

## Romans #1 - Lost and Found Finding God's Peace

- Oh, it's a really good day. I'm so glad to see you, whoa. There's bad news out there, there's good news in here. There's problems out there, there's a solution named Jesus in here. Out there, everybody's sad, in here, we're all pretty fired up. Welcome to our fourth birthday, welcome to our Easter celebration. I'll tell you what, everything's closed but Heaven is open, and you are all invited to the party that never ends. If you've got a Bible, find the book of Romans, and as you're finding your place in God's word, I wanna start with a little bit of a story. For every effect, there is a cause. The bigger the effect, the bigger the cause. I'll give you one example. July 9th, 1958, at 10:15 pm, there was a 7.8 earthquake in Alaska. It unleashed and released 40 million cubic yards into the Gilbert inlet. It created a mega tsunami, the largest wave recorded in the history of the world, 1720-foot wave. The spiritual equivalent of that mega tsunami is the book of Romans. It has been ruling in an epic way for 2000 years, transforming lives, altering destinies, empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring the life of God into God's people. And we're gonna spend a whole year studying it together. And I am so excited to open God's word and to help you learn from what is arguably the greatest book written in the history of the world. I will read some quotes for you from theologians. Now, all of this is found in the free study guide. Pick one up on the way out, or if you're online, you can just grab it at [realfaith.com](http://realfaith.com). All of the footnotes are included. I'm your new nerd friend, I have a Shrek-sized head to hold all of that information. I'm very happy to share it with you. Let me just give you some of the quotes regarding Romans from the theologians. Number one, Romans is probably the greatest book in the Bible. That's a big statement because the Bible is the greatest book. And this might be the greatest book in the greatest book. That's great. In addition, another one says, "Romans stands among the most important pieces of literature "in the intellectual history of Western man." Another says, "It is safe to say that Romans "is probably the most powerful human document ever written." Another one says, "Romans is one "of the most influential writings in Western culture." Another says, "More than any other book, "Romans has been the forge of the Western psyche." When a metalsmith wants to hammer something into proper shape and forges it, that is what God is going to use the book of Romans to do for you to forge the mind of Christ in your mind. Another says, "It is arguably the most influential book "in Christian history, "perhaps in the history of Western civilization." And another says, "Every great spiritual revival "in the church will be connected "with a deeper understanding of this book." Historically, revivals and reformations have come when the book of Romans is open. And I'm telling you that right now, the whole world is freaking out and they need a solution, and His name is Jesus. And we have tried everyone and everything else, and we have all concluded it doesn't work. Ultimately, the time is ripe for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for the opening of the church, and for revival to come to the church and reformation to come through the church by the power of the Word of God. Can I get an amen?

- Amen.

- Amen, that's why we're here. Let me reload a few other additional quotes. The great epic

English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge said that Romans is "the profoundest book in existence." John Chrysostom, the early church father, had the book read to him upwards of four times a week, just so that he could familiarize himself with it for the duration of his life. The great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, says that Romans is "the true masterpiece "of the New Testament and the very purest gospel. "A Christian should not only learn it "by heart word for word, "but he should daily deal with it "as the daily bread of men's souls "for it can never be too much or too well read or studied." What he's saying is this, your body was made for fuel. You need food, but in addition, your soul was made needing fuel that is the word of God, that Jesus says that man does not live on bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And what Luther said is if you want your soul to be healthy, you need to feed it the Word of God, starting with the book of Romans. John Calvin, the great Protestant reformer said, "If we have gained a true understanding of this epistle, "we have an open door "to all the most profound treasures of Scripture." And then lastly, William Tyndale. He says that Romans is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament, the most pure gospel and a light in a way unto the whole of Scripture. This is what I'm telling you. Fads come and go, the news comes and goes, marketing comes and goes, and the Word of God endures forever. I don't know when Jesus is coming back. It may be 2000 years. Lord Jesus, it's your choice. We would, however, request humbly you come before the election, nonetheless. I don't care if you're Democrat or Republican, I agree with that prayer right there. Ultimately, when Jesus comes, whatever you are worried about, whatever is consuming your time in media and social media will no longer be an issue. But the book of Romans will still be widely regarded, widely studied, and still proclaiming the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ. What I'm telling you is put time in God's word. It is not wasted time, it is invested time. That being said, we now want to receive a word from God. So to do so we will open the Word of God. I now introduce you to the book of Romans, chapter one, verse one, where we learn that we serve the God who serves us. Here is the opening line. Paul, he is the author, you'll get to know him well in our year study of this book together. A servant of Christ Jesus, it's all about Jesus, called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God. Let me start by introducing you to this concept of a servant. This is a particular noble, distinguished role in the kingdom of God. It is not particularly distinguished in our world and culture. Let's be honest, we're in Scottsdale. The whole goal is to make enough money to pay people to serve you, true? So when you pulled up, you're like, "Where's the Valley parking?" We're here to teach you to serve. Feel free to park your own car. We love you but it's good to learn how to serve. And a servant is not something that the culture honors, but the kingdom of God honors, and we want to live kingdom down, not culture up. and our King Jesus is a humble servant king. He is a humble servant king. And so when Paul declares himself to be a servant, he is taking on the same posture of Jesus. To be a servant is requiring three things. Number one, that you allow Jesus to serve you. Before Jesus calls you to serve anyone else, he serves you. Number two, then it is accepting Jesus as your Lord, and then number three, asking your Lord, who he would send you to serve and how he would send you to serve. A servant does two things. They lift burdens and give blessings. They lift burdens and give blessings. Jesus lifts burdens and gives blessings and then invites us to also serve by lifting burdens and giving blessings. This is the key to a healthy relationship. And they came to Jesus, on one occasion, the disciples did, his followers, and they asked him, "Who will be greatest in the

