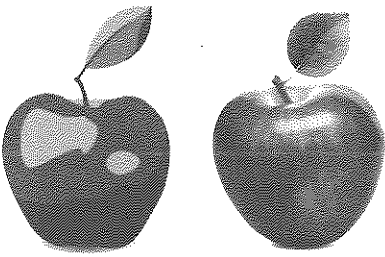


God Redeems



Topic

Sin and redemption

Theme

God provided redemption to hopelessly lost, sinful humanity.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will examine his life for toleration of sin and will take steps toward walking in newness of life.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 5
- Marker
- Paper
- Tape

Scripture Focus

Matt. 15:3–14; Rom. 2:17–29; 3:9–25; 5:6–9; 6:1–19

Summary

The remnant of Jews who returned to the Promised Land from captivity eventually developed a religion based on the law and their tradition. Both Christ and the apostle Paul spoke against their religion. What Christ said and what Paul wrote help us understand the reality of sin and redemption.

Outline

I. Humanity Is Hopelessly Lost

- A. Humanity cannot save itself (Matt. 15:3–14; Rom. 2:17–29)
- B. Humanity needs God's intervention (Rom. 3:9–20)

II. God Provides Redemption

- A. Christ paid the penalty of sin (Rom. 3:21–25; 5:6–9)
- B. Christ assured victory by His resurrection (Rom. 6:1–19)

Memory Verse

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"
(Romans 6:4).

GETTING STARTED

Air Temp Comfort Levels

All of us have varying comfort levels. Probably most notable is our different comfort levels when it comes to temperature.

ASK: What temperature do you set your thermostat on during the day?

(Record several responses on the board putting the lower temperatures at the bottom of the board and the higher ones at the top. Record names next to the temperatures.)

ASK: What influences your temperature comfort level? *Perhaps growing up in a warm or cold climate.*

ASK: What might cause your temperature comfort level to go up or down? *Getting older or wearing warmer clothes around the house.*

All of us have sins we are more comfortable with than others. While we might think our comfort level with sin is okay, God's comfort level is the one that matters. This lesson will help us adopt God's zero tolerance for sin.

Living Comfort Scale

Before class, make one sign for each of the following words or phrases.

1. Extremely Uncomfortable
2. Somewhat Comfortable
3. Comfortable
4. Very Comfortable
5. Extremely Comfortable

Tape the signs in order on the floor of your classroom. Tape the first sign on one side of the classroom and the fifth sign on the other side. Tape the other three signs in between the first and fifth signs at equal distances apart to form a scale. Taping the signs along a wall would be fine too.

Have the learners stand in the middle of your "scale." Tell them what each sign says. Then read the following list of activities one at a time. Have the learners stand on the "scale" at the point that matches how comfortable they would be doing the activity. Point out any of those on the extreme ends. If time allows, have the learners suggest a few more activities.

- Giving a speech
- Going to the dentist
- Singing a solo
- Baking a birthday cake
- Rebuilding a hot rod
- Swimming a lap
- Making macaroni and cheese
- Changing a baby's diaper

Have the learners return to their seats.

ASK: Where might you stand if the activity was exaggerating to make yourself look good? What about watching inappropriate TV shows? How about talking about someone behind his back?

ASK: Where would God's comfort level be for all those sinful activities?

All of us have sins we are more comfortable with than others. While we might think our comfort level with sin is okay, God's comfort level is the one that matters. This lesson will help us adopt God's zero tolerance for sin.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The last session left off with the remnant of Jews in the Promised Land renewing their covenant with God. They fully intended on serving Him faithfully in response to His faithfulness to them. But eventually they proved unfaithful.

Over the next four hundred years, they went from under Persian control to under Greek control to a period of self-rule and finally to a period of Roman rule. The Romans ruled the Jews during the time of the New Testament.

Religiously, the Jews developed a system based on strict adherence to the law of Moses and their traditions. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes led the Jewish religious system. The Jews and their leaders believed others perceived them as pleasing to God. But Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul both made clear that the Jews weren't pleasing to God. They didn't even *appear* pleasing to God.

The Jews needed to understand the reality of sin and redemption. Jesus showed them the reality of their sin and provided for their redemption. Later, in a letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote clearly about the reality of the Jews' sin and Christ's provision of redemption.

I. Humanity Is Hopelessly Lost

Many people live with a false view of who they are in relation to God. They think they are basically good and therefore in good standing with God. They believe that while they have not done all they could to deserve Heaven, they certainly have not done enough bad to deserve Hell. That is a dangerous belief.

The need for understanding the reality of sin and redemption is vital to breaking through such self-deception. The book of Romans helped the Jews understand the reality of sin and redemption. It is an important book for us for the same reason.

A. Humanity cannot save itself (Matt. 15:3–14; Rom. 2:17–29)

Paul addressed the Jews specifically in his letter to the Romans. Though the book was written about two decades after Christ, most Jews were still convinced of their good standing with God.

READ: Romans 2:17, 18. **ASK:** On what did the Jews rest when they considered their eternal state? (Q3) *The fact that they were Jews and therefore God's chosen people. And the fact that they had the law and knew exactly what God commanded in it.*

“Privileged” is an accurate word to describe the Jews. God chose them, instead of countless other nations, to be His people. And even though the Jews in Paul’s day were living under Roman rule, they still considered themselves to be better than the rest of the world. They let the privilege of being God’s people go to their heads. They lost track of reality.

Trying to keep the law should have revealed to the Jews just how sinful they were. But instead, they used the law to prove how righteous they were. They believed they were spiritual leaders for those who did not know God (2:19). And they believed they showed the light of “truth” to the spiritually blind. They used the embodiment of the truth in the law to instruct the foolish and the immature (2:20).

READ: Romans 2:21–23. **ASK:** What did the Jewish leaders fail to do with the law? (Q4) *Honestly apply it to themselves.*

The Jewish leaders developed a system of rules, or traditions, that they added to the law. They even gave the traditions preeminence over the law (Matt. 15:3–6). They used their traditions to carefully craft a system that allowed them to declare themselves righteous for following their rules.

READ: Matthew 15:3–9. **ASK:** What motivated the Pharisees to write their own traditions? (Q5) *Selfishness and greed. They made their sin “legal” with their traditions.*

Paul made it clear that the Pharisees were not actually keeping the law. His series of questions (Rom. 2:21–23) pointed out that the Jews were being hypocritical and breaking the law. Paul even went further to say the Jews were blaspheming God’s name (2:24). The Gentiles knew the Pharisees in particular were sinning. They recognized their conniving. The Pharisees’ feigned spirituality gave God a bad name among the Gentiles.

READ: Matthew 15:10–14. **ASK:** What did Christ say about how successful the Pharisees were at leading the spiritually blind? (Q6) *He said they would be uprooted by God and that they were blind themselves. They would lead the Jews into a figurative ditch.*

Paul went on to make the distinction between outward religion and the inward reality of a personal relationship with Christ (Rom. 2:25–29). What makes a Jew acceptable to God is not outward keeping of rules but an inward circumcision of the heart. In other words, no one, not even the highly privileged Jews, could save themselves by being good and following rules. Salvation comes from God, not from within.

B. Humanity needs God’s intervention (Rom. 3:9–20)

READ: Romans 3:9–18. **ASK:** What did Paul note about humanity’s character (vv. 10–12), their speech (vv. 13, 14), and their conduct (vv. 15–18)? (Q7) *Their character is not righteous and no one even seeks God; their speech is corrupt like a tomb with rotting flesh; their conduct is characterized by destruction and a lack of fear of God.*

Paul's message is emphatic. All of humanity is hopeless without God's intervention on their behalf. That is reality.

ASK: Why is it significant that Paul quoted from the Old Testament to build his case about the universal sinfulness of humanity? (Q8) *It gave his message authority to his Jewish readers. It also helped establish that the sinfulness of man was not a new doctrine.*

Paul wrote that the purpose of the law is to show humanity their sinfulness (3:19, 20). The mouth of those who say otherwise is stopped by the law. No one could defend himself before God and win the case that he is innocent of sin and worthy of eternal life based on his works. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:20) for every single person.

Where does this leave humanity? Helpless! Humanity needs God's intervention.

II. God Provides Redemption

The previous lesson covered Christ's death on our behalf. The rest of this lesson will cover God's redemption of humanity in more detail.

A. Christ paid the penalty of sin (Rom. 3:21–25; 5:6–9)

God intervened to help humanity by revealing His righteousness. God's righteousness is His absolute perfection, His holiness. His righteousness is "without the law" (3:21). That means it does not come by keeping the law. In fact, the word for "without" is particularly emphatic leaving no doubt that the law cannot bring righteousness.

But God's righteousness was "witnessed" by the law and prophets in that the Old Testament offerings and sacrifices spoke of God's righteousness being given to people. Abraham, for example, had God's righteousness (4:3; cf. Gen. 15:6). Yet even for Abraham, who preceded the law, works was not the means of securing God's righteousness (Rom. 4:1–4).

READ: Romans 3:22. **ASK:** What is the only means of attaining the righteousness of God? (Q9) *Through faith in Jesus Christ.*

Since everyone is a sinner and falls short of God's perfection, there is no difference between any two people (3:23). They all must put their faith in Jesus Christ. When they do, God justifies them freely by His grace (3:24). To be justified means to be declared righteous by God. A believer's account in Heaven is wiped clean when God justifies him. Christ's righteousness goes on his account instead.

Believers can have Christ's righteousness credited to their account because of the "redemption" that is in Christ Jesus (3:24). Redemption speaks to a deliverance that is the result of the payment of a price. Christ's shed blood was the price.

God had set forth Christ as the propitiation for sin (3:25). "Propitiation" means "acceptable sacrifice." Christ met the requirement that God's holiness be satisfied. In addition, the penalty for sin was canceled by Christ's death on the cross. The believer stands guiltless before God as righteous.

The fact that God "set forth" (3:25) Christ Jesus should not be overlooked.

God acted in His love for humanity when He provided a means for salvation. God reached out to man and not the other way around.

READ: Romans 5:6–8. **ASK:** How would you describe God’s love based on this passage? (Q10)

We should never think that we are somehow special and deserving of salvation. We are worthless objects! Paul made that abundantly clear in Romans 3:10–18. No person would give the life of his son for a repulsive, hateful enemy. Yet that is what God did in providing salvation for us.

As a result of our justification, God’s wrath is satisfied (5:9). We won’t face His wrath on our sin. That wrath would have meant eternal, excruciating torment for us. Being free from that wrath should cause us to rejoice greatly every day. But taking for granted our freedom from God’s wrath is easy to do. If we are not careful, we could treat our salvation as if it were ho-hum and old news.

Redemption is a reality we ought to remember and cherish. There could never be a greater cause for rejoicing!

ASK: How often do you contemplate the value of being redeemed and no longer under the wrath of God? (Q11)

B. Christ assured victory by His resurrection (Rom. 6:1–19)

Redemption would not be possible without the resurrection of Christ. Paul continued his letter to the Romans with a section on the resurrection.

Those who believed they did not need to keep God’s commands were called antinomians.

Some of the Roman believers thought that since they were justified, they didn’t need to worry about obedience to God. They thought that the more they sinned, the greater they made God’s grace appear. They asked whether they should continue in sin so grace might abound. Paul answered emphatically with a phrase meaning “God forbid!” (Rom. 6:1, 2).

As believers, we have died to sin (6:2). That means we are no longer obligated to obey it. We don’t have to sin. When we do sin, we are choosing to do so. At salvation, we are identified, or “baptized,” with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (6:3, 4). Our old relationship with sin has changed. We are no longer slaves to sin. Instead we should “walk in newness of life.” Obedience, not sin, should characterize our life after salvation.

The death and resurrection of Christ provide us with this break from sin and the opportunity to live obediently. Christ was changed after His resurrection (6:5). Our lives should be characterized by change after salvation, though our change involves obeying instead of sinning. Christ obviously never sinned.

This break from sin is possible because our old man, our sin nature, was crucified with Christ and “destroyed” (6:6). The word “destroyed” means “rendered powerless” or “made inoperative.” Our sin nature no longer automatically controls our lives. We are freed from sin’s possession of us (6:7).

Victory over sin is secured because Christ’s resurrection brought victory over death once and for all (6:8–10). Christ will never need to die again. His victory over death becomes our victory over death once we put our trust in Him for salvation. We can have eternal life because Christ rose from the dead.

READ: Romans 6:11, 12. **ASK:** What reality does Paul command us to recognize? (Q12) *He commands us to recognize that we are dead to sin and alive to God.*

ASK: What might be the consequences of failing to recognize we are dead to sin? (Q13) *We live as slaves to sin. We get frustrated and give up in our battle against sin.*

Victory over sin is not automatic. There is a battle that ensues as we seek to obey God. It means yielding to God daily, presenting our bodies to Him as instruments of righteousness (6:13). It is not about us trying to keep a bunch of rules. We are no longer under the law. Change comes by God's grace (6:14). He enables us to live for Him. That means we need to develop a dependence on God.

ASK: Why is it important to know that victory over sin comes through God's grace rather than our own efforts? (Q14) *Instead of struggling and giving up, we will pray about victory over sin, depend on God's Word, and persevere knowing victory is possible.*

We need to think of ourselves as slaves of righteousness with an obligation to obey God. So we should be presenting our bodies to God as instruments for Him to use (6:17–19).

ASK: What are some practical ways to present our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness? (Q15) *Taking advantage of opportunities for service training; making ourselves available to church ministry leaders; praying for opportunities to witness and for the boldness to do so.*

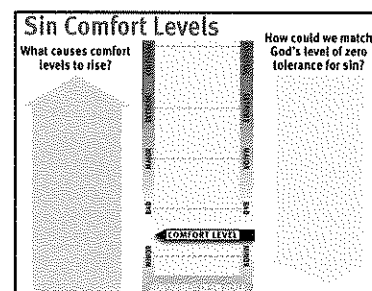
The reality of sin is that all of us are affected equally and none of us can do anything on our own about our sin problem. The reality of redemption is that God sent forth Christ as the acceptable payment for our sin. When we trust in Christ's death on the cross as sufficient for our sins, God declares us righteous. We then can live for God by His grace as we yield ourselves to Him for His use.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

While we may have a Biblical understanding of our sinfulness, our practice may not reflect such an understanding. Some believers will tolerate sin in their lives, thinking they are basically good because they are better than most others. They don't commit major sins and their reputation is fairly spotless. They settle into life comfortable with their sins as if God is okay with the sins as long as they don't get out of hand. They are not living according to reality. God is never okay with sin.

Where's Your Comfort Line?

RESOURCE: Display resource 5. **ASK:** What sins might people put along the scale? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q16) *Perhaps sins like exaggeration at the bottom and murder at the top.*



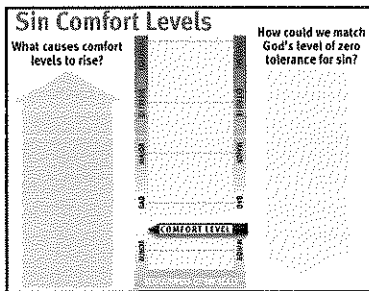
ASK: What causes our comfort level for sin to rise up the scale? (Q17) (Record or reveal answers.) *Not being in God's Word; not confessing our sins; making excuses for our sins; not having anyone to be honest with about our sins.*

ASK: Are you comfortable with your sin? Do you have a "line" that you won't cross when it comes to the types of sins you are comfortable with? (Q18)

Encourage the learners to take time to examine their lives for sins they are comfortable with. Perhaps their choices for entertainment, their family relationships, or their use of money are areas in which they are comfortable with sin. Remind them of God's holy standard covered in lesson 2 (1 Peter 1:13–16).

Lower Your Comfort Level

RESOURCE: Display resource 5. **ASK:** How might we lower our comfort level to the point of being uncomfortable with any sin in our lives? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q19) *Renew our minds with daily doses of God's Word; adopt God's standard of zero tolerance for sin; memorize God's Word and use it to combat temptation; evaluate whether the places we go and the people we know contribute to our comfortableness with sin; reckon ourselves to be dead to sin (Rom. 6:11, 12); actively look for ways to use our bodies to serve God (Rom. 6:13); continue to get to know God's character and ways.*



Remember Your Redemption

ASK: When was the last time you took a moment to reflect on your redemption? Has your salvation become ho-hum to you? Spend time every day praising God for your redemption. (Q20)

Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 4 or use the following: Walk in newness of life as God's redeemed.

Encourage learners to memorize Romans 6:4. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

