18:11). Aquila and Priscilla were Jewish believers who had come to Corinth from Rome because of an edict issued by the Roman emperor Claudius, **in A.D. 49**, ordering all Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:1-3). They worked with Paul making tents and ministering at Corinth. Paul would have heard much about the believers at Rome from Aquila and Priscilla. Jews were permitted to return to Rome from **A.D. 54**. So Aquila and Priscilla went back to Rome and would have shared about Paul's ministry to the believers there.



Later during his **third missionary journey (A.D. 53-58)**, Paul spent most of his time, about 3 years in Ephesus (Acts 19). From there he went into Macedonia (Acts 20:1), and then on into

Greece (Acts 20:1-3) which would have included cities like Athens and Corinth. When Paul was in **Corinth**, he wrote to the believers at Rome, about **A.D. 57**.

Written from Corinth

The reason we say he was at Corinth when he wrote the letter:

Romans 16:23

Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.

Paul states that he is staying in the house of **Gaius**, who is very likely the same Gaius mentioned in **1 Corinthians 1:14**.

Bible and archeology

Erastus is the city treasurer or steward, or head of the public works department (as translated in the NIV), we see he lived in Corinth (2 Timothy 4:20). Confirmation of his existence and his title was found in the city of Corinth. Archaeologists working on an excavation of a first century road uncovered a stone with Erastus named as aedile in a Roman pavement found east of the theater in Corinth. This inscription, uncovered **in the late 1920s**, reads "Erastus for his aedileship paved (this) at his own expense." An aedile was an official magistrate of public works.



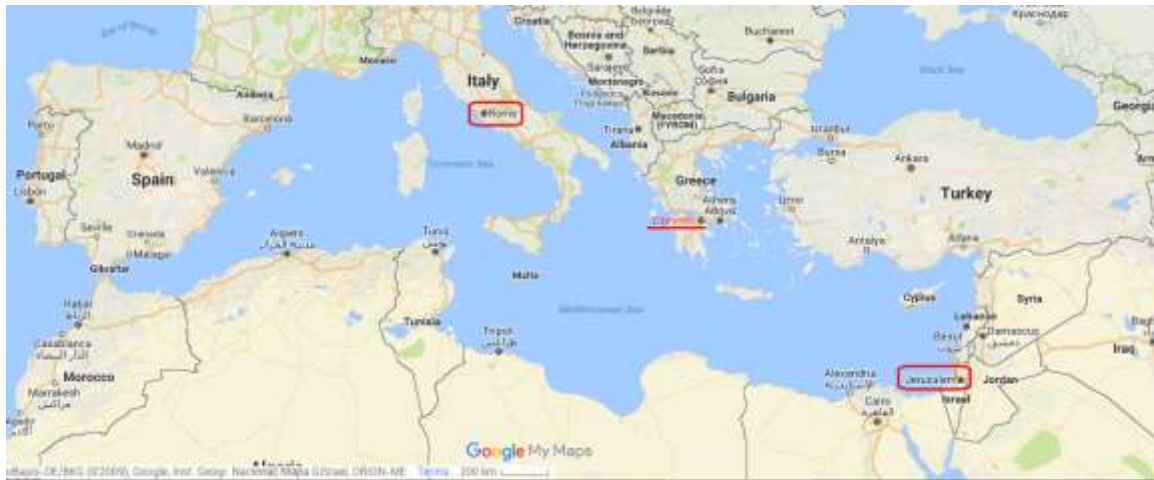
[Sources:

www.biblehistory.net/newsletter/erastus.htm

corinthianmatters.com/2011/08/17/the-search-for-the-historical-erastus/]

Paul's Travel Plans

Towards the end of the letter, Paul shares that he was heading to Jerusalem to bring the offering to help the saint there. He also writes about his difficulties in the regions of Greece and Macedonia and shares his intent to travel to Spain from Jerusalem. His plan was to stop at Rome on his way to Spain.



Romans 15:22-33

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,

24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.

26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.

