The Greatest of These - Series

"Assurance: Love Received and Enjoyed"

Romans 5:1-8

Introduction: We've been talking in this series about The Greatest of These – love. First we saw that love is an impossible command – to love God with EVERYTHING – heart, soul, mind, strength. This takes the new birth – we must be born again – God taking dead people and making them alive. We saw this happen in the life of Zachaeus – God through a simple invitation caused his dead heart to come alive and he was changed from the inside out. Last week, we discussed how God could be a God of justice and a God of wrath, who hates sin, and yet forgive and love sinners like Zachaeus, and you, and me. The answer that came from Paul in Romans is: "***justification by faith in Jesus Christ***".

- "**Justification by faith in Jesus Christ**" This phrase is a phrase that becomes a BANNER that hangs over the life of the Christian. It's the means not only to receiving the love of God, but also enjoying the love of God.

The eternal WRATH of God that was towards us because of the JUSTICE of God, has been appeased through the eternal SON of God, whom God put forth as a sacrifice for sin as a display of the LOVE of God unto the GLORY of God. (listen to the sermon)

- **Watershed**: "We receive, we enjoy, and we supply the love of God IN CHRIST (it's in a person) UNTO THE GLORY OF GOD (God receives the glory for it)."

Love between two people can at times feel very fragile: One of the reasons that married couples have such a difficult time within the first several years of their marriages is because trusting in the love of another person…WHO SEES YOU AT YOUR WORST…is such a fragile thing. It's takes time!

If Lorrie, who has seen me at my worst, can love me, how much more God! Receiving God's love means faith in the finished work of Jesus. Enjoying God's love means PERSEVERING in faith in the finished work of Jesus.

This morning church my aim is for you to leave here with Great assurance in your relationship with Jesus. So that when the devil comes or when your flesh tempts you or when the world tells you… "God doesn't love you!", or, "God has abandoned you!", or, "Your faith isn't real…you've been duped!" You will have solid ground to stand upon where you can open your Bible, put your finger on Romans 5 and other passages like it and say, "THERE! It says it right THERE!! THESE words trump everything you have to say…and I will put my faith in THESE words and NOT IN YOURS. Oh how precious a gift to us is the Word of God!

Now in this passage we just read, Paul gives us 4 reasons, 4 Biblical truths – really, they are 4 results from our justification. But I like to think of them as 4 weapons with which to do warfare. They are meant to give us assurance.

When the lie, "God doesn't love you.", comes our way. Truth is like a weapon…God's word is described as a sword that you are to take up in the day of spiritual warfare. If you're here and you wonder, "why is he getting so worked up…this is silly." It's probably because you have no idea what

I'm talking about. But for those of you who know the different attacks that can come on your faith…this is for you. For everyone else, who thinks I'm getting worked up for nothing…you can just tune out, look at your phone…to be honest, this isn't really for you anyways. But may God awaken your heart to the reality of the love of God that is in Christ!

Weapon/Truth #1 - We Have Peace with God – Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Notice this truth comes in the form of an argument: SINCE you have been justified….THEN you have peace with God.
- "**we have been justified by faith"** -
    - This is a past action – JUSTIFIED – with an abiding present result – WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD.
    - You are not the actor in this, you are the recipient (passive). God has "righteoused" you. God has made you righteous "by faith".
- **Problem: sin is not only a major barrier to RECEIVING God's love, it's also a major barrier to ENJOYING God's love.**
    - When you sin, you lack peace! Conviction. Shame. Guilt. God as a loving Father must correct you. But there is a massive difference between correction, and wrath or even worse, abandonment. Have you ever felt like God has abandoned you, and you began to look for sins in your own life as reasons? You won't find any. God will not abandon you. But Satan would love to come alongside of God's correction and turn conviction and correction into condemnation. "God is no longer with you. God no longer loves you!"
- **"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" –**
    - The wrath of God against you for sin is removed. Forgiven. Paid in full! God sees you "through" the lens of "Jesus Christ" as "justified". Like 3D glasses… "Justified glasses". He sees you and He sees Jesus. This doesn't mean that God doesn't see your sin…again, He's a loving Father and will correct you, but He chooses through "justified glasses" to see you as righteous because of Jesus.
    - The war between you and God is OVER. We need to preach this truth to ourselves over and over again. God sees me as righteous in Jesus Christ and I am at peace with God. It takes time to be assured of this, but this is the assurance God wants for you.
    - It's a powerful weapon to know that the fight that you're fighting is NOT with God…though the devil would love for you to think so.

