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Sermon Notes

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Unconditional Love

Romans 5:6-8

I. A Modern Wedding Vow

A. In the Past

"Will you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife? To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?"

B. Now

"...as long as you both shall love!"

This allows for our feelings to change toward one another

The essence of "conditional love"... I see something in you that attracts me

As long as you keep that special something alive, I will love you... but if you lose that aspect of yourself that attracts me, I will stop loving you

Illus. "That Thing You Do" Tom Hanks

C. God's Unconditional Love

1. Founded in God's unchanging character
2. Not dependent on you in any way
3. The only sure basis for eternal security

God's love for us in Christ is without parallel in human experience... yet it is as real as the rough wood and hard iron spikes used to crucify Jesus; as real as the blood which flowed from His wounds; as real as the crown of thorns on His head; as real as the cries of anguish which came from His lips

God's love for us is infinite and unconditional, and there is only one perfect demonstration of that love: the cross of Jesus Christ

D. God's Purpose: His Glory in Our Security

1. God wants you to know how secure you are in His love
2. So, He inspired Paul to write Romans 5
3. Review:
 - 1) having been justified by faith: past tense, once for all declaration
 - 2) we have peace with God through Christ: status of right relationship
 - 3) introduction by faith into a standing in grace: access to God, permanence in grace
 - 4) rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God: joy in the certainty of our destiny
 - 5) rejoicing in the tribulations that forge our character
 - 6) experiencing the love of God poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit

All of these things gives us total assurance of God's love for us, and of our final destiny in heaven

Now Paul adds more: the bedrock display of God's love for us in the cross of Jesus Christ

E. Overview of Romans 5:6-11

1. Paul's object: to make God's love MUCH MORE certain in our hearts

God has acted in history and nothing can change that!!!

2. Romans 5:6-8 Positive statement of God's love... an exposition of it
3. Romans 5:9-10 draws out logical deductions from that positive statement

If this is true, **how much more certain** is it that this will be true!! "Much more certain..." is therefore the Apostle's goal

In effect, our final salvation is so certain, we can go logically in our minds straight from our justification by faith all the way to our final glorification in heaven:

Romans 8:30 "...those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified"

Every single person who gets justified through faith in Christ, will ABSOLUTELY POSITIVELY be glorified in heaven!!

II. The Greatest Statement of God's Love in the Bible (vs. 6)

vs. 6 *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.”*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: “I do not hesitate to assert that this is one of the greatest statements of God's love in the Bible.”

A. Central Doctrine

Our salvation is entirely of God and his love... not one atom of it may be traced to anything in us

Our assurance is totally dependent on understanding this!!

1. God the Father appeased His own wrath through God the Son
2. NO ‘schizophrenia’ in God
 - a. some try to set God's love against His wrath
 - b. “You must choose; either He is loving or wrathful”
 - c. some extend this to the persons of the Trinity... wrathful Father, kind loving Son
3. God the Father expressed His love by delivering His Son to death

Romans 8:32 *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”*

John 3:16 *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”*

Isaiah 53:10 *“Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.”*

4. This was God's careful plan before the world began

B. Context

1. “For”... connects to previous section
2. Verse 5: The love of God has been poured out into our hearts...
3. What love? The love He's about to describe... not subjective at all... a love that moved God to make the supreme sacrifice of all time

4. The love of God in Christ at Calvary... THAT LOVE... the one that acted in history... THAT LOVE has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

C. The Perfect Time

“For at the right time...”

1. Meticulous plans from God (remember the God of Daniel)
2. Salvation plan also worked out meticulously
3. “Before the foundation of the world...”

Revelation 13:8 “[Jesus] is the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world.”

4. The Perfect Time

Galatians 4:4 “When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son...”

- a. image: time like a fruit that had to ripen
 - b. history had to unfold in the way God had planned
 - c. certain events had to occur before Christ could come
5. Why the perfect time??
 - a. **human religion** had reached its full flower in Israel; the Jews had the Law for 1400 years... plenty of time to prove one thing:

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

- b. **human philosophy** had reached its flower in ancient Greece and failed to find God
 - Aristotle had come and gone... no salvation found in following his system of ethics
 - Socrates had come and gone... no salvation in his philosophical system
 - Plato had reached the highest, positing a Supreme Creator... but had no idea how to reach him

1 Corinthians 1:21 “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him...”

- c. **human government** had reached its apex in the Pax Romana... under Caesar Augustus; each nation had a measure of freedom and the Roman legions kept the peace worldwide

BUT no salvation was found that way either

At just the right time, when all human efforts at perfection and salvation had been given their full opportunity to prove themselves

D. The Perfect Savior

vs. 6 Christ

1. Human efforts had utterly failed...
2. God's answer is clear: salvation through His Son and only through His Son
3. Can we ever tire of saying His name? Christ, the Savior; Christ, Christ alone... God's perfect answer to our utter failure

Isaiah 59:16 He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.

