

Romans Chapter 5

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[0 : 00] Our reading, Romans chapter 5, I'd like to read the first 11 verses. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 1.

In which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings.

Because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance, character. And character, hope.

And hope does not put us to shame. Because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

[1 : 33] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person. Though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him?

For if we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son? How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?

Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[2 : 46] Sometimes, there's a lot of people who have been given to us.

There's a family feud, and that really distresses everyone. You know how it is.

At least one person in the family will ask this question. Does he or she still love me, despite those awful things that I've said and done?

Well, that, of course, is something we can very readily understand. You see it very often on television programs.

But there's a much bigger question to ask. Do you wonder if God still loves you? Perhaps you don't have any doubt at all when things are going well with you.

[4 : 08] But what about when problems arise and they go on and on? What about if a whole series of events hits you really hard?

Perhaps after a time of backsliding in your Christian life, or maybe some significantly bad decision in your life, and you wonder, does God love me despite the fact that I've messed things up?

Do you sometimes fear that you might have lost your relationship with the Lord? Now, I think those are questions that will go through just about everyone's mind here from time to time.

The passage that I read is an encouragement to each one of us who believes. And firstly, it's an encouragement because it tells us that God's love is absolutely surprising.

It should amaze us, it should stagger us, that God loves us despite of who we are, despite of those things that we might have done or said in the past of which we're deeply ashamed.

[5 : 40] Now, of course, the letter was written by Paul. Paul and Paul himself had every reason to be surprised that God loved him, as you'll see in a moment.

But he was including others. Notice that he used the word we, or our, or us, more than 20 times in those 11 verses that we read.

For example, in verse 1, we, we have been justified. We, we have got peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have gained, we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand and so on.

Now, Paul was including others in that congregation at Rome that he was seeking to encourage, but he was definitely including himself.

It wasn't you, it was we. How could Paul possibly expect that God would love him? What, what do we know of Paul?

[6 : 51] Did he deserve God's love? Well, we know that he had a deep sense of his shame. He wrote a letter to a younger Christian called Timothy.

We have it written down for us. And in his first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 13, he said this, I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.

And most of you here will be familiar with his story. He was a shadowy figure in the background when a godly, gracious, wise Christian called Stephen was stoned to death by angry Jewish leaders recorded in Acts chapter 7.

A little later on in Acts, Acts chapter 26, as he stood prisoner before King Agrippa, Paul described his life before his conversion.

This is what he said. On the authority of the chief priests, I put many of the Lord's people in prison. And when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

[8 : 04] Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished. And I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

So could a person who acted in this way possibly expect that God would love him? He must have been absolutely surprised and truly amazed that he was one of the we there in Romans 5.

Some months ago, I read a story about a band of armed robbers in Siberia in the late 1890s, a long time ago.

And this band of robbers murdered two men, carried away their baggage, and as they looked through their baggage, they came across a New Testament.

They were Christians. They were Christians that they murdered. And so when the robbers read this New Testament, which they did, they were convicted of their sin, and they became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 19] And they concluded that they ought to hand themselves over to the authorities. They were so surprised that God loved them and sent the Savior to die for their sins that they were intent on following a new way of life.

And the justice of the peace was so amazed at their change of life that he also became a Christian. God's love changed the robbers.

Just like it had changed Paul. And so the question is this. Has it changed you? Are you staggered, so staggered at the love of God that you've changed your life?

It's been completely turned around. You've got a different attitude towards God. You've got a different attitude towards Christians. You've got a different attitude towards others. Now, has that happened to you?

Are you so staggered at this love of God, this supernatural, amazing love of God? If you are. Has it changed you?

[10 : 23] Are you different now to what you were before? It definitely changed the robbers. It definitely changed Paul. So what's your attitude towards that amazing gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ who came to die to save sinners?

Is your attitude this? It's far too good to be true. If you feel that God couldn't possibly love you, it's important for you to remember that his love is surprising.

It saved Paul. It saved those violent robbers. It saved those people there at Rome as well. Now, Paul was actually writing to encourage those ordinary Christians there in Rome.

Probably most of them had been persecutors of Christians any more than you were. But are there things in your past that make you doubt that God could possibly love you?

Do you sometimes have flashbacks from the past that make you think you're beyond and outreached, beyond the reach of the love of God?

