

## Lesson 10 Lecture - The Roman Road to Salvation

In our last lesson, Maggie wrapped up our flight through Romans. Before we get into the Apostle Paul's letters to the Corinthians, we want to revisit some of the key points Paul raised in this remarkable epistle to the Romans and use them as a progressive outline for us to share the truth of God's love for the people in our lives who don't yet know Jesus— a guide, if you will, to walk the “Roman Road to Salvation.” We must never forget that this road is a road that God desires every one of His creations to walk.

Before I get into the lesson's verses, I would like to spend a little time on the concept of witnessing. Throughout our tour through Romans, we have come across a number of key Christian words. If you recall, our homework for Lesson 2 gave us a good list of them. For your consideration, I would like to add one more to the list. That word is “*apologetics*.” Simply defined, apologetics is the defense of the Christian faith – or what you believe to be true.

There's a key word in this definition – **defense**. *If we need* a defense, we can deduce that there must be an offense – there is someone or something attacking or challenging what we believe. In order to prepare to be any kind of witness, you need to firmly understand that in the spiritual realm, there is a constant war going on for ownership. In the beginning before the fall in the Garden of Eden, spiritually, we belonged to, or were owned by God. With Adam's sin, he denied God's spiritual ownership of him, and, therefore, became spiritually owned by Satan. Think about this – God did all the work in creating man and creating the earth to give him a place to dwell and have dominion over it. I think we can all agree that is an awful lot of effort and investment for humanity. Yet, with one tragic choice by man – not God, Satan, who did absolutely nothing but lie to Adam

and Eve to tempt them, gets handed, at no cost to him, spiritual ownership over all of humanity and the earth.

When I think about this scenario, if I were God, and you all should be glad I'm not, I would be so upset with Adam and Eve, I could see myself saying something like, "*Fine, you want to be in charge of yourself and be a slave to that liar, go right ahead.*" Again, thankfully for all of us, God is not like me. He loves what He creates – that means each of you, and He wants every one of us back. He proved that desire when He sent His only beloved Son, Jesus, to the cross to pay the price for our sin to make a way for us to be forgiven and be redeemed – for us to be back in the loving hands where we were originally designed – under **God's** ownership. Satan, though, despite the fact he did nothing to gain ownership of us, is not happy about losing us to God, so he does everything he can to prevent losing his ill-gotten possessions.

In other words, the spiritual realm is one giant warzone of good vs. evil. As a follower of, and witness to, the Good Shepherd, then you need to be aware that as you become more closely identified with Jesus, the more intense the enemy is going to do what he can to devalue and diminish your witness. He'll do this through hurling accusations, lies, illness, temptations, and anything else he can to disrupt your focus on Jesus. But with God and praise God, you are never alone, so whenever He asks you to do go into battle, He is always going to give you what you need to be successful – namely, Himself! In 2 Chronicles 20:15 we read, "*This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'*" What we're doing in this lesson is preparing you for when you go into battle – when you are looking to witness to someone. The beautiful assurance in this verse is that the real battle is in the spiritual realm, and God is on your side.

One of the sinister methods Satan seeks to use on us is guilt. When we attempt to witness, and if the person we're witnessing to doesn't choose to believe in Jesus, we hear Satan's nasty little voice saying something like, "*See, you're no good at this, give it up - there's no point.*" He attempts to burden you with the idea that if you had been a better witness, if you had known more Scriptures, if you didn't have all the sin in your life, that person might have been saved. All lies. What does Scripture tell us about our role in the salvation process? Similar to a garden – we're to plant the seeds and water the seeds through demonstrating our love for others and their eternal destination. Whether or not they choose to believe is not on us. The Apostle Paul wrote about this very topic in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8: "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.*"

Now for those of you who are neither Bible scholars nor great debaters, the idea of making a Biblical defense of your faith can be, at a minimum, intimidating, and maybe even terrifying. Please take a deep breath because I am not suggesting each one of you become a great apologist for what you believe. What I'm suggesting you consider is you become an apologist for why you believe. Where I'm going with this is for you to become an apologist to your Christian faith. In other words, what are the personal reasons or examples you can think of where Jesus has made a difference in your life? There will be plenty who will attack the Bible, attack Jesus, and attack pretty much anything related to religion. However, if you share your personal examples of how Jesus has made a difference in your life, what can they do? Oh, they can dismiss your testimony in a way something like, "*Well that may work for you....*", but they cannot challenge what is true and real to you.

Some believer's stories of their salvation are remarkable. There's the addict who was hopelessly hooked on drugs or alcohol received Jesus and never took another drug or drink again. Other stories are much more subtle and unassuming. Some of you have been blessed to grow up in wonderful Christian homes where you never knew the difference – Jesus was always the centerpiece of your lives. God bless you for that. For those of us who did not experience that, our roads were a little more tumultuous. The fact is whether you have a remarkable story or a “boring” story; it is still *your* story. Hopefully, there have been moments in your life where you've seen the undeniable presence of God. These are the things you can share with others. Jesus left it to the apostles to spread the gospel to the world. He did this because humans connect with humans on a personal level. The good news is we're not on our own when we share our stories, God, via His Holy Spirit, is with us every step of the way when we share our faith stories with others.

A couple was on a road-trip to a place they had never been before. The man is driving, and the woman is providing the navigation via the map someone had given them. At one point, the couple is growing concerned they're not seeing any evidence that they're headed in the right direction. The wife recommends they stop and ask someone for help. Ladies, you know what the man's response is, right? *'I don't need a map – I'll figure it out.'* The husband finally concedes and pulls up to a local restaurant. They tell the manager where they want to go, but the manager says they're headed in the wrong direction. He asks them why they were going the way they were going, and the wife shows the manager the map they were using. He looks at it and says, *“Someone gave you the wrong map – this is taking you in the opposite direction to where you need to go.”* That's the story of every person who doesn't know Jesus – they're going the wrong way. Every human is on some kind of road, or path, in life. The question each of us should ask ourselves at some point is where is that road leading me?

I don't know about you, but I like a progressive outline - a logical path or a clear road map. I'm pretty methodical, so I like going step by step of a process with each step having clarity and significance. The idea is you can't get to the next step until you fully understand the necessity of taking the first step. While each person is different and has his/her own issues, the path to the gift of salvation has some universal common steps. That is what this lesson provides – *the Roman Road to Salvation is taking key Scriptures from Romans to help us identify the proverbial mile markers that every person must pass on their way to Jesus and beyond.* The objective of this lesson is with having these key Scriptures readily at hand or in our minds, this will help us as we witness to non-believers.

Having some knowledge of key Scriptures is definitely beneficial when we choose to witness. Notably, it reminds us of what we know is true for ourselves. Satan is not only going to equip the person your talking to with doubt and cynicism, but also he's going to seek to deconstruct what you believe. This is why having Scriptures to fortify you and guide you in your witnessing is so valuable. Remember – God's Word has great power. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us, "*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*"

Before we attempt to witness to anyone, a wise move is to come before God in prayer and inform Him that we are willing to offer our testimony to someone. Prayer must always precede a witnessing opportunity, and it never hurts to pray during the opportunity. If you believe God has put someone on your heart to witness to, the best first step is to ask God for help. They say the best defense is a good offense, so who better to go to than the One Who is going to fight the battle? The prayer doesn't have to be some elaborate oratory – it can simply be, "*God, help me.*" Other things to pray for may include a request for wisdom, a request for

a hedge of protection from the enemy, a word of knowledge, and a request for peace. Prayer is the most powerful weapon we have because it brings God into the scene. Prayer prepares the way of the Lord.

So let's start down the Roman Road to Salvation with the first mile marker being Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" I like to call this verse the "*leveling the playing field*" verse. I remember I was talking to my uncle about the Bible and Christianity a long time ago. We were going back and forth and then he said something like, "*Well, one of things I struggle with is I just feel guilty all the time when I read the Bible.*" Then his face became kind of sad, and he said in a wounded voice, "*I don't think I'm all that bad of a guy.*" Probably the greatest stumbling block for the non-believer is for him or her to recognize their need for Jesus. Simply, there's no need to fix something if you don't think it needs fixing.

