

CHAPTER 1

^{1:1} Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to *be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ² which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared to *be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; *even* Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; ⁶ among whom are ye also, called to *be* Jesus Christ's: ⁷ to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to *be* saints; Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers ¹⁰ making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to *see* you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; ¹² that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹ because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, *even* his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: ²¹ because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: ²⁵ for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷ and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.

²⁸ And even as they refused to have God in *their* knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: ³² who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

Verse 1: *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.* On the phrase, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," James Macknight remarks: "The original word

‘doulos’ properly signifies a slave. Here it is a name of honor: for in the East the chief ministers of kings were called ‘douloi,’ slaves.... This honorable name, therefore, denotes the high authority which Paul possessed in the kingdom of Christ, as one of his chief ministers.”

In the phrase, “called to be an apostle,” the words “to be” were supplied by the translators. They frequently supplied words with the intention of making the meaning clearer to the English reader. These supplied words are printed in italics. But in this place the supplied words hinder rather than help. The word translated “called” is not a verb nor a participle, but a verbal adjective. It partakes of the nature of a verb and an adjective. The sense is complete and clear, if you read it, “a called apostle.” Paul was not telling what he was called to be, but what he was. Some Judaizing teachers charged that he was not a regularly constituted apostle, but that he had merely assumed that office, or had been appointed to that office by the church at Antioch. To meet that charge, Paul asserts that he was “a called apostle”—an apostle that had been called into that office by Jesus Christ. He was separated from Judaism and from all other lines of activity, and dedicated to the one business of preaching the gospel. His own motto was in harmony with his calling—“This one thing I do.” It was God’s gospel, because it originated with him and came from him. It was in no sense a product of man’s theorizing or philosophizing. It was not a mere addition to the law of Moses, as some Judaizers sought to make it. Paul did not preach his conception of Christianity, but he preached the gospel as the Holy Spirit moved him. He preached “a new and living way.”

Verse 2: *Which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures.* Why was Paul so particular to affirm that the gospel to which he had been separated and which he preached had been promised in the Old Testament Scriptures? He would have the Jews know that the very scriptures on which they relied promised the gospel which he preached. In this letter, as well as in much of his other writings, Paul combated the professed Christians among

the Jews who taught that the Gentile converts had to be circumcised and had to keep the law of Moses, else they could not be saved. They were willing enough for Paul to make converts among the Gentiles, if he would have them circumcised and require them to keep the law; but because he would not do so, these Judaizing teachers opposed him with all their might. They had drawn the idea that Gentiles could be saved only in subservience to all things Jewish. But Paul taught that Jew and Gentile stood on an equal footing before God, and that the prophets had so foretold.

Verses 3, 4: *Concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord.* This connects back with the end of verse 1. It was the gospel of God, but it was concerning his Son. It is the gospel of God, because it originated with him; and it is also the gospel of Christ, because it centers in him. Without Christ, there would be no gospel. It is this gospel to which Paul had been separated and which had been promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures. Yet some tell us that the prophets said nothing of the gospel as we have it revealed through the apostles. Such teachers occupy a position similar to that occupied by the Judaizing teachers who so zealously opposed Paul.

The contrast in verses 3 and 4 is between the human nature and the divine nature of Jesus. As to his human nature, he was the son of David; as to his divine nature, he was the Son of God. By his genealogy he was proved to be of the seed of David; but the final proof that he was the Son of God was his resurrection from the dead. He had claimed to be the Son of God and that he would arise from the dead the third day after his death. The fact that he was raised as he said he would be, established the truth that he was the Son of God. It is argued by some that the resurrection of the dead here referred to is the resurrection of all the dead, and that this universal resurrection was guaranteed by his own resurrection. But that seems to miss the point. Whatever res-

urrection is here referred to is used by Paul as proof to declare beyond doubt the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. The resurrection of all the dead is yet future. How can a fact not yet accomplished be proof of anything? But the fact that Jesus did arise from the dead was the only thing that brought absolute conviction to the hearts of even his disciples that he was the Son of God. His resurrection from the dead left in their minds no trace of doubt.

Verse 5. *Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake.* In the first verse Paul declares that he was a called apostle; now he gives the source of that call. He had not forced himself into that high office, neither had he been called to it by men, but had received his apostleship direct from the Lord Jesus Christ. In that respect he was the equal of any other apostle of the Lord. In another place he says of himself: "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). "For in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 12:11). "Obedience of faith" is the obedience to which faith leads, and which perfects faith. Paul had been made an apostle for the obedience of faith among all nations—an agent of God to bring men to an obedient faith. Jesus said to him on the way to Damascus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:15-18). Paul preached much to Jews, but he was especially an apostle of the Gentiles. It is God's plan that Jew and Gentile have equal rights to the blessings of the gospel.

Verses 6, 7: *Among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This letter

was not addressed to all the people of Rome, but to the called saints in Rome—those who had been called by the gospel into the service of Christ.

Verse 8: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.* After the introductory remarks in verses 1-7, and before entering into the discussion of the problems of the letter, Paul seeks in verses 8-13 to establish a sort of personal relationship with the Roman brethren. This gives the letter more of a personal touch. He wanted them to know that he thanked God through Jesus Christ for them; he was thankful to God that their faith was so active that it was known and proclaimed throughout the whole Roman Empire. A good church was a thing for which Paul was profoundly thankful to God, especially was he thankful for such a church in the capital city of the Roman Empire. Souls are as needy and as valuable and a church might be as good, in an obscure locality, as in a central city; but a church in a central city would be in a position to exert an influence over a wider territory. A glance at Paul's labors shows that he sought to establish churches in central places. These churches then became radiating centers for spreading the gospel. As Rome was the capital city, and therefore the most important city in the Empire, Paul was especially interested in having a strong and active church there.

Verses 9, 10: *For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.* "For God is my witness" was a solemn declaration; he was not making the statement lightly. Perhaps some Judaizing teacher was at Rome and was trying to discredit Paul by telling the brethren that Paul's oft-repeated promises to come were never intended to be fulfilled. So Paul declares that God was witness to the fact that always in his prayers for them he had requested that he might be permitted by the will of God to come to them. He would have them know that, though he could make plans to come, his movements were subject

to God's will; and this should remind us that we should not leave God out of our plans and purposes. On this point James says: "Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that" (James 4:13-15).

"Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son." The spirit, the inner man, frequently called "the heart," is the source of our deeds of acceptable service; and this service of the spirit, to be acceptable, must be in the gospel—that is, in the things the gospel requires. In John 4:24, Jesus says: "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The spirit, the heart, must be in the worship, and the worship must be in the way truth marks out.

Verses 11, 12: *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established: that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.* What was this "spiritual gift" which Paul desired to impart to them? Commentators differ. Some tell us that it was the benefit Paul wished to impart to them by his teaching; but it can hardly be that, for Paul was teaching them in this letter. It seems more likely that he referred to spiritual gifts, though it is singular that he said "gift" instead of "gifts." Perhaps there were not as many people in that church endowed with miraculous powers as Paul thought there should be. It is likely that some of the active workers among Paul's friends had received these powers before they went to Rome. One thing is sure; and that is, that some people at Rome had been endowed with these spiritual gifts, for Paul gave instructions about the proper use of them. (See Rom. 12:6-8). Paul wanted to impart this spiritual gift, "to the end ye may be established." He wanted both himself and them to be comforted in each other's faith. To confer upon them some spiri-

tual gift would certainly be a comfort to them, and to see their increase of faith and usefulness would be a comfort to him.

Verse 13: *And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles.* He had been hindered from carrying out his plans to visit them. This shows that he was not guided by inspiration in forming his plans, for the Holy Spirit would not guide him in forming plans and then allow him to be hindered from carrying out his plans. Paul did sometimes form his own plans, or purposes, which the Holy Spirit did not allow him to carry out. When the Lord was directing Paul toward European fields of labor, he wanted to turn aside and preach in Asia, but was forbidden of the Holy Spirit to do so. Then he wanted to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit suffered him not to do so (Acts 16:6-8).

Verses 14, 15: *I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.* It was not anything these Greeks and Barbarians had done for Paul that put him in debt to them. Jesus had redeemed him, saved him, and made him an heir of heaven, and thus had brought him under obligation to do all he could to carry the same blessings to others. He had thus been brought under obligation to all men. He was ready to do what he could to discharge that obligation to the Romans.

A practical question arises here: Was Paul under any obligation that the rest of us are not under? Are we not in debt the same as he? Are not all Christians under the same obligations? Every one is responsible up to the limit of his possibilities.

Verse 16: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* For preaching the gospel Paul had been subjected to many indignities and had endured much suffering. His own nation had cast him off. He had been cast out of Antioch of Pisidia, stoned at Lystra, beaten and imprisoned at Philippi and had fled

from Thessalonica to avoid his enemies; he had been mocked by the philosophers at Athens, persecuted at Corinth, and a great mob at Ephesus had sought to do him harm. He had suffered all this, and much more; and yet he was not ashamed to preach the gospel “even at Rome; where riches, pomp, and glory are alone held in admiration, where the heights of genius and learning are united with the greatest profligacy of manners; and where, consequently, the humbling doctrines of a religion which demands severe self-denial would be likely to attract derision, and might make the preacher and professor of it as it were ashamed.”

But why should anyone be ashamed of the gospel? It has God as its source, Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation its subject matter, the Holy Spirit as its Revelator, the highest ideals as its philosophy of life, and heaven as its ultimate goal. To be ashamed of the gospel is to be ashamed of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Should a person be ashamed to be a child of the ruler of the universe, ashamed of being a citizen of the glorious kingdom of Christ, ashamed to be striving for heaven and immortal glory? Yet some people are ashamed of the gospel; but not so Paul. No sane person, when he considers, will be ashamed of that which brings the greatest possible good to his fellows. He may have many reasons for being ashamed of himself, but not one reason for being ashamed of God.

Paul tells why he was not ashamed of the gospel; and, in giving the reason for his not being ashamed of the gospel, he announces the theme of his letter. He does not abruptly announce his theme, but leads up to it in an informal way. He spoke of his long-cherished desire to preach the gospel in Rome, that he was a debtor to all, and that to the extent of his ability he was ready to preach the gospel in Rome, for he was not ashamed of the gospel; and then he announced the real theme of his letter: “For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” But what is the force of that expression?

Bloomfield says: “The sense is, ‘For it is the powerful means appointed by God for the salvation of all who believe and em-

brace it.' Thus the sentence comprehends two assertions: (1) of the complete efficacy of the gospel to salvation; (2) that the extent of this efficacy shall reach unto all who believe and obey it, without distinction of Jew or Gentile; i.e., as far as concerns the gracious design of God, it shall be universal." A note in the Cambridge Greek Testament: "Tr. 'God's power for salvation' closely together—equals God's effective means for saving men. The insertion of the article in A. V. and R. V. only weakens the force of the expression."

Preachers have lessened the force of the expression by emphasizing "the"; as a matter of fact, "the" is not in the original. The gospel is God's power for saving men. God's power has been, and is, manifested in many ways for many purposes. In creating the world, he used his creative power; in saving men he uses his saving power. The power by which God saves men is his gospel. If men are saved, they will be saved by God's power. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel for it is God's power for salvation.

But many religious people do not believe that the gospel is God's power for saving men. Their whole theory of conversion is built on the theory that man is so depraved by nature that he cannot so much as believe the gospel until he is first regenerated, or made alive, by a direct work of the Spirit. That doctrine is set forth in their creeds. With all such religionists, the direct work of the Spirit is the power which saves. Many have been the prayers for God to "send the converting power down and save these sinners now." The mourners'-bench system was the way that theory was carried into practice a few years ago. They have dropped that practice, but still hold to the theory on which it was based. It seems, therefore, that it used to take more praying, singing, and shouting to induce God to send down converting power than it does now! It would be useless to ask any of these fellows to explain why this is so, for they cannot explain it. Neither can they make their theory harmonize with Paul's plain declaration that the gospel is God's power for salvation.

