ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 5:06-11 Lesson #10

Introduction

This is lesson 10 of our Romans Bible study. Last week we began chapter 5, and we discussed the first five verses. This week we'll resume at verse six and continue through verse eleven. I've titled this lesson:

God's Demonstration of Love for Us

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:6-11 (NASB)

Verse 6:

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

In speaking of the death of Christ, there are three terms used in this verse that I want us to consider. "Still helpless", "right time", and "the ungodly."

Concerning the fist of these, the still helpless, what is the inference we're intended to draw? What does Paul mean by still helpless; helpless to do what? After all, by the time Paul wrote this we had four-thousand years of recorded history concerning man's ability to survive and grow and prosper. Technology was advancing even then, and the human race appeared to be thriving. Why would Paul say that we were still helpless? This is why we teach the bible in an orderly and systematic manner, starting at the beginning of each book and reading it through verse by verse. This is a classic example of having to know the existing context for the verse to have any specific meaning. Paul has already written what we have now sub-divided up into four chapters of explanation of the total depravity of humanity, how we got that way, and our absolute inability to fix our problem by our own efforts; and that all mankind is therefore at war with God because we have not been justified for our crimes of sin against God. It is this specific situation of which Paul says that we are still helpless to fix by our own abilities, and perhaps even worse yet, we don't even want to fix it. We, as a species, are still helpless to effectuate any justification of our actions before a holy and perfect God. Therefore we are still helplessly trapped under His eventual wrath and judgement. This was Paul's background for his announcement, starting in chapter 3, verse 21, of God's grace through justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, that we examined in our two previous lessons, and are still examining here.

While we, as a species, were still helpless to escape the sentence of eventual death and hell for our sins, it was at this very time and under this condition that God acted on our behalf. God directly interceded into the situation through His own Son, Jesus Christ. Which brings us to the next point:

"At the right time." What does Paul mean by this statement? Wouldn't any time be the right time, as long as it gets done? That's not the point. Do you recall how many times in his earthly ministry Jesus said words to the effect that "His time had not yet come?" It appears that Jesus knew in advance exactly what and when everything was planned to happen. Why did Jesus come when He did? Couldn't He have come much earlier, or even much later? Well, yes He could if God had planned it that way, but the scriptures are replete with prophecies, written hundreds, even thousands of years in advance, that foretell with amazing precision all the events that lead up to this pivotal and central event in human history, and God's whole creation plan. Christ's arrival, His life, and even His death were planned out before creation took place, and God used time and situations as a teaching tool. The scriptures are the guide book that record all those preparations, and all the events that were planned in advance by God to take place, and set the stage for this central event. For mankind to comprehend what was happening it was necessary to lay some background, and this is what the Old Testament did, it

provided the necessary insight into human depravity that is necessary to comprehend the situation that mankind finds himself in. The Old Testament records that God made a choice of one people, out of all those who dwelt on the face of the earth to be His own people. He blessed them with prosperity, and protection from their enemies, and even prevented sickness among them. He gave them His Laws and statutes and ordinances so they would know how to live and prosper in His presence. But what happened? They slipped away from Him, and began to disobey His Laws and commands, which ultimately led to their being taken into bondage by their enemies and having their beautiful temple destroyed.

And yet, even after this, God eventually forgave them, and brought a remnant back into the land, and gave them another temple to replace the one that was lost. But what happened? Again they began to slip away and ignore God's Laws and commands. The horrendous lesson of destruction and God's wrath didn't prevent them from repeating the very same mistake. Why is this so? Is it true that man learns nothing from his past mistakes? Or, is it perhaps that those factors that caused him to stray the first time are still present within him now, and he is just as helpless to resist them as he was the first time? Knowing your fate in advance is only useful if you have the ability to change the factors that cause it, and this is what man had to learn, that he was, and still is, helpless to effectuate any change of his own nature and behaviors by his own resources. He is trapped in an endless loop of self-destruction by his very own innate nature.

For example: the drug addict knows full well what awaits him, and the alcoholic knows what his future will be, but knowing that doesn't necessarily change their behaviors. Why is that? Because knowing the problem is one thing, but having the resources to change it is an entirely different matter. It isn't necessarily that man doesn't learn from history, but that man is no more capable of changing his behaviors now than he ever was. Unless there is the inherent capability to act upon that historical information, and sufficient desire to do so, then history is just a bunch of useless data.

There is this popular saying that says: "The only thing that history teach us is that man learns nothing from history." I would like to formally challenge that statement. This is a very shallow conclusion. If we are paying any attention at all, then what history really teaches us is that knowing what has happened in the past does not seem to give us the necessary resources that we need to keep us from repeating it again. It isn't that we haven't learned anything, it's that we are still no more able to resist our own self-destructive ways than we ever were. This most definitely is learning something. The better question might be - Is there any way that we can we begin to put that knowledge to good use?

This is crucial information that needed to be presented to mankind before the crucifixion and resurrection were ready to be demonstrated by God as His act of gracious and loving mercy. Without this understanding, the whole thing would be a strange, even senseless mystery to humanity.

This is why the term "at the right time." It means that everything that God had planned, all the diverse situations and various religious groups, and ethnic groups, and world situations, had come together in the exact proportions, and at the precise time, for the plan to be revealed and understood by those who were intended to benefit from it. It would still be a mystery to the majority of the world, but God had gone through four-thousand years of very precise and intense human history to set the stage for what His beloved Son was about to accomplish. There was, from the very beginning, a precise and immovable time set by God, and this is what Paul means by "at the right time."

Now, finally the third term - "for the ungodly." In spite of the precedent set by Abraham, of God reckoning righteousness to him based on his believing God, man had long considered that God's final judgement of humanity was based on their works. So it was commonly understood that there were righteous people in the world, whom the Jews considered themselves to be, and unrighteous people in the world, and this is how everything worked. To the Jews there was no need for them to be justified, and God would never have anything to do with those unholy dogs called Gentiles, and sinners. But alas, it was these who embraced Christ, and whom Christ Himself accepted, and it made the religious Jews very upset. Why was He associating Himself with these obvious ungodly sinners? This is not what they expected from their coming Messiah. This Man was accepting sinners and outcasts and the lowest of society. Hardly the perceived actions of a great king. For this reason, and for many of the things that He said, the religious society concluded that he was an imposter, even though they could not explain the obviously divine miracles that He was daily performing right before their eyes.

It was His acceptance of the obviously ungodly, the obvious sinners of the world that marked Christ's ministry, and set Him at odds with the religious elite. It was His dying for the ungodly, even when they themselves were still helplessly trapped in their sins, that demonstrates both His and His Father's purpose. It demonstrates a love that is at first, completely unilateral in nature, (1Jn 4:19) at a time when man is helpless to effect any change, or even able to love in Him return. It is the surrounding circumstances, and the historical events leading up to Christ's crucifixion that serve to demonstrate by visible example the love of God for His children. It took more that just words, it took millennia of history and a myriad of examples and situations to define what the true situation was, and what was really going on, both in plain view and invisibly behind the scenes, on that eventful day when Christ was put to death. That day when the Son of God died for the helpless, loveless, ungodly sinners that the Father had predestined to eventually be His own for all eternity. It took time and meticulous preparations to set the stage so that the message could be clearly understood. Now, having made his point that Christ died for the ungodly, Paul moves on to his next verses:

Verses 7-8:

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God **demonstrates** His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul stresses the point that Christ died for the ungodly, not for a group of people who were already righteous of their own merits. Then he says that there's hardly anyone on earth who will die even for a perceived righteous person, but allows for an occasional exception, but the point is that Christ made the supreme sacrifice for those who were, at the time of that sacrifice, still unworthy and ungodly. There are two major elements to these two verses that stand out.

