

**Gospel Motivation**  
**An Adult Bible Study**

by

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## Leaders Notes

This Bible study is based on the book by the same name, "Gospel Motivation" by Robert Koester (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2006).

Also consider the other NPH Bible study by the same name, "Gospel Motivation" by Professor John Brenner of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002, new edition, 2008). Brenner gives Christians more thoughts for connecting their faith with their life. Consider that Bible study in your planning process.

This study covers most of the book, "Gospel Motivation" (pages 1-132). However, it omits the last two chapters, which offer more examples of Gospel motivation, and the concluding chapter. (pages 133-170).

This study contains the usual leader's guide material. However, the material in the book will increase your understanding of the topic. Class members will benefit from the book as well, but it might be wise to encourage them to read the appropriate chapter after you cover the material in class.

### Purpose of the Course

The New Testament writers make it clear that every aspect of our life in Christ is inseparably tied to what Christ has done for us. This course covers many of what we will call "Gospel/motivation pairs" found in Scripture, that is, places where the writer urges us to serve God and links that to what God, in Christ, has done for us. This study will help the class spot Gospel/motivation pairs on their own as they read Scripture.

### Suggestions for using this study

Here is a list of the lessons:

#### Introductory Lessons

Lesson 1 The Gospel—God's Love and Forgiveness in Christ

Lesson 2 What Is Gospel Motivation?

#### Foundational Lessons—Romans 6:1–8:17

Lesson 3 The Gospel of Death and Life

Lesson 4 The Gospel of Slavery To Righteousness

Lesson 5 The Gospel of True Spirituality

Lesson 6 The Gospel of a New Creation

#### Topical Lessons

Lesson 7 The Gospel of How God Views New Creations

Lesson 8 The Gospel of the Kingdom

Lesson 9 The Gospel in the Sacraments; The Gospel of Light

Lesson 10 The Gospel of Eternal Life

Lesson 11 The Gospel of Our Fellowship in Christ;  
Motivated to Pray for One Another

All the lessons could be combined into a single Bible study course. This study contains 11 lessons. This would work for classes that are accustomed to spending a long time on a particular topic. The lessons are longer than others. You might want to spend more than one session on a lesson. Of course, this depends on your teaching style, how long your class sessions last, and how much discussion there is. Some lessons contain "Practice" sections. Not all the verses in these sections need to be used.

Other classes like to change the topic every five to eight weeks. You could divide the lessons and make two courses. Two short courses have been written if you wish to do this. (The Full Course and the two Short Courses can be found in the Free Stuff section of the GWABooks.com web site. They are offered in both MS Word and PDF formats.)

The first two lessons are introductory. The first lesson defines the Gospel as the message of God's forgiveness and impresses on the class how important that is. The second lesson helps the class understand the concept of Gospel motivation. The introductory lessons are included in the full course and in both the short courses.

The next four lessons are foundational. They teach Romans 6:1–8:17, which is Paul's explanation of why our hope in the Gospel enables and motivates us to serve the Lord. As such, they are a unit and it would be wise to teach them in order. Short Course 1 is made up of the two introductory lessons plus the four foundational lessons.

The last five lessons cover various topics, which the Bible writers combine with the Gospel to urge us to serve the Lord. Short Course 2 is made up of the two introductory lessons plus the five topical lessons.

Note: The author of this study produced Northwestern Publishing House Bible studies for many years. However, this Bible study is not a Northwestern product. As such, it has not gone through the rigorous copy-editing and proof-reading process all Northwestern products go through. Nor has it undergone a synod doctrine and content review. The author has carefully checked the manuscript for typos and grammar mistakes. But before you print out a lesson, please read it through in case some were missed.

Blessings on your study,

Pastor Robert Koester

4-1-2026

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 1 The Gospel—God’s Love and Forgiveness in Christ

“Gospel Motivation,” Preface and Chapter 1, pp. 5-21

#### Worship

Christians don’t serve God to earn earthly or eternal blessings. However, Scripture says that those who love the Lord and serve him because of his grace in Christ are richly blessed. All the responsive readings in this course are taken from the Book of Psalms and speak about those blessings.

*Read Responsively About God’s Blessings on the Righteous, Psalm 37:25-31.*

L: I was a young man. Now I am old.

**G: But I have never seen a righteous person forsaken or his children begging for bread.**

L: Every day he is gracious and lends.

**G: His children will be blessed.**

L: Turn back from evil and do good.

**G: Then you will remain forever.**

For the LORD loves justice.

**G: He will not forsake his favored ones.**

L: They will be protected forever,

**G: but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.**

L: The righteous will inherit the earth.

**G: They will dwell on it forever.**

L: The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom.

**G: His tongue speaks what is just.**

L: The law of his God is in his heart.

**G: His steps do not slip.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, help us understand the height, breadth, and depth of your love for us.

Thank you for sending your Son to die for our sins and giving us a place in heaven with you. Throughout this course, help us see the many ways the Gospel of your forgiveness can be expressed. Use those many ways to help us grow to serve you more.

**All: Amen**

#### Thinking about motivation

1. This course explores the many reasons Scripture gives us to serve the Lord. They all stem from the hope we have because of his gracious forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

However, not all people, including some Christians, do God’s will for the right reasons. Think about the motivations some people have for living according to God’s will. Are they right, wrong, or partially right or wrong?

- John grew up knowing right from wrong. He was told that if he did enough right things, God would be pleased and give him a place in heaven. He knows he can never be perfect, but he was told that if he tries his hardest, God will never reject him. “I’m just doing what my parents told me,” he said.

John has fallen into the common trap of work-righteousness. It’s the natural, human way of thinking. If we do good, we will earn God’s favor and have the hope of heaven.

- “I know what’s right. I just feel better when I do it,” said Laura. “When I don’t, my conscience bothers me, and the feeling won’t go away. When I live according to what I know is right, my day goes so much better.”

All people have God’s law written in their hearts. We have a conscience that tells us when we have gone against that Law and when we are following it. For some people, the reason for doing good goes no further than to keep their conscience from accusing them.

- “When I do things I know I shouldn’t do,” said Jack, “it always catches up with me. I create enemies. My home life can get really rocky. I’m always looking over my shoulder to see who’s watching me. I have to shape up my life. I can’t have this trouble keep coming into my life.”

Some people live morally so that their lives go smoothly. They want to avoid the trouble that selfishness inevitably brings and enjoy the good things that kindness toward others brings.

- “I’m scared of God,” said Sue. “People say he’s good, but I know he’ll punish me someday if I don’t clean up my life. Maybe someday I’ll be able to see him as good. Maybe I’ll even believe he loves me.”

By nature, all people are scared of God. They sense their sin and rightly feel that sin deserves punishment. The natural way to overcome this fear is to deny that God exists or serve him as best they can.

- “I try to be a moral person,” said James. “And I think I am. I try to be kind to others because it’s the right thing to do. I don’t know if there’s a God or not. Regardless, if everybody thought like me, it would be a better world.”

James is not serving God. Rather, he is making himself feel good by thinking that his good actions are helping the world.

- “I heard a preacher on TV last night,” said Anne. “She said that the more I give, the more I’ll get—up to ten times as much. She sounded convincing, so I sent her church \$500 this morning. Now I’ll wait. Good things are on the way; I know it.”

Anne’s service is completely self-centered. She heard that God will bless her financially if she gives money to a church. This appeal is used by many so-called “health and wealth” preachers.

## The Gospel—God’s greatest gift

2. How does each of the following passages describe what God has done for us?

*Genesis 3:15*—

“I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.”

This is the first promise of a Savior, given to us immediately after Adam and Eve sinned. The Savior would destroy Satan and remove the sin and death he brought into the world.

*John 3:16*—

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.”

This famous passage is the basic Gospel message. Faith in Christ and what he did for us is the way to salvation. Apart from him, there is only condemnation.

*Romans 3:19-24*—

“Now we know that whatever the law says is addressed to those who are under the law, so that every mouth will be silenced and the whole world will be subject to God’s judgment. For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law, for through the law we become aware of sin.

“But now, completely apart from the law, a righteousness from God has been made known. The Law and the Prophets testify to it. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe.

“In fact, there is no difference, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

This is a more detailed explanation of the Gospel. The Law cannot save us. It only makes us aware of our sin. Only the righteousness Christ won for us and the redemption price he paid to release us from God’s wrath over sin give us eternal life. Faith in Christ’s righteousness and God’s verdict of not guilty applies those blessings to us.

3. What is God’s agenda in sending his Son for us? In other words, why do we exist as Christians? as Christian congregations? Why is it so important that we line up our agenda with God’s?

God wants to restore us to what we were created to be—his creatures. He wants us to be free from sin and alive in perfect fellowship with him. He wants that relationship to exist now and into eternity.

4. Can you tell the difference between these two statements?

“I want to serve God more, so I’ll use the Gospel to accomplish that.”

“I love the Lord for giving me the Gospel, so I will try to serve him more.”

In the first case, the focus is on serving God. The person intends to “use” the Gospel to accomplish that. In the second case, the focus is on the Gospel. Appreciation for God’s gifts is motivating the person to serve God. This study on Gospel motivation keeps the focus on God’s love in Christ and shows how that blessing leads us to greater service. In short, we cannot “use” the Gospel to achieve our agenda, no matter how noble that agenda is. Rather, as we grow to appreciate the Gospel more and more, we grow in our realization that we cannot but serve our Lord in love.

### **The Gospel—God’s gift for eternity**

The gift of eternal fellowship with God is God’s greatest gift. Right now, we live on earth. But our time here is only a speck, a little dot as you would make with the tip of a sharp pencil. But take that pencil, make a dot, and start drawing a solid line to the right. Keep drawing. Don’t stop. Take your pencil sharpener because you’re going to need it. Take a few packs of pencils too. Keep drawing until your line stretches around the world. Keep going. Circle the globe a few more times. But don’t stop there. In fact, never stop.

That’s what the second part of your life will look like. That’s what God is concerned about. That’s the part of your life that Jesus was focusing on when he died for your sins. Our life seems to be of utmost importance now, but it will have no importance when we die. Then it’s a matter of being forever in Heaven or in Hell. We truly treasure the Gospel only when we see it in that context.

5. Why does the present seem so important to us?

Class members will have various answers. The basic reason is that the present is always right in front of us. We are experiencing its joys and sorrows right now. We see eternity from a distance, and it is easy to lose sight of it.

6. Imagine your first minute in eternity. How important will your present life seem then?

Answers will vary. The main purpose of the question is to get your class to think about the question. All of the earthly things we possessed will mean nothing. Only what Christ did for us, which the Holy Spirit has revealed to us, will matter.

### **For thought**

7. According to Ephesians 3:16-19, what is the only way a believer can grow in his or her understanding of the Gospel?

*Ephesians 3:16-19—*

“I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner self, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then, being rooted and grounded in love, I pray that you would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints, how wide

and long and high and deep his love is, and that you would be able to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.”

Only God's grace can lead us to know “how wide and long and high and deep his love is” (Ephesians 3:18,19). We can do nothing except trust that the Lord will enable us to grow in our understanding of his Law and Gospel so that the Gospel and all its blessings become the greatest thing in our lives.

