

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS

Introduction to Romans: 'The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans is the classic epistle in the New Testament, setting forth a systematic presentation of New Testament theology. That may be why it has been placed as the first of the New Testament epistles. As noted in the title and the first verse, Paul is the undisputed author. It probably was the sixth of Paul's epistles, written during his third visit to Corinth in about A.D. 60. (See Romans 16:23, I Corinthians 1:14, and II Corinthians 13:1.) In all likelihood, Paul had not as yet visited Rome and wrote notifying the church of his intention to visit in the foreseeable future. That did not come to pass until three or four years later when he arrived as a Roman detainee awaiting a hearing from Nero.

As Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he unfolds in a logical and systematic fashion 'the gospel of God.' That phrase appears in verse 1 and again in 15:16. It would seem the key concept is 'the righteousness of God' which appears about five times.

The basic organization of the epistle revolves around that concept. The major parts of the epistle are (1) the introduction in 1:1-17; (2) the indictment against mankind

in 1:17-3:20; (3) justification is by faith in 3:21-5:11; (4) dealing with sin after justification in 5:12-8:13; (5) the blessings of being justified in 8:14-39; (6) the status of Israel's relationship to God in light of the New Testament in 9:1-11:36; (7) the application of righteousness to Christian living in 12:1-15:33; and (8) concluding comments in 16:1-27.

* * * * *

Overview of Romans 1: *The first portion of Romans 1 (verses 1-17) is Paul's introductory comments. He reveals to whom he is writing with personal regards. The introduction culminates with his great confession of not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ. In the first major section of Romans (verses 18 to the end of the chapter), Paul launches into his indictment of the human race. He will systematically and thoroughly develop that the human race is utterly guilty before God. The initial focus in this section is of the ungodly gentile.*

1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God. Paul begins this monumental epistle by noting three aspects of his ministry. (1) He identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. The word translated as **servant** (δουλος *doulos*) has the sense of a 'bondman'—one indentured to another for his service. (2) Next he identifies himself as a *called* "apostle." His ministry was a direct calling from Jesus Christ as per the Damascus road. (3) Finally, he indicates

that he was “separated unto the gospel of God.” The word translated as **separated** (αφοριζω *aphoridzo*) has the sense of being ‘set apart,’ in this case to the “gospel of God.” Paul’s entire life was dedicated toward that end. Throughout his epistles, Paul used the phrase “the gospel of God” interchangeably with “the gospel of Christ.” There is no distinction.

1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.) Of interest is that the antecedent “the gospel of God” had been “promised afore by his prophets in the holy scripture.” Though no portion is specified, there were numerous Old Testament prophecies which foretold the ministry of Christ. The various *types* (i.e., Old Testament foreviews) of Christ, particularly in Exodus and Leviticus, foretold a greater fulfillment than they themselves offered. The good news of God’s mercy and salvation were clearly presented throughout the Old Testament. Its culmination was in the person of Jesus Christ.

1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. Our Lord is specifically so noted here. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the gospel of God. He is noted as God’s Son and our Lord, who was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The word translated as **made** (γινομαι *ginomai*) could be translated here as ‘was.’ It has the sense of coming into existence (though our Lord is eternally preexistent). However, Paul is quick to clarify that he is referring to Jesus’ *familial* heritage. Jesus Christ is eternally preexistent. However, His human origins were of the “seed of David.” The lineage of Christ

(i.e., His seed humanly) was of the royal dynasty of David. Hence, in one verse, Jesus Christ is ascribed as the Son of God, Lord, and the royal heir to the throne of David.

1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Moreover, Jesus' divine Sonship has been verified, according to the Holy Spirit, by His resurrection. The word translated as **declared** (ὀρίζω *horidzo*) has the literal sense to 'define' or to 'determine.' It is in the passive voice. The phrase in this context essentially means the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ has been verified "with power" by the "spirit of holiness." That undoubtedly is a reference to the Holy Spirit. That which has verified the Divine nature of Jesus Christ more than anything else is His resurrection. It is the final proof of His Deity. It forcibly authenticates and verifies it.

1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name. In fashion similar to the numerous "in whoms" in Ephesians, Paul wrote that through Jesus ("by whom") "we have received grace." Every believer has received God's grace through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Paul had received his *apostleship* from Him.

The purpose He has given such grace is "for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." Several comments are in order. (1) The phrase "for obedience to the faith" could literally be rendered as 'obedience of faith.' Paul is not referring to a system of faith—a system of theology (i.e., the Christian faith) Rather, he is referring to simple faith, in this case, in Christ. (2) The word translated as **obedience** (ὕπακοη *hupakoe*) means just

that. However, implicit in that word is the more basic idea of *submission*.

As His grace has been bestowed upon us, it is incumbent upon us to submit to Him, simply trusting Him. Submission to the Lordship of Christ is therefore thinly veiled. Notice therefore the progression thus far. His grace toward us is a motivation, drawing us to not only trust Him but also to submit to Him in obedience. (3) The continuation of this obedience, to “all nations for his name,” can refer to no less than the fulfillment of the Great Commission. To witness of Christ is in obedience to His command. The word translated as **nations** (εθνος *ethnos*) is commonly translated as ‘gentiles.’ It also has the sense of ‘peoples.’ Hence, we are under an injunction to obey Him in taking the gospel to ‘all peoples.’ It ultimately is a derivative of His grace as described above. The matter of soul winning is just beneath the surface of the text. It is submission and obedience to Jesus Christ in whom and by whose grace we have placed our faith.

1:6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. The word translated as **among** (εν *en*) is the common word which overwhelmingly is otherwise translated as ‘in.’ Again, in fashion similar to the numerous ‘in whoms’ of Ephesians, Paul notes that in Him “are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” In that phrase the word *the* does not appear in the Received Text. It therefore could read either (a) ‘called of Jesus Christ,’ or (b) ‘called Jesus Christ’s.’ Theologically, both are true. We have been called by Him and now belong to Him, being redeemed by His blood. If the initial thought of Paul being ‘called’ (verse 1) is recalled, the contextual parallel would lean toward being ‘called of Jesus Christ’ in distinction to the

alternative sense.

1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. The subjects to whom the epistle is addressed is indicated—“to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints.” The final phrase is instructive. The epistle was addressed to those in Rome who were “called *to be* saints.” Indeed, they were beloved of God. The word translated as **saints** (ἅγιος *hagios*) literally means ‘holy’ and is the overwhelming way it usually is translated. It is plural indicating ‘holy ones.’ The word translated as **called** (κλητος *klaytois*) has the sense of being *invited* to something in distinction to being *described* as something. For example, a proper sense of it might be used as ‘called to supper.’ It does not have the idea of being ‘called handsome,’ for example. Therefore, the addressees of Paul’s epistle were those who had been called to be holy. That call extends to every Christian. We indeed are called to be holy! (See I Peter 1:15-16).

Paul’s salutation to the Roman church is substantially similar to his greeting in virtually everyone of his epistles. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” His invocation of grace and peace from the Father and Son to us is nothing to be taken lightly. Indeed, we have been saved by grace. But now there is offered a continual stream of grace for day-to-day Christian living. The word translated as **grace** (χάρις *charis*) represents a broad stream of thought. It begins with the idea of ‘unmerited favor.’ It, however, flares to include the idea of His goodness, His graciousness, His kindness, His help, and His strength. In being saved, we received

most clearly the aspect of unmerited favor. But now that we are saved, there is available an entire spectrum of God's goodness, kindness, help, and strength. See Hebrews 4:14-16. That priceless treasure is invoked by introduction as Paul begins his epistle.

Likewise, is the invocation of **peace**. We are at peace *with* God in being justified (Romans 5:1). But now the peace *of* God is available for day-to-day Christian living as we grow in grace. See Philippians 4:6-7 and Isaiah 26:3. That peace is invoked by Paul to his readers. Both come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Having completed his initial introductory comments, the apostle now moves on to more personal remarks. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all." A glimpse of how his thanksgiving to God was channeled through Jesus Christ is seen. All our prayer to God is through the mediatrix of Jesus Christ. The basis of Paul's thanks was that the faith of these Roman Christians was known throughout the Roman world. The word translated, **spoken of** (καταγγελλω *katangello*), though having the basic sense of 'announcing' or 'proclaiming,' also has the sense of 'being made known.' Inasmuch as it is in the passive voice, that likely is the sense. Reference to "the whole world" was an idiom common in the Roman empire referring to the empire as such. The testimony of the church of young Christians at Rome was such that it had spread across the Roman world.

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. Insight into the spiritual life of Paul is found. Notice, he wrote, that “without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” (1) It is evident that Paul prayed continually. The word translated as **without ceasing** (αδιαλειπτως *adialeiptos*) has the idea of ‘incessantly.’ Moreover, he did it always. (2) He interceded on behalf of other brethren. A clear example remains for us today. Further in that regard, notice that Paul served God from his very spirit in the gospel of his Son. Recalling that man is a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit; it is *our* spirit which is the center of our being. It is the controller of our lives. (3) Paul’s service to Christ and His work was from his very spirit, the depths of his being, from his heart. And God was witness to all of this. It is of interest that the phrase “the gospel of his Son” appears only here in the Bible.