kingdom of God?" This should have been a fairly easy question to answer. The guy whose mother is a virgin, who water-skis without a boat and feeds a stadium with a little boys lunchable, and cast demons out of people, probably that guy's the greatest. Nonetheless, they still are having this argument, which of us will be the greatest. Rather than rebuking them, Jesus redirected them. And he used himself as an example. He said, "I did not come to be served. I came to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. Jesus was in heaven, he came down to earth to serve us. Jesus lived his life without any sin on the earth to serve us. Jesus went to the cross, suffered and died in our place for our sins to serve us. Jesus rose from the dead, conquered Satan, sin, death, held the wrath of God to serve us. Jesus ascended into heaven. I'll tell you what, right now, Jesus is still serving. He's answering prayers. He is lifting burdens. He is providing blessings. He is altering destinies. That Jesus is still serving. And so what Jesus says, if you wanna be the greatest, you need to be the servant of all. Now, Paul, before he could be a servant of Jesus, he needed to be served by Jesus. So let me introduce you to this man Paul. He started out as a religious terrorist. Before he did Jesus, he did jihad. That's Paul. He is the Osama Bin Laden of his day. He hated despised, opposed, persecuted, murdered Christians. Here we meet him in the book of Acts. It's the history book of early Christianity. He appears in chapter seven, where there is a leader in an early church, a godly man named Steven. And Paul shows up with an angry, violent mob of men. They are terrorists and terrorizing, and they put to death, they murder Stephen, simply for the fact that he loves and preaches Jesus. In addition then, we read these words regarding Paul in Acts eight, execution, persecution, scattered, ravaging the church, dragging men and women to prison. He would, do you love Jesus? Okay, then we are going to beat you, perhaps murder you and or imprison you. Here's what I'm telling you. The culture that we are in is growing increasingly opposed to Biblical Christianity. And the cost of following Jesus is getting more expensive. And the children of God will need to accept that there is a price to pay. And for the first Christians, it was payment of their life. But they knew that Jesus awaited them on the other side, so they no longer feared death. By Acts chapter nine, we realize that Paul will not be stopped. It says that he was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. This is a man who will not be stopped. So Jesus gets involved. It doesn't matter how mighty a man is, when he comes face to face with the Almighty, he loses. Stronger than any man, is the God man, Jesus Christ. Jesus had already lived, died, rose, returned to heaven, and he looked down and he saw what Paul was doing, he got off his throne, came down to take care of it himself. He knocked Paul to the ground and blinded him. And then ultimately, Paul had to realize that he was wrong, that Jesus was right, that he was not Lord, that Jesus was Lord. He needed to bow his head and bend his knee and surrender his will to his new Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that man was saved and became a Christian. He went from a murder of Christians to a Christian. He went from one who persecuted Christians to one who pastored Christians. The conversion of Paul is one of the greatest evidences in the history of the world that Jesus Christ is God like he said, and that Jesus God is God who conquered death like He said He would. There's no other reason that a man like Paul would start worshipping the Jesus that he was warring against. But his life was changed in an instant, and everything changes when Jesus shows up. How many of you that's your story? Everything changed when Jesus showed up. And all of a sudden, he becomes a servant of Jesus Christ. And he serves in two ways, in deed and in Word, I will first look at his

deeds and then his words, but you and I need to be taking on by the grace of God, this posture of servant in deed and word. He, over the course of about a decade of ministry, walked upwards of 20 miles a day. How many of you would not be in church if you had to walk, right? 20 miles a day, to volunteer in ministry, to work a job on the side to make ends meet, to go preach a message that everybody hated. He started a number of riots, and they sought to kill him, and he spent time in prison. Here's how he explains it. He says these words in 2 Corinthians six. Afflictions, hardships. Imagine this was your job description. Like you've got a bad job, but it's not that bad. This is Paul's job's description. Afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, sleepless nights, hunger, slander, treated as imposters, dying, punished, sorrowful, poor having nothing. He continues in 2 Corinthians 11, stripes beyond measure. That means whippings and scourgings. In prison, five times given the lashes. 40 minus one. 40 lashes would kill a man. They whipped him five different occasions, 39 times, right near the point of death. If he took his shirt off, you would see that he bore the marks of beatings. He looked like a POW who had been tormented by captors for years. Jesus served him and he was living as a servant of Jesus. He says three times he was beaten with rods, that he was also stoned. If you're under 25, it's this, not this. It's people throwing rocks at you. In addition, he goes on to talk about shipwrecked, meaning he was on a boat, it capsized, he spent a whole night he says, adrift on the open sea. He says I have night and day, perils of water robbers, perils of my own countrymen and Gentiles, perils on the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren, weariness, toil, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness. If you didn't quit your job by then naked, we're all out. He ultimately endured everything, why? Jesus gave it all to serve him, and he would give it all to serve Jesus. And if Jesus would come from heaven to earth to pursue him, he would do anything he could to pursue others. You and I need to have this heart of Paul, not just the theology, but we're gonna study Paul. And some of you will love the theology of Paul, But I want you to also have the heart of Paul, not just think his thoughts, but have the zeal. He would do anything he possibly could to tell people about Jesus. He wanted the good news of the resurrection of Jesus to get beyond Israel to the nations including ours. He is the apostle to the Gentiles. What that means is, Jesus is Jewish, the early Christians were Jewish, and God wanted the message to get to the nations including ours. Had it not been for Paul's zeal, you and I would not know about Jesus, and this church would not exist, and Christianity, as we have known it for 2000 years, would never have made it to the nations of the earth. There's something more important than your convenience, and his name is Christ. We live in a culture in Arizona that is really fashioned by retirement and vacation. And I'm just here to tell you that we serve Christ, not comfort. We serve Christ, not convenient. And ultimately, Paul was a man who had a very lavish and a very secure lifestyle and gave it all up so that you and I could hear about Jesus. And what he adds in his testimony here, he said, and beyond at all, he concludes with this, my constant concern for the churches. I love Paul's heart and I love the church. I love our church, happy fourth birthday, what God has done here's supernatural, amen. In addition, I love all churches that serve Jesus. And what we're dealing with right now is churches are closed and the message of Jesus is not moving forward. And they're saying that one in three Christians will never return to church, and the 20% of churches will possibly close in the next 18 months. And what I'm telling you is this, if we care about suffering and human suffering, we have to care about the worst suffering, the eternal

