



Saving Faith

Session 3 • Romans 3:21–4:5



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*) and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Words in Romans*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (Handout: *Justification by Faith*). Position an empty chair where adults can see it.

ASK: In whom or in what have you been placing your trust lately? What factors can make trusting others challenging? (p. 29)

READ: Read aloud the opening paragraph on page 29. Highlight the last sentence.

ILLUSTRATE: Direct attention to the chair. Sit in the chair and explain that there are things we accept by faith, like believing chairs will hold our weight. Lead the group to list other examples of everyday faith. Record the responses on the board.

SHARE: Emphasize the importance of faith when it comes to experiencing the forgiveness God offers through Jesus:

- “Nothing we do will ever be enough to earn God’s forgiveness. For that reason, we cannot brag about what we have done to be righteous. Our right standing with God comes through Christ alone. He offers the gift of His forgiveness freely to every

person in the same way. When we turn to Christ by faith, we will be forgiven.” (p. 29)

REFLECT: Guide the group to consider where they have placed their faith and why. Discuss other things people might trust to find peace with God and why those things are ultimately futile.

TRANSITION: *To this point in Romans, Paul focused on proving that we’re all sinners who cannot save ourselves. In this session, we’ll see that God has made a way for faith to be the solution to a right standing with Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Highlight the following truths to set the context for this session: *all people have a problem called sin; our sin problem is only solved through a relationship with Jesus Christ; forgiveness is given, not earned.* Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Romans*), noting that today’s session begins the third point on the outline.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Romans 3:21-26 as the group listens for how a right standing before God becomes a reality.

ASK: Why can’t good works lead to salvation? (p. 31)

EXAMINE: Point out the word “Justification” on **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Words in Romans*). Lead a brief discussion of how Paul used the word and why it is significant.

COLLABORATE: Group the adults into teams of two to four people. Provide a copy of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Justification by Faith*) and a highlighter for each person. Assign each team one of the sub-topics in the handout, directing them to read and highlight key words or phrases and discuss how the information clarifies their understanding of justification.

SUMMARIZE: Summarize this content related to “redemption”:

- **(3:23-24)** Redemption refers to the purchase price for slaves, prisoners, or criminals. The word would have reminded Jews of their liberation from Egypt (Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; 24:18). Paul emphasized our redemption is “by his grace,” a gift offered freely. But what is free to us was not free to God; it came with a cost.

EXPLAIN: Point out that Paul used language related to the ark of the covenant to describe Jesus’s death on the cross. Note that just as priests would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement, Jesus shed His blood for us. Emphasize that as our substitute, He both satisfied God’s demand for justice and made salvation by grace through faith possible.

WRITE: Write *Falling Short* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Clarify that everyone falls short of God’s standard, so everyone

needs to accept the price Jesus paid (redemption) so they can experience right standing with God (justification).

READ: Read aloud **Romans 3:27-31** as the group listens for why people have no grounds for spiritual bragging.

SHARE: On the whiteboard write *Finding Hope*. Explain that since none of us can stand perfect before God, we can only find hope through faith in Jesus Christ.

ASK: What does it mean to be justified by faith instead of works? (p. 31)

REVIEW: Point out that God is impartial in judgment and in justification. Note that for Him, the issue is faith. State:

- *Because God loves all people in the same way, He justifies all people in the same way. His forgiveness is available to anyone who trusts in Jesus. Although Jews set themselves apart through circumcision and viewed Gentiles as uncircumcised, those distinctions were irrelevant to the one God who offers one means of salvation to everyone.*

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 5:17 and another to reread Romans 3:31. Encourage the group to listen for the role of the law in the life of a believer. Note that Paul did not disregard the law, but he did affirm that it fails to provide what is necessary for salvation.

ASK: How would you explain the importance of the law to a new believer? (p. 31)

TRANSITION: *The Jews considered themselves children of Abraham. As he continued building his case, Paul used Abraham as a prime example of one who was justified by faith, not works.*

ASK: Would you rather have someone tell you how to do something or show you how to do something? Why? (p. 31)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 4:1-5** as the group determines why Abraham was considered righteous.

REVIEW: Summarize Abraham's role in the Jewish faith:

- **(4:1-3)** For Jewish people, Abraham embodied the belief that justification could be earned through works. His life seemed to support that conviction. He left his homeland, journeyed to a distant land, and with Sarah became the father of a family that eventually grew into the nation of Israel. From a Jewish perspective, such accomplishments appeared to merit God's favor. Paul, however, insisted that before God, Abraham had no grounds for boasting. His case rested squarely on Scripture. Genesis 15:6 says, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Abraham was made right with God because of his faith—not because of his works

EXPLAIN: Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 15:6. Point out that "credited" means adding something to the positive side of a ledger. However, this transaction was the result of God's gracious gift, not a payment for works performed—by Abraham or by us.

ASK: In what ways do you sometimes try to "earn" God's favor through your actions? (p. 31)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Everyone falls short of God's standard, so everyone needs Jesus.
- We can never be "good enough" to make ourselves right with God.
- God calls all people to accept His offer of salvation through faith in Christ.

ASK: What difference does God's gift of forgiveness through Christ make in your life?

DISCUSS: Direct adults to work in pairs to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 31. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Encourage adults to share ideas for breaking through those barriers, especially those related to works-based salvation.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of salvation. Encourage volunteers to voice a sentence prayer expressing their gratitude to God for His gift of salvation.

AFTER THE SESSION

During the week, send the group a text or email that encourages them to memorize Romans 3:23-24 as a way to remember God's gift of salvation.