

## Romans – Part 2 - Condemnation

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*Romans*

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If you'd turn to the book of Romans, Romans 1, as we come to a study of this amazing book from the Apostle Paul. It is a book, as you recall, that was written during the Apostle Paul's third missionary journey around AD 57 or 58 from the city of Corinth, as we read about in Acts 20:3, to an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ in the capital city of Rome, Italy, a city that the Apostle Paul had never visited at the time of the writing of this book. The salutation, the longest in Paul's writings, is set forth in chapter 1, verses 1 through 7 as he introduces himself to these readers in Rome, Italy. The information is provided in chapter 1, verses 8 through 15, that describe not only the Apostle Paul's appreciation for these readers as he thanks God for them and prays ceaselessly for them, but also as he sets forth an explanation of his desires, of his plans, and the obligation that compels him to preach the Gospel. Then in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, we have the proclamation that enshrines the thesis or purpose or reason for the writing of this book which, of course, is the proclamation of the Gospel or the proclamation of the good news.

It is a Gospel that finds its origin or source in God as the opening verse says as you read chapter 1, verse 1, "gospel of God or gospel from God." It is a Gospel that not only comes from God but a Gospel that he promised in the pages of the Old Testament as we read in verse 2, "which gospel God promised beforehand through his prophets in holy writings," and is a Gospel that finds its fulfillment in his Son, as we read in verse 3, "concerning his Son," which is the reason why the Apostle Paul can say what he does in chapter 1, verse 9, "gospel of his Son." So this Gospel is a Gospel that Paul identifies, chapter 2, verse 16, as "my gospel," a Gospel that finds its root in the pages of the Old Testament and finds its fulfillment in the pages of the New Testament that explains the person and work of Jesus, the Christ. Therefore you would have to say verses 16 and 17 are extremely important in an understanding of the book of Romans since the entire book of Romans unpacks the meaning of these words.

So we come to Romans 1 and I want to read verses 16 and 17 once again. This is the thesis of the book. Chapter 1, verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who is believing, both to Jew first and to Greek. For the righteousness of God is being revealed in it," in the Gospel, and you come to this phrase "righteousness of God" which is a major major concept in the book of Romans in terms of all Paul's writings. If you talk about this phrase, "righteousness of God," as we

talked about a couple of weeks ago, some will argue that this refers to God's attribute which, of course, is valid and true; some would argue that this refers to God's activity in the sense of intervening to bring about salvation which is certainly true; but I believe it's talking about God's achievement. So when you talk about it, I'm going to argue it's a righteousness that comes from God, meaning this is a righteous status which God himself requires if we're ever to have a relationship with him. So when you talk about this righteousness that comes from God, it's a righteousness status that God himself bestows upon the one who believes in the Gospel. So if we talk about the phrase "righteousness of God" or "righteousness from God," again we can say it like this, this is God's initiative in putting sinners right with himself by bestowing upon them a righteousness which is not their own but his. It is a righteousness that comes from God that God himself bestows, a righteous status, otherwise we can never have a relationship with him.

So we read this phrase in verse 17, "For righteousness from God is being revealed in it," the in the Gospel, and then quite literally it reads, "out of faith into faith," which I'm going to argue is emphasizing the promise of your faith, or as it has been translated, "by faith from first to last," or "by faith through and through," and then he buttresses it by a citation from the book of Habakkuk, Habakkuk 2:4 just as it stands written and then you read the quote, "Now the righteous by faith will live." The question is: what is he emphasizing by that phrase? Is he saying that this is the way that a Christian is to live the Christian life, by faith? Or is he saying he who through faith is righteous, that person will live? So how is he using the phrase from Habakkuk 2:4? Is he saying faith is the way to righteousness or faith is the way to life? Well, obviously both affirm righteous will live and what is essential is faith. So the only way that you can obtain this righteousness is by faith and the only way that one who has obtained it is to live the Christian life is by faith. Both are absolutely valid and true but nevertheless, when I read verses 16 and 17, I'm reading the thesis of the book which is all about the Gospel, or as F. F. Bruce calls the book of Romans, it is a sustained and coherent statement of the Gospel. That's what we're reading when we come to the book of Romans.

