

Romans: The Righteousness of God

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¹Adapted from Thomas Nelson, Inc., *Nelson's teaching outlines of the Bible [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1986.

Introduction and Theme (1:1-17; 15:14 – 16:27)

Theme of Romans: **God's Righteousness**

Chapter 15 - Ministry to Poor Saints

Chapter 16 - Greetings

God is righteous, and the gospel shows Him to be so. God tells us that sin is deadly (Romans 6:23) and treats sinners as worthy of death. (Romans 1:29-30; 3:5) God provided the ultimate death to pay the penalty for sin, His own Son. (Romans 3:25-26)

But probably more to the theme of the book, the gospel reveals how *a person* can become righteous in God's sight. In other words, the good news shows how God grants someone righteous status, even though s/he has sinned.

The gospel has...

Facts to be believed (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

Commands to be obeyed (Romans 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8), and

Promises to be received (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)

	<u>The Gospel of Christ</u>	<u>The Law of Moses</u>
Strength:	Power ...	Weakness ...
Standard:	... of God	... of human righteousness
Outcome:	... unto salvation	... brings condemnation
Scope:	... for everyone	... for Jews only
Basis:	... who believes	... who do the works of the law

Background

Paul's beginning: Philippians 3:3-6; Acts 7:57 – 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:1-5, 19-20; 26:1-11; 1 Timothy 1:12-13 [Notice Paul's conscience: Acts 26:9; 23:1]

Paul's conversion and mission: Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-18

Paul wrote Romans before he had ever gone to Rome (Romans 1:9-13), so someone else obviously started the church in Rome. (Peter did not go there till very late in his ministry, according to Catholic tradition.) Paul probably wrote Romans in the spring of A.D. 58, during his third missionary journey. This conclusion is derived from an interesting study, considering the following facts and passages:

Timing – Paul wrote the Corinthians twice concerning the collection for the saints (1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:10-11) and was now on his way to Jerusalem with the donation. (Romans 15:25-26; See also Acts 20:22.)

Place – The greetings in Romans 16 contain reference to several people connected with Corinth: Phoebe (Cenchrea was the eastern port city of Corinth), Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2), Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14), and Erastus (2 Timothy 4:20).

Reading level. Romans is a difficult book with deep thoughts and lengthy arguments. Twisted doctrines and objections to the truth are anticipated and answered, and themes of promise and grace, spirit and life, law and works, sin and punishment are interwoven repeatedly.

Romans directs much of its thoughts to people living under the Law of Moses, and the Old Testament (including the Septuagint translation), is quoted 60 times, with the emphasis, "As it is written..." appearing some 19 times. At the same time, the book of Romans speaks to all men, and ever seeks to apply more challenging concepts to real-world decisions of daily life. Even those who are new in the faith can benefit greatly from this inspired writing.

Notes: 1:1 – Remember Paul's background and mission. With this in mind, remember the sufferings of him who said he was ready to preach even in Rome, because he was not ashamed of the gospel. (vv. 15-16; see Acts 9:16; 14:19-22; 2 Corinthians 11:23-33)

1:2 – The gospel was promised from the very beginning (in Genesis 3:15, intriguingly nestled among the curses) and was reiterated to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18), Isaac (Genesis 26:4), and Jacob (Genesis 28:14), and was clarified to David (2 Samuel 7:8-16), among others. All the references to the Messiah (God's anointed) throughout the Old Testament are related to the promise of the gospel "through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." (Psalm 2, Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, Joel 2, etc.)

1:3-4 – There is a dual emphasis here: Jesus is the son of *David*, according to the flesh, and the son of *God*, according to power. In the same way, the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 emphasizes that He came through Abraham and David according to the flesh (although Matthew 1:18 points out that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit). Luke 3:23-38 emphasizes that Jesus was ultimately the Son of God (although Luke 3:31 traces His lineage through David). It seems that Romans is accommodating both Jewish readers (as does Matthew) and Gentile readers (as does Luke). Romans 1:7 uses greetings common to Greeks (“grace”) and Jews (“peace,” or “shalom”).

1:7 – Remember throughout this study that Paul was writing to Christians – people who were *already saved*. As with *all* the New Testament books from Romans through Revelation, this explains why the writers choose to emphasize certain points over others, especially regarding how to be saved. For stories showing non-Christians becoming Christians (in other words, people who would need complete instructions), see the ten examples of conversion in the book of Acts: Jews on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2; Samaritans, including Simon, and the Ethiopian treasurer, Acts 8; Saul, Acts 9, 22, 26; Cornelius, Acts 10-11; Lydia and the jailer, Acts 16; the Corinthians, Acts 18:8; and the Ephesians, Acts 19.

1. According to the first few verses, what was promised?
2. Generally, where was this promise found? (v. 2) _____
So, Paul is writing to people who obviously understood something about the Old _____.
3. Even though he was an apostle, Paul’s day-to-day plans in the Lord’s service were his own, and sometimes God had other plans, or other ways to accomplish the goal. (For example, Acts 16:6-10.) Identify Paul’s expected journey plans (places and tasks).

Find the verses in chapters 1 and 15 that discuss Paul’s plans and difficulties in traveling to Rome.

4. Research: Provide 2 passages other than Romans 1:16 that illustrate and/or support that the **word** of God is related to **salvation/justification**.
5. Look at the different translations of 1:17 and then try to put in your own words what might be meant by the phrase “from faith to (or “for”) faith”.
6. (From chapter 15) Why did Paul preach in places the gospel hadn’t yet reached?
7. Why did Paul so badly need the prayers of other Christians?
8. Show how the thoughts in 16:25-26 are parallel to those in 1:1-6, 16-17.

