Romans 1:16-32

Verse 16:

--***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. . .***

--There was a shame connected to the gospel. It was the gospel of a Jewish Messiah that the most religious Jews had rejected; of a King crucified under Roman rule; of a way ill spoken of throughout the world! *There was shame in the true gospel in their day and in ours!*

--It was a high honor and personal calling to preach the gospel, and shame would not stop him! The fact that Paul's preaching was ridiculed and hated by Jews and Greeks alike was evidence that the gospel was not conjured up by men. Men do not understand or accept it. Had it been made up by men, it would have been adjusted to please men and not God. *There is a pressure to create a shameless gospel! + Modern sales techniques that ignore the real or gritty aspects of things.*

--Men are ashamed of the gospel because they want to be saved by their own means, without sin or wicked hearts, and certainly without the cross of Christ and the risen Lord, and most specifically without heaven or hell! *The cross is often seen as the negative part of the message.*

--The "respectable" Christian message has almost nothing to be ashamed of—No sin, no cross, no surrender, no repentance, no separation from the world, no supernatural power to change lives, no new heart, no freedom from sin, etc… *It is treated as a parachute you hope you never have to use.*

--Notice as well, Paul is saying this as a believer! Isn't it sad? Believers can forget God, their Creator, Father, and Savior—they may admit their sin and need for salvation, and still be ashamed to follow Him. There is no worldly shame in being half a Christian, or one who claims God and follows the language, sexual morals, self-pleasing, self-centered lifestyle of a godless culture. But to be a Christian who loves God with their whole heart and obeys with their whole body—and speaks lovingly and reverently of God—that person is a shameful person.

--Think what Satan has accomplished! There are numerous people who believe in Jesus Christ yet would rather be considered normal worldly sinners—and associate as such—than to be known as born-again saved sons and daughters of God?!

--But listen! It was also the same in Paul's day. Paul was not preaching the gospel because it was acceptable to the culture. Paul preached the gospel unashamedly because he knew that God lays hold of human hearts by the Holy Spirit through an empowered gospel.

--***for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.***

--To the Jew first, and then the Greek, was simply the reality of the divine order in which they were living. Yet. . .

1 Corinthians 1:22-25:** ***For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*
--The gospel is divinely true and divinely empowered. Paul experienced that power personally and knew that power publicly in both Jew and Greek. *God's *message* about *the cross* has power, not the superstitious *symbol* of a cross.*

Verse 17:
--What is divinely special about this good news?
--***For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."***
--The good news is that God is righteous to save apart from all human work! God could have been righteous to deal with us like He did in the flood.
--The question is: How does God bring people who are unrighteous (in the wrong), into a place of righteousness (in the right) while still being a just Judge? The answer is: By faith in the work of Christ. The gospel is based on faith and addressed to faith.
--We receive the righteousness of *faith*, not of *works*; *Another's* righteousness, completed on purpose to save us, and redeem us, reconcile us, and make us new. *In some countries, people would pay to die in a monk's garb that the merits of the order of St. Francis or St. Augustine would be given to them—this was a vain shadow of the truth of what we have "in Christ".*
--It was a humiliating truth for the Jew to admit that they, God's circumcised people, had no righteousness of their own to present to God, but must be saved by the righteousness of another, provided as a Lamb by Jehovah, just like the Gentiles.
John 6:29:** ***Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."*
--They had to accept the work of another—a work to be believed in and not done. This is still hard for some "good people" today.
--This idea of righteousness *"from God"* or righteousness *"of God"* was what Luther struggled with for so long. The Bible and his religion were a burden and bondage to him until this became clear. Then he saw the truth, and the truth set him free!
*Martin Luther: *"The whole of scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before 'the righteousness of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven."**
Philippians 3:8-9:** ***Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*

--Paul was set free just like Luther!
--This salvation is ***from faith to faith***—from first to last—to the Jew and Gentile.
--Paul adds ***as it is written*** and quotes from **Habakkuk 2:4** to show this was not something he was making up, but God's intention and plan from the very beginning.
--The wonderful news is not just that a lamb *can* be provided for sin, but that The Perfect Lamb *has* been provided by God Himself.

Verse 18:
--Now in **1:18-3:23,** Paul will expound on God's wrath, judgment, and justice toward sinners—placing the whole world under sin. He is making it clear that there is no other power or means of salvation for ungodly men, only God's wrath. *He moves from obviously carnal sinners, to civil/secret sinners, and then to religious Jewish sinners!*
--**(18)** ***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,***
--This wrath is ***revealed from heaven*** and therefore heaven is unashamed of it: Flood, Sodom, Egypt, Elijah with the prophets of Baal, etc. Man hates when God deals decisively with sin.
--Tragically, man hates God even now, when he is surrounded by beauty and mercy, and while the message of grace and longsuffering is given. When he has been handed over to righteous punishment, and forced to kneel before God Almighty, and forced to hear, see, feel, and know his own rebellion and sin, his hatred will only grow and never relent.
--Therefore, God's wrath—measured and steady—will abide on unrepentant sinners. As God, He must eternally love what is good and hate what is evil.
--***Ungodliness:*** Is direct disregard of God.
--***Unrighteousness:*** Is wicked conduct.
--***Suppress:*** Is the same word as is used of the restrainer in **2 Thess. 2:6-7.**

Verses 19-23:
--**(19-20)** ***because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,***
--The word for ***Godhead*** in verse **20** could also be *divine nature* or *deity,* and is used only here in the NT. Paul is saying something unique about God.
--Paul is not saying that by looking at the creation, man can see the fullness that is only revealed in Christ Jesus—**Colossians 2:9:** ***For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*****.**
--Paul is saying that by contemplating the works of God in creation, man can grasp enough of God's divine nature to prevent him from the error of idolatry—worshiping the creation as or over the Creator. That is why all God-rejecting men are without excuse.

