
Overview

Biblical Passage Romans 1:14-17

Supporting Passages Galatians 3:6-14

Memory Verse Romans 1:16

Biblical Truth God's salvation is available to anyone and everyone.

Context Everything has a place where the rubber hits the road. We call it the crux. In our Christian faith, the book of Romans seeks to help us grasp a clear understanding of what it means to be "saved." We begin by first discovering that the message of the gospel is that God's salvation is available to anyone and everyone. We then have the opportunity for two responses to this message: First, we have to choose whether to accept God's salvation in faith. Second, if we do, then our second response is to acknowledge and accept the call to share this message with all people. The first lesson of Crux will help your students to begin thinking about how they can talk to others about the gospel.

Learning Goals

- **Explore:** Students will understand that they possess the most powerful message that can be offered to the world: the gospel.
- **Transform:** Students will practice the skill of formulating the gospel message into words that they can share with others.

Prayer Suggestions

As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.

- Pray that your students will clearly understand God's method of salvation.
- Pray that your students will become aware of just how powerful the gospel message is and can be in their lives.
- Pray that your students will begin the exciting adventure of telling others about Jesus.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

The apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans from **Corinth** in A.D. 57 while on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:23). He expressed his intense desire to visit the church and to minister among the membership there (Rom. 1:5). He mentioned his plans to journey to Jerusalem in order to deliver the money collected for the poor in Palestine and then to travel to **Rome** on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:22-25). These plans, however, were drastically altered when he was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-33).

Paul already personally knew many of the believers at Rome (Acts 16:1-16); apparently he had met them previously at various places in his travels. Thus, when this epistle was delivered, the people would be able to verify its authenticity from the apostle.

At the time of the writing of his epistle, Paul had been actively engaged in ministry for more than 20 years (A.D. 35-57). Those years of ministry had been filled with great accomplishments and hardships. Paul's plans, however, included nothing called "retirement." Instead, he wanted to continue to preach the gospel and to lead people to trust Jesus. What Paul did in this epistle was to spell out in a systematic way the doctrine of justification by faith.

Importance

This lesson highlights the Essential Truth that **Salvation is by Faith Alone**. Paul declared that right standing with God results from trusting Jesus. All human beings are born with a sin nature, separated from God and in desperate need for salvation. Salvation, deliverance from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin, comes only through a faith relationship with Jesus. The **gospel** preached by Paul explained to people that right standing with God is granted to those who trust Christ. This right standing is called **righteousness**, which is not produced by self-effort or human performance, but is given by God as a gift to everyone who trusts Christ. The gospel is the saving power of God in which God's righteousness has been revealed.

Interpretation

Romans 1:14 The apostle saw himself as under obligation to share the gospel with everyone. He referred to the totality of humanity in two ways: 1) culturally, meaning those who spoke Greek and adopted Greek culture in the Greco-Roman world (Greeks) and those who did not (non-Greeks); and 2) those who were intelligent and educated (wise) and those who were not (foolish). The gospel is for everyone; it makes no national, racial,

cultural, class, or educational distinctions.

Paul's sense of obligation arose from his appointment by Christ to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5). Paul understood himself to be in debt to God, being obligated in the sense that God had graciously given him the duty of preaching the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 22:21).

Romans 1:15 However, Paul's motivation to come to Rome was not merely a matter of obligatory duty; it was also his eager inner desire. He was gladly anticipating preaching in Rome. Rather than being intimidated by the idea of preaching in Rome—it was the mighty capital of the Empire, where wealth and pride and education were valued and where sin and skepticism were rampant—Paul was invigorated by the strategic opportunities to witness for Christ.

If someone were to ask, "Why preach the gospel to people who are already Christians?" the answer would be that the gospel is both a call to initial saving faith in Christ and also a call to continue in a daily walk of faith in Christ (Rom. 6:14, 8:4; 1 Cor. 5:17).

Romans 1:16 Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome also arose from his high regard for the message. The gospel is a message that does not disappoint. Because of their lack of size, intellect, fame or honor in the halls of Roman power, Christians might have been tempted to be embarrassed by the gospel message. The hostility of the world coupled with the nature of the gospel message itself might lead one to feel ashamed of the gospel. The fact that God had intervened in history for the salvation of people, not in obvious might and majesty but in a veiled way, was bound to look to the world like miserable weakness and sheer foolishness. Following a crucified "criminal" as Savior would appear laughable to sophisticated Romans.

But Paul knew from his experience throughout the Roman world that the gospel was nothing to be embarrassed about; it was, in fact, a message that delivered God's power in bringing people to salvation. It is the gospel that transforms people's lives, reorders their priorities and changes their eternal destiny. The gospel is God's answer for humanity's spiritual needs. In fact, salvation is the purpose for which the gospel exists.

Paul wrote about salvation in the future tense as the rescuing from the [eschatological] wrath of God (Rom. 5:9, 1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:8), However, he also used the past tense in connection with it (Rom. 8:24, Eph. 2:8-9). The saving act of God had already been accomplished. In addition, he wrote of salvation in the present tense, describing the believer's current earthly life (1 Cor. 1:18, 2:15).

Paul explained that the gospel is God's power that is active in the world to bring about rescue from His wrath. Jesus Christ is the sum total of the gospel.

The only appropriate response to the gospel message is faith, acting in dependence upon Jesus. Such a response is appropriate from everyone without distinction. The gospel is not an exclusive message for either the Jew or the Gentile—it is for all people. "To the Jew first" does not suggest that the Jew is better than the Gentile because there is no difference in condemnation or in salvation (Rom. 2:6-11, 10:9-13). Because the Jews were God's chosen people (Rom. 11), they have had a special responsibility in the unfolding plan of God; theirs has been a priority in the history of salvation. Paul marked this priority in his ministry by initially presenting the gospel to Jewish people when he entered a community.

Romans 1:17 Verse 17 is the explanation of verse 16. Why is the gospel God's power resulting in salvation? The reason is that in the gospel message a revelation has occurred; God's righteousness has been revealed. Righteousness means a right standing with God, a legal reality given to the believer. In the death of Christ, God revealed His righteous character in punishing sin, and in Christ's resurrection He revealed His righteousness by making salvation available to those who would believe. The gospel answers the question of how a holy God can forgive sinners and still be holy. By means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God is seen to be both just in His character and the Justifier of those who believe (Rom. 3:26).

God's righteousness is a by-faith kind of righteousness from start to finish. It is an all-encompassing righteousness; it begins with an initial act of faith in Christ for eternal life, and it extends into one's daily life. This kind of righteousness is categorically different from a works-based righteousness.

Paul took the rest of the epistle to explain in detail how God's righteousness functions to rescue sinners (Rom. 1-8), how God's righteousness relates to Israel (Rom. 9-11), and how God's righteousness works out practically in daily living (Rom. 12-16).

Implications

The gospel is God's awesome power to save people who place their faith and trust in Jesus, the provider of salvation. The gospel is for anyone and everyone. How has this truth impacted, transformed, and changed the way that you look at and approach life? Is this truth seen and known by others because they see it in you? How has this truth affected the way that you teach students? Is it what drives your desire to make an impact on the lives of your students?

Your students live in a world in which great sources of power are displayed: atomic energy, the Hoover Dam, Niagara Falls, nuclear submarines, and large cities like New York and L.A., which are lit up every night and appear as one large light to a satellite above the earth. But none of these sources of power has the ability to save any one of us from sin and allow us to eternally live in right relationship with God. You may think that the power you possess within you is insignificant—but in fact it is more powerful than any force of power or source of energy found in this world. How will it change the life of your students today?

Teaching Plan

Connect Activity

Media Option: Not Ashamed

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

Your students will watch a video about the difficulty of defending their beliefs.

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb Media Pass or the Reverb DVD, preview and arrange to show the “Not Ashamed” video. (If your church has not purchased the Reverb Media Pass, you can purchase this single video through the “Media” tab.)

Show the “Not Ashamed” video to your students. When you have finished, have someone summarize the video for you. Then ask students for their reactions.

Ask: **Have you ever been in Jen’s position? Have you ever been put on the spot to defend your beliefs? If so, how did you fare?** Explain to students that this is the first lesson in *Crux*, a 6-week study on the gospel. Encourage your students by explaining to them that after the next 6-weeks, they will have a much fuller understanding of how to talk about the gospel.

Drama: Take One

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will watch a drama about the absurdity of passing up food when one is hungry.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the drama script. Prior to the session, enlist three students to enact the drama. Give copies of the script to cast members ahead of time so that they will be ready to perform it.

Prompt students to perform the drama. Afterward, ask: **Why do you suppose that Ryan and Craig were so afraid to take any of the doughnuts on the table, even with a sign that said “Take One”?** Explain that in a world where some things are limited or exclusive to just a certain group of people, there is something that God has made available to everyone! Say: **Today we begin a new study titled *Crux*. We’ll discover that God’s salvation is for all of us—and not just us but the entire world.**

Explore Activity

Master Teacher Key Study: We Have the Power

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Romans 1:14-17 to understand the power of the gospel.

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the Master Teacher Key Study. Print one copy for your own use. Also download the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Print a copy for each learner. Also provide pens.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Romans 1:14-17.

Transform Activity

Deeper Discussion

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss reasons for why people reject the gospel.

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

- **Why do you think that God's free gift of salvation is not as popular as Denny's free breakfast?**
- **As believers, we have a free and powerful message to tell the world. What are some applicable ways to tell the world about the free gift of salvation?**
- **What are some reasons for why people reject the free gift of salvation?**
- **How can we as believers be unashamed of the gospel just as Paul was?**
- **What does it mean to literally share the gospel with someone, and how can we do it?**

Creative Prayer

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will pray about opportunities to share the gospel.

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the prayer cards. Print copies for each student. Also provide pens.

Distribute the prayer cards and pens to each student. Say: **It is easy to read Scripture and see its impact on the individuals that wrote the Scripture and the intended audience of the Scripture.**

However, when we take Scripture and apply it to our world and ourselves, it becomes real and more applicable. Lead students to take a prayer card and fill in the blanks. Once they have filled in the blanks, ask them to pray to God and ask Him to make the statements true in their lives as they proclaim the free and powerful message of Jesus Christ.

Reverb Student Book: Devotion

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

Students will complete an activity about the gospel as a cure for the sins of the world.

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb student book, preview the activity on page 203. If possible, provide a copy of the book to reference as you mention the activity to students.

As students work through pages 202-207 in the *Reverb* student book this week, challenge them to take about 10-15 minutes and read through the *Devotion* in the *Reverb* student book on page 203. Ask: **How is the gospel message like a cure to a disease? How does this change your thinking about sharing it with others?** Explain that Paul treated the gospel just like it is—a cure for sin. He wanted everyone to have access to it and decide whether they would receive it.

Crux 1, "Something for Everyone"
Drama

Take One

Characters:

Ryan
Craig
Leah

Props: table, sign, box of doughnuts, chewing gum

Costumes: They can all be dressed in normal clothing.

Creative Note: This drama is absurd, but have them play it as if what they're doing is completely normal.

(On one side of the stage, there's a table with a box of doughnuts on it. Next to the box of doughnuts is a sign that reads "Take One." Two guys, RYAN and CRAIG, stand on the other side of the stage. They pay no attention whatsoever to the box of doughnuts, nor do they even acknowledge that it is there. CRAIG is chewing a piece of gum.)

RYAN: Man, I'm starving!

CRAIG: Yeah. Me too.

RYAN: I skipped breakfast this morning.

CRAIG: Me too.

RYAN: 'Cause I overslept.

CRAIG: Me too.

RYAN: Now, here I am, just waiting.

CRAIG: Yeah.

RYAN: I feel like I've been waiting forever.

CRAIG: Me too.

(RYAN checks his watch.)

RYAN: Great. Now I've missed lunch.

CRAIG: Yeah. Me too.

(They stand there for a moment. CRAIG smacks his gum.)

RYAN: I can't take it. I've got to have something. Do you have any more of that gum?

CRAIG: Oh, sorry. This was the last piece.

RYAN: Oh . . .

(RYAN looks extremely upset and disappointed.)

CRAIG: You can have it if you want it.

(RYAN suddenly perks up.)

RYAN: Really? You mean it?

CRAIG: Yeah. Of course.

RYAN: Thanks!

(CRAIG removes the gum from his mouth and hands it to RYAN, who immediately begins chewing it. A girl, LEAH, enters.)

LEAH: Hey, guys.

BOTH: Hey.

LEAH: What're you doing?

BOTH: Waiting.

LEAH: Oh. Cool. You been here long?

CRAIG: Yeah. All day. And we're starving!

LEAH: Really?

RYAN: Yeah. All we've got is this gum, and it's not cutting it.

LEAH: Now that you mention it . . . I'm kinda hungry too.

(RYAN offers LEAH the gum.)

RYAN: Well, if you want it, you can just ask.

LEAH: Um, no! Thanks.

(RYAN starts chewing the gum again. LEAH looks over and notices the doughnuts.)

LEAH: Oh, awesome.

(She makes her way over to the table.)

LEAH: Did you guys not see this?

(RYAN and CRAIG acknowledge the doughnuts for the first time.)

RYAN: Wait! Leah! Don't!

CRAIG: Just what do you think you're doing?

LEAH: I'm going to have a doughnut.

CRAIG: Well . . . you can't do that.

LEAH: I can't?

RYAN: No. Are you crazy?

LEAH: Why can't I have one?

(RYAN and CRAIG each look to the other one for an answer. RYAN finally speaks up.)

RYAN: Umm . . . because they're not yours. Are they?

LEAH: No.

CRAIG: Aha!

LEAH: But it says to take one.

RYAN: That may be. That may be. But how do you know that sign applies to you?

LEAH: Well, we're the only people here.

CRAIG: What makes you think it's even safe, Leah? You know, nothing's really free in this world.

RYAN: He's right. Look, you better just come on back over here and wait with us.

(RYAN and CRAIG lead LEAH back over to the other side of the stage and resume their waiting.)

LEAH: Just what are you guys waiting for, anyway?

BOTH: To get a doughnut.

(LEAH is flabbergasted.)

LEAH: You're crazy. Both of you. I'll see you later.

(LEAH exits. The two guys stand in silence for a moment. RYAN smacks his gum.)

CRAIG: Man, I'm starving!

RYAN: Yeah. Me too.

CRAIG: Do you have any more of that gum?

RYAN: Oh. No. This was the last piece. But you can have it if you want.

CRAIG: Really? You mean it?

RYAN: Yeah. Of course.

CRAIG: Thanks!

(RYAN removes the gum from his mouth and hands it to CRAIG, who immediately begins chewing it. They stand there for a moment.)

(The End)

Master Teacher Key Study WE HAVE THE POWER

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Intro: Who can receive salvation?

Description: Paul wanted Roman believers to understand that God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is available to anyone and everyone. He set out to share with them the great value of the gospel and why He was so driven to share it with everyone.

Illustration: For the 2009 Super Bowl broadcast, Denny's restaurants bought a 30-second ad and advertised free breakfast for all who came in the following Tuesday, February 4, 2009, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. More than 1.5 million people took them up on the free offer.

1. God has a free gift to give away to everyone (Rom. 1:14–15).

Description: Paul felt more than just an obligation—he was energized and eager to share the gospel with both Jews and Greeks. In his world, that meant everyone.

Illustration: Free Websites, free software, free family/household items, free Internet access, free stuff for bloggers, free you-name-it stuff. Have you ever checked out *The Free Site.com*? It offers anyone and everyone free everything—everything that is, but free salvation from sin and death.

Application: The gift of salvation ultimately comes from Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit, but we believers must tell others about the free gift.

2. The only correct response to the free gift is faith (Rom. 1:16–17).

Description: In this world, so little that is offered for free is really worth having. For that reason, many believe that they must work hard and earn anything that is good. Paul wanted believers to understand that what was offered to them was received by faith in Jesus Christ. Likewise, what they would offer to others would have to be received because of expressed faith. It's the only way to have the free gift.

Illustration: In *The Polar Express* (2004), one of the many characters played by Tom Hanks says, "Sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we can't see." In the movie, only those who believe are able to hear Santa's sleigh bells. In this life, only those who have faith and believe in God's free gift of salvation are the ones who really get to see and experience it.

Application: The world often gets the definition of the word *faith* right, but it rarely understands faith regarding God's free gift of salvation. We receive salvation by believing and acting upon that belief by placing our lives into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. This is done by acting upon what we cannot see with our eyes but what we know with our hearts.

Conclusion: Jesus responded to a world in need of forgiveness. That is the gospel. Salvation was the result. Now everyone in the world can have it.

Description: There are two things that Paul wanted believers in His day to understand: 1) Salvation has been made available for everyone through Jesus Christ, and 2) faith is the way to receive salvation.

Application: Everything that we need to share with the world is found in the gospel—a story that goes beyond the world of fantasy because it is a glorious reality. We can know God through Christ. We can experience salvation from sin. We can enter eternal life.

REVERB::CRUX::lesson one

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

biblical passage: Romans 1:14–17

memory verse: Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

WE HAVE THE POWER

1. God has a _____ gift to give away to _____ (Rom. 1:14–15).

2. The only correct _____ to the free gift is _____ (Rom. 1:16–17).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think that God's free gift of salvation is not as popular as Denny's free breakfast?
- As believers, we have a free and powerful message to tell the world. What are some applicable ways to tell the world about the free gift of salvation?
- What are some reasons for why people reject the free gift of salvation?
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- What does it mean to literally share the gospel with someone, and how can we do it?

REVERB::CRUX::Something For Everyone::lesson one

CREATIVE PRAYER

_____ is obligated both to _____
(your name) (name of popular kid/group)

and _____, both to the popular and the unpopular.
(name of unpopular kid/group)

That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at _____ and _____.
(name of your high school) (name of your church)

_____ is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is
(your name)

the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Romans 1:14–16

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