

Regeneration (Rora 2003)

by Ron Bailey

Ron Bailey's sermon on regeneration emphasizes the necessity of a fundamental change in nature through the Holy Spirit, urging believers to return to biblical truths over evangelical superstitions.

Duration: 58:25

Scripture: John 3:16, John 20:29, Romans 5:5-18, 1 John 5:7

Topics: "Regeneration"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Romans, particularly the first four chapters. He explains that Paul brings an accusation against the whole world, declaring everyone guilty. However, because of God's incredible act of paying the price through Christ, it is possible for individuals to be justified and declared free. The preacher then explores the experiences of Abraham and David, highlighting the blessings of being justified by faith. He also emphasizes the impact of sin and death on humanity, tracing it back to Adam. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the witness of the Spirit and the importance of relying on God's word.

Transcript

Good morning. We'll pray briefly. Inspire the living faith, which whosoe'er receives the witness in himself he hath, and consciously believes.

The faith that conquers all, and doth the mountain move, and saves whoe'er on Jesus call, and perfects them in love. Amen. Can't pray any better than that.

In fact, if you've read that and thought through it carefully, I don't really need to preach to you this morning. That might get me into less trouble. We've had one or two questions come in on the internet from people who are curious as to where exactly we stand on some of the things we're saying.

Had a telephone call from my wife. I have a message to you from her. I am not a Humpty Dumpty.

Of course what she means by that is anybody's guess. Our topic this morning is regeneration and it's the third in our series of which the overall title is Having Begun in the Spirit. And I've chosen that series title very, very carefully because I want us to be thinking about reality in the spirit, not logical deductions drawn from proof texts.

One of the questions that has been not just from the internet but come in from individuals too, is I made a passing statement about discomfort I felt with certain trends in evangelicalism which I prefaced by saying that faith that is not based on revelation is superstition. And people have said, what do you mean? Illustrate. Give us one or two examples.

And I'm not going to give you many because I want to press on with this thing. But I'll tell you the kind of area I'm thinking of. There's a whole language that's built up in evangelical circles probably over the last hundred years which we're all very familiar with and which I think we've probably stopped thinking about.

And you get kind of statements, for example, like this. You'll say, if you give your heart to Jesus, you'll go to heaven when you die. Now, the Bible says no such thing.

I'm not saying it's not true. I'm just simply saying the Bible says no such thing. If you ask Jesus into your heart, you'll have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Nowhere in the Bible does it talk about inviting Jesus into your heart. In fact, the testimony of the Bible is that your heart is so incurable that God doesn't want it. So, he'll give you a new one.

So, we have an entirely different pattern of ideas that come. Anyone who has received Christ has received his Spirit which is actually the exact opposite of what the Bible says which is that when someone receives his Spirit, that's how you receive Christ. But this whole language of receiving Christ is evangelical rather than biblical.

I know where it comes from. It comes from another happy little most quotation where we say, but as many as received him, they became real Christians. That's not what it says.

What it says is as many as received him, to them he gave the authority to become children of God which is actually quite different. All I'm pleading for is that we consider what the Bible says. Think it through and don't just go with the flow.

The terrible danger is that we just sleepwalk from one generation to the next in our evangelical theology and stop thinking about things. That's why I asked Norman if we could sing this hymn. This hymn, to quote those last lines again, is this, Inspire the living faith which whosoever believes the witness in himself he hath and consciously believes.

At different times in my life, I've had different sorts of responsibilities and I recall on one occasion working as an advisor who was someone over a group of counsellors at Evangelistic Crusades and that particular evangelistic agency which has been very, very greatly blessed and was blessed to my own conversion, developed a methodology. They discovered, for example, that of all the people who came forward after an appeal, there were many different reasons why people had responded in that way. I've forgotten the exact figures, but it was something like about 15% were coming forward because they had heard something that had spoken to them for the first time and they wanted to respond to God.

Now there was a whole bundle of little things like people went forward because their friend went forward or because they wanted to stand on the turf at Wembley or something like this. But the largest percentage was of people who had come forward before but weren't convinced that the thing that they wanted had happened so they were now coming forward again. And the terminology that was used to describe these people was people who need assurance.

