

While we were yet sinners - Rev. Calum Macmillan (Rosskeen)

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Preacher: Rev. Calum Macmillan

[0 : 00] Well, please turn back in your Bibles, Romans chapter 5. Let me read again from verse 6.

Since, therefore, we've 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 also be saved by his life.

And especially the words of verse 9. Verse 8, sorry. But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God shows his love, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. I wonder if you've ever had an experience where you've just felt you've blown it.

You've completely blown it, and there's no redeeming the situation, or maybe that there was no way back. And I wonder, even in a spiritual sense, if we've ever experienced that.

[1 : 37] We've ever maybe been worried that we're going to blow it spiritually. I wonder if we've ever feared that the Lord would get exasperated with us. It's a very human reaction, isn't it?

And maybe we've had experiences in our lives. We've had difficult experiences. We know the pain that results when relationships that we thought would be there forever didn't turn out that way.

And it's easy. It's a human reaction to project onto God the way that we are. And God reminds us, he is God and not a man. He is not like us. He is completely faithful.

His love is not like our love. And he reminds us that we can trust his heart. This is a passage this morning that's going to remind us of that. We can trust his heart towards us in Jesus, and that we're loved.

And I know that sometimes that wee voice rises up in our heads, but I'm a great sinner. Romans 5 says, while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

[2 : 44] Ah, you say, but I feel worse now than I was then. Surely my sins since coming to faith are worse now because they're in the face of and in the light of the love that Jesus has shown us.

But what Romans is going to remind us of today is that if Jesus died for us while we were a sinner lost in the darkness, how much more can we rely on his love now that we're his children?

How much more can we rely on his love when we're his children? His is a love that will never let you go. You can't earn it. He gives it.

But when he gives it, you cannot lose it. He has committed himself to you once and for all and forever. Now, as we look at our passage in Romans 5, just two headings we're going to look at together this morning.

We're going to look at God's demonstration of love, and then we're going to look at when God demonstrated his love. Okay, so we'll look at God's demonstration of love, and then when God demonstrated his love.

[3 : 53] First of all, though, God's demonstration of love. I wonder how you demonstrate love yourselves. I know you won't be as romantic as the Ruachs, of course, but I'm sure over here on the west side that you're all very romantic.

Flowers, chocolates, romantic dinners. Maybe the milk tray man has got nothing on some of the men from the west side. For younger listeners, you can go home and Google who the milk tray man is.

There was a famous book a number of years ago by a man called Gary Chapman. It was called The Five Love Languages. And he spoke about how everyone has a different love language.

And what he means by that is different people express love in different ways, and they want to receive love in different ways. So, for example, for some people, the way they like to express their

love is to buy gifts.

They show their love by giving gifts to the one they love. But for other people, as nice as maybe getting those gifts are, the way they might want to receive love is not to get a gift.

[5 : 00] It might be another category he had was an act of service. I've tidied the house for you. I've sorted the kids out. I'll take them away to give you some peace. I'll run you a bath.

He's identified five different ways we show and receive love. Those were the giving of gifts, acts of service, physical touch, you know, a hug, words of affirmation, and time and attention.

So how does God demonstrate his love towards us? And God's demonstration of love actually encompasses all these different categories. So whoever we are, God is communicating to us that he loves us.

He embodies all of them. He speaks to us of his love. The Bible says that to us. For God so loved the world, he gave his one and only son, that whoever should believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The Lord speaks to us in his word and he says to us, you are a special creation of God and you are valued in his sight. And he has done the remarkable, the unthinkable.

[6 : 08] God's son has become a man and come into this world and given his life for you. And he speaks to us of that love. And he says, you are loved. And he says, come to me and lay your burdens down and find forgiveness and find life.

There's touch. God is not distant and unseeing and uncaring. God's son actually became a man and came into this world and became one of us.

He became human. He's experienced all that we experience. Our temptations, our emotions, the highs and the lows. He knows what it is to be one of us.

He understands the things that we go through. Jesus is God's son, taking a physical body, a human nature, entering this world and becoming one of us and with us.

Or if our love language is attention. Again, God demonstrates his love for us in that. Psalm 8 speaks of that, doesn't it?

[7 : 14] David looking up at the stars, looking up at the sky and the vastness of the universe. And yet he can say, what is man that you're mindful of him or the son of man that you care of him?

We have a God who sees us. We have a God who listens to us. We have a God who's numbered even the hairs on our heads and who pays attention to us. He cares for your life and your circumstances and your situation.