28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,

31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,

32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

The Church at Rome

Acts 2:8-10

8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

While we do not have information on who founded the church at Rome, we have some background information. There were visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism) present at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Some of these visitors from Rome would have become believers in Jesus Christ and in due time returned to Rome and continued in the faith and teaching they had received under the apostles. This most likely were the origins of the church at Rome. So we can infer that a Spirit-filled church was established at Rome by these believers who were present there at the Day of Pentecost.

The believers at Rome were a mixed group consisting of **both Jewish and Gentile believers** in Following the edict of A.D. 49 for all Jews to leave Rome this would have left the church at Rome with only the Gentile believers. So during the next five years, till A.D. 54, the church at Rome was led by leaders who were Gentile believers. Subsequently Jewish believers returned to Rome and may in some cases had to serve under the Gentile believers.

The church at Rome must have been made up of **several house churches**. We know that when Paul was writing, in A.D. 57, Aquila and Priscilla had a church meeting in their house.

Romans 16:3-5

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.

So Paul's letter to the saints at Rome would have been read across all of these house churches.

Romans : Key Highlights

With this background, lets present some key highlights or emphasis we will see in the book of Romans.

Romans - The Gospel Detailed

Romans is about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have in this epistle one of the clearest and detailed explanations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans - Our Spiritual Journey Described

Starting with the existence of God (Romans 1), the sinful depravity of man (Romans 1-2), the consequences of sin (Romans 3), Christ's atoning work (Romans 3-4), justification and righteousness by faith (Romans 5), overcoming sin through the Cross (Romans 6-7), walking in righteousness by the Spirit (Romans 8), and living the Christian life (Romans 12-15), Paul describes our spiritual journey.

Romans - The Righteousness of God Revealed

A major theme through the book of Romans is righteousness. This word 'righteousness' is used 36 times throughout this book.

God being righteous in judging sin (Romans 1-2)

God being righteous in forgiving sin on the basis of Christ's atoning work (Romans 3-5)

God imparting His righteousness to the believer (Romans 5)

The believer walking in righteousness by the Spirit (Romans 6-8)

The believer living a righteous life (Romans 12-15)

Romans - Jews and Gentiles Both Chosen

Throughout this letter, Paul frequently addresses the Gospel in relation to the Jews and Gentiles. This is of significant importance to his audience, the church at Rome, that has believers from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. In Romans chapters 9-11, Paul seems to take a "side-journey" from writing about the believer's spiritual journey, to discuss God's dealings with the Jewish people and His plans for them, So this issue of how God is working with both Jews and Gentiles, is another important, truth being addressed, although seemingly in the background.

Why Did Paul Write to the Believers at Rome?

Most of Paul's epistles are written to churches that Paul founded and had direct spiritual oversight of, or to individuals he was directly connected with. Paul's epistles to the Colossians and Romans are the only two exceptions to this.

Personal connect

Paul's connection to both these churches, the church at Colossae and the church at Rome came through the people who were in leadership in these churches, whom he had personally nurtured. Although Paul did not personally minister at Colossae, he had strong personal relationship with Philemon in whose home part of the church at Colossae met (Philemon 1:19,22). Paul also had a strong relationship with Epaphras from Colossae (Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12-13; Philemon 1:23) and had just led Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave to the Lord, while at Rome

(Philemon 1:10, Colossians 4:9). Similarly, Paul's connection with the church at Rome was through Aquila and Priscilla with whom he had worked at Corinth and possibly with other believers.

Passion through prayer

Another very important commonality in Paul's relationship with the church at Colossae and at Rome, is that although Paul had not been there in person, he had been praying passionately for them (Colossians 1:3-4,9; Colossians 2:1-5; Romans 1:8-10).

Desire to minister, impart and fellowship

Romans 1:8-15

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,
10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.
11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—
12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.
13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.
14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.
15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

Romans 15:22-24,28-29,32

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.
23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,
24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.
28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.
29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.
32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

Some of the other reasons why Paul was writing to the believers at Rome, that we see through his statements:

To share his long standing desire to minister to them. He had heard of them from Aquila and Priscilla and possibly from others - as he mentioned that news about their faith had been spreading. This letter could be an expression of the Gospel he was passionate about and so desired to communicate to them at Rome (Romans 1:15).

To prepare them for his visit where he could impart spiritually to the believers (Romans 1:11, Romans 15:29). So this epistle was in some way a precursor to what he would impart to them.

To enjoy their company and be refreshed spiritually through their fellowship (Romans 1:12, Romans 15:24,32).

To be helped by them on his journey to Spain (Romans 15:24).

What To Expect Through This Study of Romans

An understanding of the Gospel

The Gospel that Paul preached was what he personally received by revelation (Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Studying through Romans will enable us to understand clearly the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Revelation of life transforming truth

Romans reveals truth intended to transform the life of the believer, so that we are no longer conformed to this world, but transformed, and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). We will learn what it means to be a recipient of His abundant grace and righteousness and this will transform our relationship with God. We will learn how to walk free from sin so that sin will no longer have dominion over us. We will learn how to walk in Spirit and keep our flesh in subject. We will learn about the immeasurable love of God that nothing can separate us from. We will learn how we live everyday life as believers and how all our relationships are affected by the personal transformation we have received through Jesus Christ.

Personal transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit

Expect the Spirit of God to use the revelation you receive through this study, to transform your life personally.

How To Use This Study

---- will complete this later ----

Personal use

Small groups

Local church services

CHAPTER ONE : CREATOR AND CREATION

Read Romans chapter 1 through in its entirety.

As with almost every New Testament letter we see an opening introduction (From: whom is the letter), then addressing the audience (To: whom the letter is written) and a introduction of the subject of the letter or reason for the letter being written.

Romans 1:1

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

a bondservant, a slave of Jesus Christ : a bondservant is one who has chosen to be a slave completely surrendered to his master for life

called to be an apostle : invited, appointed to be a sent one

Notice how he identifies himself first as a slave to Christ, and then talks about his office as an apostle.

Whose we are is more important than the role we have.

separated, set apart to the gospel of God.

For Paul this was a major thing in his life Philippians 3

As we have mentioned the gospel is a major theme of this epistle.

This "gospel of God" is good news from God Himself. We see the same "gospel of God" being referred to by other titles in the New Testament. These all refer to the same Gospel message, but with a different approach or different emphasis in its proclamation:

in Romans:

- ✓ gospel of God (Romans 1:1, Romans 15:16)
- ✓ gospel of His Son (Romans 1:9)
- ✓ gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; Romans 15:19,29)
- ✓ my gospel (Romans 2:16; Romans 16:25) - Paul refers to the gospel as "my gospel" since he received this message by direct revelation.
- ✓ gospel of peace (Romans 10:15)

in other places in Scripture (not all references are given):

- ✓ gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23)
- ✓ gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1)
- ✓ gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)
- ✓ gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- ✓ gospel for the uncircumcised, gospel for the circumcised (Galatians 2:7)

Romans 1:2

which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

The Gospel was there in the Old Testament, proclaimed by the prophets in the Old Testament

Genesis 12:

Romans 1:3-4

**3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**

The Gospel is about Jesus Christ. In the natural, he came as a descendant of David. But He was truly identified or marked out as the Son of God by the power He demonstrated through the Holy Spirit and by being raised from the dead.

The death and resurrection is key to the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Romans 4:23-25).

Romans 1:5

Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, we receive grace (Greek 'charis') and apostleship ('commissioning, sending, mission') through Jesus Christ.

The grace and commissioning on our lives comes through Jesus Christ.

All of us have received grace and commissioning.

For every commissioning there is more than sufficient grace.

God has given this so that we can make people obedient to the faith

Paul uses this phrase of being "obedient to the faith" in other places:

Romans 15:18 here Paul talks about making Gentiles obedient to the faith through, signs wonders and miracles.

Romans 16:26 refers here to people coming to the obedience to the faith

2 Corinthians 9:13 for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ,...

This tells us that there is a coming into submission, a yielding involved in coming to Christ and believing the Gospel.

The attitude that 'i believe in Jesus' but I will do my own thing is really not coming to the obedience of the faith.

Romans 1:6-7

6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

believers are

- ✓ called of Jesus Christ

- ✓ beloved of God
- ✓ called saints (the words "to be" are in italics and have been added by the translators)

Just as Paul mentioned in 1:1 that he was called to be an apostle, now he tells believers that all of us are also "called" (invited and appointed)

The Lord Jesus Christ has invited us and appointed us.

We are called saints (Greek 'hagios' = holy, set apart, consecrated).

We are also the beloved of God.

God extends His grace and peace to us.

Romans 1:8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

The believers at Rome were being heard of and spoken about everywhere in the Roman empire. Rome was the capital city in the Roman empire...and news of what happened there spread everywhere.

It is interesting that the faith of these believers was spoken of.

Two important lessons:

A) We need to impact cities and establish powerful communities of believers - because what happens in the city gets out to regions around it and beyond it

B) We need to be believers whose faith is spoken of...lets start where we are...

Romans 1:9

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

I serve God with my spirit : ours is a spiritual service first and foremost. Then the natural follows.

in the Gospel of His Son : once again Paul emphasizes his service has to do with the Gospel

Though Paul did not yet meet/see the believer at Rome, he did two things: (A)he thanked God for them (B)he prayed for them

Romans 1:10

making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

(KJV) Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Paul prayed for a "prosperous journey" (KJV) or "a way" (NKJV) to Rome to meet the believers there.

Here is what actually happened:

Paul was accused by the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 22), apprehended by the Romans, and then sent to Caesarea escorted by 200 Roman soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen (Acts 23:23).

Paul was held a prisoner for two years in Caesarea (Act 24:27). From there Paul appealed to Caesar (Act 25:11-12). So Paul was sent to Rome (Acts 27:1-2). This was a rough journey,

where there were stranded at sea for 14 days, ended in shipwreck, and landed at Malta. Paul got bit by viper but experienced no harm (Acts 28:1-6). And then after another 3 more months of sailing they arrived at Rome (Acts 28:14). The believers from Rome came and met him even before he actually reached Rome (Acts 28:15-16). Paul spent two full years in Rome under house arrest and freely ministered to all who came to him (Acts 28:30-31). The believers were surely blessed and the church strengthened.

So it really was about 3 years after this letter was written that Paul actually got to Rome, brought there as a prisoner after a very difficult journey. Paul was able to spend two full years at Rome and impart into the life of the church at Rome.

A lesson for us to learn here. Sometimes the journey itself may be very difficult, but for us fulfilling the will of God, that is prosperity, that is success. Success is not determined by the comfort or ease of the journey, but by the fulfilling of the purpose.

Romans 1:11-12

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—
12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

we see that believers can be established, strengthened, and made firm when there is a sharing or imparting of one or more spiritual gifts. The word "impart" in Greek is "metadidomi" meaning "to give a share of, impart"; "meta" = with, "didomi" = give. Same word is used in Romans 12:8, Ephesians 4:28 and in Luke 3:11 where it says that if a man has two coats let him give one to another who has none. So where there is a sharing of spiritual gifts, both the giver and the recipient are strengthened and encouraged together.

Romans 1:13-15

13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.
14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.
15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

We see Paul's heart here. He felt indebted to all men to give them the Gospel, cultured or not, wise or unwise.

Why would Paul want to "preach the gospel" to those who are at Rome, who are already believers? (to complete)

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

This is a powerful statement.

We must not be ashamed of the Gospel

The Gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to all who believe.

believe (verb, Greek 'pisteuo') and faith (noun, Greek 'pistis') come from the same root word and essentially mean the same thing.

Romans 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

(New International Version) For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

(Amplified Bible) For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed in a way that awakens more faith]. As it is written and forever remains written, "The just and upright shall live by faith."

in the Gospel, God's own righteousness is revealed as we go from faith to faith.

We will see in later chapters, how God Himself can be just - to condemn sin and still justify the sinner - in the Gospel.

"from faith to faith" can be understood to mean both these:

- ✓ the righteousness of God which is given to man is by faith from first to last, that is this is all by faith from start to finish, from beginning to the end it is all by faith.
- ✓ the righteousness of God which is given to man springs (or starts, begins) from faith and leading to more faith.

Understanding righteous and just

In Greek the words righteous, righteousness, just and justify, all have the same root word, and hence mean the same thing. This differs from our English language where righteous and just can mean two different things. In English we use righteous to mean good and holy, while we use just to mean fairness, equity, justice.