suffering. Then ultimately, I don't know when you will die, and everybody's freaking out, "Oh, we're gonna die." We all knew this well before. Everybody dies. Did anyone not know this? The question is what happens next? And so we need to tell people about Jesus so that he can prepare them for eternity, because for us, this is as close to hell as we will get. That's why it's all on fire right now. Let me reload. In addition, Paul not only serves in deed, he serves in word. This is how we serve, in word and deed. He is a wise man filled with the spirit of wisdom. He had an incredible, impeccable education. In Acts 22, it says he studied under the leading Rabbi in that day. Gamaliel, this would be like getting into an Ivy League school, and then graduating at the top of the class. He was fluent in three, possibly four languages, the Old Testament language of Hebrew, Aramaic, the New Testament language of Greek, and possibly Latin. He has an incredible, impeccable mind. He writes books of the Bible. I'll explain those in a moment, but on a hundred occasions, he just quotes the Old Testament. Hundreds and thousands of times, he references and alludes to it. He does so from memory and heart, because he is walking and he is also in prison. Now when it comes to your Bible, and I know many of you are new, we're glad to have you. The Bible is really a book in two parts. The Old Testament is 39 different books preparing us for the coming of Jesus. The New Testament is 27 books telling us about the coming of Jesus and the ensuing movements of Christianity. Of those 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are written by Paul. He may have written Hebrews, were uncertain of its authorship. If so, he would be the author of 14 books. In the book of Acts, which is the history book of the New Testament, from chapter 13 through the end of Acts in acts 28, the focus is on the mission work of Paul. In addition, the number one contributor to the New Testament is an author named Luke. He's a medical doctor, he writes Luke on the life of Christ, and Acts on the life of Christians. And he is traveling companions with Paul. Paul is this pastor, dear friend, and Luke, the medical doctor, is the one who puts Paul back together after the beatings, riots and imprisonments. What I am telling you is in addition, in 2 Peter three, Peter, who is the leader of the disciples, writes two books of the New Testament, 1 and 2 Peter, he says that Paul is a beloved brother who writes Scripture with the wisdom that God gives him. So everyone knew that Paul is writing books of the Bible. Furthermore, what I'm telling you is if we lose Paul, we lose the majority of the New Testament. So much of what we know and believe about the person and work of Jesus Christ does not exist apart from Paul serving us in word, giving us the Word of God. How many of you are so sick of bad news? Paul is all about good news. How many of you are sick of all the problems? Paul is all about Jesus as the solution. I would argue that at least in our nation, there has perhaps never been a more incredible opportunity for the hope of Jesus Christ to be known, and the good news of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed as Paul instructs and models than right now. I believe there is a divine time right now where the Word of God needs to be unleashed, and the need is perhaps greater than ever. Now, when it comes to Paul, what I want you to know is that his insight is unprecedented and unparalleled. Let me give you a few quotes. The early church father, John Chrysostom, he anticipated it in the image of scales, weighted balance. He says, "Put the whole world on one side. "Everything that everyone has ever taught or thought. "And on the other side of the scale," he says, "you will see that the soul of Paul outweighs it." What he's saying is this. Everyone versus Paul, Paul's thoughts are heavier, they are weightier, they are deeper. In addition, a guest in the church further said that he wished to have seen Christ in the flesh and Paul in the pulpit. He's saying, I wish I could