They need the assurance of salvation. So, a methodology was developed which went something like this. You worked with such people by going through steady steps and you began by saying, well, when you ask Christ into your life, another non-biblical statement, when you invite Christ into your life, did you do it in the name of Jesus? Because Jesus says, hitherto you've asked nothing in my name.

Ask and you will receive that your joy will be full. So, if you ask Him to come into your life in His name, He must do it because He never breaks a promise. So, have you done it? And they'd say, yes, I did that the last time.

And you'd say, okay, if that's the case, let me read this passage to you. Here it is from 1 John chapter 3. This is the record that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son hath life and he that has not the Son of God has not life.

These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And in one particular school of counselling, I was taught on verse 13 to make a deliberate mistake to attract the attention of the person who has been counselling to what the Bible actually said. So, you'd read it like this.

These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may hope you have eternal life. And the person who has been counselling would say, no, that's not what it says. And you'd say, let me read it again.

These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may be almost sure that you have eternal life. And they'd say, no, that's not what it says. So, I'll read it again.

These things have I written to you that you may feel that you have eternal life. And they'd say, no, that's not what it says. And you'd say, what does it say? And they'd say, it says, no.

So, you can know absolutely for sure. Is that right? And they'd say, yes. And that's brainwashing.

That's brainwashing. In fact, if we'd started off not at verse 11, this is the record, but verse 10, we would never have got ourselves into that mess. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself.

And this is why A. W. Tozer, who I mentioned is often referred to as a 20th century prophet, used to say that what we have done in evangelicalism is in place of the genuine witness of the Spirit, we have begun to replace it, we have substituted logical deductions drawn from proof texts. And I am fearful in my heart because we end up with a generation of people who are wonderfully educated in evangelical theology and who have not consciously believed, who do not have the witness in their spirit, but they're propped up with a logical deduction process that comes from the Scriptures. Let me give you an illustration of the other side of it.

Many years ago, I remember listening to a man named Richard Wunbrandt who was a Romanian pastor and in communist years had suffered terribly for his faith. I think almost every bone in his body had been broken. He had been in prison time after time.

He had gone through so many processes of brainwashing that this is his testimony. He came to one point in prison where he could not rebuild a single verse of Scripture, but he says, I knew I was the Lord's. That is the witness of the Spirit.

We just need to remind ourselves, of course, that so many of the early Christians didn't actually have 1 John chapter 5 to read. Maybe we should sympathize with them. Poor things.

They only had the witness of the Spirit to go on. Now, you know I love this book. I love this book to bits and mine is almost falling to bits.

I have a friend who says, have you noticed that Bibles that are falling to bits are usually owned by people who aren't? I want to talk to you this morning about regeneration. It's the third one in our series. The first one was repentance, a change of direction.

The second was justification, a change in legal status. Third one, regeneration, a change in nature. I want you to notice how carefully I'm using these words.

A change of. Not a modification in. Not an addition to.

A change of. You will get used to me and my pedantry if you can live long enough. Alright? Regeneration, a change of nature.

Did you notice that line at the end of verse 58? Are we saying it? And saves who err on Jesus' call and perfects them in love. The early Methodists used to love to talk about perfect love. John Wesley wrote a very contentious book called Christian Perfection.

I believe with all my heart in Christian Perfection. So now what have you done? Have you been me now already? Or are you still going to listen to me? What's the alternative? What do you believe in? Christian imperfection? Who would like to say, I believe in Christian imperfection? Amen. That would be a real watchword to take around the world, wouldn't it? Or imperfect Christianity? I believe in imperfect Christianity.

Well, there's enough of that to thrive whether you believe in it or not. But I believe in Christian Perfection. I think I've had a longing in my heart from even before I was conscious of God ever speaking to me that I wanted something to be perfect.

Now, I don't think it's unreasonable. I think it's an instinct. In the heart of the human race, we know that we were designed for something.

We may be frustrated to death as we reach out for this and that, but somehow in the heart of man we know we were made for better than this. And we sing these hymns. People who say they don't believe in Christian Perfection sing these hymns.

