

Gamma

Romans 3:9-20

Study 5 Everybody needs God

Case 1

Kylie came to faith just 8 months ago and was taught how to witness and share the gospel. She had a lot of Buddhist friends as she was once in the local PJ monastery where she was a nun for 5 years of her life.

When asked to share the gospel she was reluctant because she looked at the life of her friends who were mostly monks and nuns who lead very austere and frugal lives. She asked “ how can we call them sinners as each of them are very holy and religious and do many good works , in fact more than Christians. “

- 1. Using Romans 3: 9-10 how would you explain to Kyle of the need to share the gospel with her friends?**

We need to carefully go over with her the verses Paul writes

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God(Romans 3:9-11 ESV)

Paul declares there is nobody who is righteous not one(re-emphasized)

To be under sin is the same as being unrighteous. Righteousness is right standing before God and in that legal sense there is not a single person who has the right standing before God.

It is a qualitative property of a person, like it is whether you are Chinese or not. Paul says Jews and Greeks or Gentiles are alike in this regard all not in the right legal standing with God and so are her Buddhist monk friends

But they do so many good works Kylie will protest ! Right standing does not assume the same degree of sinfulness.

Imagine if two men were killed, one by pneumonia and the other by an airplane crash. One has a slow agonizing death and the other a quick but horribly

disfiguring death. Are there degrees of death. They are both dead not one deader than the next. So it is with righteousness either one is righteous or not. Imagine three people try to swim from Hawaii to Japan. One man can't swim and drowns after floundering 30 feet. Another is an average swimmer and drowns after 5 miles. Another is a championship swimmer and dies after 30 miles. But they all drowned because, though one was 5,000 times stronger than the other, none of them could come a fraction of the way to Japan. Is one more drowned than the others?

2. Using Romans 3: 11 how would you explain to Kyle of the need to share the gospel with her friends since they too pray to God, meditate , seek for spiritual experience and inner peace?

11 no one understands;no one seeks for God

The well known atheist Christopher Hitchens once wrote in his book “God is not great” that the trouble with religion is that it elevates man to be in the center of universe that everything exists to cater for him and in the same vein God is there to care for and love and mother over this precious creature above all other creation.

He is absolutely right in his criticism of religion as a whole which places the concerns of man right in the center of the universe. Hence religion would find its place in understanding how God caters to and care s for mankind

The truth is, it is God in the center of the universe. Paul writes in

Colossians 1:15-16 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him and for him*

(Colossians 1:16 ESV)

The truth is that God is in the center of the universe which was created by Him and for Him. In the light of that cosmic reality, the place of man as his created being is to seek for God and worship Him, enjoy Him and be in a relationship with Him.

Yet for all their good works the friends of Kylie are not righteous even though they have good works and fasting and prayer and live austere lives simply because they are depending on their own morality to earn a right standing before God. Even if they were perfect enough to be successful in this regard , the motive for their efforts would already have been a sin as the attitude is one

of relying on self instead of God

People “ seek “ for God for many things in life for blessing, for peace, for prosperity for experience, God is always secondary to a more personal selfish reason. Someone will say ...ever since I have “found” God , I have experienced so much peace and my life has been so much more meaningful and simpler. One should then ask ...is God a means to a more peaceful life, a derivative of the person’s real goal which is focused on himself?

But Paul is saying — *that no one, in his or her natural self and ability wants to find God.*

They might have an intellectual interest in the possibility of God or a philosophical conviction that there is a God. That is not a real passion to meet God face to face — that is not seeking! In fact, intellectual interest can be a way of avoiding meeting the real God. Example #2. They might have a problem in their lives, and realize they need forgiveness (to deal with their guilt) or spiritual peace (to deal with their anxiety) or power/wisdom (to deal with a particular problem) or even mystical experience (to deal with their inner emptiness). But that is not the same thing as truly seeking to come face to face with the holy, living, sovereign God — it is seeking for what God can give us, but not for him. Paul is saying that sin and its self-centeredness so controls all spiritual searching for meaning and experience, that we will try to simply get blessings without prostrating ourselves before the living God. So the “spiritual seeking” is still a way to actually get away from God.

There are those that do not at all care for God and of those... who *imagine* themselves to seek after God. They do not seek after God as He desires to be sought and found... The inward desire or seeking after God is true love of God...

3. **Kylie listened for a while and then objected and said in that case if there is no one who seeks for God , it would seem impossible that they would truly want to seek for God then how can anyone be saved? Use Romans 8:7.8; 2 Tim 2:25 and John 6:44 to answer her**

It means that anyone who is truly seeking God has been sought by God. If no one is capable of seeking God, then any human beings seeking God must have already had some change go on inside them by the Holy Spirit.