So if I want to grasp the Gospel as the Gospel was preached by Paul, then I have to be able to understand the argumentation of the book of Romans and he begins his argumentation with the argument of condemnation. That begins in chapter 1, verse 18 and goes all the way to chapter 3, verse 20. So if I'm reading chapter 1, verse 18 through chapter 3, verse 20, I've got to understand condemnation, the argument of condemnation, and it's an absolute certainty in terms of everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ.

Now when I'm thinking about all of this, if I'm going to really appreciate the Gospel, the good news, then I first have to understand the bad news and the bad news is condemnation. So I've got to understand that I'm a sinner utterly condemned before a God who is absolutely holy and all of the New Testament teaches this. If I'm reading the words of Jesus in John 8:34, he says, "Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin," so if you talk about an unbeliever, an unbeliever is someone enslaved to sin even though that unbeliever is completely unaware of it. Or if I read Paul's words in Galatians 3:10 where the Apostle Paul will say this, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of law to do them," which means everyone is under the curse of

the law which, of course, is death, even though people are completely indifferent to that reality. If I read the Lord's words in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," if you talk about an unsaved person, you're talking about someone who's lost but the individual is not aware of that. If I read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and he's talking about an unsaved person, he will say, "In whom the god of this age," the devil, "has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, an unsaved person is utterly blind but he doesn't understand that. He thinks he can see but he's spiritually blind. If I read Paul's word in Ephesians 2:1 and he speaks of Gentiles being "dead in trespasses and sins," then in verse 5 in terms of Jews, Jews also "dead in sins," if you talk about an unsaved person, an unsaved person is someone who is dead but that unsaved person doesn't understand that. If I read Paul's words in 1 Timothy 1:15, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," if you talk about an unsaved person, that person is a sinner who is underneath the wrath of God but that individual doesn't understand that.

So if you talk about an unsaved person, not only are you talking about someone enslaved to sin and falling under the curse of the law which is death, you're talking about someone who is lost and blind and dead and a sinner and is underneath the wrath of God. It is the reason why Jesus said in John 5:24 that an unsaved person doesn't have everlasting life, is under condemnation, and is dead. So for someone to desire to be saved, the person's got to understand that he's lost. For someone to appreciate the good news, he's got to understand the bad news. For someone to seek salvation, he's got to understand the problem of sin and a holy God. For someone to be open to the Gospel, he's got to understand this fundamental problem: he cannot make himself right before God. Or do you remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 9:12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." I've got to understand I'm sick. I've got to understand I've got a problem. Not just that I'm sick, I'm dead and I can do absolutely nothing. I am utterly condemned.

That's what an individual has to understand if the individual desires to understand the Gospel that Paul preached and he sets forth this argument from chapter 1, verse 18, all the way to chapter 3, verse 20. Now if we read chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 32, there are three movements of thought. The first movement of thought is a revelation, a revelation of God's wrath. That is verse 18, chapter 1, verse 18. The second movement of thought, the reasons for God's wrath which are spelled out in verses 19 all the way down to verse 23. And if you talk about the reasons for God's wrath, they are basically twofold: something can be known about God but rather than receiving that revelation, people reject that revelation and even pervert it. So that's what I read in verses 19 through 23. Then finally, we have the results of his wrath spelled out in verses 24 all the way down to verse 32. So there's a revelation, there are reasons for this wrath, and there's a result when it comes to rejecting this revelation and you read it in verses 24 all the way down to verse 32.

Now let's pick it up. Here is the first movement of thought, the revelation of God's wrath, which is found in the 18<sup>th</sup> verse. Now here's the way it reads, "For the wrath of God," and

if you talk about righteousness from God, you're also talking about a wrath that comes from God. So let's read it that way. "For the wrath from God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who are holding down the truth in unrighteousness." Now he begins with the whole concept of wrath from God and there are individuals who absolutely dismiss the concept of wrath but you cannot dismiss the concept of God's wrath. If I'm reading the pages of the Old Testament, there are over 20 different words in the Old Testament that speak of God's wrath but it's not just the Old Testament, it's also the New Testament. There are specific words that are used in the New Testament that speak of God's anger, that speak of God's wrath, from the Gospels all the way to the book of Revelation.

