



ROMANS

PURPOSE

To explain how God makes sinful people righteous.

Every undertaking has certain “fundamentals.” Whether you are learning to play soccer, trying to master your new computer, or attempting to manage your personal finances, there are certain key ideas and habits that you need to fully grasp. In the Christian life there are fundamentals as well—certain key concepts that every disciple must come to understand before faith growth is possible.

In anticipation of meeting the believers in Rome (15:24), Paul writes this letter to lay out the essentials of the Good News that is found in Jesus the Messiah, who fulfilled all God’s previous plans and promises. Specifically, Paul explains how God can make broken, sinful people holy, changing them by faith, through grace, so that they are in right standing with Him. Simply put, Paul’s letter to the Romans is a guidebook to salvation.

DISCOVER GOD IN ROMANS

The key to understanding Paul’s letter to the Romans is an understanding of the righteousness of God—that is, God’s holy and uncompromising character and its implications for His relationship with people. As Paul discusses God’s righteousness and how He draws people into right standing with Himself, we see some particular aspects of God’s nature and character.

Righteous Judge: At issue in Romans is how people, who fall short of God’s demands for them, can stand in right relationship before Him (3:3-8). Paul helps us understand that God is a righteous judge; He is just and fair and does what is right (3:23-26). The gospel is a just way to forgive sinners. God accepts the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, and those who embrace this holy transaction—and the person of Jesus Christ—are saved.

Empowering Spirit: The kind of life God desires for His people is one of holiness and power. How can those who are “merely human” live this kind of life? Through the work of the Spirit of God. In Romans 8 we encounter the Holy Spirit, who inhabits and influences every Christian. Through the Spirit’s work in us, we can live the way God desires, turning from sin to holy living and even praying effectively when we are at a loss as to how or what to pray.

Absolute Sovereign: What do you call someone who will always be in the right (3:4), who is always able to do what he says (4:21), who can and does work everything together for his own purposes (8:28), who is free to respond to people as he chooses (9:16-18), and who not only works all things for his own glory but upholds everything toward that end (11:36)? In Romans, God is portrayed as sovereign—He is the God who works all things according to the good pleasure of His own will.

DISCOVERY VERSES

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

(ROMANS 1:16-17)

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

(ROMANS 3:21-24)

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. (ROMANS 5:1)

GROWING THROUGH ROMANS

In a systematic way in his letter to the Romans, Paul weaves together his argument to show both the need all people have for God’s work of grace and the incredible outcome of that work of grace in their lives. Understanding Paul’s train of thought and his thinking about righteousness, or “right standing with God” will be of great value to any growing disciple.

Every Person’s Need: Paul begins by laying out the case that everyone is in need of being made right with God (1:1–3:20). Because of sin, all humans are cut off from life with God. This should form the foundation for every disciple’s understanding of his or her life with God—we come to Him because of our great need.

God’s Gracious Solution: Paul then presented the Good News: God has made a way for anyone to be made right with Him in and through what Jesus has done (3:21–5:21). What each person desperately needs, God reveals in the gospel. Here is the real starting point for life as a disciple—new life through God’s solution: His Son, Jesus Christ.

God’s Wonderful Provision: Because God is not interested in just pardoning sinful people but making them positively holy in His sight, Paul next explains how God works in those who believe to produce in them character consistent with their right standing (chapters 6–8). Jesus’ provision of righteousness results in a true and dramatic change in the life of everyone who believes.

God’s Worldwide Plan: If God planned on sending the gospel to the nations through Paul’s ministry, then a fundamental objection to this plan is that it appears as if He failed to convert the Jews through His message of hope—so why would this message work among the Gentiles? And was God simply abandoning the Jews? Romans 9–11 explains how God did not fail in His ongoing plan for the Jews and how the winning of the world of Gentiles would be helpful, not harmful, in bringing many Jews to God.

God’s Intended Outcome: Paul is imminently practical; he always addresses how the Good News should make a difference in the lives of those who believe. Having laid out the work of God in His people, Paul lays out principles for living a life that is in line with a right standing with God (chapters 12–15).

ROMANS FACTS

Author: The beginning and the end of the book credit Paul as the writer of Romans (1:1; 15–16). As was common in his epistles (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; and Philemon 1:19), Paul dictated this letter (16:22) while someone else took down his words.

Written to: Paul had longed to visit the Roman church, since, as the Roman historian Suetonius confirms, a great number of Christians lived there as early as AD 49. Romans 1:13 signals that the church there was predominately Gentile, though many Jews belonged to the church there as well (Acts 2:10-11). Paul had not yet been to Rome, the capital city at the heart of the empire, but he longed to go (Romans 1:13).

Date of writing: Paul gives us some good indicators of the time he wrote this letter. He apparently wrote from Gaius’ home in Corinth (16:23; compare this with 1 Corinthians 1:14). Apparently, he wrote this letter while staying for some months in Greece (Acts 20:2-6). This suggests that Paul wrote this letter near the end of his last missionary journey (Romans 15:19; compare Acts 18:23–21:14) around AD 57.

Setting: Paul likely wrote from Gaius’ home in Corinth during the three months described in Acts 20:2-3. This is made more likely as he sends greetings to the Romans from those who lived in Corinth (Phoebe is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2; Gaius in 16:23 [see also 1 Corinthians 1:14]; Erastus in 16:23 [see also Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20]). This letter was written to Rome, the center of the vast Roman Empire.

