



**WHO IS ST. PAUL?**

St. Paul is one of the most influential early Christian missionaries, with his writings forming a considerable portion of the New Testament. His influence on Christian thinking has been immeasurable due to his role as a prominent apostle of Christianity during the spread of the gospel across the Roman Empire!

Paul was previously known as Saul who persecuted the Christians. His conversion came about while he was travelling from Jerusalem to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him in a great light. Saul was blinded for 3 days. His eyesight was restored by Ananias of Damascus, and Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish messiah and the son of God (See Acts 9 for more info).

**WHO IS HE TARGETING?** Paul challenges the secular, pagan mind!

**KEY MESSAGE?** "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". However, "God demonstrated his own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"

**Chapter 1:** Fill in the blanks.

1. "...to all who are in Rome, beloved of \_\_\_\_\_, called to be \_\_\_\_\_. Grace to you and \_\_\_\_\_ from God..."

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS MEANS? ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM states that Paul reminds us of the eternal benefit which the "...calling..." brings. That is "Grace and peace!" which is available for everyone. What is grace? It is 'the power of God'. Furthermore, it is Gods love (shown at the cross) that presented us with grace and grace with peace.

2. "...I am not \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ, for it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God to salvation for \_\_\_\_\_ who believes..."

ONE OF THE GREATEST SCHOLARS NAMED ORIGEN explains the many attacks that were made on the gospel when it was first preached. But Paul knew that he would preach the gospel "not in plausible words of human wisdom but in the power of the Spirit." When Paul says "...the power of God for salvation..." he implies that there is another power of God which is not for salvation but for damnation. In the end God is the Judge, he can save or condemn us! Don't think that God is too nice to put anyone in hell - His word is often referred to as a "two edged sword" a concept similar to this "power for salvation" and "power for damnation" as Origen explains it.

3. "...(Gods) invisible attributes are clearly \_\_\_\_\_, being \_\_\_\_\_ by things that are \_\_\_\_\_ even his eternal power...so, they are without \_\_\_\_\_."

We see here that Creation displays Gods invisible nature! Another scholar named NOVATIAN stated that "The human mind considers the greatness of the Maker from the greatness of his works through nature." Furthermore, ST. AUGUSTINE claims that it is human pride that causes us to dare say "If only I had known, I would not have done it." This kind of excuse is taken away from us as we have the bible and the scriptures! You have been given so much and so God will expect much more from you. Remember the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-28)?

4. "...Professing to be \_\_\_\_\_, they became \_\_\_\_\_"

AMBROSIASER explains this verse by stating that the philosophers imagined that they were wise because they had explored the natural sciences, astronomy (solar system) and elements, while rejecting the God who made them. Therefore they are fools, for if these sciences are worthy of praise, how much more is their Creator!. For Human pride will make even the wisest person a fool! Examine yourself: Do I give glory to God for the blessings in my life, or do I swell with pride as if these gifts came from me?

5. "...God gave them up to vile \_\_\_\_\_, (and they) exchanged the natural use for for what is against \_\_\_\_\_"

According to St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: "God gave them up" means simply that He left them to their own concoctions. God left those who were not ready to receive what comes from Him but were the first to desert Him, even though He had fully done His part. After all, He gave them reason and an understanding. Yet the people of that time turned against God. To go against God is to go against nature and to commit the most unnatural sins imaginable. A prime example is Homosexuality, which was widely practiced at the time especially by those deemed intelligent. But true intelligence could never practice something that was so clearly contrary to nature, and the Fathers used this as an example of how corrupt the unbelieving mind had become. Think about it what could God have done about this? Could he have forced them to do what was right? Yes, but that would not have made them virtuous. All he could do then was to leave them to their own devices and hope/wait for them to return to Him. He is waiting for your return. Don't leave Him for too long!



"...Back in his arms again..."

