



SESSION 4

ONE GREAT SAVIOR

▶ **The Point**

God offers us hope and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

▶ **The Passage**

Romans 5:6-11

▶ **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.

▶ **The Setting**

Having demonstrated that all people need salvation, Paul examined the origin and nature of salvation. Justification, or being declared righteous by God, is a key theme (see Rom. 3:26). Paul used Abraham as an example of how God justified a sinner by grace through faith rather than by works (see 4:1-5). When we are rightly related to God through Jesus, we experience peace with God and hope for the future.

What does the Bible say?

Wrath (v. 9)—God’s “wrath” is His holy disapproval and disappointment with human sin. God’s anger is not the same as human anger.

Reconciled (v. 10)—God restored the harmony that originally existed between Himself and people before we sinned. God initiates reconciliation, and sinners receive the benefit through salvation.

Romans 5:6-11

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!

⁹ Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will 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 rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have now received this reconciliation through Him.

Romans 5:6-8 Commentary

[Verse 6] Paul stressed the radical changes we experience when we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. Before we were saved, we were **helpless** and **ungodly**. The word *helpless* could be rendered “weak” (ESV) or “powerless” (NIV). Even when we acknowledge we are sinners, we have no ability to change our situation. A sinner is also “ungodly” in the sense of not knowing the true God in a meaningful way. Many people were religious, but they worshiped pagan gods rather than the true God. They were not related to God in the right way and were without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Being a sincere follower of other so-called “gods” or living a good life, as defined by human standards, is not enough.

God provided the salvation sinners need at the **appointed moment**. Here Paul used a Greek word (*kairos*) for “time” that could be translated “due time” (KJV). Although this word is sometimes used interchangeably with *chronos* (clock time or calendar time), *kairos* points to an opportune moment when the time is ripe. God’s plan to save sinful humanity through Jesus was not an accident or a divine afterthought. God did not send Jesus because God was surprised humans had messed up! Salvation through Jesus was God’s eternal plan of redemption.

[Verse 7] Gentiles with a pagan religious background might have thought of gods as capricious or unpredictable. Jews might have thought they could earn salvation by doing good deeds. So Paul offered a human analogy. On rare occasions one person might sacrifice his or her life to save the life of a **just person**. Sometimes a heroic person might dare to die for a **good person**. We occasionally hear about a friend, family member, soldier, or first responder making the ultimate sacrifice to help another. But Jesus’ death on the cross for sinners is much more profound than these human examples.

[Verse 8] Our salvation is only possible because Jesus died for our sins. Jesus was more than an ordinary heroic human. In the background of Jesus’ death at the “appointed moment” (v. 6) was God’s **love** for us. God’s love goes beyond attraction to someone who is lovable. God loves sinners!

God makes His love known in many ways, but Paul especially highlighted God’s action in Jesus. In fact, God did not wait on sinners to shape up before He demonstrated His love for them. Indeed, **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!** God initiated salvation through Jesus while humanity was still enslaved to sin. Jesus was righteous, but He died for the unrighteous, bringing us into a right relationship with God (see 1 Pet. 3:18).

Jesus’ death on the cross is the ultimate proof of God’s love.

Romans 5:9 Commentary

[Verse 9] Paul had offered a comparison between heroic, sacrificial human actions (see v. 7) and the unique, loving action of God in Jesus' death on the cross (see v. 8). The phrase ***Much more*** suggests that we see how much more impressive is God's love than any human love we might be familiar with. God's love through Jesus means salvation is available to sinful humanity **by His blood**.

Because of Jesus' death for our sins, we have been **declared righteous by His blood**. Paul returned to one of his favorite word pictures or analogies for salvation. To be "declared righteous" is to be justified. Bible scholars sometimes debate whether this term primarily means "declared righteous" (God decides we will be treated as if we are righteous) or "made righteous" (God makes us to actually be righteous). The more traditional view is that "declared righteous" is the better interpretation.

Certainly Paul presumed that Christians will become more and more righteous or sanctified or holy as they grow and mature in their Christian lives. In fact, sanctification is God's will for our lives (see 1 Thess. 4:3).

A sinner stands guilty before God in His court room. But rather than making the sinner suffer the just consequences of his or her sins, God graciously offers salvation and decrees those who receive that salvation to be deemed as righteous on the basis of Jesus' shed blood.

One key aspect of our salvation is our being saved from God's **wrath**. Unfortunately, many people tend to misunderstand divine "wrath." Certainly wrath could mean God's anger, and words such as "wrath" and "anger" refer on the human level to emotions. But God's wrath should be primarily understood as His disapproval of human sin. At times, God's wrath was manifest in judgment, such as the destruction of the city of Sodom (see Gen. 18:20-21; 19:15). At other times, however, divine wrath is exercised by allowing sin to reap its so-called natural consequences. Paul described God's wrath on the sinful Gentiles as God delivering them over to the consequences of their choices (see Rom. 1:24,26,28). In other words, rather than punishing them, God let them self-destruct.

Paul did not shy away from the subject of God's wrath, but his main point was that salvation from God's holy displeasure with sin was possible through faith in Jesus Christ. The basis for our justification is Jesus, not our human problem-solving skills. Jesus was "delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (4:25).

Romans 5:10-11 Commentary

[Verse 10] Paul was inspired to use several word pictures or figures of speech to try and capture what it means to be saved. Although he often used “justified” or “declared righteous” in this letter, he also depicted salvation as being **reconciled**. Being “justified” comes from a court room context, while reconciliation comes from the general area of human interpersonal relations. Reconciliation becomes necessary when two people or two groups have become at odds with each other.

Paul described the situation of sinners before trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior as being God’s **enemies**. Either you are a devoted follower of God, or you are opposed to God. There is no neutral option. Paul used similar language in another letter. “Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds because of your evil actions” (Col. 1:21). Any sin or failure to obey God counts as alienation and hostility in His eyes.

Paul noted two aspects to the experience of Jesus’ followers. First, they had been reconciled to God **through the death of His Son**. Second, since we are reconciled through God’s action in Christ, we will also **be saved by His life**. Paul might have meant Christians share a close relation with the risen Christ. Paul wrote about his own experience, “For me, living is Christ and dying is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Or, Paul could have meant that the risen Christ carried on an intercessory role for His followers (see Rom. 8:34). Jesus had assured His followers that He would always be with them, even after His departure (see Matt. 28:19-20).

[Verse 11] Paul stressed that Christians should **rejoice** in response to salvation. The related term “joy” reflects the experience of many Christians. Although Paul might seem to have been a very serious, sober kind of person from some of his letters, he clearly saw a role for rejoicing in the Christian life. He wrote “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 3:1). And: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4). Elsewhere, Paul stressed a sense of gratitude as a proper response to God’s work on our behalf: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15). This gratitude could be for the gift of salvation or for Jesus in general.

Paul’s emphasis on the universality of human sin and guilt in last week’s session might have left some readers feeling hopeless. But this session reminds us of God’s generous offer of salvation through the gift of His Son Jesus. Our sins deserve God’s wrath, but because of God’s grace we can receive salvation. In a world that offers quick fixes to most problems, we need to reaffirm that Jesus is the only way to salvation and eternal life. Paul noted that God “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). In our next session, we will look in more detail at how we must respond to God’s offer of salvation.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 44 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider the following responses to the hope of salvation that is available to all people:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **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.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 44 of the PSG:

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.

PRAY: Conclude by asking for God's Spirit to be at work in the hearts of those who need to hear the gospel. Pray that you and your group members will take a step of obedience by inviting those men and women to hear about the hope that's only found in Christ.



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