

Trusting in the Gospel of Jesus

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: The gospel is the good news that God has provided salvation to sinners through Jesus Christ.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Romans 1–11

Unity creates, while disunity destroys. *Families* are formed through the union of marriage. But they are fractured through separations and divorce and the myriad of issues that lead to those outcomes. *Nations* with unity on good and strong principles, such as freedom for all, experience productivity and vitality, but they wither and die through disunity. Even in the *church*, unity in Christ brings glory to God and displays the transforming power of the gospel, but she suffers under disunity, as does her mission.

The Gospel: The Bible teaches that the gospel is both an _____ and a _____. These aspects do not exist apart from or in conflict with one another, but together inspire us to a life of _____ and _____.

Group Time

Point 1: God's righteousness is revealed through the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

The Letter of Romans overflowed from the heart of a man who had been captivated by Jesus and His gospel (as we will see in a later session). Formerly a Pharisee zealous for Jewish tradition and purity who persecuted Christians even to death, Paul experienced the power of God through the gospel and became a bold missionary who founded churches comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The redemptive work of Christ is able to save all sinners; the righteousness of God is granted to all who come to Jesus in faith.



How has the power of God transformed your life through the gospel?

Point 2: All have sinned and earned death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23a).

^{3:23} For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ... ^{6:23a} For the wages of sin is death,

Paul reminded the Gentile believers in Rome that they had no room to believe they were superior to their Jewish siblings in the faith. Prior to their own coming to Christ, they had stood condemned and alienated from God because of their idolatry and depravity (1:18-32). But Paul also reminded the Jewish believers that they too were in need of a Savior because they were guilty of the same things as the Gentiles (2:1-29). Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles stand guilty and condemned—everyone deserves death for their sin.



What is revealed about us when we question the sentence of death for sin?

Point 3: God provided Jesus as a substitute for sinners (Rom. 5:8; 6:23b).

^{5:8} But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us ... ^{6:23b} but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Not only did Paul diagnose all of humanity as sinners and deserving of death, he was clear about our prognosis in this condition. Jews and Gentiles alike are “ungodly” in their sin and “helpless” to atone for their sins (5:6). Humanity is doomed and there is nothing we can do about it. But God, who loves humanity with a love better than life, sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to die for us while we were still sinners (Ps. 63:3; Rom. 5:8). In love, Jesus substituted Himself on the cross for both Jews and Gentiles to forgive our sins and reconcile us to God and each other.



How does the love of God compare with the kinds of love found in the world?

Christ died for our forgiveness, but He also died so that we might have eternal life as a gift from God. Eternal life means living forever, as opposed to the death that our sin has earned us (Rom. 6:23a). Of course, this includes going to be with the Lord when we die physically (2 Cor. 5:8) and being raised from the dead physically when Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:13-18). But we receive the gift of eternal life even now. By faith in Jesus, we experience the resurrection life of the Messiah, which produces righteousness and justice on earth through us (Rom. 6:10-14).



Voices from Church History

“There is no difference at all between the Greek, the Scythian, the Thracian or even the Jew, for all are in the same plight ... Even if you have not done the same sins as others, you have still been deprived of God’s glory just as they have been, because you are among those who have offended ... However, Paul was saying this not to cast them into despair but rather to show the love of the Lord toward man, as he goes on to say.”¹

—Chrysostom (c. 349-407)

Point 4: God reconciles and declares sinners righteous through Jesus (Rom. 5:9-11).

⁹ How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Paul emphasized God's work in the salvation of sinners. Our sin deserves God's wrath, and were it not for the blood Jesus shed on the cross, we would remain separated from God in our unrighteousness. But through faith in Jesus, God graciously gives to both Jews and Gentiles His Son's righteousness, by which we are justified, or declared righteous, in God's sight. God made the way through Jesus for us to be given what we could not earn. Because of the work of Jesus, believers are reconciled to God and saved from final judgment. Therefore, we boast only in God for our status as His children.



What might we be tempted to boast in regarding our salvation?

Point 5: God saves all who trust in Jesus (Rom. 10:9-13).

⁹ If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, ¹² since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³ For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Salvation is God's work, yet we still have a part to play: we **confess** and **believe** in Jesus. To **confess** “Jesus is Lord” is to submit to His kingship and to live accordingly, obeying His commands throughout the Word of God and the leading of His Spirit. To “**believe** in your heart” means to have faith and trust in Jesus, the true Lord of the universe. Specifically, we are to believe in His crucifixion and resurrection. And everyone who believes—be he Jew or Gentile or one of the many peoples on the earth—everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved (Joel 2:32).



What are some worldly distinctions between people that believers must overcome for the sake of the gospel?

My Mission

Because we are sinners saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we earnestly profess Christ to others, appealing for them to respond to the gospel and be saved.

- **How will you demonstrate your faith in Jesus, the Son of God sent to die for your salvation from sin and death?**
- **What are some ways your group/church can strive for unity in the gospel across ethnic and socioeconomic lines?**
- **Who are some people you once believed were beyond the reach of the gospel, and how will you reach out to them with the good news?**

Voices from the Church

“By faith we are united to the Messiah in his condemnation on the cross, and we are also united to his justification at his resurrection ... We are incorporated into the righteousness of Jesus Christ so that his vindication and his obedient act that were the basis for it are counted as ours. Justification also has vertical and horizontal elements in declaring the sinner to be right with God and also in bringing Gentiles into the family of Abraham.”²

—Michael Bird

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Romans 1:8-17

I suspect that even if people are not followers of Jesus, they are familiar with the song “Amazing Grace.”


Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.³

These powerful words have been sung by countless people since it was published. What many singers may not know is that John Newton, the writer, was once a slave trader.

During a storm at sea, this slave trader exchanged his sin for forgiveness and the righteousness of the Jewish Messiah. Eventually Newton left his work as captain of a slave ship. He later became an Anglican pastor and an advocate to fight the evils of slavery. He wrote “Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade” to help William Wilberforce in his crusade to end the practice of slavery in England.⁵

How does such a radical transformation take place? The power of the gospel.

Yet while we marvel at Newton’s testimony, all believers share the same experience. All are sinners; none are worthy; no one is good—everyone is an unlikely, impossible convert. But God, through His power revealed in the gospel, changes those who believe. All glory and thankfulness to God for His amazing grace!

 How have you experienced the transforming power of the gospel? If you haven’t, will you turn to Jesus Christ in faith for your forgiveness, righteousness, and salvation today?



Voices from Church History

“’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!”⁴

—John Newton (1725-1807)

Day 2: Read Romans 3:21-26; 6:15-23

What parent would not want to move heaven and earth to rescue his or her children from slavery and death? If you and I would do this, imagine how much more God Himself would. Just as God heard the children of Israel crying because they were enslaved in Egypt, He heard our cries while we were trapped in our sin. We were enslaved to an enemy we could never defeat. We were helpless to free ourselves. Our evil slave master was sin and death. But God presented Jesus as the new Passover Lamb (Ex. 12:1-13; 1 Cor. 5:7). The blood of Jesus breaks the power of sin and death and frees us to become servants and children of the one true God, who loves us.

But not only does Jesus free us, He eternally forgives us, and He declares us to be righteous as He is righteous. There is power in the blood of Jesus to re-create us into a family of freed, forgiven, righteous people. This new status is not achieved by us but a gift we receive.



What are some ways God's gift of freedom, forgiveness, and righteousness in Christ attacks your sense of pride?

Day 3: Read Romans 5:6-8

The moment we are birthed into this world, we begin our quest to be loved. We learn early that if we adapt to the social norms of a group we want to be associated with, then we get love, at least of a sort. But the reality is that not even a mother's love is enough to satisfy the eternal hunger we have for love. Even the love of a spouse is never enough because we are asking imperfect people to love us with a perfect kind of love.

God's love is the only love that will satisfy the eternal hunger in our hearts. And God loved us even though He knew every dark, broken part of our lives. We were helpless because of sin. We were sin-sick, dead in our trespasses, but God is abounding in love. Jesus died on a Roman cross that was built by our sin in order to heal us, to reconcile us to His Father, so we could experience the love we've always longed for. We have always been loved, and the gospel proves how much.



How does the reality of God's abounding love for sinners make a difference in your life?

Day 4: Read Romans 5:9-11

I first met Darren at a church event for newcomers. At the time, he was a sad, hopeless, broken man. He and his wife of thirty years had recently divorced; Patty just couldn't handle his selfishness and fits of rage anymore. Several of our pastors prayed for him. We told him Jesus was able to reconcile his marriage, but first things first, he needed Jesus to transform his heart.

Over the course of the next few years, we began to see Patty attend services with Darren. Eventually we noticed them holding hands and singing worship songs together. After one service, Darren and Patty asked if they could go through premarital counseling because they wanted to get remarried. They had a beautiful wedding. They were reconciled.

This is a portrait of what Jesus did for us on the cross. The cross was a result of love unleashed, and as a result of Jesus' death, forgiveness was granted and reconciliation became a reality. In Christ, we are eternally reconciled to God the Father; therefore, we can be reconciled to each other.



How have you seen or experienced the love of God in the gospel lead to reconciliation in relationships?

Day 5: Read Romans 10:1-15

There are a very few things that I hate, but cancer is one of them. As a pastor, I have witnessed this terrible disease take children, young adults, and my grandmother. Cancer is a cruel, non-discriminating, invasive dark force.

Imagine with me for a moment: What if you had a cure for cancer? Wouldn't you want to visit every hospital and administer the cure? Of course, you would. Well, there is a more deadly, invasive disease than cancer; it's called sin and death. God provided the cure: the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news is that sin and death have been defeated through Jesus' death and resurrection to save us from sin and secure our eternal life.

We have this good news to share. Believers carry it with them and live in it every day. May we be prayerful and intentional with administering this cure in a world wrecked by sin and death because people need to hear the gospel before they can believe and live.



What are some needs among the people you know that you can address with the good news of Jesus crucified and raised?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God’s righteousness is revealed through the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).
- All have sinned and earned death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23a).
- God provided Jesus as a substitute for sinners (Rom. 5:8; 6:23b).
- God reconciles and declares sinners righteous through Jesus (Rom. 5:9-11).
- God saves all who trust in Jesus (Rom. 10:9-13).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



Why should we never see ourselves as beyond needing to hear the gospel, regardless of how mature we are in the faith?



In what ways will you implement the truths from this session in evangelistic conversations with non-Christians?

Notes
