Prometheus

Prometheus is remembered mainly for having stolen fire from the gods, and for the terrible punishment he suffered for doing it.

Creator of men
The Titan Prometheus is usually regarded as one of the greatest friends of mankind, and the saviour of all men. For when Zeus attempted to destroy the men of the Bronze Age through The Flood, he gave instructions to his son Deucalion, so that he could survive and mankind could start anew. Some have even asserted that man was moulded out of water and earth by Prometheus, himself, who gave him the form of the gods and "... bade him to stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven." (Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.85).

But others say that he and his brother just distributed abilities among creatures: It has been told that when the time arrived for mortal creatures to be created, the gods, after moulding their forms, charged Prometheus, and his brother Epimetheus to deal faculties to each creature. Epimetheus, they say, persuaded Prometheus, to let him do the dealing himself, saying that afterwards Prometheus, could examine what he had done. And to some creatures Epimetheus gave strength, and to others speed; some he armed and others he left unarmed, though giving them some other faculty so that they could survive. To some he gave wings, so that they could escape, and to others he gave the capacity to live underground. And while he distributed all capacities he took the precaution that no species should be extinguished. Likewise Epimetheus took into consideration the seasons, giving to all creatures the faculty of resisting both cold and heat. In similar manner he furnished each kind of creature with its proper food, so that some should feed on grass, others on fruits, and still others on creatures which they could devour. This is how Epimetheus, lacking in wisdom and forethought, distributed all properties suited for survival among animals, leaving unequipped the race of men. Now, when the day arrived for the emergence of all creatures and Prometheus, came to examine his brother's work, he noticed that Epimetheus had not devised anything for the preservation of humans. So in order to correct his brother's mistake, Prometheus, stole wisdom in arts from Hephaestus and Athena, along with fire, so that men could exercise those crafts, and gave all these gifts to humanity. Accordingly, Prometheus, for correcting mistakes in such a way, was later charged with theft. (For another angle on Epimetheus, see Epimetheus - Brief One-Act Play in Three Scenes.)

More cleverness
It has also been said that Prometheus, taught men to sacrifice to the gods in a clever way, casting only a part of the victim into the fire, and keeping the rest for their own food. It is told that Prometheus, deceived Zeus with a trickery concerning the part which should be sacrificed to the god and the part which would remain for men. For Prometheus, concealed the different parts in a certain way, and having given Zeus the chance to choose among them, the god, without any forethought, chose just the bones for his half. They believe that it was because of this trickery that Zeus decided to hide the fire, and prevent men to use it.

Pandora
Probably fearing the consequences of his own cleverness, Prometheus, told his brother Epimetheus never to take a gift from Zeus, but Epimetheus, a man with no foresight, accepted Zeus' gift (Pandora), and he only later understood what had happened. For until that time men lived free from ills, toil and sicknesses, but Pandora, opened a jar containing all kinds of evils, and these flew out, afflicting mankind ever since. Only Hope remained there. Prometheus, fashioned man from clay, and the gods fashioned the first woman, Pandora. This is the reason why Pyrrha, the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora, is called the first mortal woman ever born. Others affirm that Pandora, was not a curse sent from heaven, but that Pandora, who was endowed with all kinds of gifts, was given by the gods to men because the gods wished to show all mortals that they could do even better than Prometheus, who had given them fire.

Friend of mankind
Now, when Cronos was king in heaven, the OLYMPIANS fought a war against him, and having dethroned him, gave the rule to Zeus, who punished both Cronos and the TITANS that supported his cruel order. Prometheus, himself a Titan, forewarned by the Titaness Themis, who knew that neither the brute nor the violent would prevail, rallied with her to the side of Zeus, who finally prevailed. The new ruler proceeded then to apportion to the gods their prerogatives,
but the race of man, which some assert was moulded out of water and earth by Prometheus, himself, he purposed to destroy. It was then that Prometheus, out of compassion for that wretched breed of mortals, planted blind hope in their hearts, and having stolen fire from heaven—which he hid in a stalk of fennel—gave it to men, teaching them many arts and handicrafts. For this audacious deed, Prometheus, paid a high price, being severely punished by the Zeus, the new king of heaven. But among men he came to be called "benefactor," a curious title considering that humans rapidly made a habit of employing Prometheus's gifts to cook and burn one another in many ways.

Prometheus tortured
When Zeus learned about the theft, he ordered Hephaestus to nail Prometheus's body to Mount Caucasus, which he did with the help of Cratos (Power) and Bia (Force), but some affirm that it was Hermes who nailed Prometheus. On a rock in that mountain, Prometheus was kept bound for many years. And every day an eagle swooped on him and devoured the lobes of his liver, which grew by night as much as the eagle had devoured during the day. Some say that this eagle (which some say ate his heart, not his liver) was the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, but others affirm that Hephaestus fashioned it. Medea is said to have used in her sorcery a Caucasian herb of great potency, sprung from the gore that dropped from the liver of Prometheus. She is also said to have used a charm, called "the charm of Prometheus" that anointed on the body (along with other rites) bestowed invulnerability. Being a Titan, Prometheus, should be immortal by birth (a sad privilege since ages of torture awaited him). Yet, some affirm that Prometheus was granted immortality, after Heracles, shot the Centaur Chiron with a poisoned arrow. The wound proved incurable, and Chiron wished to die, but being immortal, he could not. It was then that Prometheus, offered himself to Zeus to be immortal in his stead, and the request being granted by the god, Chiron died and Prometheus obtained immortality.

Credit to Phoroneus
There are those who do not admit that fire was given to mankind by Prometheus, and claim that the discoverer of fire was Phoroneus, a son of the river god Inachus and king in Peloponnesus, called "the first man." Prometheus, they say, did not steal the fire from the gods, but was the discoverer of the procedure from which fire may be kindled.