Weapon/Truth #2 - We Have Access to God - Romans 5:2

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- **"God has abandoned you!" No! There is nothing that shall separate me from the love of God!**

- **The Veil: This would be a radical new reality for Paul being Jewish.** The people of Israel were constantly reminded of their separation from God because of a massive curtain that separated and prohibited people from going into the Holy of Holies, which was where the ark and the presence of God dwelt. No one could enter into this room except the High Priest and only once a year.
    - **Their access to God was through a Priest**
    - **Their access to God was through sacrifices that needed to continually be offered**
    - **They were constantly reminded that they were separated from God**
- **The veil is torn –** When Christ died on the cross a significant thing happened. The Veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. This was God's way of saying, "you now have access!" You can come to me any time with anything. I won't turn you away. The sin that separated you from me is removed. The veil is torn. You have access to God!
- **I remember how glorious this was to me when I first got saved:** that I could go to God and bring all of my thoughts, my questions, my worries and fears, and that He never turned me away, and that God Himself would bend His ear to listen and to speak to me. I didn't have to pray in a fancy way…I could just walk with Him and talk with Him. Access to God's grace is a place of stability, firmness, and we eternally stand here in this sphere of grace. How enjoyable it is for us to simply be in the presence of God – a place of rest, security, acceptance, love.
- **Timothy Keller – *"wherever we go in the world, we are always in the heavenly throneroom."***
- **"we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" –**
    - ***Not only do we have present access, but we have FUTURE HOPE!***
    - **Hope** – Not like, "I hope it's a sunny day…maybe not." Biblical hope is ***a confident assurance of God's promises given to us***
    - **"hope of the glory of God"** speaks of our future salvation and the future glory we will receive in the resurrection. We lost the glory as God's creatures through the fall…but it will be restored, and not the glory of Adam, but an even greater glory, the glory of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ the Son of God.
- **When the devil comes and says, "You're cut off!" You can say, "no…through Jesus Christ I have access to God…wherever I go I am always in the heavenly throneroom!"**

Weapon/Truth #3 - We Hope in the Midst of Sufferings – Romans 5:3-4

Romans 5:3-4 - ***Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope***

- **Suffering is a unique challenge that we face. We are currently living already in God's Kingdom, and yet we are waiting for God's Kingdom. Things are not as they seem, and yet the King is already reigning. He's in Control, and there's suffering. This can create temptations to doubt God's fidelity and love for us. This is because we know that God is powerful enough to prevent the suffering, and yet, often does not prevent it.** "If God loves me, why has He allowed this?".

Suffering: I want to say a couple things about suffering:

- 1. **It is *unlikely* that suffering is happening because of sin, but it's possible**

- **Corrective** - When God disciplines for sin, it is never vengeance, wrath, or punitive – it is ALWAYS TO correct or redirect us….to bring you to repentance.
- **Fatherly** – Because God loves us as a Father, He will rebuke and correct. But it is not as an enemy, but as a loving Father.
- **When you are being corrected for sin, you know it**. It's not something you need to search for or scrape to find something you've done wrong. When I eat 6 Momma McClain chocolate chip cookies with a large glass of milk and then feel pain in my stomach…it's not as if I say, "God why are you allowing my stomach to feel this way Lord? What is happening? Did I do something wrong?"

- 2**. It is *most likely* that suffering means that God is *equipping* you**
  - **ILL: The Father under the son at the playground who is stuck**
  - Our first temptation is to yell, "God get me down! Get me out!"…what we need to say is "God get me through." Instead of "How can I get out of this?!", rather say, "What am I to learn in this?!", "What are you teaching me in this?"
  - **Hebrews 5:8** – "Although He was a son, He *learned obedience through what He suffered*."
- **Paul here in this passage tells us to "rejoice in our sufferings" *because* Suffering faithfully produces hope in our future salvation – logical progression (3 steps)**

    - **Step 1 – "*Suffering produces endurance*" – the word could be translated "perseverance"…and here Paul is talking about persevering faith that results in the hope of eternal life.** It's the capacity to bear under the strains and pressures of life faithfully and to keep trusting in Christ to the end. Perseverance, fortitude…strength of faith.
      - **James 1:3 – "**for you know that the *testing of your faith* produces *steadfastness*."
      - **Heb. 10:36 - *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.***
        - **Our perseverance in doing the will of God results in our receiving eternal life.**
        - **But our eternal life is promised to us.**
        - **Which is it? Is eternal life a promise from God, or something we receive through our faithfulness? Answer: "YES"!**
        - **What God commands…endurance, God provides and promises. Sufferings are a means to create endurance…endurance which will cause us to receive what is promised.**
      - **Do not despise the training, the discipline, the endurance that God is bringing about through sufferings.**

