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.
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).

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)

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.
GREETINGS FROM PAUL

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

1:1-7 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. 14 For 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. 15 So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

16 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.* 17 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.”

GOD’S ANGER AT SIN

18 But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* 19 They know the truth about God because He has made it obvious to them. 20 For 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.

21 Yes, 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...

1:18-23 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).

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” (15:18). He planned to visit and preach in Rome one day and hoped to continue to take the gospel farther west—even to Spain.
became dark and confused. They claimed to be wise, but instead they became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

So 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. They 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. That 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. And 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.

Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, He abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. They 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.

God’s Judgment of Sin

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. And we know that God, in His justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God’s judgment when you do the same things? Don’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?

But 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. He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and eternal life.
imortality that God offers. But 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. There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

When 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. For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in His sight. Even 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. They 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. And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.

THE JEWS AND THE LAW

You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with Him. You know what He wants; you know what is right because you have been taught His law. You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You 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.

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

The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you...
don’t obey God’s law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. 26 And if the
Gentiles obey God’s law, won’t God declare them to be His own people? 27 In 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.

28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because
you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. 29 No, 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.

GOD REMAINS FAITHFUL

3 Then what’s the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of cir-
cumcision? 2 Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with
the whole revelation of God.* 3 True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that
mean God will be unfaithful? 4 Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As
the Scriptures say about Him,

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

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.) 6 Of 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?" 8 And 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.

ALL PEOPLE ARE SINNERS

9 Well 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.
10 As the Scriptures say,

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

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> 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 Testa-
ment. 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.

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 uni-
verse, and His justification of sinners is complimentary—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 11:8).
“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.”

19 Obviously, 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. 20 For
no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law sim-
ply shows us how sinful we are.

CHRIST TOOK OUR PUNISHMENT

21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the re-
quirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses* and the prophets long
ago. 22 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.

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. 24 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. 25 For 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, 26 for He was looking ahead and including

*Pss 5:9; 140:3

Ps 10:7

*Ps 59:7-8

Ps 3:1

Rom 2:12

Ps 143:2

Rom 4:15; 7:7

Gal 2:16; 3:11

Rom 1:2, 17; 9:30

Rom 4:11; 10:4, 12

Gal 2:16

Col 3:11

Eph 2:8

Heb 9:12

Lev 16:10

Heb 9:12-14

Heb 1:1-9

Heb 4:10

Greek or Greeks. 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 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 35:22; Romans 7:2-9, 12), a window through which to view the world (Proverbs 3:31-32; Isaiah 33:22; Romans 7:2-9, 12), a window through which to view the world (Proverbs 3:31-32; Isaiah 33:22) and a mirror to view ourselves (1 Kings 9:4-8; 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 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.

27 Can 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. 28 So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

29 After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t He also the God of the Gentiles? Of course He is. 30 There is only one God, and He makes people right with Himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.* 31 Well 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.

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? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, He would have had something to boast about. But that was not God’s way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”

4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. 6 David 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.”

9 Now, 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. 10 But 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!

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 4:5-8, 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.
4:11 Circumcision 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. And 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.

12 Clearly, 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. 13 If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. 14 For 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!)

15 So 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. 16 That 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.

17 Even 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!” 18 And 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. 19 Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 20 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. 21 And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.

22 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded for 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. 23 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded for 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. 24 He was handed over to God, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

25 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded for 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.

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. 2 Because of our faith,
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.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And 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.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, 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. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, He will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. For 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. So 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
5:6 Eph 1:3; Phil 1:20
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 on Him. Paul mentions the Holy Spirit infrequently early in Romans (1:4; 2:28; 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.

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.)

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 on Him. Paul mentions the Holy Spirit infrequently early in Romans (1:4; 2:28; 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.

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

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 When 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 man’s sin brought condemnation, but the free gift of many benefits. 20God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people continued to sin after the law was given, 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.

SIN’S POWER IS BROKEN

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 were united with Him in His death? 4We were connected to Him in the fountain of life—so are we (Romans 6:3-4). If you are still a baby, then you will live a baby’s life. If you still have a baptismal promise, then you will live a new life. 5But if you have died, then why do you continue to live as if you hadn’t died? 6We used to live as a creation reborn in God’s image—so are we (Galatians 3:27). Now we live as sinners—so are we (Romans 6:3). But if we die with Christ, we will also live with Christ (Romans 6:8). Now we are united with Christ (Romans 6:3). If so, then we are united with Christ in His death, and all human beings have become like Adam’s one sin. But if we receive His life, then we receive His death, too (Romans 6:5). How did Christ die? He died for sinners (Romans 6:11). Therefore, if we have already died with Christ, then we will also live with Him. 7And live we do, if we continue in faith, sinning but not dying (Romans 6:11). 8In this way, we also bring about Christ’s death (Romans 6:11). 9But if we die, then we also live (Romans 6:11). 10If we receive Christ’s death, we also receive His life (Romans 6:11). 11Therefore, we should not sin, or we will die (Romans 6:11). Then what is it? If we sin, we will die (Romans 6:11). But if we do not sin, then we will live (Romans 6:11). 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.

SIN’S POWER IS BROKEN

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 were united with Him in His death? 4We were connected to Him in the fountain of life—so are we (Romans 6:3-4). If you are still a baby, then you will live a baby’s life. If you still have a baptismal promise, then you will live a new life. 5But if you have died, then why do you continue to live as if you hadn’t died? 6We used to live as a creation reborn in God’s image—so are we (Galatians 3:27). Now we live as sinners—so are we (Romans 6:3). But if we die with Christ, we will also live with Christ (Romans 6:8). Now we are united with Christ (Romans 6:3). If so, then we are united with Christ in His death, and all human beings have become like Adam’s one sin. But if we receive His life, then we receive His death, too (Romans 6:11). Therefore, we should not sin, or we will die (Romans 6:11). Then what is it? If we sin, we will die (Romans 6:11). But if we do not sin, then we will live (Romans 6:11). 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.
5 Since we have been united with Him in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was. 6 We 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. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. 8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him. 9 We 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. 10 When He died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. 11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.

MY RESPONSE TO GOD

Saved from What?

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.
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. Sin 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.

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

19 Because 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.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. 21 And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. 22 But 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. 23 For 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? 2 For 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. 3 So 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.

4 So, 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.

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

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

6:15 John 8:32
2 Pet 2:19

6:17 2 Tim 1:13

6:18 John 8:32

6:21 Rom 7:5; 8:13
2 Cor 5:18
John 8:32
Rom 8:2
1 Cor 7:22
1 Pet 2:19

6:22 Matt 5:5-6
John 3:16; 17:2
Rom 5:21
Gal 6:9

7:1 Cor 7:29
7:3 Luke 16:18

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

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

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.

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

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.