Purify Me, we were singing last night. Like pure gold, we were singing. Sometimes we need to think about those kind of things we're thinking too.

You know that when a refiner refined silver or pure gold, it was not a lifetime's job. It was an intense hour. Yes? An intense hour of fierce concentration.

And then the thing was done. Or I believe in regeneration. Let's go to a good starting point, but maybe not where you're expecting.

Let's go to Matthew, first of all, chapter 12. No, sorry, 19. This is the only time the word regeneration is found on the lips of the Lord Jesus.

He spoke, of course, about being born again, which is the same idea, but the exact word is only used here in Matthew chapter 19 and verse 28. I'm not going to read on. I want you to get the feel, the mood of that word.

In the regeneration, what is He referring to? He's referring to a time when thrones are set. He's referring to a time when the Son of Man sits in the throne of His glory. He's really referring to what you might call cosmic regeneration.

And there's a little thumbnail sketch of cosmic regeneration in the book of Revelation. I'll read it to you. It says this, And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. Former things passed away. All things made new.

Can you hear an echo there of something that Paul once said, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

When Jesus spoke in Matthew chapter 19, He was referring to the cosmic regeneration. The regeneration, the renewing of all things in the consummation of the ages. I'm on the side of Tom Hamblin on this.

I'm not going to get into Revelation this morning. I'm just going to say that is the statement of what it says here. But as well as cosmic regeneration, there is personal regeneration, which is almost a microcosm.

It's a living example of what God is going to do in that final day. And if you'll turn with me now to where you thought I was going probably, John chapter 3. John chapter 3. It's one of those chapters in the Bible where we don't know absolutely for sure where the words of Jesus stop and the words of John, the evangelist, the commentator, join together. So, if you've got one of those Bibles with all the words of Jesus in red, well, their guess is as good as yours.

So, don't worry too much about it. I've got this very special Bible where all the words of the Holy Spirit are in black. I far prefer it.

John chapter 3. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, Unto thee ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth where it wants to and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. But so is every one that is born of the Spirit. So, you can see in the kind of language that's coming together here that regeneration, being born from above or being born of the Spirit are ways in which Jesus is referring to something that he wants Nicodemus to know as a certainty must happen.

In this old-fashioned AV that I use, one of the main reasons I use it is not because I like the beauty of the words. That's not the main purpose of the Bible to be beautiful. But because we are impoverished in English in one thing in particular and almost every other language in the world as far as I know is richer than us in this aspect and that is that we have lost the distinction between the and you.

We've just got this one word you which now just means you personally and you collectively. And we've lost the word that gives you the sense of God putting his finger lightly on your chest and saying, thou art the man. This thing that personally applies the truth to us.

And if you noticed as I read here, you'll see that there's actually a switch in one of these verses where in verse 7 it says this, Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. What he's done there is he has switched from the singular to the plural. It is absolutely true that thou Nicodemus must be born again, but this is not just a truth for Nicodemus.

This is a truth for all those who were there at the same time including the writer of this particular record of the gospel. You must be born again. This is a categoric divine imperative, you must.

Not it would be preferable if, or it would be convenient if, you must be born again. To begin with, the Lord Jesus says to Nicodemus that until he is born again and literally it means from above, in one sense a new birth wouldn't necessarily be better. It might just be an action replay of the one you'd had the last time.

But if you're going to be born from above, now there's a new source to this life. It's not just new in the sense of again, it's new in the sense of brand new. It's being born from above and that's what this word means.

It's used several times in the New Testament and nearly always translated from above. But we're used to it here as again, but it's from above. He says to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, until a man is born again from above, they can't see the kingdom of God.

Interesting statement, isn't it? Going back to evangelical ideas, a little while ago there was a very strong move that we should get out there and show them what it was really like and manifest the kingdom. Let's get out there on the streets, let's show them that the alternative society is already here and if we get enough people together, they can't possibly ignore us. 500,000 lemmings can't possibly be wrong.