# ROMANS

## Chapter 2:

1. "...you are \_\_\_\_\_, for in whatever you judge another you condemn \_\_\_\_\_, for you who \_\_\_\_\_ practice the \_\_\_\_\_ things...."

The Fathers regarded the sins of those who are quick to judge as a sign of pride more than as a form of hypocrisy. Rigorous self-examination should precede our moral evaluation of others. Nobody should assume that because God seems slow to punish, He will not do so in the end! If He delays, it is only because He wants to give people time to repent.

ORIGEN explains that "...ONLY GOD KNOWS THE HEART...." The judgment of God is to be expected ... and only God can judge rightly. For there are some crimes committed in which the deed is evil but the intention is not, e.g., when someone accidentally kills someone else. And there are other cases in which the deed may be good but the thought behind it is not, e.g., if someone shows pity not because God has commanded it but in order to win praise from men. And there are still other cases in which thought and deed are so inter-fused that one cannot distinguish which is good or evil. Given that only God knows the hearts of men and only he can discern the secrets of the mind then, only he has the power to judge rightly!!!! So instead of examining the sins of others, let me look at myself!

2. What are the two riches of Gods goodness that Paul claims leads to repentance? \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.

It is evident that Gods kindness leads to repentance! For ORIGEN himself said "...You can recognize the riches of God's kindness if you consider how many evils men do every day on earth. Almost everyone has fallen away and become worthless, traveling down the wide and broad way of perdition, ignoring the narrow road that leads to eternal life. Yet God lets is sun shine daily on all of them and sends them rain, however much they may blaspheme Him.... Therefore if anyone despises God's kindness and forbearance and patience, he does not know that he is being encouraged by these things to repent! "

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORBEARANCE & PATIENCE?

Forbearance differs from patience in that it applies more to those who sin because of their weakness and not deliberately, whereas patience is bearing those who sin deliberately. But as God has made everything with a certain measure, weight and number, so also His patience has certain limits!!!! Those limits were reached by the people who perished in the flood (Gen 7:21-22) as well as by the men of Sodom who were destroyed by fire from heaven (Mt 7:13-14). And by those who insist on sin today...

3. Aim is to ".....show the work of the law \_\_\_\_\_ in their \_\_\_\_\_, their conscience also bearing \_\_\_\_\_, and between themselves their thoughts \_\_\_\_\_ or excusing them...."

### WHICH LAWS IS ST. PAUL TALKING ABOUT? (v 12-16)

Jews and Gentiles will be judged differently: Jews according to the law of Moses and Gentiles according to the law of nature. But the result will be the same: All who refuse to believe in Christ will be condemned. The Jews were privileged to have the law of Moses, which made God's will clear to them. But Gentiles could discover something of that will for themselves by reading the law of nature and obeying it. The conscience acts as the judge of those who have not received the law of Moses. **WHO WILL BE ACCUSED AND WHO WILL BE EXCUSED?** Those who will be accused here are the heretics, who have broken with the faith of the church. Those who will be excused are those who keep the communion of the church intact.

4. "You who make your boast in the law, do you \_\_\_\_\_ God through \_\_\_\_\_ the law? For the name of God is \_\_\_\_\_ among the \_\_\_\_\_ because of you!"

Here St Paul is telling us to "Practice what we preach" for those who teach the commandments to others break them daily themselves, thereby causing the name of God to be blasphemed among the non-believers.

5. St Paul claims that "....circumcision is that of the \_\_\_\_\_." (hint: v 29)

After reading verses 25-29 we see that the only circumcision that is of any value is the spiritual circumcision of the heart. Outward signs mean nothing by themselves. Therefore Gentiles do not need to be physically circumcised, because if they do what is right, it amounts to the same thing! They will even be in a position to condemn the Jews who are circumcised physically but do not do what they know to be right. Some have received both physical and spiritual circumcision, but the two need NOT go together. Physical circumcision without the spiritual will lead to greater condemnation, but spiritual circumcision even without the physical leads to eternal life!

