

Romans 1

1. Romans 1: 1-17 Introduction

Salutation 1-7

Prayer of Thanksgiving 8-15

The Power of the Gospel 16-17

- 1) v16 The gospel is the power of God for salvation “to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” - from the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt 20) Calvin sees the Jews as the early workers and us Gentiles as the late-comers. Thus, we are the ones who have received God’s generosity.
- 2) v17 “The one who is *righteous*” on the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg - those who die on the eve of Rosh Hashana (end of the year) are considered “tsadik” or “righteous.” “They were needed until the very end - the last day of the year.”

Later on, Paul will build a case for us receiving *the righteousness which comes thru Christ*.

It’s been said that before you can hear The Good News you need to hear the Bad News. If Jesus is The Good News (dying to pay for our sins), then the Bad News is that we have sins - we are sinners. And after we hear The Bad News, there is even Worse News: our sins have a consequence - they have separated us from God.

In a gospel presentation, some of us may have memorized these verses, known as “the Romans Road”
Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 10:9 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

It’s in this context of sin and separation from God that we look at Romans 1-3

2. Romans 1: 18-23 The Guilt of Humanity & God’s Wrath

1. God’s wrath - God’s angry displeasure - is against human mistrust & wrongdoing, which suppress God’s truth
2. God is revealed through nature (beautiful sunsets, mountains, beaches, etc.), yet...
3. ...yet humanity did not honor God, even worshiping images and animals instead of God

Questions - What makes God angry?
How have you experienced God in or through nature?

(Hint: Paul is leaving us a clue as to why we need a Savior. We can sense, through nature, that there must be a God - but we don’t know how to know God.)

3. Romans 1: 24-25 Refusing to let God help you

1. God “gave them up” - to what? To their lusts - the issue is their lust, which brings forth degrading passions.
2. God “gave them up” - from The Message:

²⁴⁻²⁵ So God said, in effect, “If that’s what you want, that’s what you get.” It wasn’t long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god they made instead of the God who made them—the God we bless, the God who blesses *us*. Oh, yes!

3. “Exchanging the truth of God for a lie” - worshiping the creature rather than the Creator - how easy it is to worship something (or serving something) other than the true God

Question - What things other than God are you tempted to worship? (money, food, sports, etc)

4. Romans 1: 26-27 An Age of Shame

1. Again, God “gave them up” - to what? To their degrading passions.
2. Paul makes a distinction between natural and unnatural sex. Many have jumped to the conclusion that natural had to mean heterosexual and unnatural had to mean homosexual, but upon closer examination, these terms had been understood differently. In fact, in ancient Rome, natural would have meant male-dominated, female-passive while unnatural would have meant anything different than that.

There were forms of sex in ancient Rome which were customarily seen as degrading and lustful. They were: prostitution, sex between men & young boys, or between masters & slaves. These are the lustful, unnatural acts, overwhelmed by passion, which Paul would have been referring to.

It is safe to say that our values as to what are natural or unnatural have evolved over time:

- Jewish historian Josephus claimed that women were inferior “in every respect” to men.
- Philo also viewed women as inferior, and described femininity as “a disease.”
- Aristotle referred to women as “deformed males.”
- Plutarch said that all diseases and fevers were unnatural, as was courage in women.

Question How have your own attitudes toward sex changed over your lifetime?

5. Romans 1: 28-32 Leaving God out of the Mix

1. Not acknowledging God - for a third time, God gives them up
2. Note the various ways evil is described (much more than just sexual) - even including rebellious to parents!

²⁹ They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

3. Note the penalty - deserve to die

Questions Thus, there really is Bad News... separation from God, for 21 reasons listed. Umm, how many of these words could describe actions you have ever taken? Ever gossiped? Ever been foolish or heartless? Ever boasted or rebelled against your parents? Again, what is the penalty for not always toeing the line?

Paul is building the case for our need of a Savior - someone to save us from ourselves, from our sinful nature, from which comes the penalty: separation from God.