Just, Justly

1. dikaios (G1342) someone observing dike, that is observing what is right, the rule, things that were in accordance with right.
2. endikos (G1738), "just, righteous"

Justification, Justifier, Justify

1. dikaiosis (G1347) denotes the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal"; its precise meaning is determined by that of the verb dikaiou, "to justify", the establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt.
2. dikaioma (G1345) seems best described comprehensively as "a concrete expression of righteousness"; it is a declaration that a person or thing is righteous, and hence, broadly speaking, it represents the expression and effect of dikaiosis

3. dikaiōo (G1344) verb primarily "to deem to be right," (a) "to show to be right or righteous"; (b) "to declare to be righteous, to pronounce righteous,"

Righteous, Righteously

dikaios (G1342) signifies "just," without prejudice or partiality,

Righteousness

1. dikaiosune (G1343) is "the character or quality of being right or just"; "the righteousness of God" means essentially the same as His faithfulness, or truthfulness, that which is consistent with His own nature and promises;

dikaiosune, can also be used to mean right action, depending on the context.

2. dikaiōma (G1345) is the concrete expression of "righteousness"

the just by faith, shall live

In the Greek, Romans 1:17 can be translated either as "the just by faith, shall live" or "the just shall live by faith". We see this brought out in the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition:

Romans 1:17 Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC)

17 For in the Gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed through the way of faith that arouses to more faith]. As it is written, The man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4

Martin Luther

While Luther's study of Galatians was the undergirding of his belief that we are justified by faith, Romans 1:17 was his starting point. Luther's study and revelation of Romans 1:17 was the beginning of light breaking through to him, that through faith we receive the righteousness of God. Here are Luther's statements: *"At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' " There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God."* (Luther's Works, Volume 34, P336-337).

Romans 1:18-19

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

One thing we need to be clear, is that God's wrath - or displeasure - is towards all form of ungodliness and unrighteousness. God is displeased - angry - with ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Man attempts to suppress, hold down, hide the truth through unrighteousness.

Verse 19 states that what can be known about God is plain to see, because God has shown it to us. However, we attempt to hide the truth through our wickedness. So literally, no one can say I didn't know there was a God. The atheist who says 'there is no God' and the agnostic who says 'if there is a God, I don't know for sure' - are really without any excuse.

Now how has God made it plain for people to know that He is there?

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

God makes Himself know to man through His creation. This is evidence enough that He exists.

Romans 1:21-22

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Man refused to recognize, glorify and thank God. We see so much of this in society today.

Instead he became vain (foolish, wicked) in their imagination, reasoning, thinking which led to his heart becoming foolish and darkened (could no longer see).

Thinking he was being wise, he actually was walking in foolishness.

Romans 1:23-27

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

25 who exchanged the truth of God for the 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 vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

We see what is said in 1:23-1:24 is repeated 1:25-1:26

When we worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, this only results in greater uncleanness and immorality.

Verses 26-27 is a clear reference to homosexuality. So here we see that homosexuality is wrong. We love the sinner, but we must call the deeds what God calls it - sin.

Romans 1:28-32

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

When we leave and wander away from God, we end up becoming immoral in our thought and deed.

God let's us go.

However, all this only puts us under the righteous judgment of God.

So in this chapter, thus far, Paul puts forth the fact that God has made Himself known, but man has chosen to walk away from God.

Man has chosen to serve created things, wander away in wickedness and is in a place under God's wrath and righteous judgment.

In the subsequent chapters Paul continues to show us, how God makes a way to reconcile us back to Himself.

Reflection



1, Reflect on Paul's passion for the Gospel as shared in Romans 1:13-16. How can we be people with similar passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

2, Based on what we read - what are the consequences when we replace the Creator with creation? This replacement could be either the willful worship of His creation or even the pursuit of 'created' things, which essentially replaces the Creator with what is of this world?

3, We do not hear much about the "wrath of God" or "the righteous judgment of God" these days in what is communicated in the Church. The wrath of God and the righteous judgment of God is toward ALL ungodliness and unrighteousness. Would God's attitude toward ungodliness and unrighteous be different depending on who is committing it - the believer committing ungodliness versus an unsaved person doing the same thing?

CHAPTER TWO : THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

Read Romans chapter 2 in its entirety.