have seen Jesus and heard Paul. In addition, Martin Luther calls Paul "the wisest man after Christ." Now, let me say, our world values intellect but not wisdom. There are people that are educated beyond their intelligence. There are people that have more degrees than Fahrenheit, but if they don't have the Spirit of God, they have no wisdom. If you don't know what this looks like, find a college, walk onto campus, find a professor and just ask a few questions. You'll see that this is confirmed fact. That you can have a great education and no wisdom. That's why some of the smartest people do some of the dumbest things. Amen. That's why we're like they're very offensive. We've only begun, this is the introduction. We're still on verse one. It has 434 verses. Imagine how bad it's gonna get. Now, this being said, here's what I want you to know. When you study Paul, and we're gonna study him together for the better part of a year, two things are gonna happen. First thing, there are things that he is going to say that you're gonna find very complicated and confusing. Peter says this in 2 Peter three. He said there are some things that Paul writes that are hard to understand. Here's what Peter's saying. I'm filled with the Spirit of God, I wrote two books of the Bible, Jesus taught me for three years and Paul's way smarter than me and gives me a headache. That's what he's saying. So if you read Paul and you're like, he's smart, I'm not, welcome to the club, you're in good company. When you read Paul, there will be things that are hard to understand. I'll give you some clues. We're gonna get into something called predestination and election. One of you are like, yeah, the rest of you're like, no. Okay, now, here's the big idea. 'Cause some of you are Americans, you think not at all, we need to vote. Here's what I would ask, how's that going? How's it, anybody? It's working so well. We're all unified, looking forward to the future. No, you know what we need? Let Jesus vote. When election is that ultimately Jesus votes, he votes for who gets to enter the kingdom of God. So we're gonna get into things like election and predestination and the Holy Spirit, and all these things, and you know what? Your brain's gonna hurt. You're just gonna be like, "Oh, gosh, my brain hurts." It's because your brain is smaller than Paul's, that's why. He's wiser than you. So here's what I'd say. Don't skip it, don't change it, dig into it. Dig into it. Number two, as you read Paul, you're gonna be very offended. He's gonna say some stuff, you're gonna be like, "That's very offensive. "My inner child just got a spanking." You're gonna feel it. Okay, you're gonna feel it. Let me give you some examples. Paul's gonna say very soon that we're all bad sinners. So you'll be like, "Not me. "I'm a good person. "My mom said I have a good heart." Your mom's a false prophet. She's a liar. In a few weeks, probably when Facebook bans me, I'm gonna be in Romans one. And it has these crazy ideas, like male and female. Okay, you'll be like, no, it's a spectrum. No, it's not. It's not. Boy, girl, boy girl. And it says that sex is for marriage. Marriage is for boy and a girl. Crazy ideas, I know, wacky. And it's gonna talk about all kinds of gender issues and sexual issues and gender confusion and transgenderism. It's just an old bug. It doesn't relate to us. Yeah, it does. And what's gonna happen is, you're gonna be very offended by it. Hey, and some of you, you single guys, here's what I want you do. Bring your girlfriend so I can make her your ex-girlfriend. That's where we're going in Romans one, okay? So now when we get there, here's what's gonna happen. You're gonna read it and you're gonna think it's wrong. You know what? You're wrong. That's so offensive and insightful. Very helpful. So when you read Paul, either he's wrong or you're wrong. You're wrong. And I know right now on social media, there's some 22-year old guy in his mom's house, borrowing the internet she paid for, typing, "I disagree." You don't count. You are not

Paul. You're not that smart. I'm gonna tell your mom to change the password to the internet so you can stop saying things. Actually, I had a single guy tell me what to him it's like. Well, that's Paul's opinion. Your- Oh, please listen. So what's gonna happen then, is when you read Paul and you disagree, here's what I want you to practice. We'll all practicing it right now. Repeat after me,

- I'm.

- I'm.

- Wrong.

- Wrong.

- And if you're married, I just saved your marriage. Say it all the time. You've saved your marriage. There are times you read the Word of God, if you disagree, you got to say I'm wrong. I'm wrong. Because ultimately, we cannot be conformed to the pattern of this world. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Paul says that later in Romans. That ultimately worship including our lives must include our thoughts as we think God's thoughts after him. Repentance is this concept of change, and repentance starts in the mind. If I disagree, I'm wrong and I need to change my mind so that I can agree with the Word of God. And what he is doing is he is modeling for us through his own testament. Let me say this, if there's hope for Paul, there's hope for all of us. If there's grace for Paul, there's grace for all of us. If Jesus can fix Paul, Jesus can fix any of us. If Jesus can use Paul, Jesus can use any of us, amen? Okay, so he uses the worst guy to do the best things to give the rest of us a little hope. But it all starts with being served by Jesus and then taking the posture of a servant. And if you will adopt this as your lifestyle as Paul did. I just telling you, you'll have a better marriage, better relationships, better friendships, we'll have a better church, you'll contribute to a better company, and we'll have a better world because there's only three kinds of relationships. And let me just start by saying, we all live on a spectrum, from very selfish to a servant. We all start very selfish, and by the grace of God, we need to actively pursue service. To selfish people, it's a brutal relationship. It's a war. I'm gonna win, know I'm gonna win. You're gonna lose, know you're gonna lose. A selfish person and the servant. That's an abusive relationship. I give, you take. I win, you lose. A servant and a servant is a beautiful relationship. What God wants for your marriage is two servants, what God wants for your family, his servants. Now, let me say this, how many of you're parents? Here's a little parenting tip. The lie is if our children just had better servants, they would be better children. If we could just get a better teacher, if we could get better coach, if we get a better kids ministry director, we get a better student ministry director, if we get a better tutor, if we get a better nanny, all of those things might help. But your child will never mature by being served only by serving. You cannot be like Jesus without serving. The best thing for you is to serve and the best thing for everyone is to serve. And the point is this. That your life is gonna have problems and pains. And so what you need over your life is a purpose that is greater than your problems and your pains. And that purpose is to serve your Lord Jesus Christ. And what

this is a great opportunity is your role as servant never changes though your responsibilities of serving can change. So whether you're single married or divorced, whether you have kids or an empty nester, whether you are employed or unemployed, whether you're going up the corporate ladder or fell to the bottom, you can still serve. Your role never changes, though your responsibilities will change. And no matter what, there is always a purpose over your life that is greater than the pains and the problems of your life. That's the testimony of Paul. That was a good first verse. Okay, let's get another one. Okay, here we go. It's all about Jesus. This is what I love to say. He's gonna talk about the gospel. That literally means good news. In a world filled with bad news, we need some good news. "The gospel of God which he promised beforehand "through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures." He's talking about the Old Testaments, and the prophets who prophesied the coming of Jesus. I'll share a few with you in a moment. "Concerning his Son," that's Jesus, "who was descended from David." That is indicating that he would come as a king over a kingdom. "According to the flesh," that Jesus would come in a physical body, "was declared to be the Son of God in power "according to the Spirit." He was anointed, filled and led by the Holy Spirit and gives the same spirit to us, the spirit of holiness, by His resurrection from the dead. I've really good news, Jesus isn't dead. I have really good news Jesus conquered Satan, sin, death, held the wrath of God. We killed him, he killed death, he is alive right now, he is answering prayers, he is changing lives, he is forgiving sin, he is altering destiny. He's still serving right now. He's resurrected. Jesus Christ, our Lord. We want you all to participate in this allegiance to Jesus as our Lord. "Through whom we have received grace and apostleship "to bring about the obedience of faith "for the sake of his name among all the nations." What he's saying is this. Everyone needs Jesus. Every culture needs Jesus. Every nation needs Jesus. Every language needs Jesus. Every race needs Jesus. And we live in this foolish world, where we think that the highest authority is culture, over all cultures is Christ. Well, these people think this way and these people think that way, well over them all is Jesus. And we all need to be an allegiance to the same Lord. And culture does not replace Christ. Culture needs to bend its knee to Christ, because Christ belongs to all nations and rules over all nations. Our Jesus is a big Jesus, our Jesus is an in-charge Jesus, our Jesus is an anointed appointed authority. That's our Jesus, amen.

- Amen.

- All right, you both fired up. Let me let you know a little secret. This ain't a library, okay? You can make noise. I know that you've not been out of the house much and everywhere kind of stinks right now. But we're pretty excited to see you. So if you wanna make a little noise, you're welcome to, okay, all right? I know it's NFL kickoff day and you guys are gonna go home. And here's what you grown men are gonna do. You're gonna sit on the couch and critique athletes. You should to go faster. You can't even get up, you'd spill the chili. You're gonna sit on the couch, but if a guy carries a dead pig over a chalk line, you're gonna jump up, shout and cheer. What I'm saying is be as excited about the resurrection of Jesus as you are touched on. I'm just throwing it out there as an encouragement, that's all I'm saying. So he's gonna tell us here about Jesus. Let me tell you about Jesus. His first name is derivative of Joshua, Christ means anointed, chosen by God as the Savior and Messiah. He lived about 2000 years ago. He grew

up in a small rural town with peasant parents who were probably teenagers. The size of the home he grew up in was most likely about the same size as the parking stall you parked your car in. But the first 30 years of his life, he lived in obscurity. He swung a hammer as a carpenter with his adoptive dad. And then he had a three-year ministry that included preaching sermons and healing sick people and casting out demons and doing the supernatural. Religious people hated him. Broken people loved him. Arrogant people hated him. They opposed them, they harassed him, they lied about him. They ultimately betrayed him. They arrested him and they crucified him. And just as he promised, three days later, after dying in your place for your sins as the suffering servant, he came back roaring very much to life. He conquered sin, he conquered death, he conquered Satan, he endured the wrath of God and he showed up to Paul, and Paul could deny this fact. Jesus is who he says he is and Jesus does what he says he does. And Paul became a Christian. And in the wake of Jesus' resurrection, Christianity is the biggest movement of any sort of kind in the history of the world. A billion people on earth today claim that Jesus is their Lord. We measure time by the life, death, burial resurrection of this man, Jesus, B.C is before Christ, A.D is Anno Domini, the year of our Lord. We celebrate his birth every Christmas. We celebrate his resurrection every Easter. More songs have been sung to him, more paintings painted of him, more books written regarding him, more lives devoted to him than anyone who has ever lived on the history of planet Earth. There's nobody bigger than Jesus. There's nobody better than Jesus.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- There's nobody bigger than Jesus. There's nobody better than Jesus. And what Paul is saying is the prophets told us he was coming, so we would be ready. Lemme share with you just a few examples. There are hundreds, but I won't share them all. I will just share a few. 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah 7:14, "The Lord himself will give you a sign. "The virgin," young teenage, unmarried Mary, "will be with child, will give birth," not just to a child but a male son, "and they will call him Immanuel," which means what? God with us. Jesus is God come from heaven to earth. Well, where will he be born? 700 B.C, Micah 5:2, "Bethlehem, though you are small, little town, "out of you will come for me one "who will be ruler over Israel," king, "whose origins are from old, from ancient times, in the original Hebrew, eternity. The eternal God is gonna come as a king, and he's gonna be born in the town of Bethlehem. Malachi 3:1, 400 BC, "I will send my messenger," that's John the baptizer, "who will prepare the way before me, the Lord," that's the Lord Jesus, "you are seeking will come to his temple." This gives us a historic designation timeline deadline. The temple stood until 70 A.D, and then it was torn down, it was destroyed. The temple was the meeting place between people and God. It has the presence of God. Sacrifices were made there for sin by a priest. Once Jesus died for our sin and rose, we no longer have a temple because we no longer need a temple. We don't go to a place, we go to a person named Jesus. We don't have a priest, we have a great high priest. We don't offer sacrifices, we trust in His sacrifice once for all. The temple was destroyed because we don't need it anymore. We have all we need in Jesus. Therefore my Jewish friends who are waiting the coming of a Savior, Messiah, you missed him. His name is Jesus. He came to the temple. The temple has been closed for almost 2000 years. You need Jesus. He's a Jewish guy, you'll

