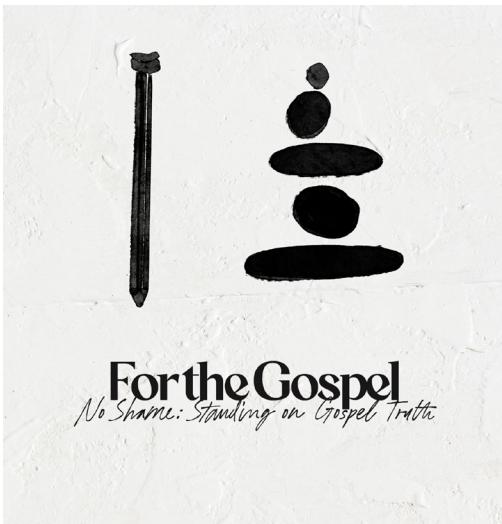


Sermon Growth Guide

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For the Gospel | Romans 1:1-12

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Key Verse: "That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." Romans 1:12

Big Idea: Introduction to the Book of Romans.

Foundations

Happy New Year, church family! From now until Christ the King Sunday (November 22), the various sermon series will be taking us on a deep dive into the book of Romans. So this growth guide is little different. Instead of a diving into the verses along with the sermon, this is an invitation to get ready!

Romans is a beautiful and complex look at the Gospel, focusing particularly on the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians through faith in Jesus. While the book of Romans is often rightly used to the present the Gospel for the first time, it was written to believers. It clarifies that those who are in Christ are called to the "obedience of faith." (1:5, ESV) Through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, God in Christ is able to do what the law could not: move us from death to life, from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness (see Romans 6 and 8). This is an exciting opportunity for our church family to grow in maturity in Christ!

As we begin, please consider reading the book of Romans all the way through. Understanding the book as whole sheds light on the beautiful and difficult passages that are often taken out of context and allows us to understand God's Word more deeply. Discipleship will also be offering opportunities and resources to help us think more deeply about this book in the coming year. Our prayers are with you as we embark on this exciting journey.

Understanding God's Word

Read Romans 1:1-12 together. What do we learn about Paul himself and his purpose in writing to the Romans from these verses? Does anything surprise you in Paul's description of the Gospel in verses 1-6?

Applying God's Word

Although we are not all apostles, we are all "set apart for the Gospel." What do you think that means in your own life? Later on (in verse 16) Paul says he "is not ashamed of the Gospel." Are you ever ashamed of the Gospel? Why or why not? Paul says he prays constantly for the church in Rome. How often do you pray for other churches? How might you encourage people in other churches?

Witnessing God's Word

Belonging to Christ makes us witnesses to God's saving work through Jesus Christ in both word and deed. However, it is easy to misunderstand the Gospel, even when we are in Christ. As we work through the book of Romans this year, allow God's Word to shape your understanding of the Gospel. May we be a church who both lives and preaches the Gospel clearly!

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. -Laozi" That's an ancient Chinese proverb. I think it applies today. Today we start a study of the book of Romans. Not a thousand miles, but it is 433 verses. It starts with verse one. James Boice at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia preached on Romans for twelve years. John Piper preached on Romans for eight years, Martyn Lloyd-Jones spent 366 sermons on it. So don't complain! From now until November 22nd we will take on Romans passage by passage, and I tell you I'm coming at this with a spirit of deep anticipation. God has used the Book of Romans in the life of the church to spark revolutions, reformations and revivals. The more we understand the gospel, the better we can live it, believe it and share it. At the beginning of the Hobbit, the wizard Gandalf had to convince Bilbo Baggins to take up the journey and the adventure. "You will have a tale or two of your own to tell when you come back," Gandalf said. "Can you promise that I will come back," asked Bilbo. "No. And if you do, you will not be the same." A journey through Romans is epic. High mountains, low valleys and perilous battles. We will not be the same. Let's do it.