The Need for God's Righteousness (Romans 1:18 – 3:20)

Chapter 1 - Gentiles' Sins Chapter 2 - Jews' Sins

The gospel reveals the righteousness of God. To this end, the first three chapters of Romans establish the *unrighteousness of man*, and thus the *just nature of God's wrath* and the need for *His* righteousness.

Chapter 1 highlights the sins of the **Gentiles** who, as a people, chose *not to know* God. Chapter 2 highlights the sins of the **Jews** who, as a people, *knew* God, but chose *not to follow* His will. Both peoples tended to boast in their own way. Perhaps you've known teachers who are very smart in many ways, but who believe in evolution – the power of “time and slime”, as opposed to the power of God the Creator. Professing to be wise, they become fools. (1:22) They are condemned as “proud, boasters.” (1:30) And perhaps you've known very religious people, even Christians, who should know how to behave, but who practice sins just like non-Christians. They may take pride in the fact that they are Christians and that they understand the Bible, but they are in no position to condemn anyone, because they themselves have sinned, and are unrighteous before God.

God's wrath is understandable. More precisely, His wrath is even *expected* against ungodliness and unrighteousness. (1:18; also 1:32; 2:5, 12, 16; 3:5-6) As we expose the *unrighteousness* of the Gentiles and the Jews, keep in mind that, in the same way that the gospel is the power of God to salvation “for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (1:16), the *wrath* of God is also for “the Jew first and also [for] the Greek... for there is no partiality with God.” (2:9-11)

Chapter 1 - The Gentiles have sinned

1:20 – Invisible things, like God's power and Godhead, are clearly *seen* in the creation. We have both God's *natural revelation* (i.e., nature, the creation, that reveals certain attributes of God), and God's *special revelation* (i.e., His written will, that reveals specifics about how to please Him). Compare Psalm 19: Verses 1-6, the natural revelation; verses 7-11, the special revelation. The Gentiles did not have the special revelation as did the Jews, but should've known better than to practice idolatry and uncleanness simply from God's natural revelation. To reiterate, their problem was (is) not a *lack* of knowledge, but rather a *rejection* of the knowledge of God!

1:24 – God does not force us to do good. In fact, when we choose to exclude Him from our knowledge and our worship, He “gives us up” to all manner of uncleanness and idolatry.

1:32 – Some people are hardened and unfeeling about their sins. They know better; they know they are not pleasing to God. But they are not content with sinning in their own lives; they even condone and endorse ungodliness in others.

Chapter 2 - The Jews have sinned

2:1 – In the same way that the Gentiles were “without excuse” in their sinful ways (1:20), the Jews were “inexcusable” when they sinned.

2:2, 3 – The “judgment of God” is righteous and just, in contrast to the judgment and condemnation of man in verse 1.

2:4 – Here is one of the first hints that God, although He is just and will punish evil, is interested in people being brought to repentance. Compare 2 Peter 3:9.

2:6, 16 – Regarding judgment based on our deeds, see also Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36-37; Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

2:7, 8 – Some *seek* for glory, honor, and immortality; others seek *self*.

2:12-24 – The pride of the Jews was brought to nothing by their sins, by them breaking the very law that God gave them. In other words, the very law of God in which they boasted was the very thing that condemned them. In fact, the Jews violated some of God's basic laws that they condemned the Gentiles for violating, and the Jews' sins caused God's name to be blasphemed, *even among the Gentiles*.

2:25-29 – The Gentiles were *not automatically* displeasing to God. In fact, the good heart of some of the Gentiles prompted them to be *pleasing* to God. At the same time, the Jews were *not automatically pleasing* to God, simply based on their family heritage. Thus, the mind-bending conclusion – likely *outrageous* to many Jews – was that “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly. . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit...” (2:28-29; Compare 9:8.)

Chapter 3 - Everyone has sinned

In chapter 3, we come to the unhappy but unavoidable conclusion that *all* people – both Jews and Gentiles – stand condemned as unrighteous. Because all have sinned, there is no room for boasting by *anyone*. “Every mouth [is] stopped, and all the world [is] guilty before God.” (3:19) As noted above, the Gentiles tend to boast in their human wisdom, and the Jews boast in their privilege from God. But sin is the great equalizer – “There is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (3:22-23)

For some people the truth that all have sinned does not need to be established with scripture. The awareness of sin is vivid and inescapable to those with a working and properly educated conscience. But the longer people live ungodly, the more blinded they become to their sins, and thus Paul, in writing Romans, explicitly condemns all men as having fallen short of the glory of God. The apostle John does the same thing in 1 John 1, stating to his Christian readers in no uncertain terms that all we Christians have sinned.

1. How do ungodly men suppress the truth?
2. Why are they without excuse? (1:18-23)
3. In ten words or less, what was the result of these men and women suppressing the truth? (1:24-31)
4. Tell two groups of people who are worthy of death regarding the sins listed in verses 1:29-31. Based on the context, would this be *physical* or *spiritual* death?
5. What type of behavior makes people “inexcusable” in God’s sight? (2:1-5)
6. What is the condition of the hearts of that type of people?
7. What is the basis of reward? (2:6-10)
8. How can someone sin “without law”?
9. If the Gentiles did “not have the law”, what law were they accountable to? (2:12-16)
10. What is the main point in 2:17-24?
11. Throughout the Old Testament and the gospels, “Jews” are the physical descendants of Jacob (“Israelites” or “Hebrews”). Describe Paul’s *new description* of who the Jews are. (2:25-29)
12. What advantage did the Jews have? (3:1)
13. How does “our unrighteousness” demonstrate “the righteousness of God”? (*Hint: consider specifically who is being spoken to, from 3:3.*)
14. Why might Paul be slanderously reported as saying, “Let us do evil that good may come”? (3:8)
15. What is the point of quoting the Old Testament passages (notice that there are six different references) in 3:9-18? (*Hint: See 3:19-20.*)

The Basis for God's Righteousness (Romans 3:21-31)

Chapter 3 - Just and Justifier

Here's a helpful word study for the book of Romans: Jews and Gentiles are different races — the Jews are *one* race, defined by their family lineage, and the Gentiles are *many* races, in fact *all* races other than Jews. An alternative translation of 'Gentiles' is 'the nations,' and the term refers to everyone from every *other* family in the world (from the Jews' perspective). The term 'Greeks' is often used synonymously with 'Gentiles' (e.g., Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12), but not always. (Rom. 1:14) Because the 'Jews' were a 'a special treasure to [God] above all people... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:5-6), and Christians are described in the same way (1 Peter 2:9), the term 'Gentiles' is at least used once by Peter apparently to refer to non-Christians. (1 Peter 2:12)

Based on the fact that *all have sinned*, Paul leads the reader to three related conclusions: **First, no race is superior to another.** The Jews had a distinct *advantage* over Gentiles by having the oracles of God (the special revelation, specifically communicating God's will in words; see 2:17-20; 3:2), but Jews are *not better than* Gentiles (3:9). Jews have sinned, as have Gentiles. Paul will return to the idea of the Jews' advantages in later chapters. (e.g., 9:4-5)

Second, all are worthy of the wrath of God. If God's only characteristic were His just nature, then He, in His justice, would rightly punish all people in His righteous wrath. But God is not simply *just*, seeking to punish unrighteousness. (Remember 2:4. Also see 11:22.) God indeed *is* just, but He is also "the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (3:26) This is truly a pivotal verse, and Paul now leaves the topic of man's unrighteousness in order to explore and explain the basis for God's righteousness starting in chapter 4.

Third, the reasoning is as follows:

All stand *condemned* on the same basis, *sin* (1:22-32; 2:2-6, 16), and
all will be *justified* on the same basis, *faith* (1:16-17; 3:22).

The holiness of God demands a separation from sinful men, and His justice even demands *payment* for sin. Sin defiles the soul, so the payment for sin is nothing less than a *life*. But if we each paid the penalty of our sins, we would all be forever separated from God. Thankfully, God's limitless love seeks to have fellowship with us. *How can God's justice be satisfied, while at the same time allowing God to have fellowship with us?*

Enter the blood of Christ. By Jesus' death on the cross, He paid the price for sin. Because He was sinless, He did not have to pay for His own sins, and so could pay for the sins of others. This payment for sin appeases God's wrath (acts as a propitiation, or mercy seat). At the same time, God, in order to justify unrighteous people, extends, of His own free will, undeserved favor, also known as "grace." By this special, unmerited favor, we can have the righteousness of Jesus Christ accounted to us – we can *be justified* – if we have faith in Him. God can be just, and at the same time justify us. The song, *Rock of Ages*, is based on powerful passages such as this: Jesus' death accomplishes two eternal purposes of God: "Saves from wrath and makes [us] pure."

1. The knowledge of sin comes _____ the law (v. 20), while the righteousness of God is revealed _____ the law. (v. 21)
2. Describe how the the righteousness of God is revealed. (3:21-26)
3. Write the name of a race of people very different from yours. _____

In what two ways is there "no difference" between you and those people?

a. _____

b. _____

4. Research: List all the other verses in the Bible which use the word ‘propitiation.’
5. Identify at least one phrase that is repeated in verses 21-30.
6. What excludes boasting?
7. What does the question, “Or is He the God of the Jews only?” say about the law referenced in verse 3:28? (3:28-31)
8. How does faith establish the law? (3:31) Consider Galatians 3:23-25.

The Basis for God's Righteousness, *Continued*

Chapter 4 - Abraham and David

Paul continues exploring the basis for our justification. It cannot be *our works*, because all men, both Gentiles and Jews, have proven themselves unrighteous. In this chapters, Paul cites accounts of two Old Testament men of faith to show that it cannot be *the Law of Moses*. In fact, the basis for justification has *always* been *faith*, contrary, perhaps, to what some of the Jews had come to believe.

1. What is the lesson to be learned from 4:4-5? (Read through verse 8.)

2. What was accounted to Abraham as righteousness? With respect to his circumcision, when was this done?

3. List at least two “big” sins of David from 2 Samuel 11 and tell what he deserved according to the Law of Moses.

4. So, when David was forgiven (2 Sam. 12:13), it was on the basis of ... (*Choose the best answer.*)
 - a. Works of penance b. Grace c. The Law of Moses d. A special exception from God

5. What would make the promise “of no effect”? (4:14)

6. How could there be “no transgression”? (4:15)

7. How is Abraham the father of us all? (Consider Genesis 12:1-3; 15:4-6, and Romans 4:12, 16.)

8. What event in Abraham's life gave him the distinct honor of his faith being accounted to him for righteousness? (Genesis 15:4-6; Romans 4:19-22)

9. For what purpose do we know the story of Abraham's faith? (4:23-25)

The Blessings of God's Righteousness

Chapter 5 - Grace

Some think Romans 5:14-21 teaches that we are inherently evil as descendants of Adam and that we die because of Adam's sin. We'll see that that's not the case. Three questions are posed regarding Adam's offense from verses 5:15, 18, and 19. These questions may seem difficult to explain at face value. *Three more* questions are posed regarding Christ's actions. The basis to answer all these questions is the same. Christ doesn't force His gift on us; He makes it available to us. It is our choice to take it or not. In the same way, Adam introduced sin into the world. Sin is now available and it is our choice whether to commit it or not.

As we have already studied in chapter 3, "All have sinned", so we are all in need of Christ. Based on James 1:14-15, sin is committed by choice, not by inheritance. James identifies the process whereby sin is committed: Tempted => Enticed => Drawn away by desire => Desire conceived => Birth to sin => Death

1. From Romans 5:1-5, explain how ...
 - a. Tribulation produces perseverance,
 - b. Perseverance produces character, and
 - c. Character produces hope.
2. With respect to our condition, when did Christ die? (5:6-8)
3. What is reconciliation? (5:9-11) (*Hint: See the Glossary after Lesson 13.*)

How are we reconciled to God?