[11 : 41] One really important lesson from these verses is that it doesn't matter how bad you've been in the past.

It doesn't matter what skeletons you've got in your cupboard. It doesn't matter what things you're deeply ashamed of. God is a God of surprises. And they're brought out here in this passage.

Paul uses specific terms to describe the we who are loved by God. In verse 6, for example, he speaks of those who are powerless.

Powerless to please God. And Christ dying for the ungodly. Those who live without God. Those who don't praise him.

Those who don't worship him. Those who are not thankful to him. Those who do not seek him. Those who do not serve him. Those who do not love him. God loved the ungodly.

[12 : 42] Verse 8, he talks about God demonstrating his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What's a sinner? Who's a sinner? Well, basically sinners are those who sin. Those who break God's laws. Those who fall short of the glory of God.

In verse 9, he speaks of those who will be saved from God's wrath. Verse 10, he talks about while we were still enemies, rebels.

We were reconciled to him through the death of his son. So, isn't it surprising that God loved the powerless, the ungodly, sinners and his enemies.

Even religious enemies. You can be a religious person. You can be a professing Christian and yet be an enemy of God. Paul served God. Paul served God and yet in his service of God, he got it all wrong and he persecuted those who were genuine Christians.

[13 : 51] So, we're meant to be surprised in this passage. If you're not surprised, isn't there something wrong with you? Wouldn't it be true to say that there's a sort of deadness about you?

Well, Paul was writing and he corrected this. Look at verse 7. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

But, but, what an amazing but. But, God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Now, if you're going through hard times and discover how weak, how vulnerable you really are, don't you need to be surprised that God really loves you despite your frailty, and suffering.

There's a hymn that goes something like this, which I've forgotten. Sometimes the light surprises the Christian on his path.

[15 : 07] Well, God is a God of surprises. And Paul here was writing to those who are now Christians, but there were suffering trials. Look at verse 3.

We glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Sometimes sufferings. Sometimes sufferings, trials, difficulty shock us, and we fail to discern that God has a purpose in them.

Sometimes we may suffer and simply not understand what God is doing. It might seem harsh to us. And we think, does God really love us?

I know that some people here go to a gym. They might even have a personal trainer. And that personal trainer says, go faster, do more of those repetitions.

Lift that weight more and more. Go on, keep on going. Keep that bike moving. And that sort of thing. It doesn't mean to say that the coach hates us. He's doing these things for our good, to strengthen us.

[16 : 19] It's not an unloving parent that insists that their children do their homework. The sufferings and difficulties we encounter do not mean that the Savior no longer loves us.

His purpose is to transform our character, especially the character of perseverance, keeping on, keeping on growing in the Christian life, keeping on getting to know God better and better, keeping on going, serving other Christians.

So allow yourself to be surprised by his love. And if you're surprised by the sufferings that you experience, think of the bigger surprise that God loves you.

Isn't that amazing? Romans chapter 8, Paul wrote to reassure Christians that despite the way that appearances would come about and Nero and other persecuting emperors, they're loved by Christ, still loved by Christ.

You know how Paul writes, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger assault?

[17 : 41] He went on to say, I'm convinced or persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Well, it's a fact that in times of weakness, tiredness, sickness, the devil tempts us to doubt God's love. Remember how the devil came to Jesus himself there in the wilderness and he said this, If you are the son of God, and then we heard the temptation.

So we mustn't be surprised, mustn't be shocked by experiences like that. When things look black and foreboding, we should do what Paul tells us here, we should go back to the cross and see in shining letters, as we sung earlier, that God is love.

Now, the love of God is surprising, but secondly, it's manifested there in the cross. How do you know that God loves you in the present when your experience is one of sadness or guilt or fears for the future?

Paul reasoned that God loved you when you are at your worst and you're most helpless. Look at verse 8.

[19 : 26] God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Notice the past tense there. Christ died for us. The unchanging God demonstrates now, today, present tense, by what he did for us there in the past.

You know what the word demonstrate means and how we use that today, how TV advertisers use that, advertisers of carpet cleaners.

They simply don't say, our cleaner will take away stains. They do a demonstrating job, a job of removing almost impossibly filthy stains, and you can see just how effective their cleaner is.