The journey is deeper into the Gospel of God, deeper into the story and truth of how God saves—you, me, this whole world. No Shame: Standing on Gospel Truth. That's our first series, and the first message, today, is For the Gospel. If you are just visiting today or maybe if you have been here a long time, it's easy to ask: why is the gospel so important? The gospel is the story of how God saves, the news about what God has done through Jesus Christ. The gospel changes everything. It introduces an intervention from another dimension. If you're like me, January is the time to reevaluate everything. What happened last year? Where am I with work, with family, with friends? What's coming next in 2026? It's after Christmas and New Years, and it is easy to feel glum. The lights are coming down, but the nights are still long. The

expectations of holiday magic did not fully deliver, family challenges are harder than you thought, the credit card is maxed out, and it is easy to just feel a little, bleh. What is life all about anyway? We need to get the gospel right. This is not a place to achieve; this is a place to receive. God has done it. Jesus has done it. Life is not an exercise in seeking pleasure, promoting self-satisfaction or even self-discovery. No gift or holiday will satisfy; no measure of success will obtain. You need a big purpose for life, a reason why. Rise to the truth of the gospel. You have been saved by God through Jesus Christ and now you have a purpose: to receive that salvation, to share that salvation with others, to enjoy your eternal relationship with God, all to the glory of the name of Jesus.

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1) Paul was his Roman name. Saul was his Hebrew name. Saul had been a servant of a religious order, the Pharisees, a word that means "set apart." As a Pharisee he considered himself set apart to destroy the Christian church. Before his conversion, he chased Christians down, ripped them from their houses, shut down their businesses and even directed executions by stoning. Now Paul is set apart for something else. Did you see it? Set apart for the gospel of God. For the Gospel. Now he is a servant of Christ Jesus. The word he uses is the same word for slave, doulos, but "slave" would imply he was unwillingly attached. His whole heart now is to serve Jesus fully and freely, body and soul. An Apostle. That means he is sent by the one he represents, an emissary, a trustee, a representative messenger. That is his identity. "Gospel" is also a word Romans were familiar with. Emperors and Generals posted gospels, good news announcements, proclamations. But the author of this gospel is God, and its subject is Jesus Christ.

We need a little context as we get started. You could spend the rest of your life debating these details, but I'll just give you the predominate view. Paul wrote this in 57 AD

in Corinth waiting to return to Jerusalem to deliver money he collected from wealthy gentile churches to support the Jewish, Jerusalem churches suffering persecution. This is his third missionary journey. The church in Rome emerged in the Jewish Quarter, and we don't know how, but there it was, led by Jewish-background Christians who were including gentile believers in the community of faith. Now, in 49 AD, the Emperor Claudius got upset and expelled all the Jews from Rome, a pogrom, as Jews refer to these antisemitic moments. Not a massacre, but a pogrom of exile, and all the Jews, including Jews who had become Christian, were expelled from the city and scattered across the empire. The non-Jewish Romans who had become Christians got to stay back; they ran the church in Rome on their own. When Claudius died five years later, Jewish Christians and Jews started filtering back into the city. Who's in charge now? Gentile, Roman believers? Jewish background Christians back from exile? Do you see some of the dynamics? Church is messy, isn't it? This is the church Paul is writing to. This is the church Paul hopes to visit. And this is the church Paul hopes will support him financially on a great missionary journey to the farthest reaches of the world! Well, Spain.

They don't know him. He has never been there. So he writes, in God's inspiration, this letter, this book, Romans, outlining everything Paul understands the gospel to mean. The Gospel of God. "The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:2-4) The mess and struggle and conflict is the occasion for a full, inspired, complete exposition of God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of God. The author of this proclamation is God, and the subject is