4. Make an argument using verses 5:12-14 showing that God had given some form of law to Adam's descendants.
5. Identify the contrasts made between Adam and Christ. (5:15-21)
6. Are we guilty/sinful and made to sin spiritually because of Adam? [*Hint: See v. 12. Consider also **James 1:14-15** and how sin is birthed.*]
7. How do many die "by the one man's offense"?

How does the gift by the grace of Jesus Christ abound to many?
8. List at least four spiritual blessings mentioned in **Romans 5:1-11** that apply uniquely to Christians.

The Blessings of God's Righteousness, Freedom from Sin

Chapter 6 - Dead and Alive

1. Why even ask a question like the one in 6:1? (*Hint: See 5:20.*)
2. Describe the relation of Christ's death and burial to the Christian as shown in verses 1-6.
3. Describe what it means to be dead to sin.
4. Describe what it means to be alive to God.
5. Compare Mark 16:16 and Romans 10:17. Tell the similarity/similarities.
6. Explain how the analogy of a slave applies to sin and righteousness. (*Hint: You may need to consider the definition of a slave.*) (6:15-22)
7. Identify the rewards of the two slaves.

The Blessings of God's Righteousness, Freedom from the Law

Chapter 7 - Free from Despair

1. Chapter 6:15-22 utilized the analogy of slavery to identify whether we will serve sin or righteousness. Identify **two words in** the marriage illustration of verses 7:1-4 that are related to the slave relationship. (Note that the ESV translates verse 3 poorly. I recommend the NKJV, but you can still answer this question from either one.)

Identify **two words in** the “explanation” verses 7:5-6 that are related to the slave relationship.

2. To whom are the thoughts in chapter 7 mostly addressed? (7:1)
3. At what point is a woman freed “from the law of her husband” and free to remarry? (7:2-3)
4. How does Paul leverage off the old law marriage requirement to make a point to those who have been raised? (7:1-6)
5. How do we know what sin is? (7:7; Consider the definition of sin – “to miss the mark”.)
6. How does sin “take opportunity by the commandment” of the law? (7:8-11)
7. Explain what is meant by Paul in verse 7:9 when he said that he “was alive once without the law”.
8. Romans 7:10-13 identifies that the law “was to bring life”, “is holy”, “just and good”. If the law was so good, explain why was there a need for a new system as identified in 7:6.
9. Describe one or two ways in which we arrive at the conclusion that *the law* is holy, and that *true problem* is our sins. (7:11-16)
10. Romans 7:17-24 describes the misery of someone who must rely on perfect law-keeping to attain righteousness. To what state of mind/emotions did Paul’s good intentions and “delight in the law of God according to the inward man” lead?
11. Fill in the blank: This passage does NOT teach that a person is helpless to do anything good, and bound to commit any one particular sin in spite of all desire and effort to avoid it. If that were the case, there would be no point to Paul’s writing to Christians, as he did in chapter _____, to encourage godly behavior.

The Blessings of God's Righteousness, *Continued*

Chapter 8 - Spiritual Blessings

1. What is the “righteous requirement of the law” and how is it “fulfilled in us”? (8:1-4) (*Hint: Consider 7:7-9.*)
2. How was the law “weak through the flesh”? (8:1-4) (*Hint: Consider 3:23 and 7:12.*)
3. From Romans 8:5-11, define what it means to be carnally minded and what it means to be spiritually minded.
4. Explain how the condition of being “joint heirs with Christ” is fulfilled in your life. (8:17)
5. Who or what is the “creation” in verses 8:18-23, and what is it doing?
6. What is the Christian's hope according to this chapter?
7. Explain how the intercession in verses 8:26-27 works toward the accomplishment of verse 8:28.
8. Put Romans 8:31-39 in your own words.
9. How can we tell from the context that it is not teaching that a Christian cannot fall from grace?

Is God's Righteousness Fair to Israel? (Romans 9 – 11)

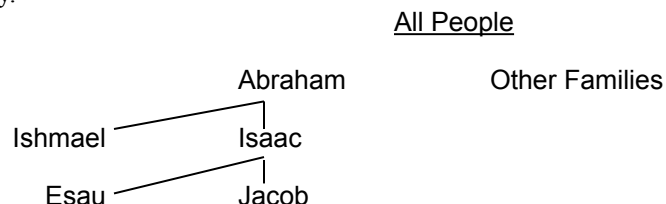
Chapter 9 - The Fair Sovereign

Chapter 10 - Not All Israel

Chapter 11 - Some Gentiles

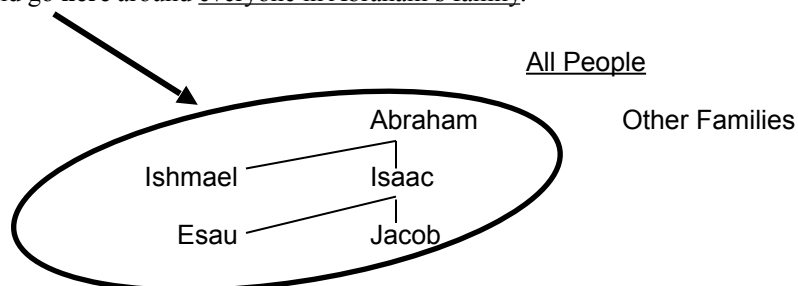
Who Are "The Elect of God"?

The diagram below shows the human race ("All People") arranged in a simple family tree highlighting Abraham's family.