The gospel was made to meet the sinner's needs as he is, and it was preached to him by inspired men as a being responsible for the way he treated their message. In the great commission Jesus gave not one hint that sinners could not obey the gospel, and not one time did any inspired man tell his auditors that they must have a direct work of the Spirit to enable them to do what they were commanded to do. That was Christianity in practice. And the practice of inspired men is worth more than all the theories of all the creeds. It is both interesting and instructive to follow the inspired preachers and see how they proceeded.

When Peter preached to the multitudes on the day of Pentecost, he expected them to hear and understand what he said. He sought to drive conviction to their hearts, depending alone upon his arguments. He succeeded in doing so, for the record says: "Now when they had heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" They were not so dead but they could hear and understand; not so depraved but that they could feel the force of Peter's arguments, and desire to get rid of their guilt. The Holy Spirit, knowing that they did not need that direct enabling power from above, told them plainly what to do: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation." Of course, the only way they could save themselves was to turn from their sins in obeying the gospel. It is certain that they had not been saved up to the time Peter exhorted them to save themselves. And it is just as evident that they could do what they were commanded and exhorted to do. Not one word is said about their being so depraved that they could not do anything; nothing was said as to their need of a direct power to enable them to appropriate the benefits of the gospel. The gospel was adapted to them as they were. No; God did not make a plan to save folks, and then have to save the folks before the plan would operate on them!

Verse 17: *For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written 'But the righteous shall live by faith.'* The seventeenth verse has given a good deal of trouble to commentators. They have not so much trouble in determining the meaning of the words as in determining the proper place of the two prepositional phrases namely, “from faith” and “unto faith.” Translators and commentators differ as to the proper placing of these phrases. Some would have the phrase “from faith” to modify the word “revealed.” But to say that the gospel was revealed from faith is, to me, meaningless. I can see how the revealed gospel might produce faith, but cannot see how faith could produce the gospel. And to say, as some would have it, that the gospel was revealed from one degree of faith to another is equally meaningless. The gospel was not revealed by faith, but by inspiration. If we take into consideration Paul's reason for making the statement, together with a correct conception of the plan of salvation, we should not have much difficulty in arriving at a proper understanding of the verse. Notice carefully this clear statement by James Macknight: “‘The righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith’ is an assembly of words to which no distinct meaning can be attached. But the original, rightly construed, gives the following clear literal sense: ‘The righteousness of God by faith is revealed in it, in order to faith.’ The apostle was not ashamed of the gospel, because a righteousness of God's appointment, to be obtained by faith, is revealed in it, in order to produce faith in them to whom it is preached. The latter clause, ‘as it is written, The just shall live by faith,’ were better translated, ‘The just by faith shall live.’” I. B. Grubbs, in his commentary, says: “We follow the translation given in the English Revised Version—deviating only as to the rendering of the clause in question, a deviation which, as we think, can be abundantly justified. The sentence with its separately indicated parts will read as follows: (1) ‘Therein is revealed (2) a righteousness of God by faith (3) in order to faith.’” Other authorities can be cited to the same effect.

But what is the meaning of “righteousness of God”? Paul does not mean to say that the truth that God is a righteous Being

is revealed in the gospel—that truth had been fully revealed in the Old Testament. Of the Jews, Paul said: “For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). The Jews were not ignorant that God was a righteous Being, but they were ignorant of this gospel plan of righteousness, and therefore did not submit to it. In Phil. 3:9, Paul refers to it as a righteousness “which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” In the gospel is revealed a plan by which God makes men righteous.

To be righteous is to be free from guilt. If a man never sinned, he would be righteous by his own works. But all have sinned and are under condemnation. If no plan had been devised by which guilty sinners might be made righteous, the whole world would be lost without remedy. Some power had to be brought to bear on the sin-polluted sons and daughters of men that would make them clean and holy, or all were lost. Paul affirms that the power which accomplishes that very thing is the gospel. “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17, 18). When a sinner obeys the gospel, he is made free from sin; he is then in God’s sight as free from sin as if he had never sinned; he is justified; he is righteous; he is clean. If the gospel did not accomplish this for the sinner, it would not be God’s power to save. Such a person is not righteous because he has always lived right, but because he has obtained righteousness by becoming obedient to the gospel.

But what of the phrase “in order to faith”? Is it in harmony with the rest of the Bible to say that a plan of righteousness, or justification, is revealed in the gospel as an inducement for men to believe? Notice the following: “Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law” (Gal. 2:16). To

get out from under condemnation, to be released from the penalty of sin, to be justified in God's sight—is that not enough to make any sin-burdened person want to become a Christian?

The gospel, then, is God's power for saving men, because in it is revealed God's plan of righteousness by faith. The gospel makes those who accept it righteous, and that great benefit to be found in the gospel induces men to believe it.

Verse 18: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness.* God's wrath is legal wrath rather than emotional. His law has been violated, and the wrath of the law must be visited upon the transgressor, unless some means can be devised whereby God can be just while justifying the sinner. The "for" at the beginning of this verse is significant, and establishes close connection between this verse and what had just been said. A plan of righteousness has been made known, because God's wrath is revealed against all sin. It is singular that God would devise a plan by which he could save the sinner from his own wrath. Had his wrath been of that furious type manifest by men, he would not have wanted to save any one from it. He would have taken delight in giving it full sway. But while man was resting under God's judicial wrath, God's love went out to him, and prompted him to devise a plan by which man could be delivered from the legal consequences of his sin.

To sum up: The gospel is God's power for salvation to those who believe it, for a way for sinners to become righteous is revealed in it, as an inducement for men to believe it so as to escape the penalty of a violated law.

If the gospel was to be a real benefit to man, a real power to save him, there must first be a need for it. If the world was not lost, there was no need for anything to save it; or if the world was lost and there was already at hand a means of saving it, there was no need for the gospel. From chapter 1:18 to chapter 3:20 Paul shows that both Jew and Gentile were lost without the gospel.

The reasonings—the professed wisdom—of the Gentiles had plunged them into the depths of moral pollution instead of saving them, and the law had condemned the Jew instead of saving him. All were sinners, and all were under condemnation.