OUTLINE

- ▶ **ROMANS 1:1–3:20**—Sin: Why We Need God’s Righteousness
- ▶ **ROMANS 3:21–5:21**—Salvation: How God Provides This Righteousness
- ▶ **ROMANS 6:1–8:39**—Sanctification: God’s Ongoing Work of Righteousness in Us
- ▶ **ROMANS 9:1–11:36**—Sovereignty: God’s Freedom in Granting This Righteousness
- ▶ **ROMANS 12:1–16:27**—Service: Practical Expressions of Living Righteously

GREETINGS FROM PAUL

1:3
Matt 1:1; 22:42
Rom 9:5
2 Tim 2:8

1 This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach His Good News. ²God promised this Good News long ago through His prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³The Good News is about His Son. In His earthly life He was born into King David’s family line, ⁴and He was shown to be* the Son of God when He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.* He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through Christ, God has given us the privilege* and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey Him, bringing glory to His name.

1:4
Acts 13:33
Rom 8:11

1:5
Acts 9:15
Rom 16:26
Gal 1:16
Eph 3:8-9

⁶And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be His own holy people.

1:7
1 Cor 1:2
2 Cor 1:1
Gal 1:3
Eph 1:1

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

1:8
Rom 16:19
1 Thes 1:8

GOD’S GOOD NEWS

⁸Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in Him is being talked about all over the world. ⁹God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart* by spreading the Good News about His Son.

1:9
Eph 1:16
Phil 1:8-9
1 Thes 2:5
2 Tim 1:3

¹⁰One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. ¹¹For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. ¹²When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

1:10
Rom 15:23, 32

1:11
Rom 15:23

¹³I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters,* that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I

1:13
John 15:16
Rom 15:22

1:4a Or *and was designated*. 1:4b Or *by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit*. 1:5 Or *the grace*. 1:9 Or *in my spirit*. 1:13 Greek *brothers*.

1:1-7 Paul’s introduction to Romans falls into two parts. Verses 1-7 contain the typical introductory elements and brief theological truths that will be developed more thoroughly throughout the book. “Grace and peace” from God and Christ should be taken as more than just a standard phrase Paul puts in his letters. Grace is God’s unearned favor that brings a person to faith in Christ, which brings peace between the believer and God. Paul reveals his belief in Jesus’ deity by praying for both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to bless the Roman believers.

1:8-15 This is the second part of Paul’s introduction, discussing the intent of his ministry among the Romans and the rest of the world. Knowing the strategic importance of the city of Rome, and therefore of the church there, Paul sought to visit Rome as soon as possible. Paul’s journey to Rome under Roman guard and his two-year imprisonment there were likely not what he had in mind when he wrote this letter (see Acts 27–28).

have seen among other Gentiles. ¹⁴For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world,* to the educated and uneducated alike. ¹⁵So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.* ¹⁷This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”*

GOD’S ANGER AT SIN

¹⁸But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* ¹⁹They know the truth about God because He has made it obvious to them. ²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

²¹Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds

1:14 Greek to Greeks and barbarians. 1:16 Greek also the Greek. 1:17 Or “The righteous will live by faith.” Hab 2:4. 1:18 Or who, by their wickedness, prevent the truth from being known.

1:14
1 Cor 9:16

1:16
Acts 3:26
1 Cor 1:18, 24

1:17
*Hab 2:4
Gal 3:11
Heb 10:38

1:18
Eph 5:6
Col 3:6

1:19
Acts 14:15-17;
17:24-28

1:20
Job 12:7-9
Ps 19:1

1:21
2 Kgs 17:15
Eph 4:17-18

1:16-17 “I am not ashamed” is another way of saying “I am proud” (compare 1 Corinthians 1:31). Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to support his insistence that a person can have a right relationship with God only by faith (see also Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38). The Greek literally reads, “The righteous person by faith will live.” This quote provides a general outline of Romans 1–8. Chapters 1–4 explain how a sinner deserving God’s judgment can be declared righteous before Him by faith (“the righteous person by faith”). Chapters 5–8 explain the nature of the life of faith (“will live”).

1:18-23 The present tense of “God shows His anger” (literally, “the wrath of God is being revealed”) indicates that God’s anger continuously falls upon people who refuse to acknowledge “the truth” (1:18).



► BIBLE

1:19-22 No excuses. We may debate whether God’s existence can be proven, but Paul explains in 1:19-20 that evidence of God’s existence and power is found in nature. Paul says that only fools deny this truth. God has provided sufficient evidence of His existence through creation, so that those who deny His role as Creator are guilty of sin—they have “no excuse” for not seeing the evidence and drawing a proper conclusion. Keep this in mind as you share the gospel with unbelievers. Thank God for revealing His existence to them, and ask God to give you the wisdom to point out His signs and His power to those who do not believe. (**See Bible**> Unity> Creation, TopicGuide page A10.)



THE GOSPEL GOES TO ROME

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome, he had not yet been there, but he had taken the gospel “from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum” (15:19). He planned to visit and preach in Rome one day and hoped to continue to take the gospel farther west—even to Spain.

