

A large, leafy tree in a field at sunset, with a fence and a road in the foreground. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere. The tree is the central focus, with its branches spreading out against the bright sky. The fence and road in the foreground lead the eye towards the tree and the horizon.

# **RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED**

## **ROMANS 9-16**

**BIBLE STUDIES FOR ASHFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

# THE STORY SO FAR...

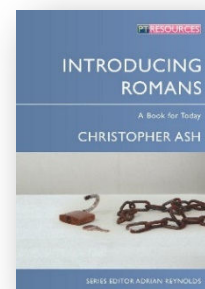


Paul wrote his letter from Corinth (A on map) to the church in Rome (B) during his third missionary journey in AD57 (see Acts 20:2-3);

1. To enlist their support for his mission to Spain (D) after visiting Jerusalem (C) (see 15:24), and
2. To encourage the Jewish and Gentile Christians to live in harmony (see 2:17; 3:27; 12:3, 10, 16; 11:17-18, 25; 14:10,19; 15:5-9)

Both of these objectives are achieved by **carefully setting out the gospel** he preaches.

"The full gospel, which is the foundation of justification (chs 1-4), the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer (chs 5-8) and the wise sovereignty of God in conversion (chs 9-11) is the key both to gospel partnership and to church harmony. Only a church deeply soaked in the gospel will live in harmony; only a church thoroughly taught the gospel will reach out with zeal." *Introducing Romans*, Christopher Ash, p46-46



## Key verse

The key verse of the letter is Romans 1:17 *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Righteousness has a number of aspects. It is;

1. a quality of God (his uprightness, faithfulness and covenant-reliability)
2. the right standing before him that he gives us when he justifies us
3. a quality of life that God requires of us, and empowers us, by his Spirit, to live

## Outline of Romans

Ch 1:1-17:	The gospel – God's <b>righteousness</b> revealed
Chs 1:18-3:20	Universal Sin - the need for <b>righteousness</b>
Chs 3:21-5:21	Universal need met - the gift of <b>righteousness</b>
Chs 6-8	The Spirit-powered way of <b>righteousness</b>
Chs 9-11	God's <b>righteousness</b> defended
Chs 12-15	The life of <b>righteousness</b> – implications and applications

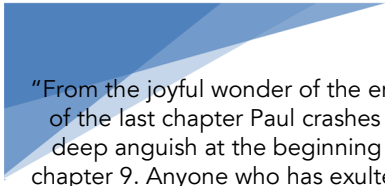
# ROMANS 9-10: WHAT ON EARTH IS GOD DOING?

In Romans 8 we took a majestic tour of all that God is doing in the world: from the individual level, setting people free by the Spirit of life from the law of sin and death through Christ Jesus (8:2), to God's plan to liberate the whole creation from its bondage to decay (8:21). God is sovereign over it all, working all things for good, including foreknowing, predestining, calling, justifying and glorifying those who love him (8:28-30).

As Paul thinks about God's electing, faithful love, his thoughts turn to his own people, the Jews. God has made many promises to them, and their rejection of the gospel calls into question whether God is reliable/faithful/righteous (see rhetorical questions at 9:6 and 9:14 and 11:1). It is this question Paul now turns to.

## Read Romans 9:1-29

1. Why does Paul have great sorrow for the people of Israel?
2. What privileges did they have? How should these have drawn them to Christ?
3. Why might someone suggest that God's word had failed?
4. How do verses 6-13 demonstrate that God has not failed in his promises and purposes for Israel? How might the link with Abraham help resolve conflict between Jews and Gentiles (see 4:11-12)?
5. Many people feel it is unjust for God to choose some and not others (v. 14). In reply why does Paul speak of God's mercy rather than his justice or injustice (vv. 15-18)?
6. How does the illustration of the potter and his clay help us gain a proper perspective (vv. 20-23)?
7. How is God's mercy and justice revealed in his treatment of the Gentiles and Jews (vv. 24-29)?
8. What is God's overriding purpose in choosing some and not others (17, 23)?



"From the joyful wonder of the end of the last chapter Paul crashes to deep anguish at the beginning of chapter 9. Anyone who has exulted over the discovery that they are God's child and then asked, 'But what about Mum? Or Dad? Or my husband? Or my child? Will I understand his pain.'"

