

Jesus Christ in the Book of Romans

by John Piper

The sermon is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is and what He has done, particularly through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 33:16

Scripture: Romans 8:3

Topics: "Christ Redemption", "Christian Living"

Description

This sermon is a heartfelt prayer of gratitude and dedication to God, transitioning from speaking mainly about God to speaking directly to Him. The speaker reflects on the person of Christ, His work of redemption, and the blessings believers receive through Him. The sermon emphasizes the importance of embracing and living out the benefits of Christ's accomplishments, rededicating to God's global purpose, and finding hope and joy in Him.

Transcript

Now Lord, with our eyes wide open, I want to thank you for eight and a half years of mainly speaking about you, not only about you, but mainly. I have spoken to you every time I've begun these messages. I think without exception I've spoken to you.

I've sought your help to speak these words by your power and for your glory, but mainly it's been about you. I've tried to model my speaking on the lines of the Apostle Paul, who said, for we are not like so many peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as from God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ. So I have tried, Lord, to unfold the book of Romans from you and through you and all the while, even often while preaching, praying to you.

So I have spoken to you and I do admit though that it's almost always been about you. And I think, Lord, that's the way you meant it to be. At least I see in your word, I see in Romans twice you said that the gospel is the gospel of Christ, the gospel of the Son of God, and therefore I don't regret that these eight years have been mainly about you rather than to you.

But, Lord, it seems to me that the time has come not mainly to speak about you, but mainly to speak to you. Lord, I have gotten so much help from the confessions of St. Augustine. What a legacy he left us.

What a work he did in his life, delivering him from lust and fornication, so much lechery, vanity, pride. What a great thing you did, O Lord, in Augustine's life. And those 300 pages called the confessions are remarkable, Lord, because every line of the confessions is addressed to you.

I've never read a book like that, Lord, not even the Bible. And I got so much help from it, it just occurred to me that I should do that. I should just pray this final sermon.

All to you, not mainly about you, but just to you. So that's what I'd like to do, Lord. I would like to praise you.

My heart is brimming with praises to what you are in this book. And my heart is brimming with thanks for what you accomplished, recorded in this book. And my heart is overflowing with an eagerness with my people to embrace afresh every benefit and every gift that you bought for us when you accomplished what you did as the person that you are.

And I am so eager to rededicate myself to the great purpose that you have for the world revealed in this book. So that's what I'd like to do, Lord. I want to thank you for the permission.

I don't assume, Lord, I don't assume that this is right or good. You gave me a daughter and I went into her room last night. No, Thursday night.

I forget when it was, Lord. You know. And I said, Talitha, I'm going to pray the whole sermon.

I'm not going to preach. I'm going to pray for 30 minutes. And she said, we'll have to close our eyes and it will be boring.

And I said, you won't have to close your eyes. Lord, what I feel so thankful for is that you directed me to the text that justifies what I'm doing. You took me to Romans 8, verses 9 and 10, which goes like this.

You described the people sitting in front of me with these words. Romans 8, 9 and 10. You described these people like this.

You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If, in fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Lord, I said, so what are you saying with the words, if Christ is in you? Are you not saying, Lord, that every son and daughter of yours that sits before me, you're in them? So that if I were to ask the question, to whom shall I look as I pray, would it not be right to say, look at me in my people? Look at me in my people. So this does not feel as strange as it once did to me. To look you in the face and pray to Jesus, because he's in you.

Lord, you have made it plain that you are in them. And my prayer is that as I pray, my praises, my thanks, my embrace, and my rededication, that some of those in this room, Lord, who have not prayed for a long time would find themselves joining me in prayer. In fact, Lord, I ask this.

I ask that in the years to come, as people remember back on the Christmas Eve sermon that got prayed, it will be a sweet reminder to them, you're in me. He looked at me in the face when he was talking to you. He looked me right in the face and was talking to you.

You're in me. May God grant you to feel the wonder. May that be a Christmas gift.