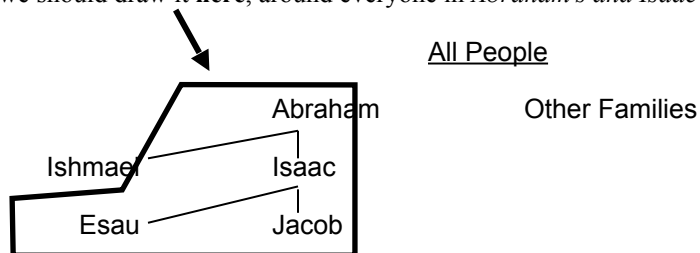
If we wanted to draw a circle around God's "elect" (that is, the people chosen by God to receive special blessings), *where would the circle go?*

Because God chose Abraham to receive special promises (Genesis 12:1-3), some might think the circle should go **here** around everyone in Abraham's family.



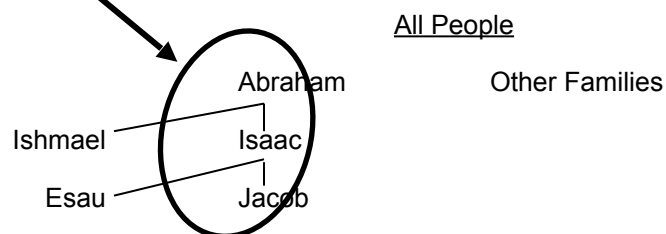
However, as Abraham started having children, we learn that his son, Ishmael, was *not* the "son of promise." So we cannot draw the circle around everyone in Abraham's family.

Maybe, then, we should draw it **here**, around everyone in *Abraham's and Isaac's* family. (Romans 9:7-9)



Well, we also learn that God chose Isaac's son, Jacob, for certain blessings rather than Isaac's son, Esau. (Romans 9:10-13) So we cannot include Esau's family.

That seems to leave very few options, and we might think, as did the Jews, that we should draw the circle around *everyone in Jacob's family*. After all, Jacob (a.k.a., Israel) was the father of the 12 tribes, and his whole family, the Israelites (a.k.a. Jews) were the people chosen by God to be a great nation, inherit the promised land, and bring the Christ into the world. To them came the Law of Moses, the priesthood, and many prophecies about the Christ. The Jews had a great advantage over the Gentiles. (Romans 2:17-20; 3:1-2; 9:4-5) So, should the circle go **here**?



No. Paul teaches that “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly... in the Spirit...” (Romans 2:28-29) and also says that “they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” (Romans 9:6) So the circle around “the elect of God” does *not* even include *everyone* in Jacob’s family! Remember that not all Jews believed and obeyed the gospel, even though they had heard and known the prophecies. (Romans 10:6-21)

The line around God’s elect, therefore, is drawn, not by family or tribe, but by whether or not a person has faith in the Christ. It **must be a circle around a “spiritual Israel”** (termed “the Israel of God” in Galatians 6:15-16) which includes some Jews and some Gentiles. (Romans 9:24, 27-29; 11:5)

To properly identify God’s elect, and to show that membership in that group is continually being reassessed by God, we turn to an illustration in Romans 11:16-24 of branches from a wild olive tree being grafted into a cultivated olive tree. The Jews were a part of the chosen nation of Israel, but they sought their own righteousness and became like natural branches being cut off from the tree. The other families, or branches from a wild tree, had some who were added onto the cultivated tree. The criterion for being added or removed was whether a person had faith in Jesus or not.

“**The remnant**” refers to those relatively few Jews who belong to spiritual Israel. “The rest were hardened” (Romans 11:7-10), were “pursuing the law of righteousness ... by the works of the law” (9:31-32), were “ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness” (10:3), had not “submitted to the righteousness of God” or “obeyed the gospel” (10: 3, 16), and were “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.” (9:22)

A Note About “The Called”: We are called by the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 2:14) Jesus said that “many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 20:16; 22:14) In other words, as in several of Jesus’ parables, many do not respond to the call. However, Paul uses “**the called**” to be **synonymous with “the elect”** (not only in the book of Romans). Paul is only referring to the people who are called *and who respond to the gospel’s call*. In the book of Romans, “the called” are the ones chosen to receive God’s blessings: To be foreknown by God, predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, called, justified, and glorified. (Romans 8:28-30) In a similar way, in Romans 4, when Paul talks about our being justified by faith, he is talking about people who have faith *and who live according to that faith*. James points out that not *everyone* with “faith” lives according to that faith – even the demons believe, and tremble! James’ distinction is true and accurate, but Paul is focusing on the ones who believe, *and live*.

A Note About Predestination: I’m having a “**Let’s-Eat-Asparagus**” party. I’ve made all the preparations, and I know who will be there, before I even tell anyone about the party. By the specific, narrow purpose of my party, I have *predetermined* that some people will come, while many will not. I don’t know the *names* of the ones who will come, but I know something about them: they like asparagus! Everyone is “predestined” to come (or not) based on his or her love for asparagus. So, I have *predestined a category of people*, rather than selecting individuals’ names, and all are free to change their minds and adjust their preferences, if they want.

So it is with God. He’s having a “Let’s-Worship-The-Son” party. Everyone is invited, but only those who love the Son will come. We are predestined, not based on our works, but according to our faith. As our spiritual blessings are described in Ephesians 1, we read that “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world... [and] predestined us to adoption as sons” (Ephesians 1:3-5) Whoever will believe in Him and live for Him will belong to a special category, “in Him,” and will be adopted by Him, and will be conformed to the image of the Son. (Wonder how we get “into” Him? Read Galatians 3:26-29.)

