



### **The Joy of Love**

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Romans 5:6-11

Clint Pressley

*<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.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Is there any greater joy than to love and to be loved back by another? Songs are sung, poems are written, and movies are made about the joy and power of love. There is romantic love, family love, brotherly love, and the strong bonds of love between friends. Even Paul in his famous triad of faith, hope and love would say the greatest of these is love. If that's the case in earthly fashion, how much truer is it when we contemplate the vast expanses and unreachable depths of God's love given to us in Christ Jesus? So often I'm afraid we short sale his love and miss represent his love when we say God loves you. Today I hope we can walk away with just a little more of a vision of God's love for us in Jesus because I think that's what Paul is talking about right here. The exclusive, particular, covenanted love of God for his people in Jesus. I would argue that the greatest benefit of salvation isn't just that we are not going to hell. I think this text tells us that the greatest benefit of being a Christian is the full-throated love of an all-powerful God and that love is found and received exclusively at the cross of Jesus. Let's go to the text and let the Bible speak to us about God's love.

## You Can't Know God's Love Fully Until You Trust Christ Completely

Let's explore what this passage actually tells us about the love of God. Here are some simple points about a beautiful truth.

### **God's love is unconditional**

To see this we have to go through the passage and pick out the words Paul uses to describe us before we are saved and see that he loved us in that condition. Let's look at the fourfold portrayal of us before we were in Christ. You see the first one right off the bat in verse 6.

Weak. We were weak. Verse 6 says while we were still weak, Christ died for us. Your Bible might say helpless. We couldn't do anything to help ourselves. We know what's right and even want to do what's right, but even when the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. It's the idea of being dropped in a deep well 50 feet down and you are standing in knee deep water. You can see the light up top but you can't do anything to get out. The sides are slick and your grip is too weak. You need rescue and rescue is embedded in verse six. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for us. The rescue plan is God's love from the foundation of the world; Jesus dying on the cross in place of sinners. It's God's love and I'm asking you to receive it today. H. B. Charles says, we do our part and God does his. We sin and he saves. While we were weak. There is another descriptor found at the end of verse six.

Ungodly. We were ungodly. *<sup>6</sup>For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* Instead of loving God with all our being, we have rebelled against God with all our might. Ungodly is the casting off. It is reinterpreting of God's provision as God's restraint. You may have seen this in adult children that were raised in a Christian home but casting all that off and saying I reject all that. That's the idea in the word ungodly. And according to the end of verse 6, Christ died for the ungodly. He was loving us when we rejected him. That's God's love in Jesus. You didn't do anything to get it and you won't do anything to lose it. There's a third word that describes our condition before we came to Christ and it is in verse 8. *<sup>8</sup>but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Don't you love verse 8.

Sinners. We were sinners. It means we have departed from the way of the righteous, we have fallen short of God's standards and missed the target completely. We have given God every conceivable reason to not love us and yet Verse 8 tells me he redeemed me not because he saw such potential in me or that I was special, important or talented. The text says he loved me

while I was covered in rottenness and stunk to high heaven. It is the unconditional love of God given to us in the death of Christ on the cross. Before I leave this point, I'd like to mention one more word that describes our position before we come to faith in Christ. It's found there in verse 10.

Enemies. <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.* Paul is making it very clear that the nature of our relationship to God, outside of Christ, is one of an enemy. It is being hostile toward God, violating his law and rebelling against his word. And worse than us being hostile to him is that when we are his enemy, he is hostile toward us. Our sins have justly incurred his wrath and yet this passage tells us that his love has overcome our rebellion. Think about it with me. At the cross, the weak become strong, the ungodly are made godly, sinners become saints, and enemies become friends of God! At the cross of Jesus it is shown that God's love for us is unconditional.

### **God's love is without rival**

This is one of the most soul satisfying, life protecting things you can get ahold of. If you are loved by God through Jesus, that love fills in the cracks, heals the wounds and cleared your vision so that you can be who God created you to be. That really is the point Paul is making in verses 7 through 8. You have to read them together <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.* Verse 7 shows us the pinnacle of human love, the giving of one's life to a person you are close to - a spouse or child or combat buddy. It's what Abraham Lincoln would call the last full measure of love. Verse 8 gives us a contrast. In contrast to the very best in human love, verse 8 says but God shows his love for us by sending his son to die for people that hate him. This shows us once again that God's love is without rival. There's something else. I want you to notice how many times Paul uses the phrase or thought "Christ died". And what is said about Christ dying. In verse 6 it says at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Maybe he's referring to the exact right time in history or maybe like what Paul wrote in Galatians 4, it was in the fullness of time. Whatever Paul means here, he is telling us that God the Father has the time of salvation in mind. And as you pray for "your one", you trust in God's good timing. The second thing mentioned in verse 8 is that while we were sinners Christ died for us. He died for us in our place. There is the micro gospel that tells a

macro story of substitutionary atonement. I wonder this morning if you can say it and believe it. Christ died in my place. If you can, that is the opening line in your gospel story. The 3rd time, and if you're not careful you will go running by it, is in verse 9, since therefore we have been justified by his blood and saved by him from the wrath of God.

Justified. Jesus not only paid for our sins at the cross, he gave us his righteousness. We put it on, he clothes us in his righteousness so that when you believe in Jesus not only are your sins forgiven you are covered by Jesus. There is a fourth mention of his death and it is in verse 10. Let's finish the whole verse to see what the death of Jesus does for us. <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.* Three times you hear that the death and resurrection of Jesus have reconciled us to God. This is beautiful language. I love the word reconciliation especially when people are reconciled to God. According to the Apostle Paul there are two moments in being reconciled to God. The first is the accomplishment of reconciliation and we see that in 2 Corinthians 5:19, <sup>19</sup> *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.* The second moment is the acceptance of reconciliation and it is found in 2 Corinthians 5: 20. <sup>20</sup> *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* We have to believe the finished work of God at the cross. God's love given to us is without rival.

### **God's love causes us to rejoice**

It's right there in verse 11. <sup>11</sup> *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* We rejoice in the goodness of God. Not in what he can do, not in the blessings you get or provisions you receive, but to simply celebrate God's goodness and the fact that his love causes that kind of joy. I have been studying worship lately and the causes and form, the posture and approach; and over and over in the Psalms we are told to exalt and shout to the Lord in worship. Psalm 71: 23 says, <sup>23</sup> *My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.* And it's God's love given to us in Jesus that gives strength to our joy and hope and life. I hope today you will receive the love of God found in Christ alone.

*(Pastor prays)*