## **Summary**

There are many reasons to keep God's commandments. But many of them fall short of the reasons Scripture gives us. The Gospel of God's forgiveness in Christ is the biggest thing we have. As recipients of the Gospel, we have many reasons to serve him.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction a**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 2 What Is Gospel Motivation?

“Gospel Motivation,” Preface and Chapter 1, pp. 5-21

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 1:1-6.*

L: How blessed is the man

**G: who does not walk in the advice of the wicked,**

L: who does not stand on the path with sinners,

**G: and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers.**

L: But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD,

**G: and on his teaching he meditates day and night.**

L: He is like a tree planted beside streams of water,

**G: which yields its fruit in season,**

L: and its leaves do not wither.

**G: Everything he does prospers.**

L: Not so the wicked!

**G: No, they are like the chaff which the wind blows away.**

L: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

**G: nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**

L: Yes, the LORD approves of the way of the righteous,

**G: but the way of the wicked will perish.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to accomplish our salvation. You have given us the benefit of his work—the forgiveness of our sin and credit for living a perfect life—simply through faith. When we realize how sinful we are and that you will someday judge us, we know we can appear before you because we are clothed with the robes of Jesus’ perfect life. Today, help us review the heart of the Gospel.

**All: Amen**

#### The Gospel motivates us—two examples from Scripture.

1. What is the Gospel? Read these two sections of Scripture. How do they define the Gospel

*1 John 4:19—*

“We love because he first loved us.”

This verse then tells us that God’s love for us makes us want to love others. God loved us first by giving us a Savior from sin.

*Ephesians 2:4-10—*

“But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He did this so

that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.”

God has made us alive—we who were naturally dead in our sins. Note the other words Paul uses in this verse: grace, saved, seated us in heaven, riches of his grace and kindness in Christ Jesus, through faith, a gift of God. All these words are ways to describe the Gospel.

This verse then links God’s riches in Christ to the works we do for him. We are his “workmanship.” Even before we came to faith, God prepared us to be people who live lives of good works.

## Diagramming Gospel Motivation passages

2. In this study, when the Gospel is followed by (or follows) an encouragement to serve the Lord, we call this a “Gospel/motivation” link.

Throughout this course, we will be using the following pattern to mark the Gospel/motivation links: Gospel passages will be highlighted in bold. What the Gospel motivates us to do will be highlighted in italics.

Feel free to adopt your own pattern, for example, mark the Gospel in parentheses and underline what the Gospel motivates us to do. Or bring two colors of pencil to class and use them to make the distinction.

We will be focusing on how the Gospel motivates us to serve the Lord. However, Gospel statements are sometimes accompanied by Law statements, namely, what we were like before we became Christians or what will happen if we fall away. You may want to mark those law statements in a third way.

In the previous section, we read a brief passage from 1 John 4: “We love because he first loved us.” We can easily diagram it like this: “*We love* **because he first loved us.**”

John tells us what to do, namely, to love. We marked that sentence in italics.

The next phrase is the Gospel, which tells us why we can do that. God loved us first. So we marked that in bold.

3. Do the same with these two lengthier passages.

Throughout this course, the passage in the student’s guide is repeated in the leader’s guide (with the bold and italic markings) in the same format as in the student’s guide. This makes it easier for the leader to help the class see the Gospel/motivation links. However, the passage with the markings is only in the leader’s guide and does not appear in the students’ lessons.

*1 John 3:1-3—*

See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! The world does not know us, because it did not know him. Dear friends, we are children of God now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he is revealed, we will

be like him, and we will see him as he really is. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as Jesus is pure.

We suggest the following:

**See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! The world does not know us, because it did not know him. Dear friends, we are children of God now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he is revealed, we will be like him, and we will see him as he really is.** *Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as Jesus is pure.*

The lengthy first part of the verse tells us what God has done for us. We are children of God, taken out of this world, destined for eternal glory. We will be like Christ and enabled to see him in his present glory in heaven. Therefore, with this hope, we strive to live in the same purity that Jesus has.

This example illustrates the fact that the Gospel and what it motivates us to do are not always of equal length.

*Titus 3:3-8—*

For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, he saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy. And I want you to insist on these things, so that those who believe in God are intent on keeping busy with good works.

We suggest the following:

For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another. **But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, he saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life.** *This saying is trustworthy. And I want you to insist on these things, so that those who believe in God are intent on keeping busy with good works.*

The first sentence of the verse is law. It tells us what we were like before we came to faith. So we didn't highlight the verse. But as noted above, class members can mark the law phrases if they wish.

This example illustrates that not every part of the verse need be highlighted. Some parts are neither Gospel nor acts of service. So we didn't highlight them. We highlighted only the Gospel statement and the instruction Paul gave us on what the Gospel leads us to do.

Note, throughout this course, class members will mark more or less than is marked in the leader's guide. Don't worry about that. The main thing is that class members find the Gospel and then find

what the Gospel motivates them to do. As long as they find the Gospel/motivation link, they are doing fine.

## Practice

4. Use the following passages to practice. Find as many Gospel/motivation links as you can.

Note again: Don't insist that everyone match the suggestion that comes after the verse. The most important thing is that class members see the connection between the Gospel and the encouragement to live lives as people who know the Gospel.

*Ephesians 4:32–5:2—*

Get rid of every kind of bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and slander, along with every kind of malice. Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us.

We suggest the following:

*Get rid of every kind of bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and slander, along with every kind of malice. Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, **just as God in Christ has forgiven us.***

*2 Peter 1:5-9—*

And, for this very reason, after applying every effort, add moral excellence to your faith. To moral excellence, add knowledge. To knowledge, add self-control. To self-control, add patient endurance. To patient endurance, add godliness. To godliness, add brotherly affection. And to brotherly affection, add love. For if you have these qualities and they are increasing, they are going to keep you from being idle or unfruitful in regard to your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the person who lacks these qualities is shortsighted and, in fact, blind, because he has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

We suggest the following:

*And, for this very reason, after applying every effort, add moral excellence to your faith. To moral excellence, add knowledge. To knowledge, add self-control. To self-control, add patient endurance. To patient endurance, add godliness. To godliness, add brotherly affection. And to brotherly affection, add love. For if you have these qualities and they are increasing, they are going to keep you from being idle or unfruitful **in regard to your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Indeed, the person who lacks these qualities is shortsighted and, in fact, blind, **because he has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.***

5. Share one Gospel/motivation pair that expressed the Gospel in a way you found striking.

Answers will vary. This question is meant to help the class move beyond the common statement: "I serve God because he loves me," or "I serve God because he has forgiven me."

## For thought

6. Comment on the following statement: “In the fullest sense, holiness of living flows from the Gospel only when the Gospel is the center of our thinking and valued more highly than the holiness of life that flows from it.”

None of the above passages focus on making our lives better by living a more moral life and using the Gospel as our motivation to do so. Rather, the focus is on what God has done for us in Christ as our greatest gift and striving to live as those whom God has richly blessed. If we merely “use” the Gospel and the motivation it provides make our lives better, we don’t yet understand the Gospel as we should. But once we realize our sins and how gracious God was to send his Son to suffer and die in our place, then our service to God is done in thanks to him, not because we are looking for the blessings of a moral life.

This becomes more and more clear as we grow in the spirit of repentance and faith.

## **Summary**

The Gospel is the good news that God forgave the sins of the entire world in Christ. He had led us to believe that we are forgiven, and to find our hope of eternal life in that fact. Jesus’ forgiveness is our greatest treasure and the reason why we want to serve God. In many unique ways, the Scripture describes the gifts God has given us in Christ and urges us to serve him because of those gifts.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 3 The Gospel of Death and Life

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 2, pp. 23-32

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 9:11-14*

L: Make music for the LORD, who is seated in Zion.

**G: Proclaim his deeds among the peoples.**

L: Yes, he who avenges bloodshed remembers them.

**G: He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.**

L: Have mercy on me, O LORD.

**G: See my afflictions that are caused by those who hate me,**

L: and raise me up from the gates of death, so that I may declare all your praise.

**G: In the gates of the Daughter of Zion I will rejoice in your salvation.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, help us focus on your Son’s death and resurrection. Help us think about what they mean for us, namely that by dying for us, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, and by rising again, he proved that he was successful. Today, through the words of St. Paul, help us dig deeper into these two foundational truths of our faith. May the truths we learn motivate us to live for you.

**All: Amen**

#### Motivated by the Gospel of Death and Life—Romans 6:1-14

1. In the first two sections of Romans (Romans 1:18–3:20 and Romans 3:21–5:21), Paul tells about God’s wrath on sin, and about the righteousness he gave us in Christ.

In the third part of Romans, which begins at chapter 6:1, Paul tells us how to view our lives now that we know the Gospel. He does this from three standpoints. The first is the Gospel of death and life (Romans 6:1-14).

*Read Romans 6:1-11—*

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Shall we keep on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> **Absolutely not! We died to sin. How can we go on living in it any longer?** <sup>3</sup> **Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** <sup>4</sup> **We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life.**

Consider the last phrase of this paragraph. The EHV translates “we too would also walk in newness of life.” The original Greek reads “so that. . . we too might walk in newness of life.” Here the phrase “in newness of life” is not talking about living a new life in service to God. Rather, the phrase refers to the new life that we already have in Christ, the life we have because we are united with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection. In this life we are free from sin. In other

words, this is the Gospel, not what the Gospel motivates us to do. That will start in verse 12 below.

**<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.**

**<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him, to make our sinful body powerless, so that we would not continue to serve sin.** <sup>7</sup> For the person who has died has been declared free from sin. <sup>8</sup> And since we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he will never die again. Death no longer has control over him. <sup>10</sup> **For the death he died, he died to sin once and for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.** <sup>11</sup> **In the same way also consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Note: The resurrection Paul speaks of in verse 5 refers to the new life we live right now in Christ. It is the “newness of life” referred to above in verse 4 and being “alive to God in Christ Jesus” referred to in this verse, verse 11.

Use the following questions to explore the Gospel of death and life as Paul explains it in the above verses.

- Some were saying, “If God is gracious to sinners, then it makes sense that the more we sin the more gracious God can be, right?” How does Paul answer that question?

He first says, “Absolutely not!” Then he says that in Christ we died to sin.

- Throughout this section Paul explains how Christians have died along with Christ. When did this happen?

It happened for all people when Christ died on the cross. Our sins were placed on him, and his death was the penalty that all people deserve for their sins.

If you wish, point out John 12:31,32. where Jesus says that on the cross Jesus suffered death for *all people*: “Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” Here Jesus is saying the same as he says in verse 9 above: “he died to sin *once and for all*.”

At our baptism, the blessing Jesus won for all people on the cross was personally applied to us.

- Dying with Christ and being dead to the guilt of sin is followed by something else? What is that?

Christ died, but he also rose again. Since we died with Christ, we have also risen with him.

- How does Paul describe Jesus’ new life at the end of verse 10? After you answer that, look at the next verse. How does Paul describe your new life as those who have risen with Christ?

Paul says that the life Christ lives, he lives for God. Of course, Jesus served God throughout his entire life. But now he is not bearing our sin. He is free from that sin and is now serving God in his new and glorious body.

We too have been freed from sin (and someday we, too, will share Christ’s glory). Yet even now, like Christ, we are alive to God, ready and able to serve him with a new spirit.

