

Enemy Love Romans 5:6-11

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Every night in the DeWitt house, the girls are about to go asleep, and we generally tell a story and pray. When I get to the door to say good night, I will ask, "How much does Daddy love you?" They respond, "So much!" Where did that come from? For a long time, the last thing I would say to them is, "Daddy loves you so much!" Then, one day I asked the question, "How much does Daddy love you?" "So much!" Now that is our routine and if we happen to forget, the girls will quickly remind us. "You didn't ask how much you love me!" "How much does Daddy love you?" "So much!"

Our passage today answers the question, *how much does Daddy love us?* How much does our heavenly Father love us and how can we be assured that his love is "so much?"

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."
(Romans 5:6–11 ESV)

The general truth here is assurance of God's forever love. It comes on the heels of verse 5, which talks about hope. A kind of hope that is never ashamed. Never disappointed. How is our Christian hope of such character as to never disappoint? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (verse 5). So, the foundation of our hope is the love of God. Our future confidence depends on our present confidence in God's love. This leads to the natural question, *well, then how do I know God loves me?*

Romans was written by the Apostle Paul. He is a master at logic. I heard somewhere that Harvard University used the book of Romans to teach logic for its first 100 years or so. Logic is connecting this and that. This means this; therefore it also means that. Paul's whole argument for assurance of God's love is based on when God loved us. When in the story of humanity did God love us? If he loved us when it was hardest, will he not love us now that we are reconciled with him?

When did God love us? He uses these words to describe our spiritual condition when God loved us: When we were...*weak* (verse 6 - "utterly helpless" in NASB)... *ungodly* (verse 6)... *sinners* (verse 8)... *enemies* (verse 10). These four words describe the true lostness of our condition before God. Weak - unable to save ourselves. Ungodly - our spiritual condition. Sinners - our moral condition. Enemies - our relational position before God.

Each of these press the question, why would God love us ever or at all? We hear that sometimes when an unlikely couple is in love. Her girlfriends will whisper, *what does she see in him?* But enough about Jennifer's friends....

What is there about him that makes her love him?

We could ask about God's love of us, *what does he see in us?* Paul is not trying to convince us that we are better than we think, but rather that we are far worse than we realize.

It is this last one that I will use as the summary of the other three. *God loved us when we were his enemies.*

God's Enemy Love

Why is God's love for his enemies virtuous and not treason? Is God's love treasonous? What is treason? "*Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort.*"¹ This is a human definition, but it gets to the question, how can God aid and abet his enemies?

Further, who exactly is God possibly committing treason against? He is himself, not a country, so where does God's allegiance lie if we are on one side and he is on the other?

Here is the clue as to how God's love toward his enemies is not treason or betrayal or sedition. God's sworn allegiance is to himself and his own glory.

- *"For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."* (Isaiah 48:11)
- *In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*" (Ephesians 1:4-6)

These and many other verses show God's deepest purpose is to display his own glory. We must understand this. So much that is coming in Romans depends on it.

The subject of the love of God comes with so much baggage. Our understanding of love is baggage as our culture defines it as feelings we have. It is something undeniable. Irrepressible. It comes over you like a wave. Goose bump love, which in practice rarely takes you past the second date or the third diaper. Even God's love is confused as we constantly preach to everyone that God loves everyone all the time no matter what. Does God love everybody? Yes and no. Understanding the nuance of that will be critical when we get to chapter 9 and why God chooses to love some with saving love and others he doesn't. At least see for now that God's love is way more complex than *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*

But we still haven't answered the question of how God can aid and abet his enemies with saving love and NOT be treasonous to his own glory. God's love to us while we were his enemies doesn't contradict his own glory, rather it magnifies it. This is what Paul is celebrating.

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8)

¹ "Aid and Comfort to the Enemy," www.Law.Justia.com, US Constitution, Article III, Section 3, Clause 1.

How much does Daddy love us? First realize *when* he loved us. When we were *weak, at the right time*. This means at our most helpless moment. Bottom of the ninth, two outs. No one on base. No one on deck. One second left on our own 1-yard line. The Crown Point Jr. Bulldogs vs. the New England Patriots. Spiritual hospice and the family called in. At our most helpless and needy state. This has been true ever since Adam and Eve fell. It's not so much a chronological point of need as a theological one.

Paul doesn't illustrate our desperation by referring to the Patriots. Rather he points out the fact that when it comes to dying for someone else, few if any would die for a righteous person or even a good person. "Good" here likely meaning someone who has done us good. Maybe in an extraordinary case, someone might choose to die for someone else if they are deeply admired or loved.

But who dies for their enemies? A soldier may die in an act of bravery to save his brother in arms, but who jumps on the grenade to save the enemy? We don't give Medals of Honor to men who save the enemy.

But this is the point and the extraordinary nature of God's love. God loved us even when we were in a state of enmity with him. Even when we were in rebellion against him. Even when we were on the side of darkness and serving the enemy Darth Lord Satan. Even then God loved us.

Really? How did God love us?

