
EQUIP

**What is a Christian – Small Group Session Two
Week beginning 13th November**



Why do we need saving?

Last week, we started to see the power of the gospel to work in our lives. Paul longed to visit the Christians in Rome to preach the gospel to them because he knew it would bring them deep spiritual encouragement and produce much fruit in their lives. We finished last week with Paul's wonderful claim that this gospel is God's power to save us (1:16).

Now this claim that the gospel saves leaves us asking a question - why do we need saving? That question might seem straightforward, something we are all familiar with. We might answer something like 'we need saving because of our sin' or 'we need saving because our world is broken' or 'we need saving from judgment to come'.

But, if we are honest, do we really know what those things mean, deeply, truly? What actually is sin? Why is our world broken? What is God's judgment like? That is what Romans now explains and the answers that are given are both very surprising and quite different to how we usually think.

Opening up these questions is very challenging. It is a hard week. However, once we see the truth, it is so enlightening. It will enable us to understand ourselves more truly. It will enable us to understand why the world is the way the world is. It will help us answer questions we are sometimes asked like 'how can God be just to judge the world?' or 'what about those who have never heard of the Bible, how can God judge them?'

Maybe start the session by praying together - that as the gospel is preached to us in this session it would bear fruit in our lives.

If you want a question to start you thinking before opening up the Bible, have a think about the way that concepts like 'sin' or 'judgment' are portrayed in our media. What does our society think about these ideas?

"...they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being..."

Romans 1:22-23

The great God swap

1 No Excuse

Time to come to Romans chapter 1. First read Romans 1:18-21.

Why is God angry? (18)

Why is God's anger fully justified? (19-20)

How does this answer someone who says 'God has no right to hold us accountable for rejecting Him if we have never heard the gospel for ourselves'?

2 The Anatomy of Sin

The next few verses give us a deep insight into the nature of sin and judgment. We have 3 repeated cycles each made up of 3 steps: 21-24, 25-27 and 28-31. Read verses 22--31 now and note the cycles.

Step One: What are the hallmarks of our wickedness in 21-22, 25 and 28a? How is this different from the way we often talk about sin?

Step Two: What is God's common response to our wickedness in 24, 26 and 28? How is it wrong to say humans 'fall into sin'?

Step Three: In each of the cycles, Paul lists some sins that we are 'given over' to (24, 26-27 and 29-31). Why do you think there might be such focus on sexual sin? (What truth are people suppressing?) Why might Paul have included such a long list of different sins?

3 Think Differently

Much of what we have seen here challenges our thinking about ourselves and the world. Lists some of the main ways these verses have impacted your thinking.

Now think about each of the following in turn: Why is sin not a sign that we deserve judgment but that we are being judged? Why is our ability to sin not a sign of our individual freedom? Why would it be foolish to go away from this passage determined to stop sinning?

Discuss how you need to pray in response to this teaching and turn to prayer.

