

March 27, 2022

# The Love of God

Romans 5:6-11

Part 1

LTS: 1 John 4:9-21

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

Those who have preached from this pulpit over the years have often expressed two concerns. On the one hand we are concerned about those in the congregation who think they have been reconciled to God when in fact they are lost.

On the other hand, we are also concerned about those who fear they are lost when in fact they are absolutely secure in Christ.

In the passage before us this morning, I think Paul's primary concern is the latter group.

Apparently, some of His original readers had come to understand and joyfully embraced the gospel Paul preached, but in their heart of hearts they wondered if justification by faith is truly sufficient to save them from the wrath of God on Judgement Day.

Secretly, in their souls they wonder,

- Have I done enough?
- Have I been good enough?
- Have I believed enough?
- Have I repented enough?

And the discouraging answer is always the same. "No." I haven't done enough, believed enough, or repented enough.

The reason I think a lingering fear of judgement is in their collective thinking is because in Rom 5:10 Paul assures them that they will be saved from the wrath of God. The reason he feels compelled to make such an emphatic statement is because of their lingering doubt. As I study this text it seems to me that this is the spiritual center of gravity in this part of Paul's letter to the Romans.

Paul wants his readers – and You & Me to fully understand and embrace our eternal security in Christ. He is determined to prove to us that the Gospel of justification by faith alone is sufficient to take us all the way home.

- No fear of judgment!
- No Purgatory (which, by the way, is Nowhere in the bible),
- no half measures or near misses, just absolute security in Christ. That's what he is determined to convince us of.

Now, if you were the apostle Paul, how would you approach this challenge? What would you say? Where would you begin. Well, Paul leaves no doubt about where to begin. He takes us directly to the

- Awesome,
- Towering,
- Eternal,
- Unshakable,
- Indissoluble LOVE of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
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This is what I want us to discover together this morning. I want to show you that the bedrock foundation and origin of Justification is the Love of God for sinners. I want to establish this as an unshakable fact and then show you 4 qualities of divine love that should remove all doubt. But before we wade into this study, let's take a moment to read our text in context.

Please stand with me and take your bible and turn with me to

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—<sup>8</sup>but God shows his LOVE for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

Beloved, there is so much that could be expounded upon in this text, but I really want to demonstrate that the ground of your salvation, the bedrock of your Justification is NOT your goodness, your law-keeping, your penitence, your humility, or even your faith!

You say, “But wait! I thought Paul said that our justification is by faith. That’s correct. However, faith is not the ground and origin of our salvation. It is merely the means by which we receive salvation. That’s why we refer to it as “The Empty Hand of Faith.”

Faith is the means by which we receive justification. But the ground, the bedrock, the final and ultimate motive and source of our salvation is the “Free, unfettered, sovereign love of God.

From this starting point, it should be intuitive and fairly obvious that the Love of God for sinners is quite different than the love we have for one another.

I actually want to speak to you about five qualities of God love that should convince us that we are secure in Christ. For most of this sermon I want to focus on the first quality; namely,

## I. The Nature of God’s Love.

1. As I mentioned, God’s love for us is quite different than our love for one another. Allow me to illustrate:

When Chris and I were dating in college (approx., 36 years ago) I knew her well enough to know that saying “I love you” would be out of bounds until I was ready to make a commitment. So, for many months we both refrained from saying those three “Magic Words.” And then, one night, I took her out on a date and presented her with a gigantic Chocolate-chip cookie. And on that giant cookie – there were three wonderful words spelled out in beautiful white icing,

“I love You.” It melted her heart just as planned and the rest is history!

And now you young guys know how to do it. You’re welcome!

2. The point I want to make, however, is that the first time I said “I love you,” what I meant was, I see things in your life, your character, your beauty, your sense of humor and adventure that are so attractive and compelling to me that I really can’t imagine being happy or complete in this world without you. You fill the empty places in my life.
3. Now, there is nothing wrong with that kind of love. But it is substantively different than the love God. It would be a mistake to think that within the three Persons of the triune Godhead there can be any deficiency or lack that can be filled or satisfied by another.
4. Allow me to pose a question. What was God doing out there for all eternity before He created the heavens and the earth and finally man? The clock will limit us to a short answer, so I’ll summarize with the following: For all eternity the Eternal Father was loving his Eternal Son
5. Witness what Jesus said in his high-priestly prayer in John 17:24.

(Turn there with me for a moment)

*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

6. The whole of Scripture teaches us that to love is to give. For all eternity the three Persons of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) were engaged in actively loving one another. Hence, at Jesus’ baptism, the H.S. descended upon Jesus and the Father called out from heaven, “This is my beloved Son. And I want to suggest that this is a picture of what the three Persons of the Trinity were doing even before creation.
7. Michael Reeves masterfully handles these theological treasures when he writes,

It is all deeply personal: the Spirit stirs up the delight of the Father in the Son and the delight of the Son in the Father, inflaming their love and so binding them together in “fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

8. What was God doing before He created the heavens and the earth and the angels and everything? He was actively loving His eternal Son. And that divine propensity to give spilled over, as it were, resulting in the creation of all things.