like him, okay? In addition, Psalm 22:16, 1000 years B.C, "A band of evil men has encircled me, "they have pierced my hands and my feet." What is that? The crucifixion of Jesus through the most sensitive nerve centers on the human body, the hands and the feet. This not only predicts the crucifixion of Jesus, this predicts the invention of crucifixion. You may not know this. Crucifixion was not invented for a few hundred years after this prophecy by the Persians. Not only does this predict how Jesus would die, it predicts that this mode of execution would be invented. And he was nailed through the hands and the feet as was predicted. 1000 years B.C, Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Who said that? When did Jesus say that? On the cross. He quoted Psalm 22:1, you know why? He wanted to let us know that he was fulfilling the prophecy. Jesus trusted the Word of God, Jesus preached the Word of God, Jesus prayed the Word of God, Jesus fulfilled the Word of God. Oh my goodness, he's gonna die in our place for our sins. He's gonna endure the wrath of God, he will be forsaken, he will be put to death. Good news, 1000 years B.C, Psalm 16:10, "You will not abandon me to the grave." He's gonna die and be buried, but he will not let the Holy One, and there's only one who's holy, his name is Jesus, see decay. So here's who we're waiting for. We're waiting for a male son to be born to a virgin mother, who came down from heaven, in Bethlehem, from eternity, prepared in advance by a messenger, showing up before 70 A.D at the temple, crucified through the hands and the feet, forsaken by God, dying in our place for our sins, enduring the wrath of God, being put in a grave, and then coming out and defeating death. What's his name?

- Jesus.

- Jesus, people need Jesus. Everybody needs Jesus. All the questions are ultimately answered in the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus. This row has a lot of problems, but there's one solution, his name is Jesus. Everything that the Bible promised came true. You can trust the Word of God. Two things I want you to know. Number one, God wrote this book. God wrote this book. Number two, God knows and rules the future and reveals it to us. The God who is good for all of his prophecies and promises is true for those that remain. When God says that there is a heaven and there is a hell, it's because he knows and rules the future, and he is preparing you for eternity. And I'll just tell you what? How many of you are sick of people predicting the future and not getting it right? Oh gosh, this has been a year of false prophets. It's gonna get better, it's gonna get worse. I recently heard an expert, I won't say his name. He's like, it'll either get better or worse, thank you. What revelation? Yes, it will get better or worse. Thank you so much for that clarity. Now I know how to proceed forward in full confidence. Over and over, we try to predict the future, right? I mean, right now, what are we trying to do? Predict the future? How's it going? We don't know. We don't know. Some of you say, "I know." No, you don't. Only God knows the future. So here's the good news. We don't need to know the future, but we can know the God who does. And we can understand that He is the Lord over the future, and He is the Savior through the process into the future. And his name is Jesus. So let me make this real personal. You are called to belong to Jesus Christ. Romans 1:6 and 7. Lemme make this real personal. "Including you." You know what? All that we're talking about. The love of God, the grace of God, relationship of God, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, it's for you. Not amazing? It's for you. It's for you, that guy with the beard. That's good luck, by the way. The guy with the hat.

Right, the gal with the boner hair. It's for you. When's the last time somebody said, "Do you know what?" I'm for you. When's the last time somebody said, "I'm here for you?" When somebody said, "I want what's best for you." His name is Jesus. He's for you. And you are called to belong to Jesus Christ 'cause you're loved by God. Lemme unpack all this for you. "And called to be saints: Grace to you and peace "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Let me share a bit of my story with you. I met my wife, Grace, March 12th, 1988. We were 17 years of age in high school. And she gave me this Bible. This was my first Bible. It's got a new cover 'cause I wore the first one out. I went off to state university fall of 1989, okay? Class of '89. All right, okay. Okay. It was '89, we were rocking like dockin'. It was good times back then. And I went off to college at a state university. And all the classes that I took had very negative things to say about Christ, Christianity and the Bible. Go to the anthropology class, arts ruin civilizations, go into the philosophy class, arts oppressed ideologies. Go into the gender studies class, art's very binary. And they had negative things to say, and then eventually, a lot of my teachers were talking very negatively about a guy named Paul. I didn't know. And then to the philosophy class, they started talking about Paul as well. So I thought I got to figure out who this guy Paul is. So I go back to my dorm. And I didn't know the Bible. So I got this Bible, and I'm looking for the book of Paul. Hey, Grace, did I get the whole Bible? I can't find Paul. I didn't know that there wasn't a book called Paul, there was a guy named Paul who wrote books. So then I found out that Paul wrote books. So I'm looking for books written by Paul 'cause everybody's trashing them in all of my university classes. And the first book I found was Romans. And it's not because he wrote it first, but they placed it first among his letters because it's in the prominent, preeminent position. So I'll never forget, it was the fall of 1989. I didn't have a crisis or an emergency. I wasn't a drug addict. I didn't murder my mother. I wasn't smuggling heroin for the cartel. We always put people up who have the craziest testimonies. I was just a happy pagan, 19 years of age. That's it. No heroin, no dead body, nothing, just me. So I sit down on my dorm, and I literally open this Bible to Romans chapter one just to see what it says. I wasn't expecting anything. And I read Romans 1:6. You were called to belong to Jesus Christ. My whole life changed. One verse from Romans. God flipped a switch in my soul that I don't fully understand. All of a sudden, I changed. It was supernatural. If you're a Christian, you know what this is. You know what this experience's like. Also, I read it and literally, I just said, "You're called the belong to Jesus Christ." Okay, I belong to Jesus now, literally. I literally stood up from my dorm bed. Okay, I belong to Jesus now. My life is no longer my own. So I had to find a church, found a good church that preach through books of the Bible. And that's one of the reasons I love doing so to this day. So I'm in the church, and they say, "Hey, you gotta sign up for the men's retreat." I'm like, "Why are they retreating?" I thought they were men, we advance. We advance. Why do we have a reverse gear for men? I don't understand. Okay, I'll go to the retreat. So I sign up for the retreat, and I go to the retreat, and we're singing songs and a lot of beards and Bibles and it was good. And so then the pastor is like, "All right, you guys need to go meet with God." I was like, "All right, where is he?" I don't know what I'm doing. I'm 19, I went to public school. I don't know what I'm doing. And so he's like, "No, no, you gotta go talk to God." I was like, "I don't know the number, not sure the hours." He's like, "No, just go talk to him." I said, "How's that work?" He's like, "Just go talk to him." So I got in the woods, I'm like, "God, it's Mark." I mean you probably know that but- "I'm kinda new." "Yeah, I'm new." I just said, "Jesus, you're the Lord,

