

The Love of God

Romans 5:6-11

Part 2

LTS: Romans 8:28-39

B.I. For those who believe, the fear of judgment is eternally nullified by the love of God for us in Christ.

I think it has been rightly said that in the 21st century (our century), “love” is a word that means virtually nothing anymore.¹ We use it of everything, so it really refers to nothing. For example, on any given Sunday a Christian person may very well say that he or she “loves” church, pizza football and a long nap... and in that order. We love puppies and Disney World (or, at least we did before this past week). We love the winter Olympics, chocolate pastries and a perfect cup of coffee first thing in the morning.

The point is, we use the word Love so frequently and with such equality that the word itself has lost its meaning. It used to be that we “liked” things, (cars, movies, barbecue), and save the word “love” for those things we cherish most, (family, God.) But Not anymore. [Today] We love everything and anything, and nothing at all.

God's love, however, is NOT so superficial. When he expresses his love or declares that he will set his love upon someone, it means something significant. In the Bible, divine love is so rich that it stretches the mind to its fullest capacities even to begin to apprehend something of its glory.²

Hymn writers sometimes attempt to verbalize something of the magnificence of God’s love in a way that we can all sing together.

For example, one of my favorite hymns would have us sing the following lyrics:

Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skys of parchment made;
were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade;

¹ Adapted from - Matthew Barrett, *None Greater*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2019), 220-221

² Ibid.,

To write the love of God above would drain the oceans dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.³

This morning, I want to pick up our study of the Love of God from last week and develop it all the more from Paul's letter to the Romans. So, if you have a bible, please turn with me to Romans chapter 5, and follow along as I read verses 1-11.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.³

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

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 die⁸ 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.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

As I have argued previously, Paul is attempting in this section of Romans to instruct and convince his readers that their justification, which is by faith rather than works, is eternally secure in Christ. They don't have to worry about whether they have

³ Words & Music © 1923, Ren. 1951 by Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188.

- sacrificed enough,
- obeyed enough,
- or even believed enough.

Rather, the security of their (and our) eternal reconciliation with God finds its ultimate source in the free, unfettered, sovereign love of God. He is the first actor in our salvation. As the Apostle John said it, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19).

Last week we focused in on the first of five qualities of the love of God; namely, the eternal substance of God’s love. We don’t have time to re-preach that message but let me add one more thought.

The Scripture that tells us God is love, also tells us that God is light.” Light in the bible is usually a reference to holiness. and moral purity. Darkness, on the other hand, speaks of moral impurity, perversity, and unrighteousness. So, Paul asks the church in Corinth, “What fellowship has darkness and light?”

The point that needs to be made here is that the God who is Love is also the God who is light. In other words. God’s love is always a holy love. Yes, He is committed to giving us what is good and best for us, but what is good and best for us is not always what we think is good and best for us.

Witness the fact that the author of Hebrews teaches us that “The Lord disciplines those he loves and punishes everyone whom He accepts as sons. He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness (Heb. 12:6-11).

So, let’s dispense with modern sentimental ideas of the Love of God in our times. And’s let us never forget that His love has a goal, namely our holiness.

Now, we have learned something about

- I.** The Nature of God’s Love. But there is more to come. Paul also wants us to marvel at
- II.** The Timing of God’s Love
- III.** The Manner of His Love
- IV.** The Recipients of His Love
- V.** The security of His Love

The Second quality of the love of God in this passage is...

I. The Timing of God's love:

1. Note what Paul writes (6). "For while we were weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

2. What I want us to consider first is that the arrival of Messiah and his atoning work on the cross happened at exactly the right time. In other words, it came about exactly according to God's sovereign plan. We can see this even in the O.T.

- Genesis 3:15. God promised that a son of eve would one day come to crush the serpent's head. Salvation was God's plan from the beginning.
- Isa. 7:14; "The Lord himself will give you a sign: behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and he will call his name Immanuel [God with us]."
- Isa. 9:6. "a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, eternal father, Prince of peace."
- Matt. 1:18ff. To Joseph an angel appeared saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.(Now listen to this statement) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet."
- Jesus Himself understood that His saving work in the world was on a divine timetable. "in Jn. 13:1 we read,

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end...

- Consider what Paul said to the church in Galatia (Gal. 4:4) "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law..."

3. You see, there was an appointed time for Jesus to come into the world and die on the cross for you and me. At just the right time - the time appointed by the eternal triune God, Jesus came to earth as the ultimate, objective revelation of the Love of God for sinners like you and me.

4. He didn't wait for you to express your love for Him. His saving love was activated even before the creation of the world.

5. That's why the apostle John would write, (1 John 4:10) "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

6. My friend, do you wonder if your justification is sufficient to take you all the way and protect you from the wrath of God? Consider this, that if you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your only hope in life and death, it is because He loved you before the creation of the world.

- He knew everything about you before you were born.
- He knows your every sin.
- He knows all that stuff you don't want anyone to know, and yet he loves you.
- As Spurgeon once said,

"He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature he ever made, and the only Saint He ever loved."

