

We Are Loved

by Jim Cymbala

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrifice of Christ, and it is the foundation of Christianity.

Duration: 38:41

Scripture: Romans 5:6

Topics: "Love Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having faith in the invisible truth of Christianity. He refers to the book of Romans, particularly chapters four and five, as containing the key principles of the Christian religion. The speaker then quotes Romans 5:6-8, highlighting God's love for humanity demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice while we were still sinners. The sermon also includes a personal anecdote about a conversation the speaker overhears, addressing racial tensions and the need for love and unity.

Transcript

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Listen again to the NIV. Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

This is what the ancients were commended for by God. What were they commended for? Not their perfect lives, not any exploits, but their faith. Now, notice the two realms that faith works in.

Faith is being certain of what we hope for and being sure of what we do not see. Faith operates in two realms, the future and the invisible. People of faith live their lives based on promises that God has given us about the future, although they cannot prove that those future things will happen.

But because they receive it, the future shapes their life because they hope for certain things. Hope always means future. And on the other hand, it involves the invisible world.

The natural world, scientism says, unless you can observe it and put it in a test tube, it doesn't exist to us. But faith is being sure and certain of what we do not see, invisible things. So God is constantly speaking about future things, about invisible things.

For example, God speaks all the time in the Bible about the soul. Has anyone ever seen a soul? Has anyone ever looked at one? You can't prove that in a laboratory. But God speaks about it, and men and women who are full of faith are affected by invisible things which are more real to them than that monitor,

speaker, even though they can't show it to anyone else.

They just know. For example, while the choir was singing and just as we were worshiping today, how many know that God is here today among us? See, but faith tells us that. We can't prove that to anyone.

Faith tells us that. Now, of all the invisible things that faith reveals to us and that God wants us to hold on to, there is one most important invisible reality that is the hardest to hold on to, for many of us. Because Satan attacks this truth, an invisible truth, about an invisible quality of God, like, I think, no other truth.

He wants to rob this from us. And I, in my own opinion, I'll just speak for myself, very few of us live with a consciousness and an awareness and a possession of this truth, this invisible thing. We have faith for certain things, but faith for this invisible thing is a little bit harder.

The passage I wanna just use as the main body, just a few verses, is found in one of the most important parts of the New Testament. Some people have called the Book of Romans the constitution of the Christian religion. And in chapters four and five, you probably have the weightiest sentences about what makes Christianity tick, if I could say those words, than any other place in the book.

So let's look at chapter five of Romans. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That bears a second reading.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, we couldn't get out of the mess we were in. We couldn't obey God like we sometimes wanted to. Christ died, notice, for the ungodly.

He didn't die for nice people. He died for rebels. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us. How does God demonstrate his love for us? What's the ultimate proof of God's love for us? While we were still sinners, his son, Jesus Christ, died for us. Now, it doesn't stop there.

This reality of God's love for us is referenced, obviously, many times in the Bible, but notice in Jude what it says. In Jude, it says, keep yourself in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Notice, keep yourself in God's love.

Keep your mind surrounded by God's love. Keep your soul permeated with God's love. Keep rejoicing in it.

Keep leaning on it. Keep praising God for it. No matter what you're going through, no matter how many acts mean towards you, know this, God loves you.

He proved it by sending his son. Now, keep yourself in God's love, or life can get real lonely real quick. And finally, Paul, writing in 2 Thessalonians, says, may the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

May God, the Lord, this is one of the few prayers directed to Jesus. There are several, though, in the New Testament. This is one of them.

May the Lord, speaking of Jesus, direct your heart into God's love. May the Lord direct your heart into a constant sense of relaxing and trusting. He loves me.

That's not easy for a lot of us. I had my mother up here. My dad was an alcoholic from the time I was about 11 or 12 for 20 some years.

He didn't really turn to the Lord and that thing wasn't beaten in him and he didn't get victory until I was already in the ministry, a long time. One of the things I've read about alcoholic children is that they grow up in such chaos that it's very hard for them to rest and know that they're loved. There's an insecurity inherent in that situation because the fighting, the chaos, not able to go home, maybe because you don't know what you'll find.

Then when I got older, I had to protect my mother. So there wasn't from my dad a strong reinforcement that he loved me. I knew he loved me, but he was fighting his own demons.

