

Romans 1 (2017)

- Welcome to a study of the most important work of theology in the world: the book of Romans
 - As many of you probably know, this is not the first time I've taught this study for VBVM!
 - In fact, this is at least the fourth time I've gone through this book
 - And it's because I've studied through the book so many times, that I feel the need to do it again
 - That's how important the message of this book is...
 - How deep the concepts are, and how necessary it is that we understand it properly
 - In my previous study of this book, I used the first lesson to introduce the book
 - I explained Paul's reason for writing and his relationship to his audience
 - I still plan to provide some introduction tonight, but I want to refocus that introduction on the book itself
 - And along the way, I'll cover Paul's circumstances and his audience
- One of the things I've discovered in the years since my first study of Romans is how important it is to understand the structure of this book
 - I believe it's the key to appreciating its content
 - I've created a handout (available online) that breaks down the structure of the book in blocks according to topic
 - I've also included a copy of this handout in these notes:



STRUCTURE of ROMANS

Chapter 1:1-15
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1:16-17
PAUL'S THESIS ON RIGHTEOUSNESS

Chapter 1:18-32
ARGUMENT AGAINST PAGANISM

Chapter 2:1-11
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Chapter 13
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Chapter 14
GRACE FOR JEWISH BELIEVERS

Chapter 15:1-13
GRACE FOR GENTILE BELIEVERS

Chapter 15:14-33
PAUL'S APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

Chapter 16
GREETINGS TO PAUL'S ACQUAINTANCES

- We will refer back to this document throughout the course of our study
- The first block is Paul's introduction to his letter
 - As he usually does, he identifies himself, his intended audience, and his occasion for writing
 - Our study of his introduction will give me opportunity to address some important background to this letter

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Rom. 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, **Rom. 1:3** concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

Rom. 1:4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Rom. 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Rom. 1:6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Rom. 1:7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Paul's salutation is similar to his other letters (though this is his longest), so elements will be familiar to many of us
 - In his typical humility, Paul addresses himself as a bond-servant of Jesus
 - In that day, the term bond-servant was used to describe a slave who had served his required time to repay a debt
 - But then later, because of the kindness of the master, the slave decided to renounce his right to freedom so he may remain in service to his master permanently
 - It was a lifelong, irrevocable commitment to live under the house of a good and faithful master
 - Paul frequently uses this term to describe himself and all Christians, since it captures the nature of our relationship with Christ
 - Secondly, Paul says he was an apostle called by God

- Paul waged a life-long campaign to justify his apostleship with some in the church
- His prior life as a persecutor and his unorthodox beginning in faith led some to question his authority
- So Paul frequently reminds his readers of his authority given him by God
- Ultimately, his apostolic powers authenticated his claims as they did all apostles
 - Only those men who possessed the supernatural powers of an apostle could lay claim to the title
 - In that way, the early church could safely distinguish between false apostles and true apostles
 - And since apostles were authors of scripture, it was especially important to know who the true apostles were
- Finally, Paul says his calling was to be set apart to preach the Gospel
 - And the way Paul describes the Gospel in vs.2-6 is our first clue to his audience and purpose in writing to Rome
 - The elements in this description are uniquely targeted to a Jewish reader
 - First, Paul says this is the Gospel promised beforehand by the Old Testament prophets in the Jewish scriptures
 - Obviously, this would be a compelling argument for Jews
 - The Jews were looking for a coming Messiah because their scriptures foretold it, but Gentiles had no such advance notice
 - Secondly, Paul says those prophecies concerned a son of David – in human terms
 - Once again, the family identity of the Messiah was especially important to a Jew but largely irrelevant to a Gentile
 - Furthermore, Paul reminds his readers that the truth of Jesus' claims were witnessed by His resurrection in Jerusalem and the Spirit of holiness

