

Romans 5:6-11

6 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. **8** But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. **10** For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. **11** And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Sermon for Pentecost 4, June 28, 2020 St. Paul's Green Garden

Text: Romans 5:6-11

Theme: "Our God, A Savior Like No Other"

Introduction: I am sure it seemed like a great day to enjoy the outdoors. The Seattle area is known for its wide range of available outdoor activities. On one particular day some years ago one man decided to go rock climbing—you know, where the climber, without ropes or safety harnesses free climbs up the sheer face of a cliff. Those climbers know what risk they are taking, but it almost turned out to be deadly for one man several years ago.

After climbing for some time he found himself in a position where he could neither go up, nor down, and he could barely hang on. Obviously he was already tired, muscles were fatigued and surely the stress of the situation was taking its toll on his emotions. He managed to dig out his cell phone and call 911 to send a rescue team. But the dispatch told him it would take hours to get a team out to the site to rescue him. The man, by that time was desperate to be saved so he told the dispatch plainly that he could not hold on much longer. It was then that the Seattle rescue team decided to make a daring aerial rescue by helicopter.

The rock face was so sheer and the positioning of the helicopter was so difficult it took all the pilot's skill to hover over the stranded climber with only ten feet between the tips of his blades and the face of the cliff. But he was able lower a rescue climber down, get a harness on the stranded climber

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and raise him up into the helicopter. The expression on the rescued man's face was one of relief and thanks. He knew how desperate his situation was and how much in need he was of the rescue team that brought him to safety.

Every one of us was just as stranded, just as much in need of rescue, just as unable to rescue ourselves spiritually because of sin, as that man was unable get off that cliff safely. In fact, when our first parents sinned it was as if the entire human race was stranded on the face of a cliff with no rescue in sight and we were unable to help ourselves. Because imagine this: We were spiritually dead, we could climb nowhere, find no place to be safe. That would be the equivalent of a man stranded on a cliff face with no arms or legs just hanging by the threads of his clothing. At any moment his support could be gone and he would go tumbling down into an abyss of death. Imagine that as our spiritual state; we were absolutely helpless. This is what Paul describes for us today for he wants us to know we have a Savior like no other.

- I. He saved us when he could gain nothing
 - A. He had given us everything
 1. Like the son in Jesus parable; we had spiritual wealth, members of God's family.
 2. What did our spiritual wealth consist of?
 - a. Know God as creator and loving Father
 - b. Know he made everything in the universe for you
 - c. You know your God who has given you everything loves you and you have no need to question that.
 - d. And you know that even though God loves you, you did nothing to deserve anything. God's creation of YOU is a gift of his love.
 3. But when the human race sinned, God could look up and down history, from one end to the other and he could see that WE would not be able to do anything to save ourselves from his anger and punishment.

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B. Paul says we were and are powerless. We have no ability to give God anything that would please him so that he would save us.

1. Like the man on the rocky face of the cliff, we could not go up or down. We could not pay money for someone to rescue us. Now that man had a cell phone, but you and I were unable to call for help;
2. In fact we were so helpless we did not even realize we needed help. Imagine, being stranded on the face of that sheer cliff and NOT KNOWING you were in grave danger and that if you fell, you would die. But that was you and I.
3. And then imagine that man on the rocky cliff shaking his fist at his rescuers? Someone comes to rescue you and tells you how much he loves you and you shake your fist at him? But that also was you and I.

C. So what Paul says is very plain: When we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly—he died for people who did not love him and in fact we hated him, in our natural, sinful state.

Application: And yet Paul says, while we were in this terrible, hateful, rebellious spiritual state, Christ died for us. These words of Paul here do such a great job of showing each of us what our natural spiritual state is: We are powerless to do anything pleasing to God. We have not power at all, to give anything to God that would save us. In fact, in our natural sinful state we do everything we can to prove God is wrong and we CAN SAVE ourselves. And so in that condition we reject God, even though we are stranded on the face of the rocky cliff and it is obvious we can do nothing to save ourselves. That is really spiritual blindness, isn't it?

II. He saved us when we were his enemies

A. Who saves his enemy?

1. David in OT did not kill king Saul when Saul tried to murder him.—But David was a believer with a reason to obey God

2. Suppose the helicopter pilot who finally rescued the stranded climber was actually an enemy of the climber. If he had recognized him as an enemy how willing do you think the pilot would have been to rescue the stranded man? We can only guess, knowing what sinful human nature often does.
 3. Doctors in ERs or surgery are sometimes called on to save the life of someone who has committed a terrible crime. In their minds and hearts they many question the validity of saving the life of such a terrible person. Yet because of their Hippocratic Oath the Dr. will do everything he or she can to save even the criminal's life.
 4. But no human being who is not compelled to will risk his life for an enemy.
- B. The one at risk needs to be worthy of saving in the mind of the rescuer.
1. We have all heard of the soldier who falls on a live grenade to save the other soldiers in his unit. They are worthy because they fight alongside him. He trusts them and they trust him. He will do anything to save them.
 2. But who will die to save the life of a criminal on death row, even if they are convinced the convict is innocent. YET that IS what God did for us: v. 8 **“But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**
 3. And the truth is we were entirely unworthy of being saved.
- C. But God took it upon himself to do the unthinkable.
1. He put his Son to death on a cross and by his blood he declares us “not guilty”!
 2. Why—Because all the anger and punishing justice that he should have carried out on us he poured out on his own son instead.

Application: So we can never say, “I made my decision for Christ! That statement makes me just a little worthy. We can never say God chose me

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because he knew I would be a Christian. That would take away God's grace—and grace is the only way we are truly saved, because if we are not saved by grace, we cannot be saved at all. We are not worthy of being saved and we can do nothing to make ourselves worthy of being saved. We can only be saved because by God's grace he declares us "not guilty." That means we are no longer God's enemies but his friends.

III. He promises eternal life to those whom he has reconciled

A. God did the most difficult thing of all.

1. He showered his grace on us and caused his Son to pay for our sins. We were criminals guilty of murder, adultery, theft, discontent; virtually every sin we could be guilty of.
2. But God took away our sins so there can be no more hostility between us and him.
3. This reconciliation is like the bright sunshine in our hearts. It is our assurance that God loves us.

B. So now if God does the very difficult thing of paying for our sins through the blood of his Son and making us his friends; NOW that we are his friends we can be sure that he will take us to eternal life in heaven.

That is no small thing, that is joy of Christmas or the joy of Easter.

C. We rejoice in God through Jesus.

1. We have been restored to God's family
2. God calls us his friends and that takes away fear and apprehensions about the future.
3. Even when the most difficult circumstances come to our lives, illness, sorrow, loss of a family member, loss of physical ability, someone fails to keep an important promise; even with all such trials and sorrows we can rejoice in God. We have a relationship with him because of his unchanging promises.

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Application: And that relationship is eternal. It doesn't matter whether you live another 25 years or if God chooses to call you home tomorrow. He rescued you, he made you his child through the blood of Jesus. He now gives you his word, a word he wants you to read and study and hold on to. IN Jesus we turn only to our heavenly Father. He is a Savior like no other. What we lost when our first parents sinned Jesus regained for us so that we know we can never lose it.

Do you think a mountainside rescue is daring? Do you think only a few people would attempt it? Probably so. But then think of Jesus, going to the cross to pay for the sins of the world. Now that is a rescue in the extreme, by a Savior, like no other. Amen.