4. Christ's entrance into the world at just the right time: the proof of God's love

1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

E. The Ultimate Expression of Love

vs. 6 "Christ died..."

1. NOTE: what Paul focuses on: CHRIST'S DEATH

NOT Christ's sinless life... NOT Christ's mighty miracles; NOT Christ's perfect and eternal teachings

NO... Christ's death is the highest evidence of God's love for us

2. Just as Christ had taught

John 15:13-14 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

3. KEY: Substitution... death FOR someone

“Christ died for...”

- a. Christ’s death in the place of others is the highest expression of love
- b. Christ took their place and died FOR them

F. For Totally Unworthy Sinners

True measure of nature of God’s love: for whom did Christ die??

III. For Whom Did Christ Die? (vs. 6-8)

A. A Love Utterly Unlike Ours

1. How do we love?

- a. attractive attributes
- b. pleasing circumstances
- c. as long as the person maintains those attributes and the circumstances are pleasing, we will keep loving

“As long as we both shall love...”

2. For whom would we die?

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

- a. to sacrifice your life: the highest expression of love
- b. BUT FOR WHOM would you die?

3. The limits of human love

vs. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

Very rarely would any one of us be willing to lay down our lives for another... if we did, we would do it for someone like this one: a good man, a good woman

That’s the essence of human love: something from outside of us attracts it, and pulls love from us... it is conditional on the nature and attributes of the person we are loving

A RIGHTEOUS MAN... A GOOD MAN... even then, only rarely would we love

So human love is conditional and limited:

- a. limited by the nature of the person we're loving
- b. limited in extent... even for the best person, we would only do so much

If you don't think so, then ask yourself honestly: WHAT ARE YOU UNWILLING TO DO FOR JESUS?? The most perfect man that ever lived... calling you to obey, to pray, to read the Scripture, to witness to this lost world... simple things, yet we won't do them

The limits of human love!! We will only love what is lovely and attractive to us

But for whom did Christ make the ultimate sacrifice?? What does Paul say?

Three terms... none flattering, all utterly true: he calls us **helpless, ungodly, sinners**

B. Helpless

1. lit. "Without strength", "powerless",
2. Best illustration: Christ's miracles
 - John 9: man blind from birth... had never seen the light of day, helpless to change his situation
 - John 5: man paralyzed for 38 years... lying near a pool of water that could heal him if he could only get into it... yet, with the healing water close by, he was absolutely helpless to get into it
 - John 6: 5000 men plus women and children; no food, Jesus challenges His disciples to feed them; they are utterly helpless to affect the situation
 - John 11: by Lazarus's tomb, sisters Martha and Mary distraught, friends weeping, Lazarus cold and lying on a slab of rock; utterly helpless to do anything

Helpless to see, helpless to walk, helpless to eat, helpless to live

Humanity's helplessness constantly lived out in one miracle from Jesus after another

The constant lesson of the miracles: humanity can't, Christ can!!

3. Romans 5: helpless spiritually

- a. powerless to understand spiritual truth

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- b. totally unable to please God

Romans 8:7-8 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Isaiah 64:6 "...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags"

- c. totally unable to obey God

Feel the weight of this: we are utterly incapable of changing our spiritual state! Completely helpless... if God doesn't move, we will not move!!

Our salvation is utterly of God, from first to last; and that's where our security comes from

C. Ungodly

1. Totally stripped of the glory of God
 - a. originally created in God's image to reflect His glory on earth
 - b. sin has totally defaced the image of God, twisted it, perverted it, polluted it
 - c. we have traded the glory of God for sin

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and lack the glory of God."

2. Totally repulsed by the glory of God
 - a. should be attracted to the glory of God as the highest thing we desire
 - b. actually the full display of God's nature and attributes the thing we hate the most
 - c. God repulses the natural man

Psalm 10:4 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

3. To whom does this apply?
 - a. EVERYONE!!
 - b. we shrink from this... we like to think of average people as "basically good at heart"

Suppose you knew someone who led a moral life, belonged to a couple of civic groups and volunteered his time on Saturdays to raise money for worthy causes; who was a member at a church and attended regularly; who was active at the church and on a number of committees; and who seemed kind and nice... BUT who saw no need for Christ's blood to atone for his sins and to save him from the wrath of God, who rejects the Biblical view of God as having any wrath at all. You might call that person "basically a good person"... God calls him **UNGODLY**

The "god" he worships is actually an idol made of his own imagination

LET'S BE PERFECTLY CLEAR: There's no such thing as a naturally godly person!

c. example from Romans 4: Abraham

Romans 4:1-5 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

If Abraham was counted ungodly before he was justified, friend, so were you!!

D. Sinners (vs. 8)

vs. 8 "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

1. Sinners = active rebels against the laws of God
2. Transgressors... rebels...
3. "God's law says _____. Well, then, I'll do the opposite!"

Summary: Astonishing! Our love depends on the nature and performance of the person we're loving... and our love is limited; even for the very best person, we would very rarely consider laying down our lives. God's love has ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING HE SEES IN US!! It is totally dependent on who He is, what His purposes are. There is absolutely nothing you did or were to attract His love... never mind that God, the perfect Judge should send what He loved the most in all the universe—His only begotten Son—and pour out His life unto death...

For whom? For helpless, ungodly sinners!!

IV. God Demonstrates His Love... THEN and TODAY!! (vs. 8)

vs. 8 *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

A. Demonstrated Then

1. At just the right time... Christ died
2. History matters!! On a specific day, with a date and in a certain place, the Son of God was nailed to a cross to save sinners
3. Objective reality: firmest foundation for our assurance... nothing can undo history!!

B. Demonstrating Now

1. Verb tense: “God demonstrates”... present tense
2. All over the world, God continues to demonstrate His love in the death of His Son
3. HOW? Hebrews tells us Christ died only once, for all time
4. Paul gives us the answer:

Galatians 3:1 *Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*

- a. Paul’s preaching clearly depicted Christ as crucified
- b. he resolved to do this wherever he went

1 Corinthians 2:2 *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

5. ALSO: the gospel records continue for all time to depict Christ as crucified and thus they continue to demonstrate God’s love day after day

Day after day, God continues to demonstrate this same love to us... the love of the Cross; the Cross is a never-exhausted well of living water, continually refreshing us with God’s love

The love of God poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit IS the love of God demonstrated in the death of Christ for helpless, ungodly sinners

VI. Application

To the unsaved: COME TO CHRIST!!!!

To the saved:

A. Don't Look Inward

How do you know you'll be saved? If your answer is based on something IN YOU, you are deceived! Why did God love you? Because of HIS NATURE and PLAN, and for no other reason! You will search in vain for some assurance based on some aspect of your personality or performance

B. Be Honest and Be Assured

But even if you convinced yourself that it was something inside you that attracted God to you, how do you know He'll still love you ten years from now? A high opinion of your role in your own salvation leads to A TOTAL LOSS OF ASSURANCE!! Paradoxically, the more you embrace the ugly reality of what you were apart from Christ: helpless, ungodly, sinner, (vs. 9) enemy!!... the more certain you will be that God loves you forever; when you were at your worst, God gave His best gift for you... next week, we'll make the HOW MUCH MORE argument

C. Survey the Cross: Day After Day Isaac Watts:

***When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride***

***Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood***

***See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?***

***Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life my all!***

As often as you need to experience the love of Christ, come again to the cross and drink of that display; God is demonstrating His love for you over and over

D. A Match Made in Heaven

Realize the nature of this love match: a sinner and the Savior

There was nothing in you naturally to attract Christ: helpless, ungodly, sinner, enemy... but He loved you fully

ALSO there was nothing in Christ crucified to attract you at all:

Isaiah 53:1-3 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Is there anything attractive to you in the sight of Christ crucified? Is the picture of God's love and his just wrath against sin beautiful or utterly repulsive to you? If it's beautiful to you, realize there is NO WAY you naturally would have found it attractive:

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

If you desire Him today, if you love Him today, realize that God and God alone could have worked this in your heart. And if he has, He will take you all the way to perfection in heaven!

E. Love the Unlovable

1. Enemies
2. Sinning Christians
3. Needy