

The Display of God's Love

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[0 : 00] I want you guys to open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 5.

We're still in the book of Romans. Anybody else really hot? Like, it's hot in here? Yeah, I asked them to turn the air down, but they have to make a phone call to somebody else in a bat cave somewhere to hit the controls and get things going.

So eventually, about the time we leave, it'll be nice and cool, feel great. So you guys don't worry about that. You got those things to fan yourselves, though, okay? All right, so we're in Romans chapter 5 this morning. We're continuing.

In case you guys aren't used to us, if you haven't been here with us before, typically when I preach, I just preach through books of the Bible. That's mostly what I do. We take a few verses every week because I figure it's more important for you to hear what God has to say than for you to hear what I want to say about any given topic on any given week.

And so we just try to faithfully walk through the Scriptures. And we've been going through Romans since last year for quite a while now. And we're in the middle of chapter 5 this week. We're going to be looking at verses 6 down through verse 11.

[1 : 09] And so I want to ask you guys, as we read together, I want to ask you all to stand in honor of God's Word. The Apostle Paul writes, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since therefore we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by His life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

We give you thanks, Father, for this word. And ask you to open it for us this morning. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You guys take a seat. One of the things that we saw last week is that Paul, in Romans chapter 5, particularly in the first half of Romans chapter 5, addresses the universal human need for a sense of security, a sense of safety, a sense of knowing that all that you do and all that you believe is not ultimately in vain.

[2 : 39] Paul does say in 1 Corinthians 15, that if Christ has not been raised, therefore if the gospel is not true, if what we believe turns out to not be true, then we are of all men the most to be pitied.

And so we need to know, we need to have a sense that the faith that we hold is true and genuine and will result in our eternal safety, our eternal security.

We want to know that we're not just jumping through hoops, that we're not just involved in some sort of religious circus while we're here going to church and reading our Bibles and doing these sorts of things, we want to know that we have a firm foundation for our hope that stretches into eternity.

And so last week, in the first few verses of Romans chapter 5, we saw the Apostle Paul lay the groundwork for a sense of security. The truth of the gospel is the first sort of leg of the stool that our security stands upon.

And he lays that out really through the first four chapters of Romans as he explains to us how we come to be saved, how we come to be in a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus alone and by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for us.

[3 : 49] And then he turns his attention to the second leg of that stool that holds up our sense of security, and that is the evidence of our own lives. Is there actual evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in you, causing you to persevere through all sorts of suffering, through all sorts of hardships, so that at the end of the day, your faith in the gospel truth is proven to be real and genuine in itself, and your faith doesn't turn out to be counterfeit.

We know that there are many people who have a counterfeit faith in the world. James tells us that even the demons believe, in a sense, they acknowledge the truths of the gospel, and yet their faith is not a saving faith.

James tells us that faith without works, that is, faith that's not demonstrated by a life of obedience, which Paul says is proven out through suffering, that that kind of faith that doesn't last is a dead faith.

It's not a saving faith. So we know that dead, unsaving faith exists, mere acknowledgement of the truth, or mere emotionalism without an attachment to the truth.

Both of those kinds of false faiths exist in the world. And so Paul tells us that when our faith endures through suffering, and our hope remains intact, in fact, our hope grows through that suffering, our faith is proven to be genuine and real.

[5 : 08] And then lastly, we saw last week that the third leg of that stool is an actual experience of the love of God poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

So that we have on the one hand, God addressing our heads with the right doctrine, and then we have Him addressing our hands, what we do as our doing proves the reality of our faith. But finally, in verse 5, Paul addresses the heart.

That there is a sense in which you feel it, you know it, you experience the love of God in a real way. Christianity is not merely a religion of doctrines, it's not merely a religion of the head, it's a religion of the heart, that those truths affect your heart.

And Paul says that God, through the power of the Spirit, pours out His love into our hearts. But the question then remains, how does He do that?

How does that work? I mean, we don't want to just whip ourselves up into an emotional frenzy. We don't want to just be emotional people riding from one emotional high to the next.

[6 : 11] How do we know that the feeling that we have, the sense that we have, that we are loved by God, how do we know that that's actually the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Because if you ask the average lost person who lives next door to you, or who works in the cubicle next to you, if you ask the average lost person in the world, does God love you?

They'll say, of course God loves me. If you'll say, well, how do you know God loves you? They'll say, well, I just know it. I just feel it. So how can our sensing of God's love poured out into us through the Spirit, how can we know that that's not just some feeling that anybody can have?