I don't know what we thought we were doing, but apparently you can't see the kingdom unless you're born again from above. So by definition, whatever it was we were manifesting, it wasn't the kingdom because that can't be seen except to people who are born again from above. You see why I say, I think we need to get back to think through what the Bible is telling us and not just go along with these evangelical superstitions.

First of all, Jesus says, you can't see it. You can't see the rule of God. You can't see what God is doing.

You can't see. Well, in this hymn that we sang earlier, what does he say? No man can truly say that Jesus is the Lord unless thou take the veil away and breathe the living word. In other words, if we quote Paul, it's only by the Holy Spirit that you can call Jesus Lord.

It's only as a result of revelation. We're back to that word again. It's only as a result of revelation that we can begin any of these crises which develop into processes.

Unless you're born from above, says Jesus, you can't see how this thing works. You can't see the rule of God. You can't see the purpose of God.

And Nicodemus is somewhat perplexed by it and I'm not going to go into his perplexity. I just want to look at this statement in verse 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

The wind, and you probably know that in Greek, the word for wind and breath and spirit are all the same word. So, this could be. The spirit blows where he wills and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it comes and whither it goes.

So is every one that is born of the Spirit. There's always going to be mystery about genuine regeneration. It's never going to be as a result of a procedure, a technique, a methodology.

No matter how closely we try to tie it to Scripture, God will have His prerogatives in these things. It will be as He wills, as He chooses, when He chooses and not when we decide we'll go through an ABC of salvation or a certain number of spiritual rules and produce some kind of product at the end of it. You must be born again.

Why? Why can't God just patch us up? Why can't He just forgive us and let it drop? Why do we have to be born again? Alright, come with me now please to Romans. Very much of what I'm saying in these four sessions could have been said all out of Romans because this is almost a progression that you get into the book of Romans. So we'll turn to, what does Peter call this? The wisdom that Paul was given and has written to you.

So this is not the mind of Paul, this is the wisdom of God given to Paul for you and me so that we can read it. It's intriguing too for me to notice how Peter gives Paul his full title. We get again carried away in evangelicalism into all kinds of titles and we have bishops this and elder that and evangelist the other and pastor this and you know that none of those words are used as titles in the New Testament.

They're all job descriptions. There's not a single one of them that uses a title. But we can give Paul his full formal title if you want to.

It's the one that Peter uses in his second letter when he says our beloved brother Paul. That'll do. I'll tell you something, you ought to use that more often.

Very difficult to criticize someone if you start off by saying our beloved brother. Very difficult. Okay, let's see what we've got here.

Very quick resume of Romans. The first two or three chapters. Paul is bringing this accusation, he's bringing the whole world, every individual, every part of it to justice.

And the verdict is guilty but because of this astonishing thing that God has done in paying the price in Christ, it's possible for God to declare us to be justified and we can walk from the court a free man. And then he illustrates that that was the experience of these people that we call Old Testament saints. And he starts in chapter 4 by saying what shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh has found? So there's his question and chapter 4 is very much the answer to his own question.

What was Abraham's experience? What did Abraham discover? And then he goes through here and he brings in David who further expands the blessednesses of being justified by faith and he comes to this point and he says Abraham is the father of all those who believe us whether they are from the Gentile races whether they are from whether they are physical descendants of Abraham it makes no difference they all have to have this Abrahamic faith. The faith of Abraham he says. Later on he'll talk about the faith of Jesus which is somewhat different but we may not get quite onto that.

That will be another question for you another time. He then begins to talk about the law and he makes it very clear he makes it even clearer in Galatians if you want the condensed version that the law was only ever given as an addition and for a specific purpose and for a specific period of time. What purpose does the law serve says Paul writing to the Galatians? Well he says it was added.

It was added to a relationship of sorts that men had with God. It was added for the sake of transgressions until the seed should come unto whom the promise was made. So it was only an addition and it was only ever intended to be temporary and the purpose of it was transgressions.

What the Jewish people did is they made it a ladder. They made it a way of attaining a certain standard of righteousness a do-it-yourself achievement by which God would have to listen to what they were saying and continue to own them as His people and Paul says that was never the purpose of it. The purpose of it was to sensitize this particular people of God to whom God had given His unique revelation in this whole issue of sin.

