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ONE GREAT SAVIOR



What's one of your favorite rescues from history, film, or literature?

QUESTION #1

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THE POINT

God offers us hope and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“It was a dark and stormy night.” That sentence is considered the classic opening for a bad novel. But it’s also a scenario you don’t want to experience when you’ve been knocked off a boat in the Gulf of Mexico. Trust me.

As a young man, I worked on an offshore drilling rig. On this particular “dark and stormy night,” I was offloading materials from a supply boat. The small craft was being violently tossed in the waves when a cable hit me and launched me overboard. The pounding waves carried me further into the dark waters of the Gulf. I drifted so far that I no longer could see the lights of the rig.

After two hours went by, I gave up hope of being saved. I was lost in the darkness and gripped with fear. Suddenly a light burst through the turbulent waves—a boat equipped with a searchlight. When that light hit me, my hope was restored. I was saved!

Darkness, fear, separation, and hopelessness. That’s also an apt description for being spiritually lost. But as we’ll see in Romans 5, we still have hope because of Christ.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Romans 5:6-8

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, 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!

Let me get right to the point: Jesus is the Light of the world. He dispels the darkness of our lives, removes all fear, reconciles us to God, and brings us hope. Jesus did all of this through His death on the cross—and He did it for the least likely group of people imaginable. (Read the inside front cover of this study for a more in-depth explanation of the hope we have in Christ—and what it means to follow Him.)

Paul notes three kinds of people in these verses:

- ▶ **The just person.** Paul is not using a theological term at this point, but describing a person others see as morally upright or exemplary in his or her conduct.
- ▶ **The good person.** This person is generous, kind, and loving toward others. While the just person appears to never do anything wrong, the good person is simply someone everyone likes to be around. It's conceivable that someone might possibly die for that kind of person.
- ▶ **The sinner.** The ones Jesus died for are neither upright nor good. They are corrupted by sin. "Christ died for the ungodly"—and this title fits all of us.

The apostle Paul placed great emphasis on the love and grace of God. Heroism might motivate someone to die for a good person, but only unmerited grace and unconditional love can drive people to die for their enemies. Jesus did just that. He died for the helpless, the ungodly, the sinners. He died for us.

What do these verses teach us about God's character?

QUESTION #2

Romans 5:9

⁹ Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath.

In Christ we are “declared righteous.” The Greek word for this phrase was a legal term that simply meant “declared not guilty.” When we follow Jesus, our sin—all of it!—is removed, and we stand before God completely forgiven, justified, and righteous in His eyes.

Don’t miss that word “wrath.” Because God is holy, He must punish sin. In fact, His righteous character *demand*s that He deal with our sin. Justice demands payment. However, in an act of divine love, God sent Jesus to suffer and die in our place. Christ willingly came to die as the substitute for our sin. By His death and shed blood, He is able to declare us righteous.

In eastern Afghanistan, children make money from recycling used shell casings they find lying on roads. As a military convoy headed down one particular road, several soldiers jumped out of their vehicles to move the children out of the way before the heavy trucks came along.

After the children were on the side of the road, one young girl ran back to pick up another shell casing. Unfortunately, she ran out in front of a 16-ton armored truck. National Guard Sgt. Dennis Weichel saw this and ran to get her out of the way. He got her to safety—but not before he was hit by the truck. The 29-year-old from Rhode Island died just weeks after arriving in Afghanistan.¹

This is similar to what Christ did for us, only we’re not innocent children. We’re the enemy. Because of our sin, the wrath of God was barreling down on us. But Christ came as our Rescuer. He absorbed the full brunt of our punishment. In doing so, He gave us not only the chance to see our sins forgiven, but also the gift of hope.

To what degree do you feel at peace in your relationship with God?

QUESTION #3

MY HOPE IN CHRIST

Use the space below to record how you've experienced hope as a result of Jesus' work in your life. Make a list, sketch a picture, tell a story, and so on.

List five people you hope will say yes to joining this Bible study.

"Anyone can devise a plan by which good people go to heaven. Only God can devise a plan whereby sinners, which are His enemies, can go to heaven!"

—LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

Romans 5:10-11

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 rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have now received this reconciliation through Him.

Here we find Paul making an argument from the greater to the lesser. Since Christ declared us righteous even while we were ungodly sinners, then He will certainly save us from God's wrath now that we are His righteous children. The first truth increases the likelihood and power of the second truth.

Through His death, Christ has provided the way for peace between the sinner and the Creator. The dividing wall has been torn down between God and humanity. For this reason, Paul wrote, "How much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!" We can be even more certain of the salvation He provided because He has risen from the dead and is alive forever.

Let's look deeper at that word "reconciled." To reconcile something is to reestablish a relationship. Jesus brought reconciliation in order to reestablish the peace humanity enjoyed with God before Adam gave in to temptation and brought sin into the world. We don't have the ability to reestablish our relationship with God, but Christ is able—and He took the initiative to make it happen.



What are we offered in a relationship with Christ?

QUESTION #4

With that in mind, to be reconciled to God means:

- ▶ **Our future is secure.** We are reconciled to God by Jesus' death, but our security is in His life. Jesus rose triumphantly from the dead, and His bodily resurrection is the proof that His rescue mission was successful. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
- ▶ **We have a reason for joy.** Look again at Romans 5:11: "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." True joy is knowing our sins are forgiven and we are at peace with God. The ultimate source of this joy is the hope we have in Christ.

This same hope, joy, and secure future are available to all who repent of sin and surrender their lives to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Sadly, countless people around the world and in our communities are lost, and they don't even realize it. They need to reach out and receive God's forgiveness for their sins. They need to take hold of the hope and purpose they've been searching for all their lives. They need Jesus.

We can actively seek out those who need to be rescued and reconciled to God. Indeed, Christians have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation: "That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

If you know Jesus as your Savior, then you are an ambassador for His kingdom. You have work to do. So what are you waiting for?

In what ways does your life reflect joy in God?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you respond to God's offer of hope and forgiveness for all people? Consider the following options:

- ▶ **Write your testimony.** Write out the story of your own salvation. Focus on three questions: (1) What was your life like before salvation? (2) How did you come to know Jesus? (3) What is your life like now since you've been saved?
- ▶ **Share your testimony.** Pray for the opportunity to share your testimony with someone who needs to hear it. Commit to sharing the truth of the gospel with at least one person before your next group gathering.
- ▶ **Invite five people.** Take steps to connect with the five people you listed in the "My Hope in Christ" activity. Invite them to visit your Bible study for Session 5.



Drifting alone and frightened in the Gulf of Mexico is bad. But drifting through life in the spiritual darkness of sin is much, much worse. Seek out Jesus, the Light of the world.

My thoughts

1. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/03/hero-u-s-soldier-gives-life-to-save-afghan-girl/>.

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLtruth**