

The Results of God's Love for Sinners

Today we come to the conclusion of the first half of chapter 5 in Romans. Lord willing, we will have made it half way up the Hillary Step of the Mount Everest of the Bible by the end of today. If you remember, the Hillary Step is that sheer rock face that is near the top of Mount Everest that climbers must make it up if they wish to see the view from the top of the world. Here in Romans 5 we come across a portion of Scripture that must be scaled if we are to transition from being saved Christians to those who can be used by the Lord. After the 11th verse we see Paul transition to a different subject matter than he has been talking about. He moves from talking about the verb *to sin*, or the actual commission of sins, to the noun *sin*, or the sin nature, and how it must be dealt with. This is an easy thing to miss, and in fact it's so easy to miss that many people never see this, and therefore are not used to their fullest potential by the Lord. I don't say this as if I have fully attained godliness, like Paul says in Philippians 3:12-14 **Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** And that should be the goal of every single one of us. We should all desire to be used by God to the fullest possible extent. We cannot do that if we are stuck in our past sins, and do not proceed beyond just being saved. We need to press on toward the goal of our calling in Christ Jesus, and that is a life of godliness and holiness being used by Him. God will only use people who are pleasing to Him, and the only way we can be pleasing to Him is to, first of all, be justified, or have our sins forgiven. That is the first 4 chapters of Romans, how to be saved. Importantly, a person who wants to be used by God has to also live a holy life, after being saved. I've said several times that here in chapter 5 Paul is transitioning to sanctification, or the process of becoming more holy. Well, we do that by dealing with our sin natures. We all have a sin nature, even after we are saved. God does not take away our sin natures upon justification, so we still have to deal with that for the rest of our lives. It is through the process of sanctification that we deal with our sin natures. Our sin natures are the *sin* that I was talking about before, that is the noun *sin*. This is the thing that is inside of us that causes us *to sin*, the verb. And that is what Paul is going to talk about from chapter 5:12-chapter 8. So, here today we will wrap up the portion of the book on the act of sinning, and how that is dealt with. We will see the results of God's love for sinners in the past, present and future.

Let's pray

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest award for bravery given by the United States military. Typically, it is awarded to those who, in the face of great personal danger, risk their lives to save other people. Since WW 2 about 870 men have been awarded this medal, over 500 of who lost their lives in the service of their country. When asked why they are fighting, soldiers often give the answer that they are fighting for their buddies. They aren't usually thinking about the politics of the situation, as Carl Von Clausewitz said, "war is just politics by other means," they are thinking about saving their friends lives, or doing the right thing so that their friends don't die. Well, one of the

most recent men to receive the MOH is LT Michael Murphy, a Navy SEAL from a small town in NY. He and 3 other men were tasked with finding the leader of an enemy force in the mountains of Afghanistan in 2005. During the mission 3 young Afghan boys, who were herding their goats nearby where the SEALs were hiding, discovered them, and the SEALs subsequently captured them. Lt Murphy, being the person in charge of the group made the decision to let the boys go, knowing that if they tied them up, and left them there they would certainly die. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the boys to go back to their village and inform people of what had happened to them. So, after a few hours the SEALs found themselves confronting about 50 enemy soldiers. They fought in the face of overwhelming odds, defending themselves gallantly, but eventually all 4 of the SEALs were wounded. And in this desperate situation, Lt Murphy tried to contact their HQ to ask for help and for people to come rescue them. In the mountainous terrain he could not make contact by radio, so he made the decision to find a clearing so that the radio would have better range to reach back to their only source of rescue. In doing this he exposed himself to enemy fire, but he was able to make contact and relay their position to their HQ. In the process of doing this, he was shot in the back and received several other wounds. He made it back to the relative safety of the position of the other SEALs and continued to fight against the enemy. LT Murphy eventually died of his wounds, as did two other people from their group, however, one man made it out of that situation alive after much travail. You can read about this story in a book called *Lone Survivor*. It is an extraordinary story of extraordinary bravery, in the face of extraordinary danger. Lt Murphy gave his life so that his friend could live. This is our idea of valor, risking, or giving one's own life so that others may live. In the course of a battle, it's risking your life so that your friends can live. Well, today we will study the One who gave his life for the enemy. In a way, that is what Lt Murphy did also, he let the little boys go, and eventually gave his life because of that act. But, our Savior consciously gave his life for His enemies because He loved them so much.