"tell me what to do and I'll do it." And he spoke to me audibly. He said, "Marry Grace." Yes. Preach the Bible, I was like, I better read it. Train men, which is my heart. And I'll see you guys on Wednesday night. Okay, I see you guys on Wednesday night. And plant churches. So then Grace and I got married, and I've been preaching the Bible for about 30 years. And then we planted a church before we had kids. And God said plant churches, we planted churches out of that. And then I never thought of it until recently. The Trinity Church is the fulfillment of that prophecy 'cause God said plant churches, we planted one, this is the second church we planted. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy that God spoke over my life at 19. That's why we're here. God's been very gracious. So then I became a pastor and started preaching books of the Bible. I thought, I'm gonna preach Romans, 'cause I got saved reading Romans, I love Romans. And so I started preaching Romans in 1998. And I stopped because it was killing me. I was not ready. Imagine a kid who's in his 20s saying, "I'm gonna hike Everest," and he shows up in flip flops with a Slurpee. You're like, bro, you're not ready for this. You need a little more preparation. So I started preaching Romans and I got partway into it and I'm like, I can't do this. I'm not ready. So literally, since my dorm bed in 1989, I've been waiting 30 years to preach this book of the Bible. I tried it in 1998 and just gave up. So pray for me, I hope to make it to the end. But here's what I'm telling you. God has- Thank you. God has given me this burden for 30 years. So I'm really excited. I'm really excited, okay? And if I'm yelling, it's 'cause I'm really excited, I'm not angry, I'm really, really, really excited. I want you to be really excited. I want you to be more excited than Democrats and Republicans, I want you to be more excited than Saints fans and Patriots fans. I want you to be more excited than people with mask and people without mask. I just want you to be excited about the Bible. That's where I'm at. It's gonna be awesome. So lemme make this real personal for you. You're now gonna make the most important decision of your entire life. And that is whether you will receive or reject Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The most important thing about you is what you decide about Jesus Christ, what you believe about Jesus Christ, how you respond to Jesus Christ. When he says that you are called to belong, see, I get to share with you now the verse that changed my life, and I want it to change your life. 'Cause the same Holy Spirit who used it to change my life, He can use it to change your life. It's why we're here. When it says that you were called to belong, the language there is an invitation to friendship. My first date with Grace, "Do you wanna go out to dinner?" Grace and I just got back from a week together on vacation. "Hey, you wanna go on vacation?" Yeah. It's an invitation to loving, intimate, warm friendship. When it says that you are called to belong, it's Jesus inviting you. Now some of you would wonder, Mark, you're trying to convert me to your religion? No, actually, I'm trying to convert you to a relationship with a person named Jesus who's alive. And Paul is a great example. True or false, he had religion. His problem, his problem, your problem is religion. The solution is a relationship with a person named Jesus. Now some of you would ask, "Pastor Mark, are you trying to convert me?" Exactly. Thank you for paying attention. That's exactly we're trying to do. And he explains this relationship with Jesus using four incredible words. I'll share them with you briefly. Love. Love. Our world has a real shortage of love. It's because we are disconnected from God who is love and the source of love. You can't give something you don't have. And you can't have it unless you get it from Jesus. Love. How many people love you? And when it says love, it's this active pursuit that Jesus is pursuing you in relationship to serve you, to lift your burdens and give us blessings.