This gives us a better insight into the real purpose of the gospel. It is God's way of meeting man's needs; it was designed as a means of saving the lost. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; he came not to condemn, but to save. Without the gospel, the whole world was lost. "The whole world lieth in sin." The question is frequently asked: "What will become of the heathen who never heard the gospel?" If a person understood the real purpose and philosophy of the gospel, he would never ask that question. To set such questioners to thinking, we ask: What would have become of the same heathen, if there had never been any gospel? The gospel was designed to save a world already condemned. It is only in a relative sense that people are lost because they do not obey the gospel. Primarily people are lost because they are sinners. To illustrate: a boat is rushed out to rescue a drowning man. He refuses to be rescued, and is drowned. Now, why did he drown? "O," some one replies, "he drowned because he would not get in the boat." Wrong. The boat had nothing to do with his drowning; he drowned because he was in the water, and he would have drowned just the same had there never been a boat. Of course, his refusing to be rescued made his drowning a case of suicide. Just so with the sinner. The gospel is sent out to rescue the perishing. When the sinner refuses to be rescued, it intensifies his guilt and shows it to be a case of spiritual suicide. But the gospel had nothing to do with his perishing; he would have perished had there never been a gospel. The boat was a means of rescue, and so is the gospel.

God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Occasionally a Bible reader wonders about these words, both as to their meaning and as to the parties to whom they apply.

We will get a better grasp on the meaning of ungodliness by first considering the meaning of godliness. The meaning of this word has been obscured by trying to make it mean godlikeness. It has no such meaning in the Bible; the Greek word from which it is translated has no such meaning. Godliness is piety, reverence. A godly person is one who has respect for God and sacred things. Ungodliness is impiety, irreverence, a lack of respect for God and sacred things. Godliness is a right attitude toward God; ungodliness is a wrong attitude toward God. Righteousness refers more particularly to our right attitude toward our fellow men. It is treating our fellow men right. Unrighteousness is the failure to do right toward our fellow men.

Ungodliness is worse than unrighteousness, though not generally so regarded. Our first and primary duty is to God. If we revere God as we should, we will respect his word, his church, and his worship. Those who blaspheme the name of God, or speak lightly of any of God's commands, are ungodly. Through sudden passion or some great weakness a person might do wrong to his fellow man, and then be filled with great penitence toward God for the wrong he had done. Such a one still retained his reverence for God. David did that. He did unrighteous things; but his reverence for God was un failing, and always brought him to repentance. But the ungodly are not so; they do not take God into account in anything they do.

There is ungodliness in the church, and even in the pulpit. It manifests itself in many ways. Some men are so careless as to what the Bible says that they put themselves to no real trouble to find exactly what any given passage means. A godly man wants to know exactly what the will of God is. Some are so ungodly as to destroy a church to carry their own selfish ends. A godly man loves and respects that which belongs to God. Many pulpits in this land are radiating centers for all sorts of infidelity. The masses in this country have never been righteous. There has been, and is yet, too much disregard for the rights of others; too much cheating, defrauding, and robbery; too much lying, deceit, and

slander; too much fighting and killing. In addition to our unrighteousness, we are fast becoming an ungodly people. We are eliminating God from our thinking and from our program of life. We deny him a part in creation and do not take him into account in what we do. And as men eliminate God from creation and thus make human beings no more than a group of animals, unrighteousness of all sorts is bound to increase; for, if we are no more than animals, why should I respect a man's rights any more than I would respect the rights of any of the lower animals? As ungodliness increases, crime of all sorts is bound to increase.

The last clause in verse 18 reads as follows in the King James Version: "Who hold the truth in unrighteousness." In the American Standard Version: "Who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." The Greek word means both "to possess" and "to hinder"; but of course, it cannot have both meanings in the same place. The connection in which it is used must determine its meaning. Some people argue that the person who knows the truth, but will not obey it, holds it in unrighteousness. But this could hardly be said of the persons of whom Paul was here speaking; for, though they had once known God, they had "refused to have God in their knowledge" (verse 28) and had "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (verse 25). Paul was speaking of these people as they were when he wrote. It could not be said of them that they at that time knew the truth, but would not obey it. They had known the truth, but had drifted so far away from it that they were worshipping gods of their own making. At that time they were not holding the truth at all; but their awful sinfulness, as depicted by Paul in the rest of the chapter, was a mighty barrier to the advancement of the truth. By their unrighteousness they were hindering the truth.

It is a fearful thing to hinder the truth of God, and God's wrath is revealed against all who hinder his truth. Even church members often hinder the truth by their unrighteousness. We profess to be friends of God, and then hinder him in what he is seeking to do for man. By such conduct we become enemies of God.

Verse 19: *Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them.* The nineteenth verse is a continuation of the things affirmed in the eighteenth verse. It was not unjust for God to punish these ungodly and unrighteous men, “because that which is known of God is manifest in them,” or among them. Of course, finite minds cannot fully comprehend the Infinite Being, but the knowable things of God had been manifest among them; “for God manifested it to them.” As the pronoun “it” is not in the Greek, it seems that it would be more in harmony with Paul’s argument to translate the last clause thus: “For God manifested himself to them.” In various ways along down the ages God had manifested himself to the peoples of the earth. He had made an extensive revelation of himself to the Jews; that is easily seen. But what of his manifestations to the other peoples of the earth? In selecting the children of Israel for a special purpose, did God deliberately reject the other peoples? Did he leave them without any light, and that, too, because he did not want them to have any light? Could any one have such thoughts concerning Jehovah? Is that the idea we have of the One whom we worship as our heavenly father?

The people of every nation find a common ancestor in Noah. Noah stood in great favor with Jehovah. Both before and after the flood God talked to Noah. By means of the flood God revealed to Noah and his family in a very striking way his hatred of sin, his justice, his power, and his providence. Those descendants of Noah who went into idolatry had first to reject what they knew of God. Later God manifested himself to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to Joseph. Many people would learn of the one God through these great men. Then God manifested himself to the Egyptians and to the children of Israel in a wonderful way when he brought Israel out of bondage. God intended that these wonderful miracles wrought in the deliverance of Israel should teach all nations, as is clearly shown by what he said to Pharaoh; “But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Ex. 9:16). That these miracles were told among the

nations is indicated by what Rahab of Jericho told the spies. (See Josh. 2:10-14). Jonah carried the knowledge of Jehovah to the capital city of the Assyrians, and brought the king and the whole city of Nineveh to repentance and to a confession of Jehovah. When the kingdom of Israel was carried into captivity by the Assyrians, they were scattered about through that vast kingdom. Among them would be found some who were faithful to Jehovah and who would carry the knowledge of Jehovah where they were placed. Then, after Babylon gained the mastery of that whole country, they carried the kingdom of Judah into captivity. Among these were many faithful men and women who carried the knowledge of Jehovah to all the provinces of that vast empire. Daniel and his companions were such active servants of Jehovah as to cause Nebuchadnezzar to make a decree concerning Jehovah, and publish it throughout his kingdom. Later Darius made a similar proclamation. When the time came for the Jews to return from this captivity, Cyrus made a proclamation in which he announced that Jehovah had given him his great dominion and had charged him to build Jehovah a house in Jerusalem. Much later the Jews and their synagogues were to be found in all parts of the Roman Empire. The Jew stood squarely against idolatry and for the one God. In their synagogues the Scriptures were read and the doctrine of Jehovah was propagated. Also, along down the ages there had been such men as Melchizedek, Jethro, Job, and Balaam before his fall. Many of the Grecians of prominence, such as Solon and Plato, believed in the one Supreme Being. This is only a brief outline of one of the ways the nations had of knowing God, if they had wanted to know him. But Paul mentions another way which God had manifested himself to all.

Verse 20: *For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.* Invisible things are things which we cannot see with the natural eye; but things invisible to the natural eye are sometimes clearly seen with the mind's eye. To see is often used in the sense of to understand, to comprehend. Paul so uses it here. The invisible

things of God are clearly seen, being perceived, or understood, by the things that are made. These invisible things of God are explained as “his everlasting power and divinity.” We know that power is necessary to change, or to make, or to create, anything; but how do the things which God made enable us to see clearly “his everlasting power”? The things we see about us were either made or they are themselves everlasting; but no one argues that the universe as we see it is everlasting. It was, then, made by everlasting power, or else by created power. But no created power could have made this universe; but even if it could, there is yet back of it a Creator. Nothing less than divinity could have made and put into motion so vast a machine as the universe. In the created things we see the power and glory of their Maker. Read the following translation by Leeser: “The heavens relate the glory of God and the expanse telleth of the works of his hands. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words, their voice is not heard. But their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words” (Ps. 19:1-4). The stars in the heavens speak no words and we hear not their voice, yet they speak wonderful things to the thoughtful mind. All created things are God’s witnesses—silent, but none the less convincing. On this point Paul said to the men of Lystra: “And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). There was no reason why any nation should have forgotten God. Every star proved his existence, and every raindrop and growing plant demonstrates his presence in the operations of nature. As inspiration viewed the matter, all nations were without excuse for their idolatry and their corrupt morals.

Verse 21: *Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.* These heathen nations had known God; their knowledge of him had been sufficient to rob them of any excuse for their gross sins. But though they knew him, they

did not glorify him as God. Their knowing him had been of no benefit to them; they had sinned against the light they had.

To glorify God as God is to recognize him as the Creator, Preserver, and rightful Ruler of all things, and to seek earnestly to comply with his will—to do the work he intended us to do. In his prayer on the night of his betrayal, Jesus said: “I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do” (John 17:4). Only in this way may we glorify him. If a machine fails to do the work which it was made to do, it certainly reflects no glory on the one who made it; but if it does perfectly the work it was designed to do, it glorifies its maker. If any of our inventions, plans, or purposes succeed, we thereby bring worldly glory upon ourselves. In the very nature of the case it cannot be otherwise. It is therefore impossible to glorify God by our own plans and purposes, no matter how successful they may seem to be. Only by doing the things he designed we should do can we glorify him. Herein the nations had miserably failed. And having put God out of their philosophy of things, there was no longer any gratitude in their hearts to the Giver of all good things. When people deny God, they are, of course, not thankful.

They became vain in their reasonings—that is, their speculations were foolish and without value. How else could they be? There can be no solid process of reasoning without a starting point, and no process of reasoning that eliminates God has any starting point. It must begin with a guess, an assumption, and proceed in the dark. If God did not create the universe, then any theory as to its origin is a blind guess. If God did not create us, then any theory as to the origin of life and as to how we became human beings is founded on a series of baseless guesses. Hence, when nations eliminated God from his universe, they became vain, empty, foolish, in their reasonings. Having shut themselves off from the only Source of light, “their senseless heart was darkened.”

Verse 22: *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* To claim superior wisdom is characteristic of those who deny God

his place in his own creation. In their estimation the man who believes the Bible is a back number, an ignoramus. They never seem to realize that the man who professes himself to be wise is a fool, and they have not learned enough to know that no man is richly endowed with any virtue or accomplishment of which he boasts.

If a man thinks and acts contrary to common sense, he is a fool, no matter how much he may know about some things. Common sense is the knowledge the human family has accumulated by experience and observation. We have learned that fire burns. If a man should deny that and act according to his theory, he would act foolishly. Only a fool would say that it would not hurt to run full tilt against a stone wall. And only a fool will say that a thing can be made without a maker, for experience and observation teach us that every made thing has a maker. Recently I read that a rayon factory was being built with such complete machinery that one man could sit at a switch-board and operate the whole plant. After that factory is finished and in operation what would you think of a man who, while watching it operate, would argue that no one built it, and that it ran without any force applied to it, and that no one directed, or controlled, its operations? Well, that is exactly what I think about the man who argues that no one made this great machine we call the universe, that it operates by its own power, and that no one controls, or directs, that power. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." If there is no God, then the universe was made without a maker, and now runs by perpetual motion—nothing made it, nothing started it in motion, and nothing keeps it going! If these fellows are right then those who tried to invent machines that would run without any power were not such cranks, after all. If there is no God, then perpetual motion is a reality! If a man is a fool who thinks a watch might just happen to be he is much more so who thinks this universe just happened to be. And so the nations who thought themselves too wise to believe in God had in reality become fools. But people cannot remain in a state of negation; they will believe in something. When a people deny God, they are but

one step from idolatry. The nations of whom Paul speaks denied God, “and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things” (verse 23). Men will worship something; if not God, then they will worship some sort of an idol. And they will recognize infallibility somewhere. Segregate our “wise men” of today so that they will not be restrained by any outside influence, and they will drift into some form of idolatry. There is but a step between denying God and the worshipping of any sort of a god.

Because these nations denied God and turned to the worship of idols, God gave them up to follow their own lusts. He did not give them up till they first gave him up. He let them go because they were set on going. From their rationalism they soon plunged into the basest of sins and the most degrading sort of superstition.

God gave us reasoning powers, and intends for us to use them; but there is a limit to reason. It cannot fully fathom God, nor correctly blaze out a way which it has never trod. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” But since God has revealed his will to us, it is our duty to use our best reasoning powers to search out that will. But to reject revelation and depend upon reason as the true source of light is rationalism; and to do so is to make reason our god, and that is a form of idolatry. It is easy to drift from one form of idolatry to another.

Reason without reverence for a Higher Power is a dangerous thing. Superstition is not so dangerous. In fact, superstition and reverence are closely related. As a matter of fact, superstition is ignorant reverence. The superstitious can be taught; but even God himself gave the rationalist up to follow his own ways.

Verse 23: *And changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.* The glory of God is here used in contrast with the shame of idolatry, and God is described as incorruptible in contrast with corruptible man. These nations had

known God, but had turned from that knowledge to their own speculations. When men come to rely on their own speculations instead of on the sure knowledge of God, they will, sooner or later, repudiate him altogether. Men naturally want to deny the existence of a God whom they will not honor. They will change him off for something else. The nations changed the glorious God for the various images common to idolaters. They rejected the One from whom all blessings come, and worshiped everything else that seemed to be of any benefit to them, and also the things which they feared.

Verse 24: *Wherefore God gave them up in the lust of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves.* When people are determined to reject God for their own way, God allows them unhindered to follow their chosen course so that they may the sooner see the degradation that comes to those who follow their own wisdom. When men are not held in restraint by a feeling of personal responsibility to God nor by associating with those who do honor God, their passions become the controlling force in their lives; they plunge into all sorts of immoralities, and they dishonor their bodies among themselves. When a whole nation forsakes God for idols, there is not then so much as the conventions of society to hold them in check. It takes a power outside itself to keep anything from going downward, both in physics and in morals.

Verse 25: *For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen!* Their whole system of speculations and their doctrines pertaining to the worship of idols is here called a “lie.” It is strange that men will deliberately turn from the truth to a lie, but that is what any one does who turns from God to human wisdom. And the mind of man must become densely ignorant before it can consent to worship man and beasts rather than the Creator. But such conduct detracts nothing from God’s glory. Whether we worship or not, he “is blessed forever.” The “Amen” is added as a strong affirmation—so let it be.

Verses 26, 27: *For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.* Paul is not indulging in a lot of fanciful speculations nor presenting baseless theories. He is showing how the heathen nations had reached the lowest degree of moral degradation. When a people cease to respect God, they will not long respect their own bodies. They give themselves up to passions of dishonor. Their women become abusers of their own bodies. The men indulged in the debasing practice of sodomy. We are told that this was a common practice among the prominent men of Greece, and also the Romans. When the greatest men of a nation descend to the lowest conceivable form of immorality, it shows how powerless education and philosophy are to save men from the deepest depths of moral pollution.

Verse 28: *And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not befitting.* Again Paul states the reason for their corruption. For the word *refused* the marginal reading has “Greek, *did not approve.*” “They tested or proved God and decided not to keep him” (R. St. John Parry). The God of heaven was not the God they wanted, and they rejected him from their system of knowledge, or philosophy. The rationalists of today occupy the same grounds. God is entirely ruled out. Because the nations then ruled God out of their affairs, “God gave them up unto a reprobate mind.” “A reprobate mind” is a mind that did not stand the test, and hence was rejected. They rejected God, and God in turn rejected them. They had so degenerated in their thinking that God could no longer tolerate them.

Paul had shown that when they so dishonored God they began to worship idols, they also began to dishonor their own bodies. In verses 29-31 he speaks mostly of the crimes that men commit toward one another. If a man does not regard God nor

the honor of his own body, it is not likely that he will have much regard for his fellow man. Such people are ready for any sin that their passions or their self-interests dictate.

NOTE:—What Paul says about the sins of these idolatrous nations throws light on a question that occasionally comes up—that is, whether or not a person that is not in covenant relations with the Lord is held accountable for his deeds. That question was first brought to my attention when a good brother said concerning some non-Christian young people, “It does not make any difference what they do, for the Lord does not take any notice of them, anyway. Not being in covenant relations with the Lord, they are not under any law of God: they therefore violate no law of God, no matter what they do.” I could not believe that doctrine then, and I believe it less now. If that doctrine is true, an alien sinner is not a sinner at all! He could not be, if God holds nothing against him; and if the doctrine be true, there is no such thing as baptism for the remission of sins. But the language of Paul shows the doctrine to be false. Certainly these heathen nations were not in covenant relations with God; yet they were great sinners. Notice the long list of sins they were continuously indulging in. The whole plan of salvation is based on the fact that men are sinners and need to be saved. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. God now commands all men everywhere to repent. If the nations had not been sinners, they would not have needed the gospel. To prove the universal need of the gospel, Paul starts in to prove that all men are sinners.

Verses 29-31: *Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful.* The sins which Paul here enumerates are sins which people commit against one another. Paul had already showed how they had dishonored and rejected God and had abused and dishonored their own bodies, and now he proceeds to list the sins they commit

against one another. It makes a dark picture, but history tells us that the heathen nations were guilty of everything Paul charges against them.