You have his attention. And what about acts of service and gifts? Well, this is what we read of in Romans 5. But God showed his love for us in this.

He's demonstrated his love. How? While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The greatest act of service the world has ever seen.

God's son laid down his life for us. God's son gave himself for the sin of the world and for you and for me. The greatest gift ever given.

[8 : 16] God the father gave his son that whoever should believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life. God's son gave his son that whoever should not perish but have everlasting life.

God has demonstrated his love for us. God has demonstrated the depth of his love for us. The tenacity and ferocity of his love for us.

And that he would go to the ultimate extreme. And that Jesus would experience all that hell is. That Jesus would drink the cup of wrath of sin.

And he would do all that for you and for me. God's demonstrated his love. He's shown it. He's proven it. He's come into the world.

He's stepped down to meet us where we are. And he's given himself to redeem us. God has demonstrated his love. And it's objective. It's verifiable.

[9 : 14] When we have those days, and we have them, don't we, where we can doubt that God loves us. We can doubt that God is as he, as the Bible reveals him to be.

The devil can come in and whisper those doubts and those questions. We can go back to an objective, verifiable, historical event. The cross of Calvary.

God has demonstrated his love. And it stands, the cross stands as a testimony and a testament to God's love for this world and for you and for me.

The death of Jesus on the cross is verified outside of the Bible. It's verified by Roman historians, by Jewish historians. It's a historical fact that Jesus gave his life on a Roman cross under Pontius

Pilate.

But while I know that the facts of what Jesus did are undeniable, that he died on a cross, but the Bible goes a stage further to tell us the meaning of it.

[10:21] God demonstrated his love. I think it was Glenn Scrivener, some of you may know Glenn, the Australian evangelist. And he used this analogy.

He said that the gift is one thing, but we need to understand the meaning of the gift. For example, if someone, ladies, was to appear at your door with flowers and chocolates, I hope you think that's a nice thing.

But it would be a bit strange if you went away thinking, are they saying I need to put on weight and my house is a bit drab? What are these gifts for? These gifts are usually a way of communicating love and appreciation.

And the cross is likewise. Jesus gave himself upon a cross, and Paul here tells us what the meaning of that sacrifice, at least part one aspect, I should say, of that sacrifice.

God demonstrated his love for us. He shows his love. That while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[11:26] God has demonstrated his love. But the second point is when God demonstrated his love. When God demonstrated his love.

Now, maybe you might remember going out back in the day, going out on a date, or maybe that's a present reality for some of you.

How do we present ourselves? Well, usually, I would hope, we get dressed up. We look our best, don't we? We dress to impress. But when did God demonstrate his love for us?

Let me phrase it like this, maybe. Did God demonstrate his love for you and me in this world when we were at our best? Not according to Romans 5.

Look at verse 6. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Verse 8. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[12:31] Verse 10. If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Listen to the language Paul uses. When did God demonstrate his love for us?

Not when we were at our best. Not when we've got our Sunday best on. He demonstrated his love for us when we were at our very worst. Again, listen to the terms he uses.

It speaks about us being weak or powerless in verse 6. It speaks about us still being sinners in verse 8.

Again, also the end of verse 6. Ungodly. Verse 10. We were enemies. We were powerless and weak. We were ungodly. We were sinners and we were the enemies of God.

And when we were all of these things, God demonstrated his love for us. It's when we were powerless, ungodly sinners and the enemies of God that Jesus gave his life.

[13:35] Let's just let that sink in even for a moment together this morning. Jesus died for us. The ungodly, weak, sinners and enemies of God.

Jesus finds us at our worst and loves us to the greatest degree that we could ever imagine and he dies for us. Let me quote a bit from a book called *Gentle and Lowly* by Dane Ortlund.

And he says this, To say the same truth backwards, Jesus didn't die for us once we became strong. He didn't die for us once we started to overcome our sinfulness.

God did not reconcile us to himself once we became friendly towards him. God didn't meet us halfway. He refused to hold back, cautious, assessing our worth.

That is not his heart. God the Father and the Son took the initiative. On terms of grace and grace alone in defiance of what we deserved, when we, despite our smiles and civility, we're running from God as fast as we could, building our own kingdoms and loving our own glory, lapping up the fraudulent pleasures of the world, repulsed by the beauty of God and shutting up our ears at his calls to come home.

