

Reconciled Through Christ

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[0 : 00] Or a bulletin, turn with me to Romans chapter 5.! If we haven't had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Andy, and I am one of the pastors here.! And I'm excited to share with you from God's word.

Romans 5, verses 6 through 11. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we now have been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?

More than that, we also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word to us.

[1 : 13] May it be sweet. May we see Christ and the beauties of your love demonstrated through the cross through it. And we ask this in Christ's name.

Amen. I'm not sure how many of you are dependent upon electronics or technology in general. This is not a show of hands, because I know that we'll have some people that love technology, and some people that just wish it would all go away, right?

Whether you have a phone that you use to keep track of your daily life, whether you use a tablet for school, you use a computer at work, everybody uses some kind of electronic.

Even if you have one of those really fancy screens in your car that makes you feel like you're driving a fighter jet, but you're just driving a minivan. Any of you out there? That's just me. Okay. So whether you hate it or love it, chances are you've had this issue.

Because it doesn't matter if you like it or love it, you've all had this problem. You've gone to plug something in and hoping or expecting it's going to charge, and you might realize it at first, but more often you realize it after a series of hours when you go to pick up that thing that you need.

[2 : 29] It's not charged. It's still dead. Or maybe you've depended upon your phone for an alarm clock, and you've not slept through your alarm at all. In fact, it didn't even go off because it was dead.

Your devices, your home electronics, your yard equipment, your alarm clocks, they all need power. And when the light doesn't turn on when you expect it to, or the phone doesn't recharge, or the car battery won't start, and you're stranded on the side of the road, or the plug's been pulled out of the wall by a toddler, no matter if you're well-meaning, no matter if you're smart, no matter if you're hopeful, no matter if you're even skilled, there's no power.

It's not going to work. It's not going to work at all. You have to be connected to the source of power. Our lives that we live, even our spiritual lives, work on the same principle, that we have to be connected to the source of power.

We can bebop along through life and think these great ideas, or think that we are really smart, or that we're just getting by, or we're tough enough to gut it out. But the reality is that if we're unplugged to the source of power, it's not going to work.

No matter how hard we try, and that's even most true, not in our lives generally, but specifically in our spiritual lives.

[4 : 00] We like to think that we work really hard to make good grades in school. So working really hard works in this category, right? Or we like to think ourselves really smart, or wise, or clever.

I can work less time and still get everything I want. That's going to work here, right? But when we apply those same principles, it's like when we take that plug, and not plugged it into the wall, we

plugged it into a block of cheese.

Or we put it into a cup. Don't try this at home. You might get electrocuted, right? I don't know how electricity works. But when I plug it into a block of cheese, or I put my phone plug into a cup of water, why would it work?

It's not going to. So why do we expect in our spiritual lives anything different? We think that we can have salvation some other way, but I've just plugged it to a block of cheese.

I try to work really hard, and I plug it into a cup of water. Or I don't think I need it at all, and I leave it sitting on the table. There's no power. It's not going to work.

[5 : 14] See, when we're unplugged or untethered from all of that, we're not drawing on the source of power, and we have nothing. This morning, this text that Paul shows us, shows us this, that salvation comes through the death of Christ.

And that salvation is also realized, in some sense, through the resurrection. Salvation is secured by Christ's death, and then realized through his resurrection.

If you were with us last week, Matthew showed us that the Christian life is marked by suffering. And if you've lived more than a day, and been awake more than an hour, you know that.

And in the midst of that, our Christian life, we have endurance and hope, and we have all those blessings in the midst of difficulty. But only if we're connected to that source of power.

And this text this morning shows us that source of power. It's Christ, and his death and resurrection. Now, you might be thinking this morning, I know, I've heard that all before.

[6 : 25] And quite frankly, it seems really silly if I try to go anywhere else. And you're right.

Salvation only comes through the cross. And quite frankly, if we think it's anything different, we deceive ourselves.

And we think, oh, I can go to something else. It can be Jesus plus this thing. It can be another source of life, of energy.

But the reality is, it's not. And we know that. Just like when we try to plug it into a block of cheese, or a cup of water. But we do that over and over and over again.

And even if we call upon Christ in our greatest hour of need, then we turn about and we forget it all. And often, we take the message of the gospel, the message of Christianity, and we divorce it from that source of power.

Why do we do that? It's not just silly, that's stupid. If we think that that is a question that's not true in our day, or in a day past, let me remind you from some famous words.

[7 : 39] There's no power in Christianity if there's a God without wrath that brings men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through a ministry of Christ without a cross.

Now, I don't agree with Mr. Reinhold Niebuhr who wrote that quote. But he's right. And Paul wouldn't agree with everything that he wrote either.

But he would agree with that. That there is a kingdom without judgment and a ministry of Christ without a cross. There's no power in that gospel. There's no power in that Christianity.

In fact, it's not Christianity at all. But we do that. We think that way even if we call upon the name of Christ. Sometimes we unintentionally do it.

We go to the newspaper and we start clipping. Not clipping out coupons, but clipping out important lines of the story. Clipping out pictures until the story becomes unrecognizable.

[8 : 38] We kind of neuter God if we're honest. We think we're transforming lives, but the reality is we have no power to do so because we've cut it out of the story.

We think that we're growing in holiness, but we're not because we're not depending upon his spirit. We're not depending upon the cross of Christ as Paul reminds us.

We've clipped out God. With that, let's turn our attention to God's word. Salvation is secured by Christ's death. And that's most often what we try to cut out of the story.

We see that and we think, oh, that's a really unpalatable part of scripture. I don't really like blood. I don't really like all that stuff. Or maybe I'm just really smart and I've moved beyond it.

I distinctly remember being told once by a very old southern Presbyterian pastor that you never talk about blood because there's enough of it in the cross.

[9 : 38] And we don't want to neuter our minds from thinking that blood is everywhere. and lose sight of the fact that the blood of the cross is the thing that it achieves our spiritual life.

And if we talk about it too much, we lose sight of that fact. It becomes commonplace to us. We can't move beyond it because that is the source of power. It is common, yes, but it's common, it's central

in our Christian lives.

look with me at verse 6. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. In Christ's death, we see a couple of attributes.

Yes, there is the actual sacrifice of Christ himself. We also see that it's purposeful. And we see that he died for the ungodly. That's really unpalatable.

It's not as if we've stumbled into the atonement. We've tripped and fallen into it. In fact, we see this in all of scripture. It's marching towards this event.

[10:44] Think about Leviticus. If you want to read gnarly stuff, Leviticus is where it's at. It speaks about sacrifice of God's people, how they were made right in some sense because of the blood.

The blood was on the mercy seat and it was for sin. The death of animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were all pointing towards this event, towards this purpose.

And yet, it doesn't stop there. We read the Old Testament earlier. We saw how God's people were saved in the Exodus. They were redeemed out of Egypt.

All of it was pointing to Christ's death. Christ saving his people. And it doesn't stop there. Even when he was walking on this earth, those that walked closest with Jesus didn't, they struggled with this idea.

They didn't see it. And he reminded them of this fact. He reminded them that Christ came not to do signs and wonders, but he came to die.

[11:53] That was his purpose. And as the disciples struggled with the idea that his hour had not yet come, it's because his hour wasn't to do signs and wonders, but his hour was to die for the ungodly.

He came for sinners. The beginning of verse 6 says that while they were weak, or while we were weak, that's really uncomfortable for us because we like to think ourselves smart, wise, tough, but the parallel to weak is later in that verse.

They're ungodly. They're not physically weak, but they lack the strength. They're morally weak.

They're sinners. That's not something that's new to us in the Christian life.

It's not even something that's new to us in the book of Romans. If we think about Romans 4, as we've been marching through this, we have that idea in Abraham that God justifies the ungodly, and his faith is counted to him as righteousness.