And my mother, although I knew she loved me, she couldn't show a lot of affection because she was in survival mode. She was just trying to make it. So it's not, if I may be open with you, to know that you're loved by somebody unconditionally, it's not easy for a lot of us because what the devil does is he tries to, first of all, question God's love for us by saying, if God loves you so much, how come the bottom fell out of your life? How come you're going through all this mess? Where's God's love? God loves you and all this is happening to you and your heart is broken and that person's being mean to you and that went on and that went on and the other thing went on and your family member turned on you and maybe your spouse turned on you or your children grew up, now got older and they don't have time for you now.

And where's God in all of this? And what you can do is you can get isolated and forget to rejoice every day that God loves me. Satan actually made that, I would say the foundation of the first temptation we read about. Did God really, God, are you sure God is interested in your life because he won't let you do whatever you wanna do.

There's one tree you can't eat of. Then secondly, when you walk with God and you become a Christian, you become sensitive about your failures and the things you say and do that are not right and then the enemy comes and says, you sure God loves you? What you did last week, last year? And he'll bring up stuff from so far away. I know one time counseling a woman, she was thinking about children that were born out of wedlock 35 years before and she still hadn't gotten over it and she was still questioning, how could he love me when I lived like that? I've talked to others who said, after three abortions, are you telling me he still loves me? I'm a Christian now but I can't forget that.

You sure he loves me? So this is a battle because keep yourselves in the love of God, Jude says. Paul says, may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God. And Paul now making the argument in the book of the Romans, he says, you gotta understand that behind salvation, the only reason you're saved, the only reason you have new life, the only reason you're gonna go to heaven when you die, the only reason your sins have been blotted out is one main thing, the love of God.

The love of God is the only reason any of us are sitting in this place. So he describes it this way. At just the right time, he says, Christ died for us.

He died for the ungodly. At just the right time, Christ died. So although this is a somber thought, it's a needed thought because it's in the Bible.

Paul says, notice, to show the love of God, it wasn't that Christ was born. Yes, God sent his son into the world. It wasn't how Christ lived.

Christ wasn't sent to be a model for us only. Some people think Christ is the model life that if you just study the old classic book from the Middle Ages, the imitation of Christ. If we could just imitate Christ, if we could just imitate him because he's the model, and he is the model, but that's not why he came.

That's not what reveals the love of God. It wasn't that he taught and preached sermons. Here in his love, Christ preached and taught so beautifully.

That shows his love. No, no, nothing about that, Paul says. How about the miracles that he did and all the helpless people that he touched and changed their life? No, no, no, no.

Paul says, you wanna understand the love of God? Here's the love of God, that at just the right time, when the law that was given to Moses had done its work, when people realized that they could never be in their own effort what they should be, that they were fragmented in their hearts, that they were failures morally, that they stumbled, it seems, every other day, Christ died. What shows God's love is not his sermons. He died.

And he died for the ungodly. He died for his enemies. He died.

Now, none of us have died yet, but contrary to popular opinion, it wasn't the crucifixion that made his death so terrible. Thousands had been crucified before him. Thousands were crucified after him.

Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified, possibly in Rome, possibly upside down, because when they went to martyr him, he said, I'm not worthy to be upright like my Lord was. Put me upside down. So it wasn't that.

People had endured that. It was all your sin and all my sin being put on him. And God loving us so much, he died for the ungodly.

He died as the substitute so you and I could be here today and know that our sins are forgiven. So all the wrath of God against sin was poured out on his son. His son took the blow.

And that's why he cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? So at just the right time, Christ died. And now the emphasis is for the ungodly. In the Greek construction of that sentence, it means on their behalf pertaining to their situation to rescue them.

Christ didn't die for himself. He died to rescue you and me. But notice Paul says that the people he died for were the ungodly people that didn't want him.

The people who were cursing him, he died for. And when he was on the cross, he said, father, my God, my father, forgive them, father, for they don't know what they're doing. When natural inclinations would say, call down fire from heaven and destroy them because of the way they're taunting me, mocking me, spitting at me, belittling me, cursing at me.

No, he's praying for the people who are killing him. Paul says that's the love of God. It has nothing to do with any concept of love you and I have ever gotten into our head.

And unless the Holy Spirit reveals it, you and I are gonna walk out of here thinking that love is something that we've experienced and we know what Paul's talking about. No, Paul says this is another whole animal. This is another whole kind of different world.

This is a love for the unlovely. This is a love for rebels. Now, Paul argues and says, now, perhaps, now that he establishes Jesus died for the ungodly, he says, now, somebody possibly could die for a good man.

He doesn't say it would happen often, but he says possibly someone could have such value to their life, they could be so morally excellent, they could be so dear to us that we might lay down our life. Parents have been known to do that. But he says, no, not in this case.

That might, might, just might happen. But he said, no, this one died for the ungodly. You know, President Obama now is followed by secret servicemen that goes back a long time, many decades now.

But it's, when you read history about the United States of America, it is absolutely alarming of how little thought was given to protecting the president back in the day. President Lincoln walked around with nobody guarding him. He would go for rides in carriages, just riding along.

Before him, some presidents took walks in Washington, D.C. by themselves and no one knew where they were. How about that? But after a couple presidents were killed, Garfield, Lincoln before that, then everyone says, no, you don't go anywhere unless you're covered by secret service. Now, secret servicemen who are scheduled to guard the president, they're taught, it happened when they shot near President Reagan, the moment you hear gunfire, you throw your body on the president.

You take it, you take one. You might possibly die, but the bullet won't go through your body and hit the president. The president's life is so valuable to the country that part of your job is you hear gunfire, you throw yourself on the president.

And if you have to, you die. For a good man, perhaps somebody, an important man, someone might die, Paul says. When you read about World War II, especially toward the end of the war in the Pacific against the Japanese forces, they were the ugliest, most bloodletting battles fought in islands like Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and a host of others.

And the Japanese forces got entrenched because they were there first, but the marines especially were sent in to drive them out because we had to get airplane bases close enough so we could start to try to bomb Japan into submission. Otherwise, the fighting and the bloodletting would go on forever. So it's very hard for the American mind, especially with the selfishness that we have today, to read about, you know, there's this hill like from where the choir is to the top of the balcony up there, okay? And across there, there's a couple hundred Japanese pillboxes with machine guns firing.

And they have the high ground, so the marine platoons and the commanders would say, okay, take them out. Run up the hill and take them out. But as you're running up the hill, they're firing.

So 100 are gonna go up, and you know before he gives the command, we're lucky if 50 come back, but they went. Why? Why? For the country, for loyalty to the Marine Corps. They would give their lives.

They risked their lives. We can possibly understand that, but how do you understand throwing your body on your enemy and taking the bullet? How do you fight and run up with the machine gun fire at you for

your enemy, the one who curses you and hates you? Paul says, herein is the love of God demonstrated that Christ died for the ungodly. He died for people who cursed him.

He died for the people who put the nails in his hands. He died for you and me. What kind of love is that? What kind of love is that? How do you love the unlovable? How do you love a rebel? How do you love someone who's cursing at you? How do you do that? Paul says, that's why you don't understand anything about love until you meditate and the Holy Spirit helps you to see that God's love is demonstrated, that Christ died for the ungodly, for the rebels.

That's why we're all here today. How many would admit with me, the reason you're here today is God's love was stronger than your rebellion? Come on, lift up your hand. Come on, lift it up high.

How many have experienced that, right? What's drawn us to Christ? It's his love. It's his love. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

Now, this is important, especially now during the holidays. And I know I'm, best I can, I know I'm preaching the right message today because as we cleared out of my office after praying before each service at the nine o'clock service, Pastor Todd was asked to lead in prayer. And the last sentence he prayed, not knowing what I was feeling in my heart, Pastor Todd said this, and bless the choir when they sing and bless the praise and worship and bless the musicians and bless the offering and bless the children downstairs and bless the kids across the street and BT kids.

But God, most of all, let all the people in the building know that you love them. Because a lot of us live with no sense of God's love for us. The holidays are a beautiful time, but they're a very bad time.

Because during the holidays, alcoholism soars, depression soars, and suicide soars. In all states in America, during the holidays, things soar during the holidays. Why? Why would that be? You're exchanging gifts, eating turkey, supposed to have nice food, get together.

You know why that happens? Because a lot of people have gotten older and the time in their life when they felt loved has passed by. Maybe their spouse doesn't even love them. Their mother or father is gone.

When life was simpler and they gathered around the tree and opened presents, they felt loved and appreciated. Not so now, and those memories haunt them. And when they look at their life now and there's so little love, brothers and sisters, this is a nasty, cold world that we live in.

This is one nasty, loveless world. There's not a whole lot of love out there, the kind of love we're talking about. So they get depressed and they feel lonely and some take their lives because without love, it's so lonely.

And I want you to know today, I don't know your situation, you don't know mine, but I'll tell you one thing. God loves you. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

When the devil comes to torment you, say, shut up and get out of here. God loves me. Come on, let's put our hands together.

God loves me. God loves me. I know he loves me because he sent his son to die for me when I was a rebel.

