

XXXIII. Romans in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel of God

“Reconciliation with God”

Romans 5:6–11

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This will be our last study in Romans 5:1-11 but we'll start at verse 6. This is a glorious text for the Reformation with the movement of the Spirit came out of this text that was only surpassed around 1500 years prior which was Pentecost. In it is salvation alone, through grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. Romans 5:6-11 says *[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— [8] but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. [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. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have **now** received reconciliation.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

A couple of month ago a man came up to me after the service and said ‘Pastor, I have good news’ for we had been praying about something in his life. He said ‘My scans came back fully clear, in full remission’ and we both kind of resolved in emotion and tears of joy, then gave praise to God as we prayed together. What stuck with me is ‘I have good news’ and the reflex action to give praise to God for it and then the filling of our lives of thanksgiving for that good news. I began to think and wonder why we’re not constantly like that about the Good News – the Gospel, where we are fully invested emotionally, informed intellectually and volitionally responding to give God praise, glory and thanksgiving. So here he had good news on a physical matter but we have Good News on an eternal matter and it is well with our soul.

I’m not saying this to put us on guilt trips but I have really tried to think my way through this. I think one of the reasons why we don’t is we don’t appreciate the grandeur of the glory of God’s grace in the Good News because we have lost sight of the bad news. One of the reasons that man and myself reacted the way we did is because five years ago I had received the news he had been taken him to the hospital because he was deathly ill and as soon as I could I went to pray with him not knowing how long he may have to live. When I got there we talked and prayed together as best he could due to the amount of pain he was in. While I was there the doctor came in and said ‘I have some bad news’ for he had cancer in a vital organ and it was stage 4. This doctor in a clear, truthful, direct manner let him know what he was facing in the coming near future. This doctor is a member of our church so it didn’t surprise me the way he handled his situation especially as he prayed with him and assured him he was in it with him all the way.

I can’t help but think our response of gladness and joy of the good news was directly related to the clarity of the bad news. So here we are in this text that was foundational to the Reformation on the glorious Gospel of grace. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. That grace that came was not by any means merited for it

wasn't even wanted. Our faith didn't even come from us for it was a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*[9] *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

We sing about this glorious truth and it grabs our hearts but I sometimes think we never really understood the depth of the bad news or we have just kind of gotten used to it. I do know the Bible is clear about it. It is clear about the Good News but it's first clear about the bad news. For instance, in this Romans 5 text there are terms that are used as what I call Gospel shorthand. Another word for this glorious work is called justification. Another word is it is a Gospel of redemption. Another word from this text, is that it is a Gospel of salvation. It is a Gospel of reconciliation and this is where we will focus in this study.

II Corinthians 5:17-20 says [17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* [18] *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;* [19] *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* [20] *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Not only is our ministry of reconciliation but our Gospel message is one of reconciliation. All of those words we get used to if we don't remind ourselves of why they are so astonishingly powerful and passionate. When the Bible says the Gospel is a Gospel of salvation, it is glorious because we were lost! We were not wandering in sin or misguided in sin, for before we were saved we were lost and Romans 1 through 4 tells us just how lost we were. We were helpless and hopeless and that the wrath of God has been revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. We are under the wrath of God and can't save ourselves. Religion can't save us and no one else can save us. We are all born in the same boat, sinning, and heading to an eternal condemnation and the outpouring of God's unmixed wrath.

My favorite illustration is that so many people present the Gospel as if we're floundering in the sea of sin with the Gospel being a life preserver but that is not the case. We are at the bottom of a sea of sin with a ten million pound rock on top of us. Who will deliver us from the wrath to come? Now, we have a Good News of salvation for those helpless and hopeless for what you couldn't do or even want to be done but this God not only saved us but He changed our want. The Bible says whoever wants to be saved can be saved but our problem is that we don't want to be for we're dead in our sins. He saved us and changed us so that we wanted the Savior to be saved and to be right with Him.

Secondly, it's a Gospel of redemption. What is redemption? It is to buy back and why is this so glorious? It is because we were enslaved – captivated to our sin and rebellion against God. In redemption Jesus bought us back. He delivered us and set us free from our captivity.

A third word that is used is justification and that is a legal term. It is in accord with innocent so what is the opposite? It is guilty. We don't really hear the word innocent in our court these days. We tend to follow the English jurisdiction that basically says 'not guilty' if you are innocent of what you are being accused of. They never say innocent because none of us are innocent – we just happen not to be guilty of that crime. In the Divine court, we're condemned. The soul that sins will surely die (Ezekiel 18:20a). I will be no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7). So we are condemned because we have a bad heart, a bad record and we stand under the righteous judgment of God, but in Jesus we are not only not guilty because He took away the penalty of our sin, but we are now innocent and righteous because of His perfect righteousness He gave to us.

His sinless life allowed Him in obedience to the Father to receive our wrath for our sins by taking our place. This Romans text says He did it out of love and at the right time. He took our place and took that wrath for us. As He cancels that debt at the cross, He clothes us with His robe of righteousness. So we're not just forgiven as the gates of hell are shut, but we are righteous in the sight of God. If we are in Christ, every time God looks at you and me He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son. The gates of heaven have been opened for heaven is for the righteous. My righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) but I don't have just my righteousness, I have His. II Corinthians 5:21 says [21] *For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.* This is what we have in Christ.

These are glorious words – justification because we were condemned, redemption because we were enslaved, salvation because we were lost, but what about this word we are looking at right now – reconciliation.

Romans 5:8-11 says [8] *but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. [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. [11] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Why is reconciliation a Good News word for the Gospel? It is because you don't have to reconcile something or someone unless it is or they are estranged. When we are born into this world we are born estranged from God. We are separated from Him – we are enemies of God. According to the text Jesus died for us when we were enemies of God. The only thing that makes us madder is when someone tells us we're estranged from God. That is why reconciliation is so crucial. We were estranged from God because of our sinfulness and God was estranged from us because of His holiness. So how can we be right with God and God be right within us? How can we be intimately connected to God? How can I be in His family and be with Him for all eternity? What we couldn't do is what God has done.

Think of this for a minute. God sent His Son to take away the estrangement at the cross because He loved us. Everyone, the just and the unjust, in the world experiences God's common grace and His benevolent love, but we have received God's redeeming love while we were enemies for God demonstrated His love for us in that Christ died for us. We have cases of people dying for the righteous, meaning the good citizens doing the right things in life and those dying for those they know and it moves us but this is the One who came to die for us because He loved us when we did not love Him. The One who did not need us, wanted us. We who needed Him did not want Him. This is why authentic Christians abhor man-made religions – it is because of all that God did to unite us to Him. There will be divisions over truth for Paul says that will be necessary but even then it's not done with divisiveness and that's why reconciliation horizontally is the evidence of those who have known the depth of their reconciliation vertically to the Almighty and they can't help but embrace this in life.

Look more closely at Romans 5:10 which says [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 (reconciled) by His life.* I know God took away my sin debt when Jesus died on the cross so what does it mean we have been reconciled by His life? How have we been reconciled by His life? I think it possibly means three things.

Number one, it means we don't get saved without Jesus vicarious atoning death. He died for us in our place. The innocent One became the guilty One because He who knew no sin

became sin (II Corinthians 5:21). Jesus in His obedience passively received the sin debt for all of His people for all of eternity so that when He went to the cross bearing it He would receive all of the wrath of God that was due to those sins. Romans 8:33 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* Jesus also actively obeyed God – perfectly kept God's law in thought, word and deed, in His entire life and now that righteousness becomes ours so we are accepted in the beloved and received into heaven through the perfect righteousness of Christ. That is how we are saved by His life.

The second possibility is it is not referring to His Incarnate life of perfection but it is referring to His intercessory life of resurrection. After Jesus was resurrected and was on earth for 40 days longer, where did He go? He went to heaven. Where is He in heaven? He is at the right hand of the God the Father. What is He doing? He is interceding for you. The next verse in Romans 8 says in verse 34, [34] *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* The One who prayed while He was here on earth ever prays for you so you are saved by His life. When He lived He did the work of redemption for you, now He is risen interceding and doing the work of redemption on you.

The third possibility is that the first and second possibilities are both true and that's where I land. I have no more arguments that saved by His life means what I have already given you. I don't want to decide between the two. I believe when it says we are saved by His life that we are saved by His Incarnate life of righteousness and His risen life of intercession. I believe both are crucial in our salvation. So, we are saved by His life and reconciled to God. Now watch the language in the text.

Romans 5:11 says [11] *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have **now** received **reconciliation**.* We have received our reconciliation but when was our reconciliation? It was at the cross. We receive it when we are born again, but it's already ours – a settled fact – we are reconciled at the cross according to the text. So, what does all that mean for you as a believer? I want to give you a takeaway by answering five questions.