I have a Finnish daughter-in-law and we've just said goodbye to Alan and Margie Brett and Daniel who were in our home for two or three weeks and Margie of course is Finnish and we sat down and I said, Margie I want you to make me a list now of all the Finnish words you know for snow and she stopped at about 30. I've had this conversation with her before but I'd lost the list so we had to go over it again. I've kept it safe now.

I know where it is. 30. You see for people like us down in the southeast of England we have snow for a couple of hours one morning usually in February and that's it.

So it's no big deal. That's just snow is snow is snow. What more can you say? It's snow.

But for people living in Finland who have six months of the stuff the snow is not never just snow. There's all kinds of snow. There's snow that's falling on snow.

There's snow that's freezing as it falls. There's snow that isn't freezing as it falls but freezing when it hits the frozen snow that's underneath. There's snow that blows into your face.

There's snow that floats down. There's snow. There's all kinds of snow.

And the reason there are all kinds of snow is because the Finnish people are highly sensitized to snow. So it's important for them to know what kind of snow we're talking about. You know that there are 18 one, eight, eighteen Hebrew words for sin.

God was determined to sensitize this people to sin. That they might see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. That they would see the terrible scorecard.

That they would understand to be under no illusions as to how hopeless it was ever to try and achieve acceptance of God by their own righteousness. That was the whole purpose of it. It was only ever intended to be temporary.

It was until the seed should come to whom the promise was given. So it has its sell-by date and not good after date very plainly printed on it. From the moment that the seed came, you began to see in Him, in the pattern of His life, an entirely different way of living.

And then as a result of His death and as a result of His Spirit, that way of living becomes a possibility for all men and women who receive His Spirit. And the law of the life that is in Christ Jesus frees them from the law of sin and death and makes a whole new way of life gloriously possible. It was only until the seed should come to whom the promise should be made.

But justification by faith is a very, very important foundational truth. And in some ways, we have to preach it with such an extreme energy that it's possible for someone to listen to us and say, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Now you notice Paul never says, now that's not logical. Because that is actually a perfectly logical question if you followed what he's saying.

What he does say is, how can you? We who died to sin, how can you continue to live in it? In other words, if you're asking the question, you're not in it. You don't know what I'm talking about. It's a perfectly logical question following what we were saying yesterday.

Our acceptance with God is 100% determined by what His Son did upon the cross. 100%. And that will be the same forever.

Even in Emmanuel's land, as that lovely hymn says. It will still be the basis of our acceptance with God. What He did upon the cross for us.

But there's more. In fact, in Romans chapter 5, there's much more. It uses that little phrase, five times in your AV and four times in the Greek.

Much more, much more, much more, much more. So, I want us to flow from Romans chapter 4 into 5 and see what we're beginning to see now here. This is what he says.

I'll read from verse 20, and I'll go back a little bit because these are such wonderful verses that we shouldn't miss them. I'll read from verse 18, which is speaking about Abraham's faith. And it says, Who against hope believed in hope that he might become the father of many nations? According to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform, and therefore it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was reckoned unto him, but for us also, to whom it shall be reckoned if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. So this is Paul saying, this wasn't just a one-off for Abraham. It certainly just wasn't a one-off for the people of Israel.

This is true for all those who put their faith in him. All are justified by faith. All have righteousness reckoned to their account.

So he wants this, this is part of our experience. Remember what I said the very first time we were together, and I'll repeat it now in case you've forgotten it. What we're doing something in Bible study like this is inherently dangerous.

We are extracting truth and assembling bits of truth together so that we can look at particular topics. Now the Bible never speaks truth to us like that. It always puts truth in amazingly rich contexts.

It always insists that we consider other truths alongside this truth. So what I'm doing is something which is really quite artificial. It may be justifiable in that it can be helpful to think about it.

As long as we think about it in the way that the old theologians used to say that we should think about the Trinity. You may distinguish the persons but you must not divide the substance. And in these things that I'm speaking of, of having begun in the Spirit, you may distinguish the elements but you must not divide the substance.

