

*Romans 4-8*

**BRC**

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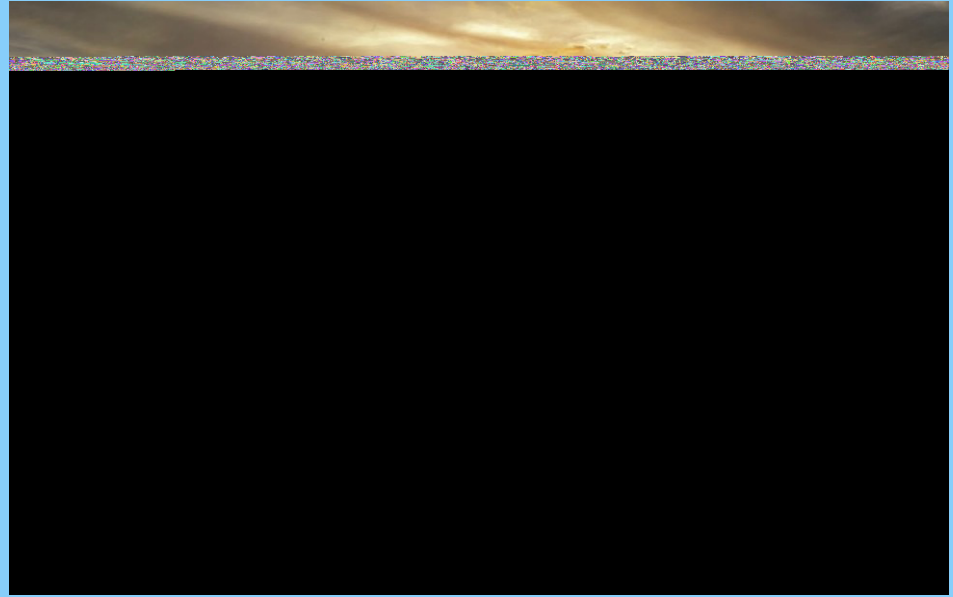
## *A Bible Reader's Conviction*

- ! *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV )*

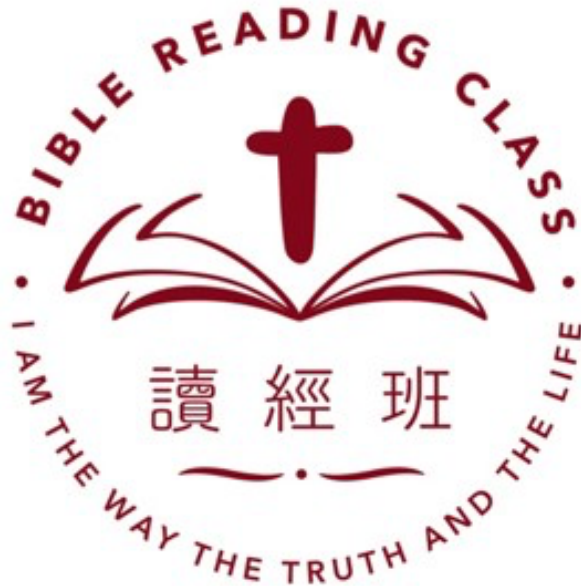
## A Blessed Journey

1. *May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.*
2. *May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.*
3. *May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.*

## Study the Bible, follow Jesus

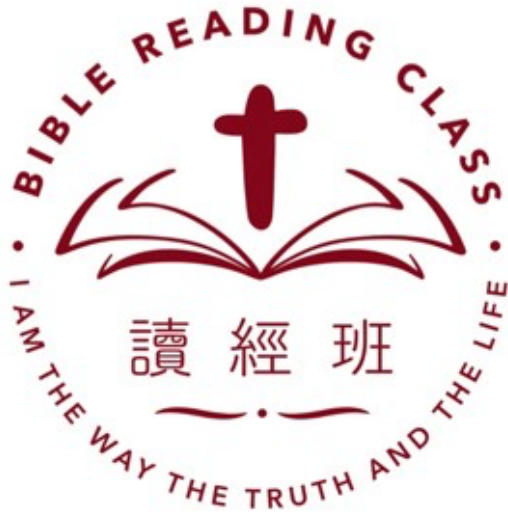


## The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

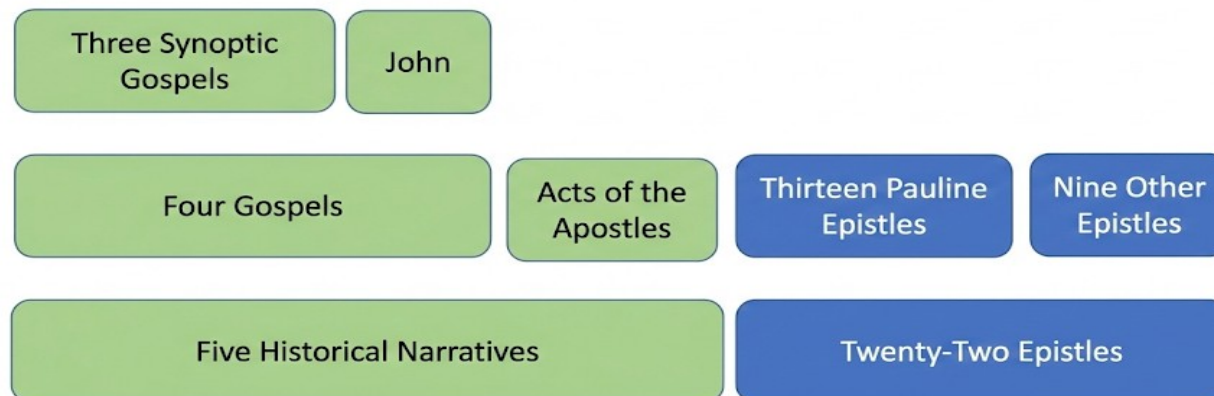
## BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement



- ! *I'll complete weekly reading assignment*
- ! *I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety*
- ! *I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)*

# The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- ! *The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John*
- ! *The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)*
- ! *Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching*



# Romans Chapter 3



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### **3. No one can be justified before God by the works of the law**

• *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God; therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law, rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:19–20 NIV)*

• *God's law is written in two places: first, it is written on every person's heart (2:15); second, it is written in the Law given to the Jews (2:17–18); since everyone has God's law, has anyone fulfilled all of God's law? whether Jew or Gentile, is there anyone who can say to God, "I have done all Your law; now please declare me a righteous person"? the answer is "No!": "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law." because of human weakness, no one is able to "keep the whole law" (James 2:10 NIV); the law cannot remove sin, it can only reveal sin.*

### 3. *No one can be justified before God by the works of the law*

- **Courage to face sin**

- *Modern people are very good at protecting their inner dignity and very good at finding excuses, and when something goes wrong they say it is because my childhood was bad, my parents were bad, society's influence was bad, my friends' influence was bad, and after talking endlessly about what was bad they still do not say I was bad, I was wrong, I sinned; and even if there is sin, it is always others who have sinned; they attack the sins of others to cover their own sins; others commit abortion or homosexuality, I do not, so I am fine; the same happens in evangelism, where some Christians "share the gospel" by talking endlessly about how good God is, how blessed life is, how faith helps life and family, yet they do not dare say we are all sinners, and this mindset is the exact opposite of the revelation of Scripture.*

- *Romans spends three chapters explaining the fact that "**all have sinned**"; if "all have not sinned," then "all do not need the gospel"; because all have sinned, there is the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross, and therefore there is "**the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**" (Luke 24:47 NIV); Scripture never avoids speaking about human sin, because behind sin stands the redemption of Jesus Christ, and we also ought to face sin with courage.*

## ***4. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31***

- *The most central doctrinal passage in Christianity: Romans 3:21–26*
- *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

## 4. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31

- *Five Core Questions of Justification by Faith (3:21–26)*

1. **What?** *What is the main point? The righteousness of God.*

A) *This passage (3:21–26) is the most important doctrinal text in Christianity. Its central theme is “the righteousness of God.”*

B) *What is the righteousness of God? First, righteousness is God’s attribute—God is righteous. Second, righteousness is God’s gift—given to those who believe in Jesus.*