1:10-12 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

An additional portion of Paul’s prayer life was his request that God would give him a prosperous journey to visit them in Rome. It is scriptural to pray for journeying mercies. Paul did. He also qualified his request that it be by the will of God. Insight into Paul’s planning was guided by the approval of God’s will.

Furthermore, Paul commented that he longed to see and meet the brethren in the young church at Rome. His goal was to impart a spiritual gift to the church. The word

translated as **gift** is (χαρισμα) *charisma*. What Paul had in mind is in no way related to the modern charismatic movement. He simply sought to grant spiritual insights and understanding to the church “to the end ye may be established.” The word translated as **established** (στηριζω *steridzo*) has the basic sense to be ‘strengthened.’ It is the Greek root from which the English word ‘steroids’ derives. Part of Paul’s desire to go to Rome and visit the church there was to strengthen them spiritually.

Additionally, he sought mutual encouragement for himself and for the church there. The word translated as **comforted together** (συμπαρακαλεω *sumparakaleo*) in more modern English has the sense of ‘mutual encouragement.’ As both Paul and the young church at Rome fellowshipped together in their mutual faith in Christ, both would be encouraged. That was an additional motive for wishing to visit.

1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. Paul adds this additional personal note. He had desired to visit them earlier to have further fruit amongst them as he had with other gentile churches. However, he was “let hitherto.” The word so translated, **let** (κωλυω *koluo*), simply means to be ‘hindered,’ ‘prevented,’ or ‘obstructed.’ Precisely what the hindrance to Paul’s coming was, we are not told. God evidently kept Paul occupied in other matters, preventing him from traveling to Rome. In His foreknowledge, God knew Paul would spend ample time there before long, though perhaps not in the setting he would have thought. He perhaps was needed elsewhere

more urgently in the time which remained in his ministry. God evidently and providentially prevented Paul from going to Rome sooner, knowing what was best in His overall plan for Paul's life. For those who seek His will even today, that same providential control remains.

1:14-15 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Though Paul's journey to Rome would not be anytime soon, he bared his heart to his Roman audience. The idea of him being "a debtor to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" is this. Paul felt a great obligation toward all to preach the gospel to them. That included those at Rome. The allusion to Greeks and Barbarians was an idiom of the day, referring to the entire world. The Greeks held themselves as the elite and all others as barbarians. The point simply is, Paul felt indebted, yea obligated, to preach the gospel to all. That included the wise and the unwise—everyone. He probably referred to both the educated (i.e., the Greek with his education) and the unwise (i.e., the uneducated masses of the world.) Certainly, both were in Rome. Therefore, as much as was in him—an idiom alluding to the best of his ability—he was prepared to preach the gospel at Rome.

1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Paul was not ashamed or embarrassed of the "gospel of Christ." It is noteworthy that in the first chapter of Romans, Paul has used the phrases "the gospel of God"

(verse 1), “the gospel of his Son” (verse 9), and “the gospel of Christ” (verse 16) interchangeably. They all refer to the same thing. Furthermore, they together clearly imply the Deity of Christ. That gospel (i.e., good news) “is the power of God unto salvation.” The word translated as **power** (δυναμις *dunamis*) refers to ‘inherent power,’ in this case, the gospel itself. The English words *dynamite* and *dynamo* derive therefrom. That spiritual power applies “to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Whereas Paul had just prior referred to all mankind (Greeks and barbarians); here, he refines his comments to note the distinction between Jew and Greek. The latter is used idiomatically of gentiles. Because of the covenant relationship of the Jewish people with God, they are first in line for the hearing of the gospel. That was true with the advent of the church. It will be true as the gospel is preached during the Tribulation. (The phrase “to the Jew first” is used three times in Romans {here, and then in 2:9,10} and no where else in the Bible.)

1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For therein—in the gospel—“is the righteousness of God revealed.” It is noteworthy that Paul did *not* say, ‘for therein is the *grace* of God revealed.’ Rather, he mentioned the *righteousness* of God. God has justly dealt with the human race in offering the gospel to both the Jew and the gentile. The gentile had historically ignored God. The Jew had recently rejected Christ. God was just in offering the gospel to both and particularly to the Jew first. (Paul is laying the foundation for that which he will address later—the gospel being sent to the gentile world, to the consternation of some Jews).

In the gospel of Christ, God’s righteousness is thus revealed “from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Whether to the self-righteous Jew or the godless gentile, the gospel is received the same way. We all are saved by faith. However, after having entered the on-ramp of salvation (by faith), now we must live by faith. There is saving faith, and living by faith—“faith to faith.” It is the same for both Jew and gentile.

To buttress his thought, the apostle quotes from Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith.” Another major theme in Romans is touched upon by way of introduction. Paul refers to those who have believed as ‘the just’—those who have been made righteous in Christ. They (and we) therefore are enjoined to live by faith having been justified. Reference to the just living by faith is found in four places in the Bible: Habakkuk 2:4, here, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. Therefore, we are not only saved by faith and thus made just, we also then must live by faith—from faith to faith. Paul is clearly laying the foundation of faith over works at the outset of his epistle. Salvation is by faith. The Christian life thereafter is by faith. Keeping the Law is not in view.

1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Paul begins his indictment by establishing that God’s wrath is impending against humanity. The word translated as **wrath** (ὀργή *orge*) has the sense of His righteous anger. It is being revealed from heaven because of the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Specifically, it is because men “hold the truth in unrighteousness.” The word translated as **hold** (κατεχω *katecho*) has the sense to ‘hold down,’ to

‘suppress,’ or to ‘hinder.’ The idea is that sinful men in fact know the truth of God in their heart, but suppress it. They are aware of the Word of God, but suppress it whether through the ruse of ‘separation of church and state’ in the public sector, by attacking the integrity thereof in the academic world, or simply ignoring it altogether personally. They willingly deceive themselves and others. That as much as their sin itself has provoked the wrath of God against them. Mankind not only is sinful *prima facie*, they also perjure themselves before God in their hearts by suppressing the truth.

1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. Even more specifically, sinful man has an innate knowledge of God in his heart, yet he has suppressed that truth. That innate, inborn knowledge of God is augmented by the witness of creation. The psalmist wrote, “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). The majesty, beauty, order, and precision of the creation from the macrocosm of the heavens to the microcosm of biology reveal there is a righteous, orderly, majestic God. Mankind knows this in their hearts, yet have suppressed that truth. John, writing of Jesus, declared that He is the true light “which lighteth every man which cometh into the world” (John 1:9). Such suppression of even inborn truth has magnified the wrath of God against mankind.

1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. To further strengthen his case, Paul further points

out that the “invisible things of His spiritual attributes—His righteousness, holiness, and glory—are obvious from the creation itself. Psalm 33:5-6 indicates the righteousness, mercy, faithfulness, and the judgements of God are revealed in the physical world. The nature of the Righteous Judge is thus revealed from His creation. See also Psalm 97:6. Those attributes of God “are clearly seen” from His handiwork. The word translated as **clearly seen** (καθοραω *kathorao*) has the sense of being ‘perceived’ or ‘understood.’ The perfection of the creation itself reveals God’s eternal power and Godhead. Ungodly men understand this in their hearts even if they suppress it through the pretense of evolution. Therefore, “they are without excuse.” The word translated as **without excuse** (αναπολογητος *anapologetos*) has the sense of being ‘indefensible’ legally and judicially. Paul thus continue to lay the legal foundation for the coming indictment of all mankind—the whole world is guilty before God.

1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. The evidence deepens. Paul indicates that men have a *knowledge of God* to the extent they already know of Him. This may be an allusion how Adam and Eve *knew* God in the garden. However, it more likely refers to the preceding comments concerning mankind’s knowledge of God: (1) an innate inborn knowledge placed in every man and (2) the general revelation of God through creation. In already having a knowledge of God and His righteous character, sinful man therefore has aggravated his guilt by failing to glorify God or be thankful to Him.

Therefore, humanity “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.” The word translated as **imaginations** (διαλογισμος *dialogismos*) has the sense of one’s ‘thought processes’ or ‘intellectual ability.’ The word translated as **vain** (ματαιωω *mataioo*) can also have the sense of ‘foolish’ or ‘empty.’ Not only has human intellectual capacity been diminished through the entrance of sin, its direction has become focused on folly. Moreover, the human heart has thereby become darkened. Sin has diminished and darkened both our mental processes as well as our heart, the very seat of our human spirit. We are therefore much damaged thereby.

1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The irony of it all is that mankind has nevertheless professed himself to be wise. Sinful, distorted, diminished, fallen creatures have foolishly proclaimed their wisdom. In so doing, they have shown themselves before God to be fools. The word translated **fools as** (μωραινω *moiraino*) is derived from the more basic word (μωρος) *moros* which literally means ‘moron.’ In plain speech, the final thought is that they have shown themselves to be morons.

