

# God Gave Them Over

TERMINAL ACTIONS IN GOD'S DEALINGS WITH CHRISTIANS

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness...

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge [Gk., epignosis, ‘mature knowledge’], God gave them over to a reprobate mind...” (Rom. 1:24a, 26a, 28a).

(For supplementary material, see the companion article, “Salvation in Romans.”)

The first chapter of Romans divides itself into two fairly equal parts, dealing with *two types of Christians, in relation to one central subject*.

The first half of the chapter (vv. 1-17) has to do with *faithful Christians in relation to the gospel message, the good news* — though not that facet of the good news pertaining to the grace of God, but that facet of the good news pertaining to *the coming Glory of Christ*.

And the last half of the chapter (vv. 18-32) has to do with *unfaithful Christians in relation to the same gospel message, the same good news*.

## The Type Christians Presented in vv. 1-17

The Christians described in the opening part of the chapter are, as Paul described himself, “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”; or, using an explanation of that being referenced in the words “gospel” and “Christ” in the verse, a person could say that Christians of this nature are “not ashamed of the good news of the One Who will rule and reign.”

There is really *nothing* about salvation by grace through faith in these first seventeen verses. The verses, among related issues, have to do with “the seed of David” (v. 3), declared to be “the Son of God with power [‘sonship’ has to do with *rulership*]” (v. 4), with “obedience to *the faith* [‘the faith,’ an expression peculiarly related to *the Word of the Kingdom*]” (v. 5), with the faith of Christians in Rome being “spoken of throughout the whole world” (v. 8), and with Paul’s expressed desire to go to and proclaim this good news to the Christians in Rome, for a stated purpose — “that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (vv. 10, 13; cf. vv. 15, 16).

### The Type Christians Presented in vv. 18-32

Then, with verse seventeen as a closing statement for the opening part of the chapter, the other type Christians are presented. And the type Christians presented in this section, rather than exercising faith and looking forward to the salvation in view in verse sixteen, had, instead, through their unfaithfulness, been led into various types of disobedience and will suffer “the wrath of God.”

Exactly the opposite of that seen in the previous section is seen in this section. And that becomes increasingly evident as one continues studying this section.

First of all, note the subject matter at hand. *The gospel of grace (having to do with the unsaved and one’s eternal salvation) is not the message Paul called attention to various ways in the opening seventeen verses.* This has already been shown but will become more evident through progressive material in this article.

Then, to further illustrate that Christians alone can be in view throughout chapter one, note the words “knowledge” and “knowing” in verses twenty-eight and thirty-two.

Both of these words are translations of the Greek word *epignosis* (the verb form of this word is used in v. 32 [*epiginosko*], meaning the same as the noun form in v. 28).

In the Greek text there is the regular word for knowledge (*gnosis*); and there is an intensified form of *gnosis*, formed through the preposition *epi* (meaning, “upon”) being prefixed to the word

(*epi-gnosis*, which has to do with a knowledge of something beyond a regular knowledge, *i.e.*, some facet of a *mature knowledge concerning the matter at hand*).

And, according to I Cor. 2:14, the natural man (which is all that the unsaved person possesses) can't even come into possession of a type knowledge described by *gnosis* (the Greek word used in this verse). The reason, of course, is because he is spiritually dead. He simply cannot understand spiritual things.

But the individuals in the latter part of Romans chapter one came into possession of a knowledge of that in view described by *epignosis*. How did they do this if unsaved? They didn't, for, according to I Cor. 2:14, if unsaved, they couldn't have even come into possession of a type knowledge of that in view described by the word *gnosis*, much less *epignosis*.

And, aside from the preceding, it wouldn't make any sense whatsoever to see the first seventeen verses correctly (a message [vv. 15, 16] having to do with *faith* [vv. 8, 16, 17], in relation to *fruit-bearing* [v. 13]), and then attempt to see the latter part of the chapter (vv. 18-32) dealing with the unsaved. Scripture is simply not structured in such a fashion.

(Note that not every unfaithful Christian would fit into the category of those committing the sins mentioned in vv. 18-32, though many would [an ever-increasing number in the world today].)

The division between these two types of Christians is on the basis of an exercise of faith. *One exercises faith, the other does not.*

And, there is *no middle ground in this realm*. Christians either find themselves among those described in the first part of the chapter or among those described in the latter part of the chapter, regardless of whether or not they are guilty of the sins named in the chapter.