C) *Here, “the righteousness of God” refers to the second meaning: God’s gift of righteousness. We may call it “the righteousness of grace.”*

## 4. *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31*

2. Where? *Where is God's righteousness revealed? Apart from the law.*

- ! *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (Romans 3:21 NIV)*
- ! *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.” (Romans 1:17 NIV)*
- ! *Romans 3:21 must be read together with 1:17; both passages speak of “**the revelation of the righteousness of God**”. 3:21 says “the righteousness of God **has been revealed**” (past perfect), 1:17 says “the righteousness of God **is being revealed**” (present continuous).*

## 4. *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31*

- ! *Has been revealed* means that the righteousness of God has already been revealed on the cross of Jesus Christ. *Is being revealed* means that through the preaching of the gospel, the righteousness of God is continually being revealed to the world.
- ! Where is the righteousness of God revealed? In “outside the law” and “inside the gospel.” **Outside the law** means that the righteousness of God cannot be obtained by keeping the law. If you follow religious rules and try to be justified by keeping the law, or try to be accepted by God through good works, you will gain nothing. God does not require religious rituals from you (see Isaiah 1), and you cannot keep the whole law (see James 2:9–10), and your “good works” are not good enough.
- ! **Inside the gospel** means that through faith in Jesus Christ, God freely gives His righteousness to all who believe in Him. It is freely given, not earned. It is by faith, not by works. It is because of Jesus, not because of you or me.
- ! Therefore, **everyone stands on the same ground**. We are all people who have received grace. You are not better than I am, and I am not better than you. We are all the same before God. We are all recipients of grace and have entered into Christ by faith. This righteousness is by faith from first to last; the righteous will live by faith

## 4. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31

3. Who? To whom does God give His righteousness? To all who believe in Jesus.

- ! *This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference. (Romans 3:22 NIV)*
- ! *To whom does God give His righteousness? He gives it to all who believe in Jesus Christ. It is not given to those who merely believe that God exists, not to those who believe that God is powerful, not to those who believe that God is great, but to all who believe in Jesus Christ: “**given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.**”*
- ! *God has one requirement for faith: one must believe in His Son Jesus Christ. Only those who believe in Jesus are justified; only those who believe in Jesus can be saved. If a person believes in God but does not believe in Jesus, such a person is not justified and cannot be saved.*
- ! *God’s righteousness is to be given to “**all who believe**”. There is no distinction of race, gender, wealth, or social status; no distinction of any kind. As long as one believes in Jesus Christ, anyone can be saved. What God loves is “**the world,**” and what God desires to save is also “**the world.**”*

## 4. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31

### 4. Why? Why do we need God's righteousness? Because all have sinned.

- ! Why do we need the righteousness of God? **“Because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** If God does not give us this “righteousness of grace,” we can only stand in the position of sinners and receive God's judgment.
- ! In the previous three chapters, Paul has already proven that all people have sinned. Because all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God.
- ! What does **“fall short of the glory of God”** mean? It means that our lives perform very poorly in **“reflecting the glory of God”**. It is like a car that is **“designed to perform excellently but performs terribly”**, originally able to climb mountains and exceed 100 miles per hour, but now can only sputter black smoke, moving at less than 10 miles per hour, running a little and stopping a little; when people see this car, they shake their heads and say, “Sigh, this brand of car is terrible, never buy this brand” and thus the car's performance brings shame to its maker and falls short of the maker's glory.
- ! God created human beings in His own image, originally as a masterpiece reflecting His glory; but because human life has been affected by sin, the masterpiece has become a defective product, performing terribly, and thus falling short of the glory of God.

## 4. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, 3:21–31

### 5. How? How does justification by faith happen? Through the redemption of Christ.

! *And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ( 3:24 )*

! *The foundation of justification by faith is the cross of Jesus Christ. Without the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no justification by faith. How does all of this happen? There are four main steps:*

1. **Grace:** Justification by faith is God’s grace. Because God loves us, He freely gives us this grace.
2. **Substitution:** Jesus Christ bore our sins, died in our place, and on the cross paid our debt of sin.
3. **Faith:** God decided that He would give salvation to people through “faith.” Whoever believes in Jesus receives the redemption of Jesus, is forgiven, and is saved.
4. **Justification:** Those who are saved by Jesus are not only forgiven but also justified. Forgiveness declares you “not guilty”; justification declares you “righteous.”

*Forgiveness is negative—it says, “You have no more guilt; you may go.”*

*Justification is positive—it says, “You are a good person; welcome into My house, come and be with Me.”*

## ***5. Further Explanation of Justification by Faith, 3:27–31***

***! Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law***

## 5. Further Explanation of Justification by Faith, 3:27–31

• *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith.*

▪ *First, the word “law” here is nomos, meaning “law,” not “method.” The “law of works” is the law of works, and the “law of faith” is the law of faith.*

▪ *A person is justified by God not because he is clever and has found the correct method, but because he submits and operates according to God’s principle.*

*“Law (nomos)” means “principle.” A person is justified based on the principle of faith, not the principle of works.*

▪ *If only those with exceptionally good behavior were justified (the law of works), then they would have something to boast about. But God does not look at human behavior. As long as one believes, anyone can be declared righteous. In this way, justification becomes God’s grace. Since it is God’s grace, there is no room for anyone to boast.*

## 5. Further Explanation of Justification by Faith, 3:27–31

- ! *For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too.*
- ! *Scripture repeatedly declares that God does not show favoritism. God is the God of the Jews, and He is also the God of the Gentiles. Jews can be justified by faith, and Gentiles can also be justified by faith. Therefore, those who preach the gospel must not show favoritism, because God does not show favoritism. Those who preach the gospel must not be narrow, because God is not narrow. Those who preach the gospel must not care only for their own people, because God loves the world.*
- ! *In today's climate of rising nationalism, Christians must firmly remember that **“God is the God of the Jews and also the God of the Gentiles”**. In Christ there is no Black or White, no Chinese or American—only those who have been justified by God. If you strongly promote nationalism on earth, have you considered whether this God who **“does not distinguish between Jew and Gentile”** is also promoting nationalism in heaven? If one cannot even grasp the basic truth that “God loves the world,” how can one preach the gospel at all?*

## 5. *Further Explanation of Justification by Faith, 3:27–31*

- ! *Every person may certainly love his own people and take pride in his own nation, but he must not reject other peoples, belittle other peoples, discriminate against other peoples, or even demonize other peoples. The apostles risked being condemned by their own people and were willing to give their lives to bring the gospel to people of other nations. With love that comes from God, they loved them, accepted them, and treated them with the kindness of Christ. Such people have only gratitude, not pride or a sense of superiority—gratitude for the greatness of God’s grace, that people of every tribe and nation may be saved through faith in Jesus; gratitude for God’s choosing and using them, that someone as unworthy as I am may also have a share in the gospel of Christ. There is no pride or rejection, no sense of superiority.*

## 5. Further Explanation of Justification by Faith, 3:27–31

- ! *Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.*
- ! *At first glance, “justification by faith” seems very permissive. It only requires you to believe, and does not place moral or spiritual demands on you. If that is the case, doesn’t faith abolish the law of God?  
On the contrary, faith does not abolish the law—it upholds the law.*
- ! *Everyone who believes in the Lord is given a new life by the Lord. The old self dies with Christ, and the new self rises with Christ. And the Holy Spirit lives within him, guiding him, exhorting him, and enabling him to walk according to God’s will. Compared with those who do not have new life and rely only on their own strength to practice righteousness, those who are justified by faith have greater ability and motivation to obey God’s will, and therefore “but rather uphold the law”.*

## 6. Paul's Battle with the Legalists

! During the first missionary journey, Paul and Silas came to Pisidian Antioch in Asia Minor and testified about Jesus in the Jewish synagogue, and many Jews and Gentiles believed in the Lord. On the next Sabbath, *“almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord”* (Acts 13:44 ). But those legalistic Jews became jealous of Paul, stirred up influential people, and drove the two of them out of the region.

