

# How to Experience the Outpouring of God's Love

by John Piper

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*This sermon delves into Romans 5:1-8, focusing on verse 5 which emphasizes that hope does not put us to shame because God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The experience of God's love is not just a mental conclusion but a tangible outpouring felt in the heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. The sermon highlights that this experience is for all Christians, can vary from person to person, and should be pursued for fuller measure through prayer and seeking God's direction.*

**Scripture:** Romans 5:1, John 16:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Psalms 119:36, John 3:16, Romans 8:9

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## Description

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## Transcript

So I'm going to read this text with you. This is Romans 5, and we'll read verses 1 to 8, and then I'll tell you where we're going, and then we'll pray, and go there. So Romans 5, verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man one would dare even to die. But God shows His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So that's worth about a year's worth of sermons, and we're going to do one, and we're going to focus on verse 5. Hope does not put us to shame. Why? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Now that's an experience.

That's not an idea. And that's the experience I want you to have. So let's pray.

It happens by the Holy Spirit, Father. It doesn't happen by John Piper, or Michael Boyce, or music, or reading the Bible. No, none of these things are sufficient.

It is a work of the Holy Spirit to have the love of God poured into our hearts. So I ask for it, for me now and for these friends, that you would grant us the realization, the experience of verse 5. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

So God's love poured into your heart is not the same as God's love proven to your mind. God's love poured into your heart by the Spirit is an experience. You feel it, or it's nothing.

This is an experience. It is not a conclusion to an argument. It's not wrong to conclude by argument that you are loved.

That's not a bad idea. It would go like this. I'll give you two examples of what this is not, but is good.

Premise number one. John 3.16. The Bible says, for God so loved the world. Premise number two.

I'm part of the world. Conclusion. God loves me.

That's knowing you are loved by argument. Here's another one. John 15.13. Greater love has no one than this, that one lays down his life for his friends.

Premise number two. I'm his friend because I love him and keep his commandments. Conclusion.

Therefore, he loves me with a great love. That's not a bad thing to do with the Bible. It's just not what verse five is talking about.

Verse five is not deducing with argument. Therefore, I'm loved. That's a thought.

That's an idea. That's a conclusion. This is an outpouring of God's love into your heart by the Holy Spirit.

That's an experience. It's felt or it's nothing. So it's good to have ideas.

It's good to have conclusions. It's good to have logic. It's better to have an experience.

It's better to taste the love of God because the Holy Spirit has poured it out in your heart. So let's look at it. Hope does not put us to shame.

Verse five. Hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. It's something poured out.

It's something felt in the heart, not the head. Known in the way the heart knows, not just the way the head knows. And notice the role that it has.

It's a very, very big role that this outpouring of God's love in your heart felt in the heart, not just known in the head. There is a big role for that. What's the role? What's the function of it? Look.

Hope does not put us to shame. Why? Why will your hope not put you to shame? Because, and then comes, the love of God has been poured out. The reason your hope won't put you to shame, surprisingly here, is an experience.

We need more than experiences. But less is not Christianity. There are two ways you could experience your hope being put to shame.

What does that mean? Your hope will not put you to shame. What does that mean? One way would be, well, your hope, your experience of hoping is a sham. You're not hoping in God.

You're hoping in money and health and wealth and people liking you. And if that were exposed, your hope would put you to shame. Everybody would know.

You claim to be hoping in God. You're not hoping in God. That would be one way hope could be put to shame.

Another way that hope is put to shame is that the object of your hope proves to be false. So I'm hoping that God loves me and He doesn't love me. That would be horrific.

I'm hoping that He exists. He doesn't exist. That would be horrible.

Your hope would be put to shame. You'd be put to shame if at the end of your life it was made plain. You lived your whole life hoping that He was real.

It turns out not to be real. So this verse, verse 5 with the because, hope will not put you to shame because is going to show you why that second one doesn't hold. He's already dealt with the first one in verse 3. Right? Verse 3, we rejoice in our sufferings because suffering works patience and patience works a sense of approveness and approveness works hope.

So the reality of your experience of hoping is tested by the fire of sufferings. Like you were hoping in money, you were hoping in wealth, you were hoping and suffering burns it all up. Burns up all your money.