This of course leads immediately to the whole issue of election and predestination. And you can’t avoid it. Paul is teaching the doctrine of “total

inability.” He says it again in Romans 8:7,8: “The natural mind is hostile to God; it does not submit to the law of God, indeed it cannot.” It means that we aren’t capable of seeking God, so anyone who does seek God has already been enabled by the Spirit. Paul put it in II Tim 2:25: “God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth,” showing that repentance and knowledge of the truth is something God must grant. Jesus says the same when he says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44) and he repeats this in John 6:65.

4. Why Kylie heard this she got upset , then it can be so unfair!! Why is it that my eyes were opened by the Spirit to seek God and their eyes are still closed. How do we answer Kylie?

There’s two ways this verse can effect Kylie. She can concentrate on the life stories of *others* — she can let it upset her because she is trying to figure out what God is doing with her friends or she can concentrate on the only life story she knows — *hers*. Then she can rejoice to see that God is not trying to hide from her, that all the things she knew about him were things he’s granted. That should humble her. For who sees anything different in her? “What have you that you did not receive?” (I Cor 4:7). That should also comfort her. “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you *will* carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” And it should fill her with *more* gratitude than she would feel if she thought that she were capable of seeking. If she were capable of seeking God, then her salvation would have begun with her; she would have contributed to it. But Paul shows us that it was by *sheer* grace, Kylie didn’t contribute *anything* to it. That should lead you to sing:

Then as for her friends this is her opportunity to be the same vessel of God’s generous grace. She can start by praying for them that the Lord will grant them to be moved by the Holy Spirit to seek Him and be open to Him.

5. Kylie then pointed out that she did not agree with Romans 3:12 there Paul says “ no one does good” not even one. How can this be so? The friends at the monastery really do good works and live a simple life that would put most Christians to shame. Kylie quoted

Matt 5:16 “*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*” Jesus said we should do good works. Is there a contradiction too here?

The word for “worthless” was used for milk gone sour; it is completely useless. Some would say, “Paul has gone too far again! I know many people who aren’t Christians who do a lot of good to society and to the people around him.” But that is to miss the focus of Paul’s passage. He is talking about our relationship to God and whether our good deeds can rectify that relationship. And he is showing us that in the ultimate sense, our good deeds cannot *at all* get us saved.

It is important to compare Paul’s statement here with Isaiah 64:6, that “All our righteousness are as filthy rags.” Paul also says it again in Phillipians 3 at greater length. He literally says that when he looks at all his best achievements, “I count them but dung that I may win Christ.” (Phil. 3:8)

Is Paul going too far again? How can he say no one does anything good? The Bible sees a “good” deed as being both good in *form* AND in *motive*. For example, if you help an old lady across the street, that is good in form; it conforms to God’s will for our behavior. But if you never help anyone across the street except rich old ladies that you are trying to milk for money, then obviously that deed arises from a selfish heart and selfish motives. Now when it comes to God, no one does good deeds, because a “good deed” is one done for God’s glory and not our own (I Cor 10:31). The following quote shows how impossible it is to do good deeds until the gospel changes your heart.

Once in a kingdom long ago, a gardener grew a huge carrot, and decided to give it to his prince, because he loved his sovereign. When he gave it, the prince discerned his love and devotion, and that he expected nothing in return. So as the gardener turned to leave, he said, “Here, my son, I want to give you some of my land so you can produce an even greater crop. It is yours.” And the gardener went home rejoicing. A nobleman heard of this incident and thought, “If that is what the prince gives in response to the gift of a carrot, what would he give to me if I gave him a fine horse?” So the nobleman came and presented the prince with a fine steed as a gift. But the prince discerned his heart and said, “You expect me to give to you as I did to the gardener. I will not. You are very different. The gardener gave ME the carrot. But you were giving *yourself* the horse.”

(from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon)

Now notice what this teaches. If you know God loves you in Christ, that there is nothing you can do but accept his perfect righteousness, then you can feed the hungry and visit the sick and clothe the naked, and all for God! But if you think you are going to get salvation in return for these good deeds, it is really

yourself you are feeding, *yourself* you are clothing, *yourself* you are visiting! In other words, good deeds are not truly done for God, and thus are not truly *good* unless a person has accepted and grasped the gospel. All deeds done in the natural and normal way, in the hopes that they will procure God's favor and blessing and salvation, are not "worthless," and lead to either smugness (if our life goes well) or anger and self-pity (if our life does not go well). The "good" deeds outside of the gospel make your soul go sour.