If God loved us when we were away from him and Christ gave his life for the rebels and the unlovely, how do you love something that's obnoxious? How do you love something that stinks? In human love, all human love is based on is there something in the object that you love that draws admiration or pulls your heart toward them? All love is based on that. Everyone who loves anything, food, a person, a family member, there's something in that person that you delight in, there's some character trait, there's some mark of beauty or nobility that makes you say, that person is worthy of my love. And God says, remember this, there's nothing in you, there will never be anything in you ever that merits my love.

I love you because I am love. I am love. I don't love you because of, don't look inside and don't let the devil have you say, am I worthy to be loved? You're never worthy to be loved.

I'm never worthy to be loved. I'm a rascal. But God loves rascals.

God loves every kind of person. He is love. And Paul says, you gotta grasp this because this is the foundation of your faith.

You gotta know every day, keep yourself in the love of God. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God. You gotta just rejoice in that, confess it, say it, praise God for it, thank God for it.

He loves me, he loves me. And he proved it by the fact that Christ died for the ungodly. Rebels like you and me.

He loves me. I know you might look at me and say, you're not much. I know.

But he loves me anyway, how about that? How many are with me that he loves us though we're not what we ought to be, should be? Without this element, Christianity becomes very intellectual and dry and doctrinaire, and it's just facts about God, but there's no devotion, there's no pouring out of your heart to God. How could you not love the one who loved you first? How could you, how many love him today because he what, first loved us? That's why we love him. He loves you today.

I don't care how mean anyone is to you, I don't care who ignores you this holiday, you can't let that get the best of you. Look at me, look at my face. He loves you.

He gave you the best Christmas gift, and he gave it just once. He gave his own son to die for you and me. You gotta rejoice in that love.

Now, in this world that we live in, we've got to share that love with other people. The Bible says the love of God is shed and brought in our heart by the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, but the test of that love is to love the unlovable, the obnoxious, the enemy.

If you love your family and those who stroke you right, what's the big deal of that? I can do that, you can do that, but that has nothing to do with the love of God. God didn't love people who were nice to him. God loved the rebel, the ungodly, the person who was pushing him away.

And when he offers his gifts through grace, people push his hand away, and guess what he does? He never walks away and says, no, you don't want that? Fine, I'll give it to someone else. No, please, please take it. Please take it.

So the love, this holiday that we have to show the world, we gotta go to people's houses we don't know or to people's houses that don't like us. My father-in-law, late father-in-law, he was such a good example of

that. He loved people, without going into detail, sometimes his own family would get mad at him because he would be nice to people who were really nasty.

If you live in New York City, you will have a chance every day to love someone. Am I right or wrong? You will have a chance before the sun goes down today to love somebody who is up in your grill. The other morning, about two weeks ago before the election, I walk down the street and I go into the diner here on the corner, and I go to the counter where I'm gonna have my little cantaloupe and my decaf coffee, but there's only one seat left, and it's in the middle.

So I sit down, and there's an African-American man on my left, and he's got a hookup where he's talking on the phone, but he doesn't hold the phone like I do. He's got that other contraption. I sit down, and I kind of, because the seats are so close, I kind of bump into his arm.

He just looks, and he sees who's sitting down, but he's talking in a conversation. So I sit, I open my newspaper, I'm gonna write. Now, what I'm about to tell you has no racial overtones.

Because we all know about white prejudice, black prejudice, we know about every kind of prejudice. Hate, hate is multicolored. How many are with me, right? Hate is like the rainbow, it's got everything in it.

So I sit down next to this dude, and he is talking, I think, to his son. I think. And he's talking out loud, and he doesn't care that the whole world hears him.

And the election's about five days, I guess, in front. Coming up, and he goes, so listen, Ronnie. I'm telling you, Ronnie, now, you get that black man back in the White House.

Just because you got a job now, what, are you gonna bow down to the white man? And I'm going, what? And the waitress just looks at me, and she rolls her eyes like, what is this about? No, but he, that was just the beginning. He went on. No, no, no, after all those slaves that were hung and killed, and now what? You gonna act like a white man now on me, Ronnie? And he knows I'm there right next to him.

He didn't care. It was pure, 24-carat hate. I've been around white hate.

I've been around black hate. I've been around every kind of hate, I think. And, you know, there was a revulsion in me.

At first, I was shocked. But then he kept talking, and he knew I could hear him, and he knew everybody could hear him. And then he was throwing in words that are not found in the Bible, that were adjectives.

He was just filthy-mouthed, hateful man. Filthy-mouthed hate. And I thought, how am I gonna get out of, I can't even enjoy my food.

My cantaloupe started tasting horrible when he went into that Ronnie thing. And the Lord whispered to me, I love him. I couldn't love him.