So when I think about the word "wrath," the word that is used here for wrath, there are two particular words that are used. There is the word "thumos" and the word "orge." The word that is used here is "orge." If I look at the word "thumos," which is used for God in the New Testament, if I look up that word "thumos," it'll say "rage and angry passion and anger welling up and subsiding again." That is "thumos." The word that is used here is "orge," and "orge" is defined as "an indignation that has arisen gradually and has become more settled." So if you think of the first word, "thumos," you're thinking of a passionate anger, whereas when you think of the word that is used here, it's a settled kind of anger. So it's an anger that's there and it's anger that's building, building, building, and he's going to use this word "orge" in these chapters in terms of God.

So when I read the statement here, we're talking about a revelation, a revelation of God's wrath and the text says, "For wrath from God," then he uses this verb, there is a certain emphasis placed upon it, "is being revealed," and if you look up the verb, it'll say "to uncover; to lay open that which has been veiled; to disclose; to make bare." "For wrath from God," this settled wrath from God, "is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who are holding down the truth in unrighteousness." Now the order there is extremely important: ungodliness, then unrighteousness. If you talk about ungodliness, what does ungodly mean? It means "no worship; no reverence." So you're talking about someone who doesn't think about God at all, and if you're talking about someone who doesn't worship or reverence God, then you're talking about someone who does that which is contrary to God's nature, contrary to what God reveals. So if someone's ungodly, some absolutely will be unrighteous so it's a cause/effect relationship.

So when I read the statement here in chapter 1, verse 18, and I'm thinking about this revelation, it is a revelation that is being unveiled, it comes from heaven, it is the wrath that comes from God, is leveled against someone who has no worship or no reverence, and therefore is unrighteous and the text says he's trying to hold down truth and he's doing it in this unrighteousness, and the truth that you read about here if you go down and you read verse 25, it is the truth about God, the truth of God. So when I read to say there is a revelation and the revelation is of God's wrath, it is, again, someone who is ungodly, unrighteous and someone who is trying to suppress, try to hold down this truth about God in terms of his unrighteousness.

Now he shifts to a second movement of thought, it begins in verse 19 and goes all the way down to verse 23 and he sets forth the reasons for this wrath. Now I want you to notice it and notice the way it reads. "Because that which is known of God is manifest among them," it's visible, it's plainly seen, it's open. Because knowledge of God is visible among them, "for God," then he uses the verb of that adjective, "for God visibly made it known to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly perceived, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity; so that they are without excuse."

Now when you read this, obviously there are various things that one can know on the basis of that which God has created and he uses a particular phrase here when I read that 20<sup>th</sup> verse, "his eternal power and divinity," and he uses that word "divinity." Now that word is only used here in the New Testament. There is a word that is very similar to it in Colossians 2:9 and they're pronounced the same way, "theiotes, theotes." There's only one letter that distinguishes these two words. You have one here, the only time it's found, you have another word only found in Colossians 2:9. The word that is found in Colossians 2:9 refers to deity in terms of essence. The word that is used here is referring to the quality or the attributes of divinity. So when you read this statement here and he says in verse 20, "his eternal power and divinity," he's saying they are qualities, they are attributes in terms of that which he created that everybody should know. He's a powerful God, created the universe. He's supreme. We certainly understand various things about him. He's alive. He's living. He's intelligent. He's good. He's in control.

So when you read that everyone should know, there is a living, powerful, intelligent, superhuman being. Everyone knows instinctively there is a supreme being and this supreme being is all-powerful and everyone knows that on the basis of what he created. So when I read Paul's words, there is not a problem in terms of intellect. Everyone knows this instinctively. So I come to these verses and I'm reading them and I'm reading verse 19, he's setting forth the reasons why there is this wrath, verse 19, "Because that which is known of God is visible among them; for God made it visible to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the mind, being understood by the things made, even his eternal power and divinity; so that they are without excuse." Now follow it, verse 21, "Because having known God, they did not glorify as God nor give thanks, but they became worthless in their inward reasonings and their senseless heart was darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God in the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and reptiles." So here is God revealing himself in all kinds of ways in terms of that which he created, and instead of individuals responding to the Creator, they respond to that which he created and instead of worshiping him, they worship that which he created, and as a result it renders them without excuse. Now that's what Paul says.

So I'm reading about this revelation of his wrath and I'm reading the reasons for his wrath. There is something that can be known about God, he's a supreme being and he's all-powerful. People do not respond to that revelation. They do not receive it. They reject it. They pervert it and instead of worshiping him and reverencing him, they turn to idols

and they worship that which he created, and as a result, they're inexcusable before God. Now that is as straight-forward as it can be as you're reading. So if this is the revelation and these are the reasons, what is the result? Now here it is, verse 24, "Wherefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to uncleanness, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. On account of this, God gave them over to dishonorable passions, for even their," and you have to read it this way, "females." Females. He is emphasizing the gender and he does it in a delicate kind of way. Even, "for even their females exchange the natural function into that contrary to nature." The nature function, of course, would be a conjugal relationship and they're doing something contrary to the natural order, the created order. I mean, that's the language that's used here. So I'm reading the verse, verse 26, "For even their females exchange the natural use," function, "unto that contrary to nature," the natural order, "and likewise also," and you have to read it this way, "males," males, "having left the natural function of the female," we're talking conjugal relationship, likewise even the males have abandoned, left, the natural function of the female, "burn in their appetite towards one another; males with males producing the shameful thing and receiving back the penalty which is was necessary for their wandering. And just as God did not approve and just as they did not approve to have God in knowledge, God gave them over to a disapproved mind to do the things that are not proper or fitting."

Now when you read it, three times you have the word "God gave them over." You have it in verse 24, "Wherefore God gave them over"; you have it in verse 26, "God gave them over"; and you have it in verse 28, "God gave them over." Three times you have the verb "paredokate" and when you read it here, you would have to say this is abandonment. This is God abandoning them, removing all restraints and letting them destroy themselves. So when you talk about the wrath being revealed from heaven in verse 18, this is how it's being revealed, it's being revealed in absolute destruction in terms of people.

Now when you talk about "God gave them over," the subject is God, that verb is active. So you can't just say God passively, God actively gives them over to absolute self-destruction. I mean, the verb is active in voice.

So when I read this and I think about the results of someone having this revelation, utterly repudiating and rejecting this revelation, there is a consequence, there is a price to pay, and he describes it here in these verses. Even though this text says God gave them over, they're absolutely responsible. Here is the same verb and I want you to notice the way Paul uses it in the book of Ephesians. Turn over with me, please, Ephesians 4, and I want you to notice it here. Ephesians 4. Look at the 19<sup>th</sup> verse and he's talking about unsaved people. He says in verse 19, "Who having become calloused," now here's the verb, it's the same verb but now it's used in reference to people, "Who having become calloused, they gave themselves over to sensuality, to the pursuit of all uncleanness with greediness." Now there is the same verb but it's referring to people. It's the same word, "paredokate," but here it doesn't refer to God, it refers to what they are doing. So God gives them over but they are responsible. They are doing all of it. Having become calloused, they gave themselves over to sensuality, to the pursuit of all uncleanness with

the desire to have more and more in terms of diminishing returns, absolute self-destruction.

So I read it here in verse 24, verse 26, verse 28, and when I come to verse 28, he's going to say at the very end, "to do the things that are not proper," and then you come to verse 29, "having been filled with all," then he's going to say, "full of." Now I want you to notice what he does in verse 29. "Having been filled with all," and then you see the word that is used there, that is the very same word that's used in verse 18. In verse 18, it's used twice. He comes right back to it, "unrighteousness," and all of these vices flow out of unrighteousness and it depends upon whatever manuscript you have, either 21 or 23 vices. But if you read it, it all flows from this unrighteousness.

So if I'm reading verse 18, "For wrath from God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," there it is, "unrighteousness of men, who are holding down the truth," the truth about God, here's the word, "in unrighteousness." Then I come to verse 29, "having been filled with all unrighteousness," the same word, and then you have all the vices that flow from it.

So I read verse 29, "fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," then notice the way the chapter ends, "Who having known the righteous judgment of God, that the ones who are practicing such things are worthy of death, not only are doing the same things, but also are agreeing with," approving, sympathizing with, consenting with, "the ones who are practicing." Even though they know that this will bring about death, not only are they doing it, they're applauding other people who are doing it as well.

So you'd have to say this is an amazing text in terms of talking about condemnation, condemnation of all Gentiles. I have the revelation, I have the reasons, I have the result. So it's all set forth very clearly as I read it. Now when I think about what the Apostle Paul is saying in this text of Scripture, there are a number of theological observations that must be made so let me set forth some theological observations that I'd like for us to think about.

First, there really is a God. He is alive. He's a living God. He is the Creator. He is the one who created everything. So there's a natural order that we instinctively know that is valid and right and if you talk about relationships, we know according to the created natural order you're talking male, female. Anything other than that is not normal, it is not natural, it's absolutely wrong. No question about it. So when you talk about male/female relationship, a conjugal relationship in terms of marriage is only that. There is nothing else that can be accepted. Nothing else that can be approved. When I go back to Genesis 1, it says that, "God created in his own image, in his own likeness both male and female," and the word that is used there for male and female are the same words that are used here by Paul. The same words. If I go to Jesus' words in Matthew 19, Jesus makes this statement, "Have you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male

and female?" The same words that Paul uses in Romans 1. "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:4-6. He takes Genesis 1, he combines it with Genesis 2, he stamps his approval upon it. This is Jesus himself and he said this is what God said at the very beginning. So anything that moves beyond this created order is unnatural, it is abnormal. In fact, Paul says it is the result of someone repudiating the revelation of God and God allows them to go this way to destroy themselves.

So if I read this, there is a God. He's very much alive. He's certainly powerful. He's the one who created everything. There is a created order. There is a way things should function and if they don't function according to the created order, they are problems. So there is no way under God's heaven for any of us if we claim to believe the Bible, to accept anything other than this. There is no other way. It is abnormal, it is unnatural if you talk about a male with a male or a female with a female. It is abnormal, it is unnatural and it can never be endorsed by a Christian.

If I read this text, he is setting forth general revelation. He's talking about the importance of general revelation. He's talking about the significance of natural theology. This is general revelation. It's natural theology on the basis of creation that he created. We're in a theater and creation is all around us, the screen is out to us about the Creator. So if you read this, we'd have to say this is a beautiful illustration of general revelation of natural theology that provides ample evidence for the existence of God.

You say, "Well, what do you mean by 'general'?" We'd say it's general in scope, wouldn't we? Meaning that it reaches all people on this planet. We'd say it's general in terms of geography, it encompasses the entire globe. We would say it's general in terms of its methodology because the universal means would be something like the heat of the sun. Psalm 19, even a blind man can feel the heat of the sun. So if you talk about this text, it is certainly a beautiful illustration of general revelation of natural theology. Everything that one can understand, that there is really someone out there, a supreme being, who created everything.

Now let me say this because this also is very important. We would say, would we not, that general revelation is adequate and sufficient to condemn an individual who rejects it? It's adequate, it's sufficient to condemn because an individual who rejects this revelation is without excuse before God. So we would say general revelation is sufficient to condemn an individual but we would also say it is insufficient to save an individual. The only way in which an individual can be saved is through the Gospel. The individual has to hear about Jesus Christ.

You say, "But an individual who is out there may never have heard of Jesus Christ so how could that individual be condemned if he's never heard of Jesus Christ?" He's condemned not because he hasn't heard of Jesus Christ, he's condemned because he rejects God as the Creator and since he rejects God as Creator on the basis of this

information, God doesn't have to supply more information. He's already rejected the revelation that he has.

So general revelation is sufficient to condemn, it is insufficient to save. It cannot save. So if you have someone out there in some tribal group and he is living on the basis of what he has, if he doesn't hear about Jesus Christ, he's not going to heaven. He's got to hear about Jesus Christ. The question would be: does that individual out there in that tribe, does that individual respond to the revelation that he has? And that is a very debatable question but all I'm going to say here is general revelation, scream it out that there is a supreme being that's all-powerful, is universal. Everyone knows it. Everyone instinctively knows it. So for an individual to turn away from that, that individual is condemned.