A Note About The Perseverance Of The Saints: One difficulty in drawing the diagram above (with a circle around the elect) is that the list of individuals belonging in the circle can change. The Jews had been “broken off” because of their unbelief, but could come to believe, and could be grafted back in! (Romans 11:23) This is exactly what the apostle Paul had done in his life. But we know that **Paul’s** eternal destiny was dependent, in part, on his continued faith. *Even he might have still been “disqualified”* had he not continued living by faith. (1 Corinthians 9:27) And we know that the believing Gentiles who are grafted in, “stand by faith” and should fear being cut off if they don’t continue in God’s goodness. (Romans 11:20-22) This speaks loudly and clearly to the possibility of falling away, both for the remnant and the others.

Romans 9:14 reminds us that this arrangement is perfectly fair, because God is sovereign. After all He doesn’t owe us anything. If He chooses to show mercy, His mercy will be extended on *His* terms, not ours.

Some people believe that God has predestined us *individually, by name*. This idea is neither Biblical nor reasonable. The idea would have to include God predestining every lost person, also, as well as each person who starts out of the circle, then repents and obeys the gospel, then falls away.

A Note About Hardening and About Pharaoh: The more I talk about asparagus, the more some people are interested. People who love asparagus enjoy thinking about the smell, the texture, the color, the flavor, how to cook it, etc. But the more I talk, the more I turn some people *off*. So, is it fair for me to have a party centered around such a polarizing topic? Sure it is, because it’s *my party*. To borrow Paul’s language from Romans, I can show mercy on whomever I will, on whatever terms I choose. If this hardens some people’s hearts against me,

so be it, but it's their choice. The same asparagus that interests some people, turns off many others. As the old saying goes, "The same sun that melts butter hardens clay."

So it is with the gospel and the will of God in general. **Pharaoh clearly had a choice.** After all, Moses went to him and gave him a choice... *how many times?! But the text says that Pharaoh hardened his heart.* (Exodus 8:15, 32) At the same time, *God* clearly played a role in hardening Pharaoh's heart. (Exodus 4:21; 9:12) God did not take away Pharaoh's free will, though, any more than I take away your choice in whether or not to come to my asparagus party. **So how did God harden Pharaoh's heart?** By allowing Pharaoh to go on thinking he could keep the Israelites as slaves! God did not override or control Pharaoh's will; God *used* Pharaoh's evil will for His own purposes. Notice that his heart was hardened when God *took away* two of the plagues! (Exodus 8:15, 32) Again in Exodus 14:3-8, we read how God again hardened Pharaoh's heart through a simple circumstance. God directed the Israelites to an apparent "dead end" in the wilderness, and Pharaoh's heart, which already wanted to keep the Israelites captive, was hardened to the point that he pursued them. **Pharaoh made the decision; God reinforced his determination** (hardened him) in that decision.

An apt illustration is of someone standing, leaning hard on one foot. It doesn't take much of a push to make that person lose balance. God hardening someone is like giving him a nudge to keep going the direction he's already leaning. Similar language is used when God nudges a person to do some good thing when he was already so inclined: "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation" allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1:1)

"Whoever Calls Upon The Name Of The Lord Shall Be Saved": Romans 10:13 is not the first place this is said. Peter preached it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21), and he was quoting Joel who had written it hundreds of years before. The question is, does Romans 10:9-13 tell the whole story regarding what a person must do to be saved? No. Keep reading to at least verse 16, and you'll see that Paul emphasizes the importance of *hearing* the gospel and laments the fact that *not everyone has obeyed* the gospel. And earlier in the book, Paul mentions being buried with Christ by *baptism* into death so we can rise to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4) And what about *repentance* (described in chapters 6 and 12)? Wouldn't you agree that repentance is necessary? (Reference the comment with lesson 1, on Page 2, that Paul was writing to Christians. So he doesn't mention everything in the same paragraph.)

"Calling on the name of the Lord" is obviously our pleading to Him to save us, but it is ***not simply a prayer that we utter***. Notice in Acts 2, that Peter quotes this promise, then preaches Jesus as Lord and Christ. When the believers ask *what to do* (v. 37), Peter does not tell them to pray, but instead tells them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) Notice that the preacher, Ananias, gave Paul the *exact same instruction*. Paul had been praying and fasting with faith for three days, and Ananias told him to "arise and be baptized and wash away [his] sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16; 9:1-19) Notice that Romans 10:17 mentions *hearing* the word of God, verses 9-10 mention *faith* and *confession* of faith, and verse 16 mentions *obedience* to the gospel. This all helps explain "calling upon the name of the Lord" in verse 13. Our being buried with Christ into His death is *how we call* upon the name of the Lord. We appeal to God for salvation, not so much by our words, as by our *obedience*.

1. Describe and distinguish the two "Israels" referenced in 9:6.
2. Who fits the role of the vessels of wrath in 9:22?
3. Paul uses the same illustration of "vessels" in 2 Timothy 2:19-22. Do the vessels have any choice as to whether they are appointed for destruction or for mercy?

Support your answer.

4. From 9:19-24 show that the "vessels of mercy" included both Jews and Gentiles.

5. Why had the Jews not attained righteousness? (9:30-33)
6. What was lacking with regard to the zeal of the Jews? (10:1-3)
7. What was the reason for asking the questions in verses 10:6-7 with respect to the confession of verse 10:9?
8. Tell what has to occur for someone to “call upon the name of the Lord.”
9. *Extra credit.* How do you know that baptism is involved in “calling on the name of the Lord”? (*Hint:* Consider Acts 2 and Acts 22.)
10. Identify **three prophets** and **three passages** quoted from the Old Testament in chapters 9 and 10 that predicted that the Gentiles would have salvation.
11. Explain the illustration Paul used regarding Elijah and how it applies to Israel in the days of Paul. (11:1-5)
12. How does the jealousy of verse 11:11 turn out to be something good?
13. Explain the illustration of the branches in verses 11:16-24 and identify whom each set of branches represents.
13. What is being referred to by verse 11:33?