Some of you have not been loved, some of you have had people say they love you and they just use an abuse you, some of you have only had people pursue you for their benefit, not yours. Jesus is not like that. He comes to love and pursue and serve. In addition, Paul uses this other word. He says that Jesus wants to see you as a saint. This is kind of an odd word. How many of you grew up Catholic like me? Okay, so my name is Father Mark, welcome to our mass, this is my collar. Here's my Levi investment. We're very glad to have you. When you hear saint, you think, oh, those are the superhero Christians. Oh, it's chastity man, and wow, I can't do that. Those are the superheroes. You can laugh, that's funny, come on. Do you know that if you come into relationship with Jesus Christ, he forgives your sin, he lifts your burden of sin, he gives you the blessing of his righteousness, he declares you Holy in his sight, which is what saint means, and ultimately in eternity, Jesus will make you perfect. That ultimately, you are going to be a resurrected perfected you if you belong to Jesus Christ. So what Jesus says is, he says, "Well, I'm not gonna primarily speak "over your life, your past, "I'm gonna speak over your life, my future." This gives you hope that when you become a Christian, you become new and you're in a process that ends in perfection. And so Jesus calls you as he will see you eternally. And then he walks with you into that eternal perfection. This should give you real hope. And this is how we need to see each other. We're in a process that is gonna end in perfection and I wanna see you as you're going to be when Jesus is done with you, and I wanna love you and help you get to that place. He then uses two extraordinary words that our world could use more of grace and peace. What grace means, it means a gift you don't deserve. It means help you don't merit. It means burden lifted, blessing given, and it's not because you earn it, it's because he's good. You know what our world needs right now? A lot more grace. Are people giving each other grace? t's a graceless world. Our canceled culture, our critic culture, our crazy culture, it's a graceless world. The only way that we can have a relationship is with forgiveness and grace. That is true with Jesus and one another. And so if we wanna have healthy relationships, we need to forgive each other and give grace, okay? We need to forgive each other and give grace. I need to learn this so bad, God gave me a wife named Grace. I'm always reminded of the need for Grace. And let me say this, it doesn't matter what you're done. There's grace for you. There's grace, it doesn't matter what you need, there's grace for you. There are two kinds of people, people that need grace, and people that need more grace. And the result, he says is peace. Again, we live in a world that lacks love. We live in a world that lacks hope for people's future. We live in a world that lacks grace and we live in a world that lacks peace, because we live in a world that lacks Jesus. And this piece, it's peace with your past. Some of you have things you regret. You look back, I can't believe I said that, did that. Jesus died for it, you could put it to death. There's peace with your past. In addition, as you look at the future, many of you have fears, and right now let's just say it's a fearful time. But you can have peace for your future knowing that Jesus is the Lord over it, and He is the Savior through it. And that Jesus who brought me this far, will see me through to the end. And there's a peace that comes to the children of God that surpasses all understanding. So here's what I'm asking you, would you please receive Jesus invitation to a relationship? He loves you. He died for you. He rose for you. He's been pursuing you. He's prepared a place for you. He has grace for you. He has love for you. He wants to be the savior of your life and the Lord over your life. So I'm gonna ask you now to pray with me and to welcome Jesus into relationship with you. If you would pray this prayer,

Jesus will answer it yes every single time. And the Christians who are here would tell you, it's the best decision you will ever make and it's the one decision you'll never regret. I've never met anyone. I've met a lot of people that have made decisions they regret. I've never met anyone who met Jesus and regretted meeting Jesus. For those who are saints, would you testify that as your story. That's your story. So here's what I'm gonna do. I'm going to lead you in a prayer. I'm gonna ask you just to do two things. One, you don't have to put your hands up but just put 'em palms up because we come to God first that he would serve us and give so that we could serve others. And I'm gonna ask you to close your eyes. So raise your hands and just close your eyes, everyone. Here's my question to you, friend. Are you ready to receive Jesus? Are you ready for that relationship to begin? Are you ready to receive forgiveness of sin, eternal life, relationship with the living God? If so, please pray after me. Dear Jesus.

- Dear Jesus.

- I am a sinner.

- I am a sinner.

- I need a Savior.

- I need a Savior.

- I believe you are God.

- I believe you are God.

- I believe you died for me.

- I believe you died for me.

- I believe you rose for me.

- I believe you rose for me.

- I believe that you can hear this prayer.

- [Congregation] I believe that you can hear this prayer.

- I'm asking you to be my Savior.

- [Congregation] I'm asking you to be my Savior.

- I want to begin this relationship.

- [Congregation] I want to begin this relationship.

- And I invite you to be Lord over my life.

- [Congregation] And I invite you to be Lord over my life.

- Thank you for hearing and answering.

- [Congregation] Thank you for hearing and answering.

- In Jesus name.

- In Jesus name.

- Amen.

- Amen.

- Amen. Welcome to the family of God, welcome to forgiveness of sin, welcome to burdens lifted, Welcome to blessings given, welcome to hope, saint, welcome to the family, saint. For those of you who have not received Jesus Christ, we're gonna throw a party to honor Jesus, we call it worship, and we're gonna baptize the new Christians. Everybody okay with that? If you are Christian who's never been baptized or you just prayed that prayer with me, go to the back or if you have questions about Jesus, go to the back, we'd love to talk to you, pray with you. Some of you are like, "I didn't know "I was gonna get baptized" God didn't tell you 'cause he knew you wouldn't show up. He told us he was gonna save you. So he told us to have towels, shorts and T-shirts, and he just told you, so now we're all on the same page ready to go. We are ready to baptize you, and this shows the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior, our God, our friend, our Lord. We would love to baptize you showing what Jesus did for you, and the future that he has for you, amen.

- Amen.

- All right, if this doesn't fire you up, your wood's wet. It's a good day. Here's what we're gonna do. I'm gonna share a little testimony video as we prepare to baptize the new Christian sticker. Every time somebody gets baptized, I want you to make more noise than a Cardinals fan. Watch the video.

- I'm getting baptized 'cause Jesus Christ died on the cross for me and shed his blood for my life.

- So I wanna be baptized 'cause I love Jesus and I wanna pursue him for the rest of my life.

- I love Jesus and it's time for me take the next step.
- I wanna get baptized because I love Jesus and I wanna proclaim that in a public way.
- What Jesus has done for me is he's saved my life.
- Jesus has pulled me from the disparaging depths of my own addiction and my life, my flesh.