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
(Romans 5:8)

This is a top five verse in Romans to memorize. Romans 5:8. I memorized it as a boy in Awana in the old KJV. *"But God commendeth his love toward us."* The English translations struggle for the right word to translate the Greek here. *"Demonstrate"* doesn't get there. The ESV goes with "show." The sense is that God "provingly" demonstrates. God displays his love beyond question. And how did he do it? Love notes and chocolate? The love of God is on display by *when* God loved us—while we were still sinners—and *how* he loved us—Christ died for us.

Salvation isn't predicated on our being worthy of being saved or worthy of God's love. The confusion on this lies behind the sentiment people have when they say, *if I walked into that church, the building would collapse*. What do they mean? *I'm such a dirty, rotten sinner that I'm beyond anything Christianity has to offer. I'm too bad for God. I'm too far gone for God to love me.*

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." While we were his enemies, Christ died for us. While we were weak and helpless and in spiritual hospice without any hope, Christ died for us. God's love is a saving love and the timing on Christ's death gives hope for salvation to the worst of sinners and the greatest enemies of God because God's love is an enemy love.

What does God's enemy love accomplish?

God's enemy love is a reconciling love

"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 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. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:9-11)

In these verses, Paul employs an argument from the greater to the lesser. You see much more repeated in verses 9, 10, and 11. In each case Paul says,

If God has done _____ in the past, he most certainly will do _____ in the future.

The thing in the past was the harder thing. If God has already done the harder thing in the past, then we can be confident he will do the easier thing in the future. So, let's see what he has done.

"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood." Talk about a hard thing. How do you make unrighteous people righteous? The only way was for Jesus to incarnate himself as one of us and live the life we couldn't live and die a death we deserved. Was that hard? Only God could have done it.

Yet, notice that *"We have now been justified by his blood"* is in the past tense. *"Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God"* is in future tense. If he can save us from his wrath when we were unrighteous, we should be confident he can save us from his wrath and hell now that we are declared righteous.

"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." (Romans 5:10)

Which is harder? To save enemies or to save friends? Enemies. Yet God reconciled us while we were enemies. Now that we are reconciled it's no stretch to be confident that we will be saved. How? By his life. There's debate on what that means exactly. I take it to be the fruit of the resurrection and Jesus' ongoing life and ministry. If his death reconciled us, just think what his life must do for us! The third one doubles down on the second.

"More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:11)

If God has reconciled us in the past, then our present perspective can only be rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ. This is the joy of the gospel. This is what should make Christians the most joyous people on earth. What is the only possible response for a weak, sinful, enemy of God who finds themselves justified by God, reconciled with God, assured of eternal life with God through Jesus? Joy.

Our assurance of our future salvation is derived from our confidence in God's past saving love. Paul is modeling the look back and the look ahead. See in the past the mind-boggling saving love of God for us when we were his enemies, and then look forward with confidence knowing that Daddy loves us so much and always will.

While this is certainly true in our eternal futures, it also applies to the daily fears and wonderings. How do we know God loves us today and tomorrow so much? How do I know God's love can sustain me in the trials and troubles of this week? The answer is to constantly remind our hearts of God's love when there was nothing at all about me to love. If he loved me even then when I was aligned with Satan and his purposes, how much more will God's love deliver me now that I am aligned with him as a child of God?

This is why a deep understanding of things like justification and reconciliation provides resources for sustaining us in the troubles of life. How we need to go deeper than *Jesus loves me, this I know!* While true and wonderful, what does it mean? What difference does it make in my life? All the difference, because the more I relish the divine exertion of power and love through the cross of Jesus, the more confident I will be that God can handle the little crosses of my life.

Football season is here. Now that football season is here, we also have the onslaught of new truck ads. I don't know that I have ever seen a truck commercial during a televised golf tournament. But a TV football game is three hours of beer and trucks. Now here's the thing about truck commercials; they are generally preposterous. They will show the truck off road in some desert or on some vertical mountain climb. Sometimes in fine print it says, *Professional driver - do not try at home.* And you see the pickup truck pulling three semis and a 747 down a lonely interstate. What possible relevance is there for the general consumer that this truck can pull three semis and a 747 simultaneously?

The psychology is this, as you watch the commercial you think, if that truck can vertically climb Mount Kilimanjaro in the ad, then I'm confident it will climb up my driveway. If it's strong enough to pull three semis, then I'm confident it will pull our pop-up camper. If it can do the hard thing, then I'm confident it can do the easier thing.

Friends, whatever you are facing this week is nothing compared to God loving you as his enemy. Whatever you are facing next week is nothing compared to God reconciling himself to you, a sinner. Here's the kicker, whatever future judgment day may be like, God declaring you righteous and doing it through the death of the Son of God means future resurrection and eternal life is doable. If he did the one, he most certainly can and will do the other.

So, friend go deep in the gospel. Think seriously about what God did to save you, a sinner. Let the hard thing give you confidence that neither height nor depth nor anything in all creation will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He loves you so much!

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