



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 5: 6-11

Romans

“The Love of God”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, our text is Romans chapter 5 and we’re going to look at verses 6 through 11. In Romans 5, Paul has been discussing the blessings of justification, and among those blessings are the assurance of salvation that we have, and he develops that in the verses that we will read this morning.

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

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.

And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the time that we have to gather together here and read the Bible, as we have done; and what a great text of Scripture it is to

read about your love – what a subject. And we pray, Father, that as we now seek to study it and understand it better, you would guide us in our thinking, and bless us as we do that. It is a great privilege to read this text. It is a great privilege to study it, because in studying it, we’re studying you, and there is no greater subject to study than that.

There’s no greater person to consider than you. You are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Your attributes of goodness, grace, of power, wisdom, so many, Father, are a blessing to study. We take one of those this morning, your love, and we pray that you would bless us as we do that. Help us to understand it better, so that in understanding your love, we can understand your grace, and our great salvation, and that understanding would shape and affect the way we think.

And the way we live, that we might live lives that are a blessing in the world around us, and lives that bring glory to you, and that, of course, Father, is the chief end of man, is to enjoy you and glorify you forever. So Father, may our time together this morning be to that end. May we learn more about you, and glorify you in doing so. But Father, we are a people of material needs as well as spiritual needs, and we pray for those needs that this congregation has.

We pray for the sick – we pray that you would give healing. We pray for those who are facing medical procedures, surgeries – we pray that you would bless them and give them peace, and that you would bless the doctors that will attend to them. We pray for those who are discouraged from the various difficulties of life. We considered that last week, Father, the tribulations that come into our lives, and they come into all of our lives. We will not escape hardship, trials, and tribulations. It’s part of life.

It’s part of living in a fallen world, but it is part of what the Christian has been called to experience. It is part of our experience, and it is one of the ways in which you cause us to grow. We need to understand that. The great truth of it is, though, Father, that because of your love for us, you can take the trials of life, the difficulties of life, and you use them to our good. So we’re not destroyed by hardship and difficulty; we are, in fact, strengthened, and prepared for this life.

Made mature in this life, and prepared for heaven through all of that, but Father, we pray that those who are experiencing hardship and are discouraged and weighed down by it that you might encourage them; build them up in the faith. We

live in a dangerous world. We live in a world of many uncertainties, at least from the human perspective, and so we pray for those who are traveling. We think of Dr. Hanna as he leads a tour to Israel in the next week or so.

We pray that you would bless them and give them safety, and a very enjoyable time in a very interesting part of the world. May they learn much and be helped in their understanding of the Bible through that trip. And we pray for the Scotland mission trip that is coming up this Tuesday; we pray that you'd bless our young people and the chaperones as they travel, and may they have a very enjoyable time, and a safe time and a productive ministry in that place.

We pray, Father, that you'd bless us this evening when we come back and worship the Lord through the Lord's Supper and through the ministry that will take place in that hour, and bless us now as we sing our final hymn. And as we worship you in this hour, and as we consider the great truths that we will consider, bless us, teach us, build us up in the faith. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] The great love story of the Old Testament is that of Hosea for Gomer. It is the account of an unheard of kind of love. Hosea was an eighth century prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel. He married Gomer, who was a prostitute. They had children together, but she went after other men. She called them her lovers. Still, Hosea loved her, and even provided for her during her unfaithfulness, but Gomer continued in her waywardness. I suppose friends counseled Hosea to let her go; she's unworthy.

She's a tramp; divorce her. But Hosea was under God's direction, and he remained steadfast in his love. Sin, however, is a slippery slope, and Gomer went from bad to worse. Her lovers forsook her. The good times ended. She was left destitute and became a slave. She was put on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder, and we can imagine how that went. Men began to bid for this woman – 5 shekels of silver, 7 shekels, 10 shekels.

Then, of all people, Hosea stood up, and said, “15 shekels of silver, and a homer and a half of barley,” and with that, his own wife was sold back to him. He said, “So I bought her for myself.” He bought her out of slavery and shame. He took her away. She fell in love with her husband and never returned again to her old lovers. Hosea's love is a mystifying kind of love. Human beings can understand

loving someone who is faithful and good, loving the lovely, but not the unfaithful, not the unkind and undeserving.