Submitting to Society

Chapter 12 - Be Transformed

1. Put in your own words how to fulfill the instruction of 12:1-2.
2. *Research:* From verse 2, look up the Greek word for “**transformed**.” (*Tutorial:* You can use www.BlueLetterBible.org. Type the verse reference into the search box. After the passage appears, click “TOOLS” beside the verse. Then look for the word in the list.)
 - a. Spell out that word the best you can in English.
 - b. Tell an English word that is very similar to it.
 - c. You’ll also see a number (like G3339) which you can click. It will give you the definition and more! List **two other places** that word is used. (In other words, two other contexts. For example, if you use a passage from Matthew, you may not simply use the parallel passage in Mark.)
3. In a “nutshell”, summarize what you think is the emphasis of 12:3-13.
4. Provide a practical example that illustrates what it is to give preference to one another. (12:10)
5. How might our reactions differ from Paul’s instruction in verses 12:14-21 if we used our own wisdom, which is to be “wise in our own opinion”.

Submitting to Governing Authorities

Chapter 13 - Obey Authorities

1. Who *should* be afraid of God's appointed authorities? (13:1-5)

Who should *not* be afraid of God's appointed authorities?

2. What is the purpose of these appointed authorities? (13:1-5)
3. Why should you *not* speed when driving down the road? (*more than one reason*) (13:1-5)
4. What are some other reasons (perhaps from 1 Peter 2:12ff, or from Matthew 5:41 or Matt. 17:24ff or Matt. 22:15ff) for obeying the government?
5. With respect to their treatment by the government, what did Paul, Peter, and Jesus have in common?
6. Give other examples of how 13:1-7 applies especially to young Christians.
7. Explain how 13:8-14 ties in with 12:17-21 and 13:1-4.

Submitting to Each Other as Christians (Romans 14:1 – 15:13)

Chapter 14 - Receive Each Other

What if Joe Christian thinks some action is okay, but Bob Christian thinks it's sinful?

- They *can* be “like-minded toward one another.”
- They *can* “with one mind *and* one mouth glorify” God, and can edify each other.
- They *can* worship and work together, in spite of their differences.
- They may make exactly opposite choices, both following their consciences.

But notice that the solution is *not compromise!*

There was a controversial topic in New Testament times of eating meat that had been cooked as a sacrifice to idols. That meat, which had been part of an idolatrous ritual, was then sold in the market place. (*Parallel passages: Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8; 10:14-33*)

Christians fall into two categories: They're either okay with eating that meat, or they think it may be sinful.

Okay with eating it

Believes he may eat all things
Strong/Knowledgeable
 He who has **faith** (is **sure** that it's permitted)
 To him, all things are pure

Doubtful about eating it

Eats only vegetables
Weak in the faith
 He who **doubts** (is **not sure** it's permitted)
 He considers it to be “evil”

What happens if the “strong” goes ahead and eats the meat? The “weak” sees him, and goes along with eating the meat, although he has lingering doubts, concerned that he may be indirectly participating in the idolatry.

He who eats

Puts a stumbling block or a cause to fall in his brother's way
 Is no longer walking in love
 Sins against the brethren, and wounds their weak conscience
 Sins against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12)

He who does not eat

He who doubts is “condemned if he eats”
 It is evil for the man who eats with offense*
 Whatever is not “from faith” is sin
 Stumbles/Is Grieved/Is Destroyed/Is made weak/ Is offended*

*“*You've offended me!*” In this context, to be “offended” is to be encouraged/caused to do something against one's conscience. Nowadays, people use the term to complain about being bothered, even though they would never-in-a-million-years practice what the other is doing.

Remember that 1) Christ died for each member of the body; we all are the Lord's, and 2) the kingdom of God is spiritual (i.e., is more than food and drink). Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. This would happen if the “strong” insisted on exercising his liberty – his right – to do some unnecessary thing the other person thought was sinful. (1 Corinthians 8:9)

We must do things that are accepted by God *and approved by men* – both *Jewish* and *Gentile* men, Christians and non-Christians alike. (1 Peter 2:11-12, etc.) This was surely one of the considerations in Acts 15:19-29, where “things polluted by idols” are listed with other sins that had been prohibited by God even before the Law of Moses. (See Genesis 2:24; 9:4.) Even if no other Christians would be made to stumble, the “strong” also have their reputation among *non-believers* to consider. (1 Corinthians 10:32-33)

Until the “weak” learned that eating the meat was not the same as committing idolatry, the “strong” would have to receive him without thinking less of him (i.e., without despising him: “Good grief – I can't believe he thinks it's wrong to ...”). And until the “strong” learned to forego his liberty and leave off eating that meat, the “weak” would have to receive him – after all, *God* has received the “strong” as God's servant! (i.e., without judging him or showing contempt for him: “Good grief – I can't believe he *does* that!”) We can assume that other Christians are doing their best in God's service, and are following their consciences, even if they reach different conclusions from us. The “strong” must *always* “bear with the scruples of the weak,” and in this case, forego eating meat – *forever*. (1 Corinthians 8:13)

Jesus encountered a similar situation regarding paying taxes. Technically speaking, Jesus and His apostles should have been free from paying taxes, but they had to forego their liberty and pay the taxes anyway.

Why? “Lest we offend them.” (Matthew 17:24-27) Notice that 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 are in the context of liberties that Paul had to forego. (1 Corinthians 9)

Whatever the topic under consideration, each person must make up his own mind on the matter. “Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind,” because “we all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ,” and “each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

But whatever conclusion we reach, we must “receive one another to the glory of God.”

1. Of the two brethren identified in 14:1-4, is the *weaker* brother the one who is *more* “restrictive” in his practices, or *less restrictive*?
2. What “type” of judging is being done from one brother to another? (14:1-13)
3. Give at least two reasons for giving up something for the sake of your brother? (14:14-21)
4. Give a modern example of doing something that is allowed by God, but that action is considered to be sin by some.
5. Describe the strength required to “bear with the scruples (weaknesses) of the weak”.