*Read Romans 6: 12-14—*

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer the members of your body to sin as tools of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God **as those who are alive from the dead**, and offer the members of your body to God as tools of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> **Indeed, sin will not continue to control you, because you are not under law but under grace.**

- In verses 1-11, we heard the good news: In Christ we died to our sins because they were laid on him. And in Christ, we have risen, free from sin, ready and able to serve God. Because of this, what does Paul encourage us to do in verses 12,13?

He encourages us to give up using our bodies as tools of unrighteous, sinful actions. He encourages us to use our bodies to serve God as those who are alive, enjoying God's gracious forgiveness in Christ.

- Paul says that sin does not control us any longer (verse 14). Why is that true?

The reason is this: We are no longer under law but under grace.

In a future lesson, we will come back to this truth where we explore what it means to serve God "in the new way of the Spirit." In that lesson we will use examples to help the class better understand this truth.

## **Other New Testament passages that teach the Gospel of Death and Life**

2. Read the following passages and diagram the Gospel/motivation pair found in each.

Reminder: Let the class search for the Gospel/motivation links without being too insistent that they match the suggestions below. The important thing is that the class members get into the habit of looking for the pairs as they read Scripture. Let your discussion be geared to that end. Of course, if the class is not "getting it," be a little bit more directed in your discussion and help the class understand why the author of the study highlighted the passage as he did.

*Galatians 2:20—*

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

We suggest the following:

<sup>20</sup> **I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.** *The life I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

*Colossians 3:1-5—*

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> So put to death whatever is worldly in you: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

We suggest the following:

<sup>1</sup> **Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.** <sup>2</sup> *Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.* <sup>3</sup> **For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** <sup>4</sup> **When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.** <sup>5</sup> *So put to death whatever is worldly in you: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.*

2 Corinthians 5:14,15—

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ *compels us*, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, so that those who live *would no longer live for themselves* but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.

We suggest the following:

<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ *compels us*, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died.** <sup>15</sup> **And he died for all, so that those who live *would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.***

## For thought

3. We often say—and rightly so—that in baptism our sins were washed away. Based on the Romans passage we read above (Romans 6:1-14), what can we also say happened to us when we were baptized?

Have the class focus on Romans 6:3,4 above: “We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life.” In baptism we joined Christ in his death for sin, and in baptism we were also given a new, sin-free life. In other words, through baptism we began to take part in the “Gospel of Death and Life.”

## Summary

Death hardly seems a good word to describe the Gospel. But Paul used it that way. When Christ died, we died. That is, when Christ died for the sins of the world—for the sins of all people—it’s as if we with all our sins died with him.

And when Christ rose to live a new life, free from our sins, we rose to a new life founded on God’s grace and forgiveness, not on the demands of the Law. Now we ought to, and can, serve God willingly.

## Close with a prayer or the Benediction

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 4 The Gospel of Slavery to Righteousness

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 3, pp. 33-42

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 11:4-7*

L: The LORD is in his holy temple.

**G: The LORD is on his throne in heaven.**

L: His eyes observe.

**G: He focuses on the children of Adam.**

L: The LORD is righteous. He examines the wicked.

**G: He really hates those who love violence.**

L: On the wicked he will rain down fiery coals and sulfur.

**G: A scorching wind will be the cup given to them.**

L: Indeed, the LORD is righteous. He loves righteousness.

**G: The upright will view his face.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, we confess our sins. We know that apart from you, we would have remained slaves to sin and unrighteousness for time and eternity. Thank you for rescuing us from that existence. Today, give us your Holy Spirit to teach us about a new and wonderful slavery in which we exist and a new master who directs our lives.

**All: Amen**

#### Motivated by the Gospel of Slavery to Righteousness

1. The next section of Romans is closely connected to the section we looked at in our last lesson. But instead of “death” vs. “life,” it speaks about “slavery to sin” vs. “slavery to righteousness.”

*Read Romans 6:15-23—*

<sup>15</sup> What then? Should we continue to sin, because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that when you offer yourselves to obey someone as slaves, you are slaves of the one you are obeying—whether slaves of sin, resulting in death, or slaves of obedience, resulting in righteousness?

<sup>17</sup> **Thanks be to God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to the pattern of the teaching into which you were placed.** <sup>18</sup> **After you were set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** <sup>19</sup>(I am speaking in a human way because of the weakness of your flesh.) Indeed, just as you offered your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, resulting in more lawlessness, *so now offer your members in the same way as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. <sup>21</sup> So what kind of fruit did you have then? They were things of which you are now ashamed. Yes, the final result of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> **But now, since you were set free from sin and have become slaves to God, you have your fruit resulting in sanctification—and the final result is eternal life.** <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, **but the undeserved gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

If the class is also marking the phrases that remind us of what we were without Christ, or what will happen to us if we die without him, they will find some in this verse.

Use the following questions to explore the Gospel of slavery to righteousness.

- Paul began the previous section on the Gospel of death and life (6:1ff) by asking a question: If God’s gracious forgiveness increases the more I sin, then sinning is good, right? Can you spot a similar question at the beginning of this section?

At the beginning of the present section, Paul asks the question again: Is it okay to sin since we are no longer under the condemnation of the Law? To put it another way: Is it okay to sin because God is gracious and merciful to us in Christ? Paul again answers, “Absolutely not!”

- What do you think Paul means by “the pattern of the teaching into which you were placed,” that is, the teaching that God led us to believe?

Paul is referring to the teaching that Christ died for the sins of the world. Paul wrote in the Galatians: “God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law” (4:4,5). By becoming a human being, Jesus made himself liable to the Law like all other human beings are. But unlike all other human beings, he kept all God’s commandments. He was perfectly “righteous” in everything he said and did. This righteousness covers the sins of the world. That is the Gospel message, and he wants everyone to believe it. And that is what we have done!

- What did this “pattern of teaching” do to our relationship to the Law?

We were slaves to the Law, which told us to obey it under the pain of suffering and death. Our sinful nature could not handle that demand, and we found ourselves being stirred up to sin even more than we had been. But having Christ’s righteousness, that is, having Jesus’ fulfillment of the Law credited to us, when the Law makes demands on us, we can tell it to leave us alone because we have already fulfilled all its demands.

- How did this “pattern of teaching” make us slaves to righteousness?

Christ gave the world the gift of his own obedience to the Law. We now possess his righteousness. His righteousness defines our life. It determines how we should live and enables us to live that way. The Law makes demands, and those demands make us its slaves. Christ’s righteousness, given to us as a gift, also makes us slaves. But now we are slaves who willingly pattern our lives after the righteousness he has given us.

- How would our lives have ended if we had remained slaves to sin?

We would have died in our sins.

- How will our lives end now that we are slaves to righteousness?

We will live forever in heaven.

## Slavery to Righteousness versus Slavery to the Law

7. React to the following scenario: Jason is thinking about this passage. He keeps concluding that slavery to the Law and slavery to righteousness mean about the same thing. The Law says, “You have to keep me or you will die.” Righteousness says, “You have to keep me, and you will live.” He concludes, “It seems that both are telling me to be a good person, which is what I have a hard time doing.”

Help Jason sort this out. Describe the difference between the two kinds of service Paul speaks about.

Being a slave to the commands of the Law and being a slave to righteousness must be viewed in two different ways. Slavery to the Law means being a slave to the Law’s demands. There is no hope in that slavery because we cannot fulfill those commands. We cannot earn eternal life in this way. Not only can’t we keep the Law, but the Law’s demands hit our sinful nature like gasoline hits a campfire. It makes it flare up and become more violent than before.

If we think about slavery to righteousness in the same way, we are missing the point. Being a slave to righteousness is hearing, “You are forgiven. The Law and its demands have been fulfilled. The Law has nothing to say to you. You are righteous in me. Righteousness is my free gift to you. Don’t worry about the Law. You’re a slave to my gift. I’ve made you a happy slave, a slave always at peace, always with hope. The righteousness I’ve given you cannot help but shape the way you live.”

In this section, Paul is, in fact, talking about serving God by obeying his will. But slavery to the Law means to serve God because of his demands. Slavery to righteousness means to serve God because of his gift of perfect righteousness in Christ. Slavery to the Law means serving God because you have to. Slavery to righteousness means serving God because you want to. If you look at both kinds of slavery with a feeling of compulsion, you are missing the point. Slavery to the Law generates that feeling—you have to keep it or else. Slavery to righteousness creates a feeling of willingness—even though I don’t have to, I want to keep the Law because I love the Lord and want to please him.

## Practice

8. In the above section, Paul said that his explanation of the two kinds of slavery was stated “in human terms” to help the Romans understand what he was telling them. He doesn’t use this picture elsewhere in his writings. For this reason, we’ll continue spotting Gospel/motivation pairs using other pictures found in Scripture.

*1 Corinthians 5:6-8—*

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Purge out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, just as you are unleavened. For our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, namely, Christ! So let us keep celebrating the festival, not with old yeast, not with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

We suggest the following:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? *Purge out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, just as you are unleavened. For our*

**Passover lamb has been sacrificed, namely, Christ!** *So let us keep celebrating the festival, not with old yeast, not with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

*John 15:5—*

I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.

We suggest the following:

**I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit,** because without me you can do nothing.

*Titus 2:11-15—*

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are his own chosen people, eager to do good works.

We suggest the following:

**For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are his own chosen people, eager to do good works.**

## For thought

9. We are either slaves to the Law or slaves to Christ. Why can a person never be in a state of neutrality regarding these two options?

When we think about the Law, we often feel that sense of compulsion. The Law hangs over us. We think, "If I'm really a Christian, I gotta keep it!" That feeling is natural, but it comes from our sinful nature (which knows nothing about the Gospel). Only in Christ, in possession of his gift of righteousness, can we feel good when we hear the Law because we want to learn what pleases God.

These are the only two states we can be in, and we must be in one state or the other. If a person is not a slave to Christ's righteousness that person is an unbeliever. But if a person believes in Christ's work for them, that person is free from the Law and is clothed in Christ's righteousness.

Now that we have come to faith, we are completely slaves to Christ's righteousness, even though our sinful nature is always trying to pull us in the other direction. That feeling of being pulled to be a slave to the Law does not mean we are not slaves to Christ's righteousness. That is how all believers in Christ can define themselves.

## **Summary**

Christ's work has made us righteous in God's eyes. It has rescued us from slavery to sin. We are children of God. Righteousness is now our master. It is the theme of our lives. It makes us eager to serve God by following his will.

If we are slaves to the Law and sin, our result will be eternal death in Hell. But if we serve God as slaves to righteousness, our end will be eternal life with God. Heaven is the "final result" (literally the "end") of our life of being a slave to righteousness, not in the sense that we've earned heaven, but in the sense that that's how the life of a slave to righteousness will end.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 5 The Gospel of True Spirituality

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 4, pp. 43-53

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 50:1-5*

L: LORD, who may be a guest in your tent?

**G: Who may dwell on your holy mountain?**

L: One who walks with integrity,

**G: who does what is righteous, and who speaks the truth in his heart.**

L: He has no slander on his tongue.

