Session 3: Salvation. What's so amazing about grace?

Welcome to Session 3 of our teaching series on Romans. In this session you will find worship song suggestions, a sermon outline and a written prayer.

KEY VERSE:

'All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'

ROMANS 3.24 (NIV)

BIBLE READINGS:

Romans 3.19–24, 4.19–25

MAIN QUESTIONS:

How can a just and holy God declare sinners to be righteous, and how does this enable us to live out the adventure of faith?

Context:

Paul has led his audience through the valley of sin. Having felt the crisis, we are now ready to hear the good news story of God's amazing grace.

Summary:

MAIN THEMES:

Justification, faith, acceptance, doubt, pride, gratitude, adventure. Paul helps us understand what God has done to save us through the death of Christ. He then uses the example of Abraham, which inspires us to not only be justified by faith but also to live a life of adventure by faith.

WORSHIP SONG SUGGESTIONS:	 This Is Amazing Grace Your Grace Is Enough House Of The Lord To God Be The Glory 	 Who You Say I Am In Christ Alone Just As I Am, Without One Plea

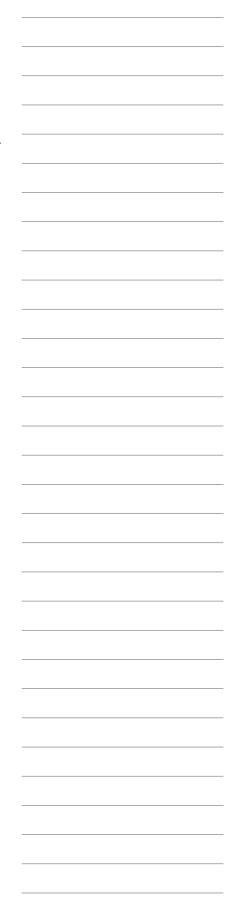
Reflections:

In passages from Romans we have covered so far there is no flicker of hope, no way out of the desperate state of humanity. In this section, with the words 'But now ...' (Romans 3.21), Paul introduces the diamond of God's grace onto the dark backdrop of the previous chapters. We have had the bad news, and now it is time for the good news. This is the gospel!

If you expect there to be people in your congregation who have not heard the gospel, this could be a lifechanging message. Even if your church is familiar with the idea of justification by faith, they might not have considered how they can live their daily lives in the light of this.

This passage contains one of the most central doctrines of the Christian faith, and yet it is full of practical application. It challenges legalism, and shows the need for the cross, but also highlights the radically inclusive nature of the Christian gospel.

The example of Abraham helps us to understand what it looks like to live a life of faith, and we can build on this example to enable our audience to consider how the doctrine of justification helps them live grateful and adventurous lives. NOTES



NOTES

Suggested sermon outline

INTRODUCTION

Start with a recap: what is the problem Paul outlined in the previous section?

Use an anecdote/story to illustrate the topic, for example:

- A story of a situation you could not get out of by yourself
- A recent event in the news or movie scene which illustrates a seemingly helpless situation that then is resolved through a turning point, e.g. miners stuck underground without hope suddenly hearing the sound of a drill
- See the course book for more illustrations
- Introduce the turning point phrase of Romans 3: 'BUT NOW ...' Good news sounds even better when we feel stuck in bad news

KEY POINTS: TWO HARD TRUTHS

Salvation is a gift we receive by faith (Romans 3.21–26)

God's grace is the only way out of our predicament of sin.
 Salvation is not a DIY project but a rescue effort. The solution to our problem is found in Jesus Christ – his life, death and resurrection. Salvation is a gift. This is the core of the Christian faith, and what makes it unique among all other world religions.

Here, you could compare and contrast God's grace with other ways people attempt to earn salvation/acceptance. How is the righteousness of God different?

 Paul deals with cultural, racial, and religious barriers, building on his conclusion in the previous chapter that all have sinned. Equally, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile when it comes to salvation. Perhaps include a moment to speak to those who may not

yet have believed the gospel, and call them to accept God's generous offer of salvation.

 Paul uses three metaphors to unpack the gift of salvation: redemption from slavery, sacrifice of atonement to cleanse us, the legal status of justification.

Perhaps choose one or two of these to unpack the idea and apply it to our context today. See the course book for how to do this.

2 Salvation is an adventure we live by faith (Romans 4)

- In Romans 4, Paul unpacks Abraham's story as it reveals God's original pattern of salvation for all peoples. It shows how both Jews and Gentiles become part of God's family 'by faith'.

Here, you could emphasise how Abraham is a pivotal figure in the story of the people of God, and reference other places in Scripture which refer to this. For example Hebrews 11.8–16.

- Salvation by faith goes right back to the start of the story. Before the law and before circumcision there was justification by faith. Abraham's justification is the model for our justification.

Here, you could consider the ways in which we try to justify ourselves by trying harder, doing more, impressing people, doing good works. Why is this such a shaky foundation for life? How can the gospel give us a more secure identity in Christ?

- Paul uses the story of Abraham to demonstrate what

 a life of faith looks like. His audience would have been
 familiar with this story, but Paul sheds a new light on it.
 Abraham's faith enabled him to live a bold life, believing
 in the promises, following God's call into the unknown.
 Illustrate and apply this principle of living by faith today.
 For example:
 - A time where you could not see where you were going but trusted God
 - A testimony of someone you know who lives by faith despite difficult circumstances

NOTES

CONCLUSION How do we live in the light of this?

Below are some suggested points of application. Feel free to select a couple of points which are most appropriate to your setting.

- Following in Abraham's footsteps means accepting God's grace as a free gift. Have there ever been times you have been tempted to try to 'pay God back' or earn salvation by good works? Romans 4.4–5 shows that although wages can be earned, a gift can only be received. How do our lives and relationship with God change in the light of this reminder? What would it look like for your congregation to let go of self-justification, and rely on God's grace?
- Following in Abraham's footsteps means being grateful **not proud.** Because our salvation is a gift, we have to leave behind any pride or boasting that discriminates and divides. Salvation is freely available to all regardless of gender, race and social status – no matter what we have done or left undone. This is radical news in a world where we are more divided than ever. What would it look like for your church to live out a gospel that welcomes all? How can your church members display gratefulness in the way they serve God and each other in the coming week?
- Following Abraham's footsteps also means we can live lives of faith. Although Abraham had the odds stacked against him, he still believed God's promises to him. What would our lives look like if we stepped out in faith, receiving God's salvation but then also stepping into a life of adventure, being confident in the power of God? Justification by faith also makes us adventurous, not cautious, as a growing faith in God enables us to take bold steps of faith like Abraham and his family.
- How can your church take steps of faith in the coming week, and how can they encourage each other to be bold as they walk with God?



- Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life by Andrew Ollerton
- What's So Amazing About Grace? by Philip Yancey
- The Message of Romans by John Stott
- Romans 1–7 For You by Timothy Keller



WRITTEN PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we confess that we are a broken people. We confess that we easily justify our sinful and selfish actions and words. Forgive us for pretending to be better than we really are. Today we agree that we have fallen short and desperately need your grace. Thank you that we are not without hope, because you died for us on the cross, you paid the price for our wrong and you offer us all grace and freedom. You truly are the Saviour of all. We thank you for the gift of salvation in our lives.