--*But God is invisible?!* Some protest. Invisible realities can be known through what we can see: *Think TV, Internet, cell phones, lasers, germs, so much of science, etc.*
--So too, man can see and perceive that the created things are not the Creator.
--Science can tell us *How,* but it cannot tell us *Why.* Science can explain how grass turns green, but not why grass is green. How the sky looks blue, but not why the sky is blue. Why are green and blue, which fill our world, the easiest shades on the human eye? Luck? Conspiracy? Magic? *G.K. Chesterton's *Ethics of Elfland**
--Apparently, God doesn't believe that information and invisibility are the problem! God has stacked the deck *<u>for us</u>* so that the very world, century, place, and life we are in have been designed to make it easiest for us to find Him. You are in your best possible position to find God and His salvation.
Acts 17:26-28:** ***And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being.*
--Creation gives men no excuse to become idolaters. Rejected truth births idolatry.
--**(21-23)** ***because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.***
--Resisting the truth of God—yet unable to free themselves in conscience and thought from God—man began to shade God in darkness and exchange His incorruptible reality with something else; leaving themselves to live in selfish ingratitude (***unthankful***) and as their own unaccountable gods (***unholy***).
--Idolatry is worshiping God as something that He is not, such as a golden calf (Unworthy). God's glory is ***incorruptible***—He cannot change for better or worse. He is immutable.
Psalm 102:27:** ***You are the same, and Your years have no end.*
--What a contrast between claims and reality! It isn't that man cannot find God or information about God, but that man ***suppresses the truth***; ***without excuse***; ***does not glorify***; ***does not give thanks***; professes to be wise but in the sight of God is futile, foolish, and dark in heart!
--***Professing to be wise, they became fools***, *Foolishness of culture outside of God—Paul's and ours: Science can tell us there is a Creator; that a baby is alive in the womb; that men and women are different.*
--In idolatry, man takes all that is rightfully God's and knowingly, rebelliously, and foolishly gives it to something he knows is not God and not worthy of it.

Verses 24-27:

--This rebellion against truth will lead to one conclusion repeated by the Holy Spirit three times: ***God gave them up. . .24+26+28***. How can God do this? First, some will only repent of sin when they are gorged in it. Otherwise, part of God's just wrath is seen in allowing sin to work its inevitable alienation, ruin, and death. These are the birth pangs of eternal wrath!

--**(24-25)** ***Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.***

--Sadly, this rebellious heart was seen in God's own people.

Acts 7:41-43:** ***And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: *Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.******

--God will surrender a man to sinful desires if he so rejects Him. ***Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:17-19; Phil. 3:17-21; Col. 3:5-11; Titus 3:3-7***

--What happens when we reject God, reject our Creator, reject all His works in us, around us, and live only for ourselves? There is no end to sexual desire or the perversion thereof. This is the ***lusts of their hearts*** and not merely bodies.

--**(26-27)** ***For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.***

--Our society is seeing the effects of it in literal human bodies—the outcomes of promiscuous lifestyles—as well as minds, hearts, spirits, on whole societal levels. *All sexual activity—homosexual or heterosexual—outside of the Creator's design is sin (though one directly ignores the Creator more than the other!).*

--Homosexual behavior is not new to our culture. It was addressed multiple times in the Old Testament as the common practice of the nations around Israel, and Paul addressed the same issues in the Greek and Roman cultures of his day. ***Leviticus 18***

Deuteronomy 22:5:** ***A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.*

--I don't need to go into the negative effects of promiscuous lifestyles: sexually transmitted infections, cancer, AIDS, mental illness, suicide, etc., and all these stats, particularly higher in LGBTQ and trans communities. What is the world's answer? Cry, *Bigotry!* Well, what about those who regret?

--This battle is not just in the godless world. There are large segments of the church right now that are battling along these lines!
Quote from an Anglican church leader: "They have not arrived lightly at their ideas that traditional teaching needs to change. They are not careless about Scripture. They do not reject Christ. But they have come to a different view on sexuality after long prayer, deep study and reflection on understandings of human nature. For them, to question this different teaching is unthinkable, and in many countries is making the church a victim of derision, contempt and even attack. For these churches not to change traditional teaching challenges their very existence."
--We do not need to pray about these issues. We do not need to be careful about how we address them. All we need to do is speak the truth in love. The Bible is clear about the sin of homosexuality. Those who believe like this aforementioned church leader need our prayer. Even so, God's Word cannot be broken. *Pray for faithful servants who will boldly declare God's clear truths in Anglican, PCUSA, RCA, UMC, Mennonite, and other battling denominations!*
--*This is the nature of man apart from God, and we are not beyond it!* *We would be the same exact thing if unsaved! Power is not found in derision or contempt, but by speaking the truth of the gospel in love. Remember, Christians are also stereotyped by the other side.*

Verses 28-32:
--**(28)** ***And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;***
--Here, man is given over to think and live in a way that is totally opposite of what pleases God and benefits man. God is not worth thinking about, and has no viable connection to "real" life, the way we want to live it.
--**(29-30)** ***being filled. . .*** has the idea of being *saturated* or *full to the brim*. Paul then gives a fitting list of mankind living saturated with sins.
--***with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,***
--**(31)** Has five words in the Greek all beginning with "a"—which is negative.
--***undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;***
--**(32)** ***who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.***
--The evil list ends with the picture of glad evil in unity against God. The sinner is ignoring a guilty conscience and rejoicing in those who do the same. Committing evil and applauding and encouraging others to follow your example and do the same is a dark end.