[14:57] It was then in the hollowed out horror of that revolting existence that the Prince of Heaven bade his adoring angels farewell. It was then he put himself into the murderous hands of these very rebels in a divine strategy planned from eternity past to rinse muddy sinners clean and hug them into his own heart, despite their squirming attempts to get free and clean themselves on their own.

Christ went down into death, voluntary endurance of unutterable anguish, while we applauded. We couldn't have cared less. We were weak sinners, enemies.

It was only after the fact, only once the Holy Spirit came flooding into our hearts that the realization swept over us. He walked through my death.

And he didn't simply die, he was condemned. He didn't simply leave heaven for me, he endured hell for me. Not deserving to be condemned.

He absorbed it in my place. I who alone deserved it. That is his heart. And into our empty souls, like a glass of cold water to a thirsty mouth, God poured his Holy Spirit to internalize the actual experience of God's love.

[16:18] And you see that in verse 5 of this very chapter. It says, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And herein is the majesty and the uniqueness of the love that God has for us.

And that's what he's driving at in verses 7 and 8, when he speaks about, So we all know stories of incredible acts of self-sacrifice.

People are capable of remarkable acts of heroism and courage. And maybe I'd argue that that's partly because we're made in the image of God. And we reflect God when we do that.

You read stories of parents sacrificing themselves to protect their children from danger. Or a soldier's act of heroism and war to save his comrades or whatever it might be.

Paul's saying, In the world in which we live, people do die at times for other people. Maybe for a righteous person, though scarcely that would be so.

[17:33] Though perhaps for a good person, one would dare to die, be willing to sacrifice oneself. But Paul's saying, but God's love is of a different order. It's one thing to give your life for a friend.

It's another thing to give your life for your enemy. And that's what Jesus did. He dies not for the righteous or the good, but for his enemies, the sinners, ungodly.

And by his grace and by his power, he turns his enemies into his friends. And why does that matter for us? Well, it does matter.

And there's a call to you this morning. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ yourself as your Lord and Savior, there's a call on you this morning to recognize the love that God has demonstrated for you.

He knows you. He knows all about you. He knows you at your very worst. And still he came. And still Jesus gave himself upon the cross in order that you have the possibility of salvation.

[18:39] All you have to do is come and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he calls you to come and to discover for yourself the depths of the love that he has for you.

He calls you to come and to receive the benefits that Jesus has bought and won for you. And these benefits are listed in the chapter. Peace with God through Jesus.

To be justified by faith for our sins to be forgiven and for God the judge to say you're innocent. To have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus.

To have hope and to have God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. You know, in a sense, verse 10 is quite a stark verse.

If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, will we be saved by his life. If while we were God's enemies.

[19:41] And I ask you this morning, are you God's enemy or are you God's child? In a sense, with either one or the other, you're either God's enemy or you're God's child. And you know, one of the scary things in the New Testament, in the Gospels, is that when God became a man and came into this world in Jesus Christ, didn't most of the opposition he received come from the religious ones, the churchgoers, the Bible experts who opposed him.

They showed themselves to be God's enemies. But what about you? God has demonstrated his love for you, but how are you responding?

Have you received his love? Do you know his love? Have you trusted in Jesus? Is Jesus yours?

Can you say, I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. Is your faith in the Lord Jesus?

Jesus tells you, commands you, invites you, come. Come, put your trust in me. Come and know the love that I have for you. I've demonstrated it and I want you to know it in your own heart.

Just come. It's the love of God, as we said, that turns his enemies into his friends. Jesus says, come so that we might live.

[20:58] You see in verse 1 of the chapter, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That's when we go from being God's enemy to being his friend, to being in his family.

When we trust in Jesus, our sins are dealt with and we have peace with God where there was not peace before. If we do not have our faith in Jesus, the Bible says, we do not have peace with God. That we're still his enemy at war with him. And that's a dangerous place to be. And he says, come. Come and find life. He offers you terms of peace. Will you not accept them?

But the main application, probably, of Romans is not to the unconverted, because Paul's not writing to the non-Christian here, is he? He's writing to the church. He's writing to the church in Rome and reminding the believers there of these things.

And what is it that he's wanting them to be assured of? What is it that he's wanting the believers there to be confident in? Look at verses 9 and 10 and you'll see too how much more expressions. [22 : 07] Verse 9, And then another one in verse 10.

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.

And essentially, what he's saying to the believers there is, if that was how God loved us when we were his enemies, how much more can we be confident in his love as his children?

For God to stop loving his people, God would need to stop existing. And that cannot happen. And I know the language here is maybe a wee bit confusing.