It is sufficient to render the person without excuse but it cannot save an individual because this is a question you always hear, don't you, "What about that poor guy out there in some tribe who's never heard the Gospel? Surely you're not going to say that individual, if that individual were to die, that individual is going to hell. Surely you're not going to say that." Yes, I am. I am going to say that. That the reason why the Gospel has to go out, and that's the reason why the Gospel has to be proclaimed to everyone, because if an individual dies apart from Jesus Christ, that individual is not going to heaven. Why else would Paul be so urgent and have such a passion to go and proclaim the Gospel to everyone if all of these individuals are okay in terms of their paganism? Why wouldn't he just leave them alone? Why does he penetrate all of these areas proclaiming the Gospel? Because he knows apart from the Gospel they're not going to heaven.

Now this is something else that's very important. We think about religious evolution, that's what we hear, that individuals who are animists, and then they became polytheists, and then they embraced cannatheism, and then finally they came to monotheism, so gradually they're evolving, worshiping. The animist believes that there are spirits into all of the material kind of stuff, worshiping the various spirits of the trees or whatever. Then they're making their way up until finally they become monotheists, they believe that there's one God. That is absolutely false. Everyone began as monotheist. Everyone began with believing that there is one God and then they moved away from that. They repudiated the thought that there is one God but that's the way that they began. I mean, historians talk about it. Eusebius in the 4<sup>th</sup> century said the oldest civilization had no idols. So everyone began believing that there's one God but over a period of time they turned away from him and they became animist and polytheist, believing in all kinds of gods, and cannatheist, believing that there's a pantheon of gods and yet there is one supreme god among all the gods. Mankind didn't begin as animist and then make it that way, man began as monotheist and then they moved away and they rejected him and they worshiped that which he created.

That's what happened. Instead of recognizing that someone created the sun, they worshiped the sun. Instead of understanding that someone created the moon, they worshiped the moon. I mean, down in Egypt weren't they sun worshipers? Over in Mesopotamia, weren't they moon worshipers? If you think of the name Jericho, Jericho is the oldest city in the world. Do you know what Jericho means? City of the moon. So they

worshiped the moon, they worshiped the sun. So you have these tribal groups, what did they do? They cut down a tree and they make an idol and they worship the idol and that's what's done. But in the very beginning, monotheist, one God, and then they moved away and then they began to worship all of the things that he created and Paul says this renders them utterly without excuse.

There is a God. He is alive. He is the Creator. There is a natural order in terms of creation. There is a way things should function. Anything other than that created order is abnormal, it's not natural. There is general revelation seen, for example, in creation sufficient to condemn, insufficient to save. Mankind began as monotheist, believing in one God, and they moved away from that and they embraced all of these other things that we think about which Paul basically says is reduced to idolatry, and when man rejects that revelation, the revelation of God, God in turn rejects that man and allows that man to go his way so that he destroys himself. That's what Romans 1 says.

Now if I'm reading Romans 1, I want you to notice what Paul does. Now look again at chapter 1 and I want you to notice verse 14 and 15. Romans 1:14, "I am debtor," I have an obligation, "both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So according to me, I am eager also to preach the gospel to you in Rome." Then you ask the question, "Why, Paul? Why?" And when you read that little word "for" you can read it in a clausal sense "because." "Why, Paul? Why do you feel this obligation and why are you so eager to do this, Paul?" Verse 16, "Because I'm not ashamed of the gospel." Well, Paul, why aren't you ashamed of the Gospel? "Because it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and to the Greek." Paul, why do you need to believe that Gospel? "Because the righteousness from God is being revealed in it, out of faith, into faith, just as it stands written, The righteous will live by faith." But why, Paul? Why do you need this righteousness from God? "Because the wrath from God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are holding down the truth in unrighteousness." If I do not have this righteousness that comes from God, then I'm going to experience this wrath that comes from him. That's the reason why I've got to believe the Gospel. It's either the righteousness from God or it's the wrath that will come from him. That's the reason why I've got to understand the Gospel as it's proclaimed by Paul, but we have to understand there's a problem, there's a holy God and I'm unholy. There is sin. There is a barrier that exists and there is no way that I can have a relationship with him unless I have a righteous status and the only way I can have a righteous status is for him to give me this righteousness, not mine but his, and the only way I can have it is through faith in the Gospel. You've got to hear it and then when you hear it, you've got to believe it, otherwise there is this condemnation.

