

Sermon Growth Guide

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Who Can Be Saved? | Romans 10:8-13

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Key Verse: Romans 10:9 - “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Big Idea: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. No one is excluded. Through wholehearted faith—heart, soul, and voice—we are rescued from darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.



Foundations

Tragically, significant numbers of people consider themselves Christians based on their involvement in church life or the fact that they were ‘born into’ Christianity. They play the role of being Christian without the Holy Spirit having penetrated their hearts with transformation deep into the heart and soul of man.

Prayer may be perfunctory or absent. They live their lives week after week and year after year “as usual.” There is no or little evidence of the radical change that comes from the gospel of Jesus. They experience no real or genuine relationship with Jesus, the Beloved Son who became truly Man (while still being truly God), who suffered and died for those who by nature were his enemies, and who rose from the dead to live and reign forever at the right hand of God.

Understanding God’s Word

What qualifies a person to be saved? Salvation comes through genuine faith in Jesus Christ—believing in your heart and confessing that “Jesus is Lord.” This faith transforms us and brings us from darkness into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).

Who can be saved? Everyone! Because God’s grace is available to all, followers of Jesus are called to love others, not judge them. No one is beyond the reach of God’s salvation, so the gospel should be offered freely to all.

Applying God’s Word

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Those who reject Christ remain separated from God, the source of life. God’s gift of salvation is too important to treat lightly. As we reflect on what Jesus has done for us, our faith should grow deeper, leading us to lives marked by gratitude, devotion, and a desire to share the gospel with others.

Witnessing God’s Word

The “Roman Road” offers a helpful way to explain the gospel, but our ultimate confidence is in the Holy Spirit, who guides and empowers believers. As followers of Christ, we are called to live out our faith and share the hope we have in Jesus. Above all, let us remain steadfast in prayer as we seek to follow Him faithfully.

Some things you say out loud change you forever. For example, wedding vows. We have a ministry here called First Pres Fellows. Each year we bring out a class of recent college grads, help them get an internship in town in an area of work they are interested in, train them in discipleship and leadership, and send them out to be world-changers for Jesus. Every now and then a couple of them fall in love. Last weekend Abigail and I were at a wedding of two First Pres Fellows from the class of 2025. Joe Farrell officiated (many of you know him). It just really got me. I was choking back tears. They made the standard promises, “better or worse, richer or poorer, sickness or health,” and of course after thirty years of marriage and thirty-five years of ministry I couldn’t help but think, “You have no idea.” Nobody does. At the end they looked directly into one another’s eyes and said, “To these promises I pledge my vow.” That doesn’t just make you different; it makes you a new person. The Gospel doesn’t enhance your life; it gives you a new life. “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

We are walking through Romans verse by verse. Paul has said a lot. The Roman church was divided between Jewish background believers and Gentile background believers. There was controversy about who really belongs, who truly belongs. Paul reframed it all. The church is one body. The plan of salvation includes the Jewish and Gentile people, all people, not as first class and second class. This was the plan, this is the story, Romans are part of the family of God. Maybe we are getting a little lost in the muddle. “Paul, you’ve said a lot here about the way the world is, what God has done to redeem it, how Jesus is over us all, and how we are all on a level playing field. You’ve said a lot about predestination, election, and how it’s a bigger category than the genetic line of Abraham. So, help us out. Who Can Be Saved?”

Well, you don’t have to climb your own way up to heaven, because Christ came down. You don’t have to descend to the depths of Hades like Theseus or Odysseus, because Jesus went to the depths and rose again. “But the righteousness that is by faith says: ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim.” (Romans 10:6-8) The Word is right here. The help is right here. The Savior is right here. There is no heroic journey to take, no task to fulfill, no super villain you have to conquer to level up. It’s all right here. Salvation is right here.

Who can be saved? There are few places in Scripture where the offer is more clear. “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” (Romans 10:9-10) We will come back to this. Let’s walk through the passage first. This idea doesn’t stand alone. Scriptures we’ve been quoting say the same, from Isaiah, from Joel, from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. “As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.’” (Romans 10:11) That’s Isaiah. So, this isn’t a new idea but the fulfillment of what God’s been doing all along. “Put to shame” is interesting, isn’t it? Shame isn’t healthy. Guilt can be healthy. Guilt says, “I think I did something wrong.” If you did something wrong, the healthy, mature thing is to recognize it, apologize for it, try to make up for it and resolve not to do it again. That’s all healthy, mature behavior. Shame says, “I think I’m a worthless person.” That’s a lie. This says, if you believe, you will not be put to shame—no one can make the claim that you are worthless and have it stick, least of which you yourself. No shame.

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.” (Romans 10:12) This is one of the big problems the Roman church is trying to get past, two groups. Is it too far to call it a problem of racism? Our issues with race in America are different from this division in the Roman church, but they are close. One Lord. One people. One blood; one humanity. No difference. Now, literally there are differences. Different background, different skin tone, different language, food, music, but all of those distinctives are just colorful paintbrush strokes on one canvas, one big story called the Church, the body of Christ. “For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (Romans 10:13) Quoting Joel. Everyone. Everyone who calls on the name. The name is more than the word “Jesus.” Name is reputation, character, reliability, trust. To call on the name is to pitch your hope, your faith, your life on all you know the Lord to be. Everyone who does this, not repeats a slogan, but rests their souls, and trusts their lives on Jesus, they will be saved. What an offer.