God doesn't just say that he loves us. He demonstrated his love for us. He took us at our worst when we were helplessly lost in sin and washed us, not in part, but the whole.

[20 : 39] While we were sinners, Christ died for us. The apostle John wrote a similar thing in 1 John 4, verse 9.

This is how God showed or demonstrated his love among us. He sent, past tense, he sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 5 has the same answer, verse 6. You see, just at the right time, when we were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

The apostle Peter wrote a similar thing. 1 Peter, chapter 1, and verse 18. You know that it wasn't with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed, past tense, from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

[21 : 55] Peter was writing to those whose empty, vain, lost way of life was heading in one direction, a bad direction, but they were redeemed, delivered from this and the judgment that would follow.

they were saved from an eternally disastrous destination. How? By the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

His suffering and death on the cross demonstrated the powerful, compassionate love that God has for us. So have you learned from the demonstration?

Has it gripped your attention? Are you convinced that God loved you, that the unchanging God continues to love you and will love you throughout all eternity?

Paul continued to build up the evidence that God does surprising things for us in the cross. He uses a stronger word than sinner or powerless.

[23 : 03] He uses the word enemy. While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son.

What an amazing word. Reconciled. Enemies. Reconciled to God. That's the power of the cross. It's a measure of the love of God. Whilst we were enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son.

Now, you might quickly acknowledge that Paul was an enemy of God as he persecuted those who believed in his son. But Paul used the word enemy for all those who eventually become Christians.

He said, while we, while we were God's enemies, and that includes you, it includes me, we, God's enemies, reconciled to God through the death of his son.

peace and there's no peace between warring individuals, tribes, or nations without reconciliation. There can be no peace between ourselves and God without reconciliation.

[24 : 15] And Paul affirmed that you and I are reconciled to God through the death of his son. Peace follows reconciliation.

reconciliation. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But something must happen before you can be reconciled.

Before you can be reconciled with God, you must be justified. Why do you sometimes doubt that God loves you now?

One reason is that you don't fully understand what Paul has to say in this passage about justification. Verse 1, Paul wrote, since we have been justified, past tense, since we have been justified through faith.

These words refer to something that happened once for all in the past. We have been justified through faith. If a magistrate justifies a prisoner in the dock, he's saying that the prisoner is innocent, is guiltless, God is our judge.

[25 : 30] If he acquitted us once for all, for all our sins, past, present and future, in thought and word and deed and attitude, that would be a mark of his love, wouldn't it?

But it's not as simple as that. God's truthful, he's right in his judgments. judgments. If an earthly judge treats someone as being innocent, when it's obvious to all that that person has blatantly crossed the law, we'd be very suspicious of that judge.

The newspapers have a field day about that unjust judge who acquitted the guilty one. The papers will be full of angry letters about this unjust judge.

And the amazing thing is this, that God, the holy, the truthful, the right, justifies the ungodly and remains right in doing so.

Remember that the answer to this lies a couple of chapters earlier in Romans chapter 3 and verse 23. I'd like you to turn to that, please.

[26 : 47] Romans chapter 3 and verse 23. All, all have sinned, that's every one of us, whether Jew, Greek, Gentile, young, old, rich, poor, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified, that's the word we're looking at, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just, and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Now, I'd like to note a number of things from that passage there in Romans chapter 3. Notice, firstly, the need for a sacrifice for sin, a sacrifice to atone for sin.

What does atone mean? What's atonement all about? Well, it means satisfaction. If God is, if your sin is atoned for, then in some way God is satisfied, his justice is satisfied.

It means that a sacrifice had to be paid in order to satisfy God's justice. That's the first thing I wanted to notice. And then the second thing is that this sacrifice consisted of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 31] God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement. When he suffered and shed his blood on the cross at Calvary, he atoned for our sin.

He satisfied God's justice. Then thirdly, notice this, that those who are justified are those who have faith in Jesus.

Every one of these were justified at the moment they trusted in Jesus, who was sacrificed for their sin. sin. And then if you turn back again to Romans chapter 5 verse 1, we notice the fourth point that I want to stress, that justification is described as having happened in the past, at that time in your life when you first trusted in Christ.

Now, if you've been justified, it's just as though you've never sinned. But it's more than this. When God justifies you, he treats you as though you had the righteousness of Christ.