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" [Matt. 12:30; cf. Luke 11:23].)

### Three Divisions in vv. 18-32

The latter part of Romans chapter one, dealing with unfaithful Christians, can be divided into three parts, followed by four concluding, summation verses. Three times, after certain sins of

the flesh have been enumerated, emanating out of and resulting from unfaithfulness, Scripture states that “God gave them over” (vv. 24, 26, 28). Then the last four verses in this chapter somewhat present the whole of the matter in a summation statement.

(Though the wording in the English text [KJV] is slightly different in the passages [“God gave them up”; “God gave them over”], the wording in the Greek text is the same in all three verses [an aorist form of the word *paradidomai*, meaning “to hand over,” “to deliver over,” to that seen in the context].

The context has to do with particular sins of the flesh; and, because of the nature of the sins which these Christians had committed / were committing, God is seen as simply pulling back, taking His hands off of the matter so to speak, and turning them over to these sins.)

Shades of the warning passages in the Book of Hebrews are seen in God simply giving these Christians over to their sins in Romans chapter one (particularly the falling away and the wilful sin in Hebrews chapters six and ten). And there is good reason for viewing the matter after this fashion.

But first, note a parallel in Paul’s ministry, as seen in Acts, to the manner in which he began as he wrote Romans. Then, with this parallel in mind, along with the warning passages in Hebrews, the matter, as seen in Romans chapter one, will be dealt with.

### 1) *Three Times in Acts, Three Times in Romans*

It is evident that Paul wrote Romans toward the end of but during the time of the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel (which would be during the time covered by the Book of Acts). This can be clearly seen in the opening two chapters of Romans from the fact that the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel, with Israel holding priority in the order in which this message was to be proclaimed — “to the Jew first” (*cf.* Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10).

During the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel, as seen in the Book of Acts, Paul, on his travels, always followed God’s order when entering into a new city to proclaim the gospel message. He always went *to the Jew first* in that city, taking the message to the Gentiles only after he had been rejected by the Jews (which

would, of necessity, be saved Gentiles [for the message carried "to the Jew first" was the same message carried "also to the Greek," the Gentile, which was a message for the saved alone]).

On three occasions throughout these travels, after being rejected by the Jews in three different cities, Paul stated words similar to those which he penned in the latter part of Romans chapter one. Three different times, because of *the Jews' continued unbelief*, he stated words to the effect that he was giving them over to their unbelief and going to the Gentiles with this message.

The first time was in Antioch (13:46), the second time was in Corinth (18:6), and the third time was in Rome (28:28), when and where the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel ended (abt. 62 A.D.).

Rome was the center of Gentile power in that day, with the Gentiles holding the sceptre (which the Gentiles had held for over six hundred years, since the days of Nebuchadnezzar). And it is only fitting that Paul ended this reoffer of the kingdom to Israel in this particular Gentile city, for Rome was the central city among the nations holding the sceptre which rightfully belonged to Israel; and Israel, having been driven out among these nations to effect repentance — *with God ultimately giving Israel over to their continued unbelief in this central Gentile city* — would now have to await *the fulness of the Gentiles being brought to pass* (cf. Acts 15:14-18; Rom. 11:24-26).

## 2) *The Subject Matter at Hand in Acts, in Romans*

As previously seen, that being dealt with in both Acts and Romans had to do, not with salvation by grace, but with the Word of the Kingdom.

In Acts, in relation to *God giving the Jews over to their unbelief three times*, this had to do with the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel (which was to be proclaimed "to the Jew first").

Then, in Romans, in relation to *God giving Christians over to their unbelief three times*, this had to do with an offer of the same kingdom being made to the Gentiles (saved Gentiles — "and also to the Greek").

And their "unbelief," in both instances, would be exactly the same as the unbelief exhibited by the Israelites under Moses at Kadesh-Barnea. And this unbelief, exhibited at Kadesh-Barnea,

had to do with the things which God had stated that He would do relative to leading the Israelites into the land, destroying the enemy therein, and their possessing the land within a theocracy.

Both accounts are seen in the warning passages in Hebrews.

*The first warning passage in Hebrews* references “so great salvation,” which will be realized when man, rather than Satan and his angels, rules the earth (2:1-5).