1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Further folly and irony only adds to the indictment being developed. Fallen mankind has “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, an creeping things.” The whole concept is an oxymoron—a statement of absurdity. The word translated as **changed** (αλλασσω

allasso) has the idea of ‘exchanging.’ Moronic mankind has exchanged the glory of the infinitely, holy, uncorruptible God for that of corruptible men and lesser creatures, down to even snakes. (The word translated as **creeping things** {ἑρπετον *herpeton*}, while potentially referring to animals of any sort, is used usually for snakes.) The word **image** (εικων *icon*) clearly refers to idols. Imbecilic man has exchanged the infinite God for an inanimate idol made even like a reptile.

1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. The Holy-Spirit-inspired logic of Paul reaches a climax. “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness.” The word translated **gave them up** (παραδιδομι *paradidomi*) has the idea of ‘handing over,’ or ‘delivering to another.’ Because of the spiritual and intellectual rebellion against God, God in effect said, ‘Have it your way. Do your own thing.’ He left a wicked, depraved world to *uncleanness* (i.e., sexual debauchery). Curiously, it often is the ‘intellectuals’ of this world who exhibit the worst of moral perversity. It is of interest that such depravity emanates “through the lusts of their own hearts.” Recall what Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications” in Matthew 15:19. The perversity of man emanates from his own depraved lustful heart. Jeremiah noted that the human heart is not only deceitful above all things, but “desperately wicked.” That wickedness among other things manifests itself in fallen men and women dishonoring “their own bodies between themselves.” Sexual immorality is a clear indicator of the *spiritual* depravity of the human heart.

1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. But the indictment continues. Sinful mankind has “changed the truth of God into a lie.” Paul used a variation of the word translated as **changed** than he used in verse 23. Here, the word (μεταλλασσω *metallasso*) has the sense ‘to alter’ or ‘to revise.’ Sinful man has tampered with the truth. In a court of law, that is a serious offense. Perjury, tampering with evidence, or tampering with a witnesses is always a felony. Sinful man, with Satan’s willing accomplice, has sought to distort the truth of God. It comes in numerous variations whether evolution, modernist theology, Bible revisions, or outright atheism. Sinful man, in cahoots with Satan, has gleefully sought to deceive others concerning the truth of God.

As evidence of their folly, they have “worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” The word translated as **creature** (κτισις *ktisis*) also has the sense of ‘creation.’ The ancients (and some even today) are guilty of worshiping idols made like various creatures. However, modern, ‘sophisticated,’ educated man does the same in worshiping the *environment* more than the God who created it in the first place. Their folly is obvious. They have worshiped the creation rather than the One whose genius created it in the first place.

1:26-27 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men

with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

As the degradation of sin became worse, God simply gave men over “unto vile affections.” The phrase **vile affections**, is translated from the words (ατιμια παθη) *atimias pathe* and literally means ‘dishonorable passions.’ The context clearly leads into homosexuality. The context would indicate homosexuality is the bottom of the barrel of sexual immorality. It, however, is the result of spiritual apostasy of the heart. The final phrase of verse 26 speaking of women and their “use . . . against nature,” literally refers to sexual activity which is not natural. The sexual organs of both male and female were clearly designed for reproduction. Two females (or two males) cannot reproduce. It is ‘unnatural.’

Verse 27 describes how homosexual men burn in their lust one toward another. The word translated as **lust** (ορεξις *orexis*) is not the common word for such in the New Testament. It has the idea of ‘craving.’ The phrase “working that which is unseemly” could be rendered ‘performing acts which are lewd.’ Finally, Paul notes that immorality in general and homosexuality in particular causes the participants to receive “in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” The idea is that they will pay in their bodies for their sin. The consequence of sexual sin inevitably is various sexually generated and transmitted diseases, of which the most notorious, perhaps, is AIDS.

1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

There is a play on words here not evident in English. The phrase “and even as they not like to retain God in their knowledge” revolves around the word **like**. It is translated from (δοκιμαζω) *dokimadzo*’ and has the sense to ‘prove’ or to ‘approve.’ The essence of the thought is that they rejected God in their thinking. In the second phrase, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind,” the word translated as **reprobate** (αδοκιμος *adokimos*) is simply the negative noun form of *dokimadzo*. It by itself has the idea of ‘rejected.’

As the degradation continues even lower, God finally gave them over (παραδιδωμι *paradiomi*—the same word twice translated ‘gave them up’ earlier) to a rejected mind. That is, a mind which rejects God, truth, righteousness, and anything moral. In other words, God in effect has said, if you wish to reject my Word, my Son, and the truth, have it your own way. You can have a mind which rejects the truth. We come perilously close to the unforgivable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, wherein it becomes impossible for a man to be saved. They, in so reaching that point, continue “to do those things which are not convenient.” The word translated as **convenient** (καθηκω *katheko*) has the idea of appropriate or proper.