

# (Romans) Romans 1:1-32

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon on Romans 1:1-32 emphasizes the logical presentation of the gospel, the importance of surrendering to Christ, and the mutual encouragement among believers.*

**Duration:** 58:42

**Scripture:** Romans 1:1-16

**Topics:** "Gospel Of God", "Obedience Of Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of the gospel of God in the book of Romans. He highlights three statements made by Paul in Romans 1:9, 15, and 16, all relating to the gospel. The preacher explains that when Paul received the gospel, he felt a debt to the whole world, emphasizing the importance of sharing the Good News with others. He also emphasizes that the gospel primarily concerns Christ, not ourselves, and that it is through Christ that we receive grace and apostleship. The preacher warns against the extremes of legalistic obedience and presumption, emphasizing the importance of the obedience of faith.

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to Romans chapter 1, verse 1. As we look through Paul's letter to the Romans, we will discover here the clearest exposition of the gospel of Jesus Christ that is seen anywhere in the whole Bible. Paul presents the gospel logically. There are many aspects of the gospel that are presented in many, many gospels and epistles, but nowhere is it presented so logically and clearly as in Romans.

There are many who speak about the full gospel these days. Here is the full gospel in Romans chapter 1 all the way till the end. And one of the things that you will discover as you follow through this study in Romans is that you can stop at any point you like.

God doesn't force us to go beyond what we desire. For example, if all you want is forgiveness of sins, you can stop in Romans chapter 3. If you want to go on from there to be justified and to have peace with God and a relationship with God, you can stop at chapter 5. If you want to go still further to overcome sin in your personal life, you can go on to chapter 6. If you want to be free from legalism, you can go on to chapter 7. If you want to go on to life in the Spirit, you can go on to chapter 8. And it goes on. It doesn't even stop at chapter 8. It goes right on to chapter 15 and chapter 16.

So, many Christians we will discover as we go through this study have not experienced the full gospel. Ultimately, when you come to the end of chapter 16, you find this tremendous promise that the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. God's ultimate purpose is that everything that man lost in Eden through surrendering to Satan, and when Adam surrendered to Satan, he actually allowed Satan to put his foot on his head.

And now the thing is going to be reversed, and we're going to put our feet on Satan's head. That's when we have experienced the fullness of the gospel when we come to what it says in Romans 16 and verse 26, the obedience of faith. That's a phrase that occurs even in chapter 1, the obedience of faith.

And there is faith and there is obedience. And it's when we have both that we experience the fullness of the gospel. Faith alone is not enough.

Obedience alone would lead us to legalism. Faith alone would lead us to presumption. We would try to have faith for something God hasn't promised.

But the obedience of faith, where faith is based, as it says in Romans 10, 17, on the word of Christ, that can lead us to experience the fullness of the gospel. So let's go through this letter, beginning at chapter 1, verse 1. Here we read of Paul calling himself a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. Paul did not preach the gospel because he felt like it.

He was called for it. He was a bondservant means he was a slave. Now we don't understand that expression these days because we haven't seen slavery in our land.

Slavery is almost unheard of throughout the world, and there are just a few places where there could be slaves perhaps today. But Paul called himself a slave of Christ Jesus. He was a person who decided to serve the Lord not for any gain.

You know, a servant can claim wages. A servant can claim certain rights and privileges. A slave, however, can claim nothing.

He is as much his master's property as the furniture in that master's home, and the master can do anything with him. And in those days, a master could even kill his slave, and nobody would ask any questions because a slave was the master's property, and nobody could question how he treated him. He had no rights, no privileges, no salary, nothing.

And Paul calls himself not a servant of Christ Jesus, but a slave of Christ Jesus. It's good to stop there for a moment and for you to ask yourself, are you a slave or a servant? When you come to Jesus Christ, do you expect that He should do certain things for you? Do you think that you have some rights and privileges? Or have you surrendered yourself to the Lord Jesus in such a way that you can say, Lord, I gave up all my rights at Calvary's Cross. When I came to you and surrendered to you, I have no more rights in my life.

I can't claim that you should do this for me or that for me. God does many things for us, but He does it in mercy and in grace. It's not because we deserve it.

It's not because we can say we have a right to it or that we can claim it. No, those who come like that are usually disappointed. But if we come humbly and say, any right I have at all is only in Christ.

Other than that, I have nothing. So, the happiest people in the world, the happiest Christians, are those who have surrendered themselves totally, as they say, lock, stock and barrel, completely head to foot to Christ, allowing Him to be Lord of every area of their life. And they say, Lord, I don't claim any rights or privileges.