I don't have love for that. White, black, or any other kind. I cannot love that.

And the fact that he didn't hide it, and the fact that he knew I was sitting there, and the rest of the people could hear, but that's who Christ died for. You wanna spread something good this Thanksgiving? Bless those that curse you. Love those that hate you.

Forgive those who have been really nasty to you. That's the love that God says he wants us to rest in. I love you not because of anything in you, so don't try to get something in you to love you.

I loved you while you were still sinners. And we all battle with that. We all battle with that.

I've had struggles with that. How about you? I never had it with my dad. All the horror shows that I lived through, I never had problems of resenting him.

For some reason, I knew what that alcohol did to him. And my mother will tell you, my brother didn't know it, my sister didn't know it, my mother wouldn't know it. I knew when he took one sip, he hid it in the basement.

Because he used to take me to church. He couldn't drink in front of me. But I never resented him.

He never made it to my wedding. When your father doesn't make it to your own wedding, I never, but other people have gotten under my skin and I battled. But if we're gonna show people the love of God, we gotta love the hard cases.

All in favor, say aye. And you're gonna have a chance today, this weekend, tomorrow. You're gonna run into someone who's like that guy that I sat next to.

And God's gonna whisper to you and say, now show him my quality of love. Be gracious to the ungracious, be kind to the unkind. Love the person who curses at you.

And then when you try to be kind, they curse you more and then you keep loving them. How many know that ain't in us? Excuse the grammar. No, but God says, I'm gonna help you.

Because that's what you were to me. You see the man that sat next to me? That's Jim Simbala, that's Jim Simbala. You say, no.

Yeah, just in a different way. That's what I look like to God, that obnoxious. Can you say that about yourself? Can you humble yourself? Can everyone say, yeah, I'm that obnoxious before God, but he still sent his son for me.

So now that he showed me that quality of love, I can start loving the hard cases. Let's close our eyes. That husband who walked out on you, ma'am.

That relative that took advantage of you. That person who just stuck a knife in your back and turned it. Not just stuck you, turned it.

You can't go into Thanksgiving and the holiday season. You can't leave the building today until you say to God, God, I let it go. Because if you've let it go for me, I can let it go for them.

If you showed me that quality of love that while we were yet sinners, you sent your son, he died for the people putting the nails in his hands. What kind of love is that? That's crazy. It's crazy.

If you're here today upstairs in the balcony downstairs and you just got a case that you know God is dealing with you about, you gotta let it go. And there, it's a real challenge to you, but you've got to find grace from God to love them because now you know the love God has for you. How can you show less to another person? But in the balcony and downstairs here, come quick because I wanna close this service.

Come quick and say, pastor, I'm representing as I come forward a situation in my life that I am today gonna let go in Jesus' name. I'm gonna show agape love. And if you're behind me, and they tormented you, he tormented you.

He tormented you. She tormented you. Took advantage when you were vulnerable.

Talk behind your back, whatever. That's the testing grounds for the love of God. Just come up and stand here in front of me.

Come on. If you're anywhere in the building, come up. Quick, out of your seat and stand here.

Thank you, Lord, for your love. We're not alone, thank you, Lord. Doesn't matter how mean people are, you love us today, Lord.

Doesn't matter how you reject us, others reject us, you accept us. I thank you for your word today from Romans 5. And from Jude and from 2 Thessalonians. I thank you that you wanna help us to stay in the love of God, live in the love of God, rejoice in the sunshine of his love.

Push away the clouds that people try to bring into our lives by staying in the sun of your love, your delight in us. And I don't have to find anything in me to make me lovable because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I can't be more lovable tomorrow for you than I am today.

Thank you for my brothers and sisters, Lord. Help them to give it up. Help them to give it up today.

Everybody in the building to help the folks in the front, say after me, say out loud after me, dear God, today I let it go. I will love the unlovable. I will forgive the unforgivable.

I will not live in that darkness after you have loved me so much. Make me whole today. Fill me with your love.

Fill me with your love. As I live in your love. Keep my mind focused on you.

Not on other people. And my circumstances. Thank you for loving me.

Lord, I pray that you'll bless all of us. Let your face shine upon us. Oh, let us just rejoice in your love today, God.

We apologize, we repent of living dry, morbid, depressed lives. The angels must look aghast at us and say, why aren't they singing? Why aren't they rejoicing when almighty God loves them so much he gave his son? Help us to be happy in Jesus today. We pray this in his name and everyone said.

Amen. And I want every woman to give a good hug to about four or five women. Every man give a hug.

Come on.

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