It's not that they cleaned themselves up and got ready for God. And the timing of this event that Paul says is just at the right time, that all of history is pointing to this event.

[13:11] The conditions are now set for his sacrifice. That picture that we have earlier in the life of Moses talking about God delivering his people.

Israel wandering around. Israel being delivered from Egypt. The prophets even calling Israel back to true worship for their hearts to be turned.

For the disciples to see that his hour had now come. The point of the gospels, the point the disciples missed, was that Jesus died, and he died for sinners.

All those shadows, all of Leviticus, all of the example of Moses, all of those prophets calling Israel back, it was all pointing to this event. And Paul will remind the Galatians of this when he says, when the fullness of time had come, not the end of time, but the fullness of time, and that time is Christ coming and dying.

Now what follows verse six is an interesting, it's an interesting comparison, because the argument goes something like this, if we can trust God to take care of this, we should trust him to take care of that.

[14:29] So look with me at verse seven, for one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would even dare to die. If we think that Christ will die for the ungodly, wait a second, that's not how this goes, he's making this argument that if one will die for a righteous person, not that, no, he doesn't make that argument, he says no one even really wants to die for a righteous person, though maybe even for a good person you might die.

So what he's saying here is that, hey, you don't really want to die for a righteous person, but maybe even for a good person, but how does that relate to us? How does that relate to what Paul has said earlier?

He's saying for an ungodly person, you really don't want to die. Now the fuller context of this is something like this, those that were enslaved might have warm feelings towards a master, a benefactor that's rescued them out of debt or the depths of society, for that I will sacrifice, for that I

might even die.

But that's not what Paul is saying about us, is it? He's saying we stand in opposition to the Lord, to the ones that say to him, no I don't need you, to the ones that look to him, not with warm feelings of kindness, but enmity, for that Christ has died.

Now the cross, the cross of Christ is not difficult for us on its face, but it's often difficult for us to comprehend in our hearts and how we live and how we think.

[16:13] Because of this. There's a great theologian named J. Gresham Macon that said this, it's not the Bible doctrine of the atonement, which is difficult for us to understand, that a man, that God dies for us, that Jesus dies for sinners.

What really is incomprehensible are the elaborate modern efforts to get rid of the Bible doctrine in the interest of human pride. What he's saying is, is that in our own flesh we try to do this.

We try to remove the cross and think we're going to be okay. And we miss all of the beauty that we just talked about. Our pride gets in the way because we try to reconcile scripture, we try to reconcile the fact that we want to do it ourselves and we trick ourselves into thinking that we can.

And Paul reminds us that if we do that, there is no salvation at all. Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe you've come into this place and saying, I'm good.

I don't need this. In fact, this seems really bloody and I don't really like that. Maybe I'm too smart for this. But each and every one of us need the reconciling power of the cross.

[17:30] And if we try to pull that out of the gospel, we try to pull that out of Christianity, we're left with nothing. we have no power, we have no Christian message.

Or maybe we try to add something in. It's the cross plus something else. The cross plus education. Education is a good thing. But it's not an ultimate thing. It doesn't do anything from moving you from ungodly and standing at odds to the Lord to being reconciled to him.

And you might think, well of course we all know this, but we all do this each day. Maybe it's not education, but we think of safety and security of our bank accounts.

We think about the value that God provides in work and think I want to be a Christian, but I also want to be seen as healthy, as wise, as successful.

When we do that, we remove the cross, as the source of power in our Christian lives. We're reminded that the cross is the source of power, but we're not really told why God uses the cross until we read verse 8.

[18:47] But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That's a familiar verse to many of us. But we really just skip on by something that's really important in this verse.

We see that love is a motivating factor. It's not a potential he sees in them. It's not really anything in them at all. Their wealth, their wisdom, their talents.

It's all about who he is. God comes to them in love and he describes himself in these terms against the backdrop of disobedience. forgiveness. He reminds them that he is the same God here as he reminded them in the Old Testament where he proclaims, I am the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression of sin.