Then, in *the second warning passage in Hebrews*, the Israelites under Moses at Kadesh-Barnea are dealt with throughout the better part of two chapters (chs. 3, 4), forming the type, with Christians seen in the antitype.

And, *the third warning passage in Hebrews* (ch. 6) draws from this type set forth in chapters three and four, spelling out in no uncertain terms that the same thing which happened to the unbelieving Israelites will happen to Christians who exhibit unbelief and fall away after the same fashion.

(The Israelites who fell away at Kadesh-Barnea were in possession of the Word of God [the Magna Charta for the kingdom, given at Sinai], and they had both *heard the report concerning the land and tasted the fruits of the land* [a report given by and fruits brought back by the twelve spies]. They possessed more than a rudimentary knowledge of that which they turned away from when they sought to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt.

They, in a respect, as previously seen in Romans, had moved from a knowledge described by the Greek word *gnosis* to a knowledge described by the Greek word *epignosis* [which in the type (same in the antitype) had to do with realizing an inheritance in the land set before them].

This is the same thing seen relative to the Christians in Romans chapter one. Two places in this section, relative to their knowledge of the subject at hand, which was the good news being proclaimed in the first part of the chapter — the good news concerning the coming kingdom of Christ, with Christians being invited to have a part as co-heirs with God’s Son in this kingdom — the word *epignosis*, rather than *gnosis*, is used [vv. 28, 32 (with the verb form of the word used in v. 32)].

This, of course, was during the first century, early in the

dispensation, when this message was proclaimed universally throughout the Churches. In that day, it would have been very unusual to go into a meeting of Christians and not hear this message proclaimed. Thus, Christians in that day, possessing a mature knowledge of this message, could easily find themselves in a position to fall away in the antitype of that which happened to Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, as seen in the second and third warning passages in Hebrews.

Today though, the matter is completely different. Because of the working of the leaven over two millenniums of time [Matt. 13:33], very few Christians even have a *gnosis* type knowledge of the matter. It would be very unusual to attend a meeting of Christians today and hear this message proclaimed. And, if someone did come in and proclaim the message, he would likely be spoken against, with his message possibly associated with that taught by certain cult groups [e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses]. Thus, in this respect, it would be a rare thing for a Christian today to find himself in a position where he could fall away in the antitype of that seen in the second and third warnings in Hebrews.

In this respect, in relation to *Christians in a past day and Christians today*, the matter in the latter part of Romans chapter one will have to be dealt with accordingly.

*Christians in a past day* had something from which they could fall away [expressed by the word *epignosis*, having to do with their knowledge of the subject at hand (Rom. 1:28, 32)].

*Christians today* though, with not even a knowledge of the matter which could be described by the word *gnosis*, have nothing from which they can fall away. But the end result — the complete panorama of all that is involved in God giving them over to where their unfaithfulness has led them — *is still the same.*)

### 3) *The Third and Last Time in Acts, in Romans*

In the preceding respect, note again the same place of unbelief reached in both Acts and Romans where God simply gave them over to their unbelief — *the Jews in Acts and the Christians in Romans.*

The third time in Acts, as previously seen, was *the terminal point*; and, in essence, as also previously seen, that's what occurred in Romans as well. And the whole of the matter, relating to *the*

*Jews in Acts and the Christians in Romans*, as has been shown, for all practical purposes, is the same as that seen in the second and third warnings in Hebrews (cf. II Cor. 13:1, 2).

“Three” is the first of five numbers used in Scripture to show different forms of *completeness* (three, seven, ten, twelve, and forty).

“Three” shows *Divine completeness*.

“Seven” shows *the completeness of that which is in view; also this is God’s number*.

“Ten” shows *numerical completeness*.

“Twelve” shows *governmental completeness*.

“Forty” is used in a *somewhat general sense to show completeness*.

The three appearances of individuals being given over to *unbelief and the results of unbelief* in both Acts (having to do with the *Jews*) and Romans (having to do with *Christians*) take each group of individuals to a *terminal point in their unbelief*. At this point, regarding both groups, God is seen to simply turn away and let them have that which their unfaithfulness has led them into, that which they appear to desire.

#### 4) *That Seen in Romans During Modern Times*

Though a parallel doesn’t exist relative to a *knowledge about the Word of the Kingdom* between first century and twenty-first century Christians, a parallel does exist between *the depths to which Christians during both times could/can sink in their depravity*.