They were “filled with all unrighteousness.” It is not that they sometimes did unrighteous things, but they were full of all unrighteous deeds. “Unrighteousness” does not here include all sinful deeds, for it is mentioned as one kind of a long list of sins. It here means *injustice*. The Greek conveys that idea. Injustice is unfair and dishonest dealings and grows out of a lack of regard for others. An unjust man cheats and defrauds and has no interest in the welfare of the man with whom he deals. Paul does not mean that injustice is found only among the heathen nations; but these nations, having denied God and adopted idol worship, had nothing to hold them in the paths of just dealing. Where God and his word are revered, men are not full of injustice. To the Hebrews God said: “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have” (Lev. 19:35, 36). But Christianity teaches a higher code than justice. Instead of giving a just measure, we are taught to give a measure shaken down, heaped up, and running over. We are taught to be generous, forbearing, and merciful. The genuine Christian deals justly, with generosity added. It is a shame that some professed Christians are really idolaters in that they worship gain, and are therefore, as tricky as any other heathen.

Wickedness, maliciousness, malignity—these words all occur in verse 29. Disregarding for the present the words that come between them, I have put them together in this paragraph, because they are kindred in meaning. In fact, the Greek words from which these are translated sometimes have practically the same meaning. It is evident that they do not mean the same thing here. If they had everywhere meant the same thing, Paul would have used but one of them in the same verse. The Greek words in order of occurrence in this verse are *poneria*, *kakia*, and *kakoetheia*. Of the first two words Thayer says: “*Kakia* denotes rather the vicious

disposition, *poneria* the active exercise of the same." In his "Synonyms of the New Testament," Section 11, Trench says: "We shall not err in saying *kakia* is more the evil habit of mind, *poneria* the outcropping of the same." *Poneria*, translated "wickedness" in the American Standard Version, refers to the wickedness of the deeds; it is *malice* of the heart, *ill will*, *a desire to injure*, carried in action. It is the outcropping of *kakia*, *ill will*, *a desire to injure*. The other word (*kakoetheia*, translated *malignity*) Jeremy Taylor calls "a baseness of nature by which we take things by the wrong handle, and expound things always in the worst sense." Trench says of this word: "The position which it occupies in St. Paul's list of sins entirely justifies us in regarding it as the peculiar form of evil which manifests itself in the malignant interpretation of the actions of others, an attributing of them all to the worst motive."

Here, then, is a group of words describing some very pernicious sins, so common among the heathen nations as to enable Paul to say these nations were full of them. A man might in a passion injure his fellow man, but that is quite different from practicing injurious things because of a deep-seated desire to injure some one. When a person reaches that stage of depravity of mind, there is little, if any, good in him. Such a person can see no good in another. No matter what another does, such a person feels sure he had an evil motive in doing it. He could hardly think otherwise, for he knows of no motives except those that are evil. His own character is his standard of judgment.

It is a pity that such sins are found even in this country. It could not be truthfully said that this country is full of such sins, but they are too common. If a man is really a Christian, if he loves his neighbor as himself, he will not want to do anything to injure his neighbor. A Christian does not want to hurt; he wants to help.

Covetousness is avarice, a greedy desire for possessions. The heathen nations were full of a desire to get the things of others. If the laws of the land or a desire to appear decent did not restrain the covetous man, he would take what belonged to another any

way he could get it. Paul tells us that covetousness is idolatry. This is one form of idolatry that is practiced even in this country. A man who wants property more than he wants to serve God makes property his god. He might as well worship an idol of gold on his mantel as a sack of gold in his bank.

Envy is defined as “chagrin or discontent at another’s excellence or good fortune; malicious grudging.” It is certainly a perverted nature that is full of such feelings. While it could not be said that the people of this land are full of envy, it certainly is true that there is too much envy even in this land. Perhaps few people are entirely free of it. “A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30). Envy crucified the Son of God. Pilate protested the crucifixion of the Son of God, “for he perceived that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up” (Mark 15:10). Envy corrodes and corrupts the character, and sometimes leads to murder. It may not be an accident that Paul places murder immediately after envy.

Murder is included in the list of sins laid to the charge of the nations that had turned away from God to follow their own wisdom. Having denied God and plunged into a sinful course of life, they had come to have little regard for human life. The word Paul used was not confined to the taking of human life with premeditated malice by a person of sound mind. It would include any killing that grew out of disregard for human life. “It is scarcely necessary to show that this was common among the Gentiles. It has prevailed in all communities, but particularly prevalent in Rome. It is necessary only to refer the reader to the common events in the Roman history of assassinations, deaths by poison, and the destruction of slaves. But in a special manner the charge was properly alleged against them, on account of the inhuman contests of the gladiators in the amphitheaters. These were common at Rome, and constituted a favorite amusement of the people. Originally, captives, slaves, and criminals were trained for combat; but it afterwards became common for even Roman citizens to engage in these bloody combats, and Nero at one show

exhibited no less than four hundred senators and six hundred knights as gladiators.” (Barnes). But what concerns us most is the increase of murders in this country; and it is practically useless to bewail the murderous habits of our countrymen so long as the causes that produce murders are ignored and even taught. As it now is, criminals go unpunished; our children are taught that human beings are a sort of high grade animals with no souls, and God’s word is ignored and even jeered at by some of our educators. Justice has been mocked and is now only a name, man has been degraded to the status of an improved ape, and God has been dethroned and laughed out of his own world. It is foolish to expect anything but an increase of murders so long as these conditions prevail. Three things will decrease murders:—namely, (1) quick and sure punishment of the killer, (2) impress upon the growing generation higher regard for human life, and (3) teach them a deeper reverence of God and his word by impressing upon them that God is the rightful ruler and that we must give account to him. And it would do a lot of good for people to be reminded that a lot of foolish speculation does not abolish hell. The pure and unadulterated gospel is the remedy for this sin, as well as for the others Paul mentions.

For “strife” the King James Version has “debate.” But the word “debate” does not now mean a personal wrangle, quarrel, or fight, as it did three hundred years ago, and as did the word Paul used. A debate now is a discussion to elicit or to propagate truth. It was not so three hundred years ago. The word Paul used meant a quarrel, a wrangle, or fight. No one should try to make it appear that Paul taught that a discussion is wrong.