The first is concerning the situation between God and man at the time of the sacrifice of Christ. Man was in a condition of sin, and was helpless to right himself with God by any strengths or merits innate in his own nature. Man had lost the capacity to love God and was consumed with self-serving motivations. Even those who were religious zealots weren't so because they loved God, but because they perceived it as a benefit to themselves, both in the here and now and in the life to come. Religion usually isn't about God at all, it's usually about man's perception of personal benefit from it. This isn't pure and honest love, this is a myriad of things, but true love is defined in the scriptures, by word and by example, as self-sacrificing, not self-serving. Love is giving when you may well not get back anything in return, and are willing to do so anyway. Prior to His crucifixion and resurrection, even the twelve disciples often asked Jesus what their personal rewards would be for following Him, and squabbled among themselves over who would have the highest position. And this was the best of the lot, the ones who followed Him every day. This is what Jesus had to work with. It's impossible to deny that there is often a tinge of sarcasm in Jesus' responses and answers, and how could it be otherwise? He was there to live a perfectly righteous life and then to die brutally for the likes of this. For the likes of a humanity that didn't even have the capacity to love Him for who He is without polluting it with self-serving motives.

This is the background situation against which we see the life and death of Jesus Christ. When we see this clearly we can't help but ask ourselves, why did He even come, why was He even willing to put Himself through it all? Now we're ready to look at verse 8:

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

This brings us to the second major element that we mentioned earlier. The first was concerning the situation of man. Now we see the situation of God. The answer as to why Jesus Christ came to earth, and suffered through everything that He did is given clearly right here in this verse, as it is in very many others. And that answer is: pure, self-sacrificing love for His own chosen children, not based on their merits, but on His own everlasting affection. Even when man was helpless and lost and beyond responding, God's everlasting love for His own holds true. Love is, beyond a doubt, the prime mover in the workings of the entire creation scenario of God. Love is the motivator that prompts God to create a family, and a pure and holy love from them in return is the eventual end goal of the whole thing. Time and space and matter are all about God's intention to both demonstrate His own love, and eventually receive it in return from an extended family of worshipers. This is the final product of creation as depicted in the Book of Revelation.

In previous lessons you've heard me discuss the popular saying "I'm trying to find out what God's purpose is for my life." If you remember my answer, I said that there's no need to ask such a question. The answer is already given. If we want

to know what God is doing in our life then we may simply look at what He ends up with when the age is complete and the next age begins. What does God end up with as a final product of His whole creation of time and space and matter? He ends up with a kingdom of worshipers who have been transformed into the likeness of His own Son and live with Him in His eternal kingdom, His eternal City. (Rom 8:28-30) Therefore, if you are blessed to be one of these, then everything that happens in your entire lifetime is intended by God to eventually mold you into this person. There are infinite situations and circumstances and trials along that path, but the point is not to figure out the reasons for trials and situations, but to see to it that they achieve their intended purpose. This is why the scriptures can say, with absolute truth, that "all things work together for good to those who love God." Because when they're done they did the work that God intended for them to do, and the ones who endured through them were in fact transformed into the likeness of Christ through those manifold experiences. We'll discuss this in detail when we get to those verses. (Rom 8:28-30)

But back to the point. The situation with God is His everlasting love for His own chosen people. This is what motivates God to act on our behalf when we are lost and helpless. Make no mistake, God is not obligated to act on our behalf, He answers to no one, and is under obligation to no one, and He does exactly as He pleases with everything that He's created. Therefore, it is the pure and honest love of God for His own children that prompts His intervention on our behalf. But the amazing thing is the *magnitude* of this visible demonstration of His love for us. As humans, we will often call a person on the phone, or we'll send them a letter, or even give them a nice gift as a way of expressing our affection for them. But God's demonstration, His visible testimony of authenticity of His love for us, is entirely unprecedented. Although it includes all these things we humans understand, it goes far and away beyond our earthly comprehension. In fact it shocks, and even repulses multitudes of people who don't understand it.

