

THE ROMANS ROAD FOR CHILDREN

Session 1: Foundational Truths of the Gospel

I'm sure you have heard the adage "*All roads lead to Rome*". In the old Roman Empire this statement was very true. Today some people use that same statement when promoting their belief system. They would have all of us believe that there are many many ways that will eventually lead to God; however Scripture is very clear that there is only one way to have an eternal relationship with God. In Romans, a foundational doctrinal book of the Bible, we find a Gospel clearly spelled out in terms that even a child could understand.

The Romans Road is an effective way to share the Gospel with boys and girls. However before beginning to use the Romans Road, we need to be reminded of God's view of the children and why it's so important to share the way of salvation with them. When God sees the children, He sees their condition: they are sinners. This is found in *Romans 3:10* "*There is none righteous, no, not one*" (KJV). The words "*none*" and "*no, not one*" here, include the children. Every person born on earth has been born in sin and is therefore a sinner. Scripture also teaches us that all sinners are enemies of God. We see this in *Colossians 1:21*. The verse reminds us that we are alienated from God, in other words we are separated from Him because of our sin. Both *Colossians 1:21* and *romans 5:10* state that we are enemies and that God's wrath is what enemies or sinners deserve. God sees all sinners as enemies' whether adults or children. As you and I recognize the seriousness of a child's lost condition, we should be moved to do something about it. Christ gave us a command in *Mark 16:15* "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" (KJV) Two key phrases I see in this passage are, "*all the world*", and "*every creature.*"

You and I as believers are commanded to teach all people, big, or small, the good news of salvation, that good news of course is the message of God's love, and the salvation He offers to sinners, including the children. From these passages we are able to get a glimpse of God's heart in regard to the children. In the next few minutes let's spend time looking at the Gospel, or the message of salvation. This overview will help us to marvel at what God has done for us and help us begin to think about what needs to be shared with the children. What is the Gospel or the message of salvation? *Romans 1:16, 17* give us a concise answer, they say, "*For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith...*" (KJV)

The good news of the Gospel or the message of salvation reveals God to us, who He is and what He is like. Let's look at who God is and what He is like. God is the creator of all things; He made all things according to *Romans 1:20*. *Romans* tells us that God is revealed through creation. Throughout Old Testament history, one of the things that were reiterated to each generation was a reminder of God's creative power. Through this act people were able to recognize someone greater than themselves was at work all around them. In no other religion are people able to say that their god is the creator God.

As Creator, God has the right to rule over creation; He gets to make the rules. The best of God's creation is man, He made you and He made me and He was pleased with all that He did. Not only did God create us, but He loves us unconditionally. Romans 5:8 shows us the extent of God's love, He gave His Son for us while we were still sinners. J.I. Packer, in his book *"Knowing God"* sheds light on the extent of God's love for us, he says this, *"There is tremendous relief in knowing that His love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery can disillusion Him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench His determination to bless me. There is, certainly, great cause for humility in the thought that He sees all the twisted things about me that my fellow men do not see (and I am glad!), and He sees more corruption in me than that which I see in myself (which in all conscience is enough). For some unfathomable reason, He wants me as His friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose."* J.I. Packer.

What a joy and hope God's love should bring to us! Another aspect of the Gospel that is foundational is God's righteousness, and justice. God is different from humans. In Romans 1:16, 17 we saw that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. God is completely perfect; when we become aware of God's perfection, we can then understand how unlike Him we are, and see our sinful condition. Because God is also just, He will punish sin. Many people want to think of God only as a loving God. Perhaps you've even heard people say, *"Why would a loving God...?"* fill in the blank, or, *"If God is a loving God, then He'll allow everyone into Heaven."* These concepts totally put aside the aspect of tough love, or God's justice. Throughout Scripture we see that God says there are consequences for sin, this is based on His holiness. It is when we see God as He really is that we are able to see a true picture of ourselves.

In Jerry Bridges book, *"The Pursuit of Holiness"*, he quotes W.S. Plumer saying this, *"We never see sin aright until we see it as against God....All sin is against God in this sense: that it is His law that is broken, His authority that is despised, His government that is set at naught...."* W.S. Plumer. Why does man despise God's rule, because he has a sin nature, he is born in sin. Romans 5:12 says, *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"* (KJV). Since the time Adam disobeyed God, every person on earth has been born with a desire to sin. We want to be in control and have things our own way at any expense and we do not want to submit to God's authority.

This innate problem leads us to do many sinful things. As man we do sinful things in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and we see this in Romans 3:23. There are lots of verses that teach us about our sinful state, but probably the most quoted verse in regards to sin is Romans 3:23, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* We all sin in a variety of ways, sometimes it's through our thoughts that no one but God knows, often it is through the unkind words that spew out of our mouths, or actions that show the sinfulness that resides in every person. There are times we know we ought to do something, and don't, those show our sinfulness. We do many sinful things because we are sinners. God clearly teaches us that our sinful condition separates us from Him. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages or payment for sin is death, the death referred to here is separation from life with God now, and

for all eternity.

This is the horrible reality for every person born on earth. Each person must come to a place in his life where he recognizes that he is guilty, and therefore accountable to God; he must realize there is nothing he can do for himself to be saved from sins punishment. Martin Luther is reported to have said, *“The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea yay somehow he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God.”* Martin Luther. D.J. Kennedy helps to illustrate this truth in a practical manner, he said this, *“You couldn’t make an omelet out of five good eggs and one rotten egg and expect it to be acceptable to your company.... Neither can you serve your life up to God with the many things men call good and yet also filled with deeds and thoughts that are rotten and expect them to be acceptable to God.”* D.J. Kennedy.