Freedom in exchange for information
Prometheus is also admired for his resistance against what he perceived as the tyranny and ingratitude of Zeus. Though chained to a rock, he was not deprived of means of resistance: For Zeus contemplated, at the time, marriage with Thetis. And there was a prediction about this nereid, which the god ignored: That her son would be greater than his father. And if that secret were not revealed to Zeus, he would be hurled from his throne as Cronos had been before him. Being in possession of this secret Prometheus, warned the god, declaring that he would provide him with vital information if he would free him from his chains. When the god accepted the bargain, Prometheus, advised Zeus not to wed Thetis, for if one greater than he were born he might become the ruler of heaven in Zeus' place. This is why Thetis was given in marriage to Peleus, being delivered of a child Achilles, who became greater than his father. Others say, however, that Thetis would not consort with Zeus in any case because she had been brought up by Hera, and that Zeus, wishing to punish her, married her to a mortal, his own grandson Peleus. When the agreement was reached, Heracles, was sent to kill the eagle that ate Prometheus's heart or liver, and release the prisoner after thirty thousand years of torture.

Rings and Wreaths
It is said that Zeus did not release Prometheus from binding, since he had sworn to that, but for commemoration bade him bind his finger with stone and iron; and that is why, men adopted the custom of wearing rings fashioned of stone and iron, that they may seem to appease Prometheus. Similarly, it has been said that Prometheus wore a wreath, as if to claim that he as victor had revolted and yet did not suffer punishment for ever. And so the practice began of wearing wreaths at time of victory or rejoicing.

http://www.maicar.com/GML/Prometheus1.html


Prometheus

According to Greek legends, when the Olympians were winning the battle against the ruling Titans, there were two Titans that did not fight: Prometheus (whose name means "forethought") and Epimetheus (whose name means "afterthought"). Thus, when the Olympians won, Prometheus and Epimetheus were spared by Zeus and not banished to Tartarus, a gloomy abyss in the underworld. These two Titans were allowed to come and go as they pleased, but Zeus could always summon them to perform certain tasks. The most significant task of all was the creation of man.

Prometheus: the father of man?

There are numerous literary works that tell about Prometheus and his role in the creation of Man. The earliest one was Theogony, the 800 BC epic poem of Hesiod in which Prometheus was portrayed as a lowly Titan who tricked Zeus into giving man the gift of fire. The most extensive one was in the Protagoras dialogue in which Plato described how Zeus gave Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus the task of creating animals and humans. Apparently, Epimetheus used all attributes, such as wings, scales, and talons, on animals and had nothing left for man. Thus, Prometheus gave humans the appearance of the gods.

However, men did not have the powers that gods possessed. The only way to empower the mortals was to give them fire. Prometheus asked Zeus to give the men fire, but the Olympian god refused. Thus, one night when the gods were sleeping, Prometheus stole fire from Mount Olympus and brought fire to men. Prometheus’ motives for giving fire to men might have come from pity for the helpless mortals, but it could also stem from his anger at Zeus who exiled his family, the other Titans, to Tartarus. At the same time, Prometheus wanted to make sure that Zeus’ expected anger would be appeased. Thus, Prometheus instructed the mortals to regularly make animal sacrifices to Zeus.

Zeus’ punishment against Prometheus

The discovery of men using fire did not please Zeus, and Prometheus was sentenced to an eternal punishment. Prometheus would be chained to a rock, and an eagle swooped down to eat his liver during the day. At night, the liver would grow back, and the torture of having it eaten during the day was repeated. This punishment seems to exceed the gravity of Prometheus’ folly, especially when Prometheus fought against the other enemies of Zeus. But no one can really question nor challenge the wrath of gods.

The relationship between Prometheus and man

Two centuries later, another talented poet, Aeschylus, wrote a more engaging story about Prometheus and his relationship with man. In Prometheus Bound, Aeschylus reveals why Zeus gave such a harsh punishment for Prometheus. Aeschylus’ story revealed that Prometheus did not just steal fire. Prometheus enabled men to be independent and creative thinkers. He gave men the knowledge of mathematics, writing, agriculture, science, and medicine. This allowed men to survive, despite the illogical whims of gods. Zeus, like his father Cronus, had the propensity to destroy races of men. Before Prometheus intervened to help mankind, Zeus has previously destroyed five races of men. Thus, it was Prometheus’ kindness to men and rebellion against Zeus that prevented another complete destruction of a human race. Zeus’ power in destroying creatures on Earth was considerably reduced. And for this, Prometheus is punished.

The fate of Prometheus

Despite being bound to a rock by an unbreakable chain, Prometheus remained unrepentant for his actions. And despite being tortured every day by the liver-eating eagle, Prometheus never became helpless. In fact, Prometheus knew the downfall of Zeus. That is, he knew that one of Zeus’ sons would have enough strength, intelligence, and power to overthrow the king of the Olympians.

Zeus wanted to know which son was planning to usurp his power. Zeus offered to free Prometheus if he would simply reveal the name of the son. Prometheus refused, and this further infuriated Zeus. The Olympian god then declared that the only way to free Prometheus is to have another immortal die for him, while a mortal would need to kill the
terrible eagle and break the chain (Fisher, 1984).

An immortal eventually died for Prometheus. The immortal was Chiron, a centaur. Centaurs are creatures that have the upper torso of a man and the body of a horse. Centaurs are usually savages, and because of their wild nature, they rushed to a jar of wine opened for Heracles, the exiled son of Zeus and Alcmene, a beautiful mortal woman. Heracles fought the centaurs, and in the process, accidentally wounded Chiron, who did not join in the fight.