But that is how God loves. Hosea’s love is simply an illustration of divine love. God’s love is sacrificial. It is costly. His love is undeserved and unconditional. And his love is saving. It’s not merely an emotion. It’s not merely a sentiment. It’s not a love that hopes for the best and wants the best, but really can’t achieve the best. It is saving; it accomplishes the very object for which it’s designed. It delivers from slavery and degradation and death. It is a powerful love.

Now, that is the love that God has for us, and we see that in our passage in Romans 5:6-11. It is for the ungodly. It is for sinners. It is for enemies. It is unconditional. It is free for us, but costly for God – it cost him his own Son, and all through this text, we read the phrases “Christ died,” “by his blood,” “the death of his Son.” God’s love is sacrificial, and it is saving; “saved from the wrath of God,” Paul writes in verse 9. That was the purpose of God’s love.

And that was the accomplishment of Christ’s death – the salvation of sinners. This is what Paul has been explaining in Romans chapter 5. He has finished his explanation of the great doctrine of justification by faith; now he explains the results of it – the benefits that the believer has, having been justified. We have peace with God. We stand in grace – that is, we stand fully accepted by God. And we have a future hope.

But how do we know that? How can we be sure that we are accepted by God, and our future is certain? That we will someday surely enter into the glory to come? Paul answered that question in verse 5, and he explained that we have the certainty of hope because that hope is not based on anything in us – that hope is based on God’s love, which is unfailing, and we know it because the Holy Spirit confirms it. Through him, God has poured out his love for us, and the Spirit gives us an inner witness to that love.

That is his internal testimony; he assures us that God’s love is for us. How do we know God loves us? We know it because we know it. We know it because the Spirit of God confirms it to us. But there’s a second way of assuring us of God’s love – one that is not inside of us, but one that is outside of us. It is an objective witness. God has proved his love for us at the cross of Christ. There is no greater proof of

God’s love than that – than the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the demonstration of his love.

We could even say it’s the definition of his love, and in verse 6 through verse 11, Paul explains the nature of God’s love from the cross of Christ. Verse 6, “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones called verse 6 “one of the greatest verses in the whole Bible,” and it certainly is. It is very similar to John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” Behind the death of Christ is the love of God.

Love is giving. We learn a lot about love from what it gives, and not just the greatness of the gift, the largeness of the gift, but the sacrifice in the gift itself. Its greatness is measured by its gift, and God’s gift was his Son. He gave him in death. But love is also measured by its object. We learn about the nature of love from what is loved. In John 3:16 the object of God’s love is the world. The object is the same here in Romans 5:6, it’s just described differently. Christ died for the helpless and the ungodly.

How different that is from human love. We love the strong, we love the beautiful, we love the deserving. We love those that will benefit us. God loves the helpless and the ungodly – those who can do absolutely nothing for him, who don’t deserve him. That’s who he loves, and that’s why his love is so amazing. And yet these same adjectives that magnify the greatness of God’s love to make this one of the greatest verse in the whole Bible make it an offense to many.

People don’t want to be thought of, or they certainly don’t like to think of themselves, as being weak, and worse than that, as being helpless. Who wants to be known as a helpless person? And certainly not as ungodly. Men may admit that they’re less than perfect; can’t imagine anyone claiming to be perfect. They’ll admit that they have flaws and faults, but nobody wants to think of themselves as being completely without any goodness. People don’t want to think of themselves in that way.

They want to think of themselves as being basically good. They have faults, but they’re basically okay, they’re basically good. The Bible is clear. Man, by nature, is helpless and ungodly, and that is how we must see ourselves if we are to be saved. You remember what Jesus told the Pharisees? He said, “I did not come to call

the righteous, but sinners. It’s not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.”

