

LESSON 58

A Gift of Righteousness

ROMANS 3:10-22



BIBLE TRUTH

EVERYONE IS A SINNER IN NEED OF THE GOSPEL

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Romans 3:9–31 from the Scriptures or read story 136, “A Gift of Righteousness,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Free Means Free

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pretzels—enough for the class
- ✓ a fancy tray to present the pretzels
- ✓ another adult to help out with the skit

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

The Prophets Bear Witness

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

All Fall Short

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Review Paul’s Description of Sinful Man

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Everyone is under sin and condemned by the law—Our sin affects every part of our being. Paul pulls together a string of Old Testament texts in Romans 3 to make this point. “None is righteous” (Romans 3:10); “no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:11); “no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:12); and “there is no fear of God” (Romans 3:18). Lest anyone think they are an exception, Paul calls us all worthless, full of cursing and bitterness, with the venom of poisonous snakes on our lips! The collective whole leaves a convincing argument for the total depravity of man. Paul concludes the argument with a clear statement of the lost condition of all men. No one will be declared righteous in the sight of God by his good works (Romans 3:20). To those so depraved, the best the law can do for us is to point out our sin and inform us where we have failed and deserve God’s wrath (Romans 3:19).

Our righteousness must come by faith in Christ—If Paul had ended his message at Romans 3:20, we would have no hope. But Paul doesn’t leave us lost in our sin. He goes on to describe the only path to righteousness: how a man can be made good in God’s sight. Our only hope is in a righteousness outside of ourselves, apart from our good works and the law. This righteousness, Paul explains, is through Jesus and comes to us as we place our trust in Christ by faith (Romans 3:22). In the next two verses Paul summarizes our problem and God’s solution. All men have sinned, but we can be saved by grace through the work of Jesus on the cross. The whole Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) points forward to this most amazing truth. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to make a way for sinners to be saved is what God’s story is all about! Jesus died on the cross as a “propitiation by his blood” (Romans 3:25). That means that the blood of Christ spilled on the cross satisfied the anger of God for the sins of those who would believe. It is through trusting in what Jesus did on the cross that we are saved and can be given the righteousness of Christ as a free gift (Romans 3:24).

Our only boast is in Christ—If our right standing before God is based on what God has done in Christ and not upon anything we have done, then our only boast is in Christ. Apart from him, we have nothing to boast about (Romans 3:27). The only thing we can take credit for is our sin. All our salvation, from start to finish, is by God’s grace. Even the faith we have is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives giving us the gift of faith, we would remain enemies of God, lost in sin. That is why our only boast is in Christ. Paul lived his life this way, celebrating his weaknesses and admitting his sin (1 Timothy 1:15). He boasted in the Lord alone (Galatians 6:14).

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Grace

In the Old Testament, God's undeserved favor was given to his people. This was a picture of God's free grace. Grace as a concept was defined by what Jesus did on the cross. Up until the sacrifice of Jesus, the idea of grace lacked the richness of meaning it has today. The Bible defines grace by the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 5:15). When we receive God's grace, it not only brings salvation from judgment, but it impacts our entire lives by giving us undeserved power over sin. God's grace helps us in giving (2 Corinthians 8:7). Our conversation can be filled with grace toward others (Colossians 4:6). Through God's grace, we are encouraged (2 Thessalonians 2:16). And it is God's grace that teaches us to say no to ungodliness (Titus 2:11–12). God's grace is God's favor from first to last. Everything we have, everything we accomplish, and everything we know is undeserved, unmerited—the free gift of grace.

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Romans 3 comprises Paul's defense of the gospel. Important components of God's plan appear in verses 24–26. First, God presented Jesus as a sacrifice. Next, Jesus' sacrifice was an acceptable payment, or atonement, for sin. Last, this sacrifice was required to ensure the justice of God, who had allowed sins to go unpunished.

Earlier in this passage Paul clearly wanted to help us see our total depravity and our utter inability to be righteous apart from God's grace. In quoting Isaiah he wrote, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside" (Romans 3:10–12). He left absolutely no possibility that someone might be good apart from Christ.

After giving this convincing argument regarding our sin, Paul goes on to speak the gospel hope: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Romans 3:21–22). The prophets testified about it and now, Paul tells us, it has come to pass.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Romans 3:9–31 from the Scriptures or read story 136, “A Gift of Righteousness,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN**Free Means Free****SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ pretzels—enough for the class
- ✓ a fancy tray to present the pretzels
- ✓ another adult to help out with the skit

The object of this lesson is to help the children understand that we are justified freely by God's grace—there is no payment required of us. Use this skit to interrupt your teaching when you start talking about God's righteousness being our “gift” (Romans 3:24). Prior to class arrange the pretzels on a tray and enlist an adult volunteer to play the role of the pretzel salesperson. You can follow the skit dialogue or just ad-lib.

SALESPERSON: (*knocking on the door and yelling*) Pretzels! Free pretzels!

TEACHER: Please come in.

SALESPERSON: (*entering the classroom*) Pretzels! Free pretzels!

TEACHER: Are these free?

SALESPERSON: Yes. Would you like some?

TEACHER: Could I have some for the entire class?

SALESPERSON: Yes, you sure can.

TEACHER: OK. I will take (*counts the class and adds one for herself*) twenty-three.

SALESPERSON: (*Counts out the number of pretzels.*) That will be twenty-three dollars.

TEACHER: (*astonished and confused*) Twenty-three dollars? You said they were free.

SALESPERSON: The pretzels *are* free. The money covers the other miscellaneous charges.

TEACHER: Miscellaneous charges? How can you charge for something that is free? “Free” means free! If it’s free, then you don’t pay. Isn’t that right?

SALESPERSON: That is the way it used to be. Look, twenty-five cents is for shipping, twenty-five cents is for handling, twenty-five cents is for tax, and twenty-five cents is for pretzel breakage insurance. You will notice that none of these fine pretzels are broken!

TEACHER: *(turning to class)* Class, help me out here class. Doesn’t “free” mean free? *(Teacher gets the class to participate.)*

SALESPERSON: Well, OK. I’ll tell you what. I will drop my charges this time, but the next time you want free pretzels, you are going to have to pay. Nothing is totally free these days. *(Salesperson gives the pretzels to the teacher and leaves the room.)*

Skit ends and the teacher hands out the pretzels, making the connection between the skit and the fact that our salvation is free by God’s grace. We cannot pay, or do good works, to get our salvation. There was a cost, but Jesus paid the price for us. So we pay nothing.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

The Prophets Bear Witness

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class

After the following introduction, give the class some time to see if they can find Jesus in Isaiah 52:14–15.

In Romans 3 Paul said that the prophets bear witness to God’s plan to send his Son, Jesus, as our righteous substitute to die upon the cross for our sins. (Have them look up Romans 3:21 where Paul mentions the prophets.) Let’s take a look at one of those prophecies and see if we can find where Jesus is mentioned.

Have them read Isaiah 52:14–15 and see if they can tell you how it connects to the lesson today in Romans 3. Encourage the class for making the connections they did and then share with them anything from the following answer they missed:

Isaiah’s description of the suffering servant is a picture of Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus suffered greatly. Blood poured from wounds on his face and head. His face would have been bruised and swollen from being repeatedly struck by the soldiers’ fists. His back would have been torn from being whipped. Clearly, people would have been appalled to look at him. The blood shed upon the cross by Jesus would sprinkle many nations. The sprinkling of water was done as a rite of cleansing (Numbers 8:7 and 19:18–19). Blood sprinkled on those who were ceremonially unclean would cleanse them (Hebrews 9:13). The blood of Jesus sprinkled on the nations speaks of the cleansing of the nations by his sacrifice (Hebrews 10:22 and 12:24).

Here are a few more questions for reflection:

- **Why is it helpful to think about the suffering of Jesus?**
(We never want to forget the great humiliation and suffering Jesus went through to take away our sins.)

- **How can remembering the suffering of Christ motivate us toward godly living?**
(When we realize that it was our sin that nailed him to the cross, we hate sin all the more and look to live righteous lives by saying no to sin.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

All Fall Short

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of a man standing on the edge of a great canyon with the far ledge on the opposite side of your paper. Draw the man small to indicate a tremendous gulf between the two sides. At the bottom of the chasm write the words “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Draw a bridge across the chasm with a slight arch and write these words along the bridge “We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus.” Then write across the top of the paper “Grace alone through faith alone.”

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Review Paul’s Description of Sinful Man

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

This exercise is designed to help the students identify with Romans 3:10–18.

Read Romans 3:10–18 aloud together. Ask the class how it applies to kids their age. Write the verse numbers on the board and the way they apply to youth to the right of each verse. Here are some clues for each verse:

Verse 11: Children often talk back to their parents disrespectfully and say “I know” in response to correction. Children often need to be reminded to read their Bibles and do not seek God on their own.

Verse 12: All children sin. Make a list of sins with which children struggle.

Verse 13: Children lie to their parents. Make a list of situations in which children are tempted to lie.

Verse 14: All children may not use foul language, but ask the class what kinds of sinful things they mutter to themselves after being punished or having some privilege taken away because of their misbehavior.

Verse 15: Jesus said that if we are angry against our brother we have murdered him in our heart. Make a list of people with whom children get angry.

Verse 16: List the miseries children bring upon themselves by their sin.

Verse 17: List some sins children commit that ruin the peace in their homes.

Verse 18: Talk about how the fear of people influences their behavior.

When you are done, read the passage again and ask the class if these verses mean more to them now. Continue by reading the subsequent verses which outline the gospel and ask the class if they can see just how wonderful the gospel is in light of their sin. Help them to see that the gospel is not a trite religious tradition, but real salvation for real sinners.