Note that stated about Christians in Romans preceding each of the three times that God refers to giving them over to their unfaithfulness, leading into these various types of depravity. Also note II Tim. 3:1-8, where the same basic depravity is seen, though the passage may relate more to the present state of Christendom relative to “knowledge” than the passage in Romans.

In the passage in II Timothy, these individuals are seen, “Ever learning, and never able to come to *the knowledge* of the truth” (v. 7). As previously stated, the word “knowledge” in this verse is *epignosis* in the Greek text, the same as in Rom. 1:28, 32. But where all the “ever learning” efforts had led those whom Paul



referenced in II Tim. 3:7 is seen to be the same as where individuals in Romans had been led (who, unlike those described in II Timothy, *had possessed* a mature knowledge of the truth). In the next verse, verse eight, they are seen as “men of corrupt minds, reprobate [Gk., *adokimos*, ‘rejected’] concerning *the faith* [again, an expression peculiarly related to *the Word of the Kingdom*].”

The third and last time God gave the unbelieving, disobedient Christians in Romans over to the error of their ways, *homosexuality is brought to the forefront, being practiced by them* (vv. 26b-28).

And that is *exactly where Christendom finds itself today*, though, again, the type *unbelief* behind the gross sins of the flesh is different, but still *unbelief* nonetheless (an *unbelief* not connected with *epignosis*, relating to “the faith”), *with the same end result*.

In this parallel respect to Romans, *homosexual activity in the world today is rampant; and numerous Churches are falling in line with what is viewed as discriminatory practices if they don't follow suit, along with the appearance of an increasing number of homosexual Church groups*.

(As well, this article is being written during a time [June, 2014] in which there is a month-long recognition on a national level accorded homosexuals, along with other sexual deviants. And efforts have been made and are continuing to be made — some through legislative means — to force the entire matter upon the general populace at large.

But not to worry, though the nation, along with many of the Churches, have signed their own death warrants through this type activity, the One Who can straighten it all out is at the door. So, bide your time; He will be here shortly.)

### 5) *A Few Thoughts by Way of Closing*

There is far more to the homosexual activity, along with the same-sex marriages and other forms of sexual deviance, than would appear on the surface. All of this coming to the forefront on a national scale — both religious and political — can only have to do with the times in which we live, times immediately preceding Christ's return, with all attendant events (Luke 17:26-30).

All of this can only be *a Satanic-led attack on that designed and established by God. It can only be an attack, for a purpose, on the God-designed marriage relationship between a man and a woman* (Eph.

5:22-33; I Peter 3:1-7). *And Satan's purpose has to do with what can only be his goal in this realm — an attack upon things pertaining to God's future relationship to Israel, as His wife, and His Son's future relationship to His bride (relationships which must be realized before the Son can reign).*

All of it is just another of the many stops Satan has pulled out in these last days in a vain effort to thwart God's plans and purposes for *Israel* on the one hand and *the Church* on the other, seeking to prevent the inevitable (the end of the matter, as revealed in the Word).

In this respect, note *the departure* "from the faith" and Christians *giving heed to* "seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" in I Tim. 4:1, with *the heart of the matter, the central doctrine of demons referenced in the text, seen in verse three:*

"Forbidding to marry ['Hindering,' 'Standing in the way of,' 'Seeking to prevent marriage'], and commanding to abstain from meats..."

Note that "doctrine" is being dealt with (v. 1), something beyond just present-day marriage between two individuals per se; and "meats," as opposed to milk, would take the matter in this respect into "the depths [*lit.*, 'deep things'] of Satan" (Rev. 2:24), as opposed to "the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10).

The picture can clearly be seen through that occurring on an ever-increasing scale today. And, because of the gravity of the situation, it is of more than passing interest to note that this type activity is what was seen in Romans, in first-century Christianity, in connection with the third and last reference to *God giving them over* to the place where their unfaithfulness had led them.

And this is exactly where present-day Christendom finds itself today as well — *the third and last reference to the place where unfaithfulness has led so many Christians.*

*And there is no fourth statement about God giving them over. A third statement ended the matter in Romans (as it did with the Jews in Acts), and the matter is the same today.*

So, bide your time, for it is almost over; we are almost there.