

July 24
Lesson 8

UNWAVERING

HOPE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 42

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-11

ROMANS 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

KEY VERSE

Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. —*Romans 5:5*

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Give reasons why Christians have unapologetic, unashamed hope.
2. Explain the relationship between justification and the believer's expressions of faith, peace, and love.
3. Write a poem, song, or other expression of joy to celebrate the receiving of reconciliation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Stuck in the Snow
- B. Lesson Background

I. Unashamed Hope (ROMANS 5:1-5)

- A. Result: Peace with God (vv. 1, 2)
Access, Granted and Denied

- B. Result: Gift of the Spirit (vv. 3-5)

II. Unearned Salvation (ROMANS 5:6-11)

- A. Basis: Christ's Death (vv. 6, 7)
 - B. Basis: God's Love (vv. 8, 9)
 - C. Basis: Christ's Resurrection (vv. 10, 11)
- Reconciled, Saved*

Conclusion

- A. Proven Love
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. Stuck in the Snow

One December while I was in college, a friend and I were driving together to our hometown in Idaho for Christmas vacation. To get there, we had to navigate several tricky roads (one of which is known as "Deadman Pass") in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon. It was snowing, and my little sports car ultimately spun out and went off the roadway into a snow bank. We were not hurt, but the car was stuck, traffic was very light, and we were alarmed. Providentially it was only a few minutes until a large SUV pulled over to check on us. The driver offered us a lift to the next town, which would save us from freezing to death.

Then something remarkable happened. This kind man, who was in a hurry to make an appointment, noticed a pillow in the back of my car that had the insignia of my college fraternity. He said, "My two boys were members of that house." And he spent the next 90 minutes digging us out of the snow bank, freeing my car. He then followed us to the next town, where he filled my gas tank before he went his way. A dangerous situation became a gracious rescue, more than we expected or deserved (given our foolhardy travel during dangerous winter conditions in an ill-equipped car).

Today's lesson tells the much bigger story of God's loving us so much that he acted to save us from an eternal death that we deserve. This is a core teaching in the book of Romans.

B. Lesson Background

The apostle Paul was involved in several great travel adventures, the last of which was his trip to Rome for a hearing before the emperor. The book of Acts ends with Paul awaiting this trial ([Acts 28:30, 31](#)). Rome was a destination he had desired for many years ([Romans 1:13](#)).

Prior to that visit, Paul had spent several months in Greece toward the end of his third missionary journey ([Acts 20:2, 3](#)). There, probably while in the city of Corinth, he wrote to the church in Rome in AD 57 or 58. Included in the letter are the apostle's understanding of the Old Testament background for the Christian message, the nature of Christian salvation based on the atoning death of Christ, the centrality of faith as the only path for human salvation, the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the plan of God, and several other matters.

All this makes Romans both the most challenging of Paul's letters to understand and the richest depository of what he calls "my gospel" ([Romans 2:16; 16:25](#)). The basis and reality of being justified by faith is the subject of [Romans 1-4](#) in general and [3:24, 28](#) in particular (last week's lesson). Paul quoted [Habakkuk 2:4](#) in [Romans 1:17](#) to set the tone for the entire book: "the righteous will live by faith." This means that faith—complete trust in God—is the only way that life may be found. It cannot be earned by obedience, although obedience is important. It is not inherited by ancestry, although this is not unimportant (see [Romans 3:1, 2; 9:4, 5](#)). True life, eternal life, the life of salvation, is only found in trusting God to save us.

Abraham, the great patriarch of the Jews, was justified by faith ([Romans 4:3](#), quoting [Genesis 15:6](#)). Thus the idea of faith in God as the core element of one's life is not a Christian innovation. Such faith is to be the foundation of our relationship with God. This was intended as central in the pre-Israel period (Abraham), in the nation of Israel itself (Habakkuk), and in the church. This fact takes us into today's text.

I. Unashamed Hope

([ROMANS 5:1-5](#))

A. Result: Peace with God (vv. 1, 2)

1. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

HOW TO SAY IT

Bathsheba Bath-*she*-buh.
 Corinth Kor-inth.
 Habakkuk Huh-*back*-kuk.
 Leviticus Leh-*vit*-ih-kus.
 patriarch *pay*-tree-ark.
 Pentecost *Pent*-ih-kost.

shalom (*Hebrew*) shah-lome.

The result of our justification by faith is *peace with God*. This peace is more than a mere cessation of hostilities, a peace treaty. Rather, it is an Old Testament kind of peace, as exemplified by the Hebrew word *shalom*.

In this sense, *peace* has the meaning of “satisfaction,” or “payment for an offense.” For example, [Leviticus 24:21a](#) states that a person who kills another’s animal must replace it. This half-verse uses the verb form of *shalom*, which is central to this process of making peace with another. Making peace with God is not simply saying, “God, I’m not going to fight you any more.” According to Paul, some sort of restitution must occur to have peace with God. That restitution happens *through our Lord Jesus Christ* (compare [Ephesians 2:14](#)). This is the theme that Paul will unpack in the remainder of our lesson.

What Do You Think?

In what ways does having peace with God affect the way you live daily? How should it?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

At home

At work/school

When traveling

Other

2. through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

The word *access* gives a picture of being in the presence of God (compare [Ephesians 2:18](#); [3:12](#)). Access to God was limited under the Law of Moses. Direct access to God’s presence in the temple’s Holy of Holies was reserved for the high priest, and he could claim this access but once a year (see [Leviticus 16](#); [Hebrews 9:7](#)). But the curtain of the temple has been torn open through the death of Christ ([Matthew 27:51](#); [Hebrews 10:19, 20](#)), and access is now available to all.

This is not because of our own efforts, but by the grace of God. We are spiritually able to stand in God’s presence, to have a living, dynamic relationship with our Creator despite our sin. This is a cause for rejoicing, since it removes the curse of sin that has broken this essential relationship. We can anticipate the future with hope. We need not fear being in God’s presence.

ACCESS, GRANTED AND DENIED

My dad inherited an old piece of furniture called a *secretary*. Its distinguishing feature was a large panel that was attached to the main body of the unit by horizontal hinges. When swung open, that panel served as a writing surface.

The panel had a lock to keep it secure when in the closed position. Unfortunately the key to the lock had been lost. One day my father removed the lock so he could take it with him to flea markets, where some booths would have large jars of old keys. Dad tried all those keys in the lock, eventually finding a fit. As a result, he could lock the secretary but gain access whenever he desired.

So often it seems that people pay great attention to locking up their physical valuables (house, car, etc.) while living “lock free” lives in an ethical and moral sense. They want the freedom to do and say anything, and they don’t mind allowing unholy ideas or persons to gain access to them in return. They believe that moral locks are to be left open or removed altogether, with no need for a key.

But the Bible notes the importance of keys in a spiritual sense (examples: [Matthew 16:19](#); [Revelation 1:18](#); [3:7](#); [9:1](#); [20:1](#)). Sin had locked us out of access to God, but Christ became the key that unlocks. May we ever hold that key dear!

—C. R. B.

B. Result: Gift of the Spirit (vv. 3-5)

3, 4. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Paul turns from grand expressions of spiritual hope to the realities of our lives. How do we attain the hope of [verse 2](#) in the real world, in the daily grind of life? Paul knows that the Christians in Rome are experiencing *sufferings* for their faith in Christ (compare [1 Peter 1:5-7](#)). This may be true particularly of Jewish Christians if they are constantly threatened with persecution by the more established and powerful non-Christian Jews of the city. This applies to us too, for not everything about being a follower of Christ is easy and without personal cost. As Jesus predicted, following him requires that we take up our own crosses ([Mark 8:34](#)), to die to self and live for him (see [Romans 6:6](#)).

Paul reminds his readers of the *perseverance* they learn when they suffer (compare [James 1:2, 3](#)). The causes of suffering are not always eliminated quickly. Sometimes these situations must be patiently endured. Enduring hardships serves to give us *character*. This has the sense of seasoning our souls, thereby giving us *hope*, because as we have endured suffering in the past, we will be able to endure it in the future.

Pain is not a sign that God has abandoned us. Our hope can never be taken from us, for it is based on the gracious expression of God’s love through the giving of his Son, Jesus our Lord.

What Do You Think?

What have been some personal costs to you in following Christ? How do you deal with the sense

of loss that these costs entail?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding costs in relationships
- Regarding costs of career opportunities
- Regarding financial costs
- Other

5. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

We are *not put ... to shame* by holding this hope in front of us. In addition to a sense of “being unashamed,” hope also includes the idea of “not being disappointed.” Our hope is not mere wishful thinking. It has a solid basis, for it springs from mighty acts of God that affect our lives. Paul will go on to explain the powerful implications of Christ’s death, but at this point he gives another, more immediate confirmation and benefit of our hope: *the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us*.

By using the concept of pouring, Paul creates a vivid word-picture of a spiritual reality: God’s pouring the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers. It is reminiscent of the Day of Pentecost, where the dramatic reception of the Holy Spirit among the gathered disciples was seen as a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that God would “pour out” his Spirit in the last days ([Acts 2:17, 33](#); compare [Titus 3:5, 6](#)).

Paul has not yet experienced the fellowship of the Roman church personally, but he is confident of a spiritual connection with its members. All Christians share in the gift of the Holy Spirit, freely given by God to comfort and guide us. Christianity is not a do-it-yourself faith. It is a living reality shared similarly by all Christians, who are vessels of God’s holy presence in their lives. This reality is a confirming factor in our hope, the “deposit” (down payment) of our great future with God (see [2 Corinthians 5:5](#)).

What Do You Think?

What connections do you experience between having the Holy Spirit and having love in your heart toward others?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- When the Holy Spirit seems active in your life
- When the Holy Spirit seems inactive in your life

II. Unearned Salvation

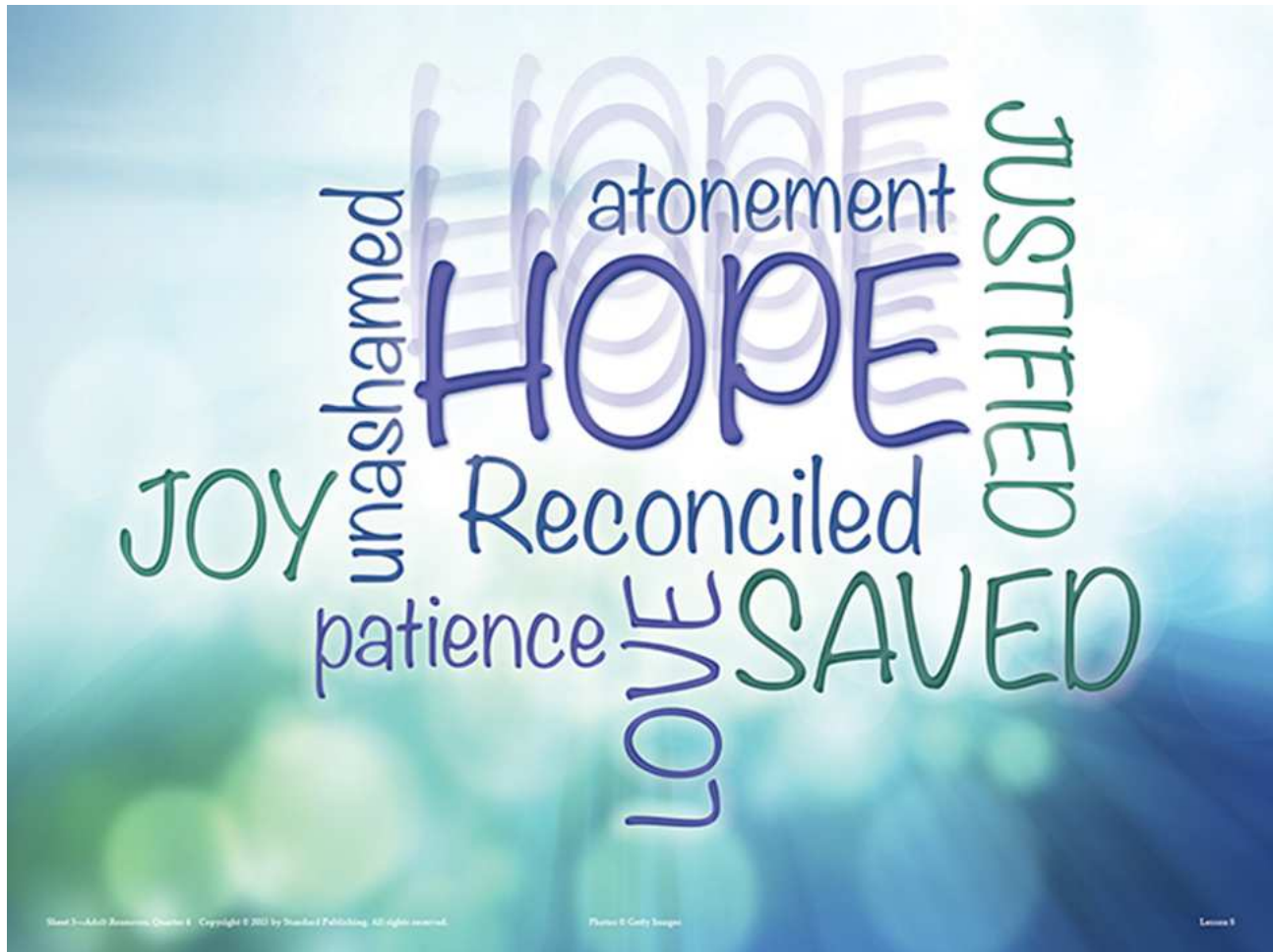
([ROMANS 5:6-11](#))

A. Basis: Christ’s Death ([vv. 6, 7](#))

6. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Having given context for our great hope, Paul now further explains how our salvation is made possible. First, he quickly sketches the human plight. The word translated *powerless* is often used in the New Testament to refer to physical illnesses, afflictions of those in need of healing (example: [Luke 10:9](#)). But the apostle uses it here to refer to spiritual sickness, our weakness when it comes to obeying the will of our Creator.

All of the tragic stories of the Old Testament are summed up in the phrase *when we were still powerless*: Adam and Eve’s eating fruit of the forbidden tree, the Israelites’ partying around a golden calf, David’s committing adultery and murder because of his lust for Bathsheba, etc. In every case, spiritual weakness led to sin. That is our situation as well. We are on the way to spiritual death, and nothing we do can restore ourselves to health. What is the solution?



Visual for Lesson 8. Point to this visual as you ask learners how hope relates to the other eight concepts noted.

The answer is that *at just the right time*, ... *Christ died for the ungodly*. Let's be very clear: those who are *powerless* are *the ungodly*. Our spiritual weakness has brought us to a contempt for God, a frightening and dangerous lack of reverence and awe for the king of the universe. Yet despite this heinous disrespect, God has done something for us that only he can do: he sent his Son to die for us.

7. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

Paul slows down a bit to explain in more detail. Why is it so extraordinary for Christ to die for sinners? Paul answers with the analogy of everyday life, probing the deep feelings of his readers. It would be unusual for someone to give his or her life for another, *even for a righteous person*. Perhaps, Paul says, it is within the realm of possibility for one to sacrifice his life for an extremely *good person*, but everyone knows that this is a rare and unlikely occurrence.

In the 1960s, former president Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered a series of heart attacks and was near death. At the time, a new medical procedure was making headlines: heart transplants. Many World War II veterans who had served under Eisenhower offered to donate their own healthy hearts for their beloved former army commander, an example of someone daring to die for a good man. None of these well-intended offers was accepted, of course, but the willingness to die for another made headlines nonetheless. Thus Paul's point still stands.

B. Basis: God's Love (vv. 8, 9)

8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul brings us to a great irony, a great mystery of the Christian faith. When Christ died for us, it was not a deserved act for a beloved and relatively good man like Eisenhower. It was a selfless, inexplicable expression of God's love for sinners.

Paul describes this as God's demonstrating *his own love for us*. This has a sense of "proving" or "giving an unquestionable display"—a strong statement! Who can doubt God's love when realizing that he freely gave his Son to be the sacrifice for our sins? The great mystery is why God loves us so much! He chooses to love us even though we deserve exactly the opposite.

9. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

The implications of Christ's death for sinners include past, present, and future aspects. First, the death of Christ is a past, historical event. The great sacrifice for human sin was accomplished during a Passover week in Jerusalem more than a quarter century ago from Paul's perspective. Jesus needed to die only once, for he was the perfect and final sacrifice for sin (see [Romans 6:10](#); compare [Hebrews 9:28a](#)).

Second, the blood of Christ and our faith in its saving power have the effect of making us righteous, *justified*. This legal language indicates salvation in the present. We don't have to wait for justification. We are justified by grace right now.

Third, the Bible promises that all will be subject to judgment after death (see [Acts 17:31](#); [Hebrews 9:27](#)). Paul promises that Christ will save us from the deserved verdict of our judgment, the *wrath* of God against sin. The righteous, perfect judgment of God is sure. But also assured is our salvation through the atoning death of God's own Son, for he will come again to save us (see [Hebrews 9:28b](#)).

C. Basis: Christ's Resurrection (vv. 10, 11)

10. For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Paul presses further by describing our unsaved state as having been *God's enemies*. This is a warfare analogy, but God was not the aggressor—we were! We were the cause of hostilities! We were the perpetrators! We were found to be fighting against God (compare [Acts 5:39](#); [26:14](#)). And in the midst of this one-sided battle, he brought peace. We are now *reconciled to him*.

Whereas the language of justification in [verse 9](#) is legal in nature, the language of reconciliation here speaks to a personal relationship. Reconciliation is a key concept for Paul (see [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](#)). It is the process by which adversaries become friends. This is central to the gospel message, that we no longer need fear that God hates us and wants to destroy us. Instead, we believe that he loves us and that there is no remaining cause for alienation and no excuse for rejecting his offer of salvation.

Paul drives this home by reminding us of the hope we have for the future. This is especially based on *his life*, referring to Christ's resurrection. We are saved now by his atoning death, and we will be saved in the future by our resurrected and living Savior. He will not forget us when he comes again in power and glory.

RECONCILED, SAVED

Years ago, I had a friend who built his own house. He had a full-time job, but evenings and weekends he spent on this project. He contracted for some of the work, such as wiring and plumbing. But by and large, he did most of the construction himself: he laid floors, put up wallboard, installed windows and cabinets, painted, hung lights, etc.

When construction was finished almost two years later, he and his family moved in. We would think, of course, that that was the natural and reasonable thing to do. That's why he was building the house in the first place. To have abandoned the house upon its completion would be far outside the bounds of expected behavior!

God has gone to great lengths to reconcile us through the Son so the Holy Spirit can "move in." Would God finish construction only to abandon us? Of course not! Collectively, we "are being built into a spiritual house" ([1 Peter 2:5](#)). Those he reconciles, he will also save. This we can cling to even in (or especially in) our darkest hours.

—C. R. B.

What Do You Think?

When was a time that your reconciliation with someone bore similarities with how people are reconciled with God? What did you learn from this experience?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding who made the first move in reconciling ([Matthew 5:24](#))

Regarding how the first move was received

Regarding the permanence of the reconciliation

Other

11. Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

These are not grim words of judgment and warning; the apostle is rejoicing as he explains these things. Earlier he noted that people of faith should be people of hope. Now, he concludes this section by saying that people of faith and hope will also be people able to *boast in God*.

The reason why is summed up in the word *reconciliation*. This noun carries forward the thought of the previous verse, where as a verb it is rendered "reconciled" (twice). This word is used in the financial world of Paul's day to refer to paying up an account, making good what is deficient. It is not far removed from today's accounting world, where "reconciling accounts" refers to making records come out evenly. The debt for sin is paid by God's Son. Our personal account, with all its sin debt, is paid off by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul is so thankful!

What Do You Think?

What can we do to put aside the felt need to “even the accounts” with other people?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- At work
- In marriage
- With a sibling
- On the freeway
- Other

Conclusion

A. Proven Love

How do you “prove” love? How do you prove to someone that you love him or her? In medieval times, a man would bend a silver coin and give it to his sweetheart as a promise of his love and intention to marry. This is similar in some ways to a man giving an expensive engagement ring to his fiancée. In both cases, this is wealth not easily spent. At the core, this is a demonstration of love that is proven by actions, not simply by words.

God’s love for us is more than promises or words. He has proven his love by sending his only Son to die for us while we were hostile and disobedient. The fact that the sinless one gave himself for sinners means that we need never doubt his love for us. So when you feel that life is rotten and unfair, remember that God has proven his love for you. When it seems that he has abandoned you, remember that he has proven his love for you. When you feel worthless and insignificant, remember that God has proven his love for you. He does so now and forevermore.

B. Prayer

Loving Father, we do not fully understand why you love us, but we believe it. When we were weak-souled because of sin, you loved us. At the right time, you proved your love by sending your Son to die for us. May we love you more and more each day. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God’s proven love is the basis
of the Christian’s hope.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Into the Lesson

Pass around a container in which you have placed the following six items: a fake lottery ticket; a large index card featuring the words *401(k)*, *IRA*, *real estate*, *stocks*, *bonds*; a picture of a family; a work ID (real or created); a bottle of multivitamins; and a cross. Have learners blindly pick one item each until all are drawn.

Ask for items to be held up one at a time, in the above order, for all to see as you ask, “Why is this one a good or bad basis on which to put hope for the future?” Discussion of the sixth item, the cross, will serve as your transition to the Into the Word segment.

Into the Word

Give each learner a worksheet that you have headed “What Difference Does the Cross Make ...” Below that heading have these three categories listed:

1. In our relationship with God ([Romans 5:1, 2, 9-11](#))?
2. In our life experiences ([Romans 5:1-5](#))?
3. In our love for Jesus Christ ([Romans 5:5-8](#))?

Have these words listed across the bottom of the handout: *access*, *boast*, *character*, *enemies*, *faith*, *hearts*, *hope*, *glory*, *justified*, *love*, *peace*, *perseverance*, *reconciled*, *saved*, *sufferings*, *wrath*.

Form learners into study pairs as you distribute the handouts. Assign each pair one of the three questions to answer, using the verses indicated. (If you have more than three pairs, assign duplicate questions.) Pairs should try to use words from the list at the bottom of the handout, but encourage learners to go beyond those as they see fit.

After calling time, request pairs to share their conclusions. Possible responses:

1. The cross allows us to be justified by our faith and results in peace with God. We have access to God and will be received into his presence. Because we are saved and reconciled with God, we don’t have to fear his wrath.

2. The cross means we can rejoice in the hope we have because of the grace God extends to us. When we have trials and sufferings, we are assured that God has not abandoned us. God works in us to produce perseverance, which gives us more character and results in hope for the future.

3. The cross causes us to love Jesus more as we realize what he did for us when we were unable to help ourselves. Because he was willing to die for us when we were his enemies, we know we are reconciled to God and saved for eternity.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Stacking Up Benefits” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs to complete as indicated. (*Option:* Make this a contest to see which pair can finish first; give a token prize to the winners.) Ask which concepts learners find most difficult; use the commentary to correct misconceptions.

Into Life

Form learners into groups of three. Give each group a large cross cut from poster board along with markers and/or colored pencils. Instruct groups to write on their crosses some expressions to celebrate the receiving of reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Encourage the most artistic person in each group to write the words creatively and decorate them expressively. Have each group show the results of its artwork.

Option. Distribute copies of the “Sing a Song of Hope” activity from the reproducible page along with hymnals or other worship songbooks for use as indicated. When learners finish, ask for volunteers to share their song titles with the class. Encourage learners to take their lists home as a stimulus to sing the listed songs during their devotions in the week ahead. Select a familiar song to sing to adjourn class.