

ANDREA STERK AND  
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# CHRISTIAN CHARACTER



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# FREED TO SERVE GOD

*Romans 3:9-26*

**W**e all have a need for acceptance. In fact our self-concept is often determined by the approval or rejection of those around us, whether family, peers, business associates, fellow students or even Christian friends. We tend to do and say what we hope will win people's favor.

**Group Discussion.** What kinds of things have you done to try to earn someone's favor? Perhaps you can recall a humorous incident from your dating life or a way you tried to gain favor with a schoolteacher.

**Personal Reflection.** This tendency to try to earn favor often carries over into our relationship with God. What are some ways you have tried to earn God's approval?

If we feel we must somehow earn God's acceptance of us, we end up acting out of a sense of guilt. In the book of Romans, Paul expounds the doctrine of justification, the biblical foundation upon which a right relationship is built—with ourselves, with others and with God. It frees us to be all that God intends for us. *Read Romans 3:9-26.*

1. In verses 10-18 Paul cites several Old Testament passages to illustrate the fact that everyone is "under sin" (v. 9). What portrait of humanity emerges from these verses?

2. How does this compare with the way you view people?
  
3. How does Paul use the various parts of the body to illustrate graphically the extent and effects of sin (vv. 13-18)?
  
4. The terminology Paul uses in this passage comes from the Roman legal system. In this courtroom scene God is the judge who is evaluating men and women on the basis of their obedience to his law. What do verses 19-20 tell us about the nature and outcome of this trial?
  
5. What do verses 9-20 reveal about our moral and spiritual condition?
  
6. Verses 21-26 introduce several key words which help us to understand the nature of salvation. A *justified* person (v. 24) has no legal charges against him or her and is therefore *righteous* in the eyes of the law. Why is our justification remarkable in light of our spiritual and moral condition?
  
7. How will a proper understanding of what God has done for you in Christ affect the way you view yourself?

8. The word *redemption* (v. 24) is borrowed from the slave market. It means to buy someone out of slavery. What are some of the ways we were enslaved as non-Christians?

9. What are some of the forms of enslavement or bondage that we struggle with as Christians?

How can Jesus free us in areas we continue to struggle with?

10. The expression *sacrifice of atonement* (v. 25) is taken from the Old Testament sacrificial system. The death of a sacrificial animal turned away God's wrath from the sinner. How does this imagery help us to understand and appreciate what Jesus did for us on the cross?

11. How can the fact that God has accepted and forgiven us through Christ affect our relationships with one another and with God?



*Take time now to praise God for his loving and costly acceptance of us through Christ.*

#### NOW OR LATER

Read Romans 8:14-16. Here we see that Christ not only justifies us, that is declares us “not guilty,” but he also adopts us into his family. Adoption (another legal term) is fundamentally not a change in nature but a change in status. Reflect on the implications of your new status—not an orphan or a slave but a son or daughter.

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