

SESSION 4

THE GREATEST GIFT

Leader pages on pp. 116-119

THE POINT:

WE CAN RECEIVE NO GREATER GIFT THAN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

ROMANS 5:6-11,18-21

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die.

⁸ But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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.

¹⁸ So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.

¹⁹ For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

²⁰ The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more

²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

At the right time (v. 6)—Greek for a fixed and definite time. Christ died at the right time in the scope of history, but also in the sense that we were powerless to break our bondage to sin.

Justified (v. 9)—To be justified is to be declared righteous in God's sight.

Reconciled (v. 10)—To end the hostilities between conflicting parties and to allow for ongoing relationship.

Righteous act (v. 18)—Christ making provision for our redemption from sin by His substitutionary death on the cross; the whole scope of Christ's ministry.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST GIFT THAT CHRIST OFFERS?

Gift giving and gift getting can be tricky, if not outright difficult. As a parent, we search for the perfect gift for our children. They unwrap it and in just a few short minutes we discover they enjoy playing with the box more than the toy!

Do you remember your favorite gift you received as a child? For me, it was a pair of ice skates. It meant I graduated from standing to the side, sliding on the ice in my boots, pretending to be in the game. Now I was able to play with the older kids on the frozen neighborhood pond.

What about the best gift you ever gave to someone? Do you remember the look on his or her face and the joy in your heart when he or she unwrapped it? Scripture says that all of heaven rejoices when a person receives the greatest gift that God has ever given (Luke 15:7). Let's explore the GOAT of all gifts, the one that changes everything.

The Gift Of God's Love //

Romans 5:6-8

The book of Romans was written by the apostle Paul to the believers in Rome he was planning to visit. The driving force of the letter was to instruct

them how to get right with God. Before he could tell them, though, he had to convince them they were not right with Him. With divinely inspired precision and court savvy logic, in the first four chapters, Paul effectively presented the case that all humans are not right with God. In chapter 5, he transitioned from the wages of our sin to the revelation of how God makes His people right with Him.

Paul underscored that any attempt to get right with God through keeping the law was useless. While in that powerless state, "at the right time" (v. 6) Christ died for the ungodly. There are two choices of Greek words available for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. The first word is used to talk about "clock time." This is why Paul chose the second word, which means the "perfect, opportune time." So, how was this the perfect time?

One explanation is that it was the right time because the people of Israel finally understood they were helpless to keep the entire law. There perhaps was no further convincing needed that it was the right time for Jesus to come to earth and demonstrate God's love for His people.

HOW HAS GOD'S PERFECT TIMING ALTERED THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE?



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Another intriguing interpretation of Jesus's incarnation is the historical context. Jesus arrived at the height of the Roman Empire, which put the world at possibly the most strategic time in history for someone with an all-time, all-world message to be able to succeed. Could God have sent His Son at some other time? Of course. But He chose to send Him at an important time.

To put it simply, the time was right for Jesus's arrival with the most important news ever.

Christ came to die not for the good but for the ungodly, the wicked, and the sinner. That was scandalous. Why would someone die for an evil person? Paul shared that it was unheard of: It was rare for a person to die for a good man, yet it was much rarer for a person to die for a sinner. For whom would you be willing to lay down your life? People who have hurt you, betrayed you, cursed you, mocked you, or outright ignored you are probably not high on the list. But for God they are the list.

Paul was very clear: The cross wasn't a plan for redemption that Jesus stumbled upon; it came from the heart of the Father: "God proves his own love for us" (v. 8). God's eternal love for His rebellious creation was once and for all nailed down through the cross.

There is no doubting the Father's love. When we were helpless, at the perfect time, in our darkest hour, Christ died for us. This is why lyrics like those found in the song "Jireh" by Elevation Worship and Maverick City Music ring true for those who belong to Christ:

*I'm already loved
I'm already chosen
I know who I am
I know what You've spoken
I'm already loved
More than I could imagine
And that is enough . . .⁹*

HOW HAS GOD'S PERFECT TIMING ALTERED THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE?

The Gift Of Reconciliation //

Romans 5:9-11

Paul continued to build his case for how lost, helpless people at war with God can be made right. He twice used the phrase "how much more" (v. 9,10). He reasoned that if God does the saving, doesn't it make sense that He will do the preserving? If God did not spare His own Son to prove His love for us, then doesn't it make sense that those for whom He died will also be saved from God's



DIGGING DEEPER RECONCILED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Bible clearly teaches that God is good and the source of all goodness (Gen. 1; Jas. 1:17). Therefore, there is nothing better than to be in the presence of God. Sometimes, people will incorrectly assume that the worst thing in the universe is to be in the presence of Satan or hell. However, encountering the wrath of God is worse than both. Thus, when Paul says that Jesus has saved us from the "wrath of God" (Romans 5:9) and given us access to God's grace (5:2), he is saying that we have traded the worst possible gift for the best one. This does not mean that we should dismiss the power of temptation to ruin our lives and cause us to grieve God's heart. But we should focus our efforts on remembering how the power of God's reconciliation has allowed us to claim worthiness that we will never deserve.

