

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY TWENTY-THREE

Three Faces of God

Romans 9:1–4, 6–7; 10:1–4, 11–12, 14–15; 11:1–8, 11, 33–36

In God's great plan, He is the star of the show. In Romans 9, He is sovereignly in charge of selecting those who will come into the family and blinding those who choose not to. In Romans 10, He declares His justice. In chapter 11, He says, "I haven't forgotten My people. I have made promises, and I will make them good." God's sovereignty. God's justice. God's faithfulness. Three faces of God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE sequence of events in a well-made movie compels us. Each scene keeps us on the edge of our seats—engaged by the complexity of the plot and eager to find out what happens next. The twists and turns, hidden connections, and surprising revelations capture our attention and curiosity. At the center of the story is the main character played by the lead actor, the one we've come to see.

In Romans, Paul projects onto our mental screens the unfolding drama of the gospel with the main character, the star of the show, being the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The curtain opened in Romans 1–3 revealing a dismal scene of human depravity. "No one is righteous—not even one," Paul concluded (Romans 3:10). In addition, we have no capacity within ourselves to *be* righteous. We stand hopelessly condemned . . . until God sends His Son to our rescue. "We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22). *What good news!*

Just as God counted Abraham "righteous because of his faith" (4:3), God justifies us—counts us righteous—when we believe in Jesus. The next scenes in Romans 5–6 flashed the amazing benefits of salvation: peace with God, access to His throne, union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and true freedom. Now, we can walk with our Savior in newness of life.

While we still struggle with our sinful condition (7:1–25), the indwelling Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome sin. In Romans 8, Paul heralded our victory from the mountaintop—absolutely "nothing can ever separate us from God's love" (8:38)!



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At this midpoint of Paul's magnum opus, the curtain closes with a climactic crescendo and resounding applause. The first act is finished. Now, how will the second act begin?



PREPARE YOUR HEART

*Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!
No one can measure his greatness. (Psalm 145:3)*

Imagine standing before the Creator of the universe, who has rescued you by His grace and mercy. Give thanks for the truths in Romans that have opened your eyes to the awe-inspiring character of the *Magnificent One*.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

An initial reading of [Romans 9–11](#) can feel like Paul is leading us on a rabbit trail. Why is it important for us to know about Israel's rejection of the gospel and God's ultimate plan for the Jews? What do Israel's troubles have to do with how we should live the Christian life?

Paul took us into this subject, first, because he was a Jew ([Acts 22:3](#); [Romans 11:1](#); [Philippians 3:5](#)), and he cared deeply about his Jewish brothers and sisters. Each of the three chapters begins with a reference to Israel. More than that, though, Paul wanted us to see how the gospel fits into God's grand design. God's plan of redemption is greater than we can imagine . . . indeed, *God* is greater than we could imagine. These three chapters remind us that God is *sovereign* and *just*, and despite human sinfulness, God is *faithful*. In Romans 9–11, Paul highlights these three divine attributes as three faces of God, whose glory is what the gospel is all about.



Observation: The Three Faces of God

The first step in *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study is observation. Before trying to understand the meaning, read the passage slowly and thoughtfully. Look for words or phrases that are emphasized, repeated, similar, or contrasted. Follow the logical flow of thought, how the concepts build on each other and lead to a conclusion.¹

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When surveying large portions of Scripture like [Romans 9–11](#), try reading the passage in one sitting and then putting it aside to let it settle in your mind. When you come back to it, start at the beginning of Romans 9 and answer the questions below. Starting with the next *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll begin examining the individual chapters, but for now, let's cover the highlights to get the big picture of all three chapters.

The Sovereignty of God—Romans 9

Review the climax at the end of [Romans 8:31–39](#). Now read [9:1–5](#) thoughtfully. Feel the heartbeat of the Jewish missionary and describe the reason for Paul's grief.

Carefully observe [9:6–7](#). Paul underscored God's sovereign hand in choosing Israel and making a covenant with the nation through Abraham. What shocking point, however, did Paul make in 9:7? How might his Jewish readers have reacted?

Just because you're born a Jew doesn't mean you're truly a part of the family. That can be a surprising message for an Orthodox Jew.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Justice of God—Romans 10

After speaking about God's sovereignty, Paul described his passion for the lost in [Romans 10:1–4](#). What concerns did Paul have regarding Israel and their zeal? How is their zeal for God not according to knowledge?