*Dust to Destiny: Reading Romans today,*  
David Seccombe

**Read Romans 9:30-10:21.**

The first part of Paul's answer to the question "Why has God not saved many from Israel?" is that it is God's choice – he will have mercy on whom he wants to have mercy (9:1-29). Paul now describes how that mercy is shown – by God justifying those who pursue it by faith, rather than works.

9. In what characteristic way did Jews seek to be right with God (9:30-33)? What was the basic problem with this approach (see 3:20; 7:7-11)? How do you see people taking this same path today?
  
10. Many people believe religious zeal and sincerity are all a person needs to be saved. How would Paul respond to this belief (10:1-4)?
  
11. How do verses 6-8 stress the simplicity of righteousness by faith? It may help to check out the context of the Old Testament quotation from Deut 30:12-13.
  
12. First-century Christians publicly confessed that "Jesus is Lord" at their baptism. Why is public confession important in addition to the belief in one's heart (vv. 9-13)?
  
13. Look at Rom 3:22-23. In that context, how does the phrase "there is no difference" compare with its use here in 10:12?
  
14. William Carey, the father of modern missions, once proposed to a group of ministers that they discuss the implications of the Great Commission. Dr. John C. Ryland retorted: "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine!" How does Dr. Ryland's understanding of God's sovereignty mesh with verses 14-15?

Realizing the implications of verses such as Romans 10:14-15, William Carey responded to God's call and went to India. Where do you feel called to go with the gospel?

Side by side in the Bible: God's sovereign election and human responsibility. The Bible consistently teaches that man is a responsible moral agent with a free will but he's also divinely controlled. They seem contradictory but they are kept together and each has its own comfort. God has chosen you and your salvation is secure. But you're also a real person. Your decisions matter.

We may never understand the mystery of how election and free will complement each other but we can understand the key lesson of these chapters. God is not fickle! He is faithful and consistent which is great because it gives us a firm foundation on which to build our life.

**Responding in Prayer**

Israel's unbelief did not stop Paul from praying for them (10:1). Spend time praying for those with whom you have the opportunity of sharing the gospel.

# ROMANS 11: SO YOU THINK YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD?

For centuries the people of Israel awaited their Messiah. But when he came, very few Jews believed in him. This situation has persisted to the point where Christianity is now considered a Gentile religion. What happened to God's promises and plans for Israel? Has God rejected his people? Can he be trusted after all? In this chapter Paul answers these questions.

## Read Romans 11:

1. How might Paul's comments in 9:25 and 10:21 lead someone to ask the question in 11:1? How do the examples given answer that concern? How do Paul's answers illustrate 9:6-7?
2. What were the spiritual consequences for those Israelites who rejected Jesus Christ (vv. 7-10)?

Why are these consequences inevitable for anyone who persistently rejects the gospel?

3. How is Paul's question in v11 related to his question in v1?
4. Why is Paul convinced that even greater blessings will come from Israel's acceptance of Christ (vv. 11-16)?
5. Up until now, Paul has been dealing with Jewish believers' feelings of superiority over Gentiles (see 2:17-29; 3:27-4:3). Why should Paul's illustration of the olive tree prevent Gentiles from feeling superior to unbelieving Israelites (vv. 17-24)?
6. Why does Paul want his Gentile readers to be aware of God's plan (25)?
7. What is God's ultimate purpose in Israel's hardening while the Gentiles believe (11:25-32)? How would this diffuse tensions between the two groups? How does this tie in with Paul's teaching in 3:21-24?
8. In this chapter Paul has argued that Israel's unbelief is partial (vv. 1-10), purposeful (vv. 11-16) and temporary (vv. 25-32). How does this make him feel about God (vv. 33-36)?
9. How can Paul's description of God in verses 33-36 also encourage us to trust and praise him?

This is a difficult chapter to understand in detail but the big idea is clear. We are to humbly know our place. Things work to God's plans and we shouldn't ever become superior and self righteous. Don't look down on those God has used. Maybe it's a good lesson to remember in the traditional versus contemporary tensions that seem to besiege most churches at some time. Don't despise our traditionalist brothers & sisters. God has used them to build up His Kingdom. Likewise don't despise those who wish for more contemporary expressions of faith. God is using them, and will use them too.