One, what has Christ saved us from (justified or reconciled us from)? Jesus has saved us from the wrath of God. As the song *In Christ Alone* by the Gettys says;
*'Til on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied...*

When Jesus said on the cross "It is finished" there was no more wrath of God against our sins. It had all been expended and endured and all that hell was born by Christ on the cross. On the third day with His resurrection, God said 'Amen.' This is why we do not fear death or even the Judgment. We stand in awe of it but we do not fear it. It is because we are in the Book of Life and I'm in the Book of Life because He paid for my sins at the cross. That is what He has done for me and we now stand in Christ reconciled to Him.

Two, where did Christ save us? There was a hymn I grew up singing in the Christian Missionary Alliance Church and we'd particularly sing it on Sunday nights. It is titled *At the Cross* and some of the lyrics say;

*At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the Light
And the burden of my heart rolled away, rolled away...*

At Calvary is where Christ saved us. He did not save me when I believed, for it was at the cross. Romans 4:24-25 says [24] *It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, [25] **who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*** I

received that salvation when I believed, but it was a settled salvation and that's why Jesus would say "Father, I lose none of them."

Thirdly, when did Christ save us? He saved us when we were helpless, ungodly, a sinner, at enmity and estranged from Him. I didn't just need a religious coach or a guru or an action packed game hero, I needed a Savior. That is so crucial. This isn't something I came up with for I'm just getting this from the text here in Romans.

Fourthly, why did Christ save us? Why should I receive this reward? It is simple. It is because He loves you. I didn't say He will love you or He did love you – He loves you, before the foundation of the world. He redemptively loves you. He saved us because He sovereignly chose to love us and save us from our sins, justify us from our guilt, reconcile us as enemies to God as our Father and Jesus our elder Brother and Savior. This is a gloriously Divine exchange that He has done for us.

Romans 1:18 says *[18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* So, how did I get saved? It is because the wrath of God that is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness didn't fall on me. The wrath of my ungodliness fell on Him while I was still ungodly. That text goes onto to say that we exchanged the glory of God for the glory of the creature (Romans 1:25). Jesus made a Divine exchange as He exchanged His righteousness to give to me and took my sin on Himself so that you and I could be reconciled to God and right with God.

My fifth question is when will Christ stop loving us? The answer is never. Revelation 1:5b-6 says *[5b] To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood [6] and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* You might think 'if I sin...' what do you mean if for I do sin, even now. Sin is there. Thankfully I'm not living under the dominion of sin but I still have some old man sin in me. God is not up there with a daisy saying 'he love Me, he loves Me not...' God is very clear about this for if you falter He is coming after you because those whom He loves He disciplines (Proverbs 3:12). If you begin to walk away He will come after you. When you come back to Me I'll receive you and run out to meet you. He is saying 'what you don't know is I did the work to bring you out of the pig trough so that you would come back to Me. I love you.'

Romans 8:37-39 says *[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

He never ceases loving us because He never started loving us. The Eternal One, before the foundations of the world sovereignly chose to love you – not because of you or His need of you, but because of His irresistible, unstoppable, vicarious, timely, redeeming love. That is what He has done for me and you, praise God! I give Him praise and glory for it. The love of God for you did not start at the cross – it was demonstrated at the cross. It started in Him and He is eternal. He is everlasting.

The foundation of the world means time, space and matter but before that even existed He loved you because He is the self-existent God and His attribute has been so expressed in His sovereignty to love you. Now you know what He has done for us now. He has chosen to love us who were estranged that we might be brought to Him and in Him. To do that, He went to the cross and defeated all the enemies – sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan – but one and that's us.

He saved us through His Son and we're reconciled to Him. That's why we have blessed assurance.

We examine ourselves to see whether we are of the faith but we do not examine ourselves to see if we're doing good enough for God to love us. God has loved us and loves us and that's why we do what we do. That's the evidence. Ephesians 2:8-10 says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Our works are the evidence but it is His work that saves us. You are the profile of His love through Christ and He is unstoppable.

So, get your assurance, not from your feelings, not from your tithing, not from your witnessing, not from your church attendance – all of those things are important but they did not cause God to love you and they don't cause God to keep loving you. They become the evidence of His love and when they falter they will become the occasion of His discipling and disciplining in our life. We are confident in Him.

Hear the everlasting love of God through Romans 8:31-39 which says *[31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Christ has laid hold, now we are His and may His praise come from our lips and through our lives. There is your assurance – the love of God in Christ. You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, why? In love He predestined us to adoption as sons (Ephesians 1:5). Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the glory and majesty of our great sovereign God and the love displayed in Christ and how You use it in the hearts, minds and emotions of Your people. God, may we be enraptured once again with the depth, breadth, height and the length of Your love and may Christ be exalted. I pray this in the lives of all who are reading this, in Jesus' Name, Amen.