Anybody can conjure that up. How can we know specifically that the feeling we have is actually an outpouring of God's love through the Spirit? That's the question that I think the end of this section of Romans 5 helps us to see and answer.

And so I want us to dive into there this morning because it's going to strengthen our sense of assurance and security in Christ, and because it's going to give us a better, more solid understanding of how the death of Christ and the shedding of Christ's blood ought to have a daily impact upon us.

So let's take a look here at this passage. Now we remember in verse 5 that Paul does speak of God's love being poured out. He says that our hope, which is a future-oriented hope, does not put us to shame.

[7 : 40] It will not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And then he begins to speak about the nature of the love of God poured out for us.

You can see it very clearly in verse 8. Verse 8 says, God shows, or God demonstrates, His love for us.

So this paragraph is about the demonstration of the love of God. But it's not a general, vague sort of thing that everybody in the world receives.

It's specific. God's showing His love toward us, toward a particular group of people. And what are these people like? Who are they?

He begins to give a description. And it's not a flattering description to begin with. In fact, Paul uses four different terms here to describe us, to describe who we are as the followers of Jesus before we trusted in Christ.

[8 : 49] Notice the four terms. You can see them pretty clearly. Two of them are in verse 6. First he says that we're weak. Then he says at the end of verse 6 that we are ungodly. In verse 8 he calls us sinners.

And then if you move down to verse 10, we are the enemies of God. So we are weak, we are ungodly, we are sinners, and we are God's enemies. That's not flattering imagery, okay?

If you came to feel better about yourself, you're going to have to wait a little bit because we have to start with the negative here. We have to deal with what Paul says. He says it straightforwardly. And all of these terms, these four terms, are really, they're really, in a sense, four ways of saying the same thing.

But each of them, in their own way, highlights a specific aspect of our fallenness. Or you might say of our depravity.

Each one of them gives us insight into another aspect of what it means to be a fallen creature. A creature, a person in need of redemption. It would be like sort of saying if I wanted to describe Shaquille O'Neal to you, if I said Shaq is big.

[9 : 57] Okay, well that's kind of vague. He's tall. He's broad. You know, all of those are, they're all saying essentially the same thing. Big, tall, broad.

Right? They're all just saying the same thing. But they give us insight. If I just said, he's broad. Well, he might be 5'4 and 400 pounds and waddle around. Right? Or if I just say he's tall, he might be 6'8 and 200 pounds and be rail thin.

You need the full description. So even though I'm sort of saying the same thing over and over, I'm giving different insight from different angles into exactly in what way is he big.

Well, the same thing here. These four terms give us some insight, though they in some sense say the same thing over and over. So he begins by saying that we are weak.

Now that could simply mean that we're physically weak. There's no doubt that Paul and other writers in the New Testament use this word at times to describe physical weakness, to describe sickness, to describe an inability to do certain things physically, whether it's you can't walk or whatever it might be, various illnesses in the Gospels, various weaknesses are healed by Jesus.

[11 : 07] But I don't think that's at all what Paul means, and I think that should be obvious from the context. Paul is talking about here not a physical weakness, but he's talking about a spiritual weakness. I think really what Paul has in mind is an inability that resides within all people apart from Jesus.

We are limited. There are things that we, apart from Christ, cannot do because we are fallen. In fact, hold your place in chapter 5 and turn over a page or two in your Bibles to chapter 8, where Paul describes the inability of those who are apart from Christ.

He says in Romans 8, verse 7, the mind that is set on the flesh. So mark that lost person, somebody who doesn't know Jesus. The mind set on the flesh.

Notice, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Now notice these words. Indeed, it cannot.

And then he goes on to say, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. So when Paul says that we are weak, he means that we have an inability, we have an incapacity, we are not able of our own accord and of our own strength and power, we are not able to obey God's commands, nor are we able to do anything that is ultimately, truly pleasing to God.

[12 : 35] That's who we are apart from Christ. If the Holy Spirit does not intervene and do something inside of us and change our hearts, which we call regeneration, or the more common term for that is being born again, if He doesn't come in and cause us to be born again, we won't ever respond rightly to His word.

We won't ever obey the commands, and we won't ever trust in Jesus and therefore please God by faith, which is the only way to please Him. We have an innate, natural inability as fallen people to do those sorts of things, and that's a part of what it means to be fallen, to be a sinner.

But He says more than that. He also, in this same verse, He calls us ungodly. It's a strange sort of word in Greek. It doesn't actually contain any sort of phrase that relates to the word God at all, and yet it's almost universally always translated as ungodly.

It's a way of referring really, I think, to the depth of our depravity. It's a word that shows us just how bad we actually are. That we're not just a little bit sinful, that we haven't just strayed a little bit.