## Responding in Prayer

Thank God that his plans are greater than anything we can conceive.

# ROMANS 12: WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

## Introduction

These days, Christians are fascinated by the subject of "**Worship**". But what is worship anyway? And where and when are we meant to be doing it? As Paul turns the corner in his letter and starts getting practical, the life of worship is his first concern!

## Think About It

Tick three items on the following list that you think are the essential ingredients of worshipping God...

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a sense of awe         | <input type="checkbox"/> encouraging another Christian           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dignified music        | <input type="checkbox"/> meditating                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reflective music       | <input type="checkbox"/> prayer                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> modern music           | <input type="checkbox"/> preaching                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an old church building | <input type="checkbox"/> the Lord's Supper                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> time to think          | <input type="checkbox"/> a Sunday                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other people           | <input type="checkbox"/> any day I feel like it                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no other people        | <input type="checkbox"/> every day whether I feel like it or not |
| <input type="checkbox"/> helping someone        |  |

What's YOUR definition of worshipping God?

The Westminster Confession of Faith (XXI.1) says this:

*1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doeth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.*

1. Although it doesn't *define* worship, how does this paragraph *describe* it?

## Read Romans 12:1-8.

This is an important turning point in Paul's letter to the Romans. In chapters 1 to 11, he's dealt with the theory - how we get right with God through the sacrifice of Jesus, and the fact that all of us are sinners who rely on God's mercy and not our own merit - now he deals with the practical issues of how we live our lives in response.

2. From v1, what is worship?
3. What do you think it means to be a "living sacrifice"? What reason does Paul give for doing this?
4. What does it mean for *many* brothers (and sisters) to present their bodies as *a single* living sacrifice (v1)?

5. To live in a way that's **holy and pleasing to god** (v1), we need to look carefully at Paul's advice in the next few verses - because he tells us **how**. What's the first step he gives us in verse 2?

What does this mean in practice?

How can we start "thinking Christianly"?

6. Perhaps being a living sacrifice means giving up your own claims on your life. According to verses 3 to 8, what should we be doing with our time and talents? (Verse 3 gives a hint of what we usually do instead!)
7. According to Paul, "we who are many form one body." Make a list of the parts and functions he mentions here.

<b>Gift List</b>
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8. Do you think **you** have any of these gifts? List the ones you think you may have, or the ones you'd most like to have.

**Read verses 9-21.**

9. From v8b-16, what attitudes should accompany the actions of serving one another?
10. Living life as a walking, talking sacrifice means living a life of **love**. As you think through the many outworkings of love in verses 9-21, in which areas do you most often fail? What can you do about it?
11. How might a church that looks like this be a living sacrifice acceptable to God?

How can we become a more loving church? Which of the areas Paul mentions do we need to work on most?

**If we can get this right... we're worshipping right!**

**Responding in Prayer**

# ROMANS 13: POLITICS & RELIGION

In this chapter Paul continues with his explanation of the consequences of the gospel. Christians are to live the way they do "because of God's mercy" (Romans 12:1) - the way we treat one another, the way we treat unbelievers, even the way we respect those who govern us, is a constant display to the world of the way God has treated us.

## Read 13:1-7

### Background Briefing

As Paul explains the attitude we should have to those who rule over us in the world, remember that he lived in far more difficult and hostile circumstances than we do! Paul was talking to first century Christians who were politically powerless in the face of Roman imperial rule.

For Christians of Jewish background, submission to Roman rule would have been a constant point of tension. Other Jewish movements of the day (like "*the Zealots*") were advocating a violent uprising. In fact, within ten years of Paul writing Romans, the Zealots plunged the nation of Israel into a disastrous revolt against Rome. Other Jewish groups were refusing to pay taxes, and rioting in the cities of Ephesus and Alexandria.

Where did Christians stand on these matters? Was the Christian church another splinter political group determined to de-stabilise Roman rule? Paul makes very clear the fact that followers of Jesus have a far different attitude!