And we must see ourselves as sinners in need of the Savior, as sick in need of the Great Physician, in order to be saved. Those who think that they are healthy, those who think that they are righteous, as those self-righteous Pharisees did, will never call upon the Savior – will never seek the Great Physician. Now, we must see ourselves as that. As unhealthy, as weak, as helpless; we must see ourselves as ungodly in order to be saved.

But whether or not a person sees himself or herself as being that or not ultimately is beside the point, because that is exactly the way the Bible describes us. It unveils for us our condition. It diagnoses us. It reveals to us the condition that we are in by nature, and that is that we are sick and sinners, and we need to understand that. We need to understand that in order to understand this great subject of the grace of God. And first of all, we need to understand the object of God’s love.

That’s where Paul begins in this analysis of the love of God, with the object. We are helpless; not just weak, but helpless. That means powerless, completely unable to change our condition and our course in life, and really without even the desire to do so. Sin has so affected the natural man, sin has so effected the unbeliever that he or she has no interest in the things of God. In fact, is opposed to the things of God.

Paul will make that plain, if he hasn’t made that plain already, later in 8:7, where he says that we are “hostile toward God.” We’re at war with God. The unbeliever is so helpless that he has no idea how helpless he really is. His helplessness is in the heart. People outside of grace and apart from conversion love that condition. They love their sin. They love this world. They don’t want to change. They don’t want to leave this place.

They’re like the sailors in Homer’s *The Odyssey*, who were blown across the sea to the land of the lotus-eaters, and when they tasted the flower food that the people there gave them, they lost all longing for home. They wanted to dwell only in the lotus land. They just wanted to stay there. So Odysseus had to drag them back onto the ship and chain them there – persuasion was impossible. They were helpless. Even in their chains they wept and they cried for the lotus land. That’s where they wanted to be.

He had to deliver them from their own condition, the condition that they loved, and man, by nature in unbelief, is the same way. Just as powerless to rescue himself from his condition. He doesn't want to be rescued. He had no interest in changing. Oh, he wants self-improvement, of course, but not conversion. He doesn't want to become a new creature in Christ. He doesn't want to become a citizen of heaven. He loves this world, so his mind must be changed.

He must receive a new heart, which takes place in regeneration, and all because of the cross. That is where Christ obtained the blessings of salvation for us. He died for the helpless. He died for those who had no affections for him, and no capabilities to turn to him. This verse, Romans 5:6, is the death of Poor Richard's theology. You know Ben Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*, and that famous statement, “God helps them that help themselves?” Well no, not at all.

According to Paul, God helps the helpless. He helps the ungodly, and what Paul goes on to describe as sinners, and enemies. So we're helpless, we're ungodly, we're sinners, we're enemies. It's a four-fold unflattering description of man, but there it is, and we can't escape it. None of this is said in order to antagonize unbelievers; this is not name-calling. This is analytical.

This is stated in order to explain our nature, so that we can understand the love of God, and the nature of his love, and give us an appreciation for God's love and what that love has done for us. God's love is measured in the object, as we see, and it's measured in the gift that is given, and no greater gift can be given than the gift of the Son of God. He died for us, and love is measured in that way – measured in its object, and measured in the gift for that object.

Which demonstrates in this case its unconditional nature – the unconditional nature of God's love – it's God's love for Gomer. It is for the uncaring. It is for the undeserving, the ungodly, and the rebellious. And to emphasize just how amazing the love of God is, Paul compares it to our love. He gives us some perspective by comparing God's love with the way we love. Love is costly. Love is sacrificial. So who are we willing to sacrifice for? In fact, who are we willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for?

That's what stands behind the statement in verse 7. “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.” We can find some examples of men who have done that. Every nation has its

heroes. When we were children learning our American history, we all learned about Nathan Hale. Before the British hanged him, he said, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

When I was in Rome and we were crossing the Tiber River, I told my daughter the story of Horatius, who defended the city against the invading Etruscan army. He did it by himself. He fought off the enemy at the bridge to the city, giving his companions time to cut it down. It was a fierce fight. He was wounded in the melee, and then he threw himself into the river. But he saved Rome. Paul’s readers may have thought about Horatius as that verse was being read to them.