How does God's love and reconciliation encourage you to live a righteous life?

wrath against sin and rebellion? What does it mean to justify a sinful people? Justification is a legal term, used when a judge:

- **Acquits.** God declares the defendant not guilty,
- **Reckons.** God calls the person free. The guilt is no longer held against the defendant. In the spiritual sense, God announces us innocent of our sins.
- **Justifies.** The defendant walks out of the courtroom justified, “just as if I had” never sinned.

God not only acquits believers, but He declares them to be righteous in His sight. Since Jesus’s work has been completed, “how much more” then will God save those who believe in Jesus from His wrath? He will finish what He started.

Salvation from God’s wrath is not a one-time event; it’s ongoing and has three tenses.

Past tense means what we have been saved from. All have fallen short of God’s standard (Rom. 3:23). The sinner is saved from that which made him or her guilty. **Present tense** means we are daily being saved. Paul instructs the believer to work out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). **Future tense** means the believer in Christ is saved from God’s future wrath against sin. The believer won’t experience this destruction because he or she will be fully restored.

What is God’s wrath? It’s not Him losing His temper and going off on sin, rather it’s His fair and just judgment against unrepentant sin. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. In the Old Testament, the blood of an unblemished lamb was needed for the forgiveness of sin. It took innocent blood to be forgiven. In all of history, there is only one person born innocent, one who was without sin, and therefore only one who could possibly be the blood sacrifice for the sins of the world.

God’s wrath against sin doesn’t make Him the enemy of sinners or the seeker of their destruction. Instead, He acts in a way so that all can be spared the wrath and judgment to come and embrace the knowledge of the truth.

This salvation, justification, and righteous standing with God have been accomplished in such a way that it’s not possible for humans to boast about how good they are.

HOW DOES THE INNOCENT BLOOD OF JESUS THAT BOUGHT YOUR RECONCILIATION RELATE TO YOUR ABILITY TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY?



The Gift Of Eternal Life //

Romans 5:18-21

Paul opened his closing argument for justification by faith with a phrase translated as “so then,” “consequently,” or “therefore.” It alerts the reader to a couple of things:

- **These are closing remarks on this subject.** He’s putting the final touches, or the exclamation point on his argument that he had just laid out so powerfully.
- **A transition is coming.** Since you now know this, in other words, here is the result. Another way to phrase it could be: Here are the results of what you just discovered.

He landed this argument of condemnation and justification by comparing the actions and results of two men. They’re not named in this passage, but we know them as the first man, and the last man: Adam and Jesus.

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First, Adam's act was a trespass, which carries the idea of the deliberate crossing over of an established boundary. It was an act of rebellion, defiance, and disobedience. Adam knew the command and deliberately chose to ignore it to do his own thing. The consequence for his act was condemnation for everyone. It's not just everyone who may have been present, but for everyone who comes after him. That would be the whole human race.

Jesus's righteous act occurred in a few phases. The word translated "act" can also be correctly translated as "work." It was more than just one step; it was a whole lifetime of a righteous plan leading to justification on the cross. And it did more than erase our sin and rebellion; it made it possible for us to have a life with and in God if we would trust Him. This is called eternal life.

Paul one more time juxtaposed Adam's disobedience with Jesus's obedience. The one man's disobedience made the many to be sinners; the other man's obedience made the many to be righteous, or right in God's sight. Paul emphasized that justification comes through belief, faith, and trust. The more we're aware of our sins, the more we realize we need God's grace and mercy.

HOW DOES AN AWARENESS OF SIN RESULT IN A GREATER AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR GRACE?

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes people will accuse God of being unjust because He did not stop Adam from committing the original sin. These people find it hard to believe one person's actions affected everyone else's eternal state. However, this is a misunderstanding of Paul's point in Romans 5:18-19 that requires at least three corrections. First, we are all impacted by where we come from. This was true even for Adam. He was born outside of Eden (Gen 2:7; 3:23) and needed to learn how to serve God once he was placed there. Second, inheriting Adam's original sin does not mean that we are the worst people possible. Instead, we are simply born with a desire to resist God's good design. Third, none of us would have represented mankind any better than Adam did. Even if we had been given the perfect conditions to serve God, eventually, we would have chosen to do our own thing. This is why Paul highlights that the seriousness of death is matched by the superior gift of eternal life with Christ.

Biblical Truth: Christ is the greatest gift we can give to anyone.

Who do you know that needs the gift of reconciliation through Jesus Christ?

LIVE IT

When is a gift most valued?

We demonstrate how important something is to us by how we use it. When understand the impact and implications of Jesus's gift of grace, we can't help but use this to alter the course of our lives and relationships. Spend some time trying to identify ways to remember and reflect on the reality that we can receive no greater gift than a relationship with God. Perhaps, the following will help you do this:

+ + +

- **Gifts to be opened.** Gifts aren't gifts until they're received and opened. Have you received the gift of being made right with God? Believe Jesus died for your sin and rose to life again. Check out the inside front cover of this book for help.
- **Steps to reconciliation.** God took big steps to reconcile us to Himself. Who are the people with whom you need to reconcile? What steps can you take to begin that process? Get started this week.
- **A message to deliver.** Tell others about God's amazing gift of reconciliation. Make an appointment in the next week or two to share your faith story with a family member, friend, or neighbor.

DAILY READINGS

1. SALVATION // ROMANS 5:6-8

What did your life look like before you accepted Christ? Be honest. Were you a liar? A cheater? A “no good . . .” You can fill in the blanks from here. We all have a not-so-pretty past that would spark surprise to anyone we share it with. God saw us in our sins and still chose to sacrifice His Son for us. He loved us at our worst moments and despite them, died for us. God’s love is unconditional, so we didn’t have to prove ourselves worthy of His sacrifice. In fact, He watched and waited patiently while we were deep in the trenches of our sin.

We aren’t worthy of the salvation God offers us, but Christ’s blood justifies us.

2. RECONCILED TO CHRIST // 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18

Betrayal is gut-wrenching. It can harden the heart, and destroy relationships. When we were in sin, we, in many ways, betrayed Christ. Hurting Him as He closely watched us choose our flesh over Him time and time again. However, the death of Jesus makes reconciliation with God possible through salvation. Salvation saves us from the righteous judgment of death (Rom. 6:23); which is the fate of those who do not believe in Christ. Salvation through Christ restores the broken relationship between God and ourselves. Setting a new foundation of trust over a relationship fractured by our sin. This further shows God’s love, compassion, and nurturing nature towards us.

Lord, thank you for the reconciliation of our relationship through Christ. Amen.

3. MOVING DAY // JOHN 5:24

“When the Lord gets ready, you got to move.” A woman started her remarks at a funeral by singing this song. After singing, she went on to say that the difference between moving and being evicted is that when you move, you know where you’re going. The price of sin is death, not just a physical death but an eternal one. Living a life enveloped in sin will only equate to hell in the afterlife. Thankfully, through salvation, we attained a “get out of hell free

card” when Jesus paid our debt of sin on the cross. Because we’ve accepted this salvation into our hearts, we have been gifted with eternal life! So, when it’s moving day, there won’t be any confusion about where we’re heading. Heaven is our home!

We can rejoice in the fact that Heaven is our eternal home!

4. EXEMPLARY LOVE // GALATIANS 2:20

Love guides our relationship with God. God showed His love toward us through the gift of salvation. 1 John 4:19 states, “We love because he first loved us.” As believers, we respond to His love by loving Him in return. We show our love of God in several ways: praise, service, testifying of His goodness, and, most importantly, how we live. As we grow in Christ, our love for Him develops from simple affection to a deep respect, admiration, loyalty, and desire to defend over time. With this mindset, believers shift their lifestyles from the practice of pleasing themselves to honor God in all aspects of their lives. In how we act and speak, our lives begin to reflect the love that we have for God.

Let us exemplify the love that God gives us by living for Him in return.

5. AIDED IN LOVE // 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

In this passage, Paul lists the attributes of love. These characteristics are personified through the life and sacrifice of Christ and even further through the gift of salvation. As we are loved by Christ, we are commanded to love others in the same manner (John 13:34). The correlation between the attributes of love and the fruit of the Holy Spirit is evident. The Holy Spirit cultivates the believer’s character into one that is Christ-like. To love others the same way Jesus shows love. Aiding us when we, in our own power and strength, cannot love the way we are commanded to. Recognizing the Holy Spirit’s function in aiding us to love one another, draws us closer to Christ.

Pause and reflect that it is Christ’s love for us that aids us in becoming more like Him.