In this chapter we see Paul:

- ✓ Challenging the attitude of Jews towards Gentiles
- ✓ Presenting an understanding of God's judgment (How, What, When)
- ✓ Revealing the work of the conscience
- ✓ Presenting what a true Jew is

and then we present the main truth Paul is driving at in this chapter.

Challenging the Attitude of Jews Towards Gentiles

Paul is addressing the Jews here, challenging their attitude towards the Gentiles, who do not have the Law.

Paul uses the word "Greek" not to refer to those natively from Greece, but rather to the "Gentiles" in general.

As we consider these truths, today, we can apply them to ourselves as Christians, who have the Word of God, and understanding of the truth and how we view those who do not have the truth.

In summary, Paul challenges the Jew and their attitude by stating:

- ✓ Judging others requires that I must hold myself accountable to the same standards.
- ✓ Judging others, and practicing the wrong I condemn, will not permit me to escape God's judgment.
- ✓ It is the goodness, forbearance (tolerance, waiting for change, willingness to put up with) and patience of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).
- ✓ God's righteous judgment is without partiality on all who do evil, Jew first and Gentiles. Jew first, because to them were given the Oracles of God first.
- ✓ Those who have the Law God will judge them according to the Law. God has His own way determined to judge those outside the Law.
- ✓ The Jews were proud that they had the written code (the Law) and circumcision (sign of the covenant). Paul makes it clear that just having these things, or just hearing the Law, will not amount to anything, if they violate what the Law requires.

Presenting an Understanding of God's Judgment (How, What, When)

How God judges

Romans 2:2 according to truth (the Word of God, John 17:17, John 12:47-48)

Romans 2:5 righteous judgment
Romans 2:11 without partiality
Romans 2:16 according to the Gospel

What God judges

Romans 2:6-11 our deeds (obedience to the truth and to righteousness versus disobedience)
Romans 2:7 our seeking (glory, honor, immortality versus self)
Romans 2:16 our motives (the secrets of the heart)

When God judges

Romans 2:5 day of wrath
Romans 2:16 the day when God will judge
There is a day God has appointed for this.

Acts 17:31

because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Revealing the Work of the Conscience

Romans 2:14-16

Paul reveals that "the work of the law" is built into every person.

This is the conscience that effectively achieves the same "work of the law" pointing out what is right and wrong.

Every man has a 'judiciary system' built in, where their conscience challenges their own thoughts and ideas.

Our conscience convicts us:

John 8:9

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

So essentially even those who do not have the written code of God's Word, are therefore without excuse, in terms of knowing right and wrong (the law).

Remember, Paul mentioned in

Romans 1:19

because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

There is something in each of us humans that should help us recognize what is shown to us through creation.

There are two things we all have which other creatures do not have:

- 1, **reason** (the ability to see and understand God from creation, Romans 1:20)
- 2, **conscience** (the law at work inside teaching us what is acceptable to God, Romans 2:15)

However, individually the conscience can be in different conditions:

good conscience (Acts 23:1; 1 Timothy 1:5,19)

without offense (Acts 24:16)

pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)

weak conscience (1 Corinthians 8:7)

seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:2)

defiled conscience (Titus 1:15)

evil conscience (Hebrews 10:22)

So it is possible that as we progress in life, through continual wrong doing we can corrupt and destroy our conscience, so that we no longer have the law at work and a witness within convicting us, teaching us right and wrong. An weak, evil or defiled conscience would be a conscience that accepts what is wrong and no longer witnesses against that.

As believers we are to maintain a good and pure conscience, without offense and free from dependence on dead work (Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 9:14)

Presenting What a True Jew

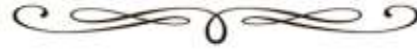
Romans 2:28-29

Paul at the end of the chapter presents the fact that a true Jew is someone who has experienced something inward, a circumcision of the heart and who looks to God for approval, not men.

The Main Objective

As we will see in Chapter 3, Paul's main objective in what he has presented this far is to bring every one, Jew and Gentile to the understanding that we are sinners, without hope, and are unable to save ourselves with the Law or outside the Law. This then sets us up to understand God's great grace in providing righteousness and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Reflection



Q1, Are we as believers/Christians sometimes like the Jews? We judge others for not following God's moral standards, but we ourselves fall into the same? In view of what we have discovered in this Chapter, what can we learn and what changes can we make?

