

Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Theme: Looking back, around and forward!

On 30th September 1938, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin declared he had secured peace in our time in the Munich treaty with Nazi Germany. Sadly, as we know, it was not the case and on 1st September 1939 Poland was invaded and 2 days later the UK and France were at war with Germany. At first nothing happened for about a month or so – the so called ‘*phony war*’. Then war became actual and real, not theoretical and technical. There was a time when war was technically in place, but no actual fighting occurred.

The Apostle Paul tells us of some remarkable truths in v9 & 10 to further encourage, strengthen the assurance and certainty of our salvation. In v9 & 10 Paul seems to repeat himself in slightly different ways as he draws out great reasons, arguments for us being certain and assured of our final salvation. Commentators are keen to point out that Paul argues from the greater to the lesser in the deductions, the logic he applies. Basically, Paul says that if God has done the most difficult and most wonderful thing in justifying us, in reconciling us then surely He will keep us and bring us safely to heaven! Paul makes a reasoned argument from what he has written of God’s love to us – the love demonstrated in Christ’s death for us. I want us to note 3 things, all one-word headings – Past, Present and Future:

1. Past.

In previous verses Paul has written about God’s love and that being shown to those who were powerless, ungodly and sinners. This is what we were. We deserved absolutely nothing from God at all. Yet in v10 Paul says these things occurred, this love was extended to us “*when we were enemies*”. It can be so easy for us to read that and think “*Yes, that is fine! I guess that was so.*” We may readily own that we had no time for God, no love to or for Him, we wasted His gifts and mercies; we resented His commands and all these to a

greater or lesser extent. We were enemies of God and we may have been actively against God or moral rebels. Yet all these things are true of every human being for the natural heart does not and cannot love God.

Yet that is **not** the primary emphasis of what Paul is saying here. It is not that we truly felt enmity and hatred against God, but that **God viewed us** as His enemies in our rebellion and enmity. Our opposition, our state, our relationship with God and to God was that of enemies. My opening remarks concerning the war between Nazi Germany and the UK/France union - no bombs were dropped, no guns fired between the 3 countries, but they were declared enemies and in a state of war - both technically and actually.

Naturally our position with and to God is one of war and enmity. That was our state, our legal standing with God. It is not that we were just enemies to God and against Him, but in His holiness and justice **He viewed us** as His enemies. Matthew Henry wrote *“This enmity is a natural enmity. God loathing the sinner, and the sinner loathing God.”* Now you may feel that is a bit strong, but sinners, even someone here if you are not a Christian, are an enemy of God and on a war footing against Him. You are, at this moment, objects of His wrath and are under His condemnation. You may receive good things, enjoy blessings in your life, but that is because God is good and the goodness of God on your life should lead you to repentance. Do not be fooled into a false sense of security, for outside of Christ we are in a wicked opposition to God and God is in a holy opposition to us and we are enemies!

As enemies to God we had nothing to commend ourselves - we were sinners, ungodly and quite without strength to win His favour, to plan to effectively carry out any plan to reconcile ourselves to God. As such we were helpless, hopeless and doomed to remain as His enemies and one day to meet an angry God, to suffer His just, holy

wrath and punishment. What a mess, a sad, sorry and helpless mess we were in. Yet that has all changed if we are a Christian, for all that is in the past - now we move on to see:

2. Present.

Something happened, something amazing and wonderful, thrilling and exciting happened. We were like that - enemies; but now we have been justified, we have been reconciled. The tenses used in both verbs indicate that this has been done to us (*passive*) and it has been completed and it remain so (*first aorist and 2nd aorist*). Our present condition and state we are in with God and God is in with us, is that of justification and reconciliation i.e. peace.

Remember what we said of justification - it is not by what we do, say or feel. It is outside of us. Justification is a legal declaration by God in the courts of heaven concerning us - that He has given, credited, imputed to our account all the righteousness of the Lord Jesus and we stand legally in and with that righteousness being ours. We are clothed in the robe of Jesus' righteousness and not just for a short time, but forever, for all eternity. This legal declaration has been made, because the legal transaction to remove our sin has occurred.

