

# “THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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## ROMANS 1

Paul wanted to visit Rome. He realized the city's strategic importance. And he'd heard *glowing reports* of a *growing church* at the heart of the empire. Paul was spending the spring of 58 AD in the Greek town of Corinth. One day he heard that a friend from the neighboring village of Cenchrea was headed for Rome. He asked *Phoebe* to deliver a letter for him... At the time Paul was in route to Jerusalem. He'd been warned of danger awaiting him, possibly death. As far as he knew, this letter to the Romans might be his last opportunity to *expound* on the truths God had given him.

It was the skeptic, Renan, who commented, "When Phoebe sailed from the port of Corinth she carried beneath the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology." And how right he was! What Paul thought was his *final* opportunity became his *finest* effort. Romans was his theological masterpiece. Almost every Bible doctrine finds its *best defense* and *fullest explanation* in the letter to the Romans. This one book has single-handedly sparked revivals, and altered history, and transformed billions of lives throughout the ages. The great preacher, John Chrysostom, thought so highly of this letter he read it once a week for 18 years. Donald Barnhouse said the Bible of any believer should be so worn that it automatically opens to the book of Romans. For the next few weeks we'll be gleaning from this field of plenty.

The book begins, "Paul..." The ancients began their letters the way we end them with a signature. Since letters were written on scrolls they put the signature first, so you didn't have to unroll the scroll to identify its author. "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ..." Paul could've introduced himself as "Paul, eminent theologian, receiver of revelation, warrior of the faith, missionary to the world, founder of many churches..." Instead he opts for "bondservant" or "love slave." It refers to a practice found in Exodus 21... In ancient Israel if you couldn't pay your debts you didn't file for bankruptcy, you became a slave and worked off your debts. Some slaves fared better in the house of a benevolent master than they did on their own. In such cases, when the debt was paid, it was not uncommon for the slave to choose to remain with his former creditor. The owner would press his servant's ear against the doorpost, and drive an awl through his earlobe. His pierced ear was a symbol of the servant's voluntary love for his master.

You and I have a similar relationship with Jesus. He's forgiven us our debt. We owe him our A(W)L! We're slaves to the Master's will, yet once we spend time in His house we realize how gracious and generous He is to His slaves. Life with Jesus is far better than what we can achieve on our own. We may start out serving the Lord out of *obligation*, but ultimately we come to serve Him out of *appreciation*. Like Paul we become a love-slave of Jesus! Paul was also "called to be an apostle..." "Apostle" is from a word which means "to be sent out." Paul was not a self-appointed prophet. He was called and commissioned by God Himself. You can tell if a pastor was *sent*, or did he just *went*... Paul was sent by God.

Paul was also "separated to the gospel of God, which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Paul was devoted to one message - the gospel - and the Gospel of God is all about His Son, Jesus. Notice the three truths Paul mentions about Jesus... He is *revealed* in the OT Scriptures... He *reigns* according to the lineage of King David... And He's been *resurrected* by the power of the Holy Spirit... The case for Jesus as Messiah is airtight. He claimed to be the Lord of the universe and Savior of the world through *prophecy*, *pedigree*, and *power*.

And verse 5, "Through Him we have received grace..." Here's the theme of Romans – "we have received grace!" Grace is love we don't deserve and can never earn. It's God's love - love that's on the house!

Remember, Paul started out a Jewish rabbi. He lived under the Law, and felt pressure to perform. He tried to keep rules and chalk up points with God. What a relief to discover God's grace. When He embraced Jesus He was loved despite *what he did* - or *who he was* - or *what he didn't do*. God didn't ask Paul to *try* just *trust!* Salvation was not a *do* but a *done!* God called Paul not to *responsibility* - He was simply saying, *respond to Me!*

Once, a young man fell in love with a wicked woman. His mother disliked her and tried to break up the relationship. The man ignored his mom and moved in with the woman. One night the vengeful woman got the young man drunk. She told him the only way he could prove his love for her was to kill his mom, cut out her heart, and bring it back as a trophy. *I told you she was evil!* The young man staggered through streets to his mother's house. He went in with a butcher knife, stabbed his own mom, and carved out her heart. But as he walked back with the prize in hand, he stumbled. He fell. He dropped his mother's heart onto the ground. As the legend goes, when he reached down to pick up the bleeding heart it spoke, *"My son, are you hurt?"*

