

Romans 1:1-32

From the Oxford Annotated Revised Standard Version Bible, 1977:

- This first of Paul's letters in the canonical order is also the longest, the weightiest, and the most influential of them. Written at the height of his career (between A.D. 54 and 58), it conveys the full richness of his experience of Christ as well as the full maturity of his thought.
- The letter falls in 5 sections:
 1. Salutation, thanksgiving and description of the world's need for salvation (chs. 1-3:20)
 2. God's saving act in Christ: its nature (3:21-4:25)
 3. God's saving act in Christ: the new life it has made available (chs. 5-8)
 4. Role of the Jewish nation in God's plan (chs. 9-11)
 5. Ethical teaching and personal remarks (chs. 12-16)

From The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. II, 1953:

- vv. 1-17: introduction
 - vv. 1-7: the address and salutation
 - vv. 8-15: the thanksgiving
 - vv. 16-17: Paul's understanding of the gospel, the theme of the letter
- vv. 18ff: all are guilty before God and subject to the bondage of sin, and are incapable of saving themselves through obedience to God's law
- vv. 19-32: the failure of the Gentiles
 - vv. 19-23: idolatry
 - vv. 24-27: for Paul, pagan morality demonstrates the kind of moral corruption, especially in sexual vices, a sign that "the wrath" has already begun to work. The prevalence of homosexuality is a manifestation not only of sin, but also of its issue and punishment, i.e., corruption and death.
 - vv. 28-32: the antisocial (as distinguished from the sensual) sins of Gentile society.

From The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 1, 1994:

- It would be wrong to press 1:26-27 for a full analysis of same-sex desires or practices; but equally it is wrong to minimize or marginalize what Paul teaches here.
- We cannot isolate these verses from Paul's larger argument, both in this paragraph and in Romans as a whole. From this it is clear that he regards homosexual practice as a dangerous distortion of God's intention.
- We cannot sideline this passage as irrelevant to Christian ethical discourse, or for that matter to the argument of Romans, or to pretend that it means something other than what it says. It is, of course, important to remind ourselves also that Romans 1 is followed at once by Romans 2, with its emphatic warning against a moral superiority complex. As the argument goes its way, Paul's most damning condemnation is reserved, not for those who engage in what he sees as dehumanizing practices, but for those who adopt a posture of innate moral virtue while themselves failing in their most basic vocation, to be the light of the world.