And in the same breath he says this, he upholds his own justice but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generations.

Paul shows us the burning clarity of the cross that it's because he comes in love and that he sends his son but then in doing so it's a definite plan.

[20:17] He hasn't tripped and fallen into the atonement. He's motivated by love but it's held in tension with his holiness and his desire for justice.

Love and loss of justice is often where we find ourselves. We get confused and we think it can't stand out from the crowd. If you watch the World Series this year, there was a guy almost every game he was in the background of home plate and he was wearing an orange jersey and orange hat upside down sometimes and that man is known as the Marlins man and the Marlins man goes and travels all over the country and sometimes the world to go to these big sporting events.

I think he's been to something like 200 World Series games, NBA finals, he's been to horse races, I don't know what the horse races are called but he's been to those too and he always shows up in that orange jersey.

He stands out among the crowd especially when the teams aren't even the Marlins, they're very often not the Marlins if you know anything about baseball because they're not very good but he shows up in his orange jersey instead of the blue of the Blue Jays or the white or blue of the Dodgers and he sits in the background and he sits right behind home plate and you can't miss it. He stands out. Now he spends 300 days on the road going to sporting events, he spends countless dollars. Now when we think of him, we think of him being out of place, he's not for either team.

[21 : 59] He stands out among the crowd but it's almost a distraction. The love that we see in this passage is not a distraction, it's not out of place like Marlins man.

In fact, it's the motivator by which we get to the cross that God sends his son to die. It's not out of place at all, it's not ill-fitting, it's not even crazy, it's the very reason that Christ died for us.

The love of God for sinners. Have you ever thought about why that's difficult for us? Yes, we have some voices in the modern day that say love looks like this and then we redefine it in any way that we want.

But in doing so, we kind of, in responding to that, we nuance our way and think, hey, I can't even talk about love because there's not a good definition for it.

And when we do that, we try to, we almost minimize the fact that God loves sinners. Or we try to move beyond that simple fact and we think that God is pleased with me because of what I've done.

[23 : 06] That's not a problem in the modern day, that's a problem with every heart. That's a problem with your heart and that's a problem with my heart. Sometimes love is difficult for us because we don't have a good earthly picture of it.

And we struggle and think, God can't love me as a father because my father was a jerk or worse. That's not true.

Sometimes we struggle with love because we reduced it to the romance that we see on TV and think it's like what we see in these fantasies or what we think about in wedded bliss.

And then we struggle because we don't have a good picture of love. Or maybe we even think love is a thing for sissies. That we don't talk about love if we're big, strong, burly men. I'll tell you that I have seen the pictures of love of the strongest and toughest people I know in a moment displaying love and tenderness.

It's not a thing for sissies. Or maybe love hurt us and we think love will never happen again. Or we think we don't deserve it. Or we've had a child who walked away from our love and has thrown it in our face.

[24 : 24] Or a wife. Or a husband. And we think that's the picture of love. The picture of love that we have is this picture here of God sending his son for people that were still enemies.

Sending that which was most precious for us while we were yet sinners. Oftentimes we think we can make ourselves lovely to the Lord.

But in spite of our sin, God loves you. In spite of who we are, God still is gracious to you. And that picture of love, not those others, should transform us.

It should transform how we think of ourselves. That we are loved because of God loving us. Our interactions with others shouldn't be transactional anymore.

If you do this, then I will love you. No. For those difficult people, those people that are nasty, or hey, I don't even like their personality. I love them because God has loved me.

[25 : 28] That should transform how we interact in this room and outside the walls of this building. It transforms our lives because then we go to our neighbors with the gospel, then we send our money forth because God has loved me.

I have known love and I want others to know that same love. Christian love should compel us to fulfill the Great Commission.

It should compel us to love God and love our neighbor. Salvation is secured by Christ's death. All those benefits, it's motivated by love, yes, but salvation is also realized in his resurrection.