And this is exactly how cruel we've been to Jesus. We drove nails into His hands and feet, and broke His heart - yet He asks each of us, *"are you hurt?"* This is God's grace... It's the Father kissing His Prodigal Son... It's Jesus telling the adulteress, *"Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more..."* It's His prayer from the cross, *"Father forgive them, they know not what they do."* Grace changed everything for Paul. It turned labor into love – chores into cheers – burdens into blessings. *Don't be surprised if this book changes you!*

Verse 5, *"Through Him (Christ) we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ..."* Notice, God's grace is for *"all nations."* The Gospel of Jesus is impartial. *It's grace for every race!*

Now Paul addresses his readers, *"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints..."* Throughout the history of the church saints have been thought of as special Christians. Saints are the All Stars – the Hall of Famers. But not so. The word means *"set apart."* You either belong to Jesus or you don't. You're His or you're not. You're either a *saint* or you're an *ain't*.

And Paul greets the saints, *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* Here're *the bookends of faith* - *"grace and peace."* The *origination* and *destination*... We start with grace and end with peace. And he speaks of the Romans, verse 8, *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."* The Church in Rome had quite a reputation in the ancient world. *"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, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."* The church at Rome was spoken of around the world, *but here's one of the reasons* - Paul spoke of it often, before the throne of God. Though he'd never visited the church, he prayed for them diligently.

According to Acts 2:10, present in Jerusalem at Pentecost were a group of Jews from Rome. Perhaps they were converted by Peter's sermon, and filled with the Holy Spirit. They may've returned to Rome to start a church. And over the years this church became famous - not for its architecture, or its pastor, or its size, or its organization. Notice, it was renown for its faith! If our church ever becomes famous I hope its because of our *faith!*

Paul prayed for the church in Rome. He wanted to visit. *And he tells us why...* verse 11, *"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established - that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."* Usually folks flocked to Rome for amusement. It was home to the Forum, and Coliseum. NASCAR fans could catch a chariot race at Circus Maximus. But in the belly of this vast city, beneath the glitz and glamor, were a small group of people - precious and important to God. Paul desired to visit Rome so he could build up these believers. He wanted to both give and to receive. This is what church is all about. *Church is like a blood bank.* Some days you come to make a donation. On other days you need a transfusion.

Verse 13, *"Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise."* Paul wanted to get to Rome, but he'd been busy elsewhere. Paul sensed a responsibility to all men. Paul owed God for His grace, but his debt was made payable to his fellow man. This is how we say thanks to Jesus, by loving the folks He died to save. *Paul had tasted God's grace, and here's how he responds...* *"So, as much as*

is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.”

History has well documented that long before the Goths and Vandals rode their horses into Rome the city had collapsed internally. Rome was rich and privileged. Her wealth made her fat and lazy. Rome was a spoiled brat. She was constantly lusting for new ways to be pampered and entertained. The Romans became lawless out of sheer boredom. Tacitus wrote of the city's prevailing attitude, "the greater the infamy, the wilder the delight." Roman civilization fell victim to moral collapse. Here's what happened... Rome lost respect for human life. Babies seen as an inconvenience were left at the Coliseum and sold as slaves... Marital fidelity was an unheard of virtue. The debutants of Rome dated years by the names of their husbands... Fourteen of the first fifteen emperors became so bored with a natural appetite for women they sought perverse pleasure in homosexual acts. Imagine... the wife of Cesar Claudius, the Empress Agrippina, would leave her palace at night and work the brothels for the sake of sheer lust. You've heard of *skid row* – well, welcome to *skid Rome*. Rome was a raunchy, and rowdy place, yet Paul wasn't intimidated.

Paul was ready to preach in Rome. He was proud of the Gospel and confident in its power. Paul says in verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Understand, the Gospel is the greatest change agent known to man. The truth that Jesus *died to forgive our sin* and *rose to live in our hearts* has the ability to transform hearts, and history, and culture, and the future. When churches stray from the Gospel they do a disservice to both God and mankind. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God to salvation. William Gladstone once said, "Talk about the questions of the day - there is but one question, and that is the Gospel. It can and will correct everything needing correction." We need to trust in its power and share the Gospel with our friends. Are you proud enough to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Beginning in chapter 3, Paul is going to explain the Gospel, but first his strategy is to convince us of our need for it. It's been said, "Before the Good News can be received, the bad news has to be believed." A person doesn't sense his need for a Savior, until he first admits that he's a sinner. In the last half of chapter 1 Paul dissects the downward spiral of Roman culture. He discusses their three stages of moral and spiritual disintegration... In verse 18-21 he shows how the world **suppresses** the truth... In verses 22-27 how it **confuses** the truth... In verses 28-32 how it **transgresses** or violates the truth. If you taking notes - **suppresses, confuses, transgresses**.

He begins, verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness..." Verse 17 told us the Gospel reveals *the righteousness of God*. In verse 18 heaven reveals *the wrath of God*. Reject or ignore God's righteousness and you're subject to His wrath. Once a country church sat next door to a parcel of farm land owned by an avid atheist - a mean, godless man. Every Sunday morning he would rev up his tractor to try and drown out the pastor's message. When harvest came his fields yielded a bumper crop. And he considered it proof that God didn't exist. The atheist wrote a haughty, hateful letter boasting in his bountiful harvest. But I love how he pastor responded. He wrote back a single sentence, "Dear Sir, God does not settle all His accounts in the month of October!" It may be now or it may be later but a Christ-rejecting world will eventually taste the awesome, faithful, eternal, and terrible wrath of Almighty God.

Paul says God's wrath is "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.." If *grace and peace* are the bookends of faith – "*ungodliness and unrighteousness*" are those of rebellion. "*Ungodliness*" is a rejection of God. "*Unrighteousness*" is a rejection of His standards. A man first *denies* God, then he *defies* God's commandments. Fifty years ago Bible reading and prayer were a regular part of our public school curriculum – and at the time, the top disciplinary problems educators faced were chewing gum, and talking out of turn, and being late for class. Today, we've eliminated God from the classroom. We've excluded Him from the subject matter – outlawed prayer – and made it illegal for teachers to read or consult the Bible... And now in our schools we have metal detectors that screen for guns and knives - and police dogs who sniff out drugs - and girls who won't go to the restroom by themselves for fear of being raped. I realize our problems are more complex than just an absence of Bible reading, but our public schools are a microcosm of the truth - *ungodliness produces unrighteousness*. When people stop believing in God there's no higher authority to govern their behavior. Right and wrong are up for grabs. *Modern society* like *ancient Rome* has suppressed the truth of God and in doing so they have opened wide the floodgates of unrighteousness!

Verse 19, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...” When we think of how God has revealed Himself we usually think of the Bible, but even without the Bible there’s much we know about God. The knowledge of God is revealed to all men in at least two ways... First, there is a knowledge *in them, in their hearts*. And second, God reveals Himself *to them, in the heavens*. *Look inward* and you’ll find evidence for God... *Look upward* and you also see proof of His eternal power...

Just as animals have migratory instincts, men and women were also made with an intuitive knowledge of God. The Creator has implanted in each of us a homing device. It never shuts off until we find our way back to God. Ecclesiastes 3:9 expresses it well - God “has put eternity in their hearts...” A childhood disease left Helen Keller a very young girl without sight, hearing, and speech. Through the tireless work of her teacher, Anne Sullivan, Helen learned brail and eventually how to talk. When Anne tried to tell Helen about God the girl told her she already knew about Him. She just didn't know His name! There’s an innate knowledge of God *in* each and every one of us.

*Look inward* and you’ll find evidence for God, but also *look upward* to the sky and there too you’ll behold the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 puts it, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.” It’s been said, “Nature was the first missionary.” During the French Revolution, one the revolutionary leaders bragged to a believing peasant, “We are going to pull down all that reminds you of God.” The faithful Christian replied, “Then pull down the stars!”

Just think, you're sitting on ball 25,000 miles in circumference. It weighs 6 septillion, 588 sextillion tons - and hangs unsupported in space. Planet Earth spins at 1000 miles per hour, while careening through space at a 1000 miles per minute - *yet your Bible doesn't even fall off your lap*. I'm sorry, but I don't have enough faith to believe that happens by chance. A world of order necessitates an orderly God. Design requires a designer.

To the non biased observer God is an obvious reality, yet despite the enormous weight of the evidence many people “*suppress the truth*.” They resist it. Try to keep it under raps. Excuse it away, or write it off, or ignore it. Yet, Paul says the evidence is so overwhelming mankind is without excuse. *It's not that we can't believe in God, but it's that we won't believe*. If a person concedes God exists, he’s no longer captain of his own ship. *Admit there's a God and you're accountable to that God*. This is why sinful man suppresses the obvious. Its scandalous for a society which prides itself on tolerance to be tolerant of every ideology except biblical Christianity?

Several years ago the School Board in Pullin County, Illinois prohibited a school from having a traditional Christmas nativity in the yard of their campus. The principal of the school was furious. He wrote the following on the school's message board, “The Board of Education is jealous of our nativity scene, for on our School Board they cannot find three wise men or a virgin!” I believe even the most ungodly, ardent atheist knows deep down inside the truth about God, yet he hardens his heart, and “*suppresses the truth!*”

Verse 21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful...” Here's a warning, it's possible to know God – even receive His blessings - yet fail to acknowledge the Giver of those blessings. When your life goes well, do you take the credit? Or chalk it up to chance? Some people talk as if God is a non-issue. They take God for granted.

“Nor were (they) thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” The world in Paul's day worshipped idols. They turned *birds, beasts, and bumblebees* into gods. People today still worship birds and beasts and bees - on the weekends they live for the *Falcons, Bulldogs, and Yellow Jackets*. You can turn anything into an idol – even a bird, a beast, or a bee... Idolatry is giving a greater glory to the creature than to the Creator. It's placing a matter of secondary importance into a primary position in your life.

Paul says people became “*futile in their thoughts...*” He says, “*professing to be wise, they became fools...*” Smart people stopped thinking rationally. This is what happens when people suppress the knowledge of God. Once a man *rejects the most important thing*, God - he tends to *fall for anything*. It never

ceases to amaze me, how brilliant people will refuse to believe in God, yet read their horoscope religiously, or visit a palm reader. College professors who'd never pick up a Bible, and dismiss outright that God became a man, seriously believe we've been visited by aliens from another planet.

Evolution is another example of *"professing to be wise, they became fools."* Despite the absence of missing links - despite the near zero probability of life forming by chance - despite criticisms from their own camp - despite not a single shred of hard scientific evidence to support their theories - they still believe in the evolution of life. The strength of a prejudice is amazing. Famed philosopher Malcolm Muggeridge once said, *"I'm convinced the theory of evolution... will be one of the greatest jokes in the history books of the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible gullibility that it has."* Remember, once I concede there's a God, I'm accountable to Him. And modern man doesn't want to be accountable to anyone, but himself. Darkness has taken over.

Verse 24, *"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves..."* Having worshipped animals they began to live like animals. Over time a person grows to resemble whatever it is that he or she worships. After teaching our kids that they've ascended from apes, why are we surprised when they *monkey around...* Teach a child that he's nothing but an *animal* and he'll be a *party animal...* Why expect a kid to develop spiritual appetites and moral standards if all he consists of are *glands and hands*. In today's morally relativistic world we haven't given people a reason why one human whim is any more right or wrong than another. People today are driven by their lusts. They dishonor their bodies. They've lost any concept of the sanctity of human sexuality. They've been given over to uncleanness.

*"Who (also) exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."* They *"exchanged the truth of God for the lie..."* Imagine a society that calls right wrong, and wrong right... Homosexuality is no longer a dysfunction - a sin - it's now a legitimate preference... Abortion isn't murder, it's a woman's right to choose... The biblical family of one father and one mother is no longer the optimum environment for raising kids - now any configuration will do... When pleasing and honoring the creature becomes more important than pleasing the Creator; then truly the patients have taken over the asylum. Here's what's happened today... to avoid God's authority we've suppressed His truth. And to convince ourselves we're right we've normalized the pathological and the deviant. We've created our own rules and ethics.

Here's how topsy-turvy the world has become... Millions of tax dollars are spent to save a few beached whales, while we condone the murder of innocent babies... Here in Georgia we threaten the water supply of millions of people to save a few snails in a Florida riverbed... In today's world, *animal rights* overshadow *human rights*. Man has lost his uniqueness. Humans are no longer viewed as the image of God - but just another animal. Rather than take dominion over nature as God commanded we've become it's slave. People and governments are more concerned about damaging the environment than bettering life for mankind. Several years ago, I read where a doctor was anesthetizing cats, then shooting them with a BB-gun to find ways to help humans traumatized by gunshot wounds. His research was helping soldiers injured in the Gulf War. Yet his experiments were shut down by animal rights activists who thought Snowball and Fluffy were more important than Smith and Franklin. The truth is, man is not an animal. It's a confused society that puts *animal life* on a par with *human life*. Man is an eternal soul made in God's image.

But in verse 26 it gets worse... *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions."* In his commentary on Romans, Donald Barnhouse writes, *"The last nine verses in the first chapter of Romans are the most terrible in the Bible... The scene is frightful."* Three times in three verses (verses 24, 26, and 28) Paul tells us *"God gave them up!"* or *"God gave them over!"* In other words, God abandoned those who abandoned Him! When a red indicator light on my dashboard starts to flash I know there's a serious problem with my car. Likewise there're cultural indicators that signal when a society is breaking down and falling apart. They're a serious warning. In the remainder of chapter 1, Paul gives us 23 indicators of a society on the verge of collapse - but the primary, clear-cut manifestation that a people have been abandoned by God is the cultural acceptance and legitimization of homosexuality. Listen to what Paul says to us in the next two verses...

*"For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature."* When it comes to sexual deviance women are usually less prone than men. But in Rome even the women behaved in unnatural ways. *"Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."*

“And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting...” The word “*debased*” means “*rejected or castaway*.” As far as God was concerned they were ejected from the ballgame. They were on their own. Here’s the ultimate destiny for those who suppress God’s truth - God stops convicting and wooing them back to Himself. He gives them up to their lies - turns them over to their own deceptions. Their evil becomes set in stone. A debased mind participates in deviant behavior without the slightest tinge of guilt. It demand acceptance. It grows militant in its quest for legitimacy.

And this describes today’s homosexual agenda. They’re not content to practice their perversion privately, they want it normalized. They want to socialize children to see homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle. They want to be a privileged group with special legal protections. They want to force acceptance of their lifestyle on the rest of us. They’ve justified their rejection of God’s order, and God has given them up. Understand, in Romans 1 Paul tells us four truths about homosexuality – it’s **not natural**, it’s **not normal**, it’s **not noble**, and it’s **not neutral**.

First, it’s **not natural**. Both women and men left the natural use of the opposite sex to lust after those of the same sex. A quick check of human anatomy will show that same sex relationships are *anatomically aberrant*. A quick peek at male and female genitalia and you’ll notice a natural fit. The Bible teaches that God created gender. The sexes matter to God. Men are for women and women for men - sexual expression is dictated by God. The research often sited to support the theory that people are born homosexual is flawed and extremely dubious. *But for the sake of argument*, what if it were proven that some people do have a gay gene? Does that mean we should condone and legitimize the behavior? If a person is biologically predisposed to alcoholism, or depression - shouldn't we still try to treat the disorder? If a person is prone to violence should we legitimize all violence? Dr. Robert Kronmeyer writes, “*With rare exceptions, homosexuality is neither inherited nor a result of some glandular disturbance or the scrambling of genes or chromosomes. Homosexuals are made, not born... From my 25 years' experience as a clinical psychologist, I firmly believe homosexuality is a learned response to early painful experiences, thus it can be unlearned...*”

Also, homosexuality is **not normal**. I believe there’re two roots from which homosexual behavior stems. First, is gender confusion. Through abuse or neglect people at early ages develop abnormal psychological attractions. This is the homosexual who may not understand why he feels the way he does. But when Paul describes homosexuality he says he “*burns in his lust*.” Here’s a homosexual who’s eaten up with desire. Perhaps she’s bored with heterosexual experiences. In her quest for greater thrills she flirts with a taboo. She swings back and forth. This is Madonna and Britney Spears pushing the boundaries... It’s the Katy Perry “*I kissed a girl*” phenomena. This is what happened in the bath houses of ancient Rome. The brothels no longer satisfied, so perverse Romans adopted an anything goes sexuality.

Homosexuality is *not natural*, *not normal*, and **not noble**. Paul describes homosexual practice, “*men with men committing what is shameful*.” The Greek word rendered “*shameful*” can be translated “*deformed*.” Such practices twisted God’s intended order. Ephesians 5 teaches us that heterosexual marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with the Church. Homosexuality on the other hand, distorts and perverts this picture. It *masculinizes the female* and *feminizes the male*. It disrupts God-given roles and identities - which in turn leads to the destruction of the family and society.

And finally, God says homosexuality is **not neutral**. Don't be naive, you can't buck nature and not pay the piper. Giving in to homosexual tendencies take a terrible toll... *Unbridled selfishness, a seared-conscience, damaged self-esteem, confusion, and insecurity, and loneliness, and depression, and manipulation* – are all the price of perversion... Not to mention the physical dangers. Even though AIDS has crossed over into the heterosexual population, still 70% of all victims are homosexual. For the last 30 years the FDA has prohibited male homosexuals from donating blood. Their sexual practices make them more prone to dangerous viruses. Homosexuality is **not natural**, **not normal**, **not noble**, and **not neutral**.

But don’t conclude that a homosexual is **not loved** by God. When Jesus went to the cross and took our sin upon His shoulders, that included the sin of homosexuality. If you embrace Jesus as your Lord He’ll forgive you, and provide you a new identity, and teach you a new way of life. Homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin. In fact, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6, “*Do not be deceived. neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites... will inherit the kingdom of God.*” But then he adds, “*And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*” I love the phrase, “*And such were some of you!*” Jesus can break the bonds of homosexuality.

As I said earlier, homosexuality is an indicator that a society is in trouble – that it's strayed dangerously far from God. But there're other indicators... Paul has a long list in verses 29-31, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful..."

Let me run through this list quickly...

"*Sexual immorality*" - The Greek word is "*pornea*" from which we get our word "*pornography*." It applies to all forms of illicit sexual arousal and activity.

"*Wickedness*" – The original word means to work or toil at wickedness.

"*Covetousness*" is greed. It's the itch for more.

"*Maliciousness*" is the desire to injure another person.

"*Strife*" is the tendency to argue just for the sake of arguing.

"*Backbiters*" – Remember, the childhood jingle "*Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me.*" That's simply not true. Flesh wounds heal quicker than wounds inflicted by a sharp tongue on a psyche or a person's reputation. Chrysostom said, "*Slander is worse than cannibalism.*"

"*Inventors of evil things*" - Today these guys work in Hollywood.

"*Disobedient to parents*" has become epidemic in today's world.

"*Undiscerning*" - the failure to learn from history – un-teachable.

"*Untrustworthy*" – When members of a society no longer try to honor their agreements, and keep their promises - that society is on its way to ruin.

"*Unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful...*" It was said of Rome, "*How pitiless she was! Amid all the ruins of her cities we find no hospital or orphanage - in an age that made many orphans. Rome had no conscience; she was a lustful, devouring beast, made more bestial by her intelligence and splendor.*" Rome is proof - anarchy and brutality await a people with no heart, no compassion.

Verse 32, "*Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*" I think Paul saved the worse for last! Think about this verse the next time you sit down to watch a raunchy movie. You may not cheat on your wife, but do you cheer on the actor who does it in the movie. How often do we give placid approval to acts God hates? It's called "*guilt by association*" - and we need to repent!

Back in the day when pay phones were popular, I heard of a businessman who phoned his wife. He'd finished the conversation and hung up, when the phone rang... He figured it was the operator telling him to insert another coin. *It was the operator*, but she didn't say anything about more money. This is what she told him, "*Sir, I thought you'd like to know that just after you hung up, your wife told you that she loved you.*" What a nice gesture! Here's how we need to close Romans 1. Even though we live in a society that's hung up on God, He's still telling us He loves us. And He'll forgive us if we repent. This is the Gospel. It's still the power of God to those who believe.