- Why? Because it is his nature to love, and it is his delight to pour that love upon you for the eternal glory of Jesus, His Son.

7. This is a wonderful truth, isn't it? It's truly amazing to consider the timing of God's love – the fact that every aspect of redemptive history (including your personal salvation) was written in God's book before there was yet one of them.

8. And it becomes all the more glorious when we consider not only When God loved us, but HOW God loved us. What did God's love look like? Or, another way to ask it, "what is the manner of His love. And that brings us to the Third feature of God's Love:

9. Look with me again at verse 6. Paul says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died." The centerpiece of Paul's gospel is the cross of Jesus Christ. This is God's ultimate objective revelation of His love for sinners. Try to consider this in a fresh way.

Imagine the scene of Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion. The role you play in this drama is that of Barabbas.

You're in a Roman holding cell awaiting your execution for insurrection. You have been a traitor to Rome and have murdered a man.

You know your crucifixion is slated for this very day. And sure enough, a Roman guard comes along just as expected. He inserts the key, jerks the door open, grabs you by the arm and leads you out into the open air. Then, most unexpectedly, he releases you saying, "You are free to go. By the will of the people and the order of Pontius Pilate, governor of Jerusalem, a man by the name of Jesus from Nazareth has been condemned in your place. He is at this very moment being affixed by the feet and hands to a rough wooden cross that was reserved for you."⁴

10. Behold the glory of the love of God for sinners! He did this for you. This is nowhere more self-evident in the Scriptures than it is in the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of John. In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that He have His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

11. I am referring to this second feature of God's love as The Manner of God's Love because that's how it reads in the original language. Literally, the first phrase of this beloved verse is

"Hutos, gar agapesen, ho theos ..."

"In this manner God loved ..."

12. If we are not careful, we might understand this to be speaking of the extent of God's love. And while that may be implied in John 3:16, the text actually tells us that this is the manner (the way, the means) by which God demonstrated his love for us. And how did God set His love on

⁴ Pastor Dan Kirk

display for all the world to see? “He gave His son. His only begotten.” That is, he gave him up to execution on a cross. He gave Him up to atone for our sins.

13. I have repeatedly taught from this pulpit that “To love is to give what I have that you need because God wants me to, no matter how I feel.” That is an accurate definition of true love as God prescribes it. But God doesn’t command us to do what He is unwilling to do. In fact, he is the ultimate model of how to love.

- “To love is to Give.
- To love is to sacrifice what I have to meet the need of another.

14. What did we need? We needed someone to bear the wrath of God that we deserve. We needed someone to experience Hell in our place. But who would ever do that? Who in the world would ever pour out upon us such love? Well, Paul is telling us that’s exactly what Jesus did.

15. Jesus Himself put it like this“ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. And this is what the Son of God came to earth to do. He came to love you by dying in your place. He came to bear the Hell you deserved so that you could experience heaven with God...

16. When you think about it, the experience of Jesus on the cross was the nearest thing we can conceive of as Hell on earth.

17. **J.I. Packer** helps us get our arms around the horror. He writes,

Look at the cross... and you see what form God's judicial reaction to human sin will finally take. What form is that? In a word, withdrawal and deprivation of good. On the cross Jesus lost all the good that he had before: all sense of His Father's presence and love, all the sense of physical, mental and spiritual well-being, all enjoyment of God and of created things, all ease and solace of friendship, were taken from him, and in their place was nothing but loneliness, pain, a killing sense of human malice and callousness, and a horror of great spiritual darkness.

The physical pain, though great (for crucifixion remains the cruelest form of judicial execution that the world has ever known), was yet only a small part of the story; Jesus' chief sufferings were mental and spiritual, and what was packed into less than four hundred minutes was an eternity

of agony - agony such that each minute was an eternity in itself, as mental sufferers know that individual minutes can be.

So, too, those who reject God face the prospect of losing all good, and the best way to form an idea of eternal death is to dwell on [the cross].⁵

11. Bruce Shelly, author of *Church History in Plain Language*, wrote as the first line of the first chapter of his *History of the church*, “Christianity is the only major religion to have as its central event the humiliation of its God.”⁶

12. That’s the kind of love God has for sinners like you and me. He willingly took to Himself such humiliation, deprivation, and pain out of love for you. This is the origin of your justification. God bestows upon his enemies His saving, sacrificial love.

12. This is God’s ultimate, objective revelation of His love.

13. And I think it’s safe to say that Paul knew this better than anyone. Having been a persecutor of the church Paul understood the Love of God more than most. Witness the fact that after meeting Jesus on the Damascus road the cross of Christ became his most precious conception. Afterwards, He repeatedly said things like this:

- Gal. 6:14
But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
- 1 Cor. 1:18
For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

14. Can we even begin to grasp the Love of God?

⁵ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, (Downer’s Grove, Il. Intervarsity Press, 1993), 195

⁶ Bruce Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 3