- Entering into a relationship with us does not add anything to Him.
- Entering a relationship with us does not fill an empty place in God’s heart.
- In the garden of Eden God said of man, “It is NOT good for man to be alone. He was incomplete apart from Eve. But the same cannot be said of God.
  - Nothing about God is incomplete in any way.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, (Downers Grove Ill. IVP Academic, 2012), 29

- He has no needs.
- He doesn't need anyone or anything.
- He owes nothing to no one.

9. So, how should we think about the love of God for sinners?

- Unlike man's love, the love of God is uninfluenced by anything outside God Himself.<sup>2</sup>
- We must be careful to note that God's love for sinners is NOT something that came into existence after people repented of their sin and believed in Jesus.
- Nor was it an unexpected visceral response in the heart of God because of our pitiable need.
- Rather, the love of God toward sinners is as old as God Himself. As Arthur Pink explains,
  - "It is not simply that God loves, but that He is love itself. Love is not merely one of his attributes, but an essential characteristic of His very nature..."<sup>3</sup>

10, God doesn't love people because He finds us beautiful, or smart, or righteous, or attractive in any way. There is nothing within man that causes or compels God to move toward us to do us good. God loves because it is His nature to love.

11. In 1 John 4:8 we read the utterly amazing declaration that, "God is love. We do not read that of any other virtue of God.

- a. We don't read that God IS Mercy
  - i. We don't read that God is Grace.
  - ii. Nor do we read that God IS wrath. But we do read that God IS Love.
  - iii. When theologians speak of the love of God, they refer to it as one of the infinite perfections derived from his nature. Love is an essential attribute of God.
  - iv. Theologically speaking, loving is not merely what God does, it is an essential characteristic of who God is.
  - v. He doesn't love us because he found something attractive in us. He loves us because it is his nature to love. And it has been his nature to love from

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1989), 77

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989), 77

before the creation of the world.

- vi. Unlike human love, God's is an unfettered love. Divine love is a sovereign love. It is a love motivated exclusively by His own sovereign will. He does not wait for us to love Him. He initiates. He draws, He pursues because it is according to His nature to do so. Hence, we read...

12. 1 John 4:19 *"We love God because He first loved us."* This is where justification begins. The love of God is the origin, and ground of your redemption. This is why your justification is secure. The atonement that God made for us to satisfy His wrath against sinners was birthed by the love of God. Let's take a moment to see this in the N.T.

13. 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."*

- God loved for us is not a response to our love for Him. We see this very clearly in Rom. 3:11 "no one seeks for God."
- God is always the initiator. He loves us first. So, if you have been justified in God's sight, it is not because of something you did, but something God did for you. And what did God do? He sent his Son to be the propitiation (the sacrifice that Satisfies justice) for our sins. Your justification is grounded and anchored in God's sovereign, unfettered act of love for you when He sent His only begotten son to die for you.

14. Consider also another famous text: John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"*

- Again, sinners receive eternal life as a divine act of sacrificial love. More specifically (we should note) we are saved by the Love of the Father. That's what is meant by the phrases "GOD so loved the world. But it wasn't just the Father.

15. Ephesians 5:25 *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."*

- So, we are justified, redeemed and reconciled to God not only by the love of the Father, but by the love of the Son. This Paul says again in...

16. Ephesians 5:1-2. *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

- Again, Paul is telling us that God loved us by giving Himself up for us as a sacrifice in our place. He gave Himself up for us because of His free, unfettered, sovereign love for us.

17. Let be belabor the point again by pointing your to... Hebrews 9:13–14; *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

18. Here we learn that the redemption God gives us finds its origin not only in the love of the Father and the Son, but of the Holy Spirit.

- In other words, the love that motivates God to forgive and justify sinners is a trinitarian love. All three persons of the Godhead are actively involved in securing your salvation. Can anything in the universe be more secure?

19. As magnificent as all the spiritual benefits Paul names in this chapter may be, the single reality that serves as the ground and anchor of our security is the unfettered, sovereign love of God for sinners.

20. Look with me at verse 5 (Rom. 5:5). Here Paul introduces us to this love when he writes, *“And hope does not put us to shame because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the H.S.”*

- In other words, we can be assured that everything God has promised us in the book of Romans and the whole of Scripture, is ours foundationally because God actively loves us.

21. From there (beginning in v. 6) Paul expounds on the objective love of God for his people. And my friend, I say it again; This is the foundation of your security: God the Father loves you. He loves you with a free, unfettered sovereign love toward a multitude of sinners from before the creation of the world.

22. And yet, His love is not an impersonal love. I know that because in Galatians 2:20 Paul says very plainly, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in **me**...who loved me and gave himself for **me**.”*

23. And it is because of this love that the believer in Jesus is absolutely and eternally secure.

Beloved, I realize I have taken you into the deep end this morning. But these truths are marvelous beyond description. And if you will bring them to bear upon your own heart, you will experience something of your security in Christ, because “God’s love has been poured into your hearts through the H.S.”

24. But Paul isn't finished. Indeed, this is just the beginning. There is much more.

Specifically, Paul wants to acquaint us with Four more qualities of the love of God that should prove to us once and for all that that we are safe having no reason to fear the just and holy wrath of God because of what He has done for you as a manifestation of His eternal love. And If this love is foreign to you, I want to invite you to receive it by faith no matter how you may have sinned, or how estranged from God you are. As we will learn next week (v. 8) that God **proves** his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

25 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. Our security in His love.

But for that, you will need to come next week.