

Becoming A Roma Disciple of Jesus

By Bob Hitching

Part Two

The Good News of the Gospel

1 The Gospel Is A Message From God

Christians have a message to share with the world. The message is good news. It is good news because it gives hope where there is no hope. It is a message that effects the way we live here on the earth and it is a message that effects whether or not we will be with God forever in heaven or be lost forever in hell. This makes our message a very serious one that we need to study very carefully. As in all our studies we turn to God's Word the Bible and nowhere else to find out the truth.

The Gospel is the truth and it is something we share with words and also with our lives. The Lord Jesus Christ when He was on earth one night was praying about His followers and He asked God to make His followers whole and complete spiritually by the truth. That truth He was talking about is what we call The Gospel or the Good News.

John 17:17 (Jesus prayed) make them spiritually whole and complete in the truth, your Word is truth.

What is incredible is that Jesus was not just praying for His followers then all those years ago. He said that He was praying for His followers who would come afterwards. Your reading this little book or doing this study is the fulfillment of Jesus prayer all those years ago. His prayer for you is in three areas:

- a. God wants you and I to be people of truth.
- b. He wants us to be people who are complete and whole in our spiritual lives because we are a people who have received His truth.
- c. He wants us to share this truth with other people so they can become whole and complete in their spiritual lives also.

With these things in mind let us now look at the what the Gospel message is.



Illustration

Being Released from Prison

Some years ago I was in prison for sharing the Gospel in a country where it is very hard to share with people about Jesus. It was just for three months but I was young at the time and it seemed like the days would never end. The other problem was that it was in the Middle East and I did not know if I would have to stay for one or two years or be free the next day. Then one day someone came to my cell and said that I was free and able to leave the prison immediately. It was the most wonderful experience. Finally, I walked out of the prison and the wind was blowing a gentle breeze. I walked and walked towards the nearby mountains. I kept saying to myself that I was free. When that person came to tell me I could leave the prison it was "Good News". He had a message for me and the message he had for me was the best news I could have received. The Gospel is "Good News". Really and simply put the Gospel is a message that lets us know that we have been set free from the prison of our sin and we are now free to live with God and for God.

First of all as we look at this subject of the Gospel we have to ask some very basic questions. Our first question is, what is a "real" Christian? A Christian is a follower of Christ. There are many people who think they are Christians who are not. There are many people who claim to be Christians who are not. So before we go much deeper we need to look at what it is to become a Christian or a follower of Jesus Christ.

For many of us we can remember the day when we became a Christian. For others, especially those who grew up in Christian homes it is not always quite so clear or dramatic. The fact is though that for everyone who claims to be a Christian, there came a time when they became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. So if we were asked the question, what is a Christian? We would answer that by saying a Christian is a follower of The Lord Jesus Christ. Of course that immediately makes us ask another question. What is it to be a follower of The Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer would be someone who acknowledges that The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has authority over their lives. Let me explain this phrase "the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over our lives", as it may need some explanation:

When we are under the Authority of Jesus Christ:

- A. We acknowledge that Jesus is our Lord or our leader
- B. We accept that Jesus has spoken in His Word and that His words are the standard for how we live our lives
- C. We acknowledge that Jesus is our Saviour from our sins

Lets look at this a little closer so we can really get this clear in our minds.

A. Jesus is our Lord or our Leader

There are always four ways we can go in life when we make decisions about how to live.

- (i) The way my feelings tell me to go.
- (ii) The way that the world around me tells me to go.
- (iii) The way that Satan tells me to go.
- (iv) The way that Jesus tells me to go.

If you look at these four ways they are like pathways or directions in our lives. Each of these ways are very strong. Our feelings are extremely powerful and they can become very confusing if we are not careful.



Illustration

Feelings are not reliable

When I was a young man I stole something very small from a shop but my conscience kept bothering me. I felt bad about what I had done. When I was a little older I did some terrible things that are so horrible it is best not to talk about them. But I felt no conscience. If I trust my feelings I will probably get confused and make mistakes. So trusting my feelings on how I should live is not a good idea.

The world around us is constantly showing us how we should live. The world is really just another way of saying all the ideas that people around us have about life. Everyone's world is a little different. In my world growing up it was acceptable to steal from the government. It was acceptable because everyone did it. To get social money for being unemployed and then to work privately on the black without paying taxes was also acceptable. To lie if it gets you out of trouble is acceptable if you follow the ways of the world.