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What did Paul say in [Romans 10:11–12](#) that demonstrates God’s justice? Now read [10:14–15](#) and note the words or phrases that emphasize human responsibility.

The Faithfulness of God—Romans 11

Read [Romans 11:1–8, 11](#). What was Paul’s answer to the question about God rejecting His people? What prophet did he reference to illustrate God’s faithfulness? In [11:33–36](#), what is his final response to the three faces of God?

Has God forgotten about the promises He made to Israel? How could He? He is sovereign, just, and faithful! Praises be to His name!



Interpretation: The Sovereignty, Justice, and Faithfulness of God

Observation answers the question, “What does the passage say?” Interpretation answers the question, “What does the passage mean?” Our observation of [Romans 9–11](#) revealed that God is sovereign, just, and faithful. Let’s examine those terms more carefully for greater meaning.

Paul pinpointed in [9:1–7](#) that God has sovereignly selected those who are in His family. Explore the “[sovereignty of God](#)” in the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at [studylight.org](#) or the Bible dictionary of your choice. How does God’s sovereignty help you understand God’s choice?

You will never understand the doctrine of election unless you see it from God’s perspective. Everyone who believes, God has called to believe.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Romans 10:11–12 tells us that whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed—stressing God’s justice. What is the meaning and importance of God’s justice to believers and unbelievers?

God is just, remember? He can’t alter His plan because a person happens to be Jewish. He’s just. It’s a plan that goes across the board, regardless of your heritage. Whoever will believe will come to know the Savior and will have the same benefits. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Romans 11:1–6 justifies God’s faithfulness in His dealings with Israel. From these verses, what promises has God kept? What are the implications of God’s faithfulness to your ability to trust Him?

*God has not forgotten His promises to His chosen people.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Correlation: Our Great God

Correlation compares our passage to similar Bible passages to aid our understanding. In this way, we let the Bible explain itself.

“It is God who decides to show mercy,” Paul wrote (*Romans 9:16*). How does the account in *Acts 8:26–40* about the Ethiopian eunuch—a God-fearing gentile—illustrate Paul’s teaching about God’s sovereignty in *Romans 9*?

God places in our path those individuals who will lead us to a knowledge of Jesus, and then we respond by faith to the message, and then we believe. Horizontally, it looks like we’re the ones who made the decision when, in fact, we are responding to the divine work of God in our lives. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Our God is just! Think about God's offer of the gift of eternal life in Scripture. How do passages such as [John 3:14–18](#); [11:25–26](#); [Romans 3:21–26](#); [10:11–12](#) highlight that there is no favoritism with God?

It's wide open: whoever will believe. How can that be? I thought chapter 9 says God chose. Chapter 10 says, "Whoever believes." Which is it? Both.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Our God is faithful! How do passages such as [Psalm 145](#) and [Romans 11:33–36](#) underscore God's character? Which passage touches you the most and why? How should all believers respond to God?

The longer you live as a Christian, the more you will realize God's work is unsearchable and unfathomable. It's a matter of perspective. When you look at it from the horizontal, it will be confounding, it will seem impossible. Situations will be bleak, depressing, discouraging. But when you see God's hand at work as He breaks through the impossible, it is remarkable what it does to you.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Remember Who God Is!

Application answers the question, "How does the passage relate to my life?" Think about the three faces of God—His three marvelous attributes of sovereignty, justice, and faithfulness—and your current situation. How does knowing who God is and trusting Him help you deal with failure or success, losses or gains?

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God is too good to be cruel. He doesn't play games with His children. On some occasions, He selects believers to bring home to Himself and to leave us in our grief, momentarily stunned and disillusioned but knowing that it will turn and become for us a deeper reason to trust Him. I have to believe that.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How does it feel to know that the ground is level at the cross and that you can approach His throne anytime as His dear child?

Why not take some time to express your amazement at God's awesome character by writing your own poetic expression of praise?

God is just and faithful. He never writes us off. Aren't you glad that when you go to Him in prayer, He doesn't answer, "Now, who are you?" Or "Is that you again?" No, He says, "Come on, come to Me. I'll give you rest. Come on." It's called grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Sovereign, just, and faithful God, I come in awe of who You are! Forgive me for trying to control my own life. Remind me that You're in charge. You're just and don't play favorites. You're faithful. You always keep Your promises. I worship You. To You be all the glory forever and ever. In Christ's name, amen!

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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