

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ROMANS 1

The Apostle Paul received *glowing reports* of a *growing church* at the heart of the empire. The Gospel had arrived in Rome. In the Spring of 58 AD, Paul was in the Greek city of Corinth when he heard a female friend, from the neighboring port of Cenchrea, was traveling to Rome. He asked *Phoebe* to deliver a letter.

The apostle was headed to Jerusalem where danger awaited him, possibly even death. He thought this letter might be his last opportunity to expound on the truths God had given him. But what Paul thought was his *final* opportunity became his *finest* effort. His letter to the Romans became his theological masterpiece.

Almost every Bible doctrine finds its *best defense* and *fullest explanation* in Paul's letter to the Romans. Throughout the ages, this one book has single-handedly sparked revivals, incited revolutions, altered the history of nations, and transformed billions of lives.

The great preacher, John Chrysostom, thought so highly of this letter he read it once a week for 18 years. Romans will be our focus for the next ten weeks.

The book begins, “**Paul.**” The ancients started 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 introduces himself as “**a bondservant of Jesus Christ.**” He could've identified as “**a warrior of the faith,**

illustrious theologian, church planter, missionary to the world..." Instead he uses "*bondservant*" or "love slave."

The term harkens back to Exodus 21... In ancient Israel if you couldn't pay a debt you didn't file for bankruptcy, you worked off what you owed, as a slave to your creditor... And some debtors fared better in the house of a benevolent master, than they did on their own. So much so, that a slave might choose to stay with their master even after the debt had been paid.

And when that happened, the owner demonstrated his slave's loyalty by pressing the servant's ear against the doorpost, and driving a sharp awl into his earlobe. The slave's pierced ear was a symbol of the servant's voluntary love and gratitude toward his master.

And we have a similar relationship with Jesus. He's forgiven us our debt of sin. We owe him our **A(W)LL!**

A Christian is a slave of Jesus, yet once we spend time in His house we experience His generosity. We realize life with Jesus is far better than life on our own.

We start out serving out of *obligation*, but end up serving out of *appreciation*. We're love-slaves of Jesus!

And Paul was also "*called to be an apostle...*" The word means "**sent out.**" Paul was not self-appointed. He was commissioned by God. *You can tell if a pastor was **sent**, or did he just **went**.* Paul was called by God!

Verse 1 also tells us Paul was "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 of God”* - and God’s Gospel is all about His Son, Jesus.

Notice three truths Paul mentions here about Jesus: He was **revealed** in the OT Scriptures... He was born God’s **ruler**, according to the lineage of King David... And He was **resurrected** by the power of God’s Spirit.

The case for Jesus as God’s Messiah is airtight. He claimed to be the Lord of the universe and Savior of the world through **prophecy**, and **pedigree**, and **power**.

Verse 5, “Through Him we have received grace...”

And here’s the theme of the letter: *“we have received grace!”* Grace is free. **It’s love that’s on the house!** We don’t deserve it and can never earn it. It’s God’s love.

Paul was once a Jewish rabbi. He lived under the Law, and felt a constant pressure to perform. But under grace God didn’t call Paul to *try*, just *trust!* Salvation is not *me do* but *He did!* And God called Paul not to a *responsibility*, God 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 them up. The man ignored his mom and moved in with the woman.

One night the vengeful gal got the fellow drunk. She demanded of him that he prove his love for her by killing his own mom, cutting out her heart, and bringing it back to her as a trophy... *I told you she was evil.*

The young man stumbled into his mom's house with a butcher knife, stabbed her, and carved out her heart.

But as he staggered back through the streets with the prize in hand, he fell and dropped his mom's heart. As the legend goes, when he reached to pick up her bleeding heart, it spoke to him, "*My son, are you hurt?*"

And this is also how cruel we've been to Jesus. We stabbed the nails into His hands and feet, and broke His heart - yet Jesus still speaks lovingly to each of us.

He cares about His child's hurts! This is grace!

Grace is the Father kissing the prodigal after coming home... It's Jesus saying to the adulteress, "*Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more...*" It's His prayer on the cross, "*Father forgive them, they know not what they do...*" God's grace changed everything for Paul.

Don't be surprised if this book changes you!

Verse 5, "Through Him (that is, 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." Since grace is for every race, God secured Paul a visa to "*all nations.*" Even Romans... In verse 7 he addresses them, "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be saints.*"

Erroneously, throughout church history "*saints*" have been thought of as *special Christians*. We view saints as All Stars of the Faith, or Christian Hall of Famers. **But not so.** "*Saint*" simply means "*to set apart.*" You either belong to Jesus or you

don't. You're either His or you're not. You're either **a saint** or you're **an ain't**.

And Paul greets these saints, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul says of the Romans in verse 8, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole 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." This church was spoken of around the world, *but Paul spoke of this church to God*. He'd never visited Rome, but he prayed for the church diligently.

According to Acts 2:10, present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost were a group of Jews from Rome. It could be they were converted by Peter's sermon, filled with the Spirit, and returned to Rome to start a church.

Over the years their church became famous - not for its building, its pastor, or its size - *but its faith*. If our church becomes well known I hope it's for our faith.

Paul wanted to visit the church at Rome, *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."

Folks usually flocked to Rome for amusement. Rome hosted the Forum, and later the Coliseum. NASCAR fans could catch a chariot race at the Circus Maximus.

But in the belly of this vast city, beneath all the glitz and glamor, were a small group of people - precious and important to God. Paul wanted to visit Rome so he could build up these believers - *to give and to receive*. And this is what church is all about! *We're like a blood bank*. Some days you come to donate. Other days you get a transfusion. Paul wants to impart a spiritual gift.

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 **owed God for His grace, but his debt was made payable to his fellow man**. We thank Jesus by loving the folks He died to save. Here's Paul's reply to grace, "So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also."

Eventually Rome fell to marauding bands of Goths and Vandals, but the real cause of its demise was internal. Rome became rich, spoiled, and lusted for new amusements. Romans were lawless out of sheer boredom. Historian, Tacitus, wrote of Rome's perverse appetite, **"the greater the infamy, the wilder the delight."**

Roman civilization fell victim to moral collapse.

And here's how it happened... The Romans lost respect for human life. Babies were viewed as an inconvenience, and left at the market to be sold as slaves... Marital fidelity became an unheard of virtue. Roman debutants dated the years by the names of their husbands... Fourteen of the first fifteen emperors were so bored with the natural attraction for

women they sought perverse pleasures in homosexual acts... Rome even legitimized pedophilia with young boys...

Rome was so debased the wife of Caesar Claudius, the Empress Agrippina, would leave her palace at night and work in the brothels for the sake of sheer lust.

You've heard of *skid row*... Welcome to *skid Rome*.

Yet Paul wasn't intimidated. He was ready to preach the Gospel in Rome. For he was proud of the Gospel.

In verse 16 he declares his confidence in its power, **“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.”*”**

The Gospel is the greatest change agent known to man. The truth that Jesus *died to forgive us* and *rose to live in us* transforms people and communities.

At the end of Chapter 3, Paul will begin to explain the Gospel, but first he wants to convince us of our need.

It's been said, **“Before the Good News can be *received*, the bad news has to be *believed*.”** We don't sense a need for a Savior, until we recognize our sin.

And in the last half of Chapter 1 Paul dissects the downward spiral of Roman culture. He discusses how the Greco-Roman world **suppressed** the truth, it **confused** the truth, and it **transgressed** God's truth...

Paul begins in verse 18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness...” Verse 17 says the Gospel reveals *the righteousness of God*, but one day heaven will reveal *the wrath of God*. Reject or ignore God's righteousness and you become subject to His wrath.

Once a country church sat next door to the farm of an avid atheist. Every Sunday morning this atheist revved up a tractor to drown out the pastor's message.

When his harvest yielded a bumper crop he saw it as proof God didn't exist. He bragged about his efforts. *But I love the pastor's reply.* He said, “Sir, God does not settle all His accounts in the month of October!”

It *may be now or later* but a Christ-rejecting world will eventually taste the terrible wrath of the Almighty God.

Paul says God's wrath is “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...” “*Ungodliness*” is the rejection of God's authority. “*Unrighteousness*” is the rejection of God's standards. And unrighteousness leads to the suppression of God's truth. When your intent is to **defy** God's commands, it's easier if you **deny** God exists.

Whenever a student returns from college for the first time, and I hear they've rejected their faith, I want to ask, “*When did you start sleeping with your girlfriend?*” For if you eliminate a higher authority; you can justify your sin, or rename it “*liberation*” or “*self-expression*.”

This is what's happened today in western society. In public schools evolution is now the law of the land. It's hyped

as fact, yet it's far from it. Evolution is a flimsy theory... Entropy is the basic law of science. The organization of life moves from complexity toward randomness. Our world is winding down, nor revving up. Yet for evolution to be true it has to deny entropy, and fly in the face of everything we observe in nature.