This really is one topic we're talking about. Having begun in the Spirit. Alright? Now what does Paul say in chapter 5? He's just said that Christ was risen again for our justification and he says, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So to all those blessings that David identified, which you can still see possibly in verse 7 and 8 of chapter 4, iniquities sent away, sins covered, sin not kept a score of. Paul now adds this one, Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is not the peace of God, which is a sense of well-being and God's care.

This is the peace of God. Its opposite is enmity with God. What has happened in the death of Christ is that God has been able in putting forth that propitiation to satisfy his own righteous requirements, his own anger against sin.

And now we have this glorious possibility of entering into peace with God. And then he says this, By whom also. Now also means in addition to what I've just said, there's something fresh coming.

Is that right? Is that right? That's what also means. It means okay, we've done one, two, three and four and there's more. Also.

By whom also we have access. Now this is new. We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

Can you see the possibility of a contrast here? We've just seen the grace in which Abraham stood. We've seen the grace that was extended to David. We've seen the grace that's extended to those who are justified by faith and reckoned righteous as a result of what Christ has done.

That's grace. That's grace. Wonderful, wonderful grace.

But there's more grace. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. There is an open door into something new.

There's an open door into something which was not the ordinary experience of those saints in Old Testament times. Oh, they saw that day. They saw wonderful glimpses of it and you'll get them in the writings of people like David.

But this grace is uniquely New Covenant grace. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In Romans chapter 3 and verse 23, Paul had said, we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Man's inheritance, his destiny had been forfeit. Our hope of ever being what God had wanted us to be, a living revelation of his own character, his own likeness, had gone, squandered, blown it, no way through. But now, Paul says, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

There's a restoration of hope to those who read this. God is going to do something that he hasn't done previously in this way. Then he speaks like this.

He says, not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope. And hope makes not a shame because the love of God has shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. We have now come, in Paul's reasoning, the wisdom that God gave to him written to you.

We have now come into this place where we are moving into this amazing era of the Holy Spirit given to us. Because of the Holy Spirit being given to us, the love of God is poured out in our hearts. Same word that Peter used on the day of Pentecost.

He has poured forth this which you now see in here. This is the living proof in flesh and blood again that Jesus had achieved what he intended to achieve and that the Father has accepted it and can now move on with his glorious plan of salvation and making each man and woman his own personal dwelling place. He can come into men and women and dwell there.

He can fill them with his Holy Spirit. And then Paul does this astonishing thing, maybe in case we aren't quite sure what he's talking about. He begins to explain what the love of God is like and he shows that the love of God is quite different to any other kind of love.

It's not like any other love you've touched. This is quite a different order of love. And he expresses it by saying, well, well I'll read it.

Verse 6, When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet for a good man some would even dare to die. So that's human love.

That's the height of it. Remember he expressed the little phrase, greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends. But this is the love of God.

He's not talking about friends, he's talking about enemies. This is the love of God poured out into the hearts of men and women. And Paul will give you an unwitting testimony to it a little bit later on in Romans chapter 9. Maybe we should touch it just to see what he's talking about.

Chapter 9 he says this, I'm not getting into this either for those who thought we might. 9, 10 and 11, we'll leave that for another time. I say the truth in Christ.

Now this isn't wishful thinking. I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. I'll put the tenses, I'll correct them slightly.

I was wishing that I myself were cut off from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites. This is an astonishing testimony and Paul isn't giving it to make a point about himself. He's going on to say other things.

But accidentally he tells us something really quite amazing about himself. These people chased him over the known world. They tried to destroy him from pillar to post.

He never left voluntarily. He always had someone on his heels. They hated him.

They took oaths that they would die rather than not kill him. And Paul's reaction to them? Well, the love of God has been poured out in his heart. And he finds something rising up in him which is beyond any natural explanation.

He said, I was wishing that I was cut off from Christ. It's extraordinary. And what Paul was only wishing, Christ did.

He was cut off. He took this path that Paul only felt towards. The love of God.

Not natural love. It's God's own unique love and it's poured out by the Holy Spirit. And we come now into a whole new area of experience.

