

“The Love of God as a Demonstration”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org
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Read Romans 5:6-11

When one considers the cross they cannot help being overwhelmed by the selfless nature of the act. An innocent man dies for the guilty. The death is criminal in its execution. Why did this man die? What motivated him to offer up his life in behalf of others? For those who viewed the event, a man died the death of the cross. There was nothing intrinsically objective in its theology. Graves opened, dead were raised, the sun darkened, the earth shook, and mental confusion reigned. Apart from these “signs” there was nothing that spoke of a vicarious sacrifice or penal satisfaction. The normal onlooker could not see the debt of sin being cancelled, or the wrath of God being assuaged, or the insurmountable gap being closed, or the burden of guilt being forgiven, or even the unrighteous being declared righteous. There was no “theology” being taught. It was a simple and brutal end to a flawless and innocent life. For us to understand the “theology” of the cross it is necessary for us to note Romans 5:6-11. Herein lays a demonstration of God’s love for His people. This love is a non-negotiable and irrefutably objective fact. The cross event declares openly that God loves those for whom He came (Col. 2:15). To deny God’s love for those He came to save is to reject the cross (2 Pet. 2:1).

The demonstration of God’s selfless love for His people is set against the backdrop of man’s selfish love for himself. The contrast is intentional. In Romans 5 there are four declarations or demonstrations communicated by this singular expression of God’s love as exhibited at the cross.

First, the demonstration of God’s love at the cross is unconditional (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10). Paul uses four words in parallel to describe our condition apart from Christ and in Adam. We are helpless, ungodly, sinners, and His enemies. There was nothing inside of us that moved Him to die in our behalf. Often we are overwhelmed by and consumed with our own righteous self-deception. We honestly believe we deserve better than we have it. We think that just because we exist, God is obligated to save us or at least give us a legitimate opportunity to believe. With such arrogance we have come to believe our own destiny lies in our ability to choose Him versus Him choosing us. There is only one reason God set His love on those in Adam and it is because of who He is, not because of who we are or have done. God’s love for us is unconditional. There is nothing in us that prompted Him to act in the manner in which He did.

Second, the demonstration of God’s love at the cross is vicarious (Rom. 5:7, 8). He took our place. He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. The Father sent His only begotten Son in order that He might die in the place of His people. The word “vicarious” means “in place of.” Jesus Christ is our substitute. It was while we were sinners that His Son died in our place.

He died for us. We were supposed to die and He took our place. God became man in the incarnation in order that He might satisfy the wrath of God against sinners and represent man before the Father. There are very few people for whom you would

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voluntarily die in the place of. The potentiality of you or I dying in the place of another is thin; the thought that the person for whom we might die is an open antagonist is even thinner. Yet, this is exactly what Jesus Christ did for His people.

Third, the demonstration of God's love at the cross is wrath satisfying (Rom. 5:9, 10). Our verses use such powerful words as "justified," "saved from the wrath of God," and "reconciliation." All of these consequences are secured because of the death Christ died. It is through His blood that sinners can stand before the eternal creator God as justified, fully and completely acquitted. It is because of His death and His life that the lost are found, the drowning saved, and the alienated reconciled.

In verses ten and eleven the word reconciliation is used. Because the wrath of God has been placated by the blood of Jesus Christ and because we are declared right because of His death in our behalf, the gap existing between God and man has been closed so that we are now reconciled to God.

Finally, the demonstration of God's love at the cross is glorious (Rom. 5:11). The death Christ died causes us to boast and glory in nothing else but Him in His redemptive work and unconditional intercession. There is nothing so glorious and majestic that would prompt us to boast or glory in anything else. To make our boast in anything other than the cross is an insult and injurious to the true depth of His life and death.

If this is true, then how should we now live?

First, just as God loves us unconditionally so also should we love others unconditionally. No matter how disappointing our children or parents or spouses or employees might have turned out to be, there is still no reason as to why our love for them should be anything less than unconditional. If God loves us unconditionally, then we too should love unconditionally.

Second, there are times when we will have to do something for someone in whom there is neither gratitude nor virtue. It is when this happens that we are most like God in our love. Such moments are undefined and unplanned, they simply happen, but when they do, may God work in us and through us His love to them.

Third, when we find ourselves in wrath filled situations it is only love that will cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). Let the love of God be a wrath satisfying expression of biblical Christianity in you and through you to those who least deserve it.

Finally, when all is said and done, the last virtue remaining will be love (1 Cor. 13:13). Love is glorious. Love outshines everything else. Pray that God will work in you and through you His love to those around you. May you and I be instruments/channels through which the love of God is poured. When God pours in us and through us His love, it will be glorious in His church. May this be what moves us to live as people of love.