

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*God's Simple, Powerful Solution*  
Romans 3:21-4:12

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Prepare copies of "Moment by Moment" to be used as a reading to begin the Gathering Time. The words are found on the next to final page of this week's session. Choose those who will be readers and, if possible, give them their part before the day of your meeting together.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

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The four-point outline in the "Bible Study Plan" would be good to copy and keep in the Bibles of each person in the church. A page of multiple copies of that outline is found on the final page of this session. Make enough copies of the outline for every participant in the study and perhaps extras for those not in attendance.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

Select choruses and hymns from those suggested or choose others which fit your group.

### **Music Sources:**

**"The Steadfast Love of the Lord"**

**"Spirit of the Living God"** *Maranatha! Praise Chorus Book, Extended 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, #277*

**"Surely Goodness and Mercy"** *Maranatha! Praise Chorus Book, (1983), #43*

**"Moment by Moment"** *Hymns for the Family of God, #65*

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***God's Simple, Powerful Solution*****Focal Text**

Romans 3:21-4:12

**Background Text**

Romans 3:21-4:25

**Main Idea**

All people are without excuse and rightly are condemned for their sin, but God graciously offers them salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

**Questions to Explore**

Is there anything I can do for my own salvation?

Is faith in God enough?

Isn't something else required?

**Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify what else they may be counting on for salvation besides faith, and decide to trust solely in what God has done in Christ.

**Gathering together:**

Sing “**Surely Goodness and Mercy**” *Maranatha Praise Chorus Book*, (1983) #43

**First thoughts:**

A couple married for over forty years tells this story:

Many people have songs that they remember as being “their song”. These usually refer to a romantic song played at the time of a first date or on the occasion of a proposal of marriage. Through the years, the song comes to have tender and beautiful memories. For my husband and me, another kind of song has come to be “our song”. I don't remember the first time my husband sang it with me accompanying him on the piano. But through the years, at the end of a long day or in the middle of a crisis, we often play

and sing this song. The words sound old fashioned, but the meaning clearly speaks of the theme of today's study – resting in the saving grace and power of Jesus.

(Copy these words from the copy at the end of the session in order that they may be read dramatically by five different people or by a single individual.)

### **“Moment by Moment”**

Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine,  
Living with Jesus a new life divine,  
Looking to Jesus 'til glory doth shine,  
Moment by moment, O Lord I am Thine.

Never a trial that He is not there,  
Never a burden that He doth not bear,  
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,  
Moment by moment, I'm under His care.

Never a heartache and never a groan,  
Never a teardrop and never a moan;  
Never a danger, but there on the throne,  
Moment by moment, He thinks of His own.

Never a weakness that He doth not feel,  
Never a sickness that He cannot heal;  
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,  
Jesus, my Savior, abides with me still.

Refrain:

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love,  
Moment by moment I've life from above;  
Looking to Jesus 'til glory doth shine,  
Moment by moment,  
O Lord, I am Thine.

(Words by May W. Moody, Public Domain)

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *God’s Simple, Powerful Solution*

#### **Focal Text**

Romans 3:21-4:12

#### **Background Text**

Romans 3:21-4:25

#### **Main Idea**

All people are without excuse and rightly are condemned for their sin, but God graciously offers them salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

#### **Questions to Explore**

Is there anything I can do for my own salvation?

Is faith in God enough?

Isn’t something else required?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify what else they may be counting on for salvation besides faith, and decide to trust solely in what God has done in Christ.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Have you ever received something that you didn’t deserve? Something that was simply offered to you, and you did nothing to earn it? That’s how God offers salvation to sinful people. He offers “freely by his grace” (3:24) to “wicked” people (4:5). But like any gift, a person must be willing to receive it for it to do them any good at all. The act of receiving is called “faith.” Many people believe they must “do something” to earn their salvation. Sinful people cannot earn salvation. But everything needed for our salvation has already been “done” though the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf. All that is left is for us to receive the gift.

## Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Paul opened his letter to the Romans with his statement of the good news of the gospel extended to “everyone who believes” (1:16). The good news is for everyone. But in order for people to receive the good news of salvation, they must accept the bad news that they are sinners in need of a Saviour. Both Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-3:8) are “**all under sin**” (3:9), “no one is righteous” (3:10), and “**the whole world is held accountable to God**” (3:19). Everyone without exception needs a Saviour.

This passage explains the marvellous provision that God has made for sinful people. In fact, God is one who “**justifies the wicked**” (4:5) – he doesn’t wait for people to become good enough to earn his salvation, he extends salvation to them while they are still sinful. It is a gift offered by his divine grace (3:24). It is a gift that must be received by faith.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### ***“Justified Freely by His Grace” (3:21-26)***

Having just stated that “**the whole world is held accountable to God**” (3:19), Paul inserted into the argument the beautiful phrase, “**But now**” (v. 21). God was not pleased to leave sinful people in their state of judgment and victims of his well-deserved wrath. He stepped in to do something about it. Verses 21-22 are a restatement of Paul’s message of “**the righteousness from God**” that saves “**all who believe**,” that is, exercise “**faith in Jesus Christ**” (cf. 1:16-17).

“**There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (3:22b-23). This statement sums up Paul’s entire discussion of 1:18-3:20 of the sinfulness of all humanity. The “**glory of God**” that all people fail to achieve either means: (1) His image or glory in which we were all made, but each of us fails to live up to [cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7], or (2) God’s approval that none of us could ever gain in our sinful state [cf. John 12:43]. Either way, everyone has fallen short of God’s standard. It makes no difference if someone is “more sinful” than another. Like people trying to jump across a canyon, some may make it farther than others, but “**there is no difference**” since no one makes it across (or even comes close) and all perish in the attempt. Every person, without exception, deserves God’s divine judgment.

Paul crammed a lot of important and vivid imagery into verses 24-26. He used several metaphors taken from different areas of life. Each picture has its own important meaning, but no picture by itself captures the full significance of everything that Christ accomplished. Paul stated first that sinful people “**are justified freely by his grace**” (v. 24). “Justification” is a term that comes from the legal arena, a courtroom setting. It



is the declaration of a judge that pronounces a person innocent of a crime. It is more than “pardon,” for pardon means that the defendant is actually guilty but is being released of the penalty of the crime they committed. **“Justified”** means that the defendant is declared “righteous,” no grounds for charges exist. The defendant stands acquitted, clean before the court in the eyes of the law. Therefore, what Paul means here is that what God has done in Christ Jesus is to make wicked people stand clean before him (cf. 4:5). No charges will stick. All of this is a free gift of **“his grace.”**

How on earth could God do this? He does it **“through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”** (v. 24). “Redemption” is a term that comes from the slave market. A price is paid for a slave to be set free (cf. Leviticus 25:47-55). A modern day analogy would be “redeeming” an item held in a pawn shop. People enslaved and in bondage to their sin are set free because of a price that has been paid “by Christ Jesus.”

**“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement”** (v. 25). An atoning sacrifice is a term from the Old Testament sacrificial system. A sacrificial animal died for the sinner who offered it (cf. Leviticus 16:1-34). The guilt of the sinner is thus taken away, and the judgment of death that God’s holiness rightfully demands for the sin is placed upon the innocent victim. It is significant here to notice who presented the sacrifice for our sin, **“God presented.”** It is also significant to notice who/what was the innocent victim that received the punishment on our behalf, **“him”** that is, Jesus.

**“He did this to demonstrate his justice”** (vv. 25, 26). The word translated “demonstrate” means to display as a proof. The healed leper was to “show” himself to the priest as a proof that he was healed (Matthew 8:4). The risen Christ “showed” his hands and his feet to his disciples as a proof of who he was (John 20:20). Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to “show the proof” of their love before the other churches (2 Corinthians 8:24), and James urged his readers to “demonstrate” their faith by their works (James 2:18; 3:13). In these verses God offered Jesus as an atoning sacrifice **“to demonstrate his justice,”** to prove that he is indeed just in his actions toward sinners. **“In his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished”** (v. 25), that is, earlier people did not receive the full measure of their judgment for their sins, because God overlooked their ignorance (Acts 14:16; 17:30). This was not because they deserved it or because God ever condoned their evil, but it was because of **“his forbearance.”** God’s intention was eventually to punish each and every sin through the death of his own Son, **“to demonstrate his justice.”** He is both **“just,”** because every sin is punished. He is also **“the one who justifies,”** the one who makes people right with him.