The offer of Christianity, what we are talking about here, is not an offer to enhance your life with a fresh philosophical accessory. Christianity is not an app to download. It’s not even a new operating system. It’s a new world. It’s a new life. Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the Life. When we say “Light and Life for the City” we are saying our mission is to make Jesus known. And he will be known, to all who seek him. The offer we share is, first of all, to be in relationship with God, to have a right relationship with God. We are all in relationship with God. God made us all. But are you in a right relationship with God or a wrong relationship with God? When you are in a right relationship with God, you call him who he is. Jesus is Lord. In all relationships, it feels good to be in an ordered, right relationship. You are my teacher; I am your student. You are my boss; I am your employee. It actually feels good to have that

stuff straight. You are my coach; I am your player. When you mess with that, there is tension all around. It’s good to have that right. When you call Jesus “Lord,” because he is, your whole life changes. Your old life ends and your new life begins.

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) This is the end of what is called the Roman Road, the fullness of the gospel. Last stop. Do you remember, if you were here in March? (1) Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) God loves us, but our sin separates us. (2) Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) The death of Jesus on the cross was not an accident. It was a perfect, atoning sacrifice. Jesus died in our place to do away with sin’s separation. (3) Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) This is the verse I remember becoming a Christian over myself when I was twelve. Do you want what your sin earned, or do you want the gift Christ earned for you? (4) Romans 10:9, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) It all needs to come home. It needs to come home to your heart, your beliefs, your lips. Otherwise it is just an idea out there somewhere.

“Declare with your mouth.” There is power in saying something out loud. Counselors use something called “talk therapy.” Saying something out loud helps us measure our emotions and thoughts, helps us sift out negative self-talk, helps us untangle emotional knots. Research says it creates new neural pathways. It changes your brain. If you believe in Jesus in your heart, I wonder, have you ever said it out loud? Paul knew these Romans needed to say it. What do they need to say? They needed to say,

“Jesus is Lord.” This is the earliest Christian creed. Jesus is Lord. It’s the same word used for emperors, governors, Caesars. “Lord.” If you say “Jesus is Lord” in ancient Rome, you are putting your life on the line. Declare with your mouth. Other translations say, “confess with your lips.” The words have to come out. Billy Graham would say, “Christ died publicly for you on the cross; you can live publicly for him.”

But this isn’t slogan salvation. Say the words and get your prize. Say the magic words. Maybe you’ve been at a camp or meeting or church where the pressure was on to get you to say the right words. You did. But you didn’t believe it. The words need to be connected to your heart. “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) Paul puts a point on the resurrection, doesn’t he? Do you believe in your heart that Jesus died and rose again? That takes some faith. It takes some trust. “Dead people don’t rise again—not a whole lot anyway. I must believe this?” Yes. Why? Because this is defining of the gospel, the way God saves. Jesus didn’t save us by sending a note or publishing a book or offering ideas on living a good life. Jesus came and took on flesh. He died as a sacrifice for sin. When he rose again, which hundreds testified to and history could not explain, it was God’s declaration: “This sacrifice is done. This death atones for sin. Now death cannot claim a sinner who calls on Jesus.” He rose again.

When you confess with your lips, when you believe in your heart, you are saved. Saved. Last point. What does that word mean, “saved”? The word definitely means rescue, being rescued from great peril. But that word was just as much about being healed, being made whole. What is the offer of a relationship with Jesus? It is an offer of eternal salvation. Separation from God, the Author of Life, guarantees a future of eternal death. Damnation. Peril. Eternal. Saved means rescue from that. Saved also means healed. A right relationship with

Jesus Christ brings immediate healing and starts a process of total healing—past wounds, past mistakes, regrets, psychological baggage—Jesus is in the game with you bringing healing. Saved means resolution to your existential crisis, “Why am I here? Do I matter? What is life worth anyway?” All resolved. All peace. Saved also means you become part of God’s mission to restore all of creation. Saved, whole, restored, healed. Shalom. Everything made right. Saved. That’s the idea. That’s the offer. It is for you, right now, right here.

This is the gateway to Christianity. Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” (John 10:9) This is not an offer to gain Christian insights, to get spiritually educated and grow as you employ new ideas, new skills, new habits. That’s not what this is about. This is about giving your life to Christ in response to the truth that he has given his life for you. This is about total commitment. Belief. And that is new life. Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” (John 3:3) Paul wrote in another letter, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This offer is before you. Forgiveness, healing, new life, life eternal, in Jesus Christ. Will you confess and believe?

No more fussing around. Let’s do it. Let’s say it to God in prayer. Repeat after me:

“Jesus, I believe. I believe that you are Lord. I believe my sins deserved death. I believe you paid my debt on the cross. I believe you rose again from the dead. I believe life is in you. I believe you gave your life for me. I give you my life today. Amen.”