

Pour Some Lovin' on Me! Romans 5:1-11

Gratefully adapted from "Romans – A Gospel Shaped Life-God's Guarantee."
By Pastor Pat Damiani, Thornydale Family Church, Tucson AZ. November 1, 2015

Let's begin this morning with a question I learned to ask more than 40 years ago in the Evangelism Explosion training program.

"Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?"

That was a "diagnostic question" that we were taught to use when sharing the gospel with someone in order to determine whether or not they were "saved." Now, as I've matured as a Christian, I've come to understand that **my salvation involves so much more than just going to heaven when I die**, as important as that is. So, I now think this question is more useful in evaluating the confidence a disciple of Jesus has in his or her salvation, than it is in determining just whether or not they are actually a believer. But it is an appropriate question for us to think about today.

Since heaven is the ultimate hope of our salvation, how sure we are of arriving there one day is probably a pretty good measure of how confident we are in our salvation.

Now, if you can't answer that question with a confident "yes" this morning, if you're not 100% sure that if you were to die today, you would go to heaven, I've got some really good news for you.

What Paul wrote in today's text (Romans 5: 1-11) should give all of us who are Jesus' disciples great confidence in our salvation. And even if you are already confident in your salvation, it certainly won't hurt to be reminded once again why we can have this kind of confidence. We have this not by anything we have accomplished, but **we can have great assurance in our hope of heaven simply and only because of God's love for us** by which He graciously provided for our justification and reconciliation with Himself through the death and return to life of His Son, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Now I know that is a stunning mouthful of theology, but that is what we are going to unpack today—the joyous result of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit having poured their love into our hearts.

Here is what I would suggest is the main message of this passage:

God's love for me, that saved me, guarantees that He will keep me.

And when you come to understand the means by which God has saved and now keeps you, you can then join with the Apostle Paul and all other confident Christians in ***Rejoicing in our hope of sharing the glory of God*** (5:3).

To get us back up to speed, remember that for the first three chapters of this letter, Paul has described **humanity's hopeless condition: being "ungodly" we have only earned God's wrath**. Then, in chapters three and four, using Abraham and David as examples, he reveals God's gracious solution for our sin: our justification, reconciliation, and now righteous standing

before Himself. God brought this about for us as a gift through our faith in Jesus—apart from any works we could do.

since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; **we are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**
(Romans 3:23-25)

As I pointed out last week, this is the central theme of the Romans letter and Paul used this theme to coin a world changing slogan: ***the one who is righteous will live by faith.***

Now it is understandable that readers of these first four chapters might have a lot of the same questions that we may still have today; questions that keep us from having complete confidence in our salvation such as

:

- *Even if my faith justified me in the beginning, will it still justify me in the end?*
- *Isn't there something more I must do to remain saved?*
- *Is it possible that God could change his mind and "un-justify" me?*
- *How can I be sure that my salvation by grace through faith will take me all the way to heaven?*

So now, in the first 11 verses of chapter five, **Paul assures us that just like our initial justification and reconciliation, the maintenance of our salvation also resides with our loving God, not with us.** Here is a basic summary of our assurance.

we can rejoice in the knowledge that
– whatever our current hardships –
our salvation will carry us through to the end because it rests in God's love for us
which will never cease or change.

So let's examine...

HOW GOD'S LOVE GUARANTEES HE WILL KEEP ME

My first guarantee that God will keep me is because all three members of the Trinity have been involved in my salvation and are now lovingly sealed within my heart.

Even though the term **trinity** is never found in the Bible, the concept of a triune God--one God consisting of three distinct persons-- is present throughout the Scriptures. This is one of those places where this is evident. In this passage we find all three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who have been intimately involved in my salvation.

1. **God the Father, out of His love for me,** first **initiated the plan** that provided for my salvation. **And it is His same love for me which guarantees He will carry His plan through to completion.** We see God's love mentioned specifically in verse five and again in verse eight.

God's love has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit
that has been given to us
Romans 5:5

God proves his love for us
in that while we still were sinners
Christ died for us
Romans 5:8

God's love is not just some emotional feeling like what we so recently celebrated this Valentine's Day with a card and some candy. But rather **LOVE is a foundational part of God's very nature which led Him to decide to somehow reconcile us to Himself regardless of what it would cost Him.**

Back at the start of time, when God promised that a descendant of Eve would crush the serpent's head, that was when He set in motion a plan that would one day demand of Him a great personal cost—the death of His one and only Son.

And later in Genesis, God promised Abraham that one day his heir would bless all the nations of the world. Because of Abraham's steadfast faith in God's promise, God reckoned this faith to Abraham as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

Then one day that descendant (seed) of Eve, heir of Abraham, king of the house of David, who the prophets named the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, was born, as Paul points out in verse six, "**at just the right time**" according to God's plan. This is how God the Father proved His love to us.

2. **Next God the Son provided the means for my justification through his death and resurrection**

Four times in this passage, we are told that all that we have comes "**through Jesus.**"

Vs.1 "**through Jesus.**" we have peace with God

Vs. 2 "**through him**" we have access into the grace of God.

Vs. 9 "**through him**" we will be saved from the wrath of God

Vs. 11 "**through our Lord Jesus Christ**" we have received reconciliation.

That is why Jesus told his disciples, *no one comes to the Father except **through me***. (John 14:6) And now Paul goes on to explain just what was accomplished for us **through** Jesus.

- Being justified by our faith in Jesus we have **peace** with God and **access** into His grace (vs. 1-2).
- Having been **justified** by his blood (death) we are saved from **God's wrath** (vs. 9).
- Having been **reconciled** to God by his death we will also be saved by his life (vs. 10).

That is why Paul boldly declares that because of our access into God's grace, provided for us through Jesus,

we [can] **rejoice** in our **hope** of sharing the glory of God
(Romans 5:2)

Notice that I substituted the word "**rejoice**" for what the NRSV Bible translates as "**boast**" because this particular verb should be translated differently depending on whether it is used in a positive or a negative sense. Up to this point in his letter, Paul has used it in a negative sense and in each of those occurrences it is rightly translated "*boast*":

*You who **boast** in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.*
(Romans 2:23 ESV)

*Then what becomes of our **boasting**? It is excluded. ...by the law of faith.*
(Romans 3:27 ESV)

*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to **boast** about, but not before God.* (Romans 4:2 ESV)

In each of these verses, Paul was exhorting his readers not to boast in what they could do to bring about their own salvation because that dishonored the God who had done everything necessary to make their justification possible. But now being used here positively this same word means "**confident joy**" and so is better translated **rejoice** or **exhult**.

And here it is also appropriate to remind you that the next word "**hope**" means not wistful wishing but a "**confident expectation.**" The Bible describes hope as "***a sure and steadfast anchor for our soul***" (Hebrews 6.19). Biblical hope doesn't offer us just a possibility, it gives us an anchor to hold on to with confident expectation.

Put those two words together and Paul says we can **rejoice** in our **confident expectation** of sharing in the glory of God. So, there is nothing tentative about either our rejoicing or our hope. **The assuredness of our salvation is based on all three members of the Trinity securing it for us.**

and **hope** does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through **the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**
Romans 5:5

3. Which brings up the third member of the Trinity: it is God the Holy Spirit who confirms my justification and seals my salvation through His presence

What a beautiful image of God pouring His love into our hearts by giving us the Holy Spirit. Notice two qualities about God's act of giving us His Love.

- The giving of the Holy Spirit is a **lavish outpouring of God's love for us**, not just a trickle. His love isn't just rationed out to us drop by drop, but it is a mighty, endless current. We sing the song: *the Love of God is greater far, more than the tongue or pen can tell. It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell.* And that is what God is pouring into our hearts with His Holy Spirit: His boundless love.
- Also the past tense of the verbs: "**has been poured,**" "**has been given**" indicates that this is **something that God has already done for us in the past.** This occurs at the very same moment in time that we are justified. So we get the Holy Spirit immediately and we get all of the Holy Spirit at once. Just like there is nothing we can do to earn our justification, there is no more that we can get of the Holy Spirit. God has already lovingly poured all of His Spirit into us.