Now I want you to turn with me to the Gospel of John, John 3, and I want you to notice this statement. John 3, look at verse 36, "The one who believes in the Son is having eternal life, but the one who is not believing in the Son will not see life." Now if you talk about eternal life, it is true to say that everyone is going to live forever, so if someone believes in the Son, that person's going to live forever, and someone who doesn't believe in the Son, that person is going to live forever also. So what does it mean when he talks

about eternal life? Obviously we're talking about forever, but what else do we mean when we talk about eternal life? Do you remember what Jesus said, John 17:3? "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." So when you talk about eternal life, now you're talking about having a relationship with God, having fellowship with God forever. That's a believer, an unbeliever is going to be severed from that.

So I'm reading the statement here. He's talking about someone who believes and someone who is unpersuaded and doesn't believe. The one who believes in the Son is having eternal life, the one who is not believing will not see life but the wrath of God, the wrath that comes from God, and the word "wrath" there is the same word that we read in Romans 1:18. Same word. Wrath from God. Now do you see that word, that verb? For the wrath of God, the wrath from God, do you see that, is abiding, is remaining, is dwelling over him right now. That person is underneath God's wrath. That's a present tense. The wrath from God is abiding right now over the person. The person doesn't experience it. Why? Because the person's in the body, but the moment the person leaves the body, then what is positionally true becomes experientially true. Someone who doesn't believe is not going to have this fellowship with God forever. That person is going to experience his wrath that's going to come from him.

Now turn to another one. This is in John 5 and I want to read this verse, verse 24. Listen to what Jesus says. "Truly, truly, I am saying to you, that the one who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me," notice, "is having," right now, "eternal life and is not coming into judgment but has passed out of death into life." That person right now has eternal life. That person is not going to be condemned. That person is no longer in death. That person is in life. He's alive. That's what happens when someone believes but if someone doesn't believe, then the person doesn't have eternal life, that person is going to face condemnation, and that person is in death. He doesn't understand anything about life.

So in order to understand the good news of the Gospel, we've got to understand the bad news of condemnation and chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 32 says universally everyone is condemned because they repudiate the revelation that they possess. Not special revelation, general revelation, natural theology. Now if this is true in terms of Gentiles in verses 18 through 32, it's also true in terms of Jews and he'll pick this up in chapter 2, verse 1, he'll take it all the way to chapter 3, verse 8, then he will cement his whole discussion by way of Old Testament Scripture in chapter 3, verse 9, he'll go all the way to verse 18, then he will give a summary statement in chapter 3, verses 19 and 20, which I will talk about, Lord willing, next week.

Chapter 1, he's the Creator, general revelation, everyone began with monotheism, God reveals himself, man rejects the revelation, God in turn rejects man and allows man to destroy himself. That's Romans 1. I go back to the words of Helen Keller, she said, "I always knew there was a God, I just didn't know his name." You have to know his name in order to be saved. She, of course, came to that knowledge and was saved.

I'll lead us in prayer.

*Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank thee for Romans 1. We think of these opening verses of chapter 1, verses 1 through 17, we think of this thesis that we know is unpacked in the words of this book, and then we think of this first argumentation as he's arguing this whole concept of condemnation and we think of the world and we think of the idolatry that is practiced in the world today and how individuals have turned away from this general revelation and instead of worshiping thee as the Creator, have worshiped that which has been created and we know, Father, this is condemnation. We just pray that we would have eyes to see as we read holy Scripture and pray that thou would guide us. Help us to understand the Gospel as it was proclaimed by Paul and as he explains it to these Roman believers. For I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.*