

**Reading:** Romans 5:1-11

**Theme:** Evidences of God's love.

We have seen some marvellous, thrilling, even moving truths from the first 5 verses of Romans 5. I tried to emphasise and underline the certainty, the security, the assurance of our salvation as we looked at those first 5 verses and to put the case for a secure, certain salvation, but the case does not stop at the end of v5. Yes, Paul has taken us to a high point - the love of God poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom God has given us. We noted the precious, the heart-warming and moving working of God the Holy Spirit pouring out and causing us to be more aware that we are loved by God. Yet incredibly some people would question the truth that God really loves them - perhaps someone here may do and so Paul goes on to enlarge upon that love - to give proofs, evidences of that love in v6-8. He then goes on to show in v9-11 inevitable deductions by saying that if that is the case, then *how much more...*

As we focus on v6-8 this evening, we will see Paul doesn't suddenly change his theme, but builds on what he has already written. Note v6 begins with "*You see*" (NIV), "*For*" (AV) and Paul introduces the proofs, the evidences of this love of God; it is almost as if he says "*Look it is blindingly obvious that God loves us...*" I want us to see 4 things concerning the evidences of the love of God to us which can be poured out into our hearts:

### **1. Salvation Has Its Origin in God's Love.**

When we think of our salvation and all it includes and involves, we can sometimes be unbalanced. We emphasise our need, our lostness - which are true and then stress Jesus came to save us, to rescue us out of our mess - also true. Yet biblically we are off centre! The whole scheme and scope of salvation doesn't originate in or spring from our desperate need, but it originates in the very heart of God, the triune God. Some people, some hymns and songs, seem to present salvation almost as God responding to our need and Jesus

came to save us and then, as it were, He pleads before God the Father to spare all those who believe in Him. God can be sometimes presented as having a kind of schizophrenia - the Father insisting on justice and the Son pleading for love and compassion, for grace and mercy to be shown.

That is not the case at all. The plan, purpose, scheme and work of salvation originated in the very heart, in the very love of the triune God. Theologians speak of the council of redemption or salvation, in which the triune God planned man's salvation before the foundation of the world, probably before the creation of one angelic creature. Knowing all that lay ahead, the triune God out of His love, set His love on His people - foreknown, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Such ones did not deserve any good thing, any blessing, any care and yet God deliberately chose to make them His people. The whole panorama, the drama of redemption, of salvation's plan finds its source, its origin in the very heart of God and His love. Salvation is entirely from God and originates from His love.

We can marvel at the scheme and scope of it, what it saves us from, what it saves us to, marvel at God's grace and mercy in our lives, but when we get back to the origin of our salvation as being God's love, we are silenced, we are to wonder and adore, we can but praise Him in words like *"Oh the love that drew salvation's plan, Oh grace that brought it down to man..."* Or *"How deep the Father's love to us, how vast beyond all measure"*.

Yes, God is still just and holy and if He changed one iota of His justice or holiness, He would cease to be God, but as we saw when we considered being justified by faith, this amazing God extends His pardon, His cleansing, His justifying work, because in the atonement His justice, holiness and wrath are satisfied in Christ. He can then extend His forgiveness, reconciliation and peace to those who trust

the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. The plan of salvation was not brought about by any merit, any good or deserving in us. All of us would have owned God as right if He left us all damned in hell for all eternity. The necessity of salvation originated in God - *“For God so loved...”*

Yes at times, even now, we may feel low, battered, bruised, useless; or we may feel great, super, on top of the world, but whatever we are feeling, we are to turn our hearts to consider God’s love in our salvation, to praise God for His love and the salvation it brought forth for the likes of you and me.

## **2. Strategic Planning in God’s Love.**

Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet, is a love story with a sad ending - they, moved by love, made plans, but didn’t really plan for the actions of others and so tragedy occurred. Our God in salvation was moved by love, but it was and is never an impulsive love - it is incomprehensible, but never irrational.

How and when was the proof of this love going to be made known? God precisely planned the when, the how, the timing and place! We are told in v6 it was *“at just the right time”, “in due time”*. In the council of redemption, God also set the timetable of the way of salvation. God planned when and how and at just the right time or as Galatians 4:4-5 says *“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*

God knew the timing, knew when it was the right time, the due time for Christ to come and to die. Often in the Gospels we read of an incident and the people would have taken Jesus and killed Him, but we read *“His time had not come”*, but in John 17:1 the Lord Jesus prayed *“Father, the time has come”*.

God's love is not impulsive and changeable, but as He has loved us with an everlasting love, so He had an eternal plan, a strategic plan and this shows in its details and preparation for its completion. As you read the Bible you begin to see the revealing of God's plan in history as He prepares the people of Israel, gives them sacrifices which point on to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world - so this could be seen and made sense of.

Albert Barnes, the Bible commentator, emphasises that this was in due time - when the religions of Jews and of pagans had all been proved futile, when the learning and philosophy of Greece had flourished and faded and was found wanting; when Roman might, pomp, power, wealth and the peace of the Empire all proved useless and empty - it was then, when man's best efforts lay broken and useless, that the Saviour came and demonstrated, commended, showed God's love.

God's love was planned not to be some sort of nice philosophy, or mere words, but was love in action - proved, demonstrated and commended. That's what Paul emphasises in v8. So often we read it as God demonstrated, commended, showed His love for us there on the cross when Christ died for us, but the tense of the verb is the present continuous tense - God continues to commend, demonstrate and show His love to us on a daily basis in that Christ died for us - 1 John 4:9 *"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him."*

God sent heaven's best to show, demonstrate, to commend His love to us. That love took Jesus to Calvary to die for us in the plan of God, for that was the only way we could be saved. There was no other option, no other route for salvation to be accomplished. If there was, would the Father who loved His Son so very, very much, have ignored His pleading in the garden *"If there be another way, remove this cup from me."*? The horrors of Calvary caused even the

incarnate Son of God's humanity to recoil in horror at what lay ahead for Him in a short while, but He submitted to the terror and horrors that the cross involved - because He loved us and would have us saved.