As such we are reconciled to Him. Here we need to be cautious not to think that all our enmity and animosity towards God is instantly removed. Yes, we have a new nature and standing, but sin will still wage a guerrilla warfare in our flesh, bodies against God and we will find this ongoing battle happening all our days as we go on in God's ways - our sanctification is the outworking of our new life and our state of justification. We will live in a state of tension and contradiction in our life - as Paul wrote of in 7:14ff. Most importantly this reconciliation focuses on the fact that God's enmity, holy opposition is completely removed from us, He is for us, accepts us and helps us.

That is why we do not, are not to focus on how we feel towards God - as we can have our ups and downs, our emotions and feelings can come and go and are so easily affected. Where do we focus for our assurance, our peace of heart and mind? It is on our God - who is eternally reconciled to us, with whom we have peace and God is at peace with us and it is an everlasting and unchanging peace He has with and towards us.

Yet at the same time, our ongoing attitude to God grows and changes, is ever developing because we have new natures. Now we are able to love and respond to Him, but that is not the primary emphasis here, for ultimately the change is in God's attitude and standing toward us and our reconciliation is traced back to God. We are to recognise these changes in our state with God and He with us, He is reconciled to us, and this is not achieved by a change of heart or mind by us; nor is it by our doing good, by being religious, or by turning over a new leaf, certainly not by our deserving or our earning it. Such changes happen as the plan of salvation is effective in and worked out in our lives. That plan of salvation which originated in God's love in eternity past, was planned and affected in time and was personally applied to our lives.

Paul does not say *"God ignored our sin; God swept it to one side"* but Paul declares that our justification is possible *"by His blood"*, we *"are reconciled to Him through the death of His Son"*. There was no way God could ever treat us in love, or be reconciled to us, or declare, make, or view us as justified. The terms "enemies" and "reconciled" are polar opposites. The only solution God found involved *"the blood of Jesus, the death of His Son."*

At Easter time we rightly include the events of Good Friday and Jesus' death, His blood being shed. We are never to dismiss or minimise Jesus' death on the cross. We are not to sentimentalise it

either, but maximise it, focus on it - for without His death and blood being shed, salvation would not be possible at all. Paul wrote that he would boast in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Some would sneer, mock and call Christianity as preached here “*a blood religion*” or “*a blood theology*” and say we portray God as cruel and vindictive to demand such. Yet God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. We would be lost and helpless to get right with God and be at peace with Him if left to ourselves. We were under His wrath and condemnation, for we are guilty sinners. The Lord Jesus on the cross swapped with us and died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God. Jesus is our propitiation, the sacrifice of atonement (3:25) and He took our sin and turned away God’s wrath and punishment away from us and onto Himself.

If we remove, take away or minimise Jesus’ death and blood, then we have no hope of reconciliation or justification. This means that the cross of Jesus is the only way God could find to be reconciled to us, to show His love to us and to justify us. In the plan of salvation, the holy love of God made it necessary for Jesus to die and to reconcile us to God. That is what God did for us while we were still sinners, enemies and has brought us into the state of justification, reconciliation through the death and blood of the Lord Jesus.

That is our present state and condition if we are a Christian! Surely it is comfort and assurance enough. How does that underline our assurance and certainty? As we look at our life, we may see our weaknesses and wonder how we can be sure He will keep on accepting us and being reconciled to us. So, moving on from Past and Present we look forward to:

3. Future.

Paul has taken us from what we were, to what God has done and what we are now and says in both v9 & 10 “*how much more*”. Basically, it means that if God has done these great things, do we

think He will not do further things? The argument is *a fortiori* - from greater to lesser. If the greater benefit has been bestowed upon us, then the lesser will not be withheld. We often view heaven, all it entails as the greater work, but in many ways, it is the “lesser”!