That part is a really tough for us. Let's turn our attention there now. Look at verse nine. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by faith, shall be saved by him from the wrath of God.

It's really easy to see the cross of Christ in this. It's much more difficult to see the resurrection. We see that Paul is pivoting from something because he uses since therefore, but we don't know what has happened in the past and what he's looking towards in the future.

[26 : 43] In a contrast, he's saying you've been justified by Christ's death. And then he's kind of looking towards a somewhat future event. You might be thinking, wait a second, I thought I put my faith in Jesus and I'm good.

Yes, you are if you put your faith in Jesus. But there's a coming day of judgment. And then by doing so, you're also saved from that, that day of wrath. Throughout this passage, the mechanism by which salvation is accomplished is through Jesus, both through his death and resurrection. resurrection. Look at verse 9. We have now been justified by his blood. Much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

He's making this argument by way of comparison. He's saying, if this happened, then surely that will happen. And he continues it in verse 10. For while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

Much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life. Life, when he's referencing life there, it's not the actions of Jesus while he was alive on this earth.

[27 : 54] That's shorthand for the resurrection. There's no longer alienation from sinners against a God because of their offense. The dividing wall of separation has been torn down and now they shall be saved by his life.

life. The resurrection secures all of this. And that life that Christ was raised to is a guarantee that that will happen to us.

Because so often our focus is on, yes, the death of Christ, which we said we try to skip past what happened on Friday. But we forget what happens on Easter Sunday.

It accomplishes all these things. And those are held in balance in the life of Christ. We can't have one without the other. The beauty of this is it's confirmation that Christ's death really accomplished forgiveness of sin.

And for us, it really accomplishes everlasting life. It secured our salvation. resurrection. It reconciles us.

[29 : 08] It justifies us. And the resurrection is a demonstration that it will happen, that we'll be saved from the wrath of God. On the heels of the Reformation, or Reformation Day, we think a lot about what Martin Luther did, of standing on the shoulders of what people have said before in the past.

Christ. And this idea that we are saved by his resurrection is essential to the gospel. That we're saved by his life. Let me remind you, not with the words of Martin Luther, but something much, much older.

Because we might trick ourselves into thinking, Martin Luther just came up with this all, right? What about the Nicene Creed? Nicene Creed's 1700th anniversary this year in 2025.

And it says this about Jesus and his death and resurrection. It answers all those pesky questions that kind of linger in our minds when we think, what did Jesus actually do?

Well, the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed, they answer them for us. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.

[30 : 18] The third day he rose again according to the scriptures. Jesus both died and was resurrected. the Nicene Creed confesses what we read in Romans 5, that Christ died and was resurrected.

And Paul reminds us that's applied to us. So where does that leave us? Where does that leave us this morning? Where does that leave us in this story in Romans 5? It leaves us with this.

Look at verse 11. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. He kind of flips it. We've received reconciliation, but more than that, we rejoice.

Our response at knowing this should be rejoicing. We should be so moved by Christ's death and resurrection, we rejoice because it means our salvation is secure and that we will escape coming judgment from the wrath of God.

It's really going to happen because he sent his own son and his own son just didn't die but was resurrected. And we're not so good as we often assume.

[31 : 30] We're left lacking, coming up short in the measuring stick, but that's okay because Christ has paid the penalty for our sin. And we're led there by the Father's love.

And for all that, we should rejoice because we've been reconciled with the Father. rejoice at his great love. Rejoice for him sending his son.

Rejoice that Christ's death paid for our sin. And rejoice that has been secured and claimed and really happening because of the resurrection.

Rejoice because it wasn't just for them. It wasn't just for me. It was for us. For you. For me. Will you rejoice with that good news this morning?

Let's pray. Lord, we're reminded in Romans 5 that we are to rejoice at Christ's death, which seems like a weird thing.

[32 : 31] We're to rejoice in his resurrection because those things secure our salvation. And Father, they testify to what will happen in the future.

May we not lose sight of that fact, Father. May we rejoice because of it. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen.