

Intro: Last year, while on vacation, our family went to an intriguing amusement attraction. It was a human maze. The maze was similar to the ones used in experiments with mice, only it was lifesize, designed for people. The maze covered an area half the size of a football field. The object was to enter through an opening at one end, and exit through an opening at the other end. Sounds simple enough. But it wasn't quite so simple. Once inside the maze, the participant encountered dozens of walls with dozens of openings which boiled down to dozens of decisions. Go right, go left, or go straight.

We never got in the maze. We had as much fun by going to a lookout stand above the maze where we could look down on the other participants. You know, it's amazing what a difference "perspective" makes. From our perspective, in the lookout, the maze was no problem. We could see the big picture. We could see the entrance as well as the exit. We could see which corridors actually went someone, and which ones were dead-ends.

For many people, life is like a maze. They are wandering helplessly through life. They are overwhelmed by the decisions of life. They lack meaning. They lack significance. They lack perspective. Is there hope?

This morning, I'd like to take you up into the "lookout tower." I want you to see what the maze of life looks like from God's vantage point. Romans 5 is a perspective chapter. Romans 5 helps us to catch a "big picture" glimpse of life. Romans 5 tells us the difference Jesus Christ makes in life. Romans 5 shows us the difference God's love makes.

Proposition: This morning, we are going to learn from Romans 5:6-11 that God's love can give us a new perspective on two areas of our lives.

I. Perspective #1: God's love is the key to our salvation (6-8).

A. What was true of us?

1. We were without strength.
2. We were ungodly.
3. We were sinners.

B. What is true of God?

1. God saw our need.
2. God took action to meet our need.

II. Perspective #2: God's love is the key to our security (9-11).

A. It should affect the way we view God (9).

Key words: "much more than"

B. It should affect the way we view ourselves (10).

Key word: "reconciled"

***Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

C. It should affect the way we view life (11).

Key word: "joy"

Application: What should we do with the love of God?

1. We need to think about His love more often.
2. We need to talk about His love more often.

I. Perspective #1: God's love is the key to our salvation (6-8).

Romans 5 deals with the results of justification. In the first five verses, we discovered three results which are ours if we have been justified. We have peace with God (1), access to grace (2a), and joy (3-5). V 3 is rather staggering at first, "We glory in tribulations." We rejoice in trials.

How is that possible? How can we have that kind of perspective? V 5 tells us. Because of the love of God. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." The love of God transforms the way we look at the trials of life.

How do we know that God loves us? That's the question that's answered in vv 6-11. In v 5 Paul mentions God's love. In vv 6-8, he describes the character of God's love. Before us we have the heart of the gospel, the good news. God's love is the key to our salvation.

Verses 6-8 answer two important questions for us relating to our salvation.

A. What was true of us?

V 6 "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." What was true of us before we were justified? What is true of every person who is born into this world? Paul describes our condition in three ways, in vv 6-8.

1. We were without strength.

Without strength to do what? To save ourselves, to reach God, to get out of the maze, to straighten out our mess. We were without strength. We were helpless and feeble. We were totally incapable.

We could not know God. I Cor 2:14 says, "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him; Neither CAN he know them." We did not have the ability to obey God, nor to please God. We were powerless to change. We were without strength.

What else was true of us when Christ died for us?

2. We were ungodly.

We were exposed to this truth back in Rom 3:10-12, "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Christ died for us when we were ungodly. What a mind-boggling thought! In the Old Testament, the ungodly died. "The soul that sins, it shall die." Even today, what do we do with lawbreakers? We lock them away. The public cry is to make the

lawbreaker pay. Stick them in a cell at S.O.C.F. But what did Christ do? He died for the ungodly. He died for us. When we were without strength, ungodly, and...

3. *We were sinners.*

We'll come back to v 7 in a moment, but for now consider v 8, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died." Yet sinners. While we were still sinners.

Martin Lloyd-Jones asks and answers the all-important question (124), "Why did Christ come into the world? Was it in answer to some plea that came from mankind? Not at all! Was it in response to some good in man? Was it because of some divine spark still remaining, and some manifestations of that? Not at all! There was nothing in mankind to recommend it to God, nothing in human nature, nothing in any one of us to recommend us in any way to God and to His love. Indeed, the truth about us was, and is, that there was everything in us that was wrong and vile and hateful, everything calculated to antagonize God towards us--enemies, hateful, vile, ungodly, sinners as we were. We must realize that our salvation is entirely gratuitous, and arises only and altogether from the love of God in His infinite grace."