**G: He does not harm his friend, and he does not defame his neighbor.**

L: He despises everyone whom God rejects,

**G: but he honors those who fear the LORD.**

L: When he promises something,

**G: he does not break his word even though it costs him a lot.**

L: He does not lend his money to get interest,

**G: and he does not accept a bribe against the innocent.**

**All: One who does these things will never be toppled.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, many people realize that the material possessions of this world do not give them true fulfillment. They know there is something more, something in the spiritual dimension. So they search for it. But they end up in a world of errors and false truths, always trying to convince themselves that they have found the truth. We know that such truth can only be found in Scripture. Guide us by your Word to the only truth that can truly fulfill us.

**All: Amen**

#### The Gospel of Death to the Law

1. Continue reading about the freedom we have to serve God.

*Romans 7:1-6—*

<sup>1</sup> Or don’t you know, brothers (since I am speaking to those who know the law), that a law has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, a married woman is bound to her husband by law as long as he is alive, but if he dies, she is released from this law regarding her husband. <sup>3</sup> So then, she will be labeled an adulteress if she is joined to another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from this law, and she is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup> In the same way, my brothers, **you also were put to death in regard to the law by the body of Christ**, so that you may be joined to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, *in order that*

*we might produce fruit for God.* <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, strong sinful desires stirred up by the law were at work in our members, with the result that we produced fruit that results in death. <sup>6</sup> **But now we have been released from the law by dying to what held us in its grip, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the letter of the law.**

Use the following questions to explore the Gospel of slavery to righteousness.

- If a wife loses a husband in death, does she still have to keep the law of marriage?

No.

- If Christians are freed from the Ten Commandments because they have died with Christ, do they still have to keep the Ten Commandments?

The answer is no. Paul says we were “put to death in regard to the Law by the body of Christ,” and “we have been released from the law.” A wife whose husband died is free from the law of marriage, which binds her to her husband only as long as the two are both alive. In the same way, Christians who have died with Christ are freed from having to keep God’s laws.

A Christian might object. “But the Commandments are God’s will! We have to keep them.” So is the law of marriage. Death frees the living spouse from that law. Only if we understand that will we be able to have true spirituality.

## True Spirituality

3. Look again at the reading above. What are the two ways a person can serve God?

The “way of the Spirit” and the “way of the letter of the law.”

The next questions contain illustrations to help the class get to the heart of the difference between these two ways.

4. Read the following illustration. As you read it, try to get a feel for the difference between the two phrases we talked about in the last question, “way of the Spirit,” and “way of the letter of the law.” (In a previous lesson we heard Paul use a similar pair of expressions, namely, living under the Law and living under grace [Romans 6:14].)

Imagine you are working as a secretary at a company. This company has a very thick handbook. You are accountable for literally thousands of rules and regulations. Imagine that at every staff meeting, your boss hauls out the handbook and reads some sections. During the week he issues a stream of memos about this or that regulation. At every opportunity he drops hints that the company will be cutting back on staff, and the main criteria for choosing who goes and who stays is compliance with the rules and regulations of the handbook. Workers are urged to report fellow workers who commit infractions. When he finds someone not following the rules in the handbook, he hauls him or her into his office and gives a lecture.

Now imagine another company. Your boss is one of the kindest people you know. Staff meetings are times of encouragement. Workers are urged to support their fellow workers. They know they won’t be laid off. Work performance is judged in a spirit of love and respect. In this company the handbook is

equally large, but it is kept in the company library for reference should someone need it. Surprisingly, you will often see employees in the library poring over the handbook because they have a question about policy and want to please their boss.

Describe the two ways of serving that come from the two different places of working.

Let the class try to identify the difference. You don't need to answer the question completely because there will be another similar question below.

Employees in the first company are driven by fear. There is no possible way they could follow the rules and regulations of the handbook. Failure to perform dominates the workplace. Those who come closer to keeping the rules become proud and judgmental of others who are less successful. Those who have a hard time doing so cower in fear.

Employees in the second company enjoy an environment with a caring boss and supportive fellow workers. They are "free from the handbook," and live in an environment of love and care. Those employees seek out the handbook when they are confused about what they should do. \

5. Consider a second example.

Mother bakes cookies on a regular basis and keeps the cookie jar filled to the top. Occasionally, she dispenses a cookie or two to one of her children. Imagine that you are a little boy or girl, one of the family members, who passes that cookie jar every day. You take the cookie jar for granted, knowing that when your mother wants to, she will give you a cookie. You are quite content with the situation and don't think much about it.

Now imagine that you come down to the kitchen one day, and there, above the cookie jar, is a big sign that reads:

DO NOT TAKE ANY COOKIES.

DO NOT TAKE EVEN ONE COOKIE.

DO NOT TOUCH THE COOKIES.

IF YOU DO, I WILL FIND YOU AND PUNISH YOU.

DO NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT TAKING A COOKIE

I AM YOUR MOTHER, AND I CAN READ MINDS.

I WILL PUNISH YOU IF YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT TAKING A COOKIE.

LOVE, MOM

Now the dynamic changes. You may not have even thought of taking a cookie, but now your mind is consumed with the thought. Maybe I won't get caught, you think, after all, I can just rearrange the cookies and make the jar look as full as it was before. But then you think of Mom's last command, don't even think about it. You know you are "dead meat" because that's what you just did.

The day wears on. That's all you think about, taking a cookie. You picture the sign that says not to take one. Maybe it's for my own good, you think. That helps for a while, but you find yourself still thinking

about taking one. I will just have to force myself not to think about those cookies, you say to yourself. You blot the thought out of your mind for a while, but all of a sudden it rushes back into your consciousness. “Why did Mom do that?” you think. “Boy, is she mean! I don’t even want to see her tonight.”

Later that afternoon, you get off the bus and slowly walk into the house. Mom is not around. You’re going to take a cookie. You don’t even think about how she might punish you if she finds out. You don’t even think about the taste of the cookie. You just want one. Why? Because Mom said you couldn’t have one. It sounds illogical. You can’t explain your feelings. But you can’t deny them either. So you sneak in the back door, take a quick look to see if Mom is in the kitchen. She’s not there. You turn your eyes to the cookie jar and the sign.

But look! Mom tore down the sign. Just a couple of torn scraps of paper stuck to the cupboard door. The cookie jar looked like it used to look, a nice place where Mom stored cookies. Mom walks in. “Oh,” she says, “I took down that sign. You can have a cookie whenever you want, but be a good boy and don’t eat too many.” You happily grab a cookie and go off to do your homework. Now the situation has changed. No fear, no punishment, no sin, no anger at Mom. The intense desire to steal a cookie is gone. Mom’s love is on your mind. So are her instructions.

Use this example to define true spirituality.

Before we came to faith, we were consumed with the desire to disobey God. That’s because we have a sinful nature. It was a fire smoldering in our hearts. God’s laws were like gas thrown on the smoldering fire. But when we came to faith, we died with Christ, and we died “to what once bound us,” namely, God’s law. It plays no role in our ability to serve God by keeping his laws, because all it can do is make our sinful nature spring into action.

Christ kept the demands of the Law so that the Law no longer applies to us. Paul wrote, “Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). And for this reason, “sin shall not be your master [the thing that “controls” you] because you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14 NIV 84).

Sad to say, this is a radical concept to many Christians. To many church members, Christianity means exactly the opposite. It means becoming more in touch with God’s laws, or perhaps getting some supernatural help to keep them. But this is the opposite of what Paul says in the reading above. We are dead to the Law. That fact alone quiets our sinful nature, because when the fuel is gone, the fire goes out.

The Spirit, who has led us to know that we are dead to the Law, is living within us. He does not demand that we keep the Law. Rather, he reminds us that Christ has kept the Law for us. For this reason, we find ourselves serving our Lord, which we could never do before. In Paul’s terms, we are filled with the fruit of the Spirit.

This is reflected by the office worker who is not under the threat of a boss who demands that she keep the company rules, or the boy whose mother removed the threatening sign.

6. Sometimes church leaders clearly present the Gospel message of God’s forgiveness in Christ. But after they have done that, they list laws children of God should keep. This can leave the congregation wondering about the Law in their lives.

Imagine a pastor concluding his sermon on Sunday by saying, “Now remember, you don’t have to keep God’s laws. Christ kept them for you. Amen.” What would you think as you left church that morning?

Hopefully, you would feel great. You would look up to God and say, “Thank you. What a burden you’ve lifted off of me.” That is freedom. That is true Gospel motivation and true spirituality. When Christ died for our sins on a cross and rose again to live for God, we were there with him. When Christ fulfilled the Law, we fulfilled it too. These truths give us power to refrain from the sins we are daily tempted to commit. In fact, only knowing that we are alive to God and dead to the demands of the Law, are we free to serve God.

These truths enable us to say, “Thank you, Lord. What a burden you’ve lifted off me. What do you want me to do now? Help me to be holy in the way I live.”

Note: When thinking about the Old Testament laws and what role they play in our lives, we hear this explanation: The Law was made up three parts: worship laws (ceremonial laws), laws for ordering one’s daily life (civil laws), and the expression of God’s timeless will, (the moral laws, that is, the Ten Commandments). It is explained that the first two parts of the Old Testament Law were intended for the Old Testament Israelites. However, the moral law still applies to us.

This is true in a sense. The Old Testament ceremonial and civil laws were temporary, meant only for the Israelites during the time before Christ was born. But the moral law expresses God’s will for all people of all time.

But we must be careful to understand that correctly. In the sense that Paul speaks about the Law in Romans 7:1-6, none of the laws apply to us; Christ kept them all. (Consider the fact that the law of marriage, which Paul uses here, is part of the moral law.) When we died with Christ, we were dead to the demands of the whole Law. Our service to God flows from the willingness generated by that freedom, and only people who have that freedom can serve the Lord.

## For thought

7. How do Christians grow spiritually?

Recall what makes us spiritual. We have come to know that Christ has brought us from death to life, from being slaves to sin and death to being slaves to his gift of righteousness, and no longer liable for keeping the Law. For this reason, we serve God in the new way of the Spirit, using God’s law as a guide. This is true spirituality.

We grow spiritually in the same way we received the Spirit of freedom in the first place. It is by growing in our realization that Christ freed us from sin, death, and the Law—the truths Paul speaks about in Romans 6–8. The more we try to improve our lives by focusing on God’s law, the more our sinful nature will find ways to sin. But the more we focus on the freedoms we have in Christ’s obedience to the Law in our place, the more we will serve God in the new way of the Spirit—freely, willingly, and with no other motive than to please God, who has made us free.

## **Summary**

Trying to keep God's law to be sure of his blessings—his favor, his blessings on this life, and his blessing of eternal life—is fruitless. When the Law comes to bear on us, our sinful nature is incited to sin. At best, we can only achieve a certain level of outward obedience. But in Christ we have died to the demands of the Law. We are now able to serve God willingly. This is the meaning of true spirituality. It is not something the world can give. Only the Holy Spirit can give it to us by leading us to Christ.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 6 The Gospel of a New Creation

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 5, pp. 55-65

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 11:7-10*

L: All his precepts are trustworthy,

**G: steadfast forever and ever, done in truth and uprightness.**

L: He sent redemption for his people.

**G: He commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.**

L: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

**G: All who do his precepts have good understanding.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, you have made us new creations. As such, we live in your grace and can serve you in the new way of the Spirit. Yet we still struggle to put off sin. Today, help us understand why that is the case. And cause our hope of eternal life to burn brightly as those who are new creations.

**All: Amen**

#### Introduction: Christians struggle with their sinful nature.

1. The following statements summarize Romans 7:7-25. Read those verses and reflect on the statements as you do.

God has made us new creations. We are dead to sin and alive in Christ to live for God. We are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of God’s gift of righteousness. We are dead to the demands of the Law.

If we were only new creations, it would be clear sailing. We would serve God perfectly in the freedom we have in Christ.

But why do we see ourselves struggling with sin? Because we still retain the sinful nature we had before we came to faith, which acts opposite to the new creation God has made us to be. This means a struggle. Paul talks about this struggle in Romans 7:7-25. Because he retained his sinful nature, every time he heard one of God’s laws, his sinful nature sprang into action: “But when [the] commandment came, sin came to life, and I died” (Romans 7:9,10). He assessed his life like this, “I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out” (Romans 7:18).

As a new creation, he willingly served God all the time. But because he had a sinful nature, he couldn’t serve God as he wanted. Paul sums up his existence, “So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind [my new nature], but with my sinful flesh I serve the law of sin” (Romans 7:25).

## The Gospel of a New Creation.

2. Which will win, Paul's new nature or his sinful nature? Paul answers that in Romans 8:1-17. In a marvelous way, he ties together everything he has said about what Christians have become, namely, people made new in Christ, people in whom the Spirit is putting to death the sins of the sinful nature, and people who can be sure they are God's children.

*Read Romans 8:1-4—*

**<sup>1</sup> So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, what the Law was unable to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did, when he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin. God condemned sin in his flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the righteous decree of the law would be fully satisfied in us *who are not walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.***

The Christian, who serves God in the new way of the Spirit, will win over the sinful nature.

- Sadly, because we have a sinful nature, the law of sin and death is still active in our lives. Review the meaning of the two important phrases:

What is the law of the Spirit of life?

The Holy Spirit has created a new spirit in us, making us new creations. We are dead to the Law and to sin. We are alive in Christ. We serve God as those who are righteous in Christ and no longer under the demands of the Law.

What is the law of sin and death?

It is the principle that if the demands of the Law apply to us, the Law will stir up our sinful nature to sin, and the result of that is death.

- In verse three, Paul reminds us that we have been set free from the law of sin and death. How did that happen?

Jesus became a human being and dealt with our sins by condemning sin in his body. He did that by suffering for our sin and guilt and satisfying all the requirements of the Law for us. The Law no longer condemns us. Every time the Law says, "God demands that you do this," we can reply, "I already did that when God's Son did it for me."

- In his letters, Paul often says that Jesus' perfect obedience is credited to *those who believe*. At the end of Romans 8:4, however, Paul says that Jesus' perfect obedience is credited to *those who are living according to the spirit*. Can you explain why both ways of speaking are true?

We are saved through faith in what Jesus did for us. But as those who have faith in Jesus, we do "not walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit."

Scripture often says that God's blessings come to those who are serving him. This is not teaching salvation by works. Christ's righteousness is credited to them not "because" they are serving him, but "as" people in whom the Spirit is living, leading them to faith and prompting them to produce the fruits of faith.

*Read Romans 8:5-17—*

<sup>5</sup>To be sure, those who are in harmony with the sinful flesh think about things the way the sinful flesh does, and those in harmony with the spirit think about things the way the spirit does. <sup>6</sup>Now, the way the sinful flesh thinks results in death, but the way the spirit thinks results in life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mindset of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you. And if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

<sup>11</sup>And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you.

<sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. <sup>13</sup>For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. *But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.*

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, "Abba, Father!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children.

<sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,

- In verse four, we saw that there are two ways a person can live, either according to the flesh (according to the law of sin and death) or according to the spirit (that is, according to the Holy Spirit who led us to Christ and made us new creations). Looking at the above section as a whole (Romans 8:5-17), define what will happen to the person who lives according to the flesh.

The point of this question is to help the class realize what it means to live according to each of the two. Below are some words and phrases that describe those who live according to the flesh (the sinful nature). Ask the class to explore the section above and write down the references where each description is found. An alternate way of approaching this is to take the phrases out of the student's guide and have the class find as many as they can.,

They are hostile toward God.

They refuse to keep God's law.

They are unable to keep God's law.

They are unable to do anything that pleases God.

They do not belong to Christ.

Their end is eternal death.

They are slaves, afraid of God's anger and eternal death.

- Define what will happen to the person who lives according to the spirit of life.

Here are some words and phrases that describe the person who lives according to the spirit (living as a new creation in Christ). Do the same with these words as you did with the previous ones.

They have life and peace.

They have the Spirit of Christ living in them and they belong to Christ.

They are because of Christ's righteousness.

Their mortal body will come to life along with their spirit.

Their end is eternal life.

They know they are children of God

They are heirs of eternal glory along with our brother, Christ

3. What should this tremendous contrast motivate you and every believer to do?

It should motivate us to live as people who are dead to sin and alive to God.

## Practice

4. Use the following verses to learn more about our lives a new creations.

*2 Corinthians 5:15-17—*

<sup>15</sup> He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again. <sup>16</sup> As a result, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him that way. <sup>17</sup> So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come!

We suggest the following:

<sup>15</sup> **He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.** <sup>16</sup> As a result, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him that way. <sup>17</sup> **So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come!**

This verse may need an explanation. Before Paul came to faith, he had no understanding of a new creation and what it meant to be alive in service to God. He thought his way of serving God—the old way of the Law—was the right way.

When he looked at Jesus, he saw delusion and lies. He saw the same when he looked at Jesus' followers. So he persecuted them.

But when he came to faith, he realized that Jesus was living in service to his Father, and that his followers had become new creatures in him. Now we analyzed both Christ and his followers in that light.

*Galatians 6:14,15—*

<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> In fact, in Christ Jesus circumcision or uncircumcision does not matter. What matters is being a new creation.

We suggest the following:

*<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, **through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.** <sup>15</sup> In fact, in Christ Jesus circumcision or uncircumcision does not matter. **What matters is being a new creation.***

*Colossians 3:9,10—*

<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other since you have put off the old self with its practices, <sup>10</sup> and put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.

We suggest the following:

*<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to each other **since you have put off the old self with its practices,** <sup>10</sup> and put on the new self, **which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.***

## For thought

5. John says, “I’ve always wanted to live a more moral life. But for the first time, Romans 6-8 has enabled me to do that. Most importantly, now I know the reason why I should want to live that way.” What might John have in mind when he thinks about why he should live according to God’s will?

He has died with Christ and is alive, free from the guilt of his sin. He is no longer under the requirements of the Law. He serves God in a newfound freedom. (Use as a little review)

## Summary

Even as believers, we have a sinful nature. Our sinful nature leads us to do things we don’t want to do. But God has made us new creations by giving us his Spirit. We are not condemned for our sins because Christ suffered for us in our place. And he fulfilled the Law we could not fulfill.

What great blessings we have! We have an obligation to do what the Spirit wants us to do, an obligation we willingly accept.

## Close with a prayer or the Benediction

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 7 The Gospel of How God Views New Creations

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 7, pp. 67-89

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 25:8-14:*

L: Good and upright is the LORD.

**G: Therefore, he instructs sinners in the right way.**

L: He directs the humble to what is just,

**G: and he teaches the humble his way.**

L: All the ways of the LORD are mercy and truth

**G: for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

L: For the sake of your name, O LORD,

**G: you forgive my guilt, although it is great.**

L: Who, then, is the man who fears the LORD?

**G: The LORD will instruct him in the way he chooses.**

L: That man will enjoy a good life,

**G: and his descendants will possess the land.**

L: The guidance of the LORD is with those who fear him.

**G: His covenant will give them knowledge.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son, who fulfilled your Law in our place so that we can serve you in the new way of the Spirit, in willing, never forced service. You have earned eternal life for us. You have earned for us adoption into your family and all the blessings of being part of your household. Today, help us see ourselves as you see us, as people made new in Christ. Help us find joy in the good news that as new creations, you will bless us.

**All: Amen**

#### Scripture sometimes links God’s blessings to what we do

We do not earn God’s blessings *by what we do*. Nor are we saved *because* we are serving the Lord. Everything we receive from God comes because Christ has given us freedom from sin and the Law.

What Scripture does say, however, is that *as* those who are serving God, we are going to receive his many blessings. The following set of passages doesn’t strictly fall into the category of Gospel motivation passages. But they do, in fact, motivate us because of the blessings they attach to the good works we do.

1. Read the following two passages. Note the word “if.” Does it sound as if God’s forgiveness is conditional?

*Matthew 6:14,15—*

<sup>14</sup> **Indeed if you forgive people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

*Mark 11:25,26—*

<sup>25</sup> Whenever you stand praying, *if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.* <sup>26</sup> But if you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.”

Answers will vary.

2. Now read Matthew 18:23-25. What light does this parable shine on the word “if” in the two passages above?

*Matthew 18:23-35—*

<sup>23</sup> The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle them, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Because the man was not able to pay the debt, his master ordered that he be sold, along with his wife, children, and all that he owned to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> Then the servant fell down on his knees in front of him, saying, ‘Master, be patient with me, and I will pay you everything!’ <sup>27</sup> The master of that servant had pity on him, released him, and forgave him the debt.

<sup>28</sup> But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began choking him, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and begged him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!’ <sup>30</sup> But he refused. Instead he went off and threw the man into prison until he could pay back what he owed.

<sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were very distressed. They went and reported to their master everything that had taken place.

<sup>32</sup> Then his master called him in and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt when you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> His master was angry and handed him over to the jailers until he could pay back everything he owed.

<sup>35</sup> This is what my heavenly Father will also do to you unless each one of you forgives his brother from his heart.”

The king forgave the first servant because he had mercy on him. The servant refused to forgive his fellow servant because he had no mercy. In effect, he was rejecting the mercy the king had shown him.

The same is true for us. If we forgive others, it is clear that we understand mercy, namely, God’s mercy to us. If we don’t forgive others, it is clear that we have forgotten God’s mercy on us.

3. Read the following petition from the Lord's Prayer. Here Jesus does not use the word "if." What word does he use? How does this word help us understand the word "if" in the two passages we started with?

*Matthew 6:12—*

<sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

Instead of "if," Jesus uses "as." The two passages in question 1 (Mark 11:25,26 and Matthew 6:14,15) are warnings, as is the parable in question 2 (Matthew 18:23-35).

In the Lord's Prayer, however, Jesus is assuming that since we are praying this prayer, we are believers who continually forgive those who sin against us, hence the word "as."

4. The word "if" is used twice in Romans 8:13. It is easy to understand the first "if." *If* a person serves their sinful nature, he or she will die.

But how should we understand the second "if?" *If* we give up sinning, we will live?

*Romans 8:13—*

<sup>13</sup>For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if **by the Spirit** you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

The first half says that sin leads to death. The second part says that putting sin to death leads to life.

Notice the difference. Paul is not saying we will live "if" we put to death the misdeeds of the body, but that we will live "if by the Spirit" we put to death the misdeeds of the body.

Our sinful nature is the source of sin, and that leads to death. But living by the Spirit is possible only because we have come to faith in Christ's salvation. Through baptism we have died to sin and are alive for service to God. We are slaves to righteousness because we have Christ's gift of righteousness. We are dead to the requirements of the Law, and for that reason we serve God free from fear of punishment. And with those blessings, we are serving God "by the Spirit."

## **Motivated by How God Views New Creations**

5. Some passages in Scripture link the works of our new man to the blessings we receive from God. We might call these passages Blessing/motivation pairs. Diagram them as you did the Gospel/motivation pairs. Then, in your own words, explain why these passages encourage us, but don't lead us into work-righteousness.

Because there are quite a few passages, we suggest that you choose a few to cover. Or, give the class a few moments to look them over and pick which ones they would like to cover.

The "For Thought" section contains a passage that most Christians are familiar with, the parable of the sheep and the goats. Many people are confused by Jesus' reference to the good works the sheep do, rather than to their faith in him. This might be a good place to start. Then return to the passages below.

*Luke 6:35,36—*

<sup>35</sup> Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

We suggest the following:

<sup>35</sup> *Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. **Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil.*** <sup>3</sup>  
<sup>6</sup> *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

We are children of God. He is pleased because his new creations are living according to what he has made them to be. When we imitate God, we show that he is our Father.

He promises to reward us. His rewards have often been called rewards of grace. In other words, we are not rewarded because we have earned the reward, but because God graciously gives a reward to us.

The last phrase is a true Gospel/motivation pair.

*John 15:9—*

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so also I have loved you. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you hold on to my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have held on to my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

We suggest the following:

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so also I have loved you. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> *If you hold on to my commands, **you will remain in my love,*** just as I have held on to my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

This verse has been used to teach work-righteousness. However, Jesus is appealing to people who love the Lord and are serving him for that reason. Note the parallel between our love obedience to Jesus, and Jesus love and obedience to his Father.

*John 14:21—*

<sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

We suggest the following:

<sup>21</sup> *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me **will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.***

Jesus loves us as the Father loves him. He fulfilled his Father’s commands because he loves him. It is natural for us to do the same. God promises us his and his Father’s love. If we refuse to keep his commandment, it shows that we don’t love him, which, in turn, indicates that we do not recognize or want his greatest gift, the forgiveness of our sins.

*Romans 2:6-11*

<sup>6</sup> God “will repay each person according to what he has done”—<sup>7</sup> eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality by persisting in doing what is good, <sup>8</sup> but furious anger to those who out of selfish ambition are disobeying what is true and obeying what is wrong. <sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and distress for the soul of every person who does what is evil—for the Jew first and for the Greek—<sup>10</sup> but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good—for the Jew first and for the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.

We suggest the following:

<sup>6</sup> God “will repay each person according to what he has done”—<sup>7</sup> **eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality by persisting in doing what is good,** <sup>8</sup> but furious anger to those who out of selfish ambition are disobeying what is true and obeying what is wrong. <sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and distress for the soul of every person who does what is evil—for the Jew first and for the Greek—<sup>10</sup> **but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good**—for the Jew first and for the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.

Paul is describing the life of a believer and that of an unbeliever. He could have said that God will judge each person based on their faith or lack of it. Rather, he says that God will judge each person according to how they lived.

Paul says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Statements like this don’t make Christians afraid. Rather, they make us think hard about our lives and ask God to make us more fruitful in serving him. And they set us at peace when we see ourselves serving God in love.

*Galatians 6:7-9—*

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up.

We suggest the following:

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. *But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit.* <sup>9</sup> *Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap,* if we do not give up.

This verse encourages us to keep living by the spirit of life, which we have only through Christ and his forgiveness.

*Matthew 19:29—*

<sup>29</sup> Everyone who has left homes or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, because of my name, will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

We suggest the following:

<sup>29</sup> *Everyone who has left homes or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, because of my name, will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*

Here Jesus encourages us to do what is necessary to hold on to our faith. He motivates us with the good news that he will replace anything that he takes away from our faith.

*1 Corinthians 15:59—*

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We suggest the following:

<sup>58</sup> *Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*

Again, we are encouraged to keep serving the Lord because he will reward us in the end.

*Matthew 25:20-21—*

<sup>20</sup> And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more." <sup>21</sup> His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

We suggest the following:

<sup>20</sup> And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, *I have made five talents more.*" <sup>21</sup> His master said to him, "**Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.**"

Jesus encourages us to serve him faithfully until he returns. If we do this, he will reward us with the invitation to enjoy the joy of heaven.

## For thought

6. This principle comes out clearly in Jesus' account of Judgment Day. Since it is a passage that is familiar to most Christians and one that causes many to wonder about its meaning, we have put it into the For Thought section. Think about this section. In what sense will Jesus judge people on Judgment Day according to what they have done in their lives?

*Matthew 25:31-46—*

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, '**Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**' <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. <sup>36</sup> I was lacking clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.'

<sup>37</sup>“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?’ <sup>38</sup>When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or lacking clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup>“The King will answer them, ‘Amen I tell you: Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’

<sup>41</sup>“ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup>For I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, lacking clothes and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not take care of me.’

<sup>44</sup>“ Then they will also answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or lacking clothes or sick or in prison and did not serve you?’

<sup>45</sup>“ At that time he will answer them, ‘Amen I tell you: Just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.’ <sup>46</sup>And they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

In these verses, Jesus does not have in mind the general good works people do, like helping the poor or doing deeds of kindness to those who are suffering. Those works are certainly good, and Christians do them out of love for others.

Jesus is referring to things Christians do as Christians—things we do *for him*. Note that the examples Jesus uses are works of service to Christians who are being persecuted. Christians go out on a limb to befriend fellow Christians who need their help and support by giving them food, clothing, shelter, and even visiting them in prison. We do these things even though we are fully aware that our acts of service might cause us to be persecuted as well, that we might land in the same prison cell with those we are visiting.

On the last day believers will wonder when they actually saw Jesus and served him. Jesus will answer that whenever they served “the least of these brothers of mine,” they were serving him (Matthew 25:40). So what Jesus has in mind are the unique works that Christians do for him in faith.

This becomes even clearer when the unbelievers ask Jesus when they saw him and refused to serve him. After all, some of them probably did more philanthropic works of charity than many Christians do. The problem is, Jesus said, that they weren’t serving him. In fact, they *couldn’t* serve him because they couldn’t recognize him when they saw his followers.

This account is as much about faith as it is about good works. Jesus says that he will judge believers on the basis of the good things they did *out of love for him*. Jesus was not teaching salvation by works. Rather, he was pointing to the faith-generated works Christians do—to their “*faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6). And he was pointing to the unbeliever’s lack of such works. They couldn’t do the works he lists because they neither knew him nor had concern for “the least of these my brothers.”

This is a great source of encouragement and motivation. When we live our faith by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, we can look forward to being among the sheep on Judgment Day.

## **Summary**

God has made us new creations. Just as we treasure his love and forgiveness, so he treasures the works we do for him. Although he doesn't have to, he graciously promises to reward us for our service to him and our fellow believers. The way he views his new creations and his promises to us are a great source of encouragement and motivate us to continue to serve him in love.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 8 The Gospel of the Kingdom

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 7, pp. 91-103

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 30:4,5*

L: Make music to the LORD, you his favored ones,

**G: and give thanks when you remember his holiness,**

L: for we spend a moment under his anger,

**G: but we enjoy a lifetime in his favor.**

L: In the evening, weeping comes to stay through the night,

**G: but in the morning, there is rejoicing!**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, you have made us members of the kingdom of your Son. Sinners like us have no right to be members of your kingdom, but you have removed the guilt of our sins. And now, as members of your kingdom, we have every reason to put off the deeds of our sinful nature. Please continue to renew us with the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom and give us a stronger desire to serve you, our King, and all who are members of your kingdom along with us.

**All: Amen**

#### The Gospel of the Kingdom

1. The nation of Israel yearned for a time when God would make them into a great kingdom. The greatest of Israel’s kings, David, gave Israel a taste of their future greatness. Whom did God promise would someday become king over the people of Israel?

*Isaiah 9:6,7—*

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given.

The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.

He will be named:

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> There will be no limit to his authority

and no end to the peace he brings.

He will rule on David’s throne and over his kingdom,

to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

from now on, into eternity.

The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

The future king would be a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of course, this refers to Jesus.

2. Most Israelites thought their kingdom would be a world empire like that of Persia, Greece, or Rome. The father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, understood the true nature of the coming kingdom. What did he know would be the foundation of God's kingdom?

*Luke 1:69-75—*

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,  
<sup>70</sup> just as he said long ago through the mouth of his holy prophets.  
<sup>71</sup> He raised up salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,  
<sup>72</sup> in order to show mercy to our fathers by remembering his holy covenant,  
<sup>73</sup> the oath which he swore to Abraham our father,  
<sup>74</sup> to grant deliverance to us from the hand of our enemies,  
so that we are able to serve him without fear,  
<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

The kingdom of God would not be built on the foundation of armies and governmental rulers. Rather, it would be built on the one thing that would bring all people into favor with God, namely, holiness and righteousness. With these gifts we can serve God, enjoy his perfect rule in our lives, and have a place in his eternal, heavenly kingdom.

3. How was Jesus' death and resurrection the foundation of the promised kingdom?

*Luke 1:76,77 (a continuation of the verses above)—*

<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,  
because you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
<sup>77</sup> to give his people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,

Jesus was punished for our sins on the cross. His resurrection assures us that we are reconciled to God. This is why we will be saved from the evil of this world and find joy in God's eternal kingdom.

## **The Gospel of the Kingdom motivates us to live for Christ**

4. You, dear Christians, are members of God's kingdom. As such, you are justified, you have the gift of Christ's righteousness, you enjoy God's care and guidance, and you can be sure of the church's victory over its enemies. You have weapons to fight off Satan's attacks and the promise of ultimate dominion over his evil kingdom. You have God's power to turn every hardship into victory, every need into a tool for greater growth in faith, and every joy into a reason to praise God. You are on the path that passes through God's judgment on sin and into his eternal kingdom.

Consider some of the topics Jesus speaks about in the Sermon on the Mount. If you were not a member of God's kingdom, how would you think about that topic? Since you are a member of the kingdom, what makes you able to follow Jesus' command?

- How you view the extent and depth of God's commandments (Matthew 5:20)

outside the kingdom:

You cannot keep the Law. Therefore, you must whittle it down to size so that at least you have a chance of coming close to keeping it.

inside the kingdom:

Jesus has given you his forgiveness and his righteousness. He had freed you from the Law. Therefore, you can strive to keep the full scope of the commandments.

- How you think about Jesus' command to love your enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

outside the kingdom:

We must grab for everything and hold on to it tightly lest others take it away from us. This fosters a spirit of competition, envy, and ill will toward others.

inside the kingdom:

We know God will provide us with everything we need, even if others take something from us. We are more concerned that the person sees in us an example of someone who trusts in God rather than someone who is self-centered and insists on our rights.

- How you think about forgiving others. (Matthew 6:12)

outside the kingdom:

It is difficult to forgive others; it goes against our grain. We feel that a person has to make up for the wrongs they did against us, and so we withhold forgiveness until they make amends.

inside the kingdom:

We know that God graciously forgives our every wrong. We want to do the same for others.

- How you think about marriage and divorce. (Matthew 5:32)

outside the kingdom:

You don't feel it is fair to struggle in a difficult marriage, especially when your spouse is largely to blame for the problems.

inside the kingdom:

You honor God's will regarding divorce. You trust that God will bless you and make all things work out for your good and for the good of your spouse. You want to help your children grow up to know the Lord rather than be separated from them and under the influence of a person who might not be a member of God's kingdom.

When you read Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount and other places he tells us to keep God's commandments, understand it in the context of your membership in the kingdom. You will find all the

motivation you need to follow what Jesus says. The Gospel of the Kingdom infuses every aspect of our lives with God's power and grace. It gives us wisdom stemming from those blessings.

## Practice

5. When Paul arrived at Rome, we are told that "For two whole years Paul stayed in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to visit him. He was preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without anyone stopping him" (Acts 28:30,31).

Practice diagramming Gospel/motivation pairs using two passages in which Paul refers to the kingdom of God.

*Romans 4:17-19—*

<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> Certainly a person who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and has the approval of people. <sup>19</sup> Consequently, let us pursue those things that lead to peace and building up one another.

We suggest the following:

<sup>17</sup> **For the kingdom of God** *does not consist of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* <sup>18</sup> **Certainly a person who serves Christ in this way** *is pleasing to God and has the approval of people.* <sup>19</sup> *Consequently, let us pursue those things that lead to peace and building up one another.*

*Colossians 1:9-12—*

<sup>9</sup> We keep asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you might live in a way that is worthy of the Lord. Our goal is that you please him by bearing fruit in every kind of good work and by growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> as you are being strengthened with all power because of his glorious might working in you. Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

We suggest the following:

<sup>9</sup> We keep asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you might live in a way that is worthy of the Lord. *Our goal is that you please him by bearing fruit in every kind of good work and by growing in the knowledge of God,* <sup>11</sup> **as you are being strengthened with all power because of his glorious might working in you.** *Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully* <sup>12</sup> **giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.**

## For thought

6. Peter also spoke about us as members of the kingdom of God. Mark all the things you have become and what Peter urges us to do.

*1 Peter 2:9-11—*

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and temporary residents in the world, to abstain from the desires of the sinful flesh, which war against your soul.

We suggest the following:

**<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and temporary residents in the world, to abstain from the desires of the sinful flesh, which war against your soul.**

## **Summary**

Martin Luther summarizes this chapter well. In his explanation of the second article of the Apostles’ Creed he wrote: “All this he did that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.” And think of what he said in his famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress.” In the fourth verse he writes, “And take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife; let these all be gone. They yet have nothing won. The Kingdom ours remaineth.” (TLH 262:4)

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 9 The Gospel in the Sacraments; The Gospel of Light

“Gospel Motivation,” chapter 8, pp. 105-116

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 34:17-22*

L: The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears.

**G: From all their distress he delivers them.**

L: The LORD is close to the brokenhearted.

**G: He saves those whose spirits have been crushed.**

L: Many are the troubles of the righteous,

**G: but the LORD delivers him from them all.**

L: He watches over all his bones;

**G: not one of them will be broken.**

L: Evil will slay the wicked.

**G: Those who hate the righteous will be found guilty.**

L: The LORD redeems the soul of his servants.

**G: Anyone who takes refuge in him will not be found guilty.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, help us appreciate the many blessings you have given us. When we think about our baptism, when we assemble to partake of the Lord’s Supper, and as we go through our day as children of the light, give us insight into how richly blessed we are. And let those blessings inspire and enable us to put off our sinful nature and its evil deeds. Help us live as new creations to your glory.

**All: Amen**

#### Gospel motivation In Baptism

1. Through baptism, we were washed clean and made members of God’s kingdom. Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the blessings of baptism and encourages us to live in light of those blessings. Note the Gospel/motivation pairs in the following passages:

*Romans 6:4—*

<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life.

We suggest the following:

**<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life.**

*Ephesians 4:3-6—*

<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in the one hope of your calling. <sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all.

We suggest the following:

<sup>3</sup> *Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* **<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in the one hope of your calling.** <sup>5</sup> **There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,** <sup>6</sup> **one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all.**

*Colossians 2:8-12—*

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, which are in accord with human tradition, namely, the basic principles of the world, but not in accord with Christ. <sup>9</sup> For all the fullness of God's being dwells bodily in Christ. <sup>10</sup> And you have been brought to fullness in him. Christ is the head over every ruler and authority. <sup>11</sup> You were also circumcised in him, with a circumcision not done by human hands, in the putting off of the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> when you were buried with Christ in baptism. And in baptism you were also raised with him through the faith worked by the God who raised Christ from the dead.

We suggest the following:

<sup>8</sup> *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, which are in accord with human tradition, namely, the basic principles of the world, but not in accord with Christ.* **<sup>9</sup> For all the fullness of God's being dwells bodily in Christ.** <sup>10</sup> **And you have been brought to fullness in him. Christ is the head over every ruler and authority.** <sup>11</sup> **You were also circumcised in him, with a circumcision not done by human hands, in the putting off of the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,** <sup>12</sup> **when you were buried with Christ in baptism. And in baptism you were also raised with him through the faith worked by the God who raised Christ from the dead.**

*Titus 3:1-7—*

<sup>1</sup> Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready to do any good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, to be gentle, and to display every courtesy toward all people. <sup>3</sup> For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life.

We suggest the following:

<sup>1</sup> Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready to do any good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, to be gentle, and to display every courtesy toward all people. <sup>3</sup> For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> **But when**

**the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life.**

## **Gospel motivation in the Lord's Supper**

2. The Lord's Supper is not used to encourage us to serve God, with one notable exception.

The Corinthian congregation was blessed in many ways. But they also had many problems. In those days, congregations met for a worship service. After the worship service, they had a fellowship meal. In the course of the meal, they would celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Here was the problem: Some of the rich Corinthian Christians were acting in a very unloving way toward the poor. The rich had all the food they needed. In fact, they seem to have had more than they needed and were eating and drinking to excess. The poor, who had little or nothing, were forced to sit there, going hungry while they waited for the Lord's Supper. It was a humiliating experience for them. It was sinful for the rich not to share from their plenty.

How did Paul handle the situation? He reminded them of the Lord's Supper, which all of them ate and drank together.

Imagine that you were among the rich in Corinth. What thoughts would have been going through your mind as you read Paul's words below?

*1 Corinthians 11:20-27—*

<sup>20</sup> So when you come together in the same place, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For when you eat, each one goes ahead and takes his own supper, and so one person goes hungry while another is drunk. <sup>22</sup> What, don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise God's church and humiliate those who have nothing? What am I to say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you!

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after the meal, he also took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

<sup>27</sup> Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood.

Paul pointed out the sins of the rich. In no uncertain terms, Paul told them that what they were doing was wrong. But Paul knew that what would change them was not a rebuke, but a reminder of the Gospel. Only the Gospel could do that.

Everything Paul said about the Lord's Supper should have motivated them to give up their sins. First, Paul's words were not his own but came from the Lord whom they all worshiped. Jesus had

been betrayed into the hands of sinners for the sake of all the members of the church in Corinth. Jesus gave his body for all of them. In the Lord's Supper, all of them partook of Christ's body and blood, which was given for their salvation. Jesus' blood was given for their sins. It sealed the covenant God made with the world, namely, to give all people the forgiveness of sins as a free gift. When they ate and drank the Lord's Supper, they were proclaiming the same message, namely, that Christ died for them and would return to receive all of them into his heavenly kingdom.

This message would create unity among them.

## Motivated by the Gospel of Light

3. In the previous chapter, we heard Paul and Peter encourage us to serve God because of our new status as people of the light. Paul had said, "*Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully* <sup>12</sup> *giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light*" (Colossians 1:11). Peter had written: <sup>9</sup> **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**" (1 Peter 2:9).

Find the Gospel/motivation pairs in the following verses.

*Romans 13:12-14—*

<sup>12</sup> The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

We suggest the following:

<sup>12</sup> **The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.** *So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.* <sup>13</sup> *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime,* not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> **Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**

*Ephesians 5:8-10—*

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, <sup>9</sup> for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. <sup>10</sup> Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

We suggest the following:

<sup>8</sup> **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.** *Walk as children of light,* <sup>9</sup> *for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.* <sup>10</sup> *Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

*Colossians 1:9-12—*

<sup>9</sup> We keep asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you might live in a way that is worthy of the Lord. Our goal is that you please him by bearing fruit in every kind of good work and by growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> as you are being strengthened with all power because of his glorious might working in you. Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

We suggest the following:

*<sup>9</sup> We keep asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you might live in a way that is worthy of the Lord. Our goal is that you please him by bearing fruit in every kind of good work and by growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> as you are being strengthened with all power because of his glorious might working in you. Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, **who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.***

*1 Thessalonians 5:5-9—*

<sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We suggest the following:

**<sup>5</sup> You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.** <sup>6</sup> *So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.* <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> **But since we belong to the day,** *let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.* <sup>9</sup> **For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Matthew 5:16—*

<sup>16</sup> In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

We suggest the following:

<sup>16</sup> In the same way **let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

**For thought**

4. Think about a particularly thorny internal problem your congregation is facing. Or use an illustration from your previous experience. How might your congregation's pastor or leader use Gospel/motivation pairs?

Answers will vary. It is always tempting to use only the Law to correct such problems. But we should always remind people that we are God's people, living in the light of his forgiveness in Christ. Church leaders will want to weave the Gospel into their rebukes and encouragements.

## **Summary**

The Gospel is found in many forms. Through baptism God washes away our sins. In the Lord's Supper he gives us the very thing that was sacrificed for our sins. We walk as people who are surrounded by the light of Christ. The light of Christ sets us on the path to eternal life. God wants us to live as people whose sins are washed away, as people who eat and drink Christ's body and blood, and as people who have come out of darkness into the light of his truth.

## **Close with a prayer or the Benediction**

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 10 The Gospel of Eternal Life

“Gospel Motivation,” chapter 9, pp. 117-122

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 37:35-40*

L: I saw a wicked, ruthless man.

**G: He was rooted like a green plant in its native soil,**

L: but he passed away.

**G: Just like that, he was gone!**

L: I searched for him,

**G: but he could not be found.**

L: Take note of the blameless. Look at the upright.

**G: Yes, there is a future for the man of peace.**

L: But rebels will be completely destroyed.

**G: The future of the wicked will be cut off.**

L: The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD.

**G: He is their stronghold in times of stress.**

L: The LORD helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked.

**G: He saves them, because they have taken refuge in him.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope of heaven. We don’t deserve to live with you in eternity, but you have prepared us for heaven by forgiving the world’s sins and by leading us to know and believe in him. Inspire us to live as your children. Help us live holy lives now on earth just as we will be living holy lives someday in your presence.

**All: Amen**

#### The Gospel of Eternal Life motivates us

No matter what blessings our faith brings us in our lives here on earth, an eternity with God in Heaven rather than in Hell is waiting for us.

When Paul thought about his life on earth, he said, “If our hope in Christ applies only to this life, we are the most pitiful people of all” (1 Corinthians 15:19). When he thought about death, he did so in anticipation: “I have the desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23). And when death was hand, he said, “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on that day, and not only to me but also to everyone who loved his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

As we look forward to heaven, we view our earthly lives in that light. We live as people who will live with God in Heaven, avoiding everything that might put our hope in jeopardy.

1. In the following two passages, diagram how our hope in the Gospel of eternal life shapes our lives on earth.

*Romans 13:11-14—*

<sup>11</sup> It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near. So let us put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us walk decently as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual sin and wild living, not in strife and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give any thought to satisfying the desires of your sinful flesh.

We suggest the following:

<sup>11</sup> *It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.* <sup>12</sup> **The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near.** *So let us put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light.* <sup>13</sup> Let us walk decently **as in the daytime**, *not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual sin and wild living, not in strife and jealousy.* <sup>14</sup> **Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give any thought to satisfying the desires of your sinful flesh.**

From the time we came to faith, we've lived in the light of God's salvation and the hope of eternal life. But our sinful nature wants us to go to sleep and forget what God has made us to be. Paul urges us to wake up, put aside the deeds of darkness, and not satisfy our sinful nature. The day of our salvation is near!

*1 Timothy 6:11-15—*

<sup>11</sup> But you, O man of God, flee from these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of faith. **Take hold of eternal life, to which you were called** and about which you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> I charge you in the presence of God, **who gives life to all things**, and of Christ Jesus, who made a good confession as a witness before Pontius Pilate, <sup>14</sup> that you keep this command without spot and without fault, **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ**, <sup>15</sup> **which he will make known at the proper time**—the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

We suggest the following:

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Paul keeps our hope before our eyes so that we continue to fight against the forces of evil—the Devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

## Practice

2. Look for the Gospel/motivation pairs in the following verses.

*Philippians 3:17-21—*

<sup>17</sup> Brothers, join together in imitating me and in paying attention to those who are walking according to the pattern we gave you. <sup>18</sup> To be sure, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. I told you about them often, and now I am saying it while weeping. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.

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*Philippians 4:4-6—*

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

We suggest the following:

<sup>4</sup> *Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice!* <sup>5</sup> *Let your gentleness be known to everyone.* **The Lord is near.** <sup>6</sup> *Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

*Titus 2:11-13—*

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup> It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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*Hebrews 10:24-27—*

<sup>24</sup> Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. <sup>25</sup> Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. <sup>26</sup> For if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains any sacrifice for sins. <sup>27</sup> Instead, there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a raging fire that is going to consume the enemies of God.

We suggest the following:

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Note the warning at the end of the verse. Sometimes the writer will remind us of the hope we have, and then remind us what will happen if we give up our hope.

*Hebrews 12:22-29—*

<sup>22</sup> Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God; to the heavenly Jerusalem; to tens of thousands of angels in joyful assembly; <sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven; to God, who is the judge of all; to the spirits of righteous people who have been made perfect; <sup>24</sup> to Jesus, the mediator of a new testament; and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better message than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse to listen to the one who is speaking. For if those people did not escape when they refused to listen to the one who spoke God's message on earth, how much less likely is it that we will escape, if we turn away from the one who spoke God's message to us from heaven? <sup>26</sup> At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also heaven."

<sup>27</sup> The words "once more" clearly indicate the removal of the things that are being shaken, that is, the things that have been made, so that the things that cannot be shaken remain permanently. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are going to receive an unshakeable kingdom, let us be thankful. This is how we serve God in an acceptable way, with reverence and awe. <sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire.

We suggest the following:

<sup>22</sup> **Instead, you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God; to the heavenly Jerusalem; to tens of thousands of angels in joyful assembly;** <sup>23</sup> **to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven; to God, who is the judge of all; to the spirits of righteous people who have been made perfect;** <sup>24</sup> **to Jesus, the mediator of a new testament; and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better message than the blood of Abel.**

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#### *1 Peter 1:13-16—*

<sup>13</sup> Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> Rather, just as the one who called you is holy, so also be holy in everything you do. <sup>16</sup> For it is written, "Be holy, because I am holy."

We suggest the following:

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#### *2 Peter 3:13,14—*

<sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight.

We suggest the following:

<sup>13</sup> **But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.** <sup>14</sup> **Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight.**

## For thought

3. There is a phrase that goes like this: "Don't be so heavenly bound that you are of no earthly good." Evaluate that phrase.

When you consider everything that Scripture says about those who are heavenly bound, you realize that the more heavenly bound we are, the more we can be a blessing to the world. When we live differently from how the world lives, we have an opportunity to tell others about the hope we have, which they can also have.

## Summary

The Bible writers remind us of our hope of heaven. This hope shapes the way we live our lives as we wait for that hope.

## Close with a prayer or the Benediction

## Gospel Motivation

### Lesson 11 The Gospel of Our Fellowship in Christ; Prayers for One Another

“Gospel Motivation,” Chapter 10, pp. 123-132

#### Worship

*Read responsively about God’s blessings on the righteous, Psalm 100:1-5.*

L: Shout to the LORD with joy, all the earth.

**G: Serve the LORD with gladness.**

L: Come before him with joyful songs.

**G: Know that the LORD is God.**

L: He made us, and we are his.

**G: We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.**

L: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courtyards with praise.

**G: Give thanks to him and bless his name.**

L: For the LORD is good. His mercy endures forever.

**G: His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

*Prayer:* Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for making me part of a group that believes in Christ, who treasures his forgiveness as I do, and who forms a fellowship to do the work of holding out the Gospel to the world. Today, help me better understand this fruit of the Gospel. Teach me what it means that we worship and work together “in Christ.”

**All: Amen**

#### The Gospel of Our Fellowship in Christ

In the third article of the Apostolic Creed we confess, “I believe in the holy Christian church, the communion of saints.” We confess that throughout the world there exists a group of people who share the same confession and faith in Christ.

Our fellowship with the members of God’s church is an offshoot of the Gospel. We are not alone. The Spirit continues to work in the hearts of other people as he continues to work in ours. Our fellowship in Christ motivates us to live in service to God.

1. Some people in Paul’s congregations needed instruction on how they should deal with each other in love. Find the Gospel/motivation pairs in the following two passages.

*Romans 14:15,20—*

<sup>15</sup> For example, if your brother is offended because of the food you eat, you are no longer walking in line with love. Do not destroy that person for whom Christ died by the food you eat!... <sup>20</sup> Do not tear down God’s work for the sake of food. Everything is pure, but it is wrong for a person to eat if it causes anyone to stumble.

We suggest the following:

<sup>15</sup> For example, if your brother is offended because of the food you eat, you are no longer walking in line with love. *Do not destroy that person **for whom Christ died** by the food you eat!*. . . <sup>20</sup> *Do not tear down **God's work** for the sake of food.* Everything is pure, but it is wrong for a person to eat if it causes anyone to stumble.

*1 Corinthians 8:9-13—*

<sup>10</sup> For if someone sees you, a person who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of this man, weak as he is, be emboldened to eat food from an idol sacrifice? <sup>11</sup> You see, the weak person is being destroyed by your knowledge—the brother for whose sake Christ died! <sup>12</sup> And when you sin in this way against your brothers and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I do not cause my brother to sin.

We suggest the following:

<sup>10</sup> For if someone sees you, a person who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of this man, weak as he is, be emboldened to eat food from an idol sacrifice? <sup>11</sup> You see, the weak person is being destroyed by your knowledge—the **brother for whose sake Christ died!** <sup>12</sup> And when you sin in this way against your brothers and wound their weak conscience, **you sin against Christ.** <sup>13</sup> *Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I do not cause my brother to sin.*

Some Christians think it is wrong to do some things that other Christians know are all right to do. But if the latter Christians force the former Christians to do things they think are wrong, they are leading those Christians to sin. Paul tells them not to do this. If they make their fellow Christians sin against their consciences, they are forcing them to sin, and they might fall from faith. Paul reminds them that Christ died for those Christians and brought them to faith. As Christians, they are God's new creations, and to cause them to fall from faith is to destroy what God has created.

2. Romans 16 is a wonderful example of Christian fellowship.

Christian fellowship is being together “in Christ.” Our common faith and hope in Christ motivate us to serve each other. How many times does Paul use the words “in Christ,” “in faith,” or “in the Lord” in Romans 16:1-16? How many times does he use the terms “brother” and “sister”? How does his use of these terms show us his God-pleasing attitude toward his fellow believers?

*Romans 16:1-16—*

<sup>1</sup> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea. <sup>2</sup> Welcome her in the Lord in a manner that is worthy of saints, and assist her in whatever way she may need your help, for she has certainly been a helper for many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their necks for my life. I am not the only one who is thankful to them. All the churches of the Gentiles are as well.

<sup>5</sup> Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

<sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are highly regarded by the apostles. They were in Christ before I was.

<sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

<sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who was tested and approved in Christ.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my relative.

Greet those from the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who worked hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard for the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who was a mother to me too.

<sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

<sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

You might want to divide the class and have each group focus on one or two of the words introduced in the question.

The purpose of this question is to encourage the class to think about each other as Paul thought about the people in the congregation at Rome. Seeing people as brothers and sisters in Christ motivates us to serve them in love.

## For practice

3. Paul corrects, rebukes, and encourages us for many reasons. He uses Gospel/motivation pairs to do this.

Paul encourages two women in the Philippians congregation to agree.

*Philippians 4:2,3—*

<sup>2</sup> I appeal to Euodia and I appeal to Syntyche to come to an agreement in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, true coworker, bring these women together, who contended alongside me in the gospel, as did also Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the book of life.

We suggest the following:

*<sup>2</sup> I appeal to Euodia and I appeal to Syntyche to come to an agreement in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, true coworker, bring these women together, **who contended alongside me in the gospel**, as did also Clement and the rest of my coworkers, **whose names are in the book of life.***

Paul corrects factionalism in Corinth

*1 Corinthians 3:21-23—*

<sup>21</sup> Therefore let no one boast about men. For all things belong to you—<sup>22</sup> whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All things belong to you, <sup>23</sup> and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

We suggest the following:

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## For thought

4. Paul prayed for the Christians he served. Pick two or three requests from Paul's prayers that you might ask God to give you or the fellow Christians in your congregation. Perhaps you choose a request that would help a special need or problem your congregation is facing.

*Colossians 1:9-12—*

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, from the day we heard about your love, we also have not stopped praying for you. We keep asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you might live in a way that is worthy of the Lord. Our goal is that you please him by bearing fruit in every kind of good work and by growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> as you are being strengthened with all power because of his glorious might working in you. Then you will have complete endurance and patience, joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

*1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; 5:23,24; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17—*

<sup>11</sup> May God our Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. <sup>12</sup> And may the Lord increase your love and make it overflow for each other and for all people, just as ours does for you, <sup>13</sup> so that he may establish your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father, when our Lord Jesus comes with all his saints.

<sup>23</sup> May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

<sup>16</sup> May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and in his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and establish you in every good work and word.

Answers will vary. You might begin with the blessings class members need for themselves. Then, with sensitivity so as not to judge others in the congregation, discuss what special needs the congregation has at this time.

## Summary

Fellowship in a Christian congregation is a great blessing. The more we see our fellow Christians as sharers with us of God's many blessings in Christ, the more we will work in harmony as we serve the Lord together.

## Close with a prayer or the Benediction