A better explanation of an **ordered universe** is an **orderly Creator**. *Yet why is creation not taught? I'll tell you why*, if it were, we'd have to bow to the Creator. This is why folks suppress the truth. If there is no higher authority; then right and wrong are up for grabs. We can make up our own rules. Ungodliness reigns.

Verse 19, people suppress the truth "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..." Even without considering the Bible, but God reveals Himself to mankind in at least two more ways.

First, there is a knowledge *in us, in our hearts*. And second, God reveals Himself *to us, in the heavens*.

Look inward and you'll find evidence for God. Then *look upward* and you'll see proof of His eternal power...

Just as animals have migratory instincts, people are born with an intuitive knowledge of God. The Creator implants in each of us a homing device. It never shuts off, until we find

our way back to Him. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says it well, God "has put eternity in their hearts..."

A childhood disease left Helen Keller without sight, hearing, and speech. As a young girl she was taught tirelessly by her dedicated teacher, Anne Sullivan.

Anne taught Helen brail and eventually how to talk.

But when Anne first told Helen about God, the young girl informed her teacher that *she already knew about God. She just didn't know His name!* Hey, there is an innate knowledge of God *in* each and every person.

Look inward and you'll find evidence for God, but *look upward* and you'll behold His glory. Psalm 19:1 says it best, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork." This is why it's often said, "Nature was the first missionary."

During the French Revolution, an atheistic revolutionary bragged to a believing peasant, "*We'll pull down all that reminds you of God.*" The faithful Christian replied, "Then pull down the stars!"

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

To the unbiased, God is an obvious reality. The evidence is inescapable. We are without excuse! It's **not that we *can't* believe, it's that we *won't* believe.**

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 benefit from His blessing, yet fail to acknowledge the Blessor. When life goes well, do you take the credit, or chalk it up to good fortune? *Are you thankful for God's good gifts?*

Paul describes an ungrateful culture, “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 Greco-Roman world was steeped in idolatry. People turned *birds, beasts, and bumblebees* into gods. They swapped the glory of the invisible God for corruptible images. And we do the same today...

People still worship *birds, beasts, and bumblebees* every weekend. They focus on **Falcons, Bulldogs, and Yellow Jackets**. You can turn anything into an idol.

Idolatry is giving a greater glory to the creature than to the Creator. **It's exalting a matter of secondary importance to primary significance in your life.**

Paul says people became “futile in their thoughts...” and, “professing to be wise, they became fools...” In other words, smart people stopped thinking rationally!

Once a man *rejects the most important thing, which is God - he tends to fall for anything.* It amazes me how brilliant folks refuse to believe in God, yet they read their horoscope, or visit a palm reader. College profs mock the Bible, and deny Jesus is God, yet seriously believe we've been visited by aliens from other worlds.

Again, 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 no 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." It's sad how in mankind's rebellion against God, darkness has taken over our minds...

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 they worship.

After teaching kids they've ascended from apes, why be surprised when they *monkey around?*... Teach a child that he or she is nothing but an *animal* and he or she will become a *party animal*... Why expect a kid to develop spiritual appetites

and moral standards if you tell them all they consist of are *glands and hands*.

In today's world people don't have a reason why one human whim is any more right or wrong than another.

People are driven by lust to dishonor their bodies. They've lost any concept of the sanctity of human sexuality. And 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.” Notice they “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie...*” Rome was a society that called right... wrong, and wrong... right.

Today, homosexuality is no longer labeled a dysfunction, *let alone a sin*, it's a protected preference... Abortion isn't murder, it's now a woman's right to choose... Gender isn't our biological reality, it's an assignment based on feelings... A family of one dad and one mom is no longer the optimum environment for raising kids - now any configuration will do...

When pleasing and honoring the creature becomes more important than obeying the Creator; **then truly the patients have taken over the asylum!**

This is what's happened today, to avoid God's authority we **suppress** His truth. And to convince ourselves we're right, we **confuse** the truth by **normalizing** the deviant. We create new, woke ethics.

Here's how topsy-turvy the world has become... As Paul puts it, we “*worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.*” Throw out the Creator and humanity becomes a

slave to creation. We refuse to pump gas to heat homes for fear of interfering with elk migration in Alaska... In Atlanta, the water for six million people is held hostage by a few snails in a Florida riverbed...

Today, animal rights and environmental concerns take precedent over human need. Humanity has lost its uniqueness. Humans are now viewed as a privileged species of animal that oppresses other species.