There are countless reasons people will offer up to reject Jesus – remember that – they're not rejecting you, they are rejecting Jesus. Some may have a charmed life, so why do they need Jesus? For others, they may think they have done too many bad things – they've gone too far for Jesus to save them. Others will be like my uncle, where comparing to others, they're not so bad. The underlying theme in all of these rejections is **pride**. What do you get when you strip away someone's pride? – **Reality**. For most of us, pure reality is terrifying – it makes us totally vulnerable and forces us to deal with our true spiritual condition. God is holy so, for us to be in an intimate relationship with Him, we must take on His holiness. We learned in Romans we can't do anything on our own to earn that holiness. Therefore, we must, by faith, rely on the free gift of Jesus' pure shed blood that makes us righteous and holy in the Father's eyes.

This kind of explanation, though, is foreign to the non-believer. The Apostle Paul shared an important truth in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "*The person without the*

*Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”* Getting into a deep explanation of salvation doctrine will seem like Martian talk to the non-believer. This is why Romans 3:23 is such an important verse. It basically says we’re **all** guilty. My mother-in-law used to say that the only sin she ever committed was using the Lord’s name in vain; therefore, she wasn’t in such bad shape. She didn’t understand what James said in chapter two, verse 10 of his epistle, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”* Just one sin makes us guilty before God. A major step for people on their respective paths to salvation is to admit, or own, they are a sinner – that they’ve done things in their lives that they know were wrong.

You can help them with the truth that we’re all sinners via the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden. When God told Adam that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would surely die, He was speaking to both a spiritual and physical death. God is the perfect trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God created man in His own image, so we were created as a lesser trinity – body, mind/soul, and spirit. Our connection point to God is at the spirit. When Adam and Eve sinned, the spirit component of our trinity died thereby severing our connection point to God. At that point, the endless cravings of our body, or our flesh, overtook our minds, and since then, every human that followed Adam and Eve was born without the spirit component of our human trinity and, therefore, we have been slaves to our body needs. In other words, we were all born with our sin nature ruling our lives. The next mile marker on the Roman Road to Salvation proves this truth, Romans 5:12, *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”*

If the person is willing to own their condition before God – that they are a sinner and have offended God, the next step is for them to understand the consequences of their sin. We need to remember that at the moment someone truly feels he/she is a sinner; they are in an extremely vulnerable place. Yes, they need to know the truth of the consequences of their sin, but they also need to know there is hope. This is why we must declare the **complete promise** of the next mile marker on our road to salvation in Romans 6:23, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” At this point on our road there is likely going to raise the issue of eternal life – the idea of heaven and hell. The concept of eternal life is another battleground. Pride and arrogance are again the area Satan tempts with thoughts of this life is the only life – there is no after-life. If you play out this temptation, then it doesn’t matter what I believe or do in this life. However, if someone is confronted with the idea there **is** an after-life, and there is more than one destination, they are forced to consider the accountability of their beliefs and behaviors in this life.

This is why we must emphasize the love of God. This is the next mile marker on our road. Romans 5:8 is such a vital verse for the person teetering on the edge of faith, “*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” What this verse is telling the non-believer, who is no doubt feeling the crush of the condemning influences of Satan, is they need to hear that God’s love is greater than that condemnation and the deathly wages of sin. They need to hear that life in Christ is more powerful than death. They need to hear that there is a heaven, and that is where God wants all of His creation. They need to know the truth of God’s mindset towards them and hear Him pleading in Ezekiel 33:11, “*As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!*”

One of the most common rebuttals to believing in God is if God is love, then why is there so much suffering? How can a loving God Who sees all things sit back and do nothing when there is so much pain? This is a massive topic to which I cannot begin to do justice in the time I have. However, I do want to make this point. How much suffering in this world is due to sin – to **man's choices** to do evil? I would argue the vast majority of it. Blaming God for people's bad choices is another of Satan's weapons. Free will, or freedom to choose, is a wonderful thing, but when we make the wrong choices, we don't like the consequences. Free will and consequences are inseparable. We need to remind people that **God** had a choice. He could have turned His back on humanity with all of its sin, but **He chose** to make salvation available to those who choose to believe. God doesn't send people to hell - people send themselves to hell by their choice to not believe. We just read that's not what He wants – we proved that in Romans 5:8.

We have now arrived at a fork in the road. We've shared with them the truth of their eternal condition, the consequences of that condition, and God's provision for deliverance from that condition. They can choose to continue down the path they are on, which will lead to darkness and destruction. Or, they can choose a different direction – one that is filled with light and hope. If you're on a road, don't you want to know where it ends? This brings us to the mile marker at the fork in the road – the promise of where the other road is going to end. Romans 10:9, *“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* Don't skim over the *“declare with your mouth”* phrase. When speaking out the things of God, not only do God and the world hear, but also so do we. Try speaking out loud our memory verses a few times per week rather than just reading them. I believe they will sink deeper into your heart. What we say out loud is a source of food to our hearts. Our tongues and

our mouths can be either wellsprings of life or pronouncements of death and negativity.

So we have told the person we're witnessing to about the alternative road and where it ends, but we also need to let them know what traveling on that road offers. In other words, what are the promises or benefits to the person who chooses to follow the new road to salvation? There are two mile markers that will help us know that we are still on the right road. First, we learn from Romans 5:1, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* We spent some time in Lesson 3 speaking to what it means to be justified. Hopefully, you recall it means, by faith, we are declared *"not guilty."* By faith, all of our sins – past, present, and future - are completely and totally forgiven. What does that truth mean? - Peace with God. What it does **not** mean is peace, as the *world* knows it. The world does not know peace because it is under the rule of Satan who only offers chaos, pain, and suffering.

Peace with God means that as a result of your declaration of faith, you are no longer at war with God – you have been reconciled to Him and are now under His protective wings. The truth of the matter is if you choose to walk closely with Jesus, you are going to experience anything but peace from the world. Your alignment with the Lord puts you in the cross hairs of the enemy. What did Jesus promise in John 15:20, *"If they have persecuted Me...they will also persecute you."* Peace with God is found in the spiritual realm. Philippians 4:7 explains this peace, *"And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* Peace **with** God ushers in the peace **of** God. What this means that while we are traveling down the Roman Road to Salvation, there will be rough terrain that will normally cause fear and anxiety. Under the full and complete assurance of God's protection, we can experience a deep and, impossible

to understand to the non-believer peace in the worst of circumstances because we know God is with us. If God is with us, who can be against us, right?

Our seventh and final mileage marker is Romans 8:1, “*Therefore, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*” All the guilt, all the shame, all the judgment, all the criticism – all the junk that comes with sin, in the eyes of God, is gone. By your faith in Jesus, you are fully forgiven and free of all sin-related burdens to live as a new creation in Christ full of hope and the promise of eternal life at peace and in love with God. This does not mean that the earthly consequences of sin go away, but, from a spiritual perspective, you are clothed in spotless robes of righteousness via the grace of God through Jesus Christ. You can share all of these wonderful mile markers with the people in your life with the confidence that comes with the infallibility of the Scriptures.

I like simple – kind of comes with the gender, right ladies? My favorite witnessing story is out of John’s gospel. In chapter 9, Jesus sees a man who has been blind since birth. He heals the man’s eyes by spitting in the ground, taking the mud made with the saliva, and putting it on the man’s eyes. The man is brought to the hard-hearted Pharisees, and they perform an investigation to see if this really happened. This is so typical of the legalistic, hard-hearted person. He is more concerned about conforming to a bunch of rules than he is about rejoicing in the end result. What they were upset about was Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. In their second encounter with the man, they are determined to prove Jesus is a sinner, so in their pompous, windbag voices they tell him, “*Give glory to God by telling the truth,*” they said. “*We know this man is a sinner.*” The man gives the simplest and most powerful testimony you can imagine, “*Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*” He didn’t quote any Scriptures. He didn’t get into some doctrinal debate. He simply gave the

ultimate “*Before*” and “*After*” picture of his personal experience with Jesus. That is the heart of witnessing, brothers and sisters.

Well, I’ve spent quite a bit of time talking about how to witness, but I want to conclude as to the why we need to witness. I’m going to give you two reasons. First, Jesus commanded it in Matthew 28:18-20, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” There are some important reminders for us in this command:

1. The Father has given Jesus all authority in heaven and earth. What does that mean to us in terms of witnessing? Jesus is in total control of what is going on. He has brought and will bring people into your life for you to be a witness for Him. You don’t have to go looking for them; He’ll bring them to you.
2. Jesus’ suffering on the cross was done for a purpose – to make a gateway for all people to be saved from the eternal penalty of sin, which is separation from God. Being saved means to live in complete confidence that you are for eternity in a peaceful and intimate relationship with God. Jesus led the most purposeful life of any human being in history. *We are created in His image, so that means each of us has a God-designed purpose in life.*