I'm yours. You can do whatever you like with me. I won't have a complaint if you do anything with my life or my body.

It's yours. Paul's life was a very happy life, and not only a very happy life, an example of a way a man could live such a fantastically useful life on earth. And if you want your life to be useful to God, here's where you must begin.

This is part of the full gospel. The purpose of the gospel is that it can bring a man to this place where he becomes a bondservant or a slave of Christ Jesus. You know, Paul later on says in this chapter that I'm not ashamed, verse 16, of the gospel, for it is the power of God.

He was speaking from experience. He wrote this after having been a believer for at least 25 years. And from 25 years of experience, he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, because it's changed my life completely.

It's made me live a worthwhile life on this earth. How is that? Because he was a slave. A slave called to be an apostle.

His calling was as an apostle. Not all are called to be apostles, but what we can learn from there is that each of us has a calling. Paul was called to be an apostle.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 about some who are called to be helps. And if you can realize, this dear friend, that you have a particular calling in the body of Jesus Christ. When you give yourself as a slave to Christ, He gives you a particular calling.

You're not a useless member in the body. You may not be a preacher, you may not be an apostle or a prophet, but you can at least be a help. That's one of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.

Everyone has a particular, specific calling in the body of Jesus Christ. Just like every member of our body has a function in the body. Even our nails, which look so small and unimportant, have a particular function.

And even if God's called you to be a small little nail or a little finger in the body of Christ, you've got a function. Don't ever devalue that. Don't ever think you're just a passenger in the church or just someone who goes and sits and listens to meetings.

You need to be exercised about it. A lot of people do not fulfill their function in the body because they don't feel that God has a specific calling for them. And that's exactly what the devil wants you to feel, because that way you'll be useless to God.

Paul recognized that he had a calling, and he was set apart for the gospel of God. So there, right in the very first verse, you have the theme of Romans. What is it? The gospel of God.

That's the subject of this wonderful letter. And verse 2, he says, this gospel was promised long ages ago through the prophets in the Old Testament. And this gospel concerns His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was born a descendant of David according to the flesh.

So that's another thing we need to see, that the gospel doesn't primarily concern us. It concerns Christ. Jesus Christ came into the world to win us for Himself, to win a bride for Himself.

If we allow the gospel to be centered in ourselves, we're going to have problems. But if we allow the gospel to be centered in Christ, then we understand what the full gospel really is. And we pray that as we look through this book, God will open our eyes to see and understand what the full gospel is.

In our last study, we were considering how Paul begins to describe the gospel of God in the letter to the Romans. And we looked at Romans chapter 1 and verses 1 to 3, and we saw that it refers to the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ. It was first prophesied in the Old Testament.

In other words, in the Old Testament, they could not experience this. It was a promise made that one day people would experience this wonderful good news. So, what we learned from verse 2 of Romans chapter 1 is that nobody in the Old Testament, however godly and sincere and wholehearted they may have been, could experience this gospel.

There were wonderful men in the Old Testament like Elijah, Moses, and Elisha, and David, and Abraham, but none of them could experience this gospel, though they were very sincere, because the time had not yet come, because our Lord Jesus had not come to the earth as yet. No one could experience this gospel till Christ came to earth and till the Holy Spirit came to dwell within man. So, the reason I mention that is because some people make these Old Testament men their examples.

Now, I believe there are many, many good qualities that we can see in men like Job, Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, fantastic qualities that we can emulate, that we can copy, imitate, follow. But, we must not think that that is all that we can experience. In Christ, we can go beyond what anyone in the Old Testament experienced.

That's what I want to point out to you. There's no need for us to be discouraged today like Elijah was. There's no need for us to lose our temper like Moses did when he broke the tablets of stone.

And there's no need for us to fall into adultery like David did. There's no need for us to lose faith like John the Baptist did when he was in the prison and he wondered whether Jesus was the Messiah. So, this was promised in the Scriptures in the Old Testament, but it's gone beyond that now to something more, which is the Gospel.

And this Gospel concerns Jesus Christ, verse 3, who was born a descendant of David according to the flesh, emphasizing his humanity. We all know that Jesus Christ is God, and we worship Him and pray to Him as equal with the Father from all eternity, part of the Trinity. But many Christians don't understand sufficiently that He became a man.

The Gospel concerns Jesus, who, though God, became a man, who was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. People saw Him as a man, but when He was raised from the dead, there was a demonstration that He wasn't just a man. He was Almighty God, equal with the Father.

And if we can understand this, then we begin to lay a good foundation for the Gospel, that Jesus Christ was not only God, but He was man who came in the flesh and did what He did on earth as a man, accepting the limitations of human beings, without sin, of course, but every other limitation. He took upon Himself so that He lived on earth as a man. Now, theoretically, we all accept this.

But the practical implication of it is that if He lived on earth as a man, we can follow Him. And that's what the Gospel message is all about. The message of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ has given us an example how a man can live on earth.

And he who says he abides in Christ, 1 John 2, verse 6 says, must walk as he walked. And that's good news. It's like saying to a sick person, you can be healthy.

It's like saying to a lame person, you can get up and walk. That's the best news in the world. And that's what the Gospel is all about.

Verse 4, He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. Speaking of His deity and God confirming His deity by raising Him up from the dead. And through Him, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.

Now, this is the expression I mentioned in our last study, which is found at the end of the book of Romans 2. At the end of Romans 16, you find this expression again, the obedience of faith. Now, generally speaking among Christians, you find these two extremes. Some who emphasize legalistic obedience and who get into bondage.

And some who emphasize faith, faith, faith, and they are led into presumption. But the balance is here. The obedience of faith among all nations for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.

He is writing to the saints in Rome, verse 7. And like in most of His letters, Paul begins with praying that they will have grace. Grace is a word that refers to God's power coming to meet us according to our need. If our need is forgiveness, grace forgives us.

If our need is deliverance from sin's power, grace delivers us from sin's power. If our need is to overcome some other limitation or to be victors in a trial, grace comes to help us there. Grace is God's help according to our present need.

If you can remember that, when Jesus said to Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, in 2 Corinthians 12. What was He saying? He was saying, with grace you don't need anything else in the world. That will take care of all your needs.

So, grace is God's power to help us according to what our present need is. The other great thing we need from God is peace. Peace in our heart, peace of mind, freedom from anxiety, peace in our heart because our sins are forgiven, peace in our mind because we commit our problems to God and trust Him to take care of them, and peace in our relationships with people around us, not only with our fellow believers, it must begin there, but also, like it says in Hebrews 12, 14 and 15, with all men, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what we read in Romans 1, verse 7. The other thing we find Paul frequently mentions in all of his letters is an expression of thanksgiving for believers. Thankfulness is something which is not natural to our human nature, which we have received from Adam. It's most common for our human nature to be complaining when we don't get what we want.

The opposite of complaining and grumbling is thankfulness. And one result of the gospel having done a work in a person fully is that he develops a spirit of thankfulness. And Paul frequently uses this expression and says to the Christians he writes to, verse 8, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.

It's not because they were perfect. No Christian in the world is perfect. Paul himself is not perfect.

He says that in Philippians 3. We don't thank God for believers because they are perfect. No. They are in the flesh.

They've got limitations. They've got weaknesses, just like we have. And as we live together with them, we'll rub each other in ways where we need to forgive one another.

But in spite of all that, there are so many things that we can thank God for in our fellow believers. They may not see eye to eye with us doctrinally in every point, but we can thank God that they've accepted Christ as their Savior. He says I thank God through Jesus Christ because of your faith.

You have really repented and surrendered your life to Christ and not only that. He says that has transformed your life so much that people everywhere are talking about the faith of the Christians in Rome. I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

By that he means the known world around there at that time. He says I've heard of people speaking about the faith of the Christians in Rome. That means their testimony of standing true to God in the time of trial and trusting Him and openly acknowledging their faith in Christ was known widely.

And I believe that should be true of all of us who are Christians. That people should know that we belong to Jesus Christ and that we're not ashamed to acknowledge Him as our Lord, not ashamed to acknowledge that He died for our sins, that He has forgiven us, and that He's given us a hope for the future. This should be a challenge to us.

Is our faith known to others? Do people recognize these people are people who are disciples of Jesus Christ? Let's take that challenge as we close the study that our life should be a testimony for Christ. We continue our study today in Romans chapter 1 and verse 9. Paul had just expressed his thanksgiving in verse 8 for the Christians in Rome whose faith was being proclaimed throughout the whole world. And here in verse 9 he says that he serves God in his spirit and he says, God whom he serves in his spirit in the preaching of the gospel of his Son is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers making request if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Paul not only thanked God for believers whom he knew about he also prayed for them and he prayed that he would have an opportunity to meet them. Paul longed to meet believers longed to meet children of God whom he had never met and that's a mark of any true child of God that he is always eager to meet other believers whom he hasn't met before because every act of fellowship every time of fellowship with other believers is always going to be mutually profitable because he says in verse 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you. He first says, I long to see you in verse 11 that I may impart some spiritual gift to you that you may be established.