Then is salvation automatic for everyone? No, it comes to sinners **“through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”** (v. 22). It is **“through faith in his blood”** (v. 25). He **“justifies those who have faith in Jesus”** (v. 26). Three times in this passage Paul emphasized that salvation is only for those who “believe” or “have faith” in Jesus. The only ability we have to save ourselves is the ability to receive God’s gracious gift offered in Christ Jesus. The terms “believe” and “faith,” come from the same Greek word. Earlier (1:16-17) Paul gave a clue to their meaning by quoting from an Old

Testament passage, Habakkuk 2:4. The term in the original Old Testament Hebrew means “faithfulness” or “steadfastness.” Therefore, “believing the gospel” or “having faith in Jesus Christ” is more than simply believing with one’s mind, but rather it is grasping him out of desperation. It is a determined choice of the will, a deliberate decision to give Jesus control of one’s life from now on. Saving faith is thus solid, steadfast, and faithful. It is trusting Jesus with a desperation that knows that salvation through no other means is possible, clinging for one’s very life, and receiving his gracious gift as a dying person with no other hope.

### ***“The God of Gentiles Too” (3:27-31)***

***“Where, then, is boasting?”*** If salvation is a free gift of God’s grace, and all people can do is receive it, does anybody have any room for boasting? Absolutely none. Can someone boast that they deserved to be saved because of ***“observing the law?”*** No way. No one could ever be good enough. Salvation is accomplished by God through Jesus Christ, a gift simply received by ***“faith.”*** A person is set right with God, ***“justified by faith apart from observing the law”*** (v. 28). Salvation is never by works, so no one can boast (Ephesians 2:9). It is only by faith in Christ.

To whom, then, does God offer this wonderful gift of salvation? ***“Is God the God of Jews only?”*** Is he not also concerned for the Gentiles? The answer is ***“Yes, of Gentiles too”*** (v. 29). Whether someone is ***“circumcised”*** (i.e. a Jew) or ***“uncircumcised”*** (i.e. a Gentile), if they have ***“faith”***, he is the ***“one God who will justify”*** them.

What about God’s law then? ***“Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?”*** That is, if salvation simply comes by faith, may people who are justified forget about God’s righteous requirements found in the law? May they then live however they want to now that they have been saved? ***“Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law”*** (v. 31). True saving faith is solid, steadfast, and faithful. It will produce “an obedience that comes from faith” (1:5). Salvation is a gracious gift of God that is received by faith and is demonstrated by obedience to his commands (Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 2:3-6; James 2:18). He gives us his Spirit that enables us to fulfil his requirements (Romans 8:4; 13:8, 10). Salvation is all of God’s grace. The kind of life we live demonstrates our gratitude.

### ***“The Father of All Who Believe” (4:1-12)***

Is this idea of salvation by faith a new idea that Paul is now teaching for the first time? Paul refers to the Old Testament character of Abraham to show this is not the case. Abraham was the father of the Israelite people, and is honored in the scripture as being called God’s “friend” (cf. 2 Chronicles 20:7). How did Abraham become right in God’s eyes? Was there another way of salvation for people in the Old Testament? Was Abraham ***“justified by works”*** (v. 2)? If he was, then he had room to boast in what he had achieved for his own salvation.

The word of God stands as the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice, therefore, ***“What does the Scripture say?”*** Paul quoted from Genesis 15:6, ***“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”*** (v. 3). Someone who works receives the wages that they earn, and those wages are “credited” to their account as rightfully earned. When someone receives a gift their account is “credited,” not as wages earned but as a gift received. When someone receives ***“righteousness,”*** or right standing with God, it comes as a free and unearned gift of grace, not as wages earned (vv. 4-5).

Paul then quoted Psalm 32:1-2 where David used several images for right standing with God, ***“transgressions are forgiven . . . sins are covered . . . sin the Lord will never count against him”*** (vv. 7-8). These are descriptions of how God ***“justifies the wicked”*** (v. 5). Not only does God credit people with righteousness (v. 5), but he refuses to count their own sins against them (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21).

Is this incredible gift of grace open to all, or only towards God’s chosen people marked by the covenant sign of circumcision (v. 9)? Paul answered by asking, “Was Abraham credited with righteousness before or after his circumcision?” ***“It was not after, but before!”*** (v. 10). Abraham was not circumcised until Genesis 17:11, at least fourteen years after God declared him righteous in Genesis 15:6. Abraham’s circumcision was a ***“sign”*** of the relationship already established with God, ***“a seal of the righteousness he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised”*** (v. 11). He entered into the relationship by faith while uncircumcised, so rightfully ***“he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised”*** (i.e. believing Gentiles). But having been circumcised, Abraham ***“is also the father of the circumcised”*** (i.e. the Jews), but only those Jews ***“who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised”*** (v. 12). It is thus faith that unites Jews and Gentiles.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Study:**

Salvation is available to all people of any ethnic distinction. Those with the same faith as Abraham are his true children, regardless of any religious works or heritage. As an example of God’s grace received by faith, Abraham is truly ***“the father of all who believe.”***

This session you have the privilege of teaching the clear, and powerful passage found in Romans 3:20 to 23. It stands as a beacon announcing both eternal judgment and hope to the whole world. Paul surrounds the message with a lot of explanation. Yet, the message itself cannot be missed even by the person who has the least knowledge of or experience with the Bible. Keep the message at the heart of your teaching – both this week and the weeks to come.

## **For Personal Reflection:**

1. What have I learned from this study?

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
  
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***God's Simple, Powerful Solution***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the **Focal Text** in their Bibles. Also, share with them the **Main Idea** to be learned from the Scriptures, and the **Questions to be Explored** by the group.

#### **Focal Text**

Romans 3:21-4:12

#### **Background Text**

Romans 3:21-4:25

#### **Main Idea**

All people are without excuse and rightly are condemned for their sin, but God graciously offers them salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

#### **Questions to Explore**

Is there anything I can do for my own salvation?

Is faith in God enough?

Isn't something else required?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify what else they may be counting on for salvation besides faith, and decide to trust solely in what God has done in Christ.

#### **Note to the leader of this study:**

Please take note of the good "4-point" outline for leading this study. Make use of it. It will help the group to remember the lesson, apply it to their own spiritual experience, and use it in sharing the true gospel with others. You may wish to make copies of the outline which can be found in multiple copy format on the final page of this session.

#### **Connect with Life:**

As the group gathers, ask them: “Have you ever received something that you didn’t deserve?” Have them describe some of those experiences.

Then ask: “Did you do anything to earn that gift?” Point out the fact that if it was earned, then it wasn’t “a gift.”

Encourage the group to share this: “What did you do for that gift to be in your possession?” (you simply received it).

State that today’s lesson will focus on God’s way of saving sinful people. Be prepared to overview briefly the teaching in 1:18-3:20 (found in the background section of the teacher preparation), pointing out that Paul has made the case that “no one is righteous” and “the whole world is held accountable to God.”

Emphasize: “That’s the bad news. Now let’s find out the good news that God offers.”

As you study this passage, have the group ponder this question: “Is there anything I can do for my own salvation?”

## **Guide the Study:**

### **1. God’s gracious gift of salvation must be received by faith (3:21-26).**

Have someone read 3:21-26.

Ask the group to think of why Paul began this section with “But now” in verse 21. (to show how God stepped into the ugly situation).

Seek a brief discussion of the following:

- a. “How would you describe the concept found in verse 23 in your own words?”
- b. “What picture does ‘fall short’ evoke in your mind?”
- c. “How many people does this verse refer to?” (all people)

Walk through verses 24-26 slowly, describing the different concepts found there (described in the Teacher Preparation section).

Ask: “Find in these verses who is responsible for people’s salvation.” (God).

Then ask: “According to these verses, what is our part in the salvation process?” (receive by faith)

Inquire of the class: “What does ‘believe’ or ‘faith’ mean?” Be prepared to review the discussion from an earlier passage 1:16-17 (grasping with desperation). Explain that is the act of receiving God’s gracious gift.

## **2. No one can work for it (3:27-28).**

Have someone read verses 27-28.

Question the group: “Can someone boast that he or she deserved to be saved because of observing God’s law? Can someone then be saved by his/her works?” Point out: Every other religion has a system by which people work to earn their salvation. Only Christianity offers salvation as a gift that is simply to be received.

## **3. It is open to all who will have faith in him (3:29-31).**

Read verses 29-31, and ask the question, “Does God play favourites in the kind of people to whom he offers salvation?” (no, salvation is for anyone who believes).

## **4. It has always been, and still is, God’s only way of saving people (4:1-12).**

Point out that people in the Old Testament were brought into a right relationship with God by their faith in the same way as in the New Testament. Be ready to describe who Abraham is as the father of the Israelite people.

Have someone read 4:1-5.

Ask: “In verse 3, to what authority did Paul appeal to determine the truth on the issue?” (the scripture) “Why is that important?” (the word of God is the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice)

Ask: “According to verse 3, how was Abraham declared right with God?” (he believed) “According to verses 4-5, was this something he earned?” (no, it was something he received)

Read verses 5-8 and have them listen for the different descriptions for how God treats sinners who trust in him (forgiven, covered, never count against him). Point out how God credits people’s account with righteousness (v. 5), but how he refuses to count their sins against them (v. 8).

Have someone read verses 9-12.

Request an answer to this: “Does the religious act of circumcision affect someone’s standing before God?” (No)

Now inquire: “According to verses 11-12, then who are the true children of Abraham?” (all who have his faith)







State: “Some people say that people in the Old Testament were saved by following the law, and people in the New Testament age are saved by their faith. According to these verses, is this true?” (no, salvation has always been by faith)

### **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have the group bring their own applications from this passage by asking them the following questions:

“In light of what we have learned today from God’s word,

-  What am I supposed to believe?
-  What am I supposed to do?
-  Is there a promise I need to claim?
-  Is there an example I need to follow? Or avoid?”

Close in prayer.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.



# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***God's Simple, Powerful Solution***

**Romans 3:21-4:12**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **Salvation -- Free -- From God**

Youth who made a profession of faith as a child often wonder if that faith experience is real. As a teen experiences some of the temptations of adolescence, he/she may struggle to do good. Failing to always do the right thing may cause one to question if he/she is a Christian at all. Sometimes, it seems like it would be easier to not be bound by the commitment made as a child.

Studying today's Scripture is a good time to affirm that salvation is the free gift of God. The desire to do good come from the power of God within us drawing us to live at the high level of moral integrity which is a part of becoming more like Christ. We will not always live up to those inner urgings, but Christ does give us strength to meet the demands of the day.

Think back on the time you first professed Christ as Saviour. How old were you? What were the circumstances surrounding your decision? Who helped you understand that decision? What has it meant to you in the years since that time?

If you have never committed your life to Christ, today would be a good day to accept the free gift of salvation. You are not accepting a set of rules and regulations, but a living Saviour who will live within you and give you strength and freedom to become all God intended for you to be.

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***God's Simple, Powerful Solution***  
**Romans 3:21-4:12****Beginning the Service:**

Sing “**Spirit of the Living God**” *Maranatha Praise Chorus Book, Extended 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, #277

**Offering:**

Sing “**The Steadfast Love of the Lord**” *Maranatha Praise Chorus Book, Extended 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, #306 as the offering is collected. Thank the Lord for his faithfulness to meet our every need.

**Praying for the World:**

Pray for new missionaries serving in Africa. Pray that their small daughter will be kept safe from illness. Pray for them as they continue to learn the language and adjust to the small village in which they live.

**Sharing Guide:**

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

***God's Only Way*****Introduction:**

One of the tenets of the post-modern mind set is the insistence that there are many ways to experience God. For people who lived most of their lives within a scientific,

rational environment, this acceptance of spirituality as a normal, natural part of life is both encouraging and frightening.

