

March 2008

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

–Romans 8:31, NLT

The book of Romans is Paul's masterpiece. Throughout it, he weaves like a thread the theme of righteousness.

Paul discusses two kinds of righteousness. One type is the righteousness that comes from keeping the law; the other is a free gift of grace that is based on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

His excellent treatise on the law is built on the premise that although the law is good, it woefully arouses man's sinful nature and produces a sense of helplessness in him.

He writes: "Am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, 'You must not covet.'

"But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power" (Rom. 7:7-8). It is for this reason, Paul claims, that the new righteousness provided in Christ is a more attainable goal.

In Chapter 5, Paul explains the dimensions of this gift. He boldly declares it to be the only means for reigning in life and emphasizes its power by showing its supremacy to mankind's sin.

He does this by using the word "sin," which refers to the principle of sin, rather than its plural form "sins"—or bad deeds. Paul refers to "sins" only three times in the entire book.

In Chapter 7 he explains that Jesus is the one who dealt the deathblow to the power of sin. He did this through His work at Calvary and His identification with man.

Before Christ appeared, sin ruled. After His appearance, sin was rendered ineffective and inoperative in the lives of those who believe. This deathblow proves that salvation is more than mere forgiveness of sins; it is a deliverance from its power.

Also in Chapter 8, Paul summarizes his thoughts on justification by stating: "Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself" (Rom. 8:33).

His clear explanation of the gospel acted as a buffer against the naysayers of his day. His lawyer-like clarifications refuted all arguments and proved the gospel's power to save all who believe.

Nineteen hundred years later, the book of Romans still speaks. It calls us to re-examine its truths. So go ahead, read it again; it's the power of God to save.

John Chasteen is the assistant dean of Southwestern Christian University Graduate School in Bethany, Oklahoma. He writes a weekly blog at .