You see, Paul was an apostle the scriptures were not written in those days and Paul was one who had revelation on the scripture on the truth of the gospel and he knew that there was something he could communicate to these believers to establish them in the faith and those who are gifted with God's word

have that ability to give us something that will establish us in the faith but then Paul is quick to acknowledge he says it's not going to be one way you see, in the body of Christ each needs the other for example the heart pumps blood to the hand and the hand cannot move without the heart pumping blood but the heart cannot keep pumping blood if the hand doesn't reach out to a plate and take food to nourish the body if the hand doesn't put food into the mouth to nourish the body finally the

body will die the heart will die so which is more important the heart or the hand you can't say both are equally important one needs the other the hand needs the heart to pump the blood to it give life to it and the heart needs the hand to pick up food and put it inside the body so that the heart can also live so that's what Paul says that I may be verse 12 encouraged together with you and each of us by the other's faith now Paul is a mighty man of God and these Roman Christians are very very immature young Christians but he doesn't look down on them saying well I can give you fellas something but there's nothing you can give me now sometimes you find Christian preachers have that attitude where they feel that they can impart something to other believers and those other poor simple

believers can impart nothing in return but that's not true Paul says that I will be encouraged by your faith and a true man of God will always acknowledge that he gets encouragement from the faith of other simple young believers I found that through many many years the simple faith of many newly converted believers is a great challenge and an encouragement to me Paul recognized that and he says that that each of us can be encouraged by the other's faith both yours and mine see this is how it is in the body of Christ in the Old Testament it wasn't like that in the Old Testament the prophets just got up and told the people what God wanted them to hear the people couldn't do anything for the prophet it was only the prophet who encouraged God's people but in the New Testament because we all

have the Holy Spirit we can each encourage one another and if you're a weak simple believer I just want to encourage you today by telling you that you have a contribution in the body of Christ you can be an encouragement to the greatest servant of God in the world by your simple faith each encourages the other we all have a ministry in the body of Christ and that was the reason why Paul says in verse 11 I long to see you not only to give you something but I can receive something from you too verse 13 is I don't want you to be unaware brothers that I often plan to come to you and I've been prevented thus far in order that I may obtain some fruit among you also even as among the rest of the Gentiles Paul longed to visit Rome because he wanted to share with them the wonderful gospel that had

changed his life so that some fruit could come through his labors there as he had seen elsewhere and then he tells them three things in verse 14 to 16 all those three statements begin with the words I am verse 14 I am a debtor to the Greeks and to the barbarians the Greeks were the most cultured people of that time and what Paul is saying is he says I am in debt to cultured people and to uncultured people I am in debt to the wise and to the foolish in other words he says I am in debt to the whole world the second statement he makes is in verse 15 I am eager to preach the gospel to you and the third statement in verse 16 I am not ashamed of the gospel all three statements relate to the gospel to the good news which is the subject of this book he says first of all I am a debtor when the

Lord Jesus gave Paul the gospel the good news it immediately placed Paul in debt to the whole world what does that mean? to use an illustration we know in our country how postmen come around house to house delivering money orders think of a postman who starts out from the post office with maybe 20,000 rupees in his bag not one rupee of that is his those are all money orders that he has to deliver to many many homes in his beat during that day so we could say when he leaves the post office with 20,000

rupees in his pocket he is a debtor to maybe 25 or 50 homes in that area he looks like a very rich man but if he spends that just on himself he is a thief the money was given to him by the post office to be passed on to others okay now let's apply this to the gospel why did Jesus Christ give

Paul the gospel? it's just like the post office giving the money to the postman it was meant for distribution it was meant to be given to others and like the postman could say I'm a debtor Paul said I'm a debtor to everybody why did Jesus Christ give you the gospel? have you recognized that? is it only for you? no God by giving you the gospel has made you a debtor to everybody in the world that which has changed your life you have to share with others and because this is true he says in verse 15 I'm eager to preach the gospel to you it's like the postman who recognizes his debt and goes house to house and gives those money orders in the same way Paul says God's given me something and I'm just eager to come and pass it on to you what God's given to me I'm not doing you a favor you don't