Only as we recognise what He went through on the cross can we appreciate how vast is the love of God. We are not just to leave His sufferings as only suffering physical pain, not even the mental anguish of knowing He was innocent, but the eternal punishment He took as He was the sin bearer for His people there on the cross and He turned God's anger from us - atonement, propitiation was made, so that we could experience God's love in our salvation. Do we recognise anything of the greatness of God's love for us?

### **3. Surprising Recipients of God's Love.**

From time to time stories occur nationally or locally of a person dying and leaving fabulous wealth to a cat or to a dog or to someone who was kind to them many years before. Yet the recipients, the beneficiaries of God's love are most surprising. It is not for good, nice, moral, kind people; nor is it even for religious people - that would have been marvellous enough, but it is for those who were powerless (v6), sinners (v8), enemies (v10).

In v7 Paul uses examples, ideas to which we can say "*Yes, I can see that*" - that there are some people who others would risk and lay down their lives for, those we consider worthy, those who love us and are precious to us. Yet in v8 Paul says "*But God...*" This God does something shockingly amazing, wonderful, contrary to human thought, experience and expectation - for the ones who are the recipients of God's love are the unlovely! "*My song is love unknown; my Saviour's love to me; love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be. O who am I, that for my sake, my Lord should take frail flesh, and die?*" (MP478v1).

There are amazing descriptions given of their character and being – “*powerless, without strength, weak, helpless*” are some translations of the original word in v6 - which is usually applied to those who are feeble, deprived of strength by disease in NT. Yet here it is used to picture everyone’s state because of the disease of sin. We are all naturally weak, helpless, powerless, without strength to live as God requires, let alone be able to plan or carry out any plan to get ourselves right with God. We are without strength, powerless to understand God or to love God. We cannot understand spiritual truth and the things of God are foolishness to the natural man and woman. This means that if the things of God are a waste of time or are meaningless to us, then realise we are perishing and even the Saviour’s death on the cross of Calvary will seem foolish to us.

As such ones who are powerless, we cannot please God one little bit, nor obey Him. We can see this in Romans 1- 4, especially in 3:9 & 23 “*What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*”. We are helpless, without strength and powerless to do anything to save ourselves, even to commend or recommend ourselves to God. If we have seen this, we will recognise something of the amazing love of God to us who were helpless and without strength.

Yet not only were we like that, but we were also ungodly - we were unlike God, the image of God in mankind is so marred as to be a disfigured, vandalised image. Also, we had no love to God - except when we felt it was for our benefit and was a selfish sinful love. Because of such we are called God’s enemies (v10) - we hate God in our natural state and all He stands for. People argue they do not hate God, until we show them what God requires -God says the soul that sins will surely die - yes physical death, but ultimately hell and people begin to doubt, to question, to laugh, mock and deny.

Paul speaks in v7 of a righteous or a good man and that some may be willing to die for such. In v8 he drives home a contrast as he describes what we are as God demonstrates His love for us in the death of Christ – Jesus died for us who are sinners. Not cute, lovable, pitiable, charming or nice, but powerless, ungodly and sinners. Such ones are and were rebels against God, His holy character and standards; are those who have fallen short of His glory - His holiness and perfection; those who are guilty of high treason against this God even when we knew His standards and ways. We can read of ourselves in Ephesians 2:1-3 “*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **All of us** also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of **our** sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of wrath.***” Then Paul says “*But God...*”

God commends, demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we are yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is surprising, shocking, staggering, almost scandalous and yet we can be thankful He shows, demonstrates, commends His love still towards us because Christ died once-for-all to show this love to the likes of you and me. There should be within us an ongoing sense of wonder “*Why O Lord such love to me?*” And then “*Hallelujah*” for we see:

#### **4. Secure Confidence through God’s Love.**

How do the things we have looked at form a ground, a basis for a secure confidence, a greater assurance? Imagine we had to self-generate the faith to believe, we had to be good enough to deserve being saved, or to be secure in our salvation. How long could we keep it up? What would happen if we died at a point of weakness or failure? There would be no hope; we would be doomed and we would be lost. At best our position would be full of danger and we

would be walking at the edge of a cliff face that could crumble at any moment and we plunge headlong into eternal ruin.

Yet that is definitely not our position! Our salvation depends entirely on the love of God and His work in us. He does not change. His love does not change for He has loved us with an everlasting unchanging love. He loved us and proved, demonstrated that love to us by sending His Son to die for us. We were helpless, had no strength, were ungodly, were sinners and His enemies - that is when He died for us!

Our position now is that we are saved, born-again, we are regenerated, we are justified and at peace with God. If He did all those things when we were without strength, ungodly, sinners and enemies, *how much more* can that love been known and enjoyed; *how much more* are we safe and secure - but that's what we will go on to see in v9-11 and also again in v12ff.

We have a secure confidence only through God's love. This is not presumption, not arrogance, but our salvation and security are to be rooted and found in the love of God to sinners such as you and me. I pray we would know and delight in such love, in a growing sense of that love shed abroad in our hearts and the growing certainty, security and assurance of our salvation that can and should accompany knowing such love, especially as we consider the "*how much more*" of our salvation in the light of God loving us, proving it, demonstrating and evidencing it in the so great salvation He has lavished on us.