We all know that words are cheap. We hear people say that they love some thing or some one every day. But we also understand that this love is not the biblical self-sacrificing love which defines God and His chosen. The Greek language has a distinct advantage over English in this situation because there's more than one word for love in Greek, and one of them means specifically the self-sacrificing kind. This is the kind of love God has for His chosen children. The kind that is willing to give before it gets, or even if it gets at all. God demonstrates His divine love for all humanity by what we call common grace. Meaning the everyday things that sustain life on earth and allow humanity to live and prosper. In this manner God demonstrates his love for all humanity.

But at the same time we all understand that there's a significant difference between how we love our friends and neighbors and how we love our spouse and our children. We will make various sacrifices for our friends and neighbors, but there's perhaps nothing we won't do for our own family. This is what God clearly wants to demonstrate by visible actions. God could simply write in the scriptures that He loves those who love Him, and He does, but far beyond that, He chose to visibly demonstrate how much He loves His own family of chosen children by an unprecedented act of self-sacrifice, whereby He has His only Son brutally crucified for the specific purpose of atoning for the sins of His own children. This makes God's love something infinitely higher than simply words, recorded in a book, it makes them visible by undeniable action. Shame, shame on any of us, certainly myself included, who shake our heads and ask if God really does love us when something seems to be going wrong in our lives. God's demonstration of His love, by His Son Christ Jesus, has forever closed the door on any doubts as to the *authenticity* and *magnitude* of His love for those whom He has chosen.

There has been, and indeed cannot be, any higher act than that one taken by God, by which He chose to demonstrate His love for His elect. God creates a means by which He may demonstrate his love for us by the incarnation of His Son, Jesus into a human body. Do we realize that neither the Father, the Son, nor the Holy Spirit can possibly die in their divine form? How could God demonstrate, by the sacrificing of life, His own love for His chosen? The incarnation of Jesus Christ into a human body serves more than one purpose to be sure. Just to mention a few, He lived a perfect life, became a perfect sacrifice, was resurrected to be an everlasting intercessor on our behalf, and, made it possible for God to visibly demonstrate by death, the magnitude of His love for His own, and the boundless lengths to which He will go to save and sanctify them. Again, all of this happens while we were yet sinners.

If we're authentic Christians then we most certainly show significant signs of that by our daily behaviors. Even though we aren't yet perfected we are certainly nothing like we used to be. People we know sometimes compliment us on our kind

nature and courteous manners, but when that happens we think in our minds, If you only knew me before I was saved you might not have such an opinion. They know us now, after God's gift of regeneration and transformation, but God knew us before that happened, when we were at our absolute worst, and it was then, and under those circumstances, that He reached out and saved us by His grace alone. Of course not everyone is the same, and people's lives are different, but in every case God saved us when we were at our very worst. When we were ill equipped to love Him in return and obey His commandments, and had little or no desire to even try. With this, I think we've captured the essence of this verse, so we can move on to the next:

Verse 9:

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

This is an interesting verse. It seems to draw a distinction between being justified and being saved from the wrath of God. It says that having now, already been justified by His blood, we shall in the future be saved from the wrath of God. While it can be mistaken as two separate elements, it is in actuality the same. We have already been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ because that has already occurred, and we have received the gift of saving faith, but our being saved from the wrath of God won't actually happen until the wrath of God is actually poured out, and that is still a future event. We will be saved from that event, whenever it happens, because we have been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul speaks in this verse of the ultimate consequence of justification, escaping the wrath of God, but we have already read about the more immediate benefits, like being at peace with God. We can be at peace because we've been regenerated and sanctified, but also because we are assured that the wrath of God has been forever removed from our future. God's elect will only know, by experience, the love of God, and the wrath of God they may see from a distance, but they will never experience for themselves. That's the point of the previous verse about the demonstration of His love.

Verse 10:

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Here we have another distinction, or would it be better defined as a comparison? For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son establishes the first point of comparison, and then having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. establishes the second. If, while we were still sinners, the shed blood of Jesus Christ was sufficient to fully reconcile us with God, and appease His righteous anger toward us for our manifold sins, how much more now, as fully reconciled children, will His perfectly righteous life, imputed to us, save us from the final wrath of God. Infinitely more, as I perceive to be Paul's point in this verse. If His death saves the rebellions sinner, then His perfect and eternal life assures every believer that they will be where He is forevermore. For God to inflict His wrath on a single one who is a chosen believer would be for God to tell His Son that His sacrifice was not entirely sufficient. That is never going to happen. The Father is altogether elated with His Son's actions, and completely satisfied with His atoning sacrifice for each and every child of God. The is no possibility of God's judging wrath in the future age on any of His elect. The concept of a purgatory is an insult to Jesus Christ and an offence to God, because it defames the sacrifice of Christ.

Also, look at the phrase *while we were enemies*. Most of the world, even those who care little about God, don't think of themselves as His enemy. They think they can hold a neutral position during their whole lifetime. Like Switzerland in WWII. But does anybody in this world actually think that Hitler would have allowed them to remain neutral if He had been victorious? Other than Richard Chamberlain, I can't imagine anyone that naive. On some issues we just can't be neutral, and when it comes to believing and obeying God, this is the ultimate. We are either His ally, or we are His enemy, and time will ultimately prove that this is the truth. There has been no place, nor position, allocated in God's plan for neutral parties. There is the kingdom of God, and there is the Lake of Fire, and there is nothing else described anywhere in the scriptures. Life is easy and comfortable if we can convince ourselves that we are God's friends even when we don't make any attempt to obey His commands nor give Him thanks and worship. But the scriptures describe those as God's enemies, and even His own elect were among those enemies before they were justified and sanctified. Yes, before we were justified we were His enemy, every one of us, regardless of what we thought our status might have been.

Now, if you'll permit me a little bit of latitude, I would like to stray just a little bit wide and discuss the difference between God's wrath and God's discipline, because it seems that our current generation can't understand the difference.

Neither I nor the scriptures suggest that we are exempt from chastening in this present life when we get off the path of righteousness. For the scriptures say: (in the Old Testament)

12 For whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. (Pr 3:12) and again: (in the New Testament)

6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." (Heb 12:6)

There are some who claim they don't see the difference between wrath and discipline, that they're essentially the same thing. This kind of thinking has taken over our times, and the scriptural teachings of discipline have been twisted into what is now called abuse. The interesting thing is that the result of abandoning discipline is that it fosters a generation that is fearless and without compassion, so now we have to put police officers in our schools to try to enforce what we used to accomplish very well with simple biblical discipline. It's interesting to see that the liberal thinkers who started this whole twisted concept would rather continue to live with it than to admit that they were wrong, that supervised discipline is altogether proper and even essential to maintain a civilized society.

When I went to school, starting in 1950, there was no such thing as children bringing guns to school and killing other students. I never knew a single person who used or sold drugs in school. Even the worst and meanest of the kids were kept in control by the Physical Education coaches, the Shop Teacher, and the Principal who all had oak paddles, and would tan your backside if you went beyond the allowed boundaries. None of us thought we were being abused, we knew full well we were being appropriately disciplined for our misbehavior, and it was indeed effective in keeping us within the allowed boundaries. Words alone would never have accomplished this. I freely admit that discipline won't change one's heart, but it will certainly control their actions and keep them from freely harming others. This old way worked, and it worked very well, the liberals have set out to achieve the same results but without the physical aspect, and it has proven to be a disaster. The fear that our children now have at school, and in the street, of mortal violence is a relatively new phenomenon in our society, and has only occurred since the new thinking of the 1960's when discipline was re-labeled abuse, and entirely abandoned. As the scriptures repeatedly warn and declare:

15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him. (Pr 22:15) 13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. (Pr 23:13) 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. (Pr 29:15)

Discipline is applied to correct and train, and it's applied to those whom we care about; wrath is applied to those with whom we can achieve no reconciliation, and it is the method of last resort, intended to destroy. If you claim that you don't see any difference then you're claiming that you're an idiot. Sorry, but that's the truth of it. This is why the scriptures can say that the justified will never see the wrath of God, (v.9) and at the very same time say that those same justified will continue to be chastened regularly by God for their training and instruction in righteousness. I am convinced that the vast majority of those who claim that they don't approve of physical chastening is not really because they don't understand the purpose but because they don't really care enough about their children to be willing to take on the emotional trauma that it demands. If you love yourself more than your children then you aren't going to cause yourself the emotional distress necessary to teach them right behaviors. Then you can call this selfish cowardice "love", without exposing yourself as what you really are, a selfish coward. But God is no such thing. He freely chastens His own beloved children, and at the same time assures us that we will never taste of His judging wrath when it is poured out on the unbelieving masses of humanity. The death, and now, even more, the life of Jesus Christ has, and will forever be, our eternal salvation. I admit I've strayed a little wide from the main point, but this seriously needed to be said. Now, moving on to our next verse:

Verse 11:

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The *not only this* of course refers to our being justified before God by the shed blood of Jesus Christ while we were still helpless sinners, and therefore being freed forever from His judging wrath. And with this as our background setting, we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. All that Jesus Christ did, and said, and accomplished were at the leading

and directing of His Father. Do you remember some of the things that He said during His earthly ministry? For example: 19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

And again,

(Jn 5:19)

20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. (Jn 5:20)

And again,

28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. (Jn 8:28)

The life and actions of our Lord, Jesus Christ, were the direct results of the Father's will and eternal plan. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in full agreement and working in perfect unison to achieve the plan of God the Father. Therefore, anything, and everything done by all of the Trinity is at its core, the will of the Father. For this reason when Jesus Christ, and now His disciples, preach the gospel, and the Holy Spirit imparts the saving faith to believe it, God the Father gets the glory, because it is the Father who planned it, and is directing its implementation through the use of the various means that He has predetermined.

For this reason we *exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was the actions of the Son that implemented the plan of God the Father, therefore, we exalt in God through those actions of our Lord, Jesus Christ, because they bring us reconciliation with God the Father and establish us firmly in His eternal love, which He had for us, by name, before the foundation of the world was ever laid. (Eph 1:4; 2Ths 2:13; Rev 13:8, 17:8)

Conclusion:

In these verses we've been taught that God loved us while we were still helpless sinners (v.6) and sent His beloved Son to die for our sins that separated us from God and condemned us to His wrath and destruction. Through this amazing act of self-sacrifice, both the Father and the Son demonstrate their love for us in a visible and undeniable manner. (v.8) Through this act, planned and empowered by the Father, and performed by the Son, we have been saved from the wrath of God that is coming on all the earth at the appointed time. (v.9) When we see these things, and they're explained to us so that we understand what actually happened, we can then begin to somewhat perceive the *magnitude* of the love that God the Father has for His chosen children. The extent to which He will go to *prove* that love to us even before we had any affection for Him at all. In fact even when we were His enemies. (v.10)

God asks us to demonstrate our love for Him by our actions - "If you love Me you will keep My commandments" said Jesus. (Jn 14:15) And then God himself takes the lead to establish the visible example of divine self-sacrificing love, by having His beloved Son demonstrate to us what love actually is. It isn't just a pretty word, it is a heart attitude of supreme sacrifice for those whom we care about, and this is what God has demonstrated to us, even while we were still His enemies. To Him alone be all glory and honor, all love and devotion, all gratitude and affection, for now and for evermore. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami Robert Andrews, Pastor 03/18/12