The Holy Spirit serves a number of purposes in our lives, but the one that is most relevant to us this morning is found in Ephesians 1:

In [Jesus] you also, when you heard ... the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance** until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV)

The Holy Spirit is given to every believer as a guarantee that our salvation is permanent and that God will bring it to its completion

So my salvation is guaranteed by all three persons of the Godhead who actively participate in the process of my salvation: **My justification and reconciliation which the Father planned, the Son provides, and the Spirit seals.**

Now, let's look at verses nine and ten.

The second reason we can be joyfully confident that God will keep us is because Jesus Christ is alive today to assure our salvation. Paul phrases verses nine and ten rhetorically—assuming we know what he means. But the grammar is a bit confusing. So I have taken the liberty— for clarification sake—of swapping around the “will” and the “we” to turn it into a bold statement.

Much more surely then,
now that we have been justified by his blood,
we will be saved through him from the wrath of God.
For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God
through the death of his Son,
much more surely, having been reconciled,
we will be saved by his life. (vs. 9-10)

Notice: two very important elements in these verses:

1. First, the phrase “***much more surely***” which Paul uses twice, ASSURES us that our salvation involves **so much more** than having been justified and reconciled in the past and being at peace with God in the present; there is a future we can be sure about as well.
2. This **much more** is then reinforced by the **future tense** of the verbs— “***we will be saved***”. So we know there are future aspects of our salvation that we have yet to experience.

And what exactly does this future salvation look like?

1. In verse nine, Paul tells us that our future salvation guarantees that ***through Christ, we will be saved from the wrath of God.*** That part is certainly easily and joyfully understandable.
2. And then a second element in our future salvation was described in verse three:
...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God...

What exactly does that mean?

Let's look at a passage that we'll eventually get to in our study of Romans.

it is [God's] very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ ...

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with **the glory about to be revealed to us.** (Romans 8:16-18)

While we can't possibly cover everything that is wrapped up in our hope of the glory of God, at a minimum, it means that **we can have a confident expectation that one day we will literally share in Jesus' glory in a way that is completely unfathomable for our human minds.**

Paul wants his readers, and us, to be confident that God will surely bring us to that final culmination of our salvation. In effect, Paul is claiming that **if a dead Savior on the cross can justify us and reconcile us to God, then certainly a living Savior is capable of making sure that we are saved from God's wrath and share in Jesus' glory.**

As we learned earlier ...

God's love for me, that saved me, guarantees that He will keep me.

So my assurance of going to Heaven when I die is not based on anything I have done or can do, but because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have poured God's love into my heart and sealed it there until that future day when as the living Jesus has promised me that where he lives there I will be also living with him.

Let me close by asking once again, the question I asked at the beginning of the message:

"Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?"

My prayer this morning is that every single one of us here can answer that question with a confident "yes", knowing that it is God's unchanging, never ending, all-powerful love that guarantees that He will finish the work He began in my life.

Benediction

May He who began a good work bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (From Philippians 1:6)

Once again the full richness of this Romans text cannot be fit into a short spoken sermon without risking audience fatigue; I want people to get something good to take home, rather than, through information overload, get nothing. So for you dear readers only, I will include the following application section in order that you might enjoy the full benefit of what it means to "rejoice in our hope of the glory of God."

But what can we take home today from all this assuredness that God's love for us has secured our home in heaven on that day when we die?

Paul even has an answer for this question, in verses three and four which you may have noticed I skipped over.

we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us,
Romans 5:3-4

What did Paul mean by sticking this comment on rejoicing in suffering right in the middle of his teaching on the assurance of our salvation?

To help answer this question, let's add one more thought to our summary statement.