Burns up all your health. Burns up your marriage. And leaves you destitute.

And at the end of that fire, you're hoping in God and you know you're real. So the first threat to your hope is dealt with by sufferings. Suffering is a gift to burn up false hopes.

Knock all props out from under you but God. So he's dealt with that one. That's not the point of this sermon.

I'm just saying he hadn't forgotten that's a problem. That hope can be fake. Fake experience.

The second one, but is the thing, the person, the history I'm hoping in that God exists, Christ is real, he died for my sins. Could that all prove to be fake? That's what verse 5 is saying, no. Your hope will not put you to shame, Christian.

God's love for you, not just your proper experiencing of hope in him, but God's love for you will not prove to be fake. The reason? Because the love of God has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit. That's amazing because most of the time I think we want to validate the object of our faith by the objective historical facts that God is, Christ was, he died, he rose, facts, I stand there, therefore I will not be put to

shame.

And that's true. That's not what this verse is saying. This verse is saying there's an experience that warrants your confidence that your hope in being loved by God will not be put to shame.

That's what we're going to look at. So I see four things about this verse or this statement that the love of God has been poured out into your hearts. Four things.

Let's just see if you see what I see. Because if you don't see them, you shouldn't believe them. Number one, this experience of the love of God being poured into my heart, His love for me, being poured experientially into my heart is through the Holy Spirit.

Okay, that's number one. It is through the Holy Spirit. Whatever else this experience is, it is not your work.

You didn't make this happen. Nobody on earth made this happen. Preaching is important.

Gave my life to it. Worship in song is biblically important. They don't make this happen.

This is a work of the Holy Spirit. It's a supernatural work, which is why we pray, which is why we're so desperately dependent, right? All the things that matter in life, ultimately, God has to do. I can't make you feel the love of God.

I can't make you feel the love of God. Only the Holy Spirit can pour God's love into your heart in such a way that you say, my hope is real. Only he can do that, which causes me to just linger for a minute over some issues.

It's sad, isn't it, that we can become so psychologized about families of origin and whether you had a dad who modeled care for you that we actually start thinking, well, if you didn't have a good dad, you probably can't experience the love of God as your father. You ever heard that? Well, the reason this person cannot experience the sweetness and the preciousness of the love of God is because their dad beat him up or left. Right? I think that argument is wicked.

The Holy Spirit does this. Families of origin don't do this. Right? Of course it's harder.

Right? Of course, if you've had no help from your parents to discern what God is like, you've got bigger things to overcome. But either this is a work of the Spirit or it's a work of families. Picture the other side.

Picture the other side. You've got now maybe a church full of families of origin that are whole. Dad was there.

Dad cared. Might not even have been a believer, but he was there. He cared.

He was solid. He was stable. And you now are well-adjusted and getting along just fine and thinking it's the love of God and it's not.

It's just you and your family of origin. It's just as easy to make a mistake that my well-being right now that's rooted in that perfect little family is what this text is talking about. It isn't.

This text is talking about a miracle for the broken and a miracle for the whole. Miracle for people who came out of absolutely horrific family situations of abuse, say, and families who are just gold, everything. They're just right on the advertisement.

And both of them are desperately in need of the Holy Spirit. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. This experience of the love of God is not natural.

It doesn't come from bad families or good families. It comes from God. That's the first observation.

This is a work, an experience of the Holy Spirit. Number two, it has factual or historical or objective content. Right here's the nub of the matter of how history and factuality, objectivity relates to experience, tasting, subjectivity, Holy Spirit indwelling awakenings, real experience.

What I'm going to say now is how those two are related to each other. So what you need to see with me, if you want to look down at your Bibles, is how verse five is related to six through eight. This was a class I'd ask you to tell me.

Verse five says that the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And then verse six is connected with what word in your Bible, what little word? For. Which means because.

So, this Spirit is experientially and divinely and supernaturally pouring out the love of God in you for while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. That's a fact. That's history.

Nobody can change that. The devil? God can't change that. It's over.

It's done. He died for sinners. And that's given as a support, a for, because of the experience.

How does that work? Let's keep reading. For one will scarcely die for a righteous man. I'm at verse seven.

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 pause.

Catch the tense of the verb shows or maybe demonstrates in your Bible. But in either case, it's a present tense in English and in Greek. That's strange.