We will never appreciate fully our salvation until we grasp what was true of us when Christ died. The LB sums it up this way. We were "utterly helpless with no way of escape." Which leads to a second question relating to God's salvation.

B. What is true of God?

Let's look at vv 6-8 again, this time looking at what God did. God did not wait for us to start helping ourselves. Notice God's twofold activity.

1. *God saw our need.*

V 6 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." In due time. At just the right time, God saw our need. God saw our predicament. God saw our helplessness. God saw that we were without strength, ungodly, and sinners. He saw our need. Then what happened?

2. *God took action to meet our need.*

That's what love is. Love is action, not mere feeling. Selfless action that focuses on the need of the other person.

This kind of love is such a rare thing in our world. We live in a "What can I get out of you" world. That's true of a teen who takes advantage of the sexual purity of another teen. That's true of a politician who uses his constituents to get what he wants. That's true of a man in his midlife years who has an affair, and violates his covenant with his wife. That's true of churches that measure success in terms of bodies and bucks. That's true of people who choose churches with only one question in mind, "What will this church do FOR ME."

Real love is just the opposite. If you want to see real love, look at v 6, "For when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." God took action to meet our need.

How unusual is this kind of love? Consider v 7, "For scarcely (i.e. "with difficulty") for a righteous man will one die. To die for another is the greatest display

of love. Jesus said in Jn 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." You don't see such love very often.

But Paul continues, "Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare (i.e. "to have courage") to die (7)." There is a definite article before the word "good." It could be translated, "the good." In other words, once in awhile, a person will give his life for a good cause. The point is that you may find a person who is willing to give his life for a friend, or for a good cause.

The next word is key. V 8 "But." There's a strong contrast. "But God." Man's most noble acts of love pale in comparison with God's love. "But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God took action to meet our need.

Notice something very important. The word "commendeth" is present tense. The Cross is a past event, but it remains a present proof of God's love. A literal reading of v 8 would be, "God keeps on showing His love toward us." Christ's death is proof of the fact that God loves us.

When some people think of the Cross, they have a mistaken notion. They think that long ago, after Adam sinned, God the Father and God the Son had a discussion in heaven. God the Father, because of His holy wrath, wanted to obliterate mankind. God the Son stepped forward and said, "No, don't do that. I love those people. I'll die for them." They think that Christ somehow changed God the Father's vengeful mind. Nothing could be further from the truth.

According to v 8, who took action to meet our need? "God commendeth His love towards us." Our salvation is rooted in the love of God. Jesus Christ didn't come to change God the Father's attitude towards us. He came to show us the Father's love (see Barclay, 77).

Think about something J. Vernon McGee has said (92), "God does not save you by His love. You see, God is more than love; He is holy and He is righteous. God cannot open the back door of heaven and slip sinners in under the cover of darkness...If He does that, He's no better than a crooked judge who lets a criminal off. God has to do something for the guilt of sinners. There must be judgment." And there was.

V 6 says, "Christ died for the ungodly." V 8 reads, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Beloved, here's the first perspective we must have. We must never forget that God's love is the key to our salvation.

The year was 1942. John was a Lieutenant in the United States army, stationed in the small country of Tunisia in northern Africa. He had been in Africa for only a couple of weeks. Early one morning, he and another soldier went searching for a Nazi machine gun nest hidden in a wooded area. As they were advancing over an open field, gunfire erupted and both men were shot. John was bleeding badly, but when the medics came, he told them, "Take care of my partner first. He's in worse shape than I am." He never saw His partner alive again. John himself spent the better part of the next year in hospitals recovering from that wound, and the past 50 years dealing with its painful complications. John Branon, like so many others who have served their country, was willing to give his life for his comrade and for his country.

I am humbled when I think of such selflessness. Yet I am overwhelmed when I think of what Jesus Christ did. He did not die for a comrade. He did not die for a friend. He died for His enemy. He died for sinners. He died for us. That's love.

If your life is a maze, here's the first perspective I want you to see from the "lookout tower" of Romans 5. God's love is the key to our salvation. There's more.

II. Perspective #2: God's love is the key to our security (9-11).

Listen to vv 9-11, "Much more then..."

In v 9, Paul is using an argument from the greater to the lesser. Much more then. If God did this (vv 6-8), how much more will He do that (vv 9-11). It's a logical necessity (Lloyd-Jones). If He did the hard thing (justified ungodly sinners), we can be sure He can likewise do what is comparatively easy (save those He had justified from wrath).

The point is this. The same love that prompted our salvation is apparent in our security. Because God loved us, He saved us. Likewise, because He loves us, He keeps us secure.

What difference should that truth make? It ought to affect us in three ways.

A. It should affect the way we view God (9).

Key words: "much more then"

V 9 "Much more then, being now justified by His blood (i.e. by the death of Christ), we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Don't miss the fact that justification is our present condition. And if God has justified us, He won't abandon us to suffer His wrath.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom 1:18)." Does that wrath affect the believer? Paul explains in 1 Thess 1:10, "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." And in 1 Thess 5:9, "For God has not appointed us to suffer wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come.

I find J. Vernon McGee's words helpful at this point (92), "God does love us. Regardless of who you are or what you have done... You can't keep God from loving you. Now you can get to the place that you do not experience the love of God. For instance, you can't keep the sun from shining, but you can get out of the sunshine. You can put up an umbrella of sin, an umbrella of indifference...which will keep His love from shining on you." But He still loves you. Knowing that affects our view of God.

B. It should affect the way we view ourselves (10).

Key word: "reconciled"

V 10 "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The key word is reconciled. We were reconciled by His death. We are saved by His life, that is, His present life in heaven. Even now, Jesus is interceding for us. His life keeps us secure.

There's a popular way of thinking today that says, "I can come to God my own way." But wait. This isn't our universe. It's God's. He made it. He makes the rules, too. We don't come to Him on our terms, but on His. And He said we must be "reconciled" to Him through His Son.

Christ died as a substitute. He died in our place. He did not die merely to give us an example to follow. He died "for us," in our place. He died for us when we were God's "enemies." There is no such thing as a naturally godly person (L.J., 120). There are people who have been reconciled, and there are those who haven't.

Have you been reconciled to God? Do you view yourself that way? Ponder the paraphrase of v 10 by the TEV, "We were God's enemies, but He has made us His friends through the death of His Son." Do you view yourself as a friend of God?

C. It should affect the way we view life (11).

Key word: "joy"

V 11 "And not only so (i.e. to top that!) we also joy in God." The key word is joy. Once we get a handle on the love of God, it will produce joy in our lives. Life is not a drag when you know you're loved by the Creator! I like the way the Phillips version paraphrases v 11, "We may hold our heads high in the light of God's love."

Do you struggle with a poor self-esteem? I challenge you to do this. Ponder the love of God. When I get a handle on Who God is, and how God loves me, it affects the way I view myself (see Rom 8:37-39). As Paul says, "We joy in God!"

George Beverly Shea put it this way, "There's the wonder of sunset at evening, the wonder as sunrise I see; But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul is the wonder that God loves me. O the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all! Just to think that God loves me. O the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all! Just to think that God loves me."

Application: What should we do with the love of God?

This morning, we've gone up into the "lookout" tower, and surveyed the love of God. We've seen that His love is the key to our salvation, and to our security. Which leads to an important question. Now what? What should we do with the love of God?

1. We need to think about His love more often.

Oh, beloved, think of His love! Ponder it often! Meditate on the cross. And as we think about His love, we need to learn to love like God loved. In our friendships. In our marriages. In our church relationships. We need to get our eyes off of ourselves, see the needs of others, and take action to meet those needs.

2. We need to talk about His love more often.

The message of God's love is not a message to be hoarded. It's to be heard. We must share it. Consider these words penned by Isaac Watts, "Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme, and speak some boundless thing; The mighty works or mightier name of our eternal King. Tell of His wondrous faithfulness and sound His power abroad; Sing the sweet promise of His grace, the love and truth of God." (from "Begin, My Tongue, Some Heavenly Theme")