The Greek word, here translated deceit, is defined by Liddell and Scott as, “strictly *a bait*, for fish; hence, any *snare*, *cunning contrivance for deceiving* or *catching*; in general, *any trick* or *crafty attempt*; and so in the abstract, *wile*, *craft*, *cunning*, *treachery*.” Hence deceit is an attempt to get the advantage of another without letting him know your intentions; it is to profit at his expense by keeping him in the dark. The man who does such things is with-

out principle. It is a pity that even in this country there are men who will deceive others for advantage. Selfishness and a disregard for the rights of others are at the bottom of deceit. A deceitful person is altogether unreliable.

Whisperers are cowardly sneaks who have not the courage to come out in the open and say damaging things about others, but secretly peddle their slanderous statements and insinuations against the object or objects of their campaign of spite. They usually add: “Be sure not to use my name in connection with the matter, for I do not want to get mixed up in the mess.” Such characters have been aptly termed “snakes in the grass.” They would destroy a good name, and then gloat over what they had been able to accomplish. Only the Lord can properly award such characters.

Backbiters, slanderers, defamers, who delight in destroying the good name of others. Such characters are not particular as to the truth of what they tell. Whisperers and backbiters are of the same breed, excepting that the backbiters are more open and bold. Neither of them has the courage to face the accused with their slanders. Neither is worthy of a place among decent people. It is a pity that the slimy trails of both are found in this good land of ours.

Haters of God—I have here adopted the marginal reading as the one more in harmony with the context; for Paul is here listing the sins of the nations, and puts this down as one of the sins. It would seem that a person had reached the depth of depravity when he becomes a God hater. But the man that continues to defy God and his laws will eventually become a hater of God.

Insolent is defined by Webster as, “haughty and contemptuous or brutal in behavior or language; overbearing; grossly disrespectful.” In its milder manifestations, insolence is uppishness. The insolent person has a feeling of superiority over others; at least, he assumes to be superior. The feeling makes one brutal or insulting to others. He is bolder than the backbiter; he likes to

crush and humiliate one who is present, and delights to have others witness his triumph.

There is but a shade of difference between “haughty” and “insolent.” Webster’s first definition: “Disdainfully or contemptuously proud; arrogant; supercilious.” Such a person is proud of himself; he likes to strut and swagger. He is embodied egotism. If such a person could ever realize that every time he is trying to show off he is acting a fool, it would help his manners. He needs the sobering influence of the gospel.

Boastful—An empty pretender: he boasts of things he does not possess or of things he has never done. He wants people to think of him as rich and a great doer of things. He likes to talk about himself; he is a little man swelled up. Such fellows are shoddy goods marked up. When a man boasts, he is generally lacking in the things of which he boasts.

Inventor of Evil things—People who indulge in worldly and sinful pursuits are constantly seeking new thrills. Old forms of pleasure and sin grow stale, and new forms of indulgence are constantly being sought out. There are now more ways to sin than ever before in the world’s history, and the end is not yet.

Disobedient to parents—Not many things break down the morals of a country more quickly and cause more lawlessness than disrespect for parents. If children disrespect parental authority, they will disrespect all authority. If they have no regard for their parents, they are not likely to have regard for anything. But when such conditions prevail, parents are not blameless. Obedience and respect are matters that have to be learned. “Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” Parents that do not try to train their children in right principles and good habits care very little for them. But it is hard for you to train up your children as they should be trained when everybody else lets theirs run loose and do as they please. However, nothing but a decay of morals can be expected where children are not taught obedience and respect to parents. Children who

properly love and esteem their parents will care for them when they become too old or too helpless to care for themselves.

Without understanding—It is no crime for a mentally defective person to be unable to understand. These people had a mind, but they had not filled it with truth and right principles. They did not have an understanding of the real philosophy of correct living. So many people are without understanding because they will not understand. They have closed their eyes and stopped their ears to keep from learning the right. They prefer darkness. There is such a thing as willful ignorance. God has never withheld light from any one who wanted the light.

A covenant breaker is one who will not stand to his agreements, whether these agreements be written or oral. Sometimes you hear some one say of another, “His word is as good as his bond.” It is a fine thing for a man to have that sort of reputation, but it is a bad state of affairs when that can be mentioned as a point of distinction. Keeping one’s word should be so common among men that it would not be a point of distinction for any man. A man who will not keep his word, whether written or oral, is a sorry specimen of humanity.

Without natural affection—These nations were without the affections that should exist on account of the ties of nature; there was no proper affection between parents and children. Paul’s charge against them is abundantly proved by the heathen writers of those days.

Unmerciful—They were harsh and unfeeling. There can be no mercy when the heart has no sympathy, for mercy is sympathy in action; it is the tender and kind feeling bearing the fruit of helpfulness. The wicked may become so hard of heart as to be devoid of mercy.

And even the Christian needs to watch himself. A person who has high ideals and a high sense of honor may become rather harsh toward those who make no special effort to do right. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Let us

watch ourselves; mercy is a grace worth cultivating. “For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy.” “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”

Verse 32: *Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them.* They had no revelation. How, then, did they know the ordinance of God and the penalty for its infraction? But Paul does not say that they knew the entire law of God. So far as his language shows, they knew only that those who practice such sins as he enumerates are worthy of death. But how did they know that these sins and that those who practiced them were worthy of death?

There is embedded in man's nature a consciousness of right and wrong. If he never had a revelation from God, he knows that it is wrong to abuse his body and to mistreat his fellows. The fact that the heathen nations then had and now have laws for the punishment of crime shows that they recognize that there was such a thing as crime and that certain crimes should be punished by death.

Let us be fair with God's word. A revelation from God was never intended to create any new faculties in man. It does not plant in the human heart a consciousness of right and wrong, but it does guide and refine that consciousness, and places motives before man to induce him to do right. If a man were to reach the point where he had no consciousness of right and wrong, his case would be hopeless. The goodness that is in the gospel has no appeal to the person who has no idea of goodness. But the heathen nations had an idea of right and wrong and knew that certain crimes were worthy of death. Yet they indulged in the things they knew to be wrong. Not only so, “but consent with them that practice them.”

This is a sample of the material contained in
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