Oh, God, do that. Would you make it a Christmas gift to this people that as I speak to you and look at them, they would feel the awesome truth that Christ is in me. So, Lord, my hope is that I might now be granted grace to pray in the Spirit, to praise you for the glorious person you are revealed to be in this book, and to thank you for the glorious accomplishment that you have wrought, recorded in this book, and to embrace afresh, receive afresh, take afresh, believe afresh, all the benefits that you wrought for me and for us in this book, and then grant, oh God, that we would dedicate ourselves to your great global purpose as revealed in this book.

So, Lord, who are you? Who are you? Your inspired apostle had no hesitation. He got down to that business as soon as he took up his pen in chapter 1 and said, God promised before through his prophets in the holy scriptures concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, declared to be Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord. You caused him, oh Christ, to get right down to business.

You are the Christ. You are the Messiah. You are the long-awaited King of Israel.

You are the Son of David. You are the one come to fulfill all the promises. You are the one to bring in the kingdom.

You are the Son of God, not like we are sons of God. You are uniquely the Son of God, the Son of God who has always eternally been the Son of God, never coming into being, never made the Son of God, eternally begotten, not made very God of very God. Is that not why you inspired your apostle to rise as high as he has ever written in chapter 9? Verse 3 with the words, the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.

Is that not why you moved him to write that? That I would now at this year's end, in praise to you, not fall short of praising you for anything less than the fullness of what you are, my God and my Lord. When you were born of a virgin, you did not come into being. We know that because you put it in his heart to say in chapter 8, God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

God sent you into flesh, Lord Jesus. You didn't come into being with flesh. You put on flesh because you always were.

Second person of the Godhead, Son of God, born of a virgin that you might be, that you might be Messiah, Son of David, promise fulfiller, Savior. 37 times you were called Jesus in this book. And your own angel told Joseph what that meant.

You were called his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. That's why you put it in his heart to say Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, 37 times in this glorious letter that you inspired. So, I praise you, we praise you, we praise you for all that you are.

Christ, Messiah, Jesus, the Savior, Lord, the very word used for God in the Old Testament, very God of very God. You are, Lord Jesus. And my heart turns with overflowing gratitude now to thank you for everything you accomplished for me and us.

Nobody else could do it, Lord. It had to be you. It had to be God in the flesh.

Nobody else could bear our sins. Is that not why Romans 8, verse 3 says, God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. It couldn't be done any other way, Lord.

It had to be you. No one else could bear the sins of the world but God in the flesh. No one else could die a death that would count for so many people but you.

And you did it. You came. And you were faithful.

Servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs. Oh, how faithful you were in the service of your Father's glory. And then, absolutely, sinlessly, righteous, beginning to happen.

Sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. A flesh, Lord Jesus, just like ours, minus sin, and perfectly righteous. You fulfilled every part of the law, every expectation that I have failed in, and your obedience came to consummation in your suffering.

For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Oh, how precious is your obedience to me. Far more precious than mine to you.

Which is so poor. And then, you suffered. Oh, how you suffered.

You did not please yourself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. Paul said that of you in Romans 15. And then, you died.

Jesus, publicly I say, that moment when you said, it is finished, is the most important moment in the history of the world. For while we were still sinners, at the right time, you died for the ungodly. Now, scarcely will one die for a righteous man, but for a good man, one might dare to die.

But you, God, showed your love for us in that while we were yet sinners, you, Christ, died. And then, you rose from the dead, never to die again. I love these words that you put in Paul's heart.

We know that you, Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has any dominion over you. Declared, Son of God, in power by the resurrection of the dead.

And what makes it so sweet, Jesus, is that when you entered into death and came out of death, you did not go. You took us with you. You took us right into the grave, so that the curse of our death is now behind us and not in front of us.

And you brought us with you out of the grave, so that our rising from the grave is as sure as yours. For if we have been united with you in a death like yours, we shall certainly be united with you in a resurrection like yours. Thank you for that word.

And when you died, according to chapter 8, verse 3, when you died, God condemned sin in your flesh. Lord, were clearer words ever spoken concerning the most precious doctrine of penal substitution, which to our shame in your church today is questioned and embarrassed and doubted and rejected. What the law could not do, Jesus, weak as it was through the flesh, God did.

Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh. Whose, Lord Jesus, whose? Christ's, yours, not mine. I got a substitute.

My sin, not yours. You had none. You had none.

And God condemned sin in your flesh. Whose? My sin, your flesh. Christ, could it be clearer? Have mercy upon foolish men who mangle this doctrine in our day.

Don't let our church go away from this. May this become the foundation of our life, the foundation of our joy, the foundation of our hope, our marriages, our parenting. Oh, Christ, forbid that we would blaspheme against you by denying that you bore our... And when you bore his condemnation, we received redemption.

We love it. It's an old, great word, Lord Jesus. We don't want to lose it.

The forgiveness of our sins. Nothing we, nothing I, have ever done, nothing I will ever do, nor anything any of us has ever done or will ever do, can add anything to the payment that you made for the forgiveness of our sins. Nothing.

It was finished in all your obedience. All your righteousness consummated. He became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

And in that consummate totality of your obedience, the ground was laid by which we may be in you counted perfect and righteous. So that by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of your imputed righteousness alone, to the glory of God alone, we might be justified forever. Oh, Christ, what a... And in all of that, through all of that, as the goal of all of that, you gave us the best gift of the gospel.

It's called reconciliation with God. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of... Which means that all these glorious things, the forgiveness of our sins and the imputed righteousness and the redemption that we have, are all leading us somewhere, Lord. They're leading us home.

They're leading us home. In the end of the gospel, the glorious news that you have wrought for us is we're home with God. Enjoying Him and seeing Him because of you.

That's why the book ends through you. Through Jesus Christ. And is that not, Lord, what eternal life is? It's all because of you.

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in you. It's the only place, Jesus, where it's found. In you.

And oh, how much more could be said about the glory of your work. The work of sending, without which none of us would have been reached. The work of faith awakening.

The work of welcoming. The work of church building and church uniting. The work of signs and wonders.

The work of sanctification. Christ, we could go on and on to celebrate and thank you for your work. But I hasten now to turn from praising you for your glorious being and thanking you for your great accomplishment.

To a fresh embrace for myself and for those who are with me here. A fresh embrace of the benefits that we have received because of that accomplishment by that person. We embrace the truth that we have died to sin and died to the law and now belong to you alone forever.

We embrace afresh the forgiveness of our sins. We embrace the reality that condemnation is now behind us and not in front of us because it happened at the cross. We exalt in the truth that our justifying righteousness is rock solid sure because it's based on a righteousness you performed than a righteousness that we performed.

We affirm with joy that you indwell us by your spirit and are with us forever and ever. We embrace the truth that you unite us to each other in a family called the church in harmony. And oh Jesus, I do not take lightly the sweetness of our fellowship for these eight and a half years.

And I do lay it at the feet of your word and your spirit and pray that it would be preserved. We hold fast to the promise that we are being conformed to the image of the firstborn yourself. And that because of your death and resurrection, Lord Jesus, this conformity to yourself is absolutely guaranteed.

We receive the gift afresh that you enable us to do significant work for the advancement of your kingdom. We glory in the truth that we are fellow heirs with you of all that God owns and all that God is. We take heart that nothing can separate us from your love and from the love of your Father because of the work that you have done to secure us and preserve us.

And rooted in all of this, we receive afresh with joy the words that I believe you speak to us through the apostle in chapter 15. When you say, now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. I thank you that you are a God who loves to give hope to sinners, who loves to give joy to sinners who cast themselves upon you.

And because of all of this, Lord, I come now to say, I hope not just for myself, that I and we rededicate ourselves to the purpose for which you made us, saved us, gathered us. Lord Jesus, none of us knows if we will see another Christmas Eve. And you know what, Lord Jesus? Yes, you know what.

You know what. It doesn't matter. That is not important.

What's important, Lord, is your infinite value and the glory of your Father and the up-building of the church in stable, unshakable faith. And the evangelization of the nations who don't know about you. And the rescuing of perishing sinners in these twin cities.

That's what matters, not whether we live or whether we die. And therefore, to that end, we dedicate ourselves to your purpose. And what is that? To spread a passion for God's supremacy in all things, for the joy of all peoples, through, to the only wise God, be glory forevermore, through Jesus.

Amen.

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