### Guidelines for Government, Guidelines for Us

1. From verses 1 to 7, what guidelines can you see for those who rule or govern?
2. Does the fact that some in political leadership reject God's claim on their lives change this reality?
3. What benefits does government bring to a society?
4. Should we consider ourselves somehow "above the law"? What does the passage say about this?
5. What excuses do people use for "rotting the system"? How should Christians view these opportunities?
6. What two reasons does Paul give for obeying the directions of the authorities that rule us?

Who are we really cheating if we cheat the taxman?



### Read 13:8-14

7. As we've worked our way through Romans we've seen that pursuing righteousness by law-keeping only leads to a dead end. Our sinful human natures are too strong for the Old Testament law (7:1-12). But for those that have faith in Christ, the Spirit of God is at work to change hearts from the inside (2:29, 6:17). With this heart transformation, one way of living sums up all those laws. What is it?
8. Write this law in the space below. Connect to it the Old Testament laws that Paul mentions. Add any others you can think of. How would you explain Paul's summary?

9. Can you think of reasons why this 'love' approach to living is so much better than trying to keep lots and lots of specific laws?
10. Since the Christian life is all about love, it's worth reflecting on the section of last week's study where you looked at particular ways of **expressing** love. Were there things last week you decided you wanted to do? How have you gone? What can you still do?
11. Apparently Roman Christians were getting slack at some of the points Paul is talking about. They are behaving in some very unloving ways. In verses 11 to 14, he tells them it's time to wake up to themselves! What is the motivation to change?

List the things Paul says they need to wake up from doing...

Are any of these relevant in your case? Perhaps there are other things? What would Paul be saying to YOU?

12. How does Paul say we Christians should live? How will the state-of-mind described in verse 14 help us do this?

### Responding in Prayer

# ROMANS 14:1-15:13: WHEN “COULD” DOESN’T MEAN “SHOULD”

## Introduction

By now we're familiar with the fact that Paul's writing to a church with real unity problems. There were differences of opinion over what was acceptable to eat (14:2) and whether certain days were more special than others (14:5). Jewish Christians had grown up eating kosher food and celebrating Sabbath and holy days of the Jewish calendar. Gentile Christians had a background of eating meat sacrificed in the pagan temples as part of their (former) worship, which caused some to choose not to eat meat (see 1 Corinthians 8). Rather than specify, Paul simply calls the two groups **the weak** and **the strong**. By the time we get to 15:7-12, however, it is obvious that he is thinking of Jews and Gentiles.

Paul's purpose in writing is that the two groups might accept (14:1; 15:7) and bear with one another (15:1), stop passing judgment (14:1,4,10,13) and looking down on others (14:3), stop putting stumbling blocks before others (14:13), destroying them (14:15); and instead walk in love (14:15), please his neighbor (15:2) and do what leads to peace (14:19), in order to bring praise to God (15:7). This is more important than any differences of theological opinion that divide.

## Think About It...

These days, there are still Christians who set rules about what they can eat or drink. Often, their standards seem impressive.

How would you describe the faith of someone who - because of their beliefs - doesn't eat meat?

WEAK / STRONG

What reaction would you have to a person who, because of their beliefs, didn't drink alcohol?

- WHAT A WOWSER
- THAT'S A BIT STRICT
- RESPECT THEIR OPINION
- IMPRESSED
- FEEL A BIT GUILTY THAT I'M NOT AS STRONG

## Read Romans 14:1-15:13, then think through these questions...

1. Verse 1 gives us two important instructions that we must keep in mind as we read and apply the rest of the chapter. What are they?
2. Who is it that we're told to accept?
3. Place a tick beside the person who Paul says is spiritually weaker...

- THE PERSON WHO EATS EVERYTHING
- THE PERSON WHO EATS ONLY VEGETABLES

4. What is the temptation of the man who eats everything? (v3)

What is the temptation of the one who does not? (v3)

Why are they both wrong?

5. What other areas of behavior do Christians have different opinions about (some say they're sinful and others say they're morally neutral)?
6. "One man considers one day more sacred than another, another man considers every day alike." (v5) According to the principles Paul has already set out (v2), which is the WEAKER in faith?

How does this apply to people who say "You shouldn't play tennis on a Sunday", or, like the Seventh Day Adventists, "The Sabbath **must** be observed on a Saturday."?

From verses 6 and 7, how *should we* respond to people who hold these views?