How can we be Christians, be justified by his blood, and be saved again? Because it seems to speak about that, doesn't it? In verse 9, We have been justified by his blood.

[23 : 09] Much more shall we or will we be saved by him from the wrath of God. What's going on there? I think what he's speaking about there is he's got in mind the return of Jesus.

He's got in mind Jesus coming again from heaven to earth to initiate the end of all things when there will be a day of judgment and when there will be a separation of his people from those who have not trusted him and Jesus will cleanse this world of all that is impure, of all that is wicked and bad and sad.

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away and the new heavens and the new earth shall be brought in. I think what Paul is saying here is that if we have been justified by his blood, we've been saved by him, we are his people, we don't need to fear that day when Jesus comes again.

We will stand with him in the new creation and we shall see him face to face and we shall be like him. Because of our faith in Jesus, he's saying, Jesus has you and Jesus will keep you and Jesus will keep you safe until you stand in his presence forever.

He will not let you go and he will not let you fall short. He won't let any of his people fall short of the goal to be with him forever.

[24 : 29] Our future is safe in Jesus. Let me just finish with this. Another quotation from Dane Ortlund. He says, We were enemies when God came to us and justified us.

How much more will God care for us now that we are friends, indeed sons. As John Flavel put it, as God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low.

How easily we who have been united to Christ wonder what God thinks of us in our failures now. The logic of Romans 5 is through his son he drew near to us when we hated him.

Will he remain distant now that we hope we can please him? He eagerly suffered for us when we were failing as orphans. Will he cross his arms over our failures now that we are his adopted children?

His heart was gentle and lowly towards us when we were lost. Will his heart be anything different towards us now that we're found? While we were still sinners, he loved us in our mess then, he loves us in our mess now.

[25 : 39] Our very agony and sinning is the sign of our adoption. A cold heart would not be bothered. We are not who we were. When we sin, do a thorough job of repenting, re-hate sin all over again.

Consecrate yourself afresh to the Holy Spirit and his ways. But reject the devil's whisper that God's heart towards you has grown a little colder, a little stiffer. He is not flustered by your sinfulness. His deepest disappointment is with your tepid thoughts of his heart. Christ died placarding before you the love of God. If you are in Christ and only a soul in Christ would be troubled at offending him, your waywardness does not threaten your place in the love of God any more than history itself can be undone.

The hardest part has been accomplished. God has already executed everything needed to secure your eternal happiness and he did that while you were an orphan. Nothing can now unchild you, not even you.

Those in Christ are eternally imprisoned in the tender heart of God. We will be less sinful in the next life than we are now, but we will not be any more secure in the next life than we are now.

[26 : 53] If you are united to Jesus, you are as good as in heaven already. I love that. We will be less sinful in the world to come, but we won't be any less secure.

And that is true because of the faithfulness and the heart of Jesus towards us. If you find yourself this morning in the mires and in the trials, may you know God's heart towards you.

May you know that he won't fail you. May he know that he will get you to the end. Your shepherd will not let you go. Your shepherd will not fail you. You have a glorious hope and for us all together as the people of God, he calls us to set our heart on that world to come that Jesus has provided for us and he is ensuring that we will get there.

Amen. Let's pray together. Lord, as we pray to the outset, we do pray for that work of the Holy Spirit to shed abroad your love in our heart.

Pour it in, Lord. It's one thing to know that we are, to be told that we are loved. It is another thing to feel your embrace. And so, gather us in your arms and hold us close.

[28 : 13] Forgive us our sin and our wanderings and indeed our tepid thoughts of your heart towards us. but that you would, Lord, help us to abide in you as Jesus says and to abide in your love for in that we shall bear fruit, fruit that will last.

So bless us today and bless your word to our hearts and to our souls and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we're concluding in the psalm that we sung just prior to the sermon.

Psalm 103 again. Psalm 103, page 135. Sing psalm's version, Psalm 103 and singing verses 8 to 14.

The Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face. 8 to 14.

Let's stand as we sing. The Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace.

[29 : 27] He will not constantly reprove for in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our mistakes or give our sins their just reward.

How great is love us I have said towards all those who fear the Lord towards all those who fear the Lord those who fear As far as he steps from the west so far as love has borne away and many sins and trespasses And all the guilt that on us saves Just as the Father loves his child So so love those who fear his name For he remembers we are dust

And well he knows our feeble And well he knows our feeble The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace And all God's people said Amen Thank you.