And that's the teaching of the remainder of the verses in Romans chapter 5. And if you've come to Christ, believed in Christ, you're in Christ, you've not only been forgiven, but you've been clothed in his righteousness.

[30 : 01] And when God looks at you, it's as though you are spotless as the Lord Jesus Christ himself. You've been united with him. What an amazing thing that is, that God justifies the sinner, you and I, simply as we trust in that saviour that God has provided.

Look at verse 2. We've gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Paul said this, that at some time in the past, when he was justified, when other Christians were justified, they gained access into the grace in which he now stands.

There's a very subtle change in tense here. We have gained, past tense, access by faith into this grace in which we now, present tense, stand.

He was, of course, not just speaking of himself and those he was writing to, he's including you, if you've gained access into this state of grace.

Do you know one of the uses of castles in the past? Go back a few hundred years, marauding armies were going around doing all sorts of dreadful things.

[31 : 34] When the marauding army approached, the powerless people out in the fields would run into the castle, owned by the lord of the castle. They trusted in his strong, loving, faithful protection.

They entered the castle and they were safe. They wouldn't dream of going out of the safety of the castle. That would be death. safety lay in the castle.

Safety lay in trusting in the lord's provision. When you come to trust in christ, you've entered a place of safety. You've gained access by faith into the grace in which you now stand.

You now have a powerful protector. You're in christ now. You're standing in a safe place. you have a saviour who died for you.

His love was so powerful in his death that it determined for your sin. It satisfied the justice of God. It reconciled you to God, gave you justification and peace with God.

[32 : 45] Now if this happened in his death, by his death, what of his endless life? can you be more justified than justified?

Can you be more reconciled than reconciled? The cross was a place of apparent weakness. It attracted the scorn of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, but it was the place where the power and the wisdom of God was manifested.

Now if the cross was so effective, what about the power of the risen saviour? Romans chapter 8 verse 34, Paul asked, who can bring any charge against those that God has chosen?

It's God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And here, chapter 5, verses 9 to 10, Paul affirms that you're even better off with a risen ascended saviour.

[34 : 02] Listen to how he puts it in verse 9. Since we've been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him?

Again, verse 10, how much more having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life? Can it get any better than being justified by God, reconciled to God?

Yes. We shall be saved through his life, verse 10. Yes, we shall be saved from his wrath.

Let me explain by taking you to a terrible scene in the future. Revelation chapter 20, verse 11.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence and there was no place for them.

[35 : 07] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done, recorded in the books.

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire is a second death. Anyone whose name is not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

fire. It's an awful, awesome, dreadful place, a fearful picture of the wrath of God for those not written in the book of life, for those not justified, for those not reconciled to God.

That's the destiny of this sinful fallen world of which you were once a part. It's the end of those who are the enemies, of God. But it's not yours if you're justified now.

[36 : 19] You're saved from that. Your saviour is there. He's the judge. Look at the parallel passage in Matthew 25. The king will say to those on his right, come you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.

will the Lord Jesus Christ stand for you on that awesome day and say, they're mine. Now, if you're in trouble, distressed, concerned about what the future holds for you, consider the surprising love of God as it justifies you through the cross of Christ when you committed yourself to him.

If you're troubled by your failures in words and thoughts, deeds, attitudes, remember how God loved you as a sinner, gave his son to pay for your sins.

If you're trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, remember that he not only provided for your justification, but he will save you on that awesome day, reserved for this fallen world.

He saves to the uttermost. But if you're not trusting in him, if you refuse the love offered to you in the gospel, where can you turn?

[38 : 01] sin, there's no one else who provided payment for sin, no one else who rose from the dead.

The Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely unique. What a blessing if you're in him, if you're in that state of grace tonight. Let's pray.

thank you for your amazing love that was poured out for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that we can rejoice and be confident in this, that you justified us once and for all through him, and that you took the initiative in bringing about that reconciliation between yourself and ourselves.

We thank you for the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that he is now raised from the dead, ascended, glorified in heaven, our great high priest who will never leave us, never forsake us, always true and faithful.

[39 : 12] We simply rejoice that we belong to him, that we are safe now and in eternity through him, to receive our thanks and our worship through him.

Amen.