An area of experience which is identified, it's marked, it's initiated by this having received the Holy Spirit. It's the great question of the New Testament. Not have you put your hand up, have you decided, have you signed the decision card, have you prayed the sinner's prayer.

The great question of the New Testament is when you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit? That's the great question. The Holy Spirit poured out into their hearts. And then he goes on and he says something and really we're chasing time now.

But he comes, he says this. I'll just read on. I'm trying to get to chapter 5. Verse 8. God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more than, there we go, much more than being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Alright. Justification point one.

We're going to be saved from wrath. Something following on here. Then he says this.

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, there's another one, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved literally in his life. This is salvation. This is salvation in his life.

This is not heaven when I die, this is heaven now. This is the Holy Spirit having come into a man's life, a woman's life and given them a foretaste of heaven. Those old folks used to sing, he's come, he's come, the comforter has come.

Not we believe he's come, not we're taught he's come, not the Bible says he's come, he's come. This is the great proof. This is why our hope doesn't need to blush which is what it says technically.

The hope that you have, he says, doesn't need to be embarrassed. It doesn't need to hide its head. It can stand up full and strong because the love of God being poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

There is a demonstration within us of what God has done upon the cross. We read on. I must get on to these other bits.

Verse 11, and not only so but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the reconciliation, that's not atonement. Then he says this in verse 12. Wherefore, and he's going to explain something now which is quite different to anything else as far as I can understand it in the whole revelation of the scripture.

Let's see what he says. Wherefore as through one man sin entered into the world and death by sin so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. And from verse 12 in most of the places that you now go to the next little part of Paul's thing that is written to us here in the original language the word sin and the word death has a definite article.

That's to say a the put in front of it. Now if you put the sin in front of it in English it sounds clumsy and uncomfortable but we need to remember that what we're talking about here is Paul has now personified sin. He's not talking about sins in the sense of transgressions.

He's not talking about sins in the sense of failures, things that can be marked off on a scorecard. He's now beginning to speak about sin as though it is a person and you'll see he's utterly consistent with this. He'll now begin to talk about sin sitting upon a throne and reigning.

He'll talk about the consequence of sin reigning and he says this is how it happened. Verse 12, as through one man sin entered into the world. That is a unique revelation from the Christian gospel.

The revelation is this, that sin is older than the human race. It entered through one man. It did not begin in Adam.

It's older than the human race. You and I today came into this marquee and you came in through a door but you didn't only just begin to exist the moment you got into here. Some of you have existed a lot longer than that.

It was a new stage in your experience but it was only a transition from one part to another. Sin is older than the human race. This is the only explanation to the way that human beings behave.

This is the only explanation to a diabolical wickedness in the human race. Animals don't behave like human beings behave. This is the only explanation to Auschwitz and Congo and the two talents and Al-Qaeda.

This is the only explanation. There is something that has entered into the human race which has constitutionally changed the way that human beings are from what they were in the original image and likeness of God. And Paul says it's sin.

He puts it with this definite article. If you want to in your mind you can put a capital S to it. It's sin.

Let me tell you what he says about it. He says this, As by one man sin entered into the world and death through sin. So it brought in with it when it came in through the entrance that Adam opened.

It brought in not only sin but it brought in death. And we're not talking about physical death. We're talking about something of which physical death is only a picture.

You see what God said to Adam, In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. And he did. It was another 960 years before the undertakers got hold of his body.

But he died in the day he sinned. Not in his body. Seems that life has a great capacity to linger.

But something in him died. He died in his unique character. He died in his unique revelation of the likeness and image of God.

He died in his relationship with God. You can hear it. You'll hear me playing this song from time to time from San Francisco, Adam where art thou? God had lost him.

There's something that had died in Adam. Sin had entered and death had come with it. And from now on in this next section and most of it, whenever Paul says sin, he says the sin.

He's talking about a person. Whenever he talks about death, he says the death. He's talking about a person.

There's something come into our human race which has transformed it, but not for the better. And it didn't come in with Eve. It came in with Adam.