- His last reference to the Spirit of Holiness would have hit home with Paul's readers
- Paul's writing principally to the Jewish leadership over the Christian church in Rome
 - The church in Rome was located in the largest, more powerful and prominent Gentile city in the world
 - The church was growing and flourishing by drawing converts from the city's vast Gentile population
 - So naturally, it consists largely of Gentiles
 - But that Gentile church was founded and overseen by Jewish men
 - These Jewish believers were converted at Pentecost while in Jerusalem for the Passover
 - So Paul is reminding them of that moment when he mentions the Spirit of holiness in v.4
 - Paul is speaking of the moment at Pentecost when the Spirit descended on these believers, a moment they will never forget
 - That group of converted Jewish men left Jerusalem soon after that moment, and returned to their homes in Rome
 - Once in Rome, they founded the church in that city
 - It was the only major church in the Roman empire NOT founded by an apostle
 - They were a successful church thriving in the empire's capital city, and they traced their start to Pentecost
 - Because of these unimpeachable credentials, this church had a chip on its shoulder
- Meanwhile, the church's most prominent Apostle, Paul, who had traveled throughout the Empire founding churches and visiting others, had yet to visit Rome
 - By the time Paul writes his letter to Rome, he has already taken three missionary journeys in Asia Minor
 - More over, he's begun writing letters to churches in the region

- These letters are immediately recognized to be scripture and valued as such by the early church
- By the time of this letter, Paul had already written Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and three letters to Corinth (two of which are in the Bible)
- But as yet Paul had never visited the Roman church nor even written to them
- So the leaders in Rome were feeling overlooked by Paul
 - They wondered why the great apostle hadn't come to them yet
 - Perhaps he only cared for the churches he founded himself?
 - Perhaps Paul worried his preaching couldn't withstand the close scrutiny of learned Jewish believers, rather than the usual ignorant Gentile converts?
 - Perhaps Paul was ashamed to preach the Gospel in Rome fearing the Roman authorities
- To make matters worse, Paul needed the church's help
 - Paul planned to travel to Spain after visiting Rome
 - And he knew he would need additional funds to make the trip
 - So Paul intended to ask the Roman church for financial help
 - A church that felt slighted by Paul
- So now, as Paul sets out to write to the Roman church, he knows he must repair the relationship on his terms while finding a way to make a financial appeal
 - But how do you identify with an audience you don't know and that you have never visited?
 - Paul couldn't speak in especially personal terms to this church as he typically does in his other letters
 - How do you mollify them for your perceived insult while also persuading them to contribute to your ministry?
 - Naturally, you write the single greatest theological explanation of righteousness ever penned

- You appease the Jewish intellectuals leading this church by giving them your religious masterwork, a letter unrivaled by anything else in scripture
- You honor this important church body residing at the center of the Empire by gifting them with the most influential evangelistic tool in the New Testament canon
- In short, you bestow upon the Roman church your best work
- So that at the end of that letter, you can ask them for money :-)
- In fact, Paul is more deferential to his audience in this letter than in any other he writes
 - Notice in v.5 Paul speaks of the church leaders in Rome as fellow evangelists and church planters
 - He says “we” have received apostleship
 - The Greek word for apostleship is different than the word Paul uses to describe himself in v.1
 - The word Paul uses in v.1 is *apostolos* which is a noun describing a person sent on a mission with a message
 - But in v.5 Paul uses the word *apostole* which is a noun describing the mission of going out
 - So Paul says he is an apostle, but yet the Jewish leadership in Rome – and all Christians – share a common mission of going out with the Gospel
 - These Jewish leaders have been living that calling in Rome, bringing Gentiles to the faith, as Paul says at the end of v.5
 - Just as they themselves also are the called of Jesus Christ
 - So Paul recognizes their significant work to build another bridge with this community
- Then Paul concludes his opening sentence by naming his readers in v.7 as all the saints in Rome
 - Obviously, we know what Paul means by “saints”
 - This term is the Bible’s label for anyone who is born again by faith in Christ Jesus

- But the meaning behind the word is important to understand
- The word in Greek is *hagios*, which literally means sanctuary
 - Therefore, all believers are called saints because by our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit has made our body His sanctuary
 - So that collectively, we have become Christ's sanctuary on earth
 - We are the temple of God, as Paul says in 1 Cor. – His sanctuary
- Some religions have redefined the term "saint" to mean a person who merits entrance into heaven by obtaining an exceptional degree of personal holiness
 - That's an ironic definition, one that reminds us why Paul needed to write Romans in the first place
 - The question of who enters Heaven is at the heart of Paul's purpose in writing this letter
 - And it's at the heart of the Gospel itself
- The Bible calls us saints because God has taken up residence inside us to bring us to heaven by His work of righteousness
 - Yet the false definition of saint makes the opposite claim, that we enter heaven on our own merits
 - This one example, of the confusion over the word "saint" by itself, explains why we need to understand the book of Romans
- And with that, Paul follows with a customary benediction of grace and peace from God the Father and the Son
 - Paul's introduction is theological truth, but it's also an artful effort to draw his readers to Paul's side
 - And he continues the charm offensive in v.8

Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

Rom. 1:9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

Rom. 1:10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

[Rom. 1:11](#) For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

[Rom. 1:12](#) that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

[Rom. 1:13](#) I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

[Rom. 1:14](#) I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

[Rom. 1:15](#) So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

- Paul says this church's faith is proclaimed or announced throughout the whole world
 - We don't know what it was about the Roman's faith that inspired such talk, but we can assume some obvious things
 - They must have been fervent in their evangelism
 - They must have been devoted in their service to needs of the body
 - And they must have been resolute in the face of persecution
 - For all these reasons and perhaps others, Paul says he never failed to make mention of them
 - It would be easy to think Paul's statement was merely hyperbole or flattery
 - But read it as prophecy, because it's absolutely true
 - As a result of Paul's letter to Rome, the faith of this church has been proclaimed throughout the entire world over and over
 - Every time this letter is read, their faith is proclaimed once more
 - Also take note of Paul's extended commentary about his desire to visit them in Rome
 - He said he longed to see them and impart a spiritual gift
 - He doesn't mean he brought a gift of the Spirit
 - He clarifies the nature of this "gift" in v.12

- He was saying he would gift them with his teaching and leadership to edify and establish (or strengthen) the church
 - In a sense, he was saying he would bring them the gift of himself
 - Paul's statement doesn't reflect a lack of humility on his part
 - He's speaking truthfully, because that was the impact Paul made on every church
 - After all, that's precisely why the church was so desiring of his visit
- But then it's back to the elephant in the room...why hasn't Paul visited Rome yet?
 - In v.13 he says I don't want you to be unaware (or "you should know") that I wanted to bear spiritual fruit with you even as I have with Gentiles
 - It's not Paul's fault...he says he's been prevented from coming to them
 - Who prevent Paul from coming? Obviously, he's implicating the Lord
 - In v.14 Paul explains he was under obligation to Greeks and barbarians instead, to both Greeks and non-Greek Gentiles, that is to both the wise and foolish
 - That even though Paul desired to teach the church in Rome, the Lord had called Paul to reach the Gentile world instead
 - Which meant that a prosperous, Jewish-led church in far-away Rome was not a top priority for his ministry
 - We can clearly see Paul's charm offensive here
 - Paul knew they were offended that he spent so much time with uneducated barbarians, instead of paying tribute to faithful Rome
 - So Paul acknowledges their concerns but then excuses his absence by saying don't blame me
 - God wouldn't let me come to you
 - There are times we may blame God, and this is one example

- When God prevents us from giving people what they desire because the Lord has a better plan
- You can blame God, so to speak, but just make sure you defend His decision
- And it's revealing to see that even Paul experienced times when his personal desires for ministry conflicted with the Lord's desire
 - Even the great Paul experienced frustration
 - Even his discernment, as great as it was, still fell short at times
 - He wanted to go to Rome, but the Lord stopped him
- That should encourage all of us through our personal struggles in obeying the Lord vs. pleasing others
 - We may want to please everyone, but anyone can want for the wrong things
 - Therefore, the Lord knows we all need help to follow Him and He guides us all
- I mentioned earlier that it's likely some were even wondering if Paul was ashamed to bring the gospel to Rome
 - Which explains Paul's next comment, which serves as his transition into the theology of his letter

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- Paul states plainly he wasn't ashamed of the gospel
 - How could Paul be ashamed of a message that contains the power of God to save everyone who believes?
 - Moreover, why would Paul be ashamed to share this message with these Jewish leaders, since the message was to be delivered to everyone
 - First to the Jews but then to the Gentiles as well
 - Here, "First" is meant in all respects, because the Lord determined that the Jewish people would be at the center of His plan to save mankind

- As Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, “salvation is of the Jews”
- The Jews were the first to receive God’s promises of salvation in the covenants
 - They heard of it first through their prophets
 - They had the honor to birth the Jewish Messiah into the line of David
 - They were the first to witness the preaching and miracles of the Messiah in the Galilee
 - And they also rejected Him first before His crucifixion
- Later, Jewish apostles were the first to deliver the Gospel to their countrymen
 - They established the Church in Jerusalem at Pentecost
 - Eventually, Paul and others brought the message of salvation to the Gentiles as the Lord promised Abraham that He would
- Paul calls his message of salvation the “gospel”
 - As most Sunday school children could probably tell you, the word itself means good news
 - Paul’s message was the good news of how a person may be saved
 - It is the message for how we may enter Heaven, how we may live forever and conquer death, how we may escape sin
 - In that sense, calling the salvation message “good news” is probably the greatest understatement in human history
 - God’s message of salvation is not just good news...it’s great news!
 - Never has there been any greater news than how a person may be saved!
 - But thanks to the enemy’s lies, the word “gospel” is losing its meaning in and around (many of the) churches today