God's love for me, that saved me, guarantees that He will keep me.

But God also loves me too much to save me from all of my struggles

This idea that we are to rejoice in our sufferings is certainly contrary to our own human nature. We don't naturally rejoice when we face difficulties in our lives. But as we have already learned, this word "rejoice" means we are to have **confident joy even in the midst of our struggles.**

In me you may have peace.
In the world you face persecution.
But take courage;
I have conquered the world!
John 16.33

That we are having struggles and trials in this life, in no way implies that God has taken any of His abundant love away from us. In fact, Jesus reminds us that we should expect struggle and trials in this world because, now that we belong to God, the powers in the world have become our defeated enemy... but they are still kicking at us for only a little while longer; because it is a conquered world.

So to put this very simply: because we can have **confident joy** in God's love which secures our salvation, no amount of earthly trouble should ever take that assurance away from us; we can always have **confident joy in God's love for us—even in the midst of our struggles**. And we can also be assured as Paul will later explain that God can and will work through our troubles to bring about a better good.

All things work together for good

for those who love God,
who are called according
to his purpose. Romans 8:28

God never promised to keep us safe from struggles but he did promise to bring good out them. It is important to note **what Paul is not suggesting in these verses**. He is not saying that we have to be happy about our suffering. He is not suggesting we merely "grin and bear it". And he is certainly not encouraging us to merely pretend we are happy.

Instead, he is teaching us that **we need to get our focus off our circumstances altogether and focus on God and what He is trying to accomplish through those circumstances**. That is why Paul encourages us, even in our "sufferings" to **rejoice in God**.

As he pointed out, suffering teaches us endurance, and learning endurance builds our character, and as we grow in character our hope gets even more confident.
Hope flourishes best under stress.

When the **Biosphere 2** was constructed in the early 1990's the scientists there discovered an interesting phenomenon. The trees inside the Biosphere grew much more rapidly than they would have in their normal environment. But the problem is that the trees consistently fell over before they reached maturity. After careful examination, the scientists overseeing the project concluded that they had neglected one critical factor in the maturation of these trees—wind.

When a tree grows, the stress of the wind causes a tree to develop what is known as stress wood. That stress wood helps the tree to position itself for optimal sun absorption and to put down deeper roots. Without that outside stress a tree will not thrive in the long run.

In a sense we're like spiritual trees. Without the outside stress of tribulation in our lives we won't thrive well in the long run. Unfortunately, however, when we get into a difficult situation, our natural tendency is to flee, or to question God's care for us, or to ask God to remove us from that difficulty or trial.

Certainly there are times when asking God to remove a difficulty is the appropriate response. But if it is true that God loves us too much to save us from all of our struggles because He wants to use them to develop spiritual strength in our lives, then perhaps, rather than fleeing or asking God to remove us from struggles, we should ask how we can grow through them.

I know it's somewhat clichéd to say, but it is absolutely true that **our loving God is more interested in making us holy than He is in making us happy; and He is more committed developing our character than our comfort.** Let's face it. There are some things that can't be learned from a sermon or a Bible study, or a book. They can only be learned as our suffering produces endurance and proven character and hope. So let's make sure we don't prematurely short circuit that process by trying to flee the situation before God is done developing us as He desires.

So when we face suffering or struggle, don't ask God "**why?**"
Ask God, "**what?**" or "**how?**"

Often when we suffer, our tendency is to ask God "**why?**".

- "God why did I get cancer?"
- "God why did my child rebel?"
- "God, why did I lose my job?"

But, most of the time these are questions for which we will never get an answer and so the more we keep asking those questions the more frustrated we become.

What we need to ask instead is "**what?**" or "**how?**".

- "God, what character trait do you want to develop in my life through this trial?"
- "God, how do you want to use these circumstances to make me more holy and more like Jesus."

I think that if we are genuine in asking those kinds of questions of God that He delights in giving us answers. We just need to spend enough time with God that we can hear God when He gives them.