We think back to our study of Romans, chapter 1 where we read that ***“since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*** (v. 20). Does this indicate that every person is free to understand God’s invisible qualities in his/her own way?

John 14:6-7 records Jesus’ own words on this matter. Thomas had said, ***“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way? Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.’”***

Paul is continuing the discussion started in Romans 1 and 2 when he says in Chapter 3:22 ***“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”***

The main points of our Bible study today are so important to the Christian life that we will do well to review them.

### **1. God’s gracious gift of salvation must be received by faith.**

An early phenomenon observed in most babies is “separation anxiety” or “making strange” as Canadians often say. Psychologists explain this as the baby beginning to understand him/herself as separate from mother. In the early days of the growing ability to understand there is fear. “Will mother come back or not?” Over time, as mother goes and comes and goes and comes, the baby understands that mother is a separate being and can go away and will return again. For some psychologists this represents a very early indication of the capacity of the human being for faith. ***“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*** (Hebrews 11:1). The baby comes to be sure that mother will return. He/she in fact learns that mother exists even when she is not present.

This amazing ability to believe in those things we cannot see is essential to accepting God’s gracious gift of salvation. It reminds us again of that passage in Romans 1 ***“since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen.”*** All people of all ages have the capacity for faith. Not all people have heard the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. That is why the missionary enterprise must continue. Every one must hear—in a language he or she understands and through a medium in which he/she has confidence—the message that Jesus saves.

## 2. No one can work for it.

Many world religions and some expressions of Christianity teach that one must work for salvation. The work may involve living a moral life, serving humanity, promoting tolerance, and feeding the hungry. Because these things have innate goodness, we substitute them for faith. We work hard to please God. But this is a religion of fear because seldom can we work hard enough to convince ourselves that God will be satisfied.

## 3. It is open to all who will have faith in him.

The Romans passage is Paul's writing to the Jewish people who having lived for so long as God's chosen people are reluctant to share God's favour with anyone else. How like us! For those who have been raised within the Christian tradition, there is a certain pride—a reluctance to share. Yet the message is clear. ***“However, to the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”***

## 4. It has always been and still is God's only way of saving people.

When we think of all the ways in which proponents of the Christ faith have insisted that the faith be received, we are amazed at the simplicity of the gospel. ***“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*** (Romans 5:1). A few verses later on Paul will speak of sufferings and how those sufferings will produce character and hope. But the sufferings do not save us. We have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

### Call to Commitment:

**Worship Leader:** Read again the hymn suggested in the Gathering Time *Moment by Moment*. At the conclusion allow a period of time for people to express thanksgiving for their salvation experience both silently and openly. Ask for a sharing of testimonies about salvation experiences as is appropriate.

### Concluding the Service:

If possible, sing together the words from the reading that opened the Gathering Time – **“Moment by Moment”**.

Prepare copies for your church to read as suggested.

## **“Moment by Moment”**

Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine,  
Living with Jesus a new life divine,  
Looking to Jesus ‘til glory doth shine,  
Moment by moment, O Lord I am Thine.

Never a trial that He is not there,  
Never a burden that He doth not bear,  
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,  
Moment by moment, I’m under His care.

Never a heartache and never a groan,  
Never a teardrop and never a moan;  
Never a danger, but there on the throne,  
Moment by moment, He thinks of His own.

Never a weakness that He doth not feel,  
Never a sickness that He cannot heal;  
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,  
Jesus, my Savior, abides with me still.

Refrain:

Moment by moment I’m kept in His love,  
Moment by moment I’ve life from above;  
Looking to Jesus ‘til glory doth shine,  
Moment by moment,  
O Lord, I am Thine.

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Bible Study Outline for all Church Members to Have in their Bibles:

From Romans:

1. **God's gracious gift of salvation must be received by faith (3:21-26).**
2. **No one can work for it (3:27-28).**
4. **It has always been, and still is, God's only way of saving people (4:1-12).**
3. **It is open to all who will have faith in him (3:29-31).**

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