Whereas, the Bible teaches that God created man in His image and gave us dominion over His creation. Nature and animals are meant to serve man's needs. Animals exist to provide us milk, and meat, and wool.

But without God and the Bible - in a pagan world - rather than humans taking charge of nature and using it for our benefit - we become its slave. We end up caring more about *animal rights* than *human welfare*.

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 injured soldiers.

You'd think that would be a noble cause. Yet his experiments were stopped by animal rights activists who thought Snowball and Fluffy were more vital than the men in our military. The truth is people have greater importance than animals! *It's a confused society that puts animal life on a par with human life.* Every human being bears God's image, and has an eternal soul.

Then he writes in verse 26... “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions.” Three times in three verses (24, 26, 28) Paul tells us, “God gave them up!” or “gave them over!” One way God judges sinners is by letting them chase their sin with an unbridled passion.

People bent on sinning are allowed to pursue their sin, and reap its consequences. It’s a just punishment. In other words, the person gets what they asked for...

And in the remainder of Chapter 1, Paul tells us how to know God has subjected a society to such judgment.

Like indicators on a dashboard that light up to let you know the car has a problem, Paul lists twenty-four cultural indicators that alert you to a society in deep trouble. And the first indicator of such a society is the acceptance and legitimization of homosexuality.

Listen to the next two verses... Verse 26, “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 were behaving in unnatural ways.

And verse 27, “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...” “Debased” means “castaway or rejected.”

Before I go further, let me reiterate, homosexuality is the first of twenty-four indicators that a culture has **suppressed** and **confused** and **transgressed** the truth, and God has “*given them over*” to its consequences.

But verse 29 also adds “*sexual immorality*” to the list. This means God sees all sexual sin - heterosexual and homosexual - as a threat to the health of a society.

All humans are born in sin, and thus are born twisted in their sexual orientation. Whether your attraction is homosexual or heterosexual if you’ve ever lusted sexually for a person who was not your spouse you’ve violated God’s design. God made us for marriage. The only sexual relationships sanctioned by God are those that are within the bounds of heterosexual marriage.

Too many Christians today turn up their noses at gay people, and act holier than thou, while they excuse their own pornography, or ignore their single friends who live together, or wink at their buddies who cheat on their spouses. Let’s be clear, *homosexuality is just one indicator that a culture is in trouble with God... But it is an indicator*, and in verses 26-27 it’s the only one in the list that Paul takes the time to describe.

Understand, a relationship with God requires that you accept God’s rules. You can’t play a game if you reject its rules. I can play basketball and violate the rules. I can foul an opponent, and I’m still in the game. I have to admit my violation and own my sin, but I’m allowed to break the rules, as long as **I admit I’ve broken them, and agree that there are rules**. But if I deny the rules or reject them, I’m not playing the game.

So it is with God. **A repentant mind** might sin, but it admits the violation and desires to change. Whereas a **debased mind** sins; yet refuses to admit there is such a thing, or rejects God's definition of it. If that's the case; you're not in the game - *or in a relationship with God.*

Thus, the ultimate destiny for those who suppress God's truth *is God stops working with them.* He ceases to convict them. He gives them up to their own lies.

A person who denies God's rules participates in sinful behavior without the slightest twinge of guilt. A debased mind even demands that you approve of their sin. They become militant in their quest for legitimacy.

And this describes today's homosexual community.

LGBTQ advocates are not content to practice their behavior privately, they want to socialize society, especially our youth to view homosexuality as a legitimate (*even desired*) lifestyle. Ending legal discrimination isn't enough, advocates want a privileged status. They want to force all of society to applaud their choices. They've justified their rejection of God's order, *and God has given them up...*

In these two verses, 26-27, Paul tells us four truths about homosexuality. 1) it's **not natural**, 2) it's **not normal**, 3) it's **not noble**, and 4) it's **not neutral**.

First, it's **not natural**. Paul says both women and men left the "*natural use*" of the opposite sex to lust after those of the same sex. I don't want to be crass or crude, but a quick peek at the male and female genitalia and it reveals a natural anatomical fit - *when men and women mate their parts*

connect. There is a natural congruity that doesn't exist in same-sex unions.

And why? The Bible teaches that God created gender. Men are designed sexually for women, just as women are tailored sexually for men. Heterosexuality was dictated in the beginning by God. It's how He intended for husbands and wives to function sexually.

The research often cited to support the theory that people are **born** homosexual is seriously flawed.