even have to thank me for it I'm just doing my duty just like the postman is doing his duty to the post office Paul says I'm doing my duty to God and I'm very eager to clear this debt you know the Bible says that we should not owe anybody anything he says that later on in Romans 13 in verse 8 what is it we owe to people even when we don't owe them money? we owe them the gospel do you know that Christ died for your sins? do you know that all your sins can be blotted out by the blood of Jesus? well you have to tell others who don't know about that you're in debt that's why we must be eager to preach that to others and the third thing he says is I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God unto salvation notice he says there that the gospel is not just a message it's not a

doctrine it's a power like electric power that lights up a room he says it's lit up my life it's changed my life it's driven out the darkness it's made my life work like electricity makes gadgets to work as soon as the power comes on he says it's a power it's delivered me it's brought salvation freedom from sin freedom from hell freedom from the grave etc the power of the grave to everyone who believes it's not only for me it's for you Jew, first, Greek, everybody this is our calling let's also say I'm a debtor therefore I'm eager and I'm not ashamed to preach this gospel to you because it's the power of God Amen let's turn today to Romans chapter 1 and verse 16 we were looking at this verse when we concluded our last study here it says Paul says I'm 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 and I mentioned how the gospel was not just a message but a power and we know there's a lot of difference between a written word or a spoken word and something that is powerful we can compare it with Genesis chapter 1 there we read that God spoke let there be light and what happened? immediately the power of God was released and the darkness was driven out and light came in and right through Genesis chapter 1 you see every time God spoke a word there was power see God's word is not like man's word there's a power in the word of God and that's why it's so important to read the Bible to believe it to confess it with our lips because the power of God is hidden in these words of scripture so we see

here Paul calls the gospel not just words but the power of God have you experienced the gospel the good news of Jesus Christ not just as a message that you're convinced of in your mind but a power that has driven out the darkness from your life brought light into it he says it's the power of God into salvation salvation is a word which is misunderstood by many Christians many people think of salvation as only being saved from hell being saved from guilt you know they ask people are you saved? what do you mean by are you saved? what they mean is are you saved from hell? are you saved from the guilt and penalty of sin? that is the first step of salvation but salvation is much bigger than that we can think of salvation in

three tenses past present and future so salvation in the past tense is

if you've accepted Christ and received him as your savior asked him to come into your life and forgive your sin well then your past sins are blotted out you're no longer going to go to hell you're no longer going to be punished by God as far as the past is concerned you're saved from guilt from hell you've got a clear conscience but now you need to experience salvation in the present tense and that is from the power of sin which dwells in your flesh you see it's the power of sin that dwells in your flesh that makes you angry that makes you lust with your eyes that makes you fight and quarrel and grumble and complain and make you jealous and so many other things like that and salvation from this power of sin is also in the gospel and then we think of salvation in the future from the very

presence of sin that is when Christ comes again and he delivers us so that sin is no longer found we don't have a flesh which keeps tempting us anymore so salvation is from the penalty of sin first of all from the power of sin now and from the presence of sin in the future and the gospel contains all three and right now we can experience at least two of those past and present and we await experiencing the future when Christ comes again but we should not be satisfied with experiencing only the first part of it that is from the penalty of sin we must go on to experience salvation from the power of sin otherwise we don't experience the full gospel we'll see that later as we come to chapter 6 for in this gospel he says in verse 17 the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith see

the righteousness of God is so much higher than anything we can conceive with our mind as righteousness there are a lot of people who imagine themselves to be very holy and who look down on others as not being holy enough compared to them but really I mean this is like a student who got one percent in mathematics comparing himself with a student who got zero and saying I'm better than you or a student who got two percent comparing himself with a student who got one percent and saying I'm better than you whereas God's standard is a hundred percent you see pass marks in an earthly school is probably 35 or 40 percent but God's pass marks are a hundred percent and most of us don't even come to one percent so where is the question of ever attaining God's standard in fact the Bible says that

all our righteousness is like filthy rags Isaiah 64 and verse 6 and many people haven't seen that they think they are good they think they are better than others because they haven't seen God's standards they haven't seen what absolute purity is the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel it says this is God's standard and how can we attain to that standard that is what Romans is all about how can I have hundred percent and be accepted by God it's by faith and from one degree of faith to another it says from faith to faith means that we experience first of all faith for freedom from the penalty of sin and then faith for freedom from the power of sin from faith to faith as it is written the righteous man shall live by faith that's a quotation from Habakkuk chapter 2 and it says

there that the man who God accepts as righteous is the man who has arrived there by faith that means he trusts God to make him righteous that means he says Lord I can't make it you got to do it it's something like the disciples toiled all night to catch fish and they couldn't catch it the whole night and then Jesus came and filled their boats immediately that's the picture of salvation I tried tried tried for years and I can't save myself like those disciples couldn't catch fish and then in a moment Jesus puts his righteousness upon me and I get 100% he gives me his marks he got 100% and he gives me his marks that's what salvation is that's the way I attain to the righteousness of God you cannot attain to the righteousness of God by struggling all your life you got to receive Christ and

receive his righteousness and then I live by faith day by day I live trusting him to make me righteous in the different situations of life and then he begins in verses 18 onwards to describe how man fell into sin he says how man descended into the depths of degradation and because of this the anger and the judgment and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against every type of ungodliness unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness see, what does it mean to suppress the truth? that means your conscience tells you that you've done something wrong but you suppress it you tell your conscience to keep quiet to shut up and don't open your mouth you see, many people who do wrong their conscience tells them they're doing something wrong but they suppress that truth in

unrighteousness and God's anger is revealed against all these people who've committed sin but who don't acknowledge that they're guilty and he says that which is known of God is evident within them for God has made it evident for them for since the creation of the world verse 20 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 see, there are people today who say how do we know there's a God? and here's the answer since the time of creation God has manifested his power in the universe look at the planets that keep such perfect time that we can even set our watches by them the stars in the sky do you think these came by accident? supposing I were to tell you that one day there was

a storm and lightning and thunder and all that and a lot of pieces of glass and metal got hit against each other and broke up into small, small pieces and finally at the end of it all there was a beautiful watch that came out of that which keeps perfect time the watch I wear on my hand would you believe that? you wouldn't believe it you'd say that's impossible you're telling a story an intelligent person made that watch I see it's exactly like that with creation how can you believe there was a big bang and crash and thunder and all of a sudden all these planets and stars came into existence it wasn't like that there was an intelligent being more intelligent than you and me who created this and created you and me and he says all these things indicate there is a God so you don't have any

excuse you're without excuse there is a God in heaven and we are answerable to Him that God has put a conscience within each of us and we are answerable to this God today we turn to Romans and chapter 1 and verse 21 in Romans 1 Paul is trying to establish the guilt of fallen man see there are two types of sinners in the world one is the godless immoral sinner who openly sins and the other is the religious sinner who's got a lot of religion about him whichever religion it may be and goes through a lot of religious activities but his heart and his inner life is just as corrupt and impure as anybody else's but he pretends that he's holy and in Romans chapter 1 Paul is dealing with the first type of sinner and in Romans chapter 2 he's dealing with the second type of sinner you know Jesus once

told a story in Luke chapter 15 about a man who had two sons an elder son and a younger son the younger son is a picture of the sinner described in Romans chapter 1 the godless immoral person who goes out and does so many wrong things and Romans chapter 2 is a picture of the elder son who lived at home but whose heart was just as wicked see his attitude to his younger brother when the younger brother came back which indicates how wicked the older brother was and at the end of the story you find it's the older brother who's outside the house so it's religious people who find salvation difficult to receive Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 4 it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved even a righteous person righteous means humanly righteous it's very difficult for him to be saved because

he thinks he's so holy he thinks he's so good he thinks because he goes to meetings and reads the bible and prays and sings, God accepts him God doesn't God's standard is 100% and nobody attains it we have

to come to God as sinners and he's establishing the guilt of these two types of sinners in Romans chapter 1 and chapter 2 and if we keep that in mind as we go through first of all he deals with the person who is godless Romans 1 21 he talks about those who knew God but did not honor him as God or give thanks they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened now in Romans chapter 1 verse 21 all the way down to verse 32 it's like a slippery slide a slide that goes all the way down to the bottom and there are terrible sinners described in verse 30 slanderers,

haters of God insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil and so on people who are full of envy, verse 29 murder, strife, deceit, etc that is the depth of sin but how do people reach that depth of sin, where do they start which is the first step downwards that you see in verse 21 even though they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks they did not glorify him as God they did not give God first place in their life do you know that all sin begins here we don't give God the place he deserves in our life and we don't give thanks to him for all that he does for us we are ungrateful and self-centered all sin begins as described in verse 21 we don't honor God as God and we don't give him thanks we're self-centered that even when God blesses us we think we deserve it and you

