

Romans Series Slide

Greg Lukianoff suffered from bouts of depression throughout his life. Eventually he sought treatment and found a therapist that taught him to notice his cognitive distortions- which were at the heart of his depression.

For example, catastrophizing.

Which is saying to yourself something like “If I fail this quiz, I’ll fail the class, be kicked out of school, and then I’ll never get a job...then I’ll be homeless and die alone in a ditch.”

Now- its not that that stuff can’t happen... its just in that moment your thoughts are distorted and a bit irrational. One thing does not necessarily follow from the former thing.

Another Cognitive Distortion is “Negative filtering”- like only paying attention to negative feedback instead of noticing praise as well.

Which- admittedly is one of my big ones. You give me a complement or an encouragement— it will boost my mood for an hour. Give me a criticism- even one done in love- and I’ll be thinking about still in 6 months.

Those distorted thoughts often lie behind certain kinds of depression and anxiety disorders.

So Greg learned to intentionally notice those thoughts- and counter them with the truth. What used to be daunting battles with depression turned into what he called “winnable skirmishes”.

As he was learning to identify distortions in his own thinking- he noticed something happening on college campuses with the students he worked with. See, Greg is a lawyer and the President and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education- so he specializes in free speech and First Amendment issues in higher education.

Students were claiming that certain kinds of speech, and the content of some books and courses were not merely bothersome to them- they were impeding their ability to function as students. So the students were demanding protection from material that they believed could jeopardize their mental health by “triggering” them or making them “feel unsafe”.

The students felt fragile. There was no expectation that students would grow stronger from their encounters with troubling texts...only that they would descend into a anxious or depressive state.

Now- Greg was NOT saying that students weren't sometimes in real danger that needs to be stopped. He is saying that students today are more likely than previous generations to engage in thought patterns that catastrophize and negative filter...which makes problems harder to solve. He noticed that students were essentially being TAUGHT to think in ways that LEAD to anxiety and depression...not taught to think in ways that lead OUT of anxiety and depression.

They were being protected from things that would actually make them stronger...more well-rounded...and better able to understand and help others.

In his words-

“University students are learning to think in distorted ways, and this increases their likelihood of becoming fragile, anxious, and easily hurt.”- Greg Lukianoff

Greg then sought out Professor and Social Psychologist Jonathan Haidt to engage in a research and writing project- that turned into an article- and eventually a ground-breaking book called *“The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure.”*

If you want more on those ideas- you can read their book.

But for us today- we're headed back into the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome in the first century- where Xians weren't experiencing *perceived* threats to their well-being- but **actual** threats to their lives. And Paul finishes Romans chapter 8- maybe the greatest chapter in the Bible with some Cognitive Gospel Therapy. Or...as 20th century Welsh Doctor and Pastor D. Martin Lloyd Jones called it- “Logic on Fire”.

Title Slide “Logic on Fire: The Questions to Ask & Answer When You're Afraid”- Romans 8:28-39

Meaning- that it is cognitive- its a series of questions to ask and answer in the face of adversity (thats the logic)...but the answers aren't cold and disconnected from pain- they're impassioned... bathed in deep feeling- (hats the FIRE).

And so, the Apostle Paul after dealing for much of the chapter in thought and ideas... lights the flame in this last section.

In the spirit of March Madness- you might picture him like he just hit a three pointer to take the lead after a 20 point comeback that forced the other coach into a time out... and he's screaming “LETS GOOOOOOOO!!!!” as he flashes the “ice in the veins” sign or puts on the “three point goggles”.

I give you: Cognitive Gospel Therapy...Logic on Fire.

Romans 8:28-39

28 We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? 33 Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. 35 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

Because of you

we are being put to death all day long;

we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I included this section we covered last month in v 28-30 that I want to go through, its the cool logic...before we hit logic on fire.

v 28-30 is the alley-oop pass that sets up the dunk in v 31-38

v 28

The larger point he is making is this- All things...the pain, the suffering, the adversity, even the sin- God is taking all things and working them together for the ultimate Good of those who love God and have responded to his call to belong in his family.

You might remember the lyrics from the Lecrae song 8:28- we talked about last time "The master artist makes your mess a masterpiece regardless"

Thats the comfort.

And To be called by God....is to love God. Thats where he is going next.

v 29-30

He says those God foreknew. This doesn't mean "know" as in "I have information about you." Its to know as in to have intimate love for. In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus is quoted as saying to people who act like they are following him, but never had a relationship with them- He says "I never knew you". He doesn't mean- I didn't know you existed. He means you didn't offer yourself to me in a close relationship.

God's foreknowledge is his LOVE toward you before you even existed. Before you could ever have the opportunity to prove yourself to God- he loves you; He LOVES you AHEAD of when you could ever love him.

Then he says- he predestined you. To pre-destine means to set a destination ahead of time. The word in Greek is prohorizdo- you can hear the root of the word "horizon" in there- to determine a horizon and set a course for it. That is purpose. Its direction. Its aim. God- because he loves you...set an aim...a purpose a direction...a horizon to pursue...your GPS has been set by God to be FORMED to look like his son, Jesus.

Loved as Jesus- acting as Jesus...made sure of by the Father's love. God's love is absolutely intent on making sure that his family grows- making more brothers and sisters that look like our big brother Jesus.

Then called....like we saw in vs 28- called people are the people that love God. Being Called by God is responding to him when you hear him say "I love you" by responding- "Yes Lord- I Love you!" Its receiving the Love that he has been loving you with since before you existed.

Then it says you are justified- meaning he has made you right- he hasn't just forgiven you for your sin...he has actually made you not guilty. Jesus, on the cross took your sin...your punishment...the justice you deserved onto himself...so that you could receive his righteousness. You are justified.

And finally- he says because of God's love- using everything...all the bad in the world...all the suffering, the sin, the pain, the affliction...he has worked it so that you will be glorified. Notice passed tense. In other words- it is so certain it may as well have already happened. This is New Heavens New Earth. Everything- including you- that has fallen apart because of sin- will be resurrected...put back together again- and sin and death will be no more. Thats what it means in this instance to be glorified. And Paul says...because of God's love for us...its as GOOD as DONE.

So that's the assist. The cool logic.

And now- in response to that- Its time to throw it down...LETS GOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

LOGIC ON FIRE! which comes in a series of 5 questions to ask and answer.

1) If an all-powerful, all-loving God is intent on our good, why would we fear any opposition?

Paul is not saying here that you won't experience opposition. In fact- he's acknowledging the fact that you will.

This is the opposite of fragile thinking.

Paul says "If God is for us- who can be against us?"

Think about it. If everything that is ever done to you or by you can be turned around and used for your good and God's glory ultimately...if the absolute worst can be turned into the absolute best...then for those that Love God and are Called according to his purpose...any opposition ends up turning out for our favor.

This is the opposite of the "safe spaces" idea. You can't say "those words" because they cause me harm. Instead...its not preventing opposition that makes us safe...rather its recognizing the presence and purpose of our loving Father in the midst of it.

Psalm 23:4

When i go through the darkest valley- you are with me. You are the good shepherd. Your rod and staff comfort me. I fear no danger...not danger doesn't exists...but I have a loving shepherd that doesn't leave me alone in it.

Romans 8:31

If God is for us...who can be against us? No one. I fear no evil....because evil cannot thwart the purposes of the God who foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified me. SO now- I can go through the valley...and its scary...it hurts...its dark... but I am not alone...and that valley does not tell me who I am...the Good Shepherd, my Father does. Remember the ministry of the Holy Spirit from earlier in Chapter 8- he testifies to our spirit that God loves us and allows us to cry "Abba, Father".

2) If the Father gave up his Son to save us, why should we worry about any of our other needs?

God the Father sacrificed Jesus the son. Jesus willingly went through the pain, shame, anguish of the cross to redeem you...to bring you to himself...that should change your perspective about what God is doing with you.

Why would God put that kind of investment into you and then not give you everything you need to do what he has called you do...and to be what he has called you to be?

v 32

Anybody ever collect baseball cards? You know when I was kid before the internet- they used to put out these books every year where you could look up the value of any baseball card. But really- that was just a number on a page. You don't really know the value of one of those until you can find somebody that will actually pay the price for it.