Q2, Having understood how and what God judges, what are things we need to look out for in our daily lives, without falling into the traps of legalism or hypocrisy, which the Jews found themselves in?

Q3, Discuss the dual witness in every human person - reason and conscience - how these could potentially lead people to the truth? How do both of these get degraded and destroyed so that people fail to encounter truth? [And if you would like to take this further, discuss how God awakens and enlightens reason and conscience - through the preaching of the Gospel, and the work of the Spirit - leading to the new birth and a journey of faith in Jesus Christ]

Q4, How do we as believers maintain a good conscience?

Q5, We learned in Romans 2:15 that our conscience bears witness. Paul later states that his conscience also bears witness in the Holy Spirit (Romans 9:1). What does this (Romans 9:1) mean?

CHAPTER THREE : SIN AND JUSTIFICATION

Read Romans chapter 3 in its entirety.

In this chapter, there are two sets of rhetorical questions, between which is sandwiched Paul's main conclusion and the key truth that Paul presents.

- ✓ Rhetorical questions about God's judgment
- ✓ Main conclusion - all have sinned
- ✓ Key truth - justification and righteousness through faith
- ✓ Rhetorical questions about Jews and the Law

Romans 3:1-2

1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

At the end of chapter 2, Paul has essentially torn down the false pride and security that the Jews held, as people who had the written code (Law) and circumcision. But then he assures them that they still had an important role. They were keepers or custodians of the oracles of God for the rest of the world.

Rhetorical Questions About God's Judgment

Having highlighted the righteous judgment of God in chapter 2, Paul now addresses some common objections that could be raised against God's judgment, by asking a set of rhetorical questions. (Rhetorical question - a question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or to make a point rather than to get an answer).

We identify 4 main questions listed as (A)-(D) and examine Paul's response.

A) For what if some did not believe?

Romans 3:3-4

3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND MAY OVERCOME WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."

If some Jews do not believe the oracles of God and what God has done for the Jewish people - does it change anything about who God is?

Paul uses this "Certainly not!" phrase 13 times in his Epistles, and 10 of these are found in Romans. This phrase is also translated: God forbid! May it never be! No, indeed! By no means. Far be it from us to imagine such a thing. Don't even let such a thought come to your mind!

Our unbelief does not change God in any way!

Paul's response: let God be true but every man a liar.

Paul then quotes a portion from David's prayer of repentance after he had sinned:

Psalm 51:4

Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

B) Is God unjust who inflicts wrath when He still gets glory out of our sin?

Romans 3:5-7

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)

6 Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?

7 For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?

The second objection is if our sin is somehow serving God's greater purpose (e.g. demonstrating how righteous He is, or causing His truth to increase in some way), then isn't God unjust in punishing and judging me as a sinner? After all my sin is serving His purposes.

Paul's response : God is still a righteous judge who judges the world righteously.

"In theory, the most dramatic example of someone who might ask this question is Judas. Can you hear Judas make his case? "Lord, I know that I betrayed Jesus, but You used it for good. In fact, if I hadn't done what I did, Jesus wouldn't have gone to the cross at all. What I did even fulfilled the Scriptures. How can You judge me at all?" The answer to Judas might go like this: "Yes, God used your wickedness but it was still your wickedness. There was no good or pure motive in your heart at all. It is no credit to you that God brought good out of your evil. You stand guilty before God." (David Guzik)

C) Let us do evil that good may come?

Romans 3:8

And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

Some may take this in another way, to a different extreme and encourage doing evil so that good may come, considering the goodness and grace of God.

People may have heard Paul's teaching about God's grace, and have slandered against him that he was actually encouraging people through his teaching to do this - do evil so you can enjoy God's grace...." ...as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say.."

The apostle Paul does not take time to respond to this slander and false report about him. He simply states "Their condemnation is just". He essentially leaves it to God to handle such people knowing that God will judge righteously. This is an important lesson for us to learn - on how to deal with those who slander, speak evil and falsely accuse you in ministry. Let God deal with them for you.

D) Are Jews better than Gentiles?

Romans 3:9

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.
All are under sin.

Main Conclusion - All Have Sinned

Romans 3:10-20

10 As it is written: "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS; THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS AFTER GOD.

12 THEY HAVE ALL TURNED ASIDE; THEY HAVE TOGETHER BECOME UNPROFITABLE; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, NO, NOT ONE."

13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN TOMB; WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY HAVE PRACTICED DECEIT"; "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS."

15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD;

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR WAYS;

17 AND THE WAY OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Paul has been building up towards this conclusion starting from Romans 1:18

Interestingly, Paul quotes several texts from the Old Testament in this conclusion, showing us that this is nothing new.

Romans 3:10-12 quoted from Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 53:1-3.

Romans 3:13-18 quoted from Psalm 14:1-7; Psalm 140:3; Isaiah 59:7-8

Paul shows we have all sinned, all are guilty (under sentence, condemned) before God and even the Jews cannot be justified by their deeds, because through the Law, they are shown to be sinful before God.

Key Truth - Justification And Righteousness Through Faith

Now begins the grand presentation of the gospel.

Paul had declared in Romans 1:17 that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, and he set out now to reveal this truth.

Romans 3:21-26

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The words Just, Justify, Justification, Justifier, Justly, Righteous, Righteousness, Righteously all come from the same root word 'dikai' simply meaning what is right.

Righteousness is the state of being or the act of doing what is right and just.

Being in a state approved and acceptable to God.

Doing what is approved and acceptable to God.

Romans 3:21

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

We can have righteousness that comes without the Law, something even the Law and the Prophets have spoken of.

Romans 3:22

even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

This is the righteousness of God Himself which we can have through faith in Jesus Christ. This is available to all. Since all have sinned, this is available to all, the same way through faith.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

We have all sinned and missed the mark of the glory of God.
Man was originally created to carry and display the glory of God. Sin has robbed us of this.

Romans 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

"being justified" Greek 'dikaioo' = to regard as righteous, to count as righteous, to declare as righteous.

freely by His grace, this is amazing. God provides this freely by His grace because of the redemption (a releasing effected by payment of ransom) that is in Christ.

When the righteousness of God is given to us, which we receive by faith God treats us as righteous. For God to declare us as righteous means that God treats us as if we had never sinned.

Romans 3:25-26

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Whom God set forth, this is completely and entirely His doing. We did not do anything to make this possible.

God decided to make Jesus Christ "as a propitiation through His blood"

propitiation Greek 'hilastērion' = a means of appeasing referring to an expiatory place or thing, an atoning sacrifice, the Mercy Seat. Used of the Mercy Seat that covered of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, upon which the blood was sprinkled to make atonement.

The Lord Jesus Himself was made our atoning sacrifice or the Mercy Seat because of whom, by His blood we receive justification or righteousness.

God demonstrated His righteousness, although He had temporarily overlooked the sins of the world, now, in the atoning work of Christ, the sacrifice had been made for ALL sin, past, present and future.

So, God could be just (in punishing sin) and also be the Justifier of all those who have faith in Jesus! The same Judge has judged our sin and also declared us righteous, justified, acquitted, totally without sin!

Rhetorical questions about Jews and the Law

Romans 3:27-31

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Paul then concludes this by asking some questions, objections that would be raised:

A) Where is boasting then?

No one can boast. All come by faith.

B) Is He the God of the Jews only?

He is God of both Jew and Gentile and He justifies both the same way, through faith.

C) Do we then make void the law through faith?

The law is not made void. Instead the law has served its part in pointing out our sin and pointing us to Jesus Christ. As Paul explains in Galatians, the Law in fact, served in preserving a people through whom the Savior could come. So the Law has been established (upheld, made to stand).

Reflection



Q1, Discuss the objection that was raised in Paul's day and may very well be something in our day "Is God unjust who inflicts wrath when He still gets glory out of our sin?"

Q2, Do we find the same mindset among some Christian who use grace as a license to sin, saying "Let us do evil that good may come?" How should we respond to them?

Q3, Examine the wisdom of God demonstrated in God being Just and the Justified or those who have faith in Christ.