Stories of courage and sacrifice are rare, but they exist. They happen. But the sacrifices that are made are made for loved ones. The sacrifices are made for companions, for fellow citizens. They’re not made for enemies. That’s unheard of. And yet that is the nature of God’s love and Christ’s sacrifice, and that is Paul’s point. A person might die for a good man; that’s possible, he says. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

A sinner is one who misses the mark – that’s a simple definition of sin. There’s a standard, and sin fails to meet that standard. It falls short of God’s righteousness. It breaks his law, and is deserving of the penalty for law-breaking. That penalty is death. But Paul says Christ died for us. He died in our place. That is what he did for us. That is the cost of his love – he died for us.

Not in some general sense, as though Christ died to show us how much God loved us, or Christ died to show how much God hates sin in an attempt to persuade us to love him, or by his example to slay us away from sin, and turn us toward God. This expression has the specific meaning of substitution. That was the exact manner of his death. He died as our substitute. That’s the idea of the preposition “for.”

It can have a general sense, it can have the meaning of “for the benefit of” or “on behalf of,” and that could fit with the idea of an example, to give us a good example for our benefit in that way. But it also means “instead of.” It also has the idea of “in the place of,” and that is the idea here. The context bears that out. Paul joins together our sin and Christ’s death. The penalty of sin, as I said, is death; “the wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23.

So the statement “Christ died for us” can only mean “Christ took our place in judgment.” He died as a sin offering, as a substitute, bearing our sins and judgment in

our place. That’s how salvation was accomplished. It happened on the cross, where Christ paid our debt, and when a person believes in him, Christ’s payment is credited to his or to her account. The believer is justified. He’s declared righteous. He’s declared paid up, without debt, and right with God. At the moment of faith, that’s what happens.

That transaction occurs, and the sinner is saved. Not because of faith – our faith has no value in and of itself. It has no merits. Faith is not something that earns God’s good pleasure, as though we’ve done a good thing and he’s pleased with that, and so he justifies us because we believe. Faith has no merit. Faith has no saving value. All of the saving work and the saving value is in the sacrifice of Christ. What faith does is merely receive the gift.

It merely receives salvation that Christ obtained on the cross, the full pardon of sin. That was the goal or the purpose of God’s love; to save sinners. And that salvation is great. We have a so-great salvation, and verse 9 makes that clear. “Having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him.” The wrath of God will never touch us because it touched his Son in our place. That is why the believer has peace with God.

The wrath of God that we deserve was exhausted in our substitute. It is no more for the believer. God’s justice now has no claim on the believer. We are right with God, and it would be unjust of God to punish people whose sins have already been punished. It would be unlawful to collect a debt from someone whose debt has been paid in full already. So, Paul writes, “we shall be saved from the wrath of God.” Now, that is a great salvation. That’s the greatest salvation – saved from wrath.

But it is a very unfashionable understanding of salvation. The idea of divine wrath is rarely heard today. I don’t go to evangelical churches today because I’m in this evangelical church almost every Sunday, but I wonder how often even in evangelical, Bible-believing churches the wrath of God is preached? I don’t know from experience. From what I read, it’s not preached a great deal.

It’s certainly not preached at all among the liberal theologians; it’s dismissed as a primitive, unenlightened idea. that dishonors the goodness of God. He is the Father of all men, the liberal preacher would explain, and all men are brothers of one another. What we need to do in this world and in this life is be tolerant, and of course

we do need to be tolerant. The Christian is tolerant of other people. Not tolerant of error, but we're tolerant.

But nevertheless, the liberal would press that, and explain it in terms of accepting everyone, just as God is accepting of everyone. That's very simply – maybe too simply – but very simply liberal theology, liberalism, modernism. J. Gresham Machen analyzed it in the early 20th century, in 1923, in his classic *Christianity and Liberalism*. And he stated that modern liberal teachers speak with horror about an angry God, and the reason they deny it is because, as he said, they have “a light view of sin.”

Now, if a person doesn't take sin seriously, then wrath makes no sense. But without wrath, grace is meaningless. There is no need for atonement, and the gospel is lost. Everyone is saved because no one's really lost. In fact, those categories are really meaningless. But the Bible takes sin very seriously, and it teaches the wrath of God. Paul teaches it here in our text. He teaches it throughout the book of Romans, and all of the other books of the Bible teach it as well.

The author of Hebrews teaches it. He warns of a terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. That's wrath. John the Baptist warned of the wrath to come, and unquenchable fire. Jesus spoke frequently of God's judgment. Liberalism denies that, but liberalism is a lie. It's not the first lie; in fact, it's just a new form of the lie that Marcion told in the second century. He was the first great heretic of the church.

Marcion rejected the Old Testament and the God of the Jews as an inferior God of strict justice and wrath. Jesus, he taught, was the revelation of the unknown God of the New Testament, the God of light and love who saved by grace, without need of atonement. So there's nothing new under the sun; what's being taught today is just a new form or what was taught long ago. But what is being taught today in so-called liberal theology is not the teaching of the New Testament. The God of Abraham is the God of Paul.

He is just, and his wrath is real, not because he's a dark and angry God, but because he is a holy God who hates sin and must deal with it, and must destroy it. And we must teach that subject of the wrath of God. We must teach it because it's in the Bible. We must teach it because it's true. And we must teach it because people

must know the peril of living in rebellion against God. God is longsuffering, and the quietness of his wrath is no indication that his wrath is not real. It is real.

People need to know that, but also know that this same God has also made a way of escape, and it is in Christ, whom God sent to be the sin-bearer, our substitute in judgment, who underwent God’s wrath so that we would not undergo it, so that we would escape it. And those who come to him do escape that wrath, and they have a great salvation. That’s the love of God. It actually saves. I want to emphasize that. I think I do in the lessons that I’ve been teaching, to emphasize the nature of God’s love.

It’s effective. It doesn’t merely provide a way of salvation, and then God sits back, we it were, and hopes that people will be saved. No one would be saved if that was the case. He provides and accomplishes the work of salvation. His love is a saving love, an effective love; it accomplishes the work that it intends. You remember what God said to Satan about Joshua the high priest. Satan was accusing this priest who’s dressed in filthy clothes, and God silences him, and he says that he is a brand plucked from the fire.

And that’s what you and I are – we are brands plucked from the fire, by the grace of God. Salvation is a work of God. It is a fact of the past, and it is a hope for the future. It is deliverance from the guilt of our sin, and from God’s future punishment on those sins. Well, that’s the negative side of salvation – escaping wrath. The positive side is given in verse 10, living to God. Christ has reconciled us to him. “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.”

Reconciliation is peace. It speaks of a change in relationships in which enemies are turned into friends, and that is what God the Father did through Christ. This God of wrath, this God who is angry towards sin and the sinner, is the God who took the initiative in ending the hostility and doing away with his wrath. He took the initiative in ending that between himself and man, and he did so by satisfying his justice in the sacrifice of his own Son, in whom he punished sin. That’s the love of God.

And that peace is restored for every person who believes in Christ, who joins himself or herself to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And so because there is peace now between God and the believer, there will be eternal life in the future for the believer.

That’s what Paul writes. “Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Just as Christ’s death was for our sins, his resurrection was for our life. When he rose to new life in glory, he brought us into that new life also.

And we will be raised to the new and glorious life in the future, but how can we know that for sure? The promise of deliverance from wrath, the promise of the resurrection to come, those are great promises. Those are glorious promises, but how do we know that they are real? How do we know that they’re true? That was the question that Paul answered in verse 5, if you remember, when he explained that our hope is sure because of God’s love.

And the Holy Spirit convicts us of that love for us; he convinces us of it. Well, now in these verses, in verses 9 and 10, Paul returns to that subject of assurance, and he answers it with a logical argument that is irrefutable. Both verses are Paul’s much more than arguments. We find those throughout the book of Romans, throughout his writings. If one thing has happened, much more then will something else happen. If the greater has occurred, then the lesser must follow all the more – that’s the logic of Paul’s thinking.

That’s the way he explains things, and in verse 9 he argues for the certainty of future deliverance from our past justification, based on our justification, having been justified by his blood, much more, then, we shall be saved from wrath through him. In other words, since God has already acquitted the believer of his or her guilt and declared us righteous – since he has done the great work of justification – then he will certainly save us from wrath.

We could illustrate it like this. A judge in a law court is not going to acquit a man of a traffic violation, say, “You’re innocent of the charge; you’re free to go, but first go pay the fine.” That’s absurd. And God is not going to justify the believer, and justify the sinner, and then say, “Now you’ve got to pay for your sins.” If he’s done the great work of justification, then Paul is saying we can be certain that he is going to save us from the wrath to come.

The logic is even stronger in verse 10. God made peace with us while we were enemies. Then surely he will save us now that we are his friends. If he’ll reconcile us at the cost of his own Son’s blood, then there is nothing that he won’t do for us, freely. If God has already done the difficult thing, then can’t we trust him to

do the comparatively simple thing of completing the task? That’s Paul’s logic, and it’s irrefutable.

The point’s very simple: the believer in Jesus Christ is absolutely secure. We will never be condemned. We will never undergo judgment. That’s not just Paul’s teaching; our Lord taught the same thing. He put it very clearly in perhaps the definitive text on the security of the believer in John 10:28-29. “I give eternal life to them,” speaking of his sheep. We don’t get it for ourselves; it’s a gift. “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

“My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” Well, see, we had the same kind of logic there. If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, you’re one because God gave you that salvation. He didn’t give you salvation and know, “Well, later on they’re going to lose it.” What he gave is eternal life, and eternal life is just that – eternal life. And it’s eternal because we’re in Christ’s hand, and we’re in the Father’s hand.

And no one’s greater than the Father, Jesus said, so the logic is no one can pluck us out of his hand; not even we ourselves can pluck ourselves out of his hand. We are safe and eternally secure, and that is Paul’s argument here. And it’s a very good text for particular redemption, limited atonement, because if he did the greatest thing in dying for sinners, then he will surely do the lesser thing of bringing them to salvation.

If he shed his blood to save them, then surely he will send the Holy Spirit to convict them of their sin and give them faith, and bring them to the completion of that work in their salvation. Now, if that’s not clear in the logic of Paul’s statement here, then it certainly is clear later on in Romans 8:32. “He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?”

If he gave his own Son for your salvation, won’t he give you whatever is necessary for securing that salvation? Of course he will. That’s what Paul is saying. But if that is so, then he must’ve died only for his elect. That must be how we define that word “all.” Otherwise, “all,” if we understand it in terms of every single individual who has ever lived or ever will live, then all must be saved, and universalism would be true, and we know that’s not true from the Bible. The Bible denies that.

This is a good text on particular redemption, or limited atonement, and I'm not coming to that point or making that point as merely an aside, because it's something that I think is interesting, or something I think you need to know. This goes to the very heart of the subject that we're studying here; the very nature of God's love. The doctrines of God's sovereign grace, what are sometimes called the five points of Calvinism, but are simply the doctrines of God's sovereign grace, or the gospel itself – those are just an explanation of God's infinite love.

They explain the love of God to us, in total depravity and unconditional election we see the unconditional love of God. The love of Hosea for Gomer; he loves the unlovable. He loves those who have nothing to give him; those from whom he cannot benefit. He loves unconditionally. In limited atonement, which is unlimited in its grace and power, we see his infinite saving love. He loves us so much that he did everything to secure and ensure our salvation, even giving his own Son to actually save us.

That's the love of God. It's effective. It's purposeful. It's powerful. It accomplishes its intended purpose. It's the same with irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. His love is such that he will bring his chosen ones, his sheep, his bride, to himself, and he will preserve them to the very end. He will not lose one. And Jesus said, “I have not lost one of those that you have given to me.” That is unconditional, unfrustratable, undying love.

The love that buys an unfaithful woman, a harlot, off the auction block, takes her away, reconciles her to himself, and makes her pure. Well, that ought to cause us to rejoice. That's what the love of God should do. It certainly did for Paul, and it's what he says that we do, or we should do; verse 11, “We exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, that's the word that we saw last week, you may remember, in verses 2 and 3, “exult in hope,” meaning we glory or we boast in the hope that we have.

We are absolutely confident in the hope that we have. Well, here it is we glory, we boast in God, and something that is significant about that statement is that boasting in God is what Paul condemned in the Jew back in 2:17. “You boast in God,” he said, and that statement by him was a condemnation of what they were doing. Well, it's the same words here that were used there, but there is a right way to do that and a wrong way. There is boasting, and there is boasting.

The boasting of the Jews was that of bragging. They believed that they had a corner on God, that they merited his love. Christian boasting is just the opposite. We know we do not have a claim on God, just as Gomer knew that she had no claim on Hosea’s love. She was guilty. She was destitute when she was bought back. And just as she must have marveled at his love for her, so too we “marvel with wondering worship,” as one of the commentators has put it, that while we were helpless sinners and enemies, he bought us for himself, and saved us for all eternity.

Now, that doesn’t lead to bragging, but it does lead to boasting, in the sense of absolute confidence in him, and absolute confidence in his love for us – love that is unailing. Now, we can’t have that confidence if his love for us is based on something in us, some merit that we have in and of ourselves. If it’s based on some good thing in us, because if that good thing should fail – and it will fail, we can be sure of that – then his love would fail.

If salvation is in any way dependent on us poor, weak sinners, then we have no security at all. Salvation is only as secure as we are strong, and we are not strong, we’re helpless. But what is clear from Romans 5 and all of Scripture is that God’s love is unconditional. It is part of him who is self-existent, and so in a sense his love is self-existent. It is tied to him. It is the expression of him. It is not based on us. It is not grounded in us. It is grounded in himself. It is independent of us, and it cannot fail us.

So we are confident in him. We boast in him. We rejoice in him, through Jesus Christ, and Paul’s complete thought in connection with verse 10 is “we shall be saved boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s how we’re saved – we’re saved boasting. We boast now, and we’ll boast and exult and rejoice all the way into heaven, triumphant, because God’s love is what it is – infinite, great, sovereign, unfrustratable.

This exultation, this boasting, this rejoicing, is what is to characterize our lives. We should be a joyful people. We are justified before God. We are reconciled with God. We have hope of the resurrection to come, and a glorious future beyond comprehension. Heaven awaits us. It’s not far away, either. We are eternally secure. Even our trials and tribulations, which should beat us down and destroy us, don’t do that; in fact, just the opposite.

They are used of God to strengthen us, make us mature in this life, and prepare us for all eternity. Even those trials, the worst of things that can happen to us, God uses for our good. That’s an amazing thing. The hardships of life are transformed into blessings. We may not see the blessing at the time, but we know it by faith, because that’s what God tells us, so we should rejoice. We should rejoice because of who we are. We should rejoice because that is our duty.

We should be the most positive people on earth, and we will be that, as we understand the love of God and what he has done for us. Are you rejoicing? Can you say, “While I was a helpless sinner Christ died for me? While I was God’s enemy, not seeking him, he sought me and reconciled me to himself.” If not, then you can come to say that by believing in him, by looking at Christ as God’s Son, who died in the place of sinners, who bore our sins in our place, so that all who believe in him will be saved.

Now, that salvation is certain – saved from the wrath to come, saved to live for God and live forever. That’s the blessing, and that’s the promise for all who believe in him, so look to him. Receive Christ by faith. May God help you to do that, and help all of us to rejoice in his grace and his love. Let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your love for us. We have attempted to understand it. The best attempts to do that are futile. We at best can only begin to scratch the surface – a surface that has no end in its depth, and we’ll spend all eternity marveling over your love and your grace, and all of the things that we’ve considered. Father, what we have tried to do, bless. We tried to understand your love, and we pray that you give us a better understanding of that.

That we might understand the security that we have in Christ, and give praise to you, and bless you for all that we have and the hope that’s ours, and live in light of that – live lives that are pleasing to you and helpful to those around us. So encourage us, bless us, sanctify us with these things, we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.