- Today we have many messages competing for the title of the “gospel”
- False religions pretending to be Christianity claim that the gospel says we must earn our entrance into heaven (what’s good about that news?)
- False teachers claim the gospel is a message offering the promise of earthly riches and freedom from earthly worries
- Still others claim the gospel is a message of physical healing
- Here again, this is why it’s so important that we study Romans today
 - Because believers must know precisely what our gospel message says, and what it does not say
 - The gospel is a message of how we may enter into Heaven and it is good news because it doesn’t depend upon us
 - It says how we may be freed from the sin that rages in our bodies and in our world
 - Of how we can face death in hope that we will live again
 - Of how we may have peace with God
- So over the next 15 chapters or so, Paul will explain this message of good news in all its fullness
 - Beginning in v.17 with a concise definition of the Gospel, which serves as his thesis for the entire letter

Rom. 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “but the righteous man shall live by faith.”

- There are three key parts to his thesis statement, each of which Paul will examine in greater detail in later chapters
 - First, the message of the gospel is a message of righteousness
 - The word righteousness means innocent, just, being right
 - Righteousness is the opposite of sinfulness and wrongdoing
- Obtaining righteousness is the central dilemma for all humanity
 - How can human beings be right in all respects?

- How can we forever and entirely remove that part of us that leads us to think, say and do what is unrighteous?
- Every person instinctively recognizes his or her own unrighteousness and longs for what is right, both in ourselves and in the world
- But who determines what is “right?”
- This leads to the second part of Paul’s thesis: the righteousness of the gospel is that “of God”
 - The righteousness we need to seek is the righteousness of God
 - As the Creator and Law Giver and Judge, God alone determines what is right
 - He sets the gold standard, the only standard for what’s required to enter Heaven
 - So we could say, that which is of God is righteous and that which is not of God is (by definition) unrighteous
- So our pursuit of righteousness must begin with understanding God and His righteousness
 - From that point we may then ask the question, “How do I equal the standard of God?”
 - How do I become as righteous as God?
- This leads to the third part of his thesis: we obtain the righteousness of God through a revelation
 - The word “revealed” in Greek here is in the third person middle tense
 - This form indicates that the subject is acting in its own interest or on its own behalf
 - So Paul is saying the righteousness of God reveals itself to us in the message of the Gospel
 - We don't discover righteousness, we don't search for a message of righteousness and find it
 - The righteousness of God finds us in a message that reveals itself to us by faith

- Paul says it does so “from faith to faith”
 - Our faith in the message, is the manifestation of God’s righteousness in us
 - And that righteousness is manifested from faith to faith
 - The righteousness of God is being revealed from one believer to the next
- Paul has much more to say about this process in coming chapters, so we will leave it for then
 - Moving on, Paul adds that this process is nothing new
 - The Lord announced it in the Old Testament scriptures
- Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4

**Hab. 2:4 “Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.**

- The prophet says the one who takes pride in himself does not possess a right heart
- A person may think himself a good person or worthy of heaven, but if he does, he is self-deceived
- For a righteous man lives by his faith
 - To live means two things here
 - First, to live means to go through life depending on faith alone for salvation
 - Secondly, to live means to receive eternal life as a result of faith
 - So a righteousness man lives in hope having placed his faith in God and by that faith he lives eternally
- Having laid down his thesis, we should expect Paul would now dive into a discussion of these points
 - And he will...but not yet

- This is where understanding the structure of the book becomes valuable
- Notice that the second block in my diagram (i.e., Paul's thesis) is followed by a third block of arguments on a different point
- Before Paul elaborates on the means to righteousness, he will first address the common misconceptions men hold for how to be righteous
 - Before Paul will explain how we become righteous, he explains how we do NOT become righteous
 - This section runs until chapter 3:20 and includes four major divisions
 - These divisions correspond to the four major world views for how a person becomes righteous (or goes to heaven)
- Paul refutes all four fallacies in turn
 - The first is paganism
 - The second is moralism
 - The third is nomianism
 - And the fourth is Judaism
- Only after refuting these false views does Paul return to describing the correct way to righteousness
 - In fact, if you glance ahead to Romans 3:21-22 you can see how Paul picks up again in his discussion there
 - So his teaching between 1:17 and 3:21 is on a different topic
- As we study these false views, you'll see they all share one common misconception
 - They all hold a false understanding of the standard to enter Heaven... that is, of how righteous we must be to enter Heaven
 - Sinful humanity has always assumed that the standard for heaven is within their reach
 - Though we may not believe we are good enough as yet, we do believe we can get there

- That self-deception begins with a wrong definition of the word righteous (or we could say good)
- For example, are you a good person?
 - Before you answer, consider how Jesus defines the term good in Luke 18

Luke 18:18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

- A man of power and wealth asked Jesus the age-old, eternal question: what must I do to inherit eternal life?
 - His question brings certain assumptions and it includes a contradiction of sorts
 - First, he asks what must I do, as in what works must I perform?
 - He is assuming the solution centers on his works, and that it lies within his ability to obtain
 - We know that is his thinking, because no one asks for directions to a place they can’t possibly reach
 - For example, no one asks how can I fly to Jupiter?
 - Yet we can no more find our own way into Heaven than we can fly ourselves to Jupiter
 - So it’s the height of presumption that a man should ask such a question of God
 - Tell me what I must do to enter Heaven and I will do it
 - But even then, the man contradicts himself, because he says what must I do to “inherit” eternal life
 - An inheritance is – by definition – something assigned to us by another
 - An inheritance doesn’t depend on our work, because no one earns an inheritance

- So the man acknowledges that God alone has the authority to grant someone entry into heaven
 - So essentially, this man is asking how, by his actions, can he influence God such that would grant him the favor of eternal life
 - That's how men of great power and wealth think about most things
 - They assume their influence can be cause for others to do their bidding...even God
- To this, Jesus asks the man, why do you call me "good?"
 - Jesus focuses in on the key misconception driving the man's wrong thinking about heaven and righteousness
 - The man has a warped, self-serving sense of what "good" is
 - Mankind generally acknowledges that God is perfect and mankind is imperfect
 - But nevertheless, we also imagine ourselves good enough to warrant heaven even in our imperfect state
 - That assumption lies at the heart of this man's question...I think I'm close, but how much better do I need to be to enter Heaven?
 - He has the wrong standard, and Jesus illustrates this by asking why the man called Jesus good?
 - We know the man probably meant it as an idle compliment, a greeting intended to gain Jesus' attention and flatter Him a little
 - But his too-casual use of the word exposes his lack of thought concerning its meaning
 - Jesus says no one is good but God alone
 - Goodness is not measured on a scale from 1–100
 - Either a person is as good as God or they are not good at all
 - To be less good than God is to be 100% bad, Jesus says
 - So the standard to enter Heaven is to equal God's goodness...close doesn't count

- The world's false view of righteousness operates on the assumption that righteousness is found on a sliding scale...close is good enough
- We imagine this to be the standard because otherwise heaven would be out of reach
- So everyone assumes a standard for goodness that is within their reach and therefore not good at all
- Paul alludes to this common misconception as he introduces the next section on paganism

Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Rom. 1:19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

- Far from being righteous (or even close to righteousness), Paul says the world is filled with ungodliness and unrighteousness
 - Men and women are both ungodly and unrighteous
 - To be ungodly means to be unlike God in every way
 - We are not just a little unlike Him, so that we have only a small gap to cross to enter Heaven, as the ruler supposed
 - In reality, we are entirely unlike Him by our nature
 - Moreover, we are unrighteous
 - We are not merely short a little righteousness
 - But as Jesus said, no one is good but God alone
 - We are 100% bad
 - And yet despite the world's ungodliness and unrighteousness, it thinks itself unworthy of God's judgment, His wrath
 - In order to arrive at these views, the world suppressed the truth, Paul says, which is further unrighteousness