Let me show you what I mean. Turn back with me to, we're going to have to push a bit of this over to tomorrow, I think. This is Genesis chapter 3. This is the story.

What I want to show you from Genesis chapter 1, if I can, is that the consequences that came into the human race and passed from generation to generation came in through Adam and they did not come in through Eve. In fact, what Eve did, did not affect Adam, but what Adam did, did affect Eve. She suffered the consequences of his sin, but he didn't suffer the consequences of hers.

Sounds a bit complicated. Let me read it to you. Here's the serpent speaking in verse 4 of chapter 3. The serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And notice the serpent, for those of you who don't have an Orthodox version, is speaking in the plural. He's not just talking to Eve. Verse 6. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat.

All she did was pass it to him. He heard the same temptation that came from the serpent. And the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons and they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God called unto Adam and said, Where art thou? Adam is the federal head of the human race. He is God's representative upon earth.

He is accountable for this thing that's taken place. Adam, where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? You see how God is putting his finger on Adam's chest.

Thou, thou. Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And then you have this statement. Oh, the shame of being a man.

I'm having to read this. The man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed. There is a curse. God speaks to the serpent and a curse comes in.

Thou art cursed over all cattle, above every beast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go and thus shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed and it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee. I want you to notice ladies, there is not a mention of curse in that verse.

In fact, I am absolutely convinced that that is a gift not a curse. God is building something into female constitution which would enable her to understand always her vulnerability and the place where God had placed her in His plan. We haven't got time to move into that but I want you to notice there is not a word of a curse in there.

It never speaks anything of a curse in there. But now look at this next bit. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, thou shalt not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Not for Eve's sake, for thy sake. Adam has brought a curse upon the earth.

Eve did not bring the curse. Are you following this? Some of you ladies, it makes you feel a bit better sometimes too. You've had a rough ride over the centuries.

Of which I commanded thee, saying thou shalt not eat of it. Cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life.

Thorns also and thistle shall it bring forth to thee. And thou shalt eat of the herb of the field and of the sweat of thy face. Thou shalt eat bread till thou return unto the ground for out of it thou wast taken.

For thus thou art and thus thou shalt return. Can you see how this whole thing is as a consequence of the man? And he is now receiving the penalty for the whole human race. And it's settling on his shoulders.

This is God's verdict. This is God's sentence. It's coming on the man.

It's coming on the federal head of the race. Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothe them.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil. Now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord sent him forth from the garden of Eden till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man. Now the woman went with him. But this is God's curse coming upon the man.

And I'm not really talking about male and female and gender. I'm talking about responsibility. I'm talking about role.

This man was the federal head of the human race. He was God's vice-regent upon earth. It was God's intention to rule the earth through this man.

Everything that this man does affects everything throughout the whole world. You must be born again. You must be.

Praise God for forgiveness of sins. Praise God for justification by faith. You must be born again.

You must be born again from above. There's something in you that can't be dealt with by forgiveness. There's something in you that can't be dealt with by cleansing of the outer parts.

There's something in you that can't be dealt with by justification. There's something in you that is incurable. You'll have to be born again.

And it's not a question of you making choices here and there. It's from above. It has to be of the Spirit.

It has to be receiving the Spirit poured out in the heart. It has to be a brand new beginning because there's no other way. Our time is gone.

One of the things that Paul says in Romans is he says that as a result of one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. And the Greek word he uses is constitutive. As a result of one man's sin, a sinful constitution passed into the whole human race.

He is the head of the race. What he did, his separation from God, the condemnation that came upon him touches every member of the human race. That's why God started again in the miracle of a virgin birth.

And God, the Word became flesh and started all over again. And we'll touch on this a little bit more tomorrow. But let this thing settle into your hearts.

Not as something for you to do. Not as some target for you to hit. Certainly not as another burden for you to carry.

Just let the Word of God speak this into your heart. You must be born from above. Thank God for His love.

Thank Him for His mercy. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Thank Him for justification.

Thank Him for wide open arms that give you access to Him. That give you the peace of God. That cause you to know that you're reconciled with God.

Thank God for it all. But you must be born again. Let's pray.

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