7. What point is Paul making in verses 8 to 12? How will this fact be demonstrated in the way we handle the sort of issues Paul is describing here?
8. Write out verse 13 in your own words to reinforce it in your mind. It's a key verse!

9. Is any food or drink "spiritually unclean" (v14)?

Can any food or drink cause "spiritual harm" (v14, 20-21)? How?

10. From verses 14 to 23, what directions does Paul give for what we eat and drink?

What compromises does he call us to make, and why?

What goals are we working towards? (Look especially at v 18 and 19)

How do these issues affect your own Christian life? How will they affect our church activities?

11. Can you reduce the things Paul has been saying to a general principle?
12. Can you think of any other areas of life where this principle will apply?

### **Responding in Prayer**

Pray Romans 15:5-6 for each other

# ROMANS 15:14-16:27: TAG-TEAM CHRISTIANITY

## Introduction

As Paul draws near the end of his letter to the Romans, he re-states his goals and ambitions - he's keen to remind them what he's been on about, and to re-focus their thinking along the same lines. Perhaps Paul's ambitions are rather different to our own!

## Paul - Man With A Mission

1. What are YOUR big ambitions in life? Be honest!

Have you achieved them? Do you expect to achieve them?

How do you think they match up with the ambitions God wants you to have?

## Read Romans 15:14-22.

2. What is Paul's big ambition? (v20)
3. Who does Paul especially want to reach?
4. Are there still places where the gospel of Christ is "not known" (v20)? What can we do about it?

## Read 15:23-33.

5. Verses 25 to 28 describe the collection Paul is taking to the Jewish Christians (2 Corinthians 8-9). What point is he making to the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome (v27b)?
6. Why does Paul ask the Romans to support him in prayer in verses 30 to 33?

*\* Who can YOU be praying for in this way if you want to join in the struggle?*

7. We're not apostles like Paul, but because of his great work in spreading the gospel, we've been included in God's family! That means we should share Paul's GOSPEL AMBITIONS. Do you need to re-focus your own ambitions to do this? In what ways can we - as individuals, and as a church - be more effective in reaching those where "Christ is not known"?

## "THE TEAM"

Real Christianity is a team sport. Paul is in the front lines, but there's plenty of support – a whole bunch of different people, men, women, young people, old people, who are galvanized together for a common task.

## Read Romans 16.

8. We saw an important aspect of teamwork at the end of chapter 15. What was it?

Can you see some other examples of teamwork scattered through chapter 16? Write down how the following people helped out...

- Priscilla and Aquilla (v3-5)
- Mary (v6)
- Andronicus and Junias (v7)
- Urbanus (v9)
- Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Persis (v12)

- Rufus's Mum (v13)
- Timothy (v21)
- Tertius (v22)
- Gaius (v23)

9. Are there ways **you** can be more involved in the team-work within our church? What are the areas of need? Think and pray about the possibilities!

### "THE OPPOSITION"

Paul has often spoken about the need for unity in the team - especially in chapters 14 and 15. His concern for unity has raised some important questions; for example, WHO are we actually meant to be united with? Does Paul mean we simply turn a blind eye to different ideas and teachings? Is the Jehovah's Witness at the door simply a Christian brother or sister with a few wrong ideas? Paul has some strong words to say in verses 17 to 19 about the need to be aware of our opposition.

#### Read 16:17-19 again.

10. Who should we watch out for?

How will we recognise these people?

Who are these people, and how do they operate? Are they still around?

What two things are necessary to stand against these people? (v19)

Is it "judgmental" or "divisive" to watch out for people like these?

11. Read Paul's final words in verses 25 to 27. The "mystery" hidden for so long is the fact that by the gospel, Jews and Gentiles alike would be brought into the family of God through Christ.

Who is the gospel intended for?

What response does Paul look for to the gospel? (end of v26)

12. Look back to what Paul says about the gospel back in chapter 1 verses 16-17. Think about these questions...

- In what ways has studying Romans deepened or clarified your understanding of this "gospel"?
- Have any of your attitudes been challenged, changed or shaped by what we have learned?
- How committed are you to the things that Paul considered **most important**?
- How can we make sure our **church life** reflects the sort of **gospel teamwork** Paul is talking about?

### Responding in Prayer