Man cannot save himself. Man often tries to do good things in order to be accepted by God, but Titus 3:5 reminds us, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* (KJV) Scripture shows us that man is in a horrible situation, there is nothing he can do to save himself. Jesus died on the cross willingly, giving His blood to pay for sin. God knew our sinful condition and our inability to save ourselves, and so He provided a way for fellowship with Him to be restored. His way of redemption was provided through His only Son, Jesus Christ. The good news of salvation is wrapped up in a person, the Lord, Jesus Christ. In romans 1:3, 4 we find who Jesus is, it says, *“Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.”*

As God, Jesus has power to forgive sins, romans 8:3 shows us that Jesus was human like us, but different, He is without sin. God required a perfect sacrifice for sin, and Jesus was the only one who fit the standard. Since Adam sinned, sacrifices had been required as a way to atone for sins, often a spotless lamb was sacrificed on an alter to pay for sin. This sacrifice was only temporary and had to be offered again and again. The animal sacrifice was merely a picture of what Jesus would one day do to forgive sin. No longer would animal sacrifices have to be offered because Jesus, the perfect, sinless, God-man became the sacrifice for us, once for all.

A number of years ago when Mel Gibson’s *“The Passion of the Christ”* was released, I went to go see it. As I watched the portrayal of Jesus’ betrayal, trail, and death, I was moved to tears as I visually saw the violence and suffering Jesus underwent in order to be the sacrifice on my behalf. Sometimes we know the Gospel so well; we forget all that Jesus went through to purchase our salvation. One of the things that struck me was that He endured all of this because of my sinfulness. Romans 5:8, 9 took on a new meaning for me, they say, *“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”* (KJV)

As the perfect son of God, He could take the punishment we deserved. Jesus died on the cross willingly giving His blood to pay for sin. In his book, *“Written in Blood”*, Robert Coleman tells a story of a

little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion. The doctor explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was an ideal donor. "Would you give your blood to Mary?" The Doctor asked. Johnny hesitated, his lower lip began to tremble, and then he smiled and said, "Sure, for my sister."

Soon the two children were wheeled into the hospital room. Mary pale and thin, Johnny robust and healthy. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met Johnny grinned. As the Nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded, he watched the blood flow through the tube. With the ordeal almost over, his voice slightly shaking broke the silence. "Doctor, when will I die?" Only then did the Doctor realize why Johnny had hesitated, why his lip trembled when he agreed to donate his blood. He thought that giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life, in that brief moment he had made his great decision. Johnny fortunately didn't have to die to save his sister. Each of us, however, has a condition more serious than Mary's, and Jesus gave His blood, His life, to pay the price required when He bled and died on the cross.

In Romans we are told that it is rare that a man will give up his life for a righteous man; yet Jesus gave His life for all who are unrighteous, for you and for me. What a great sacrifice of love that was shown to us. After Jesus' death we know that He was buried, and on the third day He came back to life. Romans 4:25 reminds us that He was delivered up because of our offenses, He died for our sins. The second part of that verse tells us that He was raised for our justification. Because of His resurrection from the dead, we have the hope of eternal life. Take some time later to look at the wonderful promises found in Romans 5 verses one through eleven. These verses remind us of all that is ours because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Verse ten says that we are saved by his life; because of the resurrection we can have eternal life. In these verses Paul reminds us that we are no longer enemies of God because we have been reconciled through Christ's blood. We are able to be saved from the wrath that we deserve. We have been made righteous in God's sight and he calls us friends. Isn't that amazing? We are able to enjoy a relationship with God because the Lord Jesus Christ died for us.

The last part of the good news we want to look at is the *Appropriation of salvation*. Knowing the Gospel does not save us. We must take the gift that God offers. We have already seen that there is nothing we can do to earn salvation it is all of grace. We must come to God on his terms recognizing who He is, what we are like, and believing on Jesus is the only way for salvation. We must appropriate the gift of salvation. Romans 10:11, 12 remind us that no matter who we are, God receives all who believe in Him. In the book of Revelation, Jesus tells us to come, God does not turn away anyone who believes on Him for salvation, but we must come.

So what is man's reasonability, what must an individual do to be saved? According to Romans 10:9 it says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (NKJV) Man's part is to believe that Jesus did what we could not do for ourselves. Recognizing our sinfulness against a holy God and repenting of that sin, each one must chose to believe, or trust on the Lord Jesus, God's provision, in order to be saved. God promises that

when we believe on Him, He saves us. Romans 10:13 says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (KJV) It says shall be, will be, not might be. This verse gives complete assurance that God will do exactly what He says. He will save us from having to live life on our own, and will enable us to live life with Him. He will save us from the power of sin, and enable us to live in obedience to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit within. And one day He will save us from the eternal punishment of separation that we deserve, allowing us instead to live with Him forever and ever.

During this session we have looked at the wonderful Gospel message that anyone must believe in order to be saved. Because you have chosen to enroll in this course in order to learn how to share the Gospel with children, I could quite naturally assume that you have come to know Christ as Savior, but it could be a wrong assumption, and so, if in listening to the glorious message of salvation today you’ve come to put your trust in Christ to save you, you can express that to God right now. Simply tell God that you are a sinner, and you realize you can do nothing to save yourself. Then tell Him that you believe Jesus took the punishment you deserve when He suffered and died on the cross, and then tell Him that you want Him to save you. He promises He will do that for you. If today you have trusted in Jesus to save you, please let us know of your decision, we would like to encourage you as you begin your new walk with the Lord. The good news of salvation is offered to all who believe, whether adults or children. While there are many ways to share the message of salvation, there are definitely not many ways that lead to salvation, the message of salvation never changes. Aren’t you glad that God clearly lays out His plan in a way anyone can understand it and be saved?