Jesus. Jesus was promised beforehand. The prophets foretold his coming. The Holy Scriptures attested to him. Jesus was Son of David. He was fully human, a man as I am a man. A human being born in the genetic line of David who had been promised by God to be the father of a King who would reign over the Kingdom of God forever. Jesus was Son of God. His resurrection was a proclamation: this Jesus who was born, lived, taught, pointed to the Kingdom, and who was arrested, unjustly tried by Jewish leaders and crucified by Roman authorities and buried, this Jesus rose from the dead. Now we know, by the Spirit of holiness, we know who he truly is, not only Son of David, but also Son of God. Holy and divine. God in the flesh. God incarnate. The only one with the power and ability to live a holy and faultless life and offer that life as a sacrifice for all of us who are unholy and faulty, and return from death to life in glory to God the Father opening up forgiveness and eternal life for all who call on him in faith. Jesus. Son of David in weakness; Son of God in power. Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you see this? Actually, the whole gospel is contained in this little introduction.

And it concludes with this: "Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus is Lord. Higher than Caesar. Higher than Claudius. Higher than Rome. Jesus Christ our Lord. Jewish, gentile, we all belong to him. "Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:5-6) And here I say, that is us. Most of us are not Jewish by descent, part of the genetic line of Abraham, but we are included in God's promises and covenants through Jesus Christ. You are called. They were called in Rome to be God's children. You are called to be God's children in Colorado Springs. Belong to Jesus Christ here and now.

That is just the greeting! From me, Paul, "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and

peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:7) Rome may promise peace. The powers that be promise peace. In Rome the gospels proclaimed were power and strength.

"The Carthaginians are conquered, good news! The Gallic tribes are defeated. Good news! The uprisings in Egypt are subdued by force. Good news! Pax Romana! Roma Victor!" Paul announces a different gospel, the Gospel of God. Grace and peace, true grace and true peace, are from one place, one source, from God our Father and from the true Lord, Jesus Christ. This is our Kingdom home.

Now the letter begins. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world." (Romans 1:8) This is the amazing providence of God that turns even bad things into great progress for the Kingdom. The pogrom against the Jews and Jewish Christians served to scatter the gospel of God and the news of the Christian church born in Rome, the greatest city in the world, the seat of the cultural, governmental and economic universe. Everyone has heard. Jesus is at work right there. Paul, to summarize, wants them to know they are loved by God (verse 7), they are celebrated by the whole church (verse 8), they are remembered by him, constantly held up in prayer (verses 9-10), and Paul cannot wait to be with them (verses 11-12), to see them, to strengthen them, and to enjoy the mutual encouragement of faith in Christ.

Okay. Phew. That's a lot. So what do we take from this today at the launch of 2026? "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1) What if you put your name in there? Tim, Matt, Anne, a servant of Christ Jesus. A slave, not by force, but by willing obedience. Sent by God. Maybe not an apostle in the formal sense, but certainly under the authority of the Great Commission, sent with a message, a proclamation to the world. Set apart. Church, we are meant to be set apart. We are meant to

be living in a way that provides a contrast. Set apart. "You guys aren't like the other Romans. You guys aren't like the other Jews. You are not like the other gentiles. You're different." That's the church in Rome. The whole world knows about you because stories of your faithfulness to Jesus resound. Stories about how you have a higher, dominating, primary allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of Rome, the seat of the Empire, the middle of the most powerful empire the world has ever known, and you live with Jesus as your Lord. You live in the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Set apart. Are we that? A community of contrast to the community of Colorado Springs. A visible witness of the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Set apart... for the Gospel of God.

The new year brings new questions about the meaning of it all. At least for guys like me. Maybe that's not you, but for me the year behind and the year ahead, it always brings a moment of, "What is this all for? What am I doing?" Imagine if all you planned for 2026 you planned as a servant of Christ Jesus, set apart for the Gospel of God. What would that look like for you? What would that look like for our church? Life is not about filling our time with the greatest pleasures, figuring out what pleases us the most and filling our calendars with it, or even this great, much ballyhooed human errand—finding myself. The journey of self-discovery. The journey we are invited into is a journey for the Gospel of God, the good news published and authored by God himself, the subject of which is this: Jesus Christ our Lord. We live, we struggle, we journey for him. In this is our purpose; in this is our meaning. For the Gospel.