! Paul and Silas left Pisidian Antioch and came to Iconium. In the same way, people in the synagogue persecuted them and stoned them, so they fled to Lystra. In Lystra, Paul healed a man who had been lame from birth, and the local people treated them as gods; but some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, stirred up the crowd, and the people's attitude turned completely around, and they nearly stoned Paul to death.

! Paul preached the gospel, and many Gentiles believed and were saved. After the first missionary journey ended, some law-keeping Jews came to Paul's churches and taught the brothers, saying that unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Paul and Silas had a sharp dispute and debate with them and went up to Jerusalem to settle the matter before the apostles and elders. This was the famous Jerusalem Council, and the conclusion was: whether Jew or Gentile, as long as one believes in the Lord, he can be saved—no circumcision, no law-keeping required.

## 6. Paul's Battle with the Legalists

- ! *However, the matter did not end there. Throughout Paul's entire life, wherever he went to preach, the Jews in the local synagogues persecuted him, chasing him from one city to another. Legalists infiltrated the churches Paul established and taught the brothers that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, otherwise they could not be saved. Paul's letters to the churches were almost all written to refute legalism, especially Romans and Galatians.*
- ! *Paul's battle with the legalists continued the battle Jesus had with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the strictest legalists—self-righteous, jealous of Jesus, persecuting Him, and sending Him to the cross. After Jesus died, they infiltrated the early church as “believers,” altering the content of the gospel, placing the law of Moses alongside the salvation of Jesus, claiming that a person must both “keep the law” and “believe in Jesus” in order to be saved. In Romans chapter 3, Paul refuted them with an unmistakable tone:*
- ! *For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too. Since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. (3:28–30 )*

## 6. Paul's Battle with the Legalists

! To this day, the battle between the disciples of Christ and the legalists continues. Jesus' most frequent description of the Pharisees was "hypocrites." They were religious leaders, occupying positions of authority, self-righteous, yet fiercely opposing Jesus and persecuting His disciples. Paul, originally named Saul, was himself a Pharisee, but later repented, believed in the Lord, became an apostle of Christ, and led Gentiles to the Lord—yet he was hated and persecuted by the Pharisees.

! **The gospel of Christ has two characteristics:** *First*, it is vast—it concerns all tribes and nations, and anyone in the world can be redeemed by believing in Jesus Christ. *Second*, it is simple—one only needs to believe in Jesus to be saved; nothing needs to be added, nothing needs to be changed. You do not need to become a Jew to be saved, nor do you need to accept Western culture to be saved. You only need to believe in Jesus to be saved—no need to keep the law, no need to accept this theology or that ideology, no need for the experience of speaking in tongues, no need to vote for a certain party or candidate. You are justified by faith; as long as you believe in Jesus, you can be saved! The legalists of Jesus' and the apostles' time have reappeared in the twenty-first century with a new face. They are still powerful, still have many followers, and still act hypocritically, confusing the word of God. The disciples of Christ have God's true word in their hearts and must, like Paul, be faithful and wise servants, stand firm, and follow Jesus.

## *Justification vs. Sanctification*

<b>Justification</b>	<b>Sanctification</b>
<i>Declared righteous</i>	<i>Truly becoming righteous</i>
<i>A one-time declaration</i>	<i>A long-term process</i>
<i>Positional</i>	<i>Practical / in daily living</i>
<i>Received by believing in Christ</i>	<i>Received by obeying Christ</i>

# Romans Chapter 4



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## ***Romans Chapter 4:***

### ***Abraham, the Example of Justification by Faith***

1. *Abraham was not justified by works, 4:1–8*
2. *Abraham was not justified by circumcision, 4:9–12*
3. *Abraham was not justified by the law, 4:13–16*
4. *Abraham was justified by faith, 4:17–25*

## **Background of the passage: God's three promises to Abraham**

1. *The promise of descendants as numerous as the stars:*

*God promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1–6 NIV)*

2. *The promise of inheriting the land:*

*God made a covenant with Abram, making him the father of many nations, changing his name to Abraham, and giving circumcision as the sign of the covenant. God promised to give the land to Abraham's descendants. (Genesis 17:1–15 NIV)*

3. *The promise of bearing a son at one hundred years old:*

*When Abraham was ninety-nine years old and his wife Sarah was ninety, God promised that Sarah would conceive and bear him a son. (Genesis 17:15–21; 18:9–15 NIV)*

## *A star-filled night*

- ! *So the Lord took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:5–6 NIV)*
- ! ***Biblical truth:** This story illustrates the truth of “justification by faith”: God made a promise to Abraham (formerly Abram), saying that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky; Abraham believed God’s promise, and God credited “this” (believing God) to him as righteousness.*

# I. Not Justified by Works

- **Four incorrect concepts:**

1. *Error: Good people go to heaven, bad people go to hell.*

- *Correct: Those who receive salvation go to heaven; those who do not receive salvation go to hell.*

2. *Error: One must accumulate merits to be saved.*

- *Correct: Believing in Jesus brings salvation.*

3. *Error: All religions teach people to do good.*

- *Correct: Christian faith brings people back to the true God; it is not merely moral encouragement.*

4. *Error: I am a sinner who has received grace.*

- *Correct: I am a righteous person who has received grace.*

## The word “credit” in Romans 4

- ! “Abraham believed God, and it was **credited** to him as righteousness.” (4:3 )
- ! “Now to the one who works, wages are not **credited** as a gift but as an obligation.” (4:4 )
- ! “However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is **credited** as righteousness.” (4:5 )
- ! “David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God **credits** righteousness apart from works.” (4:6 )
- ! “Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never **count** against them.” (4:8 )
- ! “For we say that Abraham’s faith was **credited** to him as righteousness.” (4:9 )
- ! “Under what circumstances was it **credited**? Was it after he was circumcised, or before?” (4:10 )
- ! “So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be **credited** to them.” (4:11 )

## God's Accounting

- ! *The original Greek word for “count/credit,” **logizomai**, is an accounting term meaning “to put into someone’s account” (cf. “If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.” Philemon 18). It is translated in Chinese as 「算」 and in English as “credit” (NIV, NASB), “impute” (KJV), and “reckon” (KJV).*
- ! ***Meaning:** Justification by faith is “God’s gracious accounting.” It is not that you have truly reached the standard of “righteousness” (no one can), but because of God’s grace, as long as you believe in Jesus, God “counts you as righteous”—in God’s ledger, He transfers you from the column of sinners to the column of the righteous.*
- ! *This accounting is not symbolic but real. You have truly been counted righteous by God; your sins are forgiven and will never again be remembered. When God looks at you, He no longer sees a sinner but a righteous person.*

# Twofold Accounting

1. Not counting sin: *“Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” (4:8 NIV)*
2. Counting as righteous: *“However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.” (4:5 NIV)*
  - **God’s active blessing**: *God’s blessing is active. He does not merely refrain from counting our sins and release us as “not guilty,” leaving us alone afterward. Rather, He goes further—He actively counts us as righteous so that we may be with Him and become His blessed children.*

## Study of the Passage

- ! *“If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.” (4:2 NIV)*
- ! ***Meaning:** This is a hypothetical statement showing that “justification by works” is impossible before God. No one can boast before God saying, “God, look at how many good things I have done; You ought to declare me righteous!”*
- ! ***Application:** According to Romans, the common saying “good people go to heaven, bad people go to hell” does not stand before God. Since “there is no boasting before God,” **no one is truly good.** The only way of salvation is to be “counted righteous” by God through faith in Jesus.*

## II. Not Justified by Circumcision

### • **Four Incorrect Concepts:**

1. **Error:** *I am saved because I have been baptized.*
  - **Correct:** *I am saved because I have received Jesus as my Savior.*
2. **Error:** *I am saved because I have taken communion (read the Bible, listened to sermons, attended church school, married in a church...).*
  - **Correct:** *Only those who believe in Jesus are saved; those who do not believe are not saved regardless of what religious rituals they have received.*
3. **Error:** *Whether you truly believe or not, getting baptized is always good.*
  - **Correct:** *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe, even if baptized, will not be saved.*
4. **Error:** *As long as you believe in your heart, baptism does not matter.*
  - **Correct:** *Those who believe and are baptized are true believers; those who have the opportunity to be baptized but refuse are false believers.*