Provide an example of how you may do this. (15:1)

6. Who is the “neighbor,” and what is the purpose for pleasing him? (15:2)
7. Who is to be received, and why would there be a problem receiving this person? (15:7) [Consider 14:1-10]
8. Jesus is specifically identified as a “servant to the circumcision” (15:8). Why would the Jews (the circumcision) specifically be pointed out and not the Gentiles? [*Hint*: Romans 3:1-2]

How do verses 15:8-12 play into this concept?

Definitions of Some Key Words in Romans

(mostly from Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)

Account/Impute (4:3-11, 22-24; 5:13; etc.) – Reckon, take into account, put down to someone's account (for good or bad, and regardless of the reason). The note in the Bible's margin in 4:3 (NKJV) lists "imputed, credited, reckoned, counted" as being interchangeable with "accounted."

Just/Justify/Justified (2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2) – Observing rules; doing what is right; to be (or be pronounced, or to pronounce someone) righteous.

For example, when typing, you can

"Align left," like the text in the definition for "Account/Impute",

"align right," over here,

or

"justify" (or "full justify") the margins of something you're trying to type for a term paper or other project so you can see that the words, which in and of themselves would not naturally fit perfectly from one edge of the page to the other, are *made* to fit. It's not exactly justification by faith, but it is, at least, undeserved, and is something that the words could not normally accomplish by themselves.

Justification (4:25) – Legal and formal acquittal from guilt; declaring something to be completely correct or, in a moral sense, righteous. In keeping with the definition above of "justify/justified" and applying it to a sinful person, think of someone "crooked" or "lacking" being declared "straight" or "lined up" or "complete."

Propitiation – Mercy seat (Compare Leviticus 16:15; 1 John 2:2); a sacrifice for sin, offered at the Mercy Seat (as in the tabernacle and temple) that pays the price for sin (namely, a life) and appeases the wrath of God.

Reconcile/Reconciliation (5:10-11) – (Vine's) To change or exchange something (especially money), so referring to people, to change from enmity to friendship; (from the etymology of the word) to return to the council; (American Heritage Dictionary) to re-establish a close relationship; (simplified) make friends again.

Righteous (1:32; 2:5, 26; etc.) – Just, impartial, without prejudice. Note the interesting contrast between a "righteous man" and a "good man" in 5:7, and think about the contrast between the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan in Luke 10:25ff, and think about Jesus, who was *both* righteous *and* good.

Righteousness (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 4:3; etc.) – The character or quality of being right or just; whatever is right or just in and of itself.

Romans versus James: A Contradiction in Scripture?

The great religious reformer, Martin Luther, actually wanted to remove the book of James from the New Testament! (See his Preface to James and Jude, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, pages 395-398.) He said, for example, “**It is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture** in ascribing justification to works.” (Retrieved from <http://www.matt1618.freeyellow.com/preface.html> 09/09/2018, emphasis added) Unfortunately, he is not the only one who sees a contradiction between the apostle Paul and James. After all, Paul writes that “If Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God.” However, James writes, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works...?” (James 2: 21) Hopefully, the following notes will help us realize that there is actually no contradiction.

First, notice that **neither writer tries to exclude faith or “works.”** The New Testament book which deals with *grace* perhaps more than any other (namely, Romans) also speaks of *obedience from the heart* (6:17), Paul mentions actions required to die to sin and be united in the likeness of Christ’s death and resurrection (i.e., baptism, chapter 6) and actions required “unto salvation” (i.e., confession, chapter 10). By the same token, the book that emphasizes the role of our *obedience and works* (namely, James) also speaks of the importance of maintaining a sincere and confident *faith*. (James 1:6-8; chapter 2; etc.)

Second, we need to understand **how the terms “faith” and “works” are being used**, and understand the point of the respective passages. Paul, in Romans 4, for example, is clearly discussing *the basis for justification*. (4:2 “If Abraham was justified by works...”) That basis cannot be works; all are condemned as sinners because our works are not perfect.

But James is not discussing the *basis* for justification. Rather, he is talking about whether faith is dead or alive. Notice that James says, “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (2:20) and “faith without works is dead.” (2:26) A key to understanding the different writers’ perspectives is found in James 2:19: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!” As W.E. Vine says in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*,

The two writers use the words ‘faith’ and ‘works’ in somewhat different senses. With Paul, faith is acceptance of God’s word; with James, it is acceptance of the truth of certain statements about God (v. 19), which may fail to affect one’s conduct. Faith, as dealt with by Paul, results in acceptance with God, i.e., justification, and is bound to manifest itself. ... With Paul, works are dead works; with James they are life works. The works of which Paul speaks could be quite independent of faith; those referred to by James can be wrought only where faith is real, and they will attest its reality.

So with righteousness, or justification: Paul is occupied with a right relationship with God; James, with right conduct....

Third, as Vine also says, “The two writers have before them **different epochs in Abraham’s life**: Paul, the event recorded in Gen. 15, James, that in Gen. 22.” Genesis 15 was when God promised that Abraham would have descendants as numerous as the stars, before Abraham even had a son. Verse 6 says Abraham “believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Genesis 22 was after Abraham had had Isaac, and was told to offer him on an altar. When Abraham did according to God’s word, God said, “...Now I know that you fear God.” (22:12) Clearly, God “knew” this before, when He called Abraham out of his country and made the promises to Abraham in Genesis 11:31 – 12:3. But Abraham’s works, as James argues, *perfected* or completed his faith. And in Genesis 22:15-18, God explains that “because you have done this thing” and “because you have obeyed My voice” — in other words, based on his now-visible faith — God swears by Himself to fulfill the promises which He had made previously (recorded in Genesis 12:1-3).