know a lot of Christians are like that they don't give God first place in their life they do give God some place I mean they go for meetings and say a few things to God nice things in prayer but it's maybe their business or their home or their job or their wife or somebody who's more important in their life not God God doesn't have first place and when God doesn't have first place in your life you can say that you're a backslider already you may not be doing evil things on the outside but God doesn't have first place in your life a true disciple of Christ is one who has given first place to God God's absolutely number one and one mark of God being number one is what it says here about giving thanks how do you know whether God's number one in your life you're deeply thankful to God for

everything he does for you you don't take anything for granted you don't think well I deserve that you don't deserve anything you and I don't deserve anything my dear friends we deserve nothing everything is God's free gift of grace and mercy so if we recognize that we can be saved from a lot of sins if you want to be saved from sins start here don't do what is described here do the opposite give God first place in your life in every area examine your life and see whether you're giving God first place and see whether you're grateful to God for everything he's given you to begin with physical health are you thankful to God for physical health for your home, for your parents for your family for the fact you have a job for the fact you have many many many blessings God's given you don't

compare yourself with somebody who has more than you and keep wishing that you had more that's the way the devil traps you into covetousness and jealousy and greed to make your life miserable then you find yourself murmuring and complaining instead of giving thanks see when people murmur and complain you can be absolutely sure they haven't given God first place in their life you can be absolutely sure they're backsliders they've already started going down maybe they haven't reached the bottom yet of being slanderers and haters of God like it's described in the end of chapter 1 but they're on their way there you know when you see these slippery slides in the playgrounds, children's playgrounds and you see a child has just started going down from the top you know he's going to reach the

bottom it's just a matter of time just a couple of seconds and he's at the bottom but right now he's at the top he's only started coming down and it could be like that in your life when you don't give thanks when you don't give God the first place you're at the top of that slide it's just a matter of time before your backsliding goes all the way down to the bottom and you won't be able to stop it so please be careful in

these areas if you're serious about experiencing the full gospel just learn from the failures of others how did that fellow go into this sin? by not glorifying God as God not giving him the place he deserves as the creator of this universe and secondly, not giving thanks but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened professing to be wise

they became fools the world is full of people who imagine that they are very clever there are people who even try to say there are a lot of mistakes in the bible and they imagine themselves to be so clever, so wise so arrogant but their foolish heart was darkened you see, speculation mentioned in verse 21 is something to do with our mind and in the world people place emphasis on the body and the mind the body must be fit and strong and muscular and healthy and the mind must be sharp and clever and well instructed but most human beings don't place any emphasis on the most important part of their being which is their spirit even animals have a body and they take care of it and you know that dogs have a mind they can respond to what you say they think they have a sense but they don't have a

spirit and when you think only of your body and your mind you have descended to the level of an animal already what is it that's going to lift you above the level of an animal when you give importance to that most important part of you which animals don't have, your spirit which gives you a conscience, which tells you when you do something wrong which makes you aware that there's a god in heaven to whom you're answerable so here it speaks about people who are futile in their speculation they use their mind and they don't understand that a mind cannot reveal all the factors involved in a particular situation when it comes to spiritual things the mind is very good when it comes to science or earthly matters but when it comes to spiritual things the mind cannot factor in everything a lot of

factors that the mind cannot figure out and their heart is darkened, here the contrast is between the mind and the heart their heart becomes foolish and it is darkened so if you want light, you need to get it in your heart first in your spirit where God shines the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ we don't understand it primarily we receive it in the heart and then we understand it the heart comes first and then the mind give importance to your heart we were looking in our last study at Romans chapter 1 and verse 20 and trying to see the difference between the mind and the heart or the soul and the spirit and I was mentioning how people in the world use their mind to speculate and it says here they became futile in their speculation the last part of Romans 1, 21 and the foolish heart

was darkened so here is the contrast between the mind and the heart the mind goes into speculation, imagining it must be like this, must be like this and they think that they know everything but they don't and in spiritual things we don't unless we open ourselves to God's revelation in the scriptures then our heart gets darkened so it's good when we approach the scriptures to acknowledge that our mind cannot understand everything, Jesus said once in Matthew 11 verse 25 he said, I thank you father that you have hidden these wonderful truths from those who are clever and intelligent not because cleverness and intelligence can hinder us from knowing the truth but because cleverness and intelligence tend to make us proud and it's the pride that blinds us, it's the pride that makes our heart

dark God reveals his truth to the humble, you have hidden these things from the clever and intelligent and reveal them to babes, babes are those who acknowledge, I don't know we don't know anything and so when we come to God like that we understand the truth of God otherwise, verse 22 of Romans 1, we will profess to be wise and we will become fools and that's why a lot of people in the world don't understand the way of salvation, because they don't open their heart to what God wants to say, they think of their mind all the time and when that happens when we begin to use our mind and begin to think what God must be

like without revelation from God we get all types of wrong concepts of God and then it says in Romans 1.23 that human beings then exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for

an image see God God is so vast and so great that you cannot make an image of him no it is impossible, God is a spirit how can you make an image of God and when we don't realize that the Bible says in Romans 1.23 that man begins to make an image of this invisible incorruptible God in the form of corruptible man we try to make a God who looks like a man or like birds or like four-footed animals or like crawling creatures, like snakes or something and when we imagine that God is like this, we have degraded him God is beyond all this man was created by God how can you make a man who looks like God and certainly no animal looks like God even the most handsome man in the world is not an incarnation of God so that's why in the Old Testament God spoke so much to his people in Israel against

trying to make anything an image of any form representing God it was one of the commandments you shall not make an image of me because it's not possible God is vaster than this whole universe and we degrade him, it says when we bring him down to the level of things that we can see and that's why it's wrong for us to make any type of image or idol or picture to represent God God is invisible incorruptible and we cannot make him in the form of we cannot make an image of him in the form of anything visible or corruptible it's very important we recognize sense God in our spirit we cannot see him with our eyes Jesus Christ when he came to earth was a manifestation of God and when he said, if you have seen me you have seen the Father that is what we need to see of the Father the nature, the

goodness the humility, the love the purity, the lowliness the attitude of service that was manifested in Christ the spirit of sacrifice that is what we can understand of God God himself is spirit and when people degrade God like this that means they don't give God the honor that's due unto him it says in verse 24 God gave them up the lust of their hearts to impurity now three times in this section we read this expression God gave them over first of all in verse 24 and then in verse 26 and then again in verse 28 it's like God withdrawing his grace and his mercy and God gives them up because they don't want him you see, God does not force anyone to have him in their lives if they don't want him, he won't force himself into their lives and then he gives them up it's not that he wants to give

them up God loves this world so much he loves people of every nationality of every religion God is almighty, he created them and he loves all of them but he gives up those who don't want him he will not force his way into your life if you don't want him this principle of I stand at the door and knock is always true when it says God gave them up it's because they didn't want him because they would not honor him as God or give him place in their lives therefore he gave them up and when God gives people up, what happens? they go into all types of sin see, sin comes when our contact with God is broken it's like when there's a break in the electric wire the lights go off the contact is gone and when a man's contact with God is broken it's like an electric wire and then the lights go off or the

telephone goes dead because there's a break in the telephone wire so it's like that when there's a break in our connection with God darkness comes in and then what happens? we go into impurity into all the lusts of our hearts we dishonor our bodies with all types of filthy sins that destroy our bodies and the reason is because they gave up the truth of God and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever see, one of the common sins of man is that we give more importance to man than to God what does it mean to worship and serve the creature more than the creator? that means you give more importance to a human being than you give to God that means you want to please a man but you don't want to please God then you're worshiping and serving the creature

rather than the creator and when that happens, your heart will be darkened and that happens, God says okay, you want to please that man and you don't want to please me, okay, go right ahead and then we fall into all types of sins that's why it's so important that we never give any place in our hearts for the creature which should be given to the creator God Almighty must have first place in our hearts and then it says God gave them up to their degrading passions you see, you go one step down and then you go another step down and then women and men begin to have unnatural sexual relationships with their own sex instead of the way God created it to be that all types of homosexuality and indecent acts and they receive in their own persons the penalty of their that means their bodies begin to

acquire diseases which they'd never have got if they had not gone into all these types of sins and that's because God gave them up and then thirdly, again it says in verse 28 because they didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer God gave them up to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper that means many, many, many other things this slippery slope of sin when God gives them up stage by stage by stage by stage they become filled with unrighteousness wickedness, greed, evil envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice gossiping, gossiping is mentioned as one of those things many Christians do it you know it's a mark of a man whom God's given up that he goes around gossiping when you see people gossiping, you know that the fellow's got lost contact with God slanderers, those who

speaking evil of others haters of God, insolent, arrogant boastful inventors of evil disobedient to parents, children when you disobey parents, it's a serious thing without understanding and untrustworthy unmerciful and so on they know that there's a death penalty for these crimes God punishes such sins but they do this and fellowship with other people who do these things let's take it seriously and really seek to establish and keep our contact with God by giving him first place in our lives and by being thankful for all his mercies to us

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