### ***III. Not Justified by the Law***

- I must keep religious rules—attending services, taking communion, giving offerings—to maintain my salvation.*
  - **Correct:** *“For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”*  
*(3:28 NIV)*
- Since I can be saved without keeping religious rules, then I will not keep them.*
  - **Correct:** *“Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”*  
*(3:31 NIV)*

## Study of the Passage

- *“Because the law brings wrath(or: brings punishment). And where there is no law there is no transgression.” (4:15 NIV)*
- ***Meaning:** The law brings wrath—God’s wrath. Why? Because without law there is no transgression (Greek parabasis, meaning “to cross a forbidden line,” trespass). **The law reveals transgression, and transgression provokes God’s wrath.** Therefore, the law brings wrath.*
- ***Application:** Keeping the law only exposes your shortcomings and failures; it cannot display your strengths. Therefore, “being justified before God by keeping the law” is a dead-end road. The only path to justification is believing in Jesus—being not counted as sinful but counted as righteous.*

## IV. Justified by Faith

### • Father Abraham:

1. *Abraham is the father of the Jews:* “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?” (4:1 NIV)
2. *Abraham is the father of all who are justified by faith:* “So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (4:11b NIV)  
“So understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7 NIV)
3. *Abraham is the father of many nations:* “As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’” (4:17b NIV; cf. Genesis 17:4–5)

## Two Passages That Seem to Contradict Each Other

- ! **Genesis:** *Abraham doubted. Abraham fell facedown and laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” (Genesis 17:17–18 NIV)*
- ! **Romans:** *Abraham believed. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:19–22 NIV)*
- ! **The nature of faith: growing through doubt.** *Even those who truly have faith will experience moments of doubt. Regarding the matter of bearing a child at one hundred years old, Genesis says Abraham doubted, while Romans says Abraham believed. The truth is that **Abraham moved from doubt to belief**. True faith is faith that grows in the midst of doubt. Do not look at a person’s momentary weakness, but at the long-term direction of his life.*

# Transgression and Justification

- ! *Key verse: If the gospel could be condensed into one verse, it might be Romans 4:25:*
- ! *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Romans 4:25 NIV)*
- ! ***Jesus was delivered over for our sins:** Jesus bore our transgressions and was arrested and crucified because of them.*
- ! ***Jesus was raised for our justification:** Because Jesus rose, people can believe in Him; because they believe, they can be declared righteous.*
- ! *After Jesus was crucified, His disciples fell into despair. But when they encountered the risen Lord, their faith was greatly strengthened and their lives transformed. For later believers, the resurrection of Christ is a trustworthy proof that strengthens faith and enables them to be justified by believing.*

# Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification

- ! **The teaching of Romans chapters 1–8**
- ! Romans 1–8 covers three doctrines related to the Christian life: justification, sanctification, and glorification. “**Justification**” concerns the believer’s past; “**sanctification**” concerns the believer’s present; “**glorification**” concerns the believer’s future. Romans 1–4 focuses on “**justification by faith,**” and chapters 5–8 focus on “**sanctification by the Lord.**” These chapters also mention the believer’s “**glorification.**”

## Three Stages of Christian Spiritual Growth

	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Time of Occurrence</i>	<i>Relationship to Sin</i>	<i>Relationship to the Lord</i>
1	<b>Justification</b>	<i>Past (at the moment of believing in Christ)</i>	<i>The penalty of sin is removed (forgiveness)</i>	<i>Believing in Jesus, resulting in being justified</i>
2	<b>Sanctification</b>	<i>Present (throughout one's earthly life)</i>	<i>Overcoming the power of sin (victory over sin)</i>	<i>Obeying Jesus, resulting in sanctification</i>
3	<b>Glorification</b>	<i>Future (for all eternity)</i>	<i>The presence of sin is removed (sinless)</i>	<i>Becoming like Jesus, resulting in glorifying Him</i>

# Justified by Faith

- ! **Scripture:** *“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (3:22–24).*
- ! **Meaning:** *I was originally a sinner far from God, cut off from Him. Because of God’s grace and the redemption of Jesus, as long as I believe in Jesus, God forgives my sins, declares me righteous, and restores my relationship with Him.*
- ! **Application:** *Humility leads to confession; believing in Jesus leads to justification; justification leads to a restored relationship with God. Evangelism begins by helping a person humble himself and confess his sins, then leading him to believe in Jesus so that he may be restored to God.*

## Sanctified by the Lord

- ! **Scripture:** *“Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness” (6:19).*
- ! *“Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21).*
- ! **Meaning:** Sanctification is *“the process of becoming more and more like Jesus.”* This process does not come through knowledge, nor through rituals, but through *“offering your members.”* It is a decision of the will—yielding the lordship of one’s life to Christ, fully submitting to Jesus, so that one’s life is gradually transformed to become more like Him.

## Sanctified by the Lord

- ! **Application:** *Christians should care about their own spiritual life: After believing in the Lord, has my life improved? Has the influence of sin decreased? Has the influence of the Lord increased? Am I becoming more like Jesus? In every believer there are two forces: the power of sin, urging me to disobey God; and the power of the Holy Spirit, urging me to obey God. Sin comes from the old self; the Spirit comes from the new self. These two “selves” battle within me, robbing me of peace.*
- ! *When the old self overcomes the new self, sin reigns in my life and draws me away from God. When the new self overcomes the old self, the Holy Spirit reigns in my life and draws me near to God. **Who decides which side wins? I do.** Romans teaches that you must make a decision of the will: To whom will you offer your members? Offer them to sin, and sin wins. Offer them to the Lord, and the Lord wins. The secret of the Christian life is “offering.” Those who offer themselves to the Lord have a victorious life. Those who only seek peace and blessing but are unwilling to offer themselves to the Lord have a defeated life.*

# Glorified

- ! **Scripture:** *“Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (5:2).*
  - ! *“Those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified” (8:30).*
  - ! **Meaning:** *Glorification, on the surface, means “believers receive glory,” but its true meaning is “believers display God’s glory.” Glory comes from God; sinful humans cannot display God’s glory. After believing in the Lord, the more our lives resemble Jesus, the more we can display God’s glory. Before justification, we “fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). After justification, we “hope in the glory of God” (5:2). When we are with the Lord in the future, we will “receive glory” (8:30).*
  - ! **Application:** *From falling short of God’s glory, to hoping for God’s glory, to receiving glory—the entire life of a believer is for the glory of God. How should I live so that I may glorify God even more?*
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# Romans Chapter 5



W.Wang

## Through Christ, Entering Grace — Romans 5:1–11

• **Scripture:** *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (5:1–2).*

• **Through Christ:**

- ! **Through Christ we have peace with God (5:1):** *When I was a sinner, I was an enemy of God. By believing in Jesus Christ, I declared peace with God and ceased my hostility toward Him. Through the redemption of Jesus, God forgave all my sins and accepted my desire to be reconciled.*
- ! **Through Christ we enter grace (5:2):** *After being reconciled with God, the place where I live also changed. I once lived in the realm of sin; now I live in the realm of grace. Jesus not only removes my guilt but also grants me blessing.*
- ! **Without Christ, nothing can be accomplished:** *Reconciliation with God is the restoration of relationship; entering grace is the abundance of life. Both are essential to the Christian life, and both are accomplished through Christ.*

## What Does It Mean to “Hope in the Glory of God”?

- ! **Scripture:** *“Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (5:2).*
- ! *Further meaning of “glorification”:*
  - ! *“Glorification” does not mean that we receive glory for ourselves, but that we display God’s glory. God’s purpose in creating humanity was that people would reveal His glory (see Isa. 43:7: “everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory”). Glorification is the restoration of God’s original intention for humanity—so that human beings may perfectly reflect His glory.*

## What Does It Mean to “Hope in the Glory of God”?

- ! **“Glorification” is God-likeness.** God created humans in His image, so humans were meant to resemble Him. Each person should be like a small mirror reflecting God’s beauty. But because of sin, the mirror became covered with dust and could no longer reflect God’s glory; therefore Scripture says we “fall short of the glory of God.” Because of Christ’s redemption, one day the dust of sin will be completely removed, and we will be “glorified”—perfectly reflecting God’s beauty.
- ! **Hoping for God’s glory in our life:** Because of sin, we “fall short of God’s glory”. Now that we believe in the Lord and have new life, we can “hope for God’s glory”. This hope has two meanings: a hope in life and a hope in the body. Hoping for God’s glory in life means longing for our character to become more like Christ so that we may display God’s glory. This hope begins the moment we believe and grows as our spiritual life grows. When we see the Lord, the building of our life will be complete, and our hope of glorifying God will be fulfilled.

## What Does It Mean to “Hope in the Glory of God”?

- ! *Hoping for God’s glory in our body:* The second meaning of “hoping for God’s glory” is “waiting for the redemption of our bodies” (8:23), that is, the resurrection of the body. Romans teaches that one day we will be freed from decay, and by the power of His resurrection, God will “give life to your mortal bodies” (8:11). At that time, God will give us a glorious body—this is our hope in the Lord.

## ***After Believing in the Lord, Will My Life Become Smooth?***

- ! **Scripture:** *“Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings” (5:2–3a).*
- ! **God never promised blue skies:** *Some think that after believing in the Lord, life will be smooth. But God never made such a promise. On the contrary, Jesus said in the parable of the sower that some hearts are like rocky soil—seeds sprout quickly but have no root. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away (Matt. 13:20–21). Scripture teaches that believers will still face suffering, but those with a firm foundation will not fall; instead, they will overcome through the Lord.*
- ! **There are sufferings even in the land of grace:** *Scripture says that through faith we enter the land of grace, and this land of grace still contains suffering. Yet in this land of grace there is God’s presence and God’s love, and He wants us to overcome suffering through Him.*

## What Should I Do When I Face Suffering?

- ! **Scripture:** *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (5:2–5).*
- ! **Rejoicing in suffering:** *Through faith, we are able to “glory in our sufferings.” **This joy is an inner victory.** The outward suffering remains, and the circumstances have not changed, but inwardly I have already overcome. This “joy in suffering” is a noble quality of the saints and is true victory.*
- ! **The shaping of life:** *Sanctification is the process of life being shaped. The best environment for shaping life is not ease but adversity. Suffering requires me to learn perseverance. Day after day of perseverance shapes my character. **Character (the settled formation of one’s inner being)** gives me hope—hope in God. I am certain that this hope will not turn into disappointment, because the Holy Spirit pours God’s love into my heart. God loves me, and He will never allow my trust in Him to become my shame.*

## How Do I Know God Loves Me?

- ! **Scripture:** *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8).*
- ! **Meaning:** *Scripture uses the cross of Jesus Christ to represent God’s love. On the cross, Jesus gave His life for sinners so that we might be reconciled to God through faith. This love—dying for sinners—is beyond anything found in the world; therefore, “God demonstrates His love for us in this.”*
- ! **Application:** *Many people look for God’s love in their circumstances, but Scripture tells us **to look for God’s love at the cross.** Many ignore the cross and focus only on their needs, causing them to doubt God’s love. God wants us to fix our eyes on Jesus and see Him on the cross with spiritual eyes, so that we may understand and be assured of God’s love for us.*

# *The Two Systems of Humanity*

## ! *Adam's system: condemnation and death*

- *Who is in this system? All humanity.*
- *What is the outcome? Condemnation and death.*
- *Scripture: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (5:12).*

## ! *Christ's system: grace and life*

- *Who is in this system? Those justified by faith.*
- *What is the outcome? Grace and life.*
- *Scripture: "Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5:21).*

## **Sin and Death — Romans 5:12**

1. **How did sin enter the world?** *Through one man (Adam).*
2. **How did death come?** *Death came through sin (death is separation from life; life comes from God; separation from life is separation from God).*
3. **To whom did death come?** *To all people.*
4. **Why to all people?** *Because all sinned.*

## ***In This Land of Grace***

1. **5:1–5:** *In this land of grace, I not only overcome suffering but also grow in life.*
2. **5:6–11:** *In this land of grace, I not only am reconciled to God but also rejoice in God.*
3. **5:12–21:** *In this land of grace, I not only escape death but also receive eternal life.*

## ***Through Christ***

- *I am justified by faith through Christ (5:1; 3:22).*
- *I am reconciled to God through Christ (5:1, 10, 11).*
- *I enter grace through Christ (5:2).*
- *I am saved from God's wrath through Christ (5:9).*
- *I rejoice in God through Christ (5:11).*
- *I reign in life through Christ (5:17).*
- *I receive eternal life through Christ (5:21).*
- *All of this is through Christ.*
- *The essence of the gospel is through Christ.*

# Romans Chapter 6



W.Wang

## **Romans 6 — The Lifestyle of Those Justified by Faith**

### **United with Christ, Offering Our Bodies to God**

- ! *Romans chapter 6 explains the lifestyle of **a person who has been justified by faith**. A person's way of life before believing in the Lord and after believing in the Lord must be different. The question is: What is the difference? The answer lies in the **new understanding and new practice** he receives from Jesus Christ. The new understanding is this: through baptism we are united with Christ—our old self dies and is buried with Him, and from that point on we consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. The new practice is this: offering ourselves to God, presenting our bodies as instruments of righteousness, becoming slaves of righteousness rather than slaves of sin, obeying God in all things, resulting in sanctification.*
- ! *This **understanding and practice** are spiritual and living, unlike the Mosaic Law, which is written and rigid. True disciples begin from the heart, concerned with the Spirit rather than the letter. Once this spiritual mindset is established, one can follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and make righteous decisions in all circumstances, resulting in sanctification.*

# ***A New Understanding: Baptism and Union with Christ***

## ***Seeing Ourselves as New Creations (6:1–14)***

1. ***By no means:*** *Romans 6 contains two parallel sections (1–14 and 15–23), each with a “By no means” and a “Do you not know.” The first “By no means” answers the question: “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” The verb tense indicates continuous action—after baptism, can we continue living in sin as before? The answer is: By no means.*
2. ***Do you not know:*** *This strong rhetorical question explains the meaning of baptism: “Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Death means dying to sin. If a person has died to sin, how can he continue living in it? Not only must he not live in sin, but he must walk in newness of life, just as Christ was raised from the dead.*

## **A New Understanding: Baptism and Union with Christ**

### **Seeing Ourselves as New Creations (6:1–14)**

- 3. United with Christ:** *Paul explains the meaning of baptism: baptism is “union with Christ.” This union has two parts—union with Christ in His death and union with Christ in His resurrection. My old self (the old man) was crucified with Christ. The old self was a slave to sin; since he has been crucified, I am freed from sin and now have the “freedom not to sin.” I am not only united with Christ in death but also united with Him in life. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, I now live before God with new life.*
- 4. A new way of seeing ourselves:** *How a person views himself directly affects his daily behavior. Before baptism and after baptism, do you see yourself differently? Since you were baptized into Christ—your old self dead and your new self alive—you should have a new view of yourself: in Christ Jesus, you must count (logizomai) yourself dead to sin and alive to God.*

## ***A New Understanding: Baptism and Union with Christ***

### ***Seeing Ourselves as New Creations (6:1–14)***

5. ***A new result:*** *A new understanding leads to new practice; new practice leads to new results. Seeing yourself as a new person in Christ leads you to offer yourself to God, letting your body become an instrument of righteousness. Your hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouth all act in righteousness, doing what is right in God's eyes. If you continue in this way, although sin has not given up on you and tries to return as your old master, it cannot rule over you. Your life enters a positive cycle—not under law, which operates by punishing sin, but under grace, which operates by rewarding righteousness.*

## ***A New Practice: Offering Ourselves to God***

### ***Becoming Slaves of Righteousness***

#### ***Leading to Sanctification (6:15–23)***

1. ***By no means***: In Scripture, repetition indicates importance. The same question and the same answer appear twice, showing how crucial this matter is. The question: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” The answer is unmistakable: *By no means*.
2. ***Do you not know***: A basic principle: since you have a new master, you are no longer under the authority of the old master. Since you have offered yourself as a slave to righteousness, you are no longer under the rule of sin. Why are you still thinking about sinning? Do you not understand this truth?

## ***A New Practice: Offering Ourselves to God***

### ***Becoming Slaves of Righteousness Leading to Sanctification (6:15–23)***

- Becoming slaves of righteousness***: We are freed from sin in order to become slaves of righteousness. You are not without a master—you now have a new master, God Himself. Freedom does not mean doing whatever you want; it is the freedom not to sin and the freedom to obey God. Before union with Christ, you had neither the freedom not to sin nor the freedom to obey God. Through baptism and union with Christ, you are no longer a slave to sin but a slave to God—that is, a slave to righteousness, because God calls you to live righteously.
- A new practice***: This practice takes place in your body—your hands, feet, eyes, ears, mouth. Since you have offered yourself as a slave to righteousness, your hands do what is right in God’s eyes, your feet walk in God’s ways, your eyes look at what God wants you to see, your ears listen to what God wants you to hear, and your mouth speaks what God wants you to say. Your whole being becomes an instrument of righteousness, and your life displays God’s righteousness.

## *A New Practice: Offering Ourselves to God*

### *Becoming Slaves of Righteousness*

#### *Leading to Sanctification (6:15–23)*

5. **A new result:** *The outcome of being a slave to sin is death—becoming a sinner whose body dies and whose spiritual life dies. But being a slave to God produces the fruit of sanctification—becoming like God—and the outcome is eternal life:*

! *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23).*

# Romans Chapter 7



W.Wang

# Compilation of Scriptures: The Righteousness of God Revealed in the Gospel

- ! *The righteousness of God is revealed in this gospel. This is the righteousness of God given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, without distinction (3:22). There is no one righteous, not even one (3:10). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but now, by God's grace and through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we are justified freely (3:24). Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand (5:1–2). Therefore, offer yourselves to God and present your bodies to Him as instruments of righteousness (6:13).*
- ! *Having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness, leading to sanctification (6:18–19). If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness (8:10). Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God; this is your true and proper worship (12:1). Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (12:21). For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17).*

## ***The Thread of Righteousness***

! *There is one word in Romans that unlocks the entire book—the word “righteousness” (Greek dikaiosune, meaning what is right, proper, or as it should be). In the Chinese Union Version it appears more than seventy times: righteousness, justification, unrighteousness, etc. In English translations it appears mainly as “righteousness” or “justification,” along with related verbs and adjectives. The following selected verses, arranged by order and theme, highlight the central message of Romans.*

## I. The Summary:

### *The Gospel Reveals the Righteousness of God*

- ! *“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (1:17).*
- ! *The theme of Romans is “the gospel of Jesus Christ,” explaining the true meaning of salvation. Salvation is not merely going to heaven after death; it is the comprehensive redemption of your soul and body from the moment you believe. This redemption reveals the righteousness of God—not in heaven, but in the lives of people.*

## ***I. The Summary:***

### ***The Gospel Reveals the Righteousness of God***

- ! A person who is unrighteous becomes righteous by believing in Jesus Christ—first justified by faith, restoring his rightful standing before God; then living by faith, restoring the life he ought to have before God. This righteousness is “from faith to faith”—from justification by faith to living by faith. The life of a disciple is a life of faith. The righteous shall live by faith; one who is justified by God can live out God’s life by faith.*

## II. The Human Condition:

### *There Is No One Righteous*

- ! *“As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one” (3:10).*
- ! *Scripture says God created humanity in His image. Righteousness is “**the normal state of human nature.**” In this normal state, human nature reflects God’s attributes, and human actions display God’s glory.*
- ! *After humanity sinned, human nature was corrupted and damaged; righteousness was destroyed. This corruption is universal—every human nature is fallen. Though the degree of corruption varies, there is not a single righteous person. The loss of righteousness is reflected in human behavior: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

## **II. The Human Condition:**

### ***There Is No One Righteous***

- ! *The normal state is also the best state. “Righteousness” is God’s original design and blessing for humanity. Pain and loss come from unrighteousness, which is an abnormal mutation of human nature—not God’s design.*
- ! *In righteousness, a person’s body, soul, and spirit enter their best condition, receiving God’s blessing with great joy. The righteous display God’s glory—not by striving to fulfill a command to “glorify God,” but naturally and unconsciously reflecting His glory.*

### **III. God's Grace:**

#### ***Justified Freely Through Faith in Jesus Christ***

- ! *“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (3:22–24).*
- ! *God's righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, without distinction. All have sinned; we are equal in sin and equal in salvation. Regardless of race, class, or gender, anyone who believes receives God's righteousness—first “counted as righteous” (4:5), then “becoming righteous” (6:16).*

### **III. God's Grace:**

#### ***Justified Freely Through Faith in Jesus Christ***

- ! *“Counted as righteous” restores our standing; “becoming righteous” restores our life. Humanity once lived with God but became separated through sin. Now, by faith, we are counted righteous and once again stand before God as His people. After our standing is restored, we must present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, becoming obedient slaves of righteousness, fulfilling God’s righteousness. This entire process is “by faith, from faith, unto faith.”*

### **III. God's Grace:**

#### ***Justified Freely Through Faith in Jesus Christ***

- ! *We are saved by grace through faith. Grace and faith place all people on equal ground and unite them. We were all sinners; by believing in Jesus we all become justified by grace. This “all alike” truth unites us in Christ. Humanity originally came from one man, Adam, becoming many nations. Through faith we return to Christ, becoming one people: **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).***

## **IV. The Path of Sanctification:**

### ***Present Your Bodies as Instruments of Righteousness***

- ! *“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness” (6:13).*
- ! *Justification is only the beginning; after justification we must walk the path of sanctification (after restoring our standing, we must restore our life). Sanctification is “becoming like God”—living out God’s righteousness. Justification means God “counts you righteous,” not that you are already perfect. Sin still dwells in human nature and constantly seeks to enslave you. If you want to live out God’s righteousness, you must offer yourself to God and present your body as an instrument of righteousness, no longer a slave to sin but a slave to righteousness (6:18).*

## ***IV. The Path of Sanctification:***

### ***Present Your Bodies as Instruments of Righteousness***

- ! *“Offering” is a decisive act that shapes your entire life—living for God as an obedient slave. You may ask: Can I be neither a slave to sin nor a slave to righteousness—just a free person? Romans answers: No. Before sin, no one is free. If you do not obey God, you will obey your desires. If you do not become a slave of righteousness, you will become a slave of sin. Sin’s power is strong, operating in the body as an irresistible law (7:23), leading to death. Offering yourself to God is your only path to life.*

## V. The Whole Life:

### What the Kingdom of God Is About

- ! *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others” (14:17–18).*
- ! *Christians must think corporately—not only for themselves but for the whole church and the kingdom of God. God cares not only for one believer but for all His people. He does not desire one person to be sanctified but the whole community. When God called Israel, He did not call one person to be a priest but the whole nation to be a kingdom of priests. When God calls Christians, He does not desire one person to fulfill His righteousness but the whole church to fulfill His righteousness.*

## V. The Whole Life:

### *What the Kingdom of God Is About*

- ! *From chapter 12 onward, Romans teaches how “the righteousness of God is displayed in the church.” Disciples treat one another with righteousness, doing what is right in God’s eyes. Some believers argued about food—what may be eaten and what may not. Paul was disappointed that they abandoned the great matters of God’s kingdom and focused on trivial issues. After teaching them, he concluded: **“For the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”***

## Who is “I”?

- ! *Romans chapter 7 is one of the most debated and influential chapters in the entire letter.*
- ! *The controversy arises from differing views about the identity of the “I” in Romans 7. One view holds that “I” refers to an unregenerate person; the other view holds that he is already a regenerated believer.*
- ! *In this chapter, the “I” is a person who fails. He desires to do good but cannot carry it out (7:18). He has tried; he wants to do good and avoid evil, yet the result is the opposite (7:19). His inner being is in deep anguish (7:24).*

## Who is “I”?

- ! *Who is “I”? If “I” is an unregenerate person, his experience is normal—he has no new life and no help from the Holy Spirit, so failure is expected. But if “I” is a regenerated believer, then his experience is abnormal. How can someone with new life and the help of the Holy Spirit fail so miserably? Is this normal? Is it normal for a born-again Christian to live a defeated life?*
- ! *Different views of “Who am I?” lead to different interpretations of the Christian life. If “I” is unregenerate, then a victorious Christian life is normal. If “I” is regenerate, then a defeated Christian life seems understandable—because if even Paul failed like this, how could I possibly overcome?*

## ***A New Life for “Those with Religious Tradition”***

- ! *Paul speaks to “those who know the law”:*
  - ! ***“Brothers, I am speaking to those who know the law. Don’t you know that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?” (7:1).***
  - ! *Those who know the law refers to the Jews. From childhood they were taught to keep the law—not only the Law of Moses but also many human traditions.*
  - ! *As the gospel spread, some Jews believed in the Lord. Yet after believing, they continued to cling tightly to the law and their religious traditions. Paul told them that they had been released from the law and now belonged to Jesus Christ. From then on, their service to the Lord must follow the new way of the Spirit, not the old way of the written code.*

## ***A New Life for “Those with Religious Tradition”***

- ! Based on my years as a Christian and as a pastor, I believe this passage is extremely practical. If we understand “the Jews” as “people with religious tradition,” then this passage becomes directly relevant to modern Christian living.*
- ! I have met many Christians who live their Christian life according to their religious tradition rather than according to Scripture. Some grew up in church but were not yet saved, yet they accumulated “religious experiences.” Some experiences were rituals, such as infant baptism. Some were shaped by the social gospel—emphasizing love but not the new birth. Whatever the tradition or experience, they used it to shape their Christian life and influence other believers, even the entire church ministry.*

## ***A New Life for “Those with Religious Tradition”***

- ! *Romans 7:1–6 reminds us to live a new life before God. In Paul’s day, the Jews’ strict adherence to the law became an obstacle to living this new life. Paul urged them to let go of “the law that bound us.”*
- ! *In my pastoral experience, the most difficult church members are often “old Christians.” They have been believers for many years but seldom read the Bible, seldom pray, fear discipleship training, fear giving, fall asleep in worship, yet remain self-assured. While new believers grow rapidly, they remain stuck in old traditions.*
- ! *I believe that most Christians genuinely desire to live a life pleasing to God. If “religious tradition” becomes a barrier between them and God, many would rather choose God and let go of tradition.*

# ***The Two-Edged Sword of the Law:***

## ***Holy and Good, Yet Stirring Sinful Desire***

- ! *The law is holy:*
  - ! ***“So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good” (7:12).***
  - ! *The law is God’s will, therefore it is holy. The commandments—do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not covet, do not bear false witness—are holy, righteous, and good.*
- ! *Jesus affirmed the value of the law:*
  - ! ***“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17–18).***

# *The Two-Edged Sword of the Law:*

## *Holy and Good, Yet Stirring Sinful Desire*

- ! *Without the law, sin is dead:*
    - ! *“When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? By no means! Yet I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead” (7:5, 7–8).*
    - ! *Because there is a sinful nature within us, the more something is forbidden, the more we want to try it. The law says, “Do not covet,” yet it stirs up coveting. The law becomes “the tool that activates sinful desire” (7:8).*
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## ***The Two-Edged Sword of the Law:***

### ***Holy and Good, Yet Stirring Sinful Desire***

- ! *Take note of the issue of timing. Scripture says that the law “produced sinful passions” when we were in the flesh (7:5). Christians have already passed that stage; we are no longer in the time of being “in the flesh,” but in the time of belonging to Christ.*

## ***Flesh and Body***

1. *Sarx*: flesh, sinful nature.

- *Refers to the sin nature—the power of sin within human nature.*

2. *Soma*: body.

- *Refers to the physical human body.*

! *The flesh is sinful (8:7), but the body is good (Gen. 1:27, 31).*

! *The opposite of “spiritual” is “fleshly,” not “bodily” (8:5–6).*

	<b>People of the Flesh</b>	<b>People of the Spirit</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<i>Set their minds on the things of the flesh (8:5)</i>	<i>Set their minds on the things of the Spirit (8:5)</i>
<b>Relationship to sin</b>	<i>Bound by sin (7:23)</i>	<i>Freed from sin (8:2)</i>
<b>Relationship to God</b>	<i>Hostile toward God (8:7)</i>	<i>Relate to God as Father (8:15–16)</i>
<b>Outcome</b>	<i>Death (8:6)</i>	<i>Life and peace (8:6)</i>

# *The Double Good News*

- **The first good news: *Christ died for me***

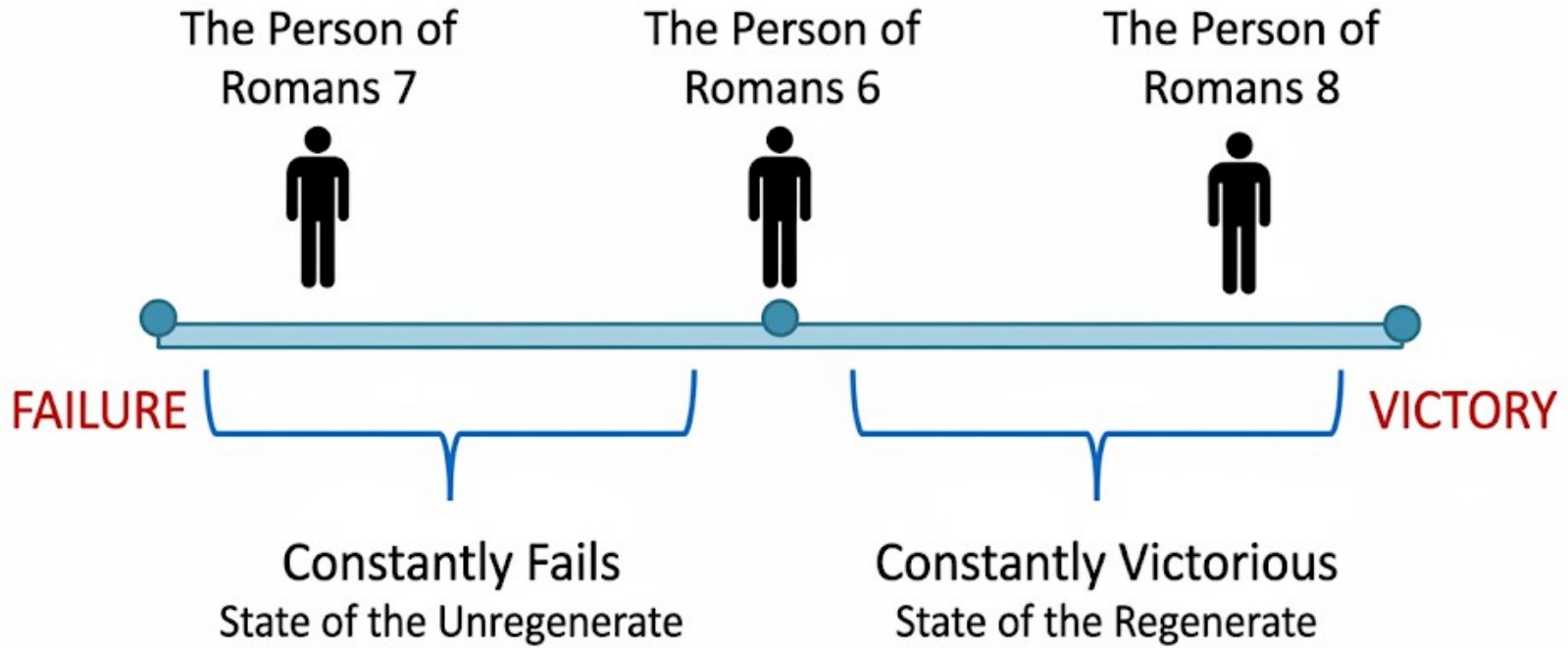
- ! *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in the flesh” (8:1, 3).*
- ! *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21).*

- **The second good news: *Christ lives for me***

- ! *“...in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (8:4).*
- ! *“The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God... and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).*

## *Always Failing and Always Victorious*

- ! *There were once a pair of twins. One was named Always Failing, and the other was named Always Victorious. Always Failing did not want to lie, yet he often lied; he did not want to be greedy, yet he often was; he wanted to be humble, yet he was often not humble. Always Victorious was the opposite. He did not want to lie, and truly did not lie; he did not want to be greedy, and truly was not greedy; he wanted to be humble, and truly was humble. Both desired to do good—only one could do it, and the other could not.*
- ! *Because they were twins, they looked exactly alike. Someone asked Always Failing, “Are you Always Victorious?” He replied, “No, I am Always Failing.” Someone asked Always Victorious, “Are you Always Failing?” He replied, “No, I am Always Victorious.” People were confused and said, “You two look exactly the same—how are we supposed to tell you apart?”*



## **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

# True and False Christians

- **Scripture:**

- ! *“If the Spirit of God lives in you, you are no longer in the realm of the flesh but in the realm of the Spirit. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (8:9).*

- **How do we distinguish true Christians from false ones?**

- ! *This verse says, “**If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.**” The way to discern a true Christian from a false one is to see whether he has the Spirit of Christ.*
- ! *But the Spirit of Christ dwells in a person’s heart—how can we see that? According to the principle Jesus taught, we can recognize it. Jesus said, “**By their fruit you will recognize them**” (Matt. 7:16). True Christians “set their minds on the things of the Spirit,” while false Christians “set their minds on the things of the flesh.” What they think, say, and do are vastly different.*

<i>True Christians</i>	<i>False Christians</i>
<i>Reads the Bible</i>	<i>Does not read the Bible</i>
<i>Prays</i>	<i>Does not pray</i>
<i>Shares the gospel</i>	<i>Does not share the gospel</i>
<i>Cares about the salvation of family members</i>	<i>Does not care about the salvation of family members</i>
<i>Worships God</i>	<i>Listens only to teachings</i>
<i>Christ-centered</i>	<i>Self-centered</i>
<i>Cares about God's kingdom</i>	<i>Concerned only about personal interests</i>
<i>Willing to sacrifice for the Lord</i>	<i>Unwilling to sacrifice for the Lord</i>
<i>Experiences peace, joy, and power</i>	<i>Experiences unrest, sorrow, and weakness</i>

# ***The Condition of the Spiritual Person:***

## ***The Body Dead, the Spirit Alive***

- **Scripture:** *“But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness” (8:10).*
- **The body is dead because of sin:**
  - ! *The wages of sin is death. Not only does spiritual life die (separation from God), but the body also dies. All have sinned, therefore all will die. As we live in this world, our bodies age, weaken, and eventually die—no one is exempt.*
- **The spirit is alive because of righteousness:**
  - ! *Doing what is righteous makes a person’s inner being alive. Those who follow the Spirit fulfill “the righteous requirement of the law” (8:4), meaning “they do what is right in God’s eyes”. When a person does what is right before God, his soul is restored (Ps. 23:3), and his inner being “lives because of righteousness.”*

## ***Our Bodies: Present and Future***

- **The present body: *subject to death because of sin***
  - ! *“The body is subject to death because of sin” (8:10).*
  - ! *“So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4).*
- **The future body: *resurrection from the dead***
  - ! *“He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you” (8:11).*
  - ! *“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship—the redemption of our bodies” (8:23).*

# *The Spirit of Slavery and the Spirit of Sonship*

- **Scripture:**

- ! *“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (8:15).*

- *The spirit of slavery: still afraid.*

- *The spirit of sonship: cries out to God, “Abba, Father!”*

## **Present Suffering and Future Glory (8:18–30)**

- ! *“I consider that **our present sufferings** are not worth comparing with **the glory that will be revealed in us**. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship—the redemption of our bodies” (8:18–23).*
- ! **Present Suffering and Future Glory**
- ! *Paul lifts his eyes toward the future—seeing future glory through present suffering. We live in a decaying world: what lives will die, what is good will deteriorate, and what dies will rot. Flowers bloom and fade; a rosy-cheeked baby becomes an elderly person with wrinkles. All creation is under **“the bondage to decay.”***

## ***Present Suffering and Future Glory (8:18–30)***

### ***! Present Suffering and Future Glory***

- ! Where does decay come from? From sin. Sin entered the world, and the world became filled with sin; everything decays. Death makes life feel meaningless. If I will die one day, why do I live? Old photos show youth and beauty; the mirror shows age and decline. Life seems to vanish in an instant. Like footprints on the sand washed away by waves, I am that footprint—an insignificant mark erased by time, as if I never existed. What meaning is there in such a life?*
- ! Faith brings hope, and hope brings meaning. In Christ, death and decay are temporary; freedom and glory are our eternal future. Our bodies will be redeemed—the footprint returns. In eternity, the waves of time cease, and the owner of the footprint, with a new body, runs joyfully on the shores of the new heaven and new earth. Life is in Christ; meaning is in Christ; freedom and glory are in Christ.*

# Three Groanings

- ! In this passage, Paul describes three “groanings” that express present suffering and future hope:
1. **Creation groans:** *“The whole creation has been **groaning** as in the pains of childbirth.”*
  2. **The children of God groan:** *“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan** inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship—the redemption of our bodies.”*
  3. **The Holy Spirit groans:** *“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (8:22, 23, 26).*
- ! *Groaning (stenazō) means sighing or moaning—either the groan of oppression or the groan of childbirth. Israel groaned under Egyptian slavery, and God heard their cry (Ex. 3:7). A woman groans in labor, but after the child is born, she forgets the pain and rejoices. Creation and God’s children groan under the bondage of decay, but when the body is redeemed, the child is born and groaning turns to joy. During this time, the indwelling Spirit understands our weakness, joins our groaning, and turns it into prayer before God.*

## **All Things Work Together for good**

- ! *“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son... Those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified” (8:28–30).*
- ! **All Things Work Together:** *A common interpretation carries the idea of “a blessing in disguise.” For example: You were hospitalized, but you happened to get some rest. Now you’re not only recovered but even healthier than before—so “all things work together for good”! Or you were unemployed for a while, but you spent more time with your family and cared for your wife and children. Now you have a new job and better family relationships—so “all things work together for good”!*
- ! **For those who love God:** *Another common interpretation understands “those who love God” in contrast to “those who do not love God.” It goes like this: Do you want all things to work together for good? Then you must first love God. Look at Brother Zhang—he loves God so much. He quickly found a new job and even got promoted and received a raise. Look at you—you don’t love God, so you still haven’t found a job!*

## **All Things Work Together for good**

- ! **What Paul means by “all things work together for good”:** What is Paul talking about? He is speaking about “present suffering and future glory”. All the suffering and all the brokenness of this present life will, when combined, become future good—bringing freedom and glory to the children of God. You must have faith in God and hope in the future.
- ! **What Paul means by “for those who love God”:** Who are the ones who love God? They are those who have been called by God and justified by faith. The reason you can become “one who loves God” is because God called you and chose you. It is entirely God’s grace, not your performance. What is the “good” that God works toward for those who love Him? It is placing you in a position where you may be conformed to the image of the Firstborn among many brothers and sisters—Jesus Christ. The good is not found in the world; the good is found in Christ.
- ! **The apostle’s macro-view and our micro-view:** The apostle sees God’s plan and the vast horizon of what is in Christ; we see only ourselves and the present moment. The apostle speaks of the future of God’s children; we focus only on our own circumstances. “Is everything working together? What benefit do I get?” This gap demands transformation—**difference demands transformation**. Our thinking must shift: the micro must become macro; our focus must move from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. This shift is an essential part of the process of sanctification.

## ***More Than Conquerors (8:31–39)***

- ! *The entire passage is a declaration of victory. It does not need explanation—only proclamation. Once you start explaining it, the power becomes fragmented and weakened. But when you read it aloud in faith, its force rises; the more you read it, the stronger it becomes.*

*What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*