However, Chiron was unlike other centaurs because he possessed wisdom and kindness. He taught Greek heroes such as Achilles. But the demigod Heracles wounded him. Since centaurs are immortal, Chiron faced an eternity of enduring excruciating pain. Thus, he and Heracles went to Caucasus, where Prometheus was bound. Chiron died for Prometheus, while Heracles killed the eagle and broke the chain (Ferguson, 2000). In the meantime, the sacrifices of men eventually appeased Zeus. Today, Prometheus is the icon for any rebellion against injustice.

References:


http://mythologymadness.com/heroes/
QUICK INTRODUCTION
When Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods, was young and trying to establish his rule, he was challenged by a group of ferocious Titans, who tried to keep him from gaining power. A long and terrible war ensued, with all the Olympian gods joined against the Titans, who were led by Zeus' father Cronus and mighty Atlas.

After ten years of fighting, and with the help of the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires (The Hundred-Handed-Ones), Zeus and his fellow Olympians defeated the enemy. Only a few Titans, particularly Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus, fought on the side of Zeus, against their fellow Titans.

You see, Prometheus was very wise - wiser even than most of the gods - and foresaw the winner of the battle between the Olympians and the Titans. He persuaded his impulsive brother Epimetheus to also fight on the side of Zeus against gigantic Atlas and his army. Once Zeus emerged victorious he granted the brothers some just rewards. Zeus permitted Prometheus and Epimetheus to populate the earth with creatures and humans. Epimetheus (he wasn't too bright and his name means "Afterthought") foolishly gave all the good qualities to the creatures: Strength and speed, the ability to fly, to stay warm in all conditions, to possess a keen sense of smell, superb cunning and instinct, to live underwater...

Sadly, when it came time for Man to be endowed with qualities, there were very few left. The scatterbrained Epimetheus had given away all the goods to the creatures so that there was no quality to make Man a match for the beasts. Desperate and sorry, he begged his brother for help. Prometheus (he was wise and his name means "Forethought") took over the task of creation and considered ways to make humans superior.

WISE PROMETHEUS
When the goddess of wisdom Athena was born out of the head of Zeus, Prometheus (or some say Hephaestus) assisted in the "delivery". Wise Athena then taught Prometheus mathematics, navigation, astronomy, architecture, medicine and many other arts. That's how Prometheus got to be so smart. Along with his ability to foresee the future, that made him a formidable Titan.

Prometheus had created humans in the likeness of gods, using the clay and water of Panopeus, and Athena had breathed a living soul into them. To compensate for the lack of great qualities, which had foolishly all been given to the creatures by Epimetheus, the wise Titan made Man stand upright like the gods, to be noble and conscious, and to hold his head high, looking up at the heavens.

As yet there were no mortal women on the earth. That came later, as we will see.

Prometheus passed onto Man the useful arts taught him by Athena and looked with joy upon his creation:

"Hear the sum of the whole matter in the compass of one brief word--every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus."

From Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus

He felt bad, however, because when Man sacrificed to the gods, the best portions of the animal were offered to the Olympians, leaving little for the people. So Prometheus tricked Zeus into choosing one pile of offerings, cleverly disguised to look delicious, but instead hiding fat and bones.

Zeus fell for the trick and impulsively chose the wrong pile, and from then on humans got to keep the good and tasty parts of the animal offerings, giving to Zeus the useless portions. This made the King of the Olympians real mad, so he punished Prometheus, who was laughing at him. Zeus took fire away from Man - "Let them eat their meat raw!" he shouted. "Let's see how your Men keep warm in the winter!"

Talk about a bad sport! Zeus knew that he would seem ungrateful if he directly hurt Prometheus, since the Titan had really helped him become King of Olympus, so he did the next best thing - Swearing revenge, he punished humans by taking away their fire.
Well, you know that didn't sit well with Prometheus. Daily he looked down with sadness upon his creation, watching them shiver in the cold and try to eat their food raw. Slowly they began to die and Prometheus could no longer sit by idly.

**FIRE RETURNED**

Prometheus arranged a meeting with Athena and beseeched her for help. The wise and gracious Athena kindly revealed to Prometheus a hidden backstairs entrance to Olympus and he gained entrance to the Palace of the gods, one of few to do so.

Upon arriving he lit a torch from the fiery chariot of the sun god, as Helios passed by. Breaking off a fragment of glowing charcoal, he hid the fire inside the hollow of a giant fennel-stalk. Blowing out his torch in case he was spotted by Zeus, Prometheus then worked his way down the side of Mount Olympus.

And what a perilous journey it was! The rebel Prometheus, who had taken such a personal risk for Man, now was faced with getting the fire back down to earth. The winds howled as he strode down the mountain, threatening to blow out the coal, or huff it out of his hand. With each step he took, the Titan fully expected to be seen by Zeus and to be struck dead with one of his killer thunderbolts.

But Prometheus made it to earth and proudly gave the fire to the humans, who were overjoyed, needless to say. Soon Zeus smelled the tantalizing scent of cooked meat drifting up to Olympus from earth and when he looked down he was outraged! There were the humans he had supposedly punished, happily cooking their food and keeping warm around their fires. Zeus was furious!

> "Then men were able to hammer iron into tools, and cut down forests with axes, and sow grain where the forests had been. Then were they able to make houses that the storms could not overthrow, and they were able to warm themselves at hearth fires. They had rest from their labor at times. They built cities; they became beings who no longer had heads and backs bent but were able to raise their faces even to the gods."

*by Padraic Colum, from "The Golden Fleece and the Heroes who Lived Before Achilles"

(It must be noted that, along with all the advantages that fire bestowed upon humanity, it also brought many ills. Out of the flaming forge emerged cruel weapons of war, along with all the attendant miseries that follow the disruption of a simple way of life.)

**REVENGE OF ZEUS**

That was twice that Prometheus had made the King of the Olympians look bad and this time Zeus was not holding back any punches. Forgetting all that Prometheus had done for him in the war against the Titans, Zeus had our hero arrested. He summoned from the Underworld the three ferocious Giants, his thugs Gyes, Cottus, and Briareus, and had them take Prometheus to the highest peak of Mount Caucasus.

On a huge rock the Giants bound the Titan with unbreakable adamantine chains, according to the ancient poet Hesiod from his book "Theogony" (Birth of the Gods):

> To a high-piercing, headlong rock  
> In adamantine chains that none can break.

This is what the brutes told Prometheus, again from Hesiod's "Theogony":

> Forever shall the intolerable present grind you down  
> And he who will release you is not born  
> Such fruit you reap for your man-loving ways.  
> A god yourself, you did not dread God's anger  
> But gave to mortals honor not their due  
> And therefore you must guard this joyless rock --No rest, no sleep, no moment's respite.  
> Groans shall your speech be, lamentation your only words.

Some say that Zeus's henchmen, Force and Power, were the ones who escorted Prometheus to the peak, and that the smith god, Hephaestus, was the one who applied the chains, albeit reluctantly. Here is Hephaestus, in *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus:
Evermore the burden of your present ill shall wear you out; for your deliverer is not yet born.

Such is the prize you have gained for your championship of man. For, god though you are, you did not fear the wrath of the gods, but you bestowed honors upon mortal creatures beyond their due.

Therefore on this joyless rock you must stand sentinel, erect, sleepless, your knee unbent. And many a groan and unavailing lament you shall utter; for the heart of Zeus is hard, and everyone is harsh whose power is new.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, each day an enormous eagle (some say a vulture), sent by Zeus, would arrive and eat at Prometheus’ liver, feasting on the helpless Titan. To make matters worse, the liver would grow back overnight and the whole ordeal would be repeated the following day. Talk about cruel and unusual punishment!

For thirty years (some say one thousand, or even thirty thousand years) Prometheus endured this excruciating pain and torment. Being a god he couldn’t die, hence his ordeal could not be eased. At one point Zeus offered him a chance to free himself by revealing information that Prometheus knew. Since our hero had the power of Foresight, he knew the name of the one who would overthrow Zeus, just like Zeus had done to Cronus. The King of the Olympians promised Prometheus that he would set him free if only the Titan revealed the identity of his potential usurper.

Nothing doing. Stubborn Prometheus informed the Messenger god Hermes, who had delivered Zeus’ offer, to tell his boss to go fly a kite. He couldn’t be bribed.

"Go and persuade the sea wave not to break. You will persuade me no more easily."

Talk about a rebel! Prometheus was the kind of guy you’d want on your side in a brawl! He was tough and his morals were uncompromising. Even though his body was bound, his spirit was free and the Titan refused to buckle to Zeus’ threats, torture and tyranny. Here’s what he told Hermes:

"There is no force which can compel my speech.
So let Zeus hurl his blazing bolts,
And with the white wings of the snow,
With thunder and with earthquake,
Confound the reeling world.
None of this will bend my will."

Hesiod, "Theogony"

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Zeus felt bad. He wasn’t a mean-spirited god, after all, and deep down he admired Prometheus for sticking to his ideals. So he offered a slim glimmer of hope to our hero: Zeus told the Titan that he could go free if two conditions were met:

1) An Immortal would have to give up his life for Prometheus
2) A mortal would have to slay the liver-eating eagle

Small consolation, thought Prometheus... What Immortal would ever give up his life for a Titan, he mused, and besides, there was no mortal brave and strong enough to kill the evil beast that feasted on his liver. Unrepentant for his actions, and fully aware that he had done the right thing in stealing fire from Olympus and giving it to Man, Prometheus was resigned to eternal life on the rocks, so to speak.

But wait! Our story has a happy ending. You see, the Centaur (half man, half horse) named Chiron, a wise and Immortal mentor of many Greek heroes, had been accidentally shot and wounded by one of Heracles’ (Hercules) poisoned arrows. The arrows were deadly, having being dipped in the blood of the dying Hydra. But being an Immortal, the gentle Centaur could not die, but lived in horrid pain from the lethal poison.
Hearing of the plight of courageous Prometheus, Chiron volunteered to die in his stead so that his unbearable pain would cease, at the same time conferring his immortality upon the chained Titan. It was a mutually beneficial move and fulfilled the first part of Zeus' terms. Now, where could be found a mortal hero brave enough to challenge the ferocious eagle?

Have no fear, Heracles is here! Passing by Mount Caucasus one day the world's greatest hero, mighty Heracles, saw Prometheus bound to the rock, with the frightful eagle merrily munching on his liver. This would not do! Heracles was famous for always taking the side of the just, the powerless and the overwhelmed.

Armed with his bow and arrows, gifts from the gods, mighty Heracles took aim and let fly a missile at the beast. Bingo! One shot was all it took and the Titan's tormentor became buzzard feed itself, killed instantly by the poisoned arrow...

Prometheus was now free to go! By this time Zeus had realized his folly in imposing such a stern sentence upon the brave Titan, so he invited Prometheus to come and live on Mount Olympus. All was forgiven and our hero rejoined his rightful place at the home of the gods.

Zeus did make Prometheus wear a ring, in which a piece of the Caucasus rock was set, as a symbol of his painful connection with the mountain. This represented the first ring to have a setting, and ever since humans have worn rings in honor of the Titan, in gratitude for all the agony he had endured on their behalf.

"No hard feelings. By the way, Prometheus, any chance of you telling me the name of the one who will overthrow me?" asked Zeus.

"Forget it, Big Guy!" replied our hero, a rebel to the end...

But just to show that he harbored no grudge, Prometheus eventually did tell Zeus and Poseidon, who were both pursuing a sea nymph named Thetis, to avoid the girl at all costs. Prometheus informed the Olympian gods that the son of Thetis would grow up to become mightier than his father. A thankful Zeus promptly ordered Thetis to marry a mortal named Peleus and their offspring was the great hero of the Trojan War, Achilles, who indeed achieved a fame for surpassing that of his father.

Before his divine punishment Prometheus married Hesione, and is said to have conceived Oceanus with her. He is also considered to have been the father of Deucalion and in some cases is described as the brother of the Titans Atlas and Menoetius, as well as the foolish Epimetheus.

The name of brave Prometheus has endured throughout the ages as the world's first rebel and the champion of humanity. He fought against divine authority for his ideals and ultimately paid a heavy price for his Foresight. Aren't you glad he did, though?

**EPILOGUE**

After Zeus imposed the horrible punishment upon Prometheus he then followed that up with a similar infliction upon Man, whom the Titan had created. Zeus ordered Hephaestus to craft a gorgeous female out of clay. She was to be called Pandora (All-Gifted) and she would be the world's first mortal woman.

Meant as a bride for foolish Epimetheus, Pandora would unleash countless evils upon humanity. Poor Pandora had everything, you see. But she also was cursed by the gods with Curiosity, and that proved to be her undoing.

http://mythmon.com/
The Myth of Prometheus — The Thief of Fire

If Prometheus hadn’t stolen the fire from Zeus, what the mankind would have done? But the mischievous Titan in the Greek Mythology stole it and while he was celebrated by the mortals he was cruelly punished by the God of all Gods.

Considering this Prometheus’s deed as one of the biggest crimes ever — although it was not the first time that Prometheus tricked Zeus — the Mighty God had Prometheus chained to the rock where the eagle was to eat his eternally replenished liver every day.

What a dispute between mortals and immortals! And what a great story for artistic expressions and theatrical plays! And most importantly, that punishment was not the end of the tale of Prometheus and Zeus. But let’s start from the beginning.

Prometheus and Zeus
Prometheus was one of the Titans, who at some point were sent to Tartarus by the enraged Zeus who didn’t accept the Titans’s fighting against him in the famous Battle of the Titans — Titanomachy.

However Prometheus was not directly involved in the war, so Zeus saved him from Tartarus and gave him a mission — to form a man from water and earth. Prometheus accomplished the task, but while working on his creation, he grew fond of men. He didn’t care much ever about the Gods and their hierarchy, and however friendly treated by them, he was much more comfortable being around the immortals. In any case, Zeus’s idea was not to have men having any unusual power. But Prometheus was thinking the other way, and decided to steal one of the powers Zeus was particularly sensitive about — fire.

Prometheus Steals the Fire
Thinking about stealing fire was easy, but it finally proved a bit more complicated. Prometheus, known for his wit and intelligence, had an immediate plan — to trick the goddesses throwing them a golden pear (in some version — apple) into the courtyard with a message: “For the most beautiful goddess of all”.

It worked as he planned — the goddesses started a fight over the fruit while gods were completely enjoying the scene. All of them were distracted and Prometheus didn’t have a hard time stealing the fire from Hephaestus’s workshop. Hephaestus was, among other stuff, the Greek god of fire. Prometheus happily left the Gods’ playground and took the fire with him either in a hollowed pumpkin or hollowed reed (depending on the interpretation) and brought it to Earth and gave it to humans.

Oh, how Zeus was mad. After so many times being defied by Prometheus, Zeus decided that it was enough. Nevertheless, he made Hephaestus himself to chain Prometheus on Mount Caucasus where the eagle would eat his liver forever.

http://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/prometheus-fire-myth/
Prometheus

The Rebel Titan

Prometheus was not a fool, but why else would he rebel against Zeus? He tried to trick Zeus (who knows all and sees all) with a false sacrifice. How foolish can you get? Prometheus also stole fire from Zeus and gave it to the primitive mortals on the earth. Zeus did not punish Prometheus alone, he punished the entire world for the effrontery of this rebel god.

Prometheus was the son of Iapetos and Klymene (Clymene). His name means Forethought.

Prometheus was a god long before Zeus took the Throne of Eternity. He fought for Zeus against the devising Kronos (Cronos), but Prometheus never had true respect for Zeus. He feared that the new Olympians had no compassion for each other or the mortals on the earth below. To show his disdain, Prometheus prepared two sacrifices and, in an attempt to belittle father Zeus, he made one sacrifice of fat and bones and the other of the finest meat. The trick was, Prometheus had wrapped the fat in such a way that it looked to be the most sincere tribute of the two. Zeus saw through the trick and magnanimously controlled his anger. He warned Prometheus but did not punish him.

The Crimes of Prometheus

Zeus had many plans for the reshaping of creation. After the fall of Kronos and his confinement in Tartaras, Zeus took no interest in the mortal race of men on the bountiful earth, he intended for them to live as primitives until they died off. Zeus said that knowledge and divine gifts would only bring misery to the mortals and he insisted that Prometheus not interfere with his plans.

Despite Zeus’ warning, Prometheus took pity on the primitive mortals and again, he deceived Zeus. Prometheus gave the mortals all sorts of gifts: brickwork, woodworking, telling the seasons by the stars, numbers, the alphabet (for remembering things), yoked oxen, carriages, saddles, ships and sails. He also gave other gifts: healing drugs, seer craft, signs in the sky, the mining of precious metals, animal sacrifice and all art.

To compound his crime, Prometheus had stolen fire from Zeus and given it to the mortals in their dark caves. The gift of divine fire unleashed a flood of inventiveness, productivity and, most of all, respect for the immortal gods in the rapidly developing mortals. Within no time (by Immortal standards), culture, art, and literacy permeated the land around Mount Olympos (Olympus). When Zeus realized the deception that Prometheus had fostered, he was furious. He had Hephaistos (Hephaestus) yoke Prometheus to the side of a crag, high in the Caucasus mountains. There Prometheus would hang until the fury of Zeus subsided.

Each day, Prometheus would be tormented by Zeus’ eagle as it tore at his immortal flesh and tried to devour his liver. Each night, as the frost bit it’s way into his sleep, the torn flesh would mend so the eagle could begin anew at the first touch of Eos (the Dawn).

Zeus’ anger did not stop there. He intended to give the mortals one more gift and undo all the good Prometheus had done. He fashioned a hateful thing in the shape of a young girl and called her Pandora. Her name means, ‘giver of all’ or ‘all endowed’. Her body was made by Hephaistos, he gave her form and voice. Athene (Athena) gave her dexterity and inventiveness. Aphrodite (goddess of Love) put a spell of enchantment around her head and Hermes put pettiness in her tiny brain. She was ready for the world.

Pandora

Zeus gave Pandora to Ephemetheus (brother of Prometheus). Ephemetheus knew better than to trust Zeus and he had been warned by Prometheus never to accept gifts from the Olympians, especially Zeus. One look at Pandora and Ephemetheus was rendered helpless. He could not resist her, he accepted her willingly. When the gift was ‘opened’, evil and despair entered into this world. Mistrust and disease spread over the wide earth. After Pandora was emptied of her curse, only Hope was left inside. Unreasonable, groundless Hope that makes the curse of life into a blessing.

And so, Prometheus was destined to suffer at the hands of his own kind. Gods punishing gods. To him, the saddest part of his punishment was the implication that the gods (Zeus in particular) had lost their right to rule because
they had lost touch with their hearts.

Okeanos and the River Daughters
As Prometheus was hanging, shackled to the rock face, he spoke to Okeanos (Ocean) and the river’s daughters. They were all shocked at Zeus’ excesses but Prometheus warned them not to speak out against Zeus, it would do no good. Zeus would soon fall from his throne and they had but to wait for that inevitable moment.

Prometheus and Io
When Io, who was also being punished by Zeus, came upon Prometheus and the daughters of Okeanos, she wanted to know her future. Prometheus, even in his tortured condition, tried to spare the feelings of the poor girl. She had been transformed into a black and white heifer and was cursed to wander, prodded by an evil gadfly. Her future was only slightly better than his but she was lucky because she was mortal and would die and be rid of her earthly torment. He, on the other hand, was immortal. His torment would last forever.

The journey of Io was crucial to the release of Prometheus from his bonds. After her wandering journey to Egypt, Io was returned to her human form and had a glorious son named Epaphos. Thirteen generations later, Herakles (Heracles) climbed the mountain, killed the eagle and freed Prometheus from his shackles.

http://messagenetcommresearch.com/myths/bios/prometheus.html
This is the story of how the world began, as the ancient Greeks told it.

The first thing that existed, the oldest thing of all, was chaos. No one can say what chaos looked like. It had no height, or width or depth, yet it was everywhere. And out of chaos Mother Earth emerged. Her name was Gaia. Gaia created the mountains, the plains, the rivers and the foaming seas. Then she took a husband - Uranus, the starry sky - and poured forth living creatures, the lion, the horse, the eagle and all the birds and beasts we know today. But others that she made were strange and monstrous, giants with a hundred arms or one eye in their forehead, and nymphs, the female spirits of the woods and waters. Then Gaia bore the first rulers of the earth, six sons and six daughters - the Titans.

The Titans were like their mother - strong and lawless. Cronus, their ruler, ate his children as soon as they were born, for Gaia had warned him that a powerful son would overthow him. His precautions were useless, for not even the gods can escape their fate. It was the destiny of the Titans to be defeated by younger, nobler gods. Cronus's wife Rhea outwitted her hated husband. She hid her sixth child, a boy named Zeus, in a cave, and offered Cronus a great stone swaddled like a baby to eat instead. Cronus thrust the stone into his stomach, never dreaming that he had a son alive, cared for by the nymphs and growing stronger by the day.

One day Rhea said to Cronus 'I have got rid of that useless creature that serves you at table. This is your new cupbearer.' The new attendant, who looked tall and powerful, offered Cronus a honeyed drink. Cronus gulped it down and at once felt drowsy and rather ill. As he slid into irresistible sleep, he realized, in a befuddled way, that he had been tricked. The cupbearer was his son Zeus, who had given him a herb to make him vomit violently in his sleep. Out came the stone he had swallowed, followed
by Zeus's elder brothers and sisters, who sprang out quite unhurt. They bound their father with chains and declared Zeus master of the world.

Zeus cast the Titans to the outer ends of the earth and compelled Atlas, the brawniest, to support the sky upon his shoulders forever. The new gods made their home on the top of lofty Mount Olympus. From his palace high above the clouds Zeus kept an eye on what went on below. His brow grew very black when he discovered the Titans befriending some creatures that were new on earth - mortal beings called men.

Some say that Mother Earth had made men spring from the rocks and soil. Others say a Titan called Prometheus took potter's clay and modelled them. Prometheus was clever, a maker of things who taught men skills when they were new to the world. Mother Earth gave him an enormous basket of gifts and told him to share them out among all mortal creatures. 'I have made them too hastily,' she said, 'and life is hard for them.'

Now Prometheus had a brother called Epimetheus who was as foolish as Prometheus was wise. When Epimetheus saw the basket he begged to be allowed to do the sharing. 'Certainly not' said Prometheus. 'You'll make a mess of it.'

But Epimetheus pleaded so much that Prometheus agreed he could start giving away the small gifts. Epimetheus gave a shell to the crab, fangs to the snake, long legs to the hare, and so on. He soon came to the end of the smaller things. Then he gave swift wings to the eagle and ferocity to the lion, and so delighted them that he could not stop. When
Prometheus returned the basket was empty.

'You didn't think I'd manage,' said Epimetheus triumphantly 'but I've done a perfect job. There was just enough to go round.' 'What did you give to men?' asked Prometheus sharply.

Epimetheus had to admit he had quite forgotten about men. Prometheus was furious, chiefly with himself for letting this happen. Men needed a gift so he decided to fetch them fire from heaven.

Now Zeus had a poor opinion of mankind, whom he suspected of plotting with the Titans. To keep men helpless, he had hidden fire on Olympus and meant to keep it from them. 'They can eat raw meat, and shiver' he said. Prometheus crept up to Olympus, into the forge of Hephaestus the god of fire, and smuggled out a glowing ember hidden in a hollow fennel stalk. From it he lit a torch and brought it flaming down from heaven to men.

This was the best gift he could have given them. With fire they had warmth and light and could forge tools to build houses and make ploughs. But Zeus was angry and revengeful. He called the gods to him and said in a deceptively mild way, 'Men are lonely in the world so I have made a companion for them - woman.' He showed them a lovely creature like a goddess. 'I have done my best,' he said 'Now each of you must give her a gift and she will be perfect - our present to mankind.' So Aphrodite, goddess of love, gave her beauty; Hermes, the gods' quick-silver messenger, filled her with liveliness and cunning; the Graces gave
Prometheus and Pandora

her irresistible charm. Each god gave something, and she was named Pandora, which means 'all gifts'; because nothing was omitted that could win men's hearts.

Zeus then commanded Hermes the messenger to lead Pandora down to earth. But at the last minute he called them back. 'This is for you' he said and he gave Pandora a box. 'But see that you never open it' he added, and smiled secretly.

Hermes brought Pandora to Prometheus, but he was suspicious and refused to have anything to do with her. Soft-hearted Epimetheus said, 'I'll look after her.'

'Don't,' Prometheus told him. 'You are a fool, Epimetheus. No good will come of anything from Zeus.'

Epimetheus did not listen. He took Pandora home and the two lived contentedly for a time. Then Pandora became restless.

'I can't think why Zeus gave me that box,' she kept saying.

'Neither can I' Epimetheus would reply without much interest.

'He told me not to look in it.'

'Then we needn't bother about it, need we, Pandora?'

But Pandora could not leave it at that. She thought that Epimetheus was stupid to show so little curiosity. 'I'll take just one peep,' she thought. She undid the clasp.

Immediately the lid flew open and a swarm of hideous mischiefs and misfortunes shot into the air - envy and greed and sickness and old age, famine and war, deceit, lies, fear, and useless pride. Pandora shrieked as the horrid things rushed past her face and flew into the open air, scattering far and wide throughout the world, where they have been tormenting people ever since. It was too late now to close the box. There was only one thing left in it, a tiny flame that flickered as if at any moment it would go out. This too rose in the air and followed the rest. This flame was Hope. Zeus's heart had softened sufficiently to allow mankind this one comfort, which has helped it to endure a thousand ills.
Prometheus, Friend of Humankind

Not all the classical creation myths identified Zeus as the creator of humankind. One tradition maintained that Prometheus, a Titan, created the human race and then remained its advocate in the face of the supreme god's hostility.

During the war between the Titans and Olympians, some of the Titans' children sided with Zeus and his brothers. One of these was Prometheus, whose name in Greek means "forethought" and who was able to foresee that Zeus would be victorious. To reward him for his faithful service, Zeus gave him the task of creating life for the Earth. After he had made the animals with Zeus's approval, Prometheus sculpted clay figures, modelled on the gods, which could stand upright. Pleased with his work, he gave these figures life, but this time without seeking Zeus's permission.

Because of this insult, Zeus never cared for humans. Only Prometheus's intervention eased their lives. For example, it was his guile that won for them the better portion of the meat from sacrificial animals. He hid the choice cuts of meat under an animal's stomach, then wrapped the bones and entrails in delicious-looking fat, before inviting Zeus to choose the gods' portion. Zeus was deceived, and the people had meat to eat. Ever after human celebrants at sacrifices received the tastiest parts of the animal (see page 43).

Then Prometheus stole fire from heaven and gave it to his human creations. Zeus, outraged, ordered that the thief should be tied to a rock for eternity. Each day an eagle came and ate out his liver, which grew again the following night.

To punish humankind for Prometheus's gifts, Zeus designed a beautiful but wicked novelty - a woman, Pandora, who was as foolish as she was alluring. Zeus sent her to Earth carrying a pot that she was ordered never to open. The men, enchanted by her charm, welcomed her among them. But soon, stupidly, she opened the secret vessel, as Zeus knew she would, and out of it flew the miseries that afflict humanity, such as war, famine and sin. Only hope, ever deceptive, remained in the pot, a slight comfort.

Prometheus himself was released from his torture after thirty thousand years. It was said that he possessed a secret so important that Zeus gave him his freedom in exchange for the knowledge. This secret was that Zeus could only be overthrown by a child he fathered by the nymph Thetis, and with this warning, Zeus was able to avoid the fate that had befallen his father and his grandfather.
PROMETHEUS
God of fire and craftsmen, punished by Zeus for his kindness to humanity.

Although Prometheus helped Zeus overthrow his father Cronus, he later rebelled against the king of the gods because Zeus was hostile toward people. Prometheus was both a fire god and a master of many skills. According to one tradition, it was he who made the first men out of clay. He instructed them in various arts, including architecture, astronomy, navigation, and medicine.

But Zeus, growing angry at their increasing powers, wished to destroy mankind. When Prometheus tricked Zeus by arranging with humans for the god to receive only the poor entrails of their sacrifice, not the tasty meat, Zeus was enraged when he realized he had been duped. In response, Zeus hid fire from mankind to prevent them from eating cooked meat, but Prometheus then stole it back and gave fire back to mankind. As a punishment for stealing the fire, Zeus swore a twofold revenge. He ordered Hephaestus to make a clay woman who would plague mankind. Her name was Pandora. Secondly, Prometheus was chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus and each day an eagle came to devour his liver. Since he was immortal, however, Prometheus' liver regrew each night.

Prometheus, whose name means "forethought," was able to see into the future. He warned his brother Epimetheus not to marry Pandora, whose dowry would eventually unleash evil onto the world. And when Prometheus forewarned Zeus that Thetis' son Achilles was destined to be his rival, Zeus released him from bondage in gratitude, ordering Heracles to shoot the eagle and break the god's binding chains.

Prometheus' son Deucalion saved mankind from a flood loosed on the world by Zeus, a story which has its parallel in the biblical story of Noah.

IN LITERATURE
The Greek dramatist Aeschylus was the likely author of Prometheus Bound, in which the protagonist is extolled as the champion of man against the new Olympian authority. The play is part of a trilogy in which Heracles frees Prometheus from bondage. This theme was developed by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in his lyrical drama Prometheus Unbound (1819). He portrayed Prometheus as one whose knowledge would bring an enlightened realm of freedom and love, instead of the Olympian reality of hatred and oppression.

As the suffering creator of man and a free thinker, Prometheus has appealed to various writers. The early fathers of the Christian Church found in him a ready symbol of the Passion of Christ. Lord Byron identified with his spirit of fighting for freedom, and Goethe also stressed Prometheus' sympathy with the suffering of mankind. Shelley's wife Mary developed the theme in a gothic horror fantasy in her novel Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus in 1819.

Prometheus Bound
Oil painting by Titian, showing Prometheus being punished by having his liver pecked by an eagle.
Zeus instructed the smith god Hephaestus to make Pandora out of clay. Athena breathed life into her and Aphrodite gave her beauty. She was taught guile by the quick-witted Hermes who also arranged her marriage to Prometheus’ gullible brother Epimetheus. Prometheus (meaning “forethought”) gave Epithemeus (meaning “afterthought”) dire warnings to avoid Pandora, but he ignored them and married her; furthermore, Epimetheus accepted as her dowry a sealed jar of divine gifts. Little did the couple know that the jar contained all the evils that could beset the world. One version of the myth says that Prometheus knew the contents of the jar because he had painstakingly filled it with the world’s woes: sickness, labor, vice, madness, old age. The only good thing in it was hope, which lay at the bottom of the jar. One day, against her husband’s advice, Pandora opened the jar out of curiosity and released evil into the world. Hence, the term “Pandora’s Box” has come to mean a source of great strife.

According to another version of the story, the jar contained everything that was good, and when the lid was raised, everything virtuous escaped.

Pandora’s daughter Pyrrha married Deucalion, the Greek equivalent of the biblical character Noah. When Zeus determined to destroy mankind because of its wickedness, Deucalion and Pyrrha survived the great flood he sent by building a boat and stocking it with food.

The Greek Eve

Just as Eve was presented in the Bible as the source of evil in the world, so in Hesiod’s Theogony Pandora is her equivalent in Greek literature. Accordingly, Zeus punished mankind by creating women, the first of whom was Pandora, married to the gullible Epimetheus. Pandora’s metaphorical box of strife bears some similarities with Adam and Eve’s fall from grace when they were punished with everlasting toil and pain. It is likely that Pandora, literally meaning “all gifts,” was originally a pre-Greek earth goddess.
The Titan, Prometheus, was wise and thoughtful. His name means "forethought" which suited him well. He took the side of Zeus in the war against Cronos (page 8), and so was not banished like the other Titans when the New Gods came to power.

Making the first people

Prometheus is supposed to have created the human race. This is how it came about:

The first people on Earth were the Golden Race (see page 8). They disappeared as they had no children and Zeus replaced them with the Silver Race. Unfortunately, they started to do all sorts of evil things so Zeus imprisoned them in Tartarus.

Zeus was discouraged by this failure, and asked Prometheus to try his hand at making a race to live on Earth. The Titan had the idea of making mortals that looked like the gods so that gods and humans could understand each other better. This was the Bronze Race.

The trick

Prometheus was fond of the people he had created and helped them whenever he could.

There was a quarrel about which part of a sacrifice should be dedicated to Zeus. Prometheus found a way of settling it in mankind's favour. He divided a sacrificial bull into two bags. In one he put the bones with a few bits of nice meat on top. In the other he put the rest of the meat, covered with the unappetizing stomach. He invited Zeus to choose which bag he would like as his portion. Naturally, Zeus chose the one that looked nicest, although it was full of bones. From that time, the bones were always Zeus's share of a sacrifice, leaving most of the meat for the people to eat.

Zeus was furious when he discovered the trick, though he could not alter his choice. As punishment, he refused to let humans have fire, the gift he had intended for them, so they shivered in the dark and ate raw meat.

The gift of fire

Prometheus felt very sorry for mankind, and with the aid of Athene, his faithful pupil and friend, he stole some fire from Zeus's palace and showed people how to use it. They could then cook, make metal tools to cultivate the land and keep warm and this was how civilization began.

When Zeus found out what Prometheus had done, it was too late to take the fire away again but he punished Prometheus horribly.

Prometheus's punishment

Zeus had Prometheus bound to a rock with unbreakable chains and ordered an eagle to rip out his liver. Despite the pain, Prometheus could not die, as he was immortal. His liver was renewed every night and the torture started again every morning.

Many centuries later, Zeus allowed Prometheus to be rescued by Heracles (see page 39).
TITANS AND OLYMPIANS

Greek Myths
Jacqueline Morley

ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO GREEK MYTHS & LEGENDS

CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

100 CHARACTERS FROM CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

Malcolm Day