

**Message of Paul:
The Roman Road**
Book of Romans

Intro: Everyone wants to go to heaven when they die. I know I do. In fact, wanting to go to heaven was my initial reason for crying out to God to save me when I was a boy. Many other things were going on inside me spiritually. I was learning and memorizing the Scriptures. I had already memorized Ephesians 2 where Paul talks about salvation through faith in Christ.

I wanted to be saved. And I knelt down in the living room with my father and asked Christ to come into my heart. I had the privilege just recently of helping a young boy do just that. He was worried about his sin, and he wanted to be forgiven.

Our salvation is the central teaching and purpose of the Bible. How does this happen? How do we become one of God's children? How do we know that have been saved? How do we know that we have been born again? What does it mean to be converted?

All of these terms: saved, born again, converted, become a Christian, justified, redeemed, point to the transforming work of God in the heart of people like you and me. The great missionary of the Early Church, seeks to describe the nature of salvation in his first and longest letter—and the one that most resembles a theological treatise—the Book of Romans.

We are going to touch on a number of verses in this great book. We will make a journey through the book. Last week we looked at an interrupted journey when God brought his transforming power to the writer of this text.

Journeys often give God an opportunity to do his work in us. Jacob was on a journey when God appeared to him at Bethel. Moses was on an occupational commute when he came across the burning bush. Elijah was on the run when he heard the still small voice.

Journeys have the potential to break up our routines, pry us out of our ruts, and help us see and hear what we may have been ignoring.

You could be on your “Damascus Road” right now, on a collision course with your Maker though you have not planned such a meeting and do not expect it. This is the intriguing dimension of Paul's experience on the road. In some ways, it is the experience of every man who discovers the presence of God in his life.

Paul starts with our need and works toward God's provision.

I. Our Moral Failure: All have sinned: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*

A. “Sin” is a moral term. I always check the vocabulary of children who are seeking God to see if they have learned the meaning of this three-letter word and to see if they are conscious of their own sinfulness.

1. The word “sin” presupposes a divine standard of behavior to which we are all called. This standard is not of our own making. It exists outside of ourselves. And it is there, judging us, no matter how much we want it to go away or say we do not believe it. We prefer to call our sin by other names: mistakes, mess ups, failures, and these are accurate to some extent. But the word “sin” goes the full way and describes the root of our mistakes and failures—we have broken God's command and disobeyed our

Creator.

2. Three words describe moral failure in the Greek of the NT.

a. Sin—“missing the mark.” There is a target out in front of you that is the person you ought to be. You always fall short. Here it is “fall short of the glory of God.”

b. Transgression—“breaking the boundary.” This is a geographical word that describes our failure to stay within the parameters set by God. We transgress—we cross the lines. We go where we are not supposed to go.

c. Iniquity—“twisting the good.” A third way that we sin is by twisting what God has made good. We gorge ourselves on delicious food, thus being gluttons. We drink alcohol to excess to get the buzz, thus being drunkards. We take prayer requests to the point of impropriety, thus becoming gossips.

B. Sin is universal in the human family. “Sinner” is an appropriate title for all humans, including you. All have sinned.

1. We know our own sin. *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst* (1 Timothy 1:15).

2. We live with regrets.

***VIDEO: You can probably list your moral failures right now. Paul does this in his testimony. You have some space there on your notes. You can use abbreviations to keep your privacy. No looking.

II. Our Moral Failure Judged: the wages of sin is death—*For the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23).

A. Sin is our responsibility, not God’s.

1. God is not the author of sin. The Bible tells us that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all* (1 John 1:5).

2. God created us to love him, but any true love must be freely given. This moral freedom was a great gift, a gift that makes us like God himself. In our freedom to love, we chose instead to disobey.

3. The three-fold assault on human freedom: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Humans succumbed to the temptation of Satan to violate God’s law and elevate themselves to the place of God. Humans also succumb to the temptation of the world around them—the forbidden enticements to excess and self-destruction. And they succumb to their own inner appetites that are often depraved.

4. Humans must answer for their sin. This is the nature of a universe that has moral structure. God rules in this universe, and he is holy and righteous. He cannot tolerate sin.

B. Death here means “separation.” This separation happens in at least three ways. These are the judgments against sin.

1. Physically. When we die physically we are separated from our bodies and separated from our friends and family members.

2. Spiritually. When we sin, we experience the “death” of many good things: love, joy, peace, relationships, etc.

3. Eternally. Jesus spoke of *Gehenna*, originally the city dump outside of Jerusalem that burned continually with the garbage of the city and the carcasses of dead animals. He taught us that we should avoid hell at all costs. For Jesus, hell is a real place where real people go when they die. To go to hell is called “eternal death.”

***VIDEO: Think back to before you met Christ. What kind of death was stalking you? Did you lack love, joy, and peace? Were your relationships broken? List some of those things at Point 2.

III. God’s Loving Provision for Our Sin: He sent his Son: *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

A. God loves us. He made us with the ability to love him, but we always go our own way and assert our independence from him.

B. God loves us even when we are living in sin. He still loves us—passionately. Jesus illustrated this both in his own fellowship with sinners and in the stories that he told about God. God is the loving Father who waits to receive the wayward son. You can be assured of the love of God for you today.

C. God demonstrates his love in many ways: through his creation, through people in our lives, and through the circumstances of our lives. But most of all he demonstrates his love for us in that he was not willing to allow us to fall into sin with no way out. So he sent his One and Only Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sin.

1. Jesus was God's perfect Son.

2. He died on the cross.

3. He died, not for his own sins, but for ours. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).*

D. God’s love for you should be clear. Review your life before Christ, and look for the indications of his love.

***VIDEO. List on your outline the ways in which God reached out to you in love even when you were going your own way.

IV. Our Free Response to God’s Loving Provision: Repenting and Believing-- *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Romans 10:9-10).*

A. Saul of Tarsus tells us repeatedly about the moment he turned from his sin to the Savior.

B. Most people remember the moment. Dori Foye told me about kneeling down in her mother’s home and asking for God’s salvation. I have been present many times when individuals, burdened by their sin, cried out to God in repentance and faith.

***VIDEO. Write down some of the details about the moment of your own spiritual transformation—when God saved you and you were born again by his Spirit.

Conclusion: If you do not have a story to tell about how you came to know Christ, you can have one after today.