It is necessary to understand this to be a Christian at all. **The main difference between a real Christian and a religious person is not so much their attitudes toward their sins, but toward their "good" deeds. Both Christians and Pharisees repent of their sins, but only Christians also repent (admit the inadequacy) of their "righteousness"!**

Note: We must be sure to admit the many deeds done by non-Christians which are most certainly "good" in the relative sense. They are not done in overt selfishness. And God gives many non-Christians wonderful talents and wisdom and goodness to make the world a livable place and to restrain its evil. Christians appreciate and value the world and all people as being created in God's image. This passage is not saying that no one but Christians have anything about them that is noble or wonderful or beautiful or great — it is saying that no one does *anything savingly good — meriting salvation before God*.

Case 2

Sandy Spielberg is a Jew and is very proud of the "Torah " which the Jews regard as the Word of God . He argues with Kylie that "We Jews have the law and it is by following the Law that we will find salvation" "The law tells us what God is like in His holiness"

The law will save us Jews and those who follow our faith

1. Kylie looked at Romans 3:19-20 and based on this how can she answer Sandy?

Yes Kylie can agree with Sandy that the Law is God's gift to man and the special privilege the Jews have in the law. The Law shows us the nature of God and our responsibility to Him. However, Kylie disagrees with the role of the law it cannot and was never designed to bring salvation. Even in the OT it showed the Jews their sins and they had to have the sacrificial system to address sin. The grace of God's Law cannot be found in the healing it brings, for it can only bring death to the guilty. As Martin Luther wrote, "The principle point of the law in true

Christian theology is to make people not better but worse; that is to say, it shows them their sin, so that they may be humbled, terrified, bruised, and broken, and by this means be driven to seek comfort and so to come to that blessed [Christ].” But thank God for His Law! Thank God for His relentless, loving confrontation of our problem
(Romans 3:19 Insights_Swindoll)

Cases on positive preaching avoiding sin
Repentance forgotten
holiness AND ROLE OF LAW
Woman with alabaster jar who is forgiven much loves much

Joseph prince grace and forget

I am not sure I have,” Trump said when asked if he’d ever asked God for forgiveness. “I just go on and try to do a better job from there. I don’t think so,” he said. “I think if I do something wrong, I think, I just try and make it right. I don’t bring God into that picture. I don’t.”

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/trump-on-god-i-dont-like-to-have-to-ask-for-forgiveness-2016-1?r=US&IR=T>

Case 3

Jessica Lau gave testimony

I joined a small group 3 years ago that went from having regular prayer meetings and living holy connected lives together to stating ‘prayer is a work and denies grace’ and ‘sin allows grace to do its great work.’ All of our prayer meetings and Bible studies were traded in for game-nights and nights out at the bar to ‘witness’ where many from the group got plastered ... all in the name of ‘grace.’

“My heart has been so broken for my dear friends who I walked so closely with. As a group, they have embraced sin as not only acceptable, but justified and desirable. I have been completely ostracized and mocked for my stand in holiness. They don’t even call me by my name anymore—they call me ‘Pharisee.’ Unfortunately, I have had to step completely away from these loved ones and am spending my life in prayer for them.”

1. Can you explain what kind of teaching has affected Jessica's small group's attitude towards sin?

This is common in increasing numbers of churches where the message of hypergrace is preached. There is an overemphasis on grace how the grace of Jesus will lead to love which leads to a holy life. However in practice, there is a loss of discipline and sense of responsibility towards sin in the lives of believers. Its place in the triumphant believer, who has already conquered is under emphasized as if sin is no longer present in a person. In their zeal for grace they teach that believers are not responsible for their sin

Case 3

Jennifer Garner the famous film star was brought up in a Christian home and was known to be a person of integrity. She recently did a movie called " Miracles from heaven " which really touched her

She said "You know, it did seem strange," she replied. "I grew up going to church every Sunday of my life, and when I did move to L.A., it wasn't something that was just part of the culture in the same way, at least in my life. But it didn't mean that I lost who I was. But there was something about doing this film and talking to my kids about it and realizing that they were looking for the structure of church every Sunday. So it was a great gift of this film that it took us back to finding our local Methodist church and going every Sunday. It's really sweet."

What do you think of her relationship to God in these few sentences ? Do you think she is a Christian? What are evidences for and against (bearing in mind one cannot just judge based on this short interview but it is enough to give some idea)