And Baseball cards are pieces of cardboard with some colored ink on them. But when somebody pays 10,000 for some rare rookie card... what do they do? They don't go home and throw it in junk drawer...or put it in their dog's food dish. No. They put it in a sealed protected case that cant even be melted by a solar flare. Because the value of something isn't mainly about the stuff its made of...as much as it is the value that someone has invested in it.

Back to 2)

And the most important investor in the universe..the one who's opinion really matters... invested his SONS LIFE into you. Do you think he's just gonna leave you alone now? NO!

He's going to see that you have everything you need to do what you are called to do..and he's going to get you home safe to him.

Look at what Jesus says in Luke's gospel- sticking with the sheep and shepherd theme.

Luke 12:31-32

31 "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. 32 Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom."

Your FATHER DELIGHTS...loves...gets giddy about...takes great pleasure in...GIVING YOU EVERYTHING!!!!

Notice- its not your employers agreement to pay you a wage...or your prison wardens duty to provide you with 3 squares a day...it is your FATHERS ABSOLUTE DELIGHT... to give you EVERYTHING he has.

This doesn't mean that suffering and hardship aren't reality. This doesn't mean that Xians don't get cancer and die what seems like way too early. This doesn't mean that injustice doesn't happen to Xians...it means in the face of it...none of that stuff dictates who we are...or that God is going to resurrect us and that we will outlast the sun and the stars.

Look at the next 2 questions now-

v 33 & 34

Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.

I'm going to combine those 2 questions into one.

3) If God accepts me on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross, then who's opinion of me can possibly matter more?

Remember a few weeks ago- I told you that all of us in our lives are looking for the answer to 3 questions.

Who am I?

What is my future?

Does someone love me?

And I told you if you pay attention to game shows, reality shows, cooking shows- and listen to what the participants are always saying They are either trying to prove something to someone in order to get the answer to these questions.

"I'm here to prove that you can come from nothing and succeed."

"I'm here to prove that a woman can do anything a man can."

"I'm here to prove that even though all those people from my small town said I wouldn't amount to anything...that I did it. I'm worth something. I'm valued. And I'm going places!"

I'm always hearing this and thinking...what if you lose (and BTW- sometimes they do)- does that mean that all those haters from your hometown were right about you?

Does your identity and future and worthiness of love really come down to how fast and accurately you can poach an egg?

Of course not...but we are so hungry for love and approval- that if we can take ganging that love and approval into our own hands...if we can earn it...we'll try.

But listen- the gospel says that God didn't see you winning at competitions and then decide to love you...rather...he sees you at your worst...and loves you by redeeming you out of it. Jesus went to the cross BECAUSE you failed...because you SINNED.

I've been listening to the 1961 song by Dion called "Runaround Sue" in my song rotation lately. Its a banger. The idea in the song is Dion has been hurt by this girl he dated- somewhat obviously named "Sue". So the song is a warning to all the other guys out there that Runaround Sue will break your heart.

Yeah, I should have known it from the very start

**This girl would leave me with a broken heart
Now, listen people what I'm tellin' you
I'd keep away from a Runaround Sue, yeah**

(Hape-hape, bum-da-hey-di-hey-di)

For us...our reaction to people when they hurt us...is to run away. And warn others-
DON'T GO NEAR RUN AROUND SUE!

Back to 3)

In the Scripture.. idolatry...making a replacement for God...is called Adultery...
cheating on God. Giving your intimacy to someone else. Drawing your sense of
meaning and purpose, and love..putting your hope for the future in something or
someone besides God...taking comfort in the present from someone or something that
is not God...and we do this in 1000 ways.

And God should be like Beyonce- "Everything you own in a box to the left!" I called you
a cab- get outta here. He SHOULD be like DION- KEEP AWAY FROM RUNAROUND
TREVOR!

Instead...he comes close. He gets hurt. He dies. And in Jesus death on a cross- he
justifies us. He makes us right. He expunges our record of sin and replaces it with his
perfect righteousness. So none of our sin is counted against us.

So- no matter what someone holds against you...and won't forgive you for- the one
who you hurt the deepest with your own sin has forgiven you...and that is ultimately
the only opinion that matters.