I don’t know what each of your complete purpose is in life, but I do know that a component of it is being a living testimony to the love of God. All of what I’ve covered today is what I call “in-the-moment” witnessing. There is another type of witnessing that, I believe, is every bit as important, and I call that “moment-by-moment witnessing.” This is basically how you live your life each day being an example of Jesus. You’ve probably heard

the saying that for every 100 people, one will read the Bible and 99 will read the Christian. Our daily treatment of people, the things we say, and how we respond to difficult situations is just as important of a testimony to an unbelieving world as is being able to recite the Roman Road Scriptures. We used to live next door to a couple that were Christians, but he was one of the most judgmental, critical, and unpleasant persons I have ever known. Graham Cooke calls people like that “*grace growers*” – they’re such difficult people to deal with that they force you to seek God’s help to give them as much grace and love as He does to us.

I can tell a lot about a person when I go to a restaurant with him or her by how they treat the waiters or waitresses. I’ve seen long-time Christians treat a waiter or waitress like some low-class peasant. Joyce Myers has said there is no other place that she has learned more about how to walk like Jesus than at the grocery store. Do you put the cart back after unloading it at the car? If you’ve decided later in your trip through the grocery store you don’t want an item, do you just put it on the shelf closest to you, or do you take it back to where it belongs? What about the cashier? Do you smile and ask the person how his/her day is going, or do you just grunt or simply ignore them?

I’m not trying to devalue the importance of a direct witness or the power of having some key Scriptures to help you in witnessing to someone. However, people flocked to Jesus because of His character – they could tell He was different. They could tell He truly cared about them. We should all be doing regular checks on ourselves to see if we’re exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit as laid out in Galatians 5:22-23, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*” If you’re showing these traits day-in and day-out, then, at

a minimum, you will be making other peoples' days a little brighter. If your life is visibly demonstrating these traits, then you are living a purpose-driven witness to a world that desperately needs Jesus. If you are not seeing these traits in your life, then you need to spend some time with God and ask Him why. I promise He will tell you in a loving way and offer a path of healing and hope.

3. The final thing to remember in Jesus' command to witness is your not alone – He is with you every step of the way. What did Jesus promise His disciples in Luke 12:11-12, “*When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*” One of the primary reasons most of us struggle with witnessing is we are afraid we won't know what to say. If you are sincerely willing to make yourself available to witness to a person, God will give you the words to say. This is a promise, and God can't lie.

Now given Jesus is our Lord, which means He is our master, His command to witness should be enough, right? That's the whole idea behind His position and title as Lord. There should be no “buts” or refusals to a Lord. What's the reality? - We are hard-hearted, stubborn, and stiff-necked people who want to do things our way – we see obedience as a sign of weakness. Therefore, for most of us, we need a “motivation” to do what we do. The most compelling motivation for anything I know is love. I'm going to ask a question that is likely going to sting because I know when I asked it to myself, I did not feel comfortable. How's that for a set-up? Here we go, “*Do you love the people God has brought into your life enough to get you out of your comfort zone and tell them about Jesus?*” Your family, your friends, your co-workers – even that cashier at the grocery store – do you care

enough about their eternal destiny to say something to them? The second “why” of witnessing is really the second commandment Jesus gave us – to love others as we love ourselves.

Please forgive me if I’m making you uncomfortable or feeling guilty – that is not my desire. However, as we consider this season that we’re in, it is a season of giving. What should be the motivation behind giving? - Love. God so loved you as His creation that He sent His beloved and only begotten Son - stripped of all of His deserved glory - and humbly entered into this world as a baby born in a manger. He loved you enough to willingly deny every temptation throughout His life to fulfill the requirement of the spotless lamb. And then He looked at every sin you have committed, are committing, and will commit and then, still, willingly went to the cross to pay the price for all those sins. When you are given a gift, what is the natural response? You say, “*Thank you.*” People, God has given you the ultimate gift of salvation, and He did it because He loves you. How do we say “thank you” to God? - By receiving the gift and allowing Him to teach us to love others as He loves us – unconditionally, sacrificially, patiently, and faithfully. If you are sincerely willing to do this, then you will be a powerful witness and give glory to God – that is the true meaning of life. Let’s pray.