    - **Step 2 – "*Endurance produces character*" –** This perseverance creates a "character" – this word in Greek is used to speak of a ***process of testing***, a forging in the fire. What's being tested? Your faith…the quality, the genuineness of your faith. What type of faith do you have? Is it the kind of faith that endures to the end…where with Peter you say, "Lord where do I have to go? You alone

have the words of eternal life!" When you go through suffering, and you faithfully endure, persistently trusting in God in the midst of suffering, the outcome is a proven genuineness of faith. This is the kind of confidence that comes after going through a storm and seeing Jesus get you to the other side.

- **You can only know the genuineness of your faith when its been put in a place where it can be tested. Don't despise this process! God is using your suffering for good…to produce a testing, a refinement of your faith.**

- **Step 3 – "*character produces hope*" –** this genuine, refined, tried faith, produces hope. Only genuine faith will get us to the end. You are saved by faith, but it's a persevering faith that gets you to the end. Persevering faith is tried and refined through suffering, therefore, it produces hope. **"My faith is real, I am truly walking with God, and I have hope in eternal life in the end, because God is working in me a persevering faith."**

Weapon/Truth #4 - We Experience God's Love through the Holy Spirit – Romans 5:5-8

Romans 5:5-8 - ***and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. [6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— [8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

This passage is challenging…I struggled for hours trying to think of how to share Paul's logic with you all…so time to put our thinking caps on as we come to a close this morning. How is Paul arguing here?

- **"and Hope" – the theme is hope…hope in our final redemption, the hope of eternal life. That's what Paul has been discussing.**
- **"Hope…does not put us to shame" –** Or another way to say it would be, "hope will not be disappointed". Here Paul is addressing another lie that we are tempted with as Christians, "Jesus is a lie. Your hope in Jesus will be disappointed! There is no heaven. There is no salvation. There is nothing. It's all a sham. When you die…worm food. Nothing." To this lie Paul says, "your hope in eternal life will not be disappointed." Why? ***Why won't it be disappointed Paul?***
- **"BECAUSE God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit"**
  - **But what does that love look like Paul?...the Holy Spirit brings the truth of the cross (v.6-8) from the past, to mind in the present, in order that we might experience in the heart presently what God has done historically. This is a present experience of the love of God through the Holy Spirit by declaring to us a historical reality – the cross.**
  - **John 16:14 – "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." Here in this passage this looks like an experience of God's love that is proved in the past, and brought to mind in the present.**
- **"FOR while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (this is a PAST EVENT) [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person**

one would dare even to die— [8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

- **When God loves, it's not like our type of love – it's EXTRA-ORDINARY/FOREIGN**
- **We're barely willing to die for a good or righteous person (v.7)**
- **But God? …"GOD SHOWS HIS LOVE…while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"**
  - **Arguing from the greater to the lesser**: If God died for us when we sinners (enemies)…how much more now can we trust Him to get us to the end…therefore, "hope will not be put to shame"
  - **War buddies rock climbing:** "if I was willing to take a bullet for you…how much more now can you hope that I will hold onto the ropes for you!"
  - **The Holy Spirit is the helper bringing to mind God's love for you. It's a present experience of God's love by pointing to a past historical reality – the cross.**

Whenever you doubt God's love, you need to only look at the cross! The cross is PROOF of His love. It's external proof, rooted in a historical fact – that Jesus Christ loved you…literally…to death. To the point of laying down His life. And He did this, NOT FOR RIGHTEOUS OR GOOD PEOPLE…for weak, for ungodly, for sinners. How much more can you now trust Him to give to you eternal life in the end? The Holy Spirit brings this to bear through the Scriptures that He inspired and that He brings to mind. If you want to experience the love of God…read the Scriptures…the Holy Spirit will take them and cause God's love to be poured out into your life.

In Closing: There are no barriers to you fully enjoying God's love. You are in Christ. You have peace with God, access to God, even your sufferings are used by God to give you hope, and the Holy Spirit takes the truths of God and brings them to mind….pouring out His love through reminding you that while you were a sinner Christ died for you…you can now be assured and enjoy the love of God. God wants for you to experience His love…He wants for you to be assured of it. It's best seen in the cross. "We receive, we enjoy, and we supply the love of God in Christ unto the glory of God."

Let's pray