There is no more need to prove yourself. You don't have to climb a tower faster than
somebody else. You don't have to make a grade to prove yourself. You don't earn love.

IN Christ- fueled up by his love for me- I can do all of those things without the
pressure of trying to secure an identity, a future, or his love.

I didn't earn any of those things. he changed the song about me from "Keep Away from
Runaround Sue" to "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like
me"

And in v 34 says- Jesus hasn't stopped interceding for me. Standing in between my sin
and me...redefining my relationship with the Father from STAY AWAY YOU HURT ME...
to COME HOME, SON...I LOVE YOU.

A brief word to those who say "I know God forgives me, but I can't forgive myself"
I would simply ask you- what makes you think that your opinion of yourself matters
more than God. Just like others don't matter like God's...neither should you...in your

arrogance... override what God says about you with your own insecurities. GOd loves you. He forgives you. Submit what you think about yourself to what God thinks about you.

Finally-

v 35

Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

4) If nothing can separate us from God's love for us in Christ, is there anything in all the universe to fear?

There are a couple of really interesting things happening in these last verses.

First, there are 2 lists present. The first list is a list of external physical dangers.

Affliction, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword. That's a list of 7

The =2nd list comes up in v 38

v 38-39

Its a list of 10 powerful beings or realities that could act as a malevolent authority over us...keeping us from something we need.

7 & 10 are numbers of completion for the Hebrews- as Paul was.

Which is significant because of this quote from the Hebrew Scriptures in Psalm 44.

v 36-37

Because of you
we are being put to death all day long;
we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

This part of this passage was always confusing to me...because I didn't really get how this was a comfort. I always thought it was like "God is in charge...and he's putting you to death...and you are sheep to be slaughtered...so suck it up...eventually you'll be More than conquered... in the meantime...God's gonna beat you up and you'll have to like it.

But I was missing an important word in v 37. the word NO.

See this is a quote from Psalm 44- which is an extremely uncomfortable Psalm. Its essentially a Psalm that blames God.

That Psalm says “God- we have done the right thing...we have kept the covenant with you...but you aren’t keeping your end of the deal because of the pain and suffering and injustice we’re experiencing. Whats wrong with you God?”

Because of you- we are being put to death!

Psalm 44:23-24

23 Wake up, Lord! Why are you sleeping?

Get up! Don’t reject us forever!

24 Why do you hide

and forget our affliction and oppression?

Romans 8:37

After centuries of this going somewhat unanswered for the Hebrews- with this list of 7- and 10 Paul is answering the question- Has God left us to die? with an EMPHATIC NO. This is the full completion of that answer. Psalm 44 was incomplete. And now- through Jesus death and resurrection- we have the completion. The answer. The fullness. You are MORE than conquerors. They don’t have the best of you. NOTHING, NO ONE, NO POWER, can separate you from the love of God that you experience through Christ.

v 38-39

You know- in the OT prophecies of a Messiah- or a CHRIST- same idea...never once in the OT does it talk about the Messiah loving his people. Sacrificing- suffering for- redeeming- yes. But never loving.

And here- Paul- who typically emphasizes the LOVE of the FATHER- grounds the whole thing in the MESSIAH JESUS our LORD.

Jesus death and resurrection is the full 7, the full 10, the full answer to Psalm 44. Jesus death and resurrection is the love of YHWH- the love of this shepherd Father KING GOD now fully embodied activated and put on display. You’ve waited a long time for this answer- Now you know- God never left you. He didn’t keep away from Runaround Sue...he Died to bring her home.

Back to 4)

If that’s true- absolutely no power or threat to our well-being- can keep us from ending up who and where God wants us to be.

That is logic on fire. Thats your actual SAFE PLACE- At the foot of the cross, at the empty tomb- in the arms of the God who has NEVER LEFT YOU.

You know who you are. His child

You know what your future holds. HE DELIGHTS to give us the Kingdom.
and BY GOD- you know someone loves you.

So- what are we going to do with all this GRITTY COURAGE

- 1) Answer the Call- baptism, commitment to his people
- 2) IHOP

IHOP SLIDE