Paul has shown us of God’s love to us as helpless, ungodly, sinners and enemies - our justification, our reconciliation through Jesus’ death and blood. There our greatest problem was dealt with; if I can say it reverently, God’s greatest problem was dealt with too - our sin, the state of enmity and war between God and us, us and God. If God did that for us when we were enemies and He reconciled and justified us, how much more will He do for us now as those who are reconciled and justified?

If He demonstrated His love to us as condemned, helpless, ungodly sinners; now we are justified, ever made, viewed as such by Him, then now we are reconciled and at peace with Him; how much more will He do for us? This is not an excuse to demand health, wealth and prosperity. Paul’s emphasis is on being saved - saved from the wrath to come, saved by or through His life.

I have tried to avoid the terms “saved” and “being saved” up to this point and use the verbs in our text - justified and reconciled. We often speak of becoming a Christian as being saved. The Philippian jailer asked “*What shall I do to be saved?*” The answer was “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved*” (Acts 16:30-31).

The NT writers use the word “saved” in 3 main ways.

Firstly: saved - **refers to becoming a Christian**, having new life, adoption, justification, reconciliation, a new nature, our sin and guilt removed. We refer to this as we say a person is or has been saved. Do we personally know this?

Secondly: we are **in the process of being saved from the power of sin and its pollution in our life experience** i.e. we are being

sanctified - which is the process of saving us from sinful life and being made more like Jesus.

Thirdly: I feel that this is how the word is being used here - it refers to when we shall be **finally and fully saved**, our salvation will be complete and the chain of love started in eternity by our being foreknown and predestined, that breaks into our life history with our being called and justified, will be complete when we stand glorified in heaven - not only as redeemed souls, but also in our united souls and resurrection bodies. It is our glorification, the redemption of our bodies (8:23), when we shall stand before Him *“faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 24).

As a Christian we are saved, are being saved and can say that we will be fully saved. Yet it all begins to be gloriously true of us personally when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and are saved for time and eternity. Do you have that hope, expectation and confidence? If we are saved, we should rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. How can we be sure we will get to heaven, that we will be there and not lose our way over the years and fail to make the grade? Justification, reconciliation cries out *“how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!”* Also *“how much more... shall we be saved through His life!”*

God has done the greatest, hardest part in bringing us to be reconciled and justified, in saving us from our sin and its guilt. The greatest transformation and work have occurred already. For God to keep us and present us faultless as His reconciled and justified ones is no problem or hardship. In fact, it is Jesus’ desire - John 17:24 *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”* Our God will keep us as His children and bring us safely to the glory of heaven.

We are not destined for wrath or hell, but heaven; with grace and mercy accompanying us all the way there; with love, peace and joy going to be fully known and enjoyed for ever. As believers we are in Christ, in union with Him and His life is in us. Paul in v10 links our final salvation with Christ's life - AV and other versions say "*by His life*", NIV says "*through His life*", the Greek says "*in*" or "*in union with*" His life.

Once, we were outside of Christ, outside of His love, outside of His effective atoning death and outside of His so great salvation. We were sinners, we were His enemies, but now by God's grace we are "*in Christ*", in a living union with Him, He is the Vine and we are the branches and His life is in us - for there is an organic unity and this means we are secure; for as long as He lives, we live and are saved, are being saved and shall be finally and fully saved!

You notice that Paul says twice in these verses "*how much more*" and underlines to us that if God has done the greatest, He will do the lesser - now we are reconciled, He will definitely lavish His love on us as His children and people. We are safe, secure and we can be assured of our salvation - the love of God to us as enemies, sinners, ungodly and helpless ones show that; how much more now we are justified in reconciled, will that same God love us, keep us and bring us safely home? Those God has justified, He has glorified! Salvation is secure!

What should our response be to all this? Paul says it is to rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation - but that is v11 and for us to consider next week!