

Sermon Growth Guide

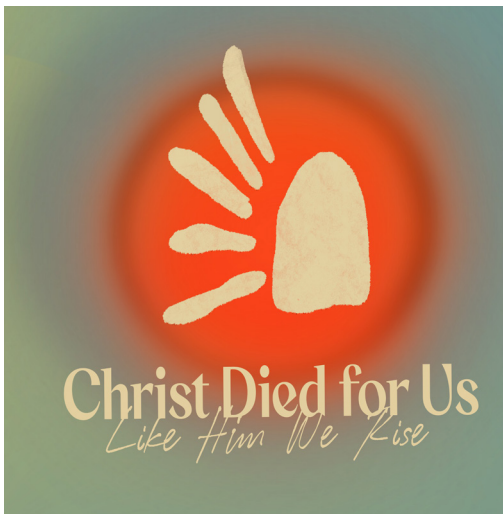
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Christ Died for Us | Romans 5:1-11

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Key Verse: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

Big Idea: God does not ignore our sin and He does not lower His standard. Instead, He gives us His righteousness as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ.



Foundations

These verses are packed with so many important Old Testament concepts and processes that it is hard to ingest let alone digest all that is being said. Here are the major terms/concepts:

1. Righteousness/Justice vv 1,9
2. Peace v 1
3. Grace v 2
4. Boasting vv 2, 3, 11
5. Glory of God v 3
6. Reconciliation v 10 (twice), v 11
7. Salvation vv 9, 10
8. Love v 8

Here are the processes mentioned:

Justification/Made right through sacrificial death (Rom 1:8) referenced in Leviticus 1-7 where the worshipper places hands on the sacrifice to signify identity.

Glorification (Exodus 40:34-38) through suffering, patience, character and hope.

The key concept for the entire passage is the opening participle, one word in the Greek text translated into five words in the NIV “since we have been justified.”

Understanding God’s Word

What Paul is saying in this passage is that we who are sinners, not in right relationship with God, have been set in a right relationship by the sacrificial death of Jesus. By opening the passage with the Greek participle from the word for righteousness, literally “made into a right relationship,” Paul tells us his main point. We have been set right with God through the death of Jesus

Applying God’s Word

We have been set right with God through the death of Jesus for us. How does this work out in our lives? Paul tells the Philippian Christians, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for God is at work among you to will and to work his good purposes,” Phil 2:12-13. We are given a right relationship with God through the death of Jesus, and we have to work this out in our lives. The process in vv 3-5 is how this happens: suffer, persevere, character development, and hope guided by the Holy Spirit. Our status now with God is a process that involves what God has done in Jesus and what we do in working this out.

Witnessing God’s Word

Our witness is accepting the right relationship with God through faith and working with the Holy Spirit who works right relationships into our lives.

How do you explain the gospel? There is an old method of sharing the gospel called the Roman Road. First of all, have you seen a Roman road? A real one? The Romans invested so much in the infrastructure of roads. Some speculate that this ease of travel is what it means when the Bible says “at the right time,” Jesus came. The roads connected the known world. But that’s not what we are talking about. This is a method of walking through the book of Romans with a non-believer to introduce them to what we believe about Jesus, and, ultimately, to introduce them to Jesus. The passage today has the second stop on the Roman Road. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Let’s understand that today. In our series, Like Him We Rise, let’s understand today what is the heart of the gospel, the keystone, the crux of the Christian claim. What we truly believe is that Christ Died for Us.

The Roman Road has four stops. People debate how effective this presentation of the gospel is for non-believers in our day, and I understand that. Don Everts in his book, I Once Was Lost, says there are five thresholds non-believers need to pass through to move to faith in Christ, beginning with knowing and trusting a Christian: Trusting a Christian, Becoming Curious, Opening Up to Change, Seeking After God, then Entering the Kingdom. This can be a journey of one hour over coffee but is usually a journey of years. A quick walk through Romans might not fit the bill. But, for me, it was very helpful when I was a young Christian, and it is a great way to get the basics straight and out on the table. With any method of evangelism, I’m reminded of D. L. Moody who, when criticized for how he evangelized, said, “Well, I like my way of sharing the gospel better than your way of not.” Jesus is something we want to share.

The four stops on the Roman Road are: (1) Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall

short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Yes, it starts with sin. I like to start a conversation with God’s love. God created you and loves you and loves this world he made. That’s a good place to start, but Romans 3:23 cuts to the chase. There is something wrong with this world and it needs fixed. Everyone has some answer to this question: what is wrong with this world? I don’t know anyone who thinks there is nothing wrong! They just have different notions of what is wrong, and what would fix it. Romans 3:23 pins the problem down. We are in a broken relationship with God. I was talking to Travis Williams the other day, the CEO of the Springs Rescue Mission. He said the more he studies how to help people get off the streets, the more he realizes it is all about relationships, broken relationships that need to be healed. A broken relationship with family; a broken relationship with self; a broken relationship with God. We all have sinned. We all fall short. God is holy. We are broken.

(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) Christ died for us. This is atonement. God had a way of covering over sins so that he could mercifully delay his justice and wrath against selfish rebellion. Injustice cannot stand, but God gave the people the sacrifices of the Temple to cover over sins and delay his justice. Then, Jesus, his Son, gave himself as a perfect and complete atoning sacrifice for sin on the cross. This didn’t cover over sin to delay wrath; wrath was poured out on sin in the body of Jesus. It was actually paid. It was actually dealt with. It was actually and finally atoned. Why? Because God loves us. God loves you. At the heart of love is sacrifice. When you truly love someone, you give, you spend, you waste. Do you count the cost when you fall in love and start going on dates and buying gifts and spending time, hours and hours, and skipping work and neglecting your friends. Of course, you do go to church. All the best marriages start with church together. You don’t count the cost; you just give. That’s how love is. “For God so loved the

world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) Love gives. But why did Jesus have to die?

The third and fourth stops on the Roman Road are passages we will take up later in the series. (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) Work draws a paycheck. Wages come after the work, the natural result. Sin, missing the mark of holiness, pursuing selfish gains, choosing disobedient paths, this has a natural result. If you turn your back on the Author of Life you point your soul toward eternal death. Those are the wages. But the gift is different. God has prepared a gift for the disobedient, for the sinner, a free gift. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. A gift must be received, opened, enjoyed. You don’t just leave your Christmas presents under the tree. In 2025 Americans finished the year with 27 billion dollars of unused gift cards. Those things can expire, people! The gift is prepared, but it must be received. So, (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) What do you believe about Jesus? Are you willing to say you believe?

If you do, this is not just an adaptation. This is not a person taking on a new philosophy of life, or accepting the propositions of Christianity, or applying a new worldview. When you say to Jesus, “I believe in you. You are my Lord. You are my Savior,” what happens is actually a total transformation. Jesus called it being born again from above. You become a new person. This is not about learning information; this is about meeting the Savior. Whenever you meet someone, your life changes. When you meet Jesus, you have a new life. The Roman Road. Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, and Romans 10:9. This is the good news of what Jesus has done. The gospel is not a philosophical proposition, the gospel is news of an event—what God has done in

Jesus Christ to save the world, and to save you. There is something broken, in the world, in your life, in you. This is how God fixes it.

But let’s go deeper into our passage for today. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) “Therefore” tells us we are at a pivot point. A large and thorough argument has been made for four chapters and now some conclusions can be drawn. Romans are a people in trouble. Their self-made Roman morality was bankrupt, their failure to glorify God in creation left their souls malformed and bent, the Jewish-background believers in the church were holding superiority contests over the Gentiles, and the Gentile-background believers were carting in false priorities. Paul argued, you can’t be saved by doing it right; you can only be saved by putting your faith in Christ and being forgiven. Settled.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, now let’s start to talk about this new life. Therefore, we have peace with God. All peace starts here. Therefore, we have access to grace: “through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” (Romans 5:2a) We can rest in the presence of God, no longer separated by our sin. Therefore, we have hope. “And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:2b) We do not boast in our performance, status, or successes. We boast in the guaranteed salvation won by Jesus; we boast in the coming Kingdom secured by Christ. Our hope is not simple optimism; it is an assured expectation that what God has promised is on the way. Therefore, we have peace; therefore, we have access; therefore, we have hope, and we even suffer differently. We all suffer, but Christians suffer differently. “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame,

because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5) It is one thing to suffer in a random world of trials and ills. It is another thing to face suffering knowing that God will use it to bring about his purposes and to shape us in character and holiness. The Christian in suffering does not ask, "Why me?" but can ask, "What for?" What will this temporary suffering produce in eternal ways?

How is all this possible? How do we enjoy these rewards? "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8) A Soldier may be called upon to give his or her life for the unit, for the mission, for the nation. A Police Officer gears up every morning or evening to cover a shift that might mean not coming home. But only Jesus, only Jesus Christ, could die to cover the sins of all humanity, all men and women of all times in all places. He didn't wait for us to prove ourselves worthy of it, either, but he did it while we were still in our disobedience, while we were still making ourselves out to be his enemies. You might understand someone dying for a good person, but Jesus died for us when we were not good people. This means God has intentions for us, for our blessing, that we cannot even fathom. "For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10)

This is the gospel. This is our faith. I didn't earn my way into God's love. You didn't prove yourself a good person worthy of the sacrifice of Jesus. No. It all starts with God's love. It is all a gift of grace. I have used the Roman Road to lead retreats or new members classes. I have used it in sermons and talks, and testimonies, and mission

trips. But I remembered this week one time I did sit down with a friend, a friend named Julie, a classmate of mine at Cheyenne Mountain High School. Julie was the center on the girl's basketball team. She always felt a little on the margin. We went together on a Young Life weekend at Frontier Ranch. She had a good time, but she confessed to me later that she really didn't understand what was being said about God and Jesus. We sat at desks in our English classroom between periods and I got out my Bible and walked her through the Roman Road. The next day she came straight at me in the hall. She had prayed in her bedroom that night and felt a love pour into her heart and a light fill up her room. She stayed up all night reading the Bible, first the Gospel of John, then she couldn't stop. She read all the Gospels and dug into Genesis. She had a consuming hunger for God's Word. Her life was forever changed.

Eternal life. Saved. Those words are not just about what happens after you die. Eternal life is life of a new quality, a new life that starts the moment you believe. Saved means a lot more than kept from damnation, retained from hell. Saved means wholeness, healing, restoration, peace. Do you know him? Jesus walked down a Roman road. We call it the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. He carried his cross. It wasn't an accident. Jesus walked down that road in order to die for us. He gave his life so that you could have eternal life. Say with your mouth, believe in your heart, "Christ died for me, and the risen Jesus is my Lord."