You're talking about history. This is 2,000 years old. God shows now his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died.

That's past tense. That combination is what arrested me years ago in this text. He now is showing and the way he's showing is that.

And the Holy Spirit is doing that by an outpouring. Now, you got to put this together. You got to figure this out, because you're not going to be a church that says we're the experienced church.

You come here, you can get experienced. Or we're the fact church. We're the doctrine church.

We're the history church. We're the objective church. We're suspicious of those subjective people.

You're not going to do that. Not if you read your Bible. You're not going to go there.

Paul won't let you do that. Verse 5 is massively, gloriously, supernaturally experiential. It's charismatic.

Holy Spirit pouring out love of God into our hearts. You feel it. You know it because he's doing it.

But the way he's doing it is connected to that 2,000 year old glorious moment in history that we sing about. So, how do you put that together? Here's my... You work it out, but here's my take on how it works. I think

the function, the role of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that he was going to send the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will glorify me. Remember that? John 16, 14. The Holy Spirit will come and he will glorify me.

So the Holy Spirit is all into Jesus. He's all into making Jesus great. The Holy Spirit is sometimes described as the shy member of the Trinity.

Like he's just pushing Jesus like this. He's back here pushing Jesus. Well, that's going on here, isn't it? The Holy Spirit is pouring out the love of God because God is showing showing your heart through the knowledge of history, through the knowledge of the Gospel showing your heart that Christ died for your sins and you might die for a good person but for an ungodly person nobody's going to die, and he did.

And therefore, as you look at the history the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of your heart and you experience, by looking at that an outpouring of love from God. You look at that, you see Christ crucified you hear what he's saying it means he loved you while you were ungodly and the Holy Spirit at that moment takes that sight and makes it satisfying sweet, precious how I love him how he's glorious how God loves me that's the experience and it won't ever happen without that sight. That's the point of this second observation.

The connection between verse 5 and verses 6-8 is that the experience given by the Holy Spirit, poured out is given by opening first your mind and then the eyes of your heart to the ravishing beauty of the love of God in the death of Christ for you. So they're not separate. That's the second observation.

Here's the third one. This experience is the experience of all Christians. Not just certain emotional types.

This can be a little threatening. Because some of you may not be an emotional type and you may be uncomfortable with experienced talk. Well, you need to get over that.

Why? Why do I say this? It's the experience of all Christians. Read verse 5 again slowly and notice who it is he's talking about. God's love has been poured into our Christians, who is that? Our hearts.

Through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Now the our and the us are the same people. Our hearts, the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit and that Spirit has been given to us.

Same group of people. The people to whom the Spirit has been given have experienced the outpouring of the Spirit as the love of God. Chapter 8 verse 9 confirms what I'm talking about.

You are not in the flesh. You are in the Spirit. You Christians.

If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he doesn't belong to him. So three different ways of referring to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit.

The Spirit of God. The Spirit of Christ. They're all the same person.

The Divine Spirit of God Christ. And he says if you don't have him you don't belong to him. Which means you're not a Christian.

You're not saved. So everyone who is saved who has received the Holy Spirit has the Spirit. That's what it means to be a Christian.

All Christians have the Holy Spirit living in them. That's the definition among others of what a Christian is. Which you go back then to verse 5 and he says God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Those are the same folks and the experience is of all of us. Which means that all true Christians have tasted this. All true Christians have experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in opening the eyes of their heart to see the beauty of Christ and God's love in the cross such that they experience it authenticating their hope so that their hope will not be put to shame.

Every Christian has tasted this. Last point. Number four.

That experience varies from saint to saint day to day and therefore can be pursued in fuller measure. So across this room right now, just right now my guess is there are a tiny handful probably who don't have any experience of what I'm talking about. You're not saint.

And others of you are ready to come out of your chair. This is so real and so precious and so sweet and it is old news to you and the best. And then there's everybody in between and probably nobody the same.

That's the challenge of being a pastor. Across this room people who are without that experience of being loved and those who are red hot with it. And then all degrees of coolness, lukewarmness but reality.

So my last point is that today in this service this might be freshly awakened for you and taste sweet for you and tomorrow you may feel very blank and wonder where did it go. That's real Christian experience. So please don't hear me describing some kind of idealistic Christian perfectionism that always lives at a level of intense experience of being loved by God.

I'm 70 years old. That's not the way it is. So what's the implication of that? Let me read you a verse and draw to a summary from 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 5. I love this verse.

So encouraging because I want realism in my ministry, in my life, in my family. 2 Thessalonians 3 verse 5 says this is a prayer now of Paul for the Thessalonians. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

This is a verse that needs meditation. May the Lord direct your heart. So the heart has directions and it can direct towards money, sex, fear, anger or it can be directed towards a sense of I'm loved.

God loves me. God sent his son to die for me. The heart can... When I try to get inside Paul's mind here what do you mean by direct the heart? How is the heart directed? I think the heart is directed when it moves towards what it values, what it cherishes, what it enjoys, what it's satisfied by.

That's the direction my heart is going. My heart is going towards I want to make a lot of money. My heart is going towards I want to be famous.

My heart is going towards I want to get back at her because she says this mean thing about me. This is where my heart is going. That's direction.

It's what you think is going to make you glad. And so to say, Oh God, direct their hearts to the love of God means you find the love of God for you more satisfying than anything else. That's what a directed heart means.

So if you're sitting there and you are trying to line yourself on that spectrum I just described from the white hot person to the dead person and you're on there somewhere and you're over here somewhere a millimeter beyond death this is your verse. This is what you do. I'm going to end with this in just a minute.

This is the way you pray. I pray this kind of prayer all the time. Help me.

Awaken me. My little way of praying is incline my heart to your testimonies. Psalm 119.

Incline my heart. That's another way of saying direct, right? Incline my heart like it's tilting towards fear. It's tilting towards anger.

It's tilting towards despair. It's tilting towards carnal life. And I want you to incline it this way.

Isn't that amazing that the psalmist must pray that way? People after God's own heart pray that way. So just take heart that if the experience I'm describing seems small for you that you have to stay there. Take heart.

You don't have to stay there. You engage with Paul. You engage with the psalmist.

You engage with the Thessalonians and the Romans and say, okay, every Christian tastes this, knows something of this. If you're not sure, you go on your face before the Gospel and say, incline my heart. Direct my heart.

Or if you're in the middle and you're feeling it, but you know you've lost it and we'll lose it and you pray, do it again. And tomorrow morning you pray, direct my heart to the love of God. So let me close with a summary.

Verse 5. Let's read it again. Hope does not put us to shame. God's existence, God's acting in history, in Christ, God's loving you is not going to prove false and put you to shame.

Why? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. A real Holy Spirit-given experience of being loved by God is the reason you are undaunted in your confidence that you are loved by the living God. So here are my four things again in case I went by too fast.

Number one. This experience of being loved by God is through the Holy Spirit. It is poured out through the Holy Spirit.

It's not your doing. It's supernatural. You are not kept from it by any family background.

And you are not guaranteed it by any family background. Number two. This experience comes through a historical fact in the Gospel, in the Bible that you see Christ died for sinners like you and that becomes by the work of the Holy Spirit being poured out so sweet and so beautiful and so valuable that you feel loved by that.

And so the history and the Spirit work together to make this experience happen. Number three. Every Christian has tasted this.

You cannot become a Christian by merely saying for God so loved the world I'm part of the world therefore I'm loved. That is not a Christian. The devil can say that.

Total unbelievers can say that. Logic makes nobody a Christian. Experience of God the Holy Spirit pouring the love of God into your heart called new birth makes you a Christian.

So everybody's tasted this. And my last point, number four is to try to give you hope that in this room we're all over the map. On the degrees of enjoyment of this experience.

And so my point where I'm going to end is simply to say to you let's move on. Let's grow. Let's take 2 Thessalonians and pray it.

God. Let's just close in prayer like this. Father, I want to ask that you would direct the hearts.

This is a supernatural work I'm asking for in this room right now. I ask that the Holy Spirit would come and that he would open blind eyes or dim eyes and that we would see Christ and the Holy Spirit would sweeten and intensify and make real and compelling and satisfying and precious and valuable that sight so that we would experience being loved by God. Jesus is better.

And that's what you have to see. God come. Give us eyes to see, I pray.

Amen.

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