For 25 years Dr. Robert Kronmeyer worked with gay people, and he concluded, "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... I firmly believe homosexuality is a *learned* response to early painful experiences, thus it can be *unlearned*..."

Yet for the sake of argument, what if it were proven that a gay gene does exist? Does that mean we should condone and legitimize homosexual behavior?

If a person is biologically predisposed to alcoholism, or depression - should we ignore the disorder or should we try to treat it if we can?... Or if a person is prone to violence should we legitimize all violence? *Surely not*.

The point is, if the Bible is God's Word, and says it's not natural, then it's a behavior that should be avoided.

Next, homosexuality is not **normal**. I believe there are two roots from which homosexual behavior stems.

First, is **gender attachment**. Through abuse or neglect people at early ages can develop abnormal *psychological* attractions. This is the homosexual who may not understand why he feels the way he does...

But the homosexual Paul is describing in Romans 1 *"burns in his lust."* This is a different situation. Here's someone who's eaten up with desire. Humans can get bored with heterosexual experience, and in a quest for greater thrills flirt with a taboo. Swing back and forth.

This is Madonna and Britney Spears pushing the boundaries at the MTV Music Awards, with their infamous on-stage kiss. The last line of their song was *"We're bored with the concept of right and wrong..."* or the Katy Perry, *"I kissed a girl"* type of phenomena.

This is what happened in the bath houses of ancient Rome. The brothels no longer satisfied their appetites, so bored Romans took to an anything goes sexuality.

Paul says homosexuality is **not natural, not normal, and not noble**. Paul writes *"men with men committing what is shameful."* The Greek translation of the word *"shameful"* is *"aschēmosynē."* It means *"against the schematic or the design."* God assigned to human sexuality a noble purpose He doesn't want violated.

Ephesians 5 teaches us that heterosexual marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with His Church. Homosexuality distorts that picture. It masculinizes the female and feminizes the male. It disrupts God's roles.

And finally, God says homosexuality is **not neutral**. These acts come with a punishment, *“receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”*

Don't be naive, you can't buck God and nature, and not pay the piper. Giving in to homosexuality takes a toll: a seared-conscience, depression, guilt, confusion, insecurity. Not to mention health dangers. 77% of AIDS victims are homosexual. Substance abuse and even suicide occur more frequently among homosexuals.

Yet don't misunderstand, Paul isn't saying that homosexuals are not loved by God, or that Jesus didn't die to set them free and give their life meaning. He did.

And Jesus never said a gay person has to become straight before he or she can be saved. God takes all sinners just as we are; then transforms us into the likeness of His Son. Remember, we're all born with a twisted sexual orientation that God alone can untwist.

Yes, homosexuality is **not natural, not normal, not noble, and not neutral** - but it is forgivable! 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 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, *“Such were some of you!”* There were former homosexuals in Corinth who'd been set free and cleansed by Jesus. Because of God's grace they had found a new identity in Christ.

But there are other indicators that a society has drifted from God, verse 29, "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 term is "pornea" from which we get the word "pornography." Pornea applied to all forms of illicit sexual arousal and activity... He also mentions, *"Wickedness"* - in the original it means to work or toil at wickedness... *"Covetousness"* is greed. It's the itch for more...

"Maliciousness" is the desire to do physical harm to another person... *"Strife"* is the tendency to argue just for the sake of arguing... *"Backbiters"* are those who inflict wounds with their words... *"Inventors of evil things"* - are folks who dream up ways to push God's boundaries... *"Disobedient to parents"* - the disrespect for authority is epidemic in our culture... *"Undiscerning"* is the failure to learn, *unteachable*... *"Untrustworthy"* is when people no longer keep their promises...

And then *"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."

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." *And Paul saves the worse indictment for last!* Think of verse 32 the next time you sit down to watch an ungodly or unrighteous movie...

You may not cheat on your spouse, but do you cheer on the actor who does? You may not take God's name in vain, but do you watch movies that do it frequently?

Do we give passive approval to what God hates? It's called "**guilt by association**" and we need to repent!

Let me close with this... Back when pay phones and operators were used, a husband called his wife. When he hung up, the phone rang back. It was the operator, "**Sir, I thought you'd like to know that right after you hung up, your wife said she loved you.**" *What a nice gesture!* And this is how we should close Romans 1.

Though our society has hung up on God, He keeps calling us. God wants us to know He loves us. And if we repent, He'll forgive us. The Gospel of Christ is still in effect. It is the power of God to those who believe!