

(16) For I am 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

(18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

(21) For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Think on These Things:

- 1) First, let’s take a look at the “Gospel” of Jesus Christ. Please explain what the Gospel is. If you need help, look up 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

**According to the Scriptures, God sent His Son, Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, into our world. Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life, teaching people about God’s nature and His Kingdom. God’s plan required Jesus to die as mankind’s sin-bearer, and He was crucified by the Romans (at the insistence of Jewish religious leaders) and buried. Having fulfilled the Father’s Will, Jesus was resurrected from the dead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day and appeared to many over the next 40 days before ascending to heaven before the eyes of His disciples. Forgiveness of sins and salvation are provided to all who genuinely repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus to save them. This is the Gospel; it points to God’s amazing grace (undeserved favor)!**

- 2) Second, what do we know about God’s method of sharing the Gospel, and how do most people respond to it, from 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Also, look at Acts 2:29-36, 40-41, and 47b. Who saves people?

**1 Corinthians says that God uses the ‘folly’ of preaching to bring the message of salvation to the world. Listeners often demand ‘signs and miracles’, but some scoff at the message of a crucifixion and resurrection as God’s grand plan. Acts records that about 3,000 people came to faith from that message on the day of Pentecost. V. 47 says it is the Lord who saves believers and adds them to Christian fellowships.**

- 3) Are you sometimes embarrassed to reveal your faith? Paul says he is not, and that the Gospel has the “power to save.” Jesus said the fields of humanity are “white to harvest” (John 4:31-38), and Paul said we must always be ready to share (2 Timothy 4:2). Yet many times we shy away from expressing our faith publicly. How do you and your family share your faith where you live?

**Personal response. While people can excitedly share about their hobbies and interests, sports results, family matters, etc..., these same people may be quite uncomfortable talking to others**

about belief in Jesus and living life according to His values. Hopefully, some present will share how they overcame to be more vocal and demonstrative (good works?) with their faith.

- 4) V. 17 says, “The just will live by faith.” That is to say, the justified (you and me) will live by faith, and that we go from faith to faith. Do you believe your faith is growing, that you are becoming more and more like Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 3:18)? What is your evidence?

2 Corinthians 3:18 says that ‘beholding the glory of the Lord, (we) are being transformed into (His) image.... For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.’ God the Holy Spirit is continually molding us into the image of Jesus Christ. Hopefully, class members can identify how they have grown in faith over the years in practical ways.

- 5) What do the wicked do with the truth of God that He has clearly revealed to them (v. 18)? Does this mean they don’t know God’s truth or can’t perceive and understand it? You do realize, don’t you, that we aren’t just speaking about the criminals in jail? We are talking about “most” of the people of the world. Why do you think most people act this way (see 2 Timothy 4:1-5)? They are also now godless, i.e., without God.

The wicked of this world who reject God “suppress His Truth” by their unrighteousness. It smacks of knowing (recognizing) God’s Truth, but rejecting it --- rather than not being able to see or understand it. God’s creation of the world (v. 20) speaks to His very existence --- which they want no part of! Rejecting God, they seek teachings from others such as the agnostic, philosopher or scientist who will reinforce their anti-God position and suit their own (sinful) passions.

- 6) Will God excuse this behavior? What will be the result (v. 18)? (Should non-believers be looking forward to this? See the Hebrews 10:29-31 warning.)

God does not excuse or overlook such behavior. In the end, they receive God’s Wrath (v. 18). Hebrews warns that it is a ‘fearful’ thing to fall into the hands of the Living God (Hebrews 10:31) --- not something anyone should ‘look forward to....’

- 7) V. 21 says most people won’t worship God or bother to thank Him for their lives. How does He describe the condition of their hearts? Do most people still think they are right (v. 22)?

Their thinking is futile, and their hearts become darkened. John 3:19 records, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” V. 22 in Romans 1 says that claiming to be wise, such people actually became fools in their insistent stubbornness.

- 8) What is the primary purpose of an idol? Today, few of us worship physical idols. How are we describing modern day idols?

For most people, an idol is an attempt to make an invisible god, visible. It is like a charm or talisman, something they can observe. Its intent may be to provide comfort or strength or hope while facing things in life. It may be something familiar or an artist’s creative concoction. Whatever it might be, if it diverts one’s attention from the one, true, Living God, it is wrong!!

A more modern definition is that an idol can be any thing or practice or activity which takes or keeps us away from God. (Ask for suggestions from class members.)

People and situations I want to pray for this week: