

Romans 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Analysis

For when we were yet without strength (ἔτι γὰρ Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν)—the adjective ἀσθενής (asthenēs) denotes complete powerlessness, moral inability to save oneself. Paul demolishes any notion of human contribution to salvation: Christ died not for the striving but for the helpless, not for the improving but for those utterly incapable.

In due time Christ died for the ungodly (κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν)—God's salvation operates on His timetable (kata kairon, 'at the appointed time'), fulfilling prophetic promises (Galatians 4:4). The preposition ὑπέρ (hyper, 'on behalf of/in place of') signals substitution: Christ died for the ungodly, bearing their penalty. Paul's descriptor ἀσεβῶν (asebōn, 'ungodly') intensifies the scandal—not merely weak but actively impious, enemies of God.

Historical Context

Paul establishes the timing and nature of Christ's death with precision. 'In due time' recalls Galatians 4:4—'when the fullness of time had come.' Christ's death wasn't Plan B after human failure but God's eternal decree executed at the appointed moment. The Greco-Roman world admired heroes dying for worthy causes; Paul announces that Christ died for the unworthy, the ungodly, those without strength to help themselves—a message that subverted all human merit systems.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing your complete 'powerlessness' to save yourself affect your dependence on Christ versus self-improvement efforts?
2. What does Christ dying 'for the ungodly' teach about the nature of divine love versus human love that must be earned?
3. In what areas of life do you still operate as if you must make yourself 'worthy' before God accepts you?

Interlinear Text

ἔτι	γὰρ	Χριστὸς	ὄντων	ἡμῶν	ἀσθενῶν	κατὰ	καιρὸν
yet	For	Christ	were	when we	without strength	in due	time
G2089	G1063	G5547	G5607	G2257	G772	G2596	G2540

ὕπὲρ	ἀσεβῶν	ἀπέθανεν
for	the ungodly	died
G5228	G765	G599

Additional Cross-References

Romans 5:8 (References Christ): But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Colossians 2:13 (Parallel theme): And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Romans 5:10 (References God): For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 4:25 (Parallel theme): Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Titus 2:12 (References God): Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Romans 4:5 (References God): But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Hebrews 9:26 (Parallel theme): For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

1 Timothy 1:9 (References God): Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (References Christ): For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 4:4 (References God): But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,