1:22 became dark and confused. ²²Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

1:23 ²⁴So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator Himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, He abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. ³²They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

1:30 ^{2 Tim 3:2}

1:31 ^{2 Tim 3:3}

1:32 ^{Rom 6:23}

GOD'S JUDGMENT OF SIN

2 You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. ²And we know that God, in His justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? ⁴Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

⁵But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and

2:1 ^{Matt 7:1}

2:4 ^{Rom 9:22}
^{2 Pet 3:9, 15}

2:5 ^{Ps 110:5}

2:6 ^{*Ps 62:12}
^{Matt 16:27}

2:7 ^{Matt 25:46}
^{2 Tim 4:14}

1:24-32 God often executes judgment by withholding His restraint on human sin, allowing people to give full expression to their evil desires. As a result people perverted sexuality and resorted to homosexual activities. They gave in to every form of wickedness as a result of their refusal to acknowledge God.



► GOD

1:26-27 Sexuality and unbelief. Unbelief—not homosexuality—is Paul's greatest concern for those living in Rome. It was certainly true that Greek and Roman culture allowed homosexuality and pederasty, considering it a natural activity. And Paul's audience certainly needed to understand that sin, sexual or not, comes quite naturally to us—but Paul wasn't delivering a lecture on sexual sin. His point was that unbelief has all sorts of behavioral, emotional, and intellectual consequences. As we leave the truths of God further behind, everything—even our most intimate relationships—grow more and more twisted. All things become a curse to those who turn their backs on the Creator and His truths. Yet God offers even the most sexually broken a fresh start through repentance and belief in His gospel. Tell that to everyone who needs to hear it—and don't forget to believe it for yourself. *(See God> God's Attributes> Forgiving> God forgives those who repent, TopicGuide page A16.)*



► GOD

2:3 God will judge. Does the Bible send mixed messages about judging others? Some think so, reading passages like Matthew 7:1, which says, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." But 1 Corinthians 5:12 says, "It certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning." So, do we judge or not? Some have been given the responsibility and authority to judge: The state rightly judges those who break the law of the land (Romans 13:1-5); the parent rightly judges and punishes a rebellious child (Proverbs 23:13); the leaders in a church rightly judge an unrepentant, sinful member (1 Corinthians 5:12). But those outside of our jurisdiction must be left to God (James 4:12). Trust that God will properly deal with others according to their standing with Christ (Revelation 6:10), and use your power to condemn very carefully. *(See God> God's Attributes> Just> God judges all people with justice, TopicGuide page A16.)*

2:5-11 These verses explain that God's judgment is universal, that it will be "for the Jew first and also for the Gentile" (2:9) since God is impartial. God will give eternal life to those who do good but wrath to those who refuse to obey. Paul defines in later chapters that true goodness (2:10) depends on faith in Christ.

immortality that God offers. ⁸But He will pour out His anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.* ¹⁰But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

¹²When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God’s written law. And the Jews, who do have God’s law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. ¹³For merely listening to the law doesn’t make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in His sight. ¹⁴Even Gentiles, who do not have God’s written law, show that they know His law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. ¹⁵They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. ¹⁶And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone’s secret life.

2:8
2 Thes 2:12

2:11
Gal 2:6
Eph 6:9
Col 3:25

2:13
Matt 7:21
John 13:17
Jas 1:22-25

2:14
Acts 10:35

2:16
Acts 10:42
Rom 16:25
2 Tim 2:8

THE JEWS AND THE LAW

¹⁷You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God’s law, and you boast about your special relationship with Him. ¹⁸You know what He wants; you know what is right because you have been taught His law. ¹⁹You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. ²⁰You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God’s law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

²¹Well then, if you teach others, why don’t you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? ²²You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? ²³You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. ²⁴No wonder the Scriptures say, “The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you.”*

²⁵The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God’s law. But if you

2:17
Mic 3:11

2:20
2 Tim 3:5

2:21
Matt 23:3-4

2:24
*Isa 52:5
Ezek 36:20

2:25
Gal 5:3

2:9 Greek *also for the Greek*; also in 2:10. 2:22 Greek *do you steal from temples?* 2:24 Isa 52:5 (Greek version).

2:12-16 Since the Jews (formerly known as Israelites) received God’s law at Mount Sinai, some assumed that they would never be the objects of God’s judgment—despite the clear record of the Old Testament to the contrary (Leviticus 26:14-46; Deuteronomy 28:15-68). But Paul explains that the Gentiles could be judged without the law and that the Jews could be judged with the law.

2:17-24 Paul contrasts what the Jews know (2:17-20) with what they actually do (2:21-24). The Jews believe that the law gives them a special relationship with God and allows them to know the difference between right and wrong (vv. 17-18), which was true.

BECAUSE GOD IS JUST

He will always treat me fairly.

He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good. . . . But He will pour out His anger and wrath on those who live for themselves.

2:28 don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be His own people? ²⁷In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

2:29 ²⁸For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise* from God, not from people.

Matt 3:9
John 8:39
Gal 6:15

Deut 30:6
John 5:44
Rom 7:6
2 Cor 3:6; 10:18
Phil 3:3
Col 2:11
1 Pet 3:4

GOD REMAINS FAITHFUL

3:2 **3** Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? ²Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.*

3:4 ³True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? ⁴Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about Him,

*Ps 51:4

"You will be proved right in what you say, and You will win Your case in court."*

3:5 ⁵"But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for Him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.) ⁶Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would He be qualified to judge the world? ⁷"But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings Him more glory?" ⁸And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

Rom 5:8
Rom 9:19
Rom 6:1

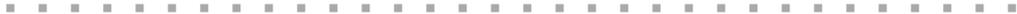
ALL PEOPLE ARE SINNERS

3:9 ⁹Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles,* are under the power of sin.

3:10-12 ¹⁰As the Scriptures say,

Rom 1:18–2:24
*Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3

2:29 Or receives praise. 3:2 Greek the oracles of God. 3:4 Ps 51:4 (Greek version).



2:25-29 Paul introduces two important subjects here: circumcision (2:25-27) and what it means to be a Jew (2:28-29). He returns to both of these later in the book (circumcision, 4:10-12; being a Jew, 9:6-8). As a sign of the Old Covenant, circumcision did not guarantee a Jew's relationship with God any more than baptism does under the New Covenant. Christians are saved by Christ, not baptism (Titus 3:4-7; Romans 10:8-13).

Salvation > Son > Only bridge between God and man, TopicGuide page A15.)

3:1-4 The main "advantage" of being Jewish was that God's revelation was given to the Jews, particularly the Old Testament. But the honor of receiving God's revelation came with the responsibility to obey it, which is where the Jews had failed miserably—as Paul would show in Romans 3:9-20.



► GOD

2:28-29 **Jews need Jesus, too.** Do you believe that those who practice other religions go to heaven? The Bible's answer is clear: Jesus alone provides the way to God (John 14:6). But what about the Jews? Surely their special place in God's plan means they can go to heaven, regardless of their accepting Christ or not, right? Wrong. While it is true that all true Jews go to heaven, here Paul defines a "true Jew" as one who is changed inside as well as outside. Paul's message in Romans 1–4—and our call to evangelize all the world—only makes sense if you accept Paul's statement that "everyone has sinned" (Romans 3:23). This "everyone" includes Jews. So share the gospel with your Jewish friends. Let them know that God has a plan for us to trust in the words and works of the greatest Jew of all time—Jesus the Messiah. (**See God**>

3:5-8 Paul anticipated an objection to his argument about the disobedience of the Jews. He hears someone saying, "Our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is." But God is also the holy Judge of the universe, and His justification of sinners is complementary—not contradictory—to His judgment of sinners. Paul develops these ideas later in the book, particularly at 3:19–4:25.

3:9-20 Paul's string of Old Testament quotations in 3:10-18 demonstrates that Jews were just as sinful as Gentiles. One of God's purposes in giving the Mosaic law was to show all people how guilty they are (3:19) by exposing how sinful they are (3:20). God never intended for the law to be a means of earning salvation. Only faith pleases God (see note at 14:23 and compare Hebrews 11:6).

“No one is righteous—
not even one.

¹¹ No one is truly wise;

no one is seeking God.

¹² All have turned away;

all have become useless.

No one does good,

not a single one.”*

¹³ “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.

Their tongues are filled with lies.”

“Snake venom drips from their lips.”*

¹⁴ “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”*

¹⁵ “They rush to commit murder.

¹⁶ Destruction and misery always follow them.

¹⁷ They don’t know where to find peace.”*

¹⁸ “They have no fear of God at all.”*

3:13

*Pss 5:9; 140:3

3:14

*Ps 10:7

3:15-17

*Isa 59:7-8

3:18

*Ps 36:1

3:19

Rom 2:12

3:20

Ps 143:2

Rom 4:15; 7:7

Gal 2:16; 3:11

¹⁹Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. ²⁰For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

CHRIST TOOK OUR PUNISHMENT

²¹But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses* and the prophets long ago. ²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

²³For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶for He was looking ahead and including

3:21

Rom 1:2, 17; 9:30

3:22

Rom 4:11; 10:4, 12

Gal 2:16

Col 3:11

3:24

Eph 2:8

Heb 9:12

3:25

Lev 16:10

Heb 9:12-14

1 Pet 1:19

1 Jn 4:10

3:9 Greek *or Greeks*. 3:10-12 Pss 14:1-3; 53:1-3 (Greek version). 3:13 Pss 5:9 (Greek version); 140:3. 3:14 Ps 10:7 (Greek version). 3:15-17 Isa 59:7-8. 3:18 Ps 36:1. 3:21 Greek *in the law*.



► SALVATION

3:10-12 Complete sinners. Many people will admit that they are sinners—we all make mistakes—but few will admit that sin is so much a part of their being that they can never do anything good. Paul believed that both Jews and Gentiles were thoroughly tainted by sin. Body, soul, spirit, mind, emotions—all are touched by sin, though some aspects may be more marred than others (1:21). Because nothing good can come out of people, we can never perfectly obey the law. With a debt of sin and no ability to pay back that debt, it is hopeless to depend on ourselves to make things right with God. What are you relying on to make things right with God? Trust in God’s gracious gift of Christ to change you into the person God wants you to be. (**See Salvation**> *Our Need*> *Sinful*> *Depraved*, TopicGuide page A22.)



► HOLINESS

3:20 The purpose of the law. Many people believe that in the Old Testament times, people were saved through obedience to the law, while in the New Testament people are saved by grace through faith in Christ. According to Paul, the Jewish scholar

and apostle, nothing could be further from the truth. The law does not justify, but terrify—the more we look at it, obey it, and understand it, “the law simply shows us how sinful we are” (Romans 3:20). We can use the law as a picture of God and His character (Exodus 3:15-16; Isaiah 33:22; Romans 7:2-9, 12), a window through which to view the world (Proverbs 3:31-32; Isaiah 51:4; Micah 4:2), and a mirror to view ourselves (1 Kings 9:4-9; Psalm 51:4; Matthew 5:17-19). But we cannot use it to gain salvation. This is not and never has been God’s way. (**See Holiness**> *Law and Grace*> *Law*> *A mirror to view ourselves*, TopicGuide page A41.)

3:21-26 From 1:18–3:20, Paul explained the bad news of human sin and guilt and of divine judgment. The phrase “but now” (3:21) comes as a breath of fresh air as the apostle begins his explanation of the good news. The Greek word for “sin” (3:23) means “to miss the mark” and is drawn from the imagery of an archer shooting at a target but missing his mark. All are equally lost in God’s sight since “everyone has sinned” and cannot match “God’s glorious standard” (3:23). But God accepts both Jews and Gentiles fully and on an equal basis when they believe in Jesus.



THE FIRST TIME GINA NOTICED something wrong with her computer, she shrugged it off. Her little cursor arrow began jumping around on her screen when she was not trying to move it. But then the problems became more troubling: Her computer turned itself off and restarted again—without her permission! Error messages popped up on the screen. Finally, her computer programs slowed to the point that she couldn't get her work done. She worked and worked on it, but failing to fix it, she took her laptop to a service technician. He performed diagnostic tests and found over 100 viruses. Her computer was totally infected and couldn't be cleaned up—it was beyond repair.

When Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden, they infected the human race with sin (Romans 5:12). Since then, every person born on earth has been infected with the "sin virus," and we spread it on to others. Our nature (Psalm 51:5) and our actions are polluted with sin so that, left to ourselves, we have no hope of dealing with our sin problem.

In Romans 3, Paul reveals just how deep the problem of sin is. It impacts our morality, our minds, and our mouths. It fills our hearts with murderous thoughts and makes us miserable.

If we can't save ourselves, then God must act. His holy, perfect nature demands justice (Isaiah 5:16; Romans 2:2). He cannot allow the guilt and pollution of sin to spread unchecked. He must take action against that which distorts and destroys His creation. He must take action against that which breaks His laws—otherwise, He would be a negligent judge.

This is where the gospel starts to make sense. If we are still imagining we are only slightly bothered by sin and able to save ourselves, then we have no reason to trust in the gospel—we can just try harder and eventually save ourselves. But if we are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1) and unable to do anything to save ourselves (John 15:5), then no one but God Himself can help us. By substituting Jesus, the sinless Son of God, for us, God's justice is satisfied.

The problem of that awful soul-virus, the guilt and pollution of sin, is also solved because we are united to Christ (Galatians 3:26-28) and given access to all the blessings given to Him by the Father (John 1:16; Ephesians 3:6; Revelation 21:7)—including His perfect, righteous, holy standing before God. This is the message of Romans: The grave problem of life-sapping sin can only be solved by the death of Christ (Romans 5:15-21).

them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness, for He Himself is fair and just, and He declares sinners to be right in His sight when they believe in Jesus.

²⁷Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't He also the God of the Gentiles? Of course He is. ³⁰There is only one God, and He makes people right with Himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.* ³¹Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

3:27

Rom 2:17; 4:2
1 Cor 1:29-31

3:28

Acts 13:39

3:29

Rom 10:12
Gal 3:28

3:31

Matt 5:17

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

4 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did He discover about being made right with God? ²If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, He would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. ³For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."^{*}

⁴When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. ⁵But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. ⁶David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it:

⁷ "Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.

⁸ Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of sin."^{*}

⁹Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. ¹⁰But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

4:2

1 Cor 1:31

4:3

*Gen 15:6
Gal 3:6
Jas 2:23

4:4

Rom 11:6
Gal 2:16

4:7-8

*Ps 32:1-2
2 Cor 5:19

4:9

Rom 15:6
Rom 3:30

3:30 Greek *whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised*. 4:3 Gen 15:6. 4:7-8 Ps 32:1-2 (Greek version). 4:9 Greek *is this blessing only for the circumcised, or is it also for the uncircumcised?*

3:27-31 Paul draws a logical conclusion from his discussion of sin and salvation thus far: A person cannot boast about gaining favor with God since he cannot do anything to earn it. Good deeds cannot save someone because sin pollutes all human activity—even our best works. Thus, salvation must be based on faith and not obedience to the law (3:28). Faith in Christ does not nullify the law, but fulfills it, as Paul's discussion in 4:1-8 explains.

4:1-3 Abraham was declared righteous without good works and before he was circumcised (see note at 4:9-12). The Jews acknowledge Abraham as a precedent for their relationship with God because he was "the founder of our Jewish nation" (4:1). Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 to show that Abraham's salvation was based not on good works but on the fact that he believed God (4:3). In 4:6-8, Paul uses another Old Testament saint, King David, as an example of salvation by faith.

4:4-8 Paul uses the workplace to make a point about works in 4:4. A person who has a job receives wages for his work, "not a gift" (literally "grace") from his employer.



► SALVATION

4:4-5 Earning salvation. Many people choose to rely on their own works, rather than God's grace, to obtain salvation. But there is one key problem with such self-reliance: unbelief in God's ordained means of salvation. The great tragedy of working for your salvation is that no one ever accomplishes it. Only Jesus can provide salvation, which is received by faith (Hebrews 10:39), through grace (Titus 2:11). Ironically, no one can offer anything to God in exchange for their salvation—except their wretched sin. Do you know people who try to make atonement for their own sin? Do you know people who refuse to trust God and trust instead in rituals or institutions for their salvation? Warn them away from such foolishness (Galatians 2:21). (**See Salvation**> *Receiving*> *How*> *Faith in Christ*, TopicGuide page A22.)

4:9-12 Circumcision was such an important ritual in Jewish life that many Jews believed an uncircumcised man could never be saved (compare Acts 15:1). Circumcision was "a sign" (4:11; see Genesis 17:11) of Abraham's covenant with God. God physically marked him so he and the entire world could understand he was "the spiritual father" (4:12) of all believers, Jews and Gentiles.

4:11 Gen 17:10-11 ¹¹Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. ¹²And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

4:13 Gen 18:18; 22:17-18 Gal 3:29 ¹³Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. ¹⁵For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

4:14 Gal 3:18 ¹⁴So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.”* This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

4:15 Rom 3:20; 7:12 1 Cor 15:55-56 Gal 3:10 ¹⁵Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”* ¹⁹And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

4:16 Gal 3:7 ¹⁶Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

4:17 *Gen 17:5 Isa 48:13 John 5:21 1 Cor 1:28 ¹⁷Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

4:18 *Gen 15:5 ¹⁸Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”* ¹⁹And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

4:19 Gen 17:17; 18:11 Heb 11:11 ¹⁹Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

4:22 *Gen 15:6 Rom 4:3 ²²Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

4:24 1 Pet 1:21 ²⁴Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

4:25 Isa 53:4-5 Rom 8:30 1 Cor 15:17 2 Cor 5:15 1 Pet 1:21 ²⁵Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²²And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

5:1 FAITH BRINGS JOY

5:1 Rom 3:28 **5:2** Eph 2:18; 3:12 **5** Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ²Because of our faith, **4:17** Gen 17:5. **4:18** Gen 15:5.

4:13-17 God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and His covenant with him (Genesis 15) were based on God’s grace that Abraham received by faith (4:13). In a theme repeated throughout Paul’s writings, law-based salvation nullifies faith and makes God’s promise “pointless” (4:14).

“we have been made right in God’s sight by faith” (5:1). He now begins his discussion of the nature of the life of faith, showing that faith in Christ leads to a life characterized by peace (chapter 5), sanctification (chapter 6), freedom from the law (chapter 7), and the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit (chapter 8).

► GOD

4:18-25 **Maturing faith.** The first steps of our spiritual walk can be shaky. Abraham laughed when God told him that he would have a child through the elderly Sarah (Genesis 17:17), but he still believed that God would make good on His promise of giving Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars. God provides His children with a faith that believes He can do anything (Ephesians 2:9-10), and this is the kind of faith that Abraham demonstrated. Don’t let faltering first steps of faith convince you that your faith isn’t real—keep trusting, keep loving, and keep marching forward, always trusting that the God who started your spiritual journey will be faithful to help you complete it (Philippians 1:6). (**See God**> *God’s Attributes*> *Faithful*> *God faithfully matures believers*, TopicGuide page A16.)

► GOD

5:1 **Peace through faith.** Ever since the first man, Adam, rebelled against God, all humanity has been at odds with Him (5:12). It is as if the head of our nation has declared war on another nation—even though we were not involved in the decision, we are nonetheless at war. But the removal of sin “by the death of His Son” (5:10) brought reconciliation to sinners who believe, resulting in “peace with God” (5:1). Sinners are no longer God’s enemies, but are placed in His family as sons, a concept Paul develops in chapter 8. Do you feel at peace with God? Do you see that Jesus made a peace treaty between God and those who believe? Trust in God’s Word and “rejoice” (5:3) in what Christ has done for those who believe. (**See God**> *Salvation*> *Son*> *Reconciles us to God*, TopicGuide page A15.)

5:1-2 “Therefore” looks back to all that Paul has said in chapters 1–4 about salvation, which he summarizes here by saying,

Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.

³We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.

⁶When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, He will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. ¹⁰For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of His Son. ¹¹So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

5:3
Matt 5:12

5:5
2 Cor 1:22
Gal 4:6
Eph 1:13
Phil 1:20

5:6
Gal 4:4
Eph 5:2

5:8
John 3:16
1 Jn 4:10

5:9
Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8

5:10
Rom 8:34
2 Cor 5:18-19
Eph 2:3

5:3-5 The Christian life is marked by “problems and trials” (5:3), but this is by God’s design to help believers grow and depend more on Him. Paul mentions the Holy Spirit infrequently early in Romans (1:4; 2:29; 5:5), anticipating a more extensive explanation of the Holy Spirit’s role in the life of believers in chapter 8, in which the Spirit is mentioned 20 times.

5:6-11 Paul describes unbelievers in four ways in verses 6-10: “utterly helpless” and “sinners” (literally, “ungodly”) in verse 6; “sinners” in verse 8; and “enemies” in verse 10. Such negative terms reinforce the truth that we are completely sinful and without hope of saving ourselves.



► ADOPTION

5:8-9 Measuring God’s love. It’s not unheard of for enemies to show respect for one another. But God’s love goes far beyond anything we’ve ever imagined—He showed His love to His enemies by sending His own Son to die for them. That is love! This love, expressed through the shedding of the blood of Christ, saves believers from God’s judgment (5:9). In Romans 1:18, God’s wrath is a present reality; by Romans 2:5 it awaits a future time of judgment. Here Paul shows that Christ’s death saves believers from both—God’s wrath in the present and in the future. This is the measure of the love of God—Christ’s outstretched arms on the cross. (**See Adoption**> *With Christ*> *United with Christ*> *Loved by God*, TopicGuide page A37.)

MY RESPONSE TO GOD

Peace with God

ROMANS 5

The minister’s life crumbled around him. He lost his job, divorced his wife, and lived in shame. Before this happened, he had been known as a man of the Word, a man of prayer, a man who had unusual gifts and abilities to discern the will of God. He had led thousands of people to Christ. What happened?

The former minister sadly explained, “There is a saying, ‘Sin will keep you from God’s Word, or God’s Word will keep you from sin.’ I knew and believed that, but my life got so busy that I more and more ceased to depend on the Lord and His Word until finally there was little time for God at all. That is when I fell into sin.”

That is how Adam and Eve fell—they stopped paying attention to God’s instructions (Genesis 3:1-7). They pursued one moment of fruitless rebellion, but in exchange, they lost almost all the blessings God had given them. God was gracious to the minister who fell, He was gracious to Adam and Eve, and He can be gracious to you, too. But you must humble yourself before Him. You must offer God nothing but your sin, and accept from Him what you could never get on your own—peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1-11).

ADAM AND CHRIST CONTRASTED

5:12 Gen 2:17; 3:19
Rom 6:23
1 Cor 15:21-22
5:13 Rom 4:15
5:14 1 Cor 15:22, 45
5:17 1 Cor 15:21
5:18 Isa 53:11
1 Cor 15:22
5:19 Phil 2:8
5:20 Rom 4:15; 7:8
Gal 3:19
5:21 Rom 6:23

¹²When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. ¹³Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. ¹⁴Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. ¹⁵But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and His gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ¹⁷For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and His gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6:1
Rom 3:5-8

SIN’S POWER IS BROKEN

6:2 Rom 8:13
Col 2:20; 3:3
6:3 Gal 3:27
6:4 Eph 4:22-24
Col 2:12; 3:10

6 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of His wonderful grace? ²Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death? ⁴For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5:12-17 Paul traces every human sin ever committed in history back to Adam’s one sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Paul’s teaching on original sin and corporate headship in these verses may be succinctly summarized as follows: A person isn’t a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner, and he is a sinner because Adam sinned. Christ’s death for sin reversed the death Adam’s sin brought into the world, resulting in the provision of grace and a right relationship with God through faith in “one man, Jesus Christ” (5:17).

5:18-21 Paul’s comparison of the effects of Adam’s act of disobedience and Jesus’ act of obedience is not intended to imply they are equal opposites. Just because all humanity (excepting Christ) is sinful and lost in Adam does not mean that all humanity is saved in Christ, for it is only those who fulfill the requirements of the gospel (1:16-17; 10:9-10) that receive Christ’s benefits.

6:1-7:25 In chapters 6-7 Paul anticipates four questions that may arise about his teachings on salvation. The first question occurs in 6:1, and his answer comes in 6:2-14. Paul’s statement in 6:14 about law and grace raises a second question in 6:15, which he answers in 6:16-7:6. Paul’s teaching about the law in 7:4-6 raises a third question in 7:7a, which he answers in 7:7b-12. Finally, Paul’s teaching about the law in 7:7b-12 raises a fourth question in 7:13a, which he answers in 7:13b-25. In

response to all four questions, Paul immediately says, “Of course not!” (6:2, 15; 7:7, 13) before giving his full response.



ADOPTION

6:3 Dying with Christ. Have you been baptized? Do you know it symbolizes that you died with Christ? But since you are obviously still alive and reading this note, that requires some explanation. Baptism demonstrates the spiritual unity we have with Christ (Galatians 3:27), and in that unity, we partake of all the blessings that belong to Jesus. He belongs to God’s family—so do we (Galatians 3-4). Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14)—so are we (Acts 2:4). If we are united to Christ, that means He not only died for us, but we also died with Him—so we will be resurrected from the dead; we will be given authority. What are the implications in your spiritual life if you have truly died with Christ? One of many is that we live as a creation reborn in God’s eyes—that old life died with Christ and the new life has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17). Live the new life, and stay away from the old, decaying ways of the past. (**See Adoption**> *With Christ*> *United with Christ*> *The exchanged life*, TopicGuide page A37.)

6:5-11 Believers are “united” with Christ in both His death and His resurrection, for His resurrection assures believers of their own resurrection as well (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-23).

⁵Since we have been united with Him in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was. ⁶We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him. ⁹We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and He will never die again. Death no longer has any power over Him. ¹⁰When He died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. ¹¹So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹²Do not let sin control the way you live;* do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³Do not let

6:12 Or *Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.*

6:5
Phil 3:10-11
Col 2:12; 3:1
6:6
Gal 2:20; 5:24
Col 2:12
6:7
1 Pet 4:1
6:10
Heb 7:27
6:11
Col 2:20; 3:3



► ADOPTION

6:11-14 Victory over sin. Have you ever tried to count how many times you sin each day? Try it—it’s quite enlightening to do a moral inventory of your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. The good news is that God empowers us to refuse to give in to temptation and sin—but the choice is ours to make. This is the reason Paul commands believers to stop letting sin control them. Even though Christ has died for their sins and they are dead to sin and no longer under its authority, believers can continue to live as if sin still controls them. Sins are committed in the body (see 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4), so Paul calls on believers to take control of their bodies’ activities by using them for God’s glory instead of using them for “evil” (6:13). Do something very

risky—ask God to reveal your sin to you. Then ask Him for the grace to sin less than you did the day before, and dedicate yourself to submitting to His sanctifying work in your life (Ephesians 4:30). (**See Adoption**> *With Christ*> *Supernatural*> *Dead to sin but alive to God*, TopicGuide page A37.)

6:12-14 Paul advises the Romans that putting themselves back under the authority of the Mosaic covenant will only lead to more sin. This happens because the law naturally reveals sin in the believer’s heart (7:4-6), but it also makes more sin possible through giving greater knowledge of God and ourselves, and thus greater responsibility. Paul discusses the implications of this statement about law and grace starting with the question in 6:15 and continuing to the end of chapter 7.

MY RESPONSE TO GOD

Saved from What?

ROMANS 6-8

For a while, Adam and Eve lived in perfection, but they eventually succumbed to temptation and sinned against God (Genesis 3). We were designed to live in perfection, too (Luke 10:27; Romans 13:8), but we also have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard (Romans 3:23).

Can we ever be restored to that perfection? By the grace of God, yes.

First, God saves us from the *penalty* of sin. Through the new birth (John 3), we are “made right with God through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Second, God frees us from the *power* of sin. Our sinful nature still influences us, and we continue to commit many sins no matter how much we grow to hate it. Often we cry out in frustration with Paul, “Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” (Romans 7:24). Of course it is God who will save us. “Because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death” (Romans 8:2). The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, slowly freeing us from sin’s hold on us (Romans 8:23).

Third, God will one day deliver us from the *presence* of sin. The process of sanctification is painful, but it is nothing compared to the perfection that awaits us! After we die, we will see Him as He really is, unstained by sin and sorrow and guilt, and “we will be like Him” (1 John 3:2). In that moment, we will be changed, for every curse of sin that has plagued us will flee before our loving Father’s gaze.

6:13
Rom 12:1
2 Cor 5:14

6:14
Rom 7:4, 6; 8:2, 12
Gal 5:18
1 Jn 3:16

6:16
John 8:34
2 Pet 2:19

6:17
2 Tim 1:13

6:18
John 8:32

6:21
Rom 7:5; 8:6, 13

6:22
John 8:32
Rom 8:2

6:23
1 Cor 7:22
1 Pet 1:9; 2:16

6:23
Matt 25:46
John 3:16; 17:2
Rom 5:21
Gal 6:8

7:2
1 Cor 7:39

7:3
Luke 16:18

7:4
Rom 6:6; 8:2
Gal 5:18
Col 2:14
1 Pet 2:24

7:5
Rom 6:21; 8:8
Gal 5:19-21

any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.

¹⁵Well then, since God’s grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. ¹⁷Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. ¹⁸Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

¹⁹Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²²But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

NO LONGER BOUND TO THE LAW

7 Now, dear brothers and sisters*—you who are familiar with the law—don’t you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ²For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. ³So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

⁴So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the One who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. ⁵When we were controlled by

7:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 7:4.

6:15-19 The question in 6:15 is similar to the one in 6:1, but the emphasis is different. Romans 6:1 asks whether believers should continue to sin to receive more of God’s constant grace. Verse 15 asks whether believers may continue to sin since they do not relate to God by law but by grace. But the answer is the same: “Of course not!” In 6:19, Paul explains that he is using the analogy of slavery to simplify and illustrate the believer’s relationship to sin and righteousness, but he also warns the reader not to press the analogy too far.



ADOPTION

6:19 Living free. The liberty to perform any and every act of sin and wickedness is often trumpeted as true liberty, but anyone who has ever sinned knows that’s a lie. The truth is that slavery to sin is the most abusive form of slavery a person can experience, while freedom from sin is the most liberating freedom a person can enjoy. Before conversion, all are “slaves to impurity and lawlessness”; after conversion to Christ, we exchange masters and become “slaves to righteous living” (6:19), enabling us to enjoy to the fullest our relationship with God through Christ. Everyone is either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness. Live in a manner consistent with your identity in Christ—as a slave to righteousness. (**See Adoption**> *With Christ*> *Supernatural*> *A life of liberating freedom*, TopicGuide page A37.)

6:20-23 Paul previously used accounting terms to describe salvation (Romans 4:4-8), and in 6:23 he does the same to contrast the way we receive sin and eternal life. If someone could cash in the value of sin, the transaction would give him nothing but death. The price of eternal life was God’s Son; the debt was paid in full, so the believer receives eternal life as a free gift by faith (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

7:1-6 Paul’s answer to the question about sin that began in 6:1, then developed further in 6:15, is answered in these verses. Paul does not attempt to be thorough in his discussion of marriage and remarriage (as in 1 Corinthians 7); he simply uses marriage to make a point in his continuing discussion about the believer’s relationship with the law.

7:4-5 The married woman is analogous to the believer, and the first husband is analogous to the law. Christ is the second husband. The death of the first husband means that the wife is dead to that relationship and free to marry another. Similarly, the believer’s identity with Christ on the cross means that he has died to the law; that is, the law no longer has authority over him.