That we are, with the whole of our being, we are opposed to God. And our lives are played out in such a way that God is not honored and glorified by our lifestyles.

[14 : 05] And it doesn't matter whether your lifestyle looks to the world to be some sort of wild, ungodly lifestyle, or whether your lifestyle looks to the world to be a sort of a strict, religious sort of lifestyle.

Apart from Christ, nothing that we do honors and glorifies God because nothing that we do is done from the heart for His sake. And that goes down all the way to the core of who we are.

We're not just sort of externally sinful. We're sinful all the way down to the core. So that if you look back from Romans chapter 5, a couple of chapters, into chapter 3, Paul describes the depth of our depravity.

In chapter 3, verse 10, he says, None is righteous. No, not one. He says, No one understands.

No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. That's the depth of depravity.

[15 : 08] I think that all too often we have in our minds this image of human beings and what we're like and we think that we're sort of dichotomous. We're composed of two parts. We often think, well, there's the good side of them and then there's the bad side of them.

That everybody has sort of within them some goodness and some badness and people have it in different degrees. And so that some people are almost totally overcome with wickedness. People like Hitler and other dictators in the world who do terrible, cruel things.

They're almost completely, they're almost all bad and the goodness is overshadowed any goodness. But then you have other people who they would say, Mother Teresa and others who do a lot of good. They're mostly good. But not according to the Bible.

According to the Bible, no matter the externals of your behavior, of your lifestyle, down to the core of who we are, apart from Jesus, there's no one who does good, not even one.

There's no one righteous. That's the depth of our depravity. That no matter how externally we may appear to be good people in comparison with our neighbors and others around us, but in God's eyes and by God's standards, we are all, all the way down to the center, ungodly, fallen.

[16 : 23] And then he adds probably the most catch-all term of all of these, but he also calls us sinners. He says, if you'll look back in Romans chapter 5, verse 8, God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners.

Now, if any of these terms is the broad term, then that would be it that encompasses everything else. But I still think the term sinner in and of itself does help us to see a particular aspect of our fallenness.

And that is that the nature of fallen people is such that our lives are not lived for the glory of God. That's what sin is. Sin is not merely a failure to obey certain rules and regulations.

That's not merely what sin is. Sin is something bigger than that. Sin is a failure to honor and glorify God as we ought. Romans 3, 23, you'll recall.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That word and is not like something in addition to sinning. All have sinned. Oh, and by the way, we've fallen short of the glory of God. It's a way of defining what it means to sin.

[17 : 32] What it means to be a sinner. To be a sinner is to have fallen short of giving God the glory that He rightly deserves. And that's who we are.

We are weak and unable to obey God's commands and please God. We are sinful down to the core of who we are. But at the end of the day, who we are, who we are creatures who do not glorify God as He deserves to be glorified.

That's why the externals don't count. What matters is whether or not God is being honored and glorified in your heart and your life.

And because we are all of these things, that leads to the fourth term that Paul uses to describe us where he tells us that we are enemies of God. We are His enemies.

Now that's not, that's not a way that we like to think about ourselves. That's not a term that we find particularly flattering and I doubt that there are very many people in the world today who would self-identify as an enemy of God.

[18 : 38] Christians would maybe be willing to say, we used to be God's enemies. We used to be. But I doubt that you'll find any lost person out there who would self-identify as an enemy of God unless they're, you know, an avowed Satanist or something like that.

You're not likely to find someone out there. And yet, that's the description that Paul gives of all of us. We are enemies. That's who we are. We are opposed to God and His ways and He is opposed to sinners.

That's who He is. That's what He's like. Paul knows His Old Testament. He knows that the Old Testament says that God hates sin. Not only that, but the Psalms say that God hates the wicked.

To be in sin, to be a sinner is to be an enemy of God. And I think that may sound strange to some of our ears because we know that Jesus in the Gospels is identified as the friend of sinners and tax collectors.

That's what the Pharisees call Him. He's a friend of sinners and tax collectors. And so we think enemy. We're not an enemy. Jesus is our friend. We have songs that we sing that say Jesus is our friend.

[19 : 49] How and what sense can we be an enemy? But when we forget that to be a sinner is to be God's enemy, we fail to see how remarkable it is that Jesus would befriend tax collectors and sinners.

It's remarkable that Jesus would come into the world and befriend such people because those very people are His enemies. and yet He comes and lays His life down on behalf of His enemies which is the only solution to the problem of being weak and ungodly and sinful and an enemy of God.

The only solution that is or can be offered is the death of Jesus in our place. I want you to notice how many times just in this paragraph the death of Jesus is mentioned highlighted in some sort of way.

Verse 6 While we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Verse 8 While we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Verse 9 We have been justified by His blood. Verse 10 While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

[21 : 07] Over and over the death of Jesus the blood of Jesus are highlighted as the solution to the problem of being weak and ungodly and sinful and God's enemy. The solution is the death of Jesus not in a vague general sense but the death of Jesus for us for the ungodly in our place on our behalf.

We are justified by His blood and not in any other way. It is absolutely necessary to have the blood of Jesus go before you and cover you and plead your case if you are not to appear in God's court as His enemy someday.

There is no other way. There is no other hope for people like you and me. There is no other plea that we can make except for the blood of Jesus and the death of Christ on the cross.

and it really is remarkable that He would do such a thing. It really is remarkable that Jesus in His life could be identified as a friend of sinners.

It's remarkable. Notice what Paul says. Paul highlights this. We're so used to thinking in this way. I think it's so common to us to talk about Jesus dying for sinners.

[22 : 31] It's almost a phrase that passes through our minds and out of our mouths without us really pausing to think about how amazing that is. But Paul pauses.

In fact, it seems almost out of place as he pauses in the middle in verse 7 here to comment on how strange it is that Jesus would die for sinners.

Listen to what he says. Verse 6 says He died for the ungodly. And then verse 7 says, For one will scarcely die for a righteous person though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

It's a strange sort of way to phrase things. It's confusing when you first read it. It almost sounds as if Paul is saying people won't die for righteous people but they'll die for good people.

That's sort of what it sounds like it's saying. But I don't think that's what Paul is saying. I think righteous and good in verse 7 are two ways of referring to the same person. They're synonyms.

[23 : 27] They just refer to the same thing. And he says first on the one hand people will hardly ever die for righteous people. Well maybe occasionally he concedes.

Occasionally someone might die for a good and righteous person. But it's rare that someone will even lay their lives down for a good and righteous person.

You will lay your life down for those close to you. You will lay your life down for those you love for your children or your grandchildren or your spouse or others that are close to you.

But would you lay your life down for a stranger merely because you knew that they were righteous and good? Paul says not very often. Oh it happens occasionally. But not often.

But wonder of wonders Jesus has not done that. Jesus has laid his life down for the ungodly. Godly. It makes no sense.

[24 : 24] How could such a thing happen? Which one of us if we could travel back in time if you could travel back to I don't know 1928 and you saw Adolf Hitler walking down the street and a bus careening towards him which one of you would push him out of the way and save his life and take the bus yourself?

I wouldn't do it honestly. No. He can eat the road. That's fine. It'll save a lot of people and do a lot of good. That's how we think. We would never do such a thing. Well you can fast forward it to modern day.

If you had the opportunity to in some way ensure the death of the leaders of ISIS or Boko Haram or even in Mexico the drug cartels that are responsible for just as many deaths would you?

Would you stop a speeding bus if it was heading towards someone that was that wicked and that terrible? No. You probably would not. But Jesus comes he gives his life not for the deserving not for those who are able of themselves to even respond with gratitude for what he's done.

He comes for the weak and the ungodly. He comes for the sinners and he comes for his enemies. And he lays his life down.

[25 : 41] so that now all we need to do is trust in his sacrifice. All we need to do is believe that he has really done that.

Turn from our sinful ways. Embrace what he has done on our behalf. And we receive what? He describes it. He tells us what we receive. We receive justification he says.

He says that we have been justified by his blood in verse 9. That's what we receive first of all. We've talked about justification for months now throughout the book of Romans.

That we could be made right declared righteous in God's sight not on the basis of anything that we do or accomplish but merely by faith in Jesus his righteousness his obedience counting as ours and our sin counting as his upon the cross.

We can be justified. And then justification always results in what Paul here calls reconciliation. He mentions it a couple of times here in this paragraph.

[26 : 51] Verse 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

And then verse 11 we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation. By reconciliation he means that we have the peace that he spoke of in verse 1 Therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God.

We are now no longer his enemies. If we have trusted in Christ we are no longer his enemies. We are no longer counted as those upon whom he is ready to pour out his wrath.

We have been rescued and delivered. And that's precisely what Paul says. Those who are justified those who have been reconciled to God those who have had peace established between them and God he says much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God.

See he makes an argument here that's powerful if you follow it. His argument is it's actually fairly simple that people won't usually die for righteous people but Jesus the righteous one has died on behalf of sinners.

[28 : 12] And because he's died on behalf of sinners those of us who trust in him and his death can be justified and reconciled with God. But much more than that even greater than justification even greater than peace with God is the fact that as a result of that we will be delivered from his future coming wrath.

We'll be saved and rescued from it. It's a this is great kind of argument but this is even better. This is unspeakably good that we have been justified and reconciled sinners though we are through the death of Jesus.

but it is even better that we get to be delivered from God's wrath in the future. But he's not finished. He says this is good this is better and he has one more step to take.

He has one more height to reach before he's done strengthening the foundations of our security. And it's a good one. Look at verse 11. You'll notice the same language more than that.

That's the same wording that's translated much more in verse 9. More than that or much more. We also rejoice or we boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[29 : 40] What's the end goal of all of this? That's what he's pointing out to us. Where is God headed with all of this work? What's Jesus actually trying to accomplish?

He's not merely trying to accomplish the salvation of sinners. He's not merely accomplishing the justification of the ungodly.

There's something else. There's something more. There's something bigger beyond even that very big reality. There's something greater. And the greater thing is rejoicing in God through Christ.

It's boasting. It's exulting in God. It's the exact same word. The exact same language that we saw in verse 4. Endurance produces character, character, hope, and hope.

Endurance produces character, character, hope, and hope does not put us to shame. God has poured His love out. What? Verse 3. More than that, we rejoice. It's the same language. This hope, this future hope is a hope in which we rejoice.

[30 : 39] And He says now that the goal of all of this work, the goal of Jesus coming and dying on behalf of sinners is so that those sinners now made right with God might throughout all eternity boast in God through Christ.

That's the end of salvation. You see, God's plan of redemption does not terminate with us. It doesn't end with us. It's not just about us being rescued from our sins.

That's not what it's ultimately about. God's plan of redemption achieved in Christ is about not just rescuing sinners, but winning worshipers.

That's His goal. In fact, I want you to hold your place in Romans and turn to the last other passage we'll turn to. But I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 1. And starting in verse 3 of Ephesians chapter 1 we really have almost sort of a hymn or Paul bursting out in praise to God.

And I just want to catch a few phrases here in this passage in Ephesians chapter 1. Verse 5 says that God predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will.

[31 : 59] Why? Why did He predestine us? Why did He adopt us as sons? Why? To the praise of His glorious grace. Verse 12 So that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

Verse 14 speaks of the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. Why? To the praise of His glory. Every aspect of our redemption whether predestination in eternity past, adoption in the here and now, justification, being filled with the Spirit, being stamped and guaranteed our inheritance by the Spirit.

Every aspect of our salvation aims at the praise of the glory of God's grace. And that's what Paul means when he says that much more even than justification and reconciliation, even more is the goal that they aim towards that we might rejoice in God through Jesus Christ.

The gospel message is not a gospel message that is merely about getting you out of the consequences of your sin. That's important.

But it's more. And the gospel message certainly is not the good news that God has sent Jesus to give you a better life in the here and now so that you can have greater riches and perfect health and a bigger house and a nicer car.

[33 : 30] That's not what the gospel is about. It doesn't concern any of those things. He doesn't mention any of those things. What it's concerned with is the glory of God in and through Christ displayed in the people that He has come to rescue and deliver and justify and reconcile to His Father.

And your life matters and is successful to the degree that it reflects the plans and purposes of God.

Is your life consumed merely with how can I improve things in the here and now for me and for those that I care about?

Is that what it's merely about? Because the world would say that's a good thing. That's a good goal to aim at. Make your kids' lives better than your life has been.

In fact, the American dream is almost summed up in that. Make sure that your kids, that the next generation have it better than you had it. But the gospel doesn't care about the American dream. The gospel cares about the glory of God.

[34 : 45] Which is why missionaries are willing to go into hard places and risk their own lives and the lives of their children for the sake of the spread of the good news of Jesus to the glory of his Father because the gospel is about more than the here and now.

Your life, is it about more than the here and now? When you go to work, do you view, is your job merely a means to the end of getting money to pay your bills so that you can afford your home and clothe your children?

Or is your job that you go to on a daily basis, is it your opportunity to interact with people who don't know Jesus so that you can tell them about Jesus? It's good to get the paycheck.

You need the paycheck. You've got to go somewhere else. But there's something much, much bigger that God has in store and in his mind for your daily life.

Your life matters. Your life is meaningful and successful to the degree that your life mirrors God's priorities in his work of salvation and redemption.

[35 : 59] Is the glory of God central to your life? It's merely on the periphery. Let's pray. Amen.