Satan also has a plan for our lives. He wants us to constantly think and do things that are not of God. I remember coming home with a horoscope and talking to my mother about getting a full horoscope read on my life. She encouraged me to do so. That was following Satan's pathway.

All of these examples are how not to live. When Jesus is our Lord or Leader we choose to go His way not these ways that lead away from him. Being a Christian is acknowledging that the way of Jesus is the only way we should live. Always remember we find out what Jesus wants for our lives by looking into His Word the Bible.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.

Mark 8:34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he (Jesus) said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

1Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

B. We accept that Jesus has spoken in His Word and that His words are the standard for our we live our lives

The obvious question that we need to ask is how do we know which pathway is the pathway of Jesus. The answer is very simple and very encouraging. God shows us how to live and which pathway to walk down in life from His Word the Bible.

One of the study sessions with its own booklet deals with this subject but let us look at this question quickly.

The Bible is the Word of God. God used men to write His Word down but they were influenced by the Spirit of God so there would be no errors or mistakes.

A Christian is a person who accepts that the Bible is the Word of God and that it's message is for us to live by.

The Bible gives guidance and direction on almost every subject you can think of. So many men have asked me over the years if it is OK to beat their wives. The question is a good one. The answer is in the Bible. Men are to love their wives like Jesus loves the Church by becoming a sacrifice on the Church's behalf. Only a coward beats his wife.

When the Bible does not speak to a particular issue it gives us principles to live by. The Bible says we are to be patient with each other. That is a principle then that can be applied to every decision that we make in life.

A Christian is a person who accepts that their life is under the direction of the Word of God.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Deuteronomy 11:18

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds;

Deuteronomy 27:26

"Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out."

2 Samuel 7:28

O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.

Job 23:12

I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

Psalms 105:8

He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,

Psalms 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

C. We acknowledge that Jesus is our Saviour from our sins

As we go through this study together we will see that the greatest battle in our lives is always going to be with sin. Right at the beginning of our study we need to look at the subject of Jesus being our Saviour. To be a Christian is to be someone who has been saved from their sins. In the next section we will look at this in a deeper way but for now we need to just touch on it.

Let me put it another way. A Christian is a person who accepts that the right pathway is the pathway of Jesus not their feelings, their world or Satan. But we will all fail. We failed before we were Christians and we will fail many times after we are Christians. So what do we do with our failure?

A Christian is someone who has come to the point in their lives where they can not get rid of their sin no matter how hard they try. Sin is not something we can wash off our bodies or clean out of our minds. Sin always finds us out.



Illustration

Hiding From Sin

I once knew a man who was very wealthy. He drove a brand new Mercedes car. He lived in a big house with a swimming pool. Everyone knew him as a successful person. One day he came to me and said he had a problem with sin and needed my help. He then me told his story. He was a slave to cigarettes. But he could not bear to think that anyone would know. I told him that smoking was not good for his health but that he should not judge himself so hard. He then told me that everyday when he got home from work he would drive off into the country in his expensive car and then go alone into a big field. He would then stand under a tree and smoke two cigarettes and then go home, take a shower, wash his clothes and spray his mouth to get rid of the smell. The sin was a small one. Let's be honest when we look in our villages two secret cigarettes is not a big deal. But for this man he lived his life trying to hide his sin.

We are all the same. We will always try and hide our sin unless God touches our hearts.

We can try and hide from our sin. We can try and hide our sin from others. We can try and pretend we do not have sin. We can try and say that our sin is not as bad as someone else's sin. We can not escape sin. That is why we came to Jesus and asked him not to hide our sin but to forgive our sin. When our sins are forgiven the Bible says they are also forgotten by God. To be a Christian is to be someone whose sin has been forgiven.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Romans 7:14

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Romans 8:2

because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3:22

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin

1 John 1:8

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Lets us go back then to the Gospel Message.

1. The Gospel is a message that tells us the Good News that we can be released from the prison of our sin.
2. When we receive this message we come under the authority of Jesus Christ.
3. Being under the Authority of Jesus Christ means:
 - He is our Lord or Leader
 - We accept His way in life and not the ways of our feelings, the world or Satan.
 - We accept that He alone can remove the failure and sin from our lives.



Special Thought

“ Sin is easy to get into but hard to get out of – that is why we need Jesus”

2 The Law of God



Illustration

I grew up with very confused feelings about the law. My parents told me I had to obey the law and one day when the police came to my house to see them because I had been caught stealing they were very angry with me. The confusion was that on another day my brother and I were told by my parents to steal toilet paper from the public toilets because we could not afford to buy toilet paper from the shops. Also, my grandfather ran an illegal gambling program from our home. So on one hand in our family the law was good but on the other hand it could be broken if it was convenient.

I believe we are all confused concerning what is right and what is wrong. It is effected so much by our family life, our village or town and also our own feelings. In the middle of this confusion God has spoken very clearly concerning what is right and what is wrong.

Deuteronomy 5:1 God gave Ten Commandments for all people, at all times in all places.

They are laws that govern the way we live with each other and also our relationship with God. Let us look at these laws and see how we have done in being obedient to God.

1. You shall have no other gods before me
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day to set it apart as holy
5. Honour your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not give false testimony against another person
10. You shall not secretly desire anything that belongs to someone else

1. You shall have no other gods before me

God makes it very clear that there is only one God and that is Himself and that it is totally without excuse to have any other God other than him. Now the immediate question we have to ask is what does this mean. It means this. Having another god instead of the true God is actually worshipping "anything" other than God.

Suddenly, when we realise this we begin to understand it is not having a god from the jungle that is the problem but rather what we worship.

Worship is to devote oneself with love and affection towards someone or something else. When we look at it like this then we realise that money can be our God, Lust can be our God and even alcohol can become our God. Everyone in the world has broken commandment number one.



Imagine a world where people loved only God and wanted to please Him every day.

2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image to worship

This is another one of those laws that sounds as if it is for the jungle rather than Europe. But we need to look at this a little more closely. If we make something with our hands and then look to what we have made as being the voice of God, we have broken this commandment. When a person empties a coffee cup or a tea cup into a saucer and then reads the leaves they have made something with their hands to give them guidance concerning that which only belongs to God. It is the same with Palm Reading or going to a Witch. In other words when we look to anything or anyone for guidance concerning that which only God knows we break this law.



Imagine a world where there is no witchcraft or witches or superstition or works of evil.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

Whenever we have used God's name as a swear word we have broken this law. There is something inside of us that finds it easy to use God's name in this incorrect way. It shows contempt and dishonour to God when we do this. It is heartbreaking to hear children growing up using the name of Jesus or the name of God as a casual swear word. It grieves and angers God greatly.



Imagine a world where no one swore and everyone respected God's name.

4. Remember the Sabbath day to set it apart as holy

Now this law is very interesting because it seems so unimportant. The Bible teaches that we are to work to earn money to provide for our families. Work is something that God has given as a means of people being able to survive and also so that they can help other people in need. In fact the Bible says that if a man does not work he should not eat. So work is good but God has said we can spend so much time working that we do not devote time to be quiet, to meet with other Christians and to generally rest. This is so important to God that He made it one of His commandments. If we do not have a day of rest which we devote to God we have broken this law. And God is angry when we break this law.



Imagine a world where men worked hard all week to provide for their families and one day each week they gave themselves to being quiet before God and then meeting with other Christians to worship God.

5. Honour your father and your mother

Honouring our mother and father is not just showing respect to them because they deserve it. The Bible teaches us that we should honour our mothers and fathers because it is the right thing to do. To be a mother or father is to be given a special place of responsibility. That needs to be honoured and respected even when they fail. Some fail more than others but it is no excuse. God has told us that we are to show respect to them in public, when we are alone with them, when we talk about them behind their backs and even in the way we think about them.



Can you imagine a world where there was so much respect and honour in families.

6. You shall not murder

Most of us know someone who has been murdered or we know someone who is a murderer. The very thought of murder gives us a nervous feeling inside. But when Jesus was teaching He said that if we hate someone we actually commit murder in our hearts. This is because with God the desires of our hearts are as powerful as our actions. If this is true, which it is, then we have all murdered.



Imagine a world without hate and murder.

7. You shall not commit adultery

Adultery is one of those broken laws that has so many consequences. It is evil, it is selfish and it is wrong. Yet Jesus says that if a person lusts after another person in their heart then they have committed adultery in their heart. It has the same principle as murder that with God the desires of our hearts are as powerful as our actions. Everyone has committed adultery.