So, let's go to Romans 5 and we'll continue our study of this amazing passage of Scripture. I'll begin reading at verse 3, because this portion that we will cover today is really a continuation of the thought that we went through last week. **And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

If you'll remember last time we talked about the fact that we will have trials in our lives as Christians. Paul mentions trials here as if they are a foregone conclusion, and we know, if we've been in the world for any amount of time that we will have trials, things

do not work out perfectly in our lives after we are saved. Paul just jumps right in after describing how people are saved by talking about the trials of life and what their purpose is. We saw how the trials, or tough times, losing a job, being persecuted, having a hard time in school, whatever it is, lead to developing perseverance (the ability to stand up under pressure), and how this leads to building character (doing the right thing no matter what), and how this leads to us recognizing our hope for the future. Finally, last week we talked about the love of God that was poured out for us through the Holy Spirit. We saw how the Holy Spirit indwelling our hearts is how we are able to persevere under intense pressure, and how we are able to do the right thing under difficult circumstances. We don't do these things in our own strength; rather we do them in the strength of the Lord through the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts when we are saved. Today's passage, verses 6-11, continues this thought of the love of God. Paul will here describe the love of Christ in more detail by showing just exactly what He did for us because of the great love that He has for us.

Christ's work for us in the past

In the beginning of verse 6 we see that Paul is talking about the work that Christ did for sinners in the past. Not only did God pour out His love for us through the Holy Spirit, like we saw last time, but here we see, actually in verse 8 it says that because of this same love He died for us. **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** And, in verse 6 we see that He did this in the past, while we were unable to do anything to save ourselves. The first words of verse 6 show our total inability to do anything for ourselves. **6 For while we were still helpless.** That word, helpless, is definitely worth spending some time on. This is a different word than was used by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The first beatitude is "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The word for poor in spirit is one that made reference to a crouching beggar, someone that was so humbled by their poverty that they could only beg for their existence. They were totally unable to work for themselves. At first I thought that this was saying the same thing, but it is a different word here, and definitely a different context. Here Paul uses the term ἀσθενῶν (translated as helpless in the NASB, weak in the ESV, and without strength in the KJV), which literally means sick or weak. This word is used several times in the NT, in the gospels and by Paul, and one of the best examples to show what Paul is trying to say here is found in Matthew 26:41. It is here that Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he goes away from the disciples to pray taking Peter, James and John away from the others, and then going off by Himself. But, after a little while He came back to the three and said to Peter, **So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.** The word used for weak here in Matthew is the same word that Paul uses in Romans 5. Verse 6 is the only instance in the NT that the word is translated as helpless in the NASB, so what Paul is saying is that we were sick and weak, unable to help ourselves, like Peter in the Garden. He was unable to keep himself awake. His flesh was weak, Christ said, but notice the admonition the Lord gives to Peter in verse 41. Christ is telling Peter that his flesh is weak, but keep on praying so that you won't enter into temptation. But, Peter, James and John cannot overcome their weak flesh, and they fall asleep again on two more occasions, until the soldiers come to arrest Jesus. Paul is saying here in Romans that we

are like Peter in the Garden, we are unable to keep ourselves awake, spiritually, and we are weak and essentially helpless. It would be easy to think that this is all in the past tense in this sentence, but notice the little word *still* in verse 6. The ESV says, for while we were still weak, and the KJV says, for when we were *yet* without strength. This is how the translators determined to show that the verb is actually in the present tense here. *Were* is a word that we typically think of as being in the past tense, but here it is combined with the word *still*, or *yet* in the KJV, to show that it is actually in the present tense, this shows that we are still weak, we still have our weak flesh, we are still in our helpless state even though we have put our faith in Christ, we are still wholly dependent upon Him for everything, for all of our strength. Again, we are reminded of Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

We see in the rest of the verse that it is talking about a past event though, the death of Christ. **At the right time Christ died for the ungodly.** We've talked about this several times in the past, but God is carrying out His perfect plan for the world, and at precisely the right time in human history Christ came to the earth and died for the sins of mankind. We see this in Christ's own words in Mark 1:15, **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.** Right when Christ began His public ministry He said that the time is fulfilled, this is the moment of history that God the Father has had planned from the foundation of the world that His Son would come to die for the sins of the world. Notice that it says in verse 6 that Christ died for the ungodly. This is where we see that this is an event that happened in the past. Christ died, in the past, for the ungodly. So, not only are the people being described here weak in the flesh, but also they are ungodly. This shows that Paul is saying that we not only have weak flesh, or a sin nature, but we act upon it, we do sinful acts, which makes us ungodly. Paul has already demonstrated earlier in the letter that all people sin, Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, that includes us, everyone is in that group, and he is talking about everyone here as well. This term *ungodly* describes someone who does not act appropriately towards a deity, in this case the God of the universe. Our sinful acts are not appropriate in the eyes of God. Not only are they not appropriate, but also they separate us from Him, and as we will see later in the passage, they bring God's wrath.

In verse 7 Paul inserts a parenthetical thought that really adds to the discussion in verse 6 making it more clear just exactly what he is getting at. It says **For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.** Here Paul adds this comment, not talking about Christ, but a person in general. Here he is talking about the sacrifice that a person may make for another, and just how inferior it is when compared to the sacrifice of Christ. He is putting it in human terms so we can see just how amazing the sacrifice of Christ really is. He says here, for one will hardly die for a righteous man; that means with great difficulty a person could bring himself to die for someone who is upright. The term for *righteous man* is the same root as the term Paul used for "having been justified" earlier in the chapter. So, here he is talking about a person who is right with God. This is in contrast to what Paul said Christ did for the ungodly in verse 6. Christ died for people who were not right with God, and here Paul says that a person could only with great difficulty die for a person who is right with God. Then he says **though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.** This term for "good man" is exactly the opposite of the term Paul used in the

beginning of verse 6, which was translated as helpless, or weak. In verse 7 he is describing a person who is beneficial, or who can do something for you, they are useful, not helpless or weak. This person is helpful; he is the good man. So, what Paul is saying here is that a person, just a regular person, would only with great difficulty die for a righteous, or holy, person; though maybe he would be able to bring himself to die for a person who could do something for him. This is in contrast to what he said in verse 6 about Christ. There he said that Christ died for those who could do nothing for Him, and those who were not right with God, in fact later in the passage he says that those for whom Christ died were His enemies. So, Christ died in the past for us, while we completely unable to do anything for Him, which state we are still in, and when we were ungodly and unrighteous. What a wonderful Savior we serve.

Christ's work for us in the present

Now in verse 8 we come to how what Christ has done for us in the past relates to the present. **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** Again, like in verse 6, this whole sentence looks like it is in the past tense, but on closer inspection, especially in the Greek, we see that it is really talking about the present tense. But God demonstrates His own love toward us; the verb in that phrase is demonstrates, and it is in the present, active tense. So, what that means is that God is still demonstrating His love right now, in the present tense, He is doing it right now. This really brings home the fact that the death of Christ is such a great event in history that the effects of it are still being enjoyed today. He is demonstrating His love for us right now by having died for us in the past. This sacrifice was so great that it is still being demonstrated now. His death was not just a completed act, but rather it is an act that the effect of which is being carried throughout history as if it were happening at this very moment. One of the complaints that people have about the Bible is that it isn't relevant to today. They claim that it just doesn't have anything to say about life today. Well, here we see that that idea just isn't true. God's love is so great, and His death on the cross is such an amazing act of love that it is as if it is happening right now. The Word is truly living and active.

Another part that shows this to be in the present tense is the phrase "while we were yet". This is just the same as it was in verse 6 when it said, "for while we were still helpless." So, this whole sentence is in the present tense. It reads something like this, "God is demonstrating His love for us, while we are still sinners, by Christ dying for us." And, it says here also, "the God", emphasizing the fact that this is the one and only God who is demonstrating His great love for we sinners.

The last word that shows that this is in the present tense is the word died. Now, this is really interesting. The word died is in the aorist, active tense. The aorist is the tense that is a snapshot of time, like taking a photograph captures an event that happened in the past. This isn't just the past tense though because it is also in the active voice, so what that means is that it is an event that happened at a moment of time that is still having an effect today. You may hear some theologians, or teachers who today subscribe to the idea that the biblical languages are not unique. Well, that just isn't true. The Greek here is able to convey such complicated ideas in a very few words. This just isn't possible in the English. Someone could write an entire book on some of these concepts and they can be done in one or two words in the Greek, and Hebrew is very similar. Yes, the biblical

languages are unique, and that is part of what we saw in verse 6, which said that Christ came at the right time to die for the ungodly. Part of coming at the right time was that Greek was the language of commerce that most of the civilized world understood. And it is able to communicate these ideas in very few words. So, in verse 8 we see that God is demonstrating His great love for the sinners of the world through His sacrificial death on the cross.

Christ's work for us in the future

Beginning in verse 9 we see a shift in the way Paul is expressing himself. You can see that he switches from talking about the past and present tense to the future tense. I'll read verses 9-11 and you can see how it is speaking in the future tense here. **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.** What Paul is saying here is that since we have been justified we will be saved from the wrath of God in the future. This is the hope that we have been talking about in the last two messages as well. We see this here for the third time now. And, not only do we see the hope for the future for the third time, but we really see all three aspects, the past, and the present three times as well. Look back to verse 1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace with God on the basis of what Christ did for us in the past. The sins of our past are forgiven; we can now live as a part of the family of God, because Christ has forgiven our sins on the basis of our faith. Incidentally, not only does Christ deal with the sins of our past, but He also has dealt with the sins of the present and any future sins that we will commit. That is how truly amazing His death on the cross is. Then in verse 3 it says, and not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations. Not only do we have peace with God, but we can rejoice in our trials because we have been saved from our sins. That is the second mention of the past tense. Then today we have the third mention of the past in verse 6, "while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." We were helpless in the past, and due to the special nature of the Greek language it is able to convey the idea that we are still helpless, but it also says that Christ died for us in the past. So, there are three mentions of the past tense, but there are also three mentions of the present tense. We saw in verse 2 that because of Christ we have obtained our access to God in which we stand. We are now standing in the presence of God through prayer. Then last time we saw that we are now developing perseverance and proven character through the trials that we are going through right now. And then today we see that God is demonstrating His great love for us through the death of Christ for us today in verse 8. Look back to verse 2 again and we will see the first of the three mentions of the future in this passage. It says, "we exult in the hope of the glory of God." Our hope is the future that we have with God. Then we saw in verse 5 that our hope does not disappoint, and the giving of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee. Then today we see that we will be saved from the wrath of God, which is in the future, through Christ. One of the ways to tell what the key ideas of a passage are is by noticing repetition. Paul here has repeated this idea of the past, present and future three times because he is really trying to drive home the fact that since we have been justified in the past we have peace

with God. We have access to God the Father through Christ in the Spirit, right now. This isn't something that we have to look forward to; this is right now. This is more access than the Jews ever had; we can go right to the Father. And we have the hope of the glory of God. We have the hope of seeing God the Father in all His glory, just like John and Isaiah did, and we get to spend eternity in that glorious state if we are justified by Christ. Paul is attempting to make these three ideas clear by repeating them in these 11 verses.

Now, to verse 9; the phrase that we see beginning verse, much more than, is only used 4 times in the Bible, all by Paul, 3 of which are in this chapter. The idea of verse 9 is something like, "God is demonstrating His love for us through the death of Christ, and if that weren't enough, since we've been justified, we are also saved from the wrath to come." So, not only do we have peace with God now, and receive all the blessings of this present salvation, but we are delivered from the wrath to come in the future as well. We will see this phrase, "much more" in verse 10 as well, and also in verse 15.

We see here in verse 9 another very significant point, and that is that we are justified by faith in the blood of Christ. Paul talked about this earlier in chapter 3:25 when he said **whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith**. That word propitiation is a reference to the mercy seat in the temple. This is where the priest would sprinkle the blood on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, for the sins of the people. Paul says there in 3:25 that that is what the death of Christ was; He was shedding His blood for the sins of the people, and it is through faith in that shed blood that we are justified. Now, you might ask, why did Jesus have to shed His blood for the sins? Why couldn't He have just forgiven our sins without shedding His blood? Well, we know from the book of Hebrews in verse 9:22 it says that there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood. Your Bible may say something like, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. The word remission means forgiveness. But, why is that? Why does there have to be the shedding of blood? That is because the life is contained in the blood, that comes from Genesis 9:4, and we see that in the fact that the people were prohibited from drinking the blood of dead animals in Deut 12:16, and this command was reiterated to the Gentile believers in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council. So, the life is in the blood, and we know from Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. Since, the penalty of sin is death, and the life is in the blood, then the shedding of blood is necessary to pay the penalty for the sin. That is why Jesus had to shed His blood and die for our sins. The perfect Lamb of God came to the earth and shed His blood for the sins of the many; and it is faith in that shed blood, faith that the shed blood of Christ is all that is necessary for the forgiveness of our sins is what is required for us to be justified. We should be so thankful for the shed blood of Christ.

The second half of the verse is where we see the future blessing that we receive through faith in Christ's shed blood. It says, **we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him**. We shall be saved, all one word in the Greek, and it is in the future, passive tense indicating that it is yet to come, and that the receiver of the action has nothing to do with it. We shall be saved in the future from the wrath of God, and we have nothing to do with it, it is a work of God only. This is not referring to our justification, or being made right with God, we already have that. This is referring to Christ saving us from the wrath that He is going to pour out on the world because it is so evil. Do you notice that? He is pouring out His love for us from verse 5, and He will

pour out His wrath on the sinful world in the future, but we will be saved from it. What a wonderful hope we have?

Then in verses 10 and 11 we see another repetition cycle like we saw earlier with past, present and future. Here we see the word reconciliation repeated three times. That means that Paul wants us to see the idea of reconciliation. Verses 10-11 **For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.** There is a lot in these two verses, but we really only have time to get into this one word, reconciled or reconciliation. It simply means to have friendly relations restored, or to settle a disagreement. So, Paul wants to emphasize in these two verses that we have our relationship with God restored through the death of His Son. Then we see the phrase “much more” again, so, not only do we have our relationship restored with God, as if that weren’t enough, we are also saved by His life. We are saved from the wrath to come through the death of Christ. What an amazing thing! He justified us with His shed blood, and He saves us from the wrath to come through the fact that He came back to life after shedding His blood. Verse 10 is the same as the pattern that we saw earlier in verse 6 where it says, “while we were still helpless.” Here in verse 10 it says, “while we were enemies,” and it is in the present tense as well. In verse 6 the word *still* denotes that it is in the present tense even though *were* is typically past tense. The word *while* here in verse ten shows the same thing. It is kind of showing both tenses, we were God’s enemies in the past, but we are reconciled to Him now, but we still have our sin natures so we can’t be completely reconciled to Him, and be with Him in heaven. That is in the future; that is our hope. And we see that in the rest of the verse, “we shall be saved by His life.” Then, once again we see the term that we exult in God. This is the third time for this term in these 11 verses also. First we could rejoice about the justification that we have in God, then we could rejoice in our trials because God is making us grow in them, and here we can exult in God because we have been reconciled to Him. We have come a full circle here if you can notice that. The first blessing that Paul mentioned because of our justification was peace with God; this we saw in verse 1. Now, after all these glorious verses Paul says again that we have been reconciled to God, which means that we have peace with Him, our sin debt to God has been settled through the shed blood of Christ.

Conclusion

So, there we have the first 11 verses of chapter 5. It is definitely hard work going through these tremendously deep verses; there is no doubt about that. But, just like climbing the mountain, the view from the top is worth it. We can draw so much closer to the Lord through understanding His divine word to us, that the hard work of going through each word and discovering what it really means is worth it when we can understand our Lord a little better. In these verses, 1-11, the main things to see are that God has given us peace even though we were His enemies in the past. He has justified us through the shed blood of Christ. Next, we need to realize that His death on the cross is such a loving action that its effects are still being felt today. LT Murphy gave his life for his friends in Afghanistan just 7 years ago, but I dare say that the majority of Americans have never heard of him, and most of those who heard about his actions in the past have

forgotten about them since. In verse 8 we see that Christ's death on the cross was so great that He is demonstrating His love for sinners through that action 2000 years later, and the effects will really continue for eternity from that one event. Finally, we saw that not only are we justified by His blood, but we are saved from the wrath to come from the fact that not only did He die for us, but He rose again for our salvation. What an amazing three days those were so many years ago. He died for the sins of the world, so that we could all enjoy peace with Him, and have access to the Father, but then three days later He walked out of the tomb, and saved us from the wrath to come through His life. These facts should really motivate us to holy living, and motivate us to carry on in the trials of life, give us the desire to be the people that He wills for us to be, and cause us to long for the day that we will be with Christ forever.

Pray