- The world suppresses the truth by perpetuating a lie that we are all good enough and that God does not care about our sin
- Or even that there is no God at all, or that our lives lead to nowhere in the end
- But Paul says the wrath of God will be revealed upon these people
 - God's wrath is coming for the world, though it hasn't been revealed yet
 - Individually, it is revealed at a person's death, when they are brought to their end in judgment
 - And in a time to come, the wrath of God will be revealed upon the earth itself in fire, Peter says
- God will hold the world accountable for its ungodliness for He can do nothing less, being truly just
 - And yet God will not have been unfair in this judgment because He did not leave them unaware of Himself
 - Paul says in v.19 that which is known about God is evident within them
 - It's important to understand what Paul IS saying here and what he is NOT saying
 - First, Paul is saying that God has placed inside every person both the capacity and the opportunity to know of God
 - The Greek word for evident means something that is plainly seen
 - We sometimes say self-evident
 - For example, I could say that the existence of the sun and moon is plainly evident or self-evident
 - No one needs to be taught of their existence, since they are plainly seen by all (except perhaps a blind person)
 - Similarly, the existence of the God of Creation is plain to all humanity, because His existence is self-evident to our conscience
 - We know instinctively that He exists because He has placed that knowledge in us

- Solomon says it this way:

Ecc. 3:11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

- Solomon says God has set eternity in the human heart
- No man upon his death will truly be surprised to learn that God exists, not even those who claim no belief in God while they live
- Since they suppressed this truth planted in their heart, God will justly reveal His wrath against their ungodliness
- On the other hand, Paul is NOT suggesting that this instinctive knowledge of God is sufficient to bring us to a saving faith in Jesus Christ
 - The phrase “that which is known” at the beginning of v.19 uses a verbal form of the word knowledge
 - So Paul is saying the knowable things of God are evident
 - Not everything about God or Christ or the Gospel has been placed in our hearts
 - No one is saved merely by the knowledge of God planted in our hearts
 - Yet what is knowable of God is enough to convict us for ignoring Him
 - It leave us without excuse, Paul says in v.20
 - So men suppress the truth of God inside themselves
- Moreover, Paul says they also suppress the truth of God evident in Creation by perpetuating the lie that the Creation is God
 - This is the oldest lie in the book, literally
 - It’s the lie Satan authored...that the creation can replace the Creator
 - Whether it’s something they see in the cosmos or in nature or even an angel or man, the pagan’s lie is that the created thing is God
 - You can understand a lot about God by examining what has been made

- You can see the immensity of the Creation and recognize that the Creator must be a God of unimaginable power
- And anything that powerful should be feared if we don't please Him
- We can observe the perfect order of Creation, from the balance of nature, the orbit of planets, the mathematics of natural forces
- In seeing these things, we understand God is a God of order, not chaos
- And any God of order can be known and understood
- Furthermore, we can see in the Creation a world specially designed for the needs of man
 - From the atmosphere, the food supply, the cycles of nature, the dominion man has over all creatures
 - Clearly God has provided good things for us, which suggest the Creator has taken a personal interest in mankind's needs
 - And so we can know He is a God of mercy and love
- We can also see the world is wearing out and that men die
 - So as beautiful as this Creation may be, it's not perfect
 - It leaves us wanting for a solution to death, destruction and sin
 - And though we may not know the solution, we know that a caring, loving God must have a way prepared for us
 - So we may seek for that answer in confidence and hope
 - Finally, we can fairly assume that a God of such power and mercy will also hold us accountable should we rebel
- These are the invisible attributes of God, yet they are clearly visible to us in the plan of Creation
 - We see his eternal power and divine nature in these things, and so we cannot live as if there is no God over His Creation
 - All mankind has the ability to know these things about God, Paul says, so all will be without excuse

- But once again, mankind cannot arrive at the Gospel merely from observing Creation
- The Creation is a testimony to God's nature and power, but more revelation is still required to know the Gospel
- Nevertheless, they can be judged simply on the basis of the testimony of Creation

- Psalms explains it this way:

[Psa. 19:1](#) The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

[Psa. 19:2](#) Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

[Psa. 19:3](#) There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.

[Psa. 19:4](#) Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

[Psa. 19:5](#) Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.

- The heavens testify to God's glory
 - To His existence, power and nature
 - If you have marveled at the genius of an artist or musician or scientist because of what they created
 - Then how can you not marvel at God's attributes when you witness Creation?
 - Just as we can see a work of art like the statue of David or the Sistine Chapel and recognize the unique genius of Michelangelo
 - Then even more, we should look at the Creation and understand it what it says about God
- Moreover, it should lead us away from assuming too much about our own power or the power of the created world
 - After all, how significant do you feel when you witness the vastness of the stars and galaxies?

- How wise do you think you are while you're struggling to understand the intricacy of atoms and DNA and cells and the other building blocks of creation?
- How self-made do you feel when you see the perfection of the design of the human body?