Can you imagine a world where there was no adultery.

8. You shall not steal

We steal with our hands and we steal with our minds. We are all thieves. Stealing is easy and yet has such terrible consequences. When we steal we violate people, we hurt people and we are utterly selfish. There is never ever any excuse for stealing.



Imagine a world where there was no stealing.

9. You shall not give false testimony against another person

This is another way of saying that it is wrong to lie. We lie to God when we say we have no sin, we lie to ourselves when we say that God will not punish our sins, we lie to each other when we let each other believe things that are not true....on and on it goes. We are all liars.



Think of a world where there was no more lying.

10. You shall not secretly desire anything that belongs to someone else

Why should they have that car, that house, that wife, that husband, those looks those abilities, those friends...it goes on forever. We all are jealous of other peoples things and other peoples gifts. God tells us it is a sin when we do this.



Can you imagine what the world would be like if everyone was content with what they had.

Let us look at this more closely. God has given us His laws so that we can live in a way that pleases him.

The truth is we have all broken all of God's laws.

The Bible makes it clear that we have sinned and that because we have sinned we have fallen below the standard that God has set for us.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With this in mind we need to then ask what are the consequences of falling short of God's standards by breaking His law.

- We are separated from God because we have broken His laws.
- Because we are separated from God we can expect nothing from God other than Judgment.
- The punishment for breaking God's law is to be separated from God in Hell for ever.

- We have no hope in ourselves because we have no power to save ourselves from the punishment of God.
- When we break the law of God we come under a curse that can not be broken by anything that we can do.



Special Thought

“ But we know there is good news, it is called The Gospel”

3 The Love Of God

After reading the last section we can be left with a sense of hopelessness if we are not careful. In one way this is true, it is hopeless if it is left to us to do something about the sin problem.

Let me put like this:

- We all have broken the law of God
- We are locked up in the prison of sin
- There is nothing we can do to help ourselves
- Our good works are never going to be enough to make us acceptable to God

Now this is as we know where God comes into the picture:

- God loves us even though we have broken His Law
- God loves us so much He will not leave us lost in our sins
- God loves us so much that He has made a way for us to be reconciled to Himself

Let us look at this and see how it works.

1. God is a Judge. He has every right to be a Judge. He has created us and given us commandments to live by.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Psalm 50:6

And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for God himself is judge

2. We have sinned against God by breaking His laws. Therefore we are guilty and the punishment we deserve is to be separated from God forever.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Isaiah 3:13

The LORD takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people.

Ezekiel 7:3

The end is now upon you and I will unleash my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.

2. God as a Judge will not allow sin to go unpunished. Can you imagine a Judge in our own community when every time a murderer came to his court he let him go. He would not be a good Judge. God is a good Judge and so He will punish sin.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Psalm 96:10

Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.

3. Because God is the Judge He can choose what punishment is worthy for sin.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

John 8:16

But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.

Now let us change direction here a little.

1. God is not only a Judge He is a Father.
2. He loves us as a Father loves a child. But that love still does not get rid of sin.
3. There has to be punishment worthy of the sin that has been committed.
4. God allowed His Son Jesus Christ to take our punishment. When Jesus died on the Cross God put the punishment we deserve on the Lord Jesus. He took our place.
5. He was punished instead of us. God has said in the Bible that the clean and pure life of Jesus is given to us and our sin was placed on Jesus when He died on the Cross.

This hard to accept but right now, if you are a Christian, God looks on you as if you were the Lord Jesus without sin.



Let us look at some verses in the Bible to help us

Jeremiah 31:34

" I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Hebrews 8:12

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more

1 John 1:7

and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Psalms 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

The Gospel is simply the message of Good News that tells us about this wonderful fact.

- Our sins are washed away
- We do not have to try to get rid of our sins because Jesus has already taken them away
- We are no longer guilty before the Judge but we are loved and accepted by the Father
- There is nothing we did to save us because Jesus did it all

1. This is wonderful news and is a gift from God but like all gifts, we need to receive it.
2. When we receive this gift we are saying to God that we realise we have no strength in ourselves but want to be under the authority of the one who has the power.
3. When we have done this, received the gift that has been offered to us, the power of forgiveness is released into our lives.



Special Thought

“ This is the Gospel. This is the Good News. This is a message that we must take to all our villages”