

Spring Training, Love Part 1, Rev. Joshua M. Knott, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007.  
**Romans 8:31-39**

I've got these questions about the text before us:

- What is love?
- What does God's love do?
- What does God's love look like?
- What does Jesus' love do & look like?

I've got these questions for us all:

- Do we know *how much* God loves us?
- Do we know *how to* respond to it?
- How* will we incarnate the love of Christ?

Then we've got some applications to make to ourselves, our church, our undershepherd groups, our Sunday schools, our neighbors, our family members

Big Context of Romans – Jist Behind Today's class is that what you believe is intrinsically related with what you do.

If I believe this microphone will explode in 20 seconds, I will speedily throw it out the window [some of you might be tempted to throw our mics as well]

If I believe God has forgiven me much, I am willing to forgive the person next to me,...

If I believe God has been patient with me, I am willing to be patient with my kids, my wife, my co-workers,...

**BIG CONTEXT: Romans is a tour-de-force with a goal in mind.**

Not theology for the sake of theology, but a letter written to real people to address a real problem,...and solution begins not with technique or with Dr. Phil common sense,...but with Paul unfolding the truths of the gospel.

There was tension between Jews & Gentiles in Rome, Christians & non-Christians, and within the church itself. Paul writes to address how church & the world are to interact, and how brothers & sisters in Christ need to present themselves as living sacrifices,...bearing with one another, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, loving one another.

So Romans 1-3 Here's what Jews & Gentiles, church & world have in common,...all have sinned and fallen short of God's perfect standard.

Romans 4-5 Just as there is universal sin, so there is the free offer of the gospel of grace to all who will hear it. Union with Christ is righteousness for sinners.

Romans 6-7 Our inner man is united to Christ,...but the outer man resists his Lordship,...and so we struggle with sin & struggle to put it to death.

### **IMMEDIATE CONTEXT:**

**Romans 8:31** <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things [pl]? If God is for us, who can be against us?

“these things” is plural & refers both backward (like a conclusion) & forward (like an introduction)

### **What are the “these things” in chapter 8?**

#### **- Removal of Condemnation**

**Romans 8:1-4** There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- How many of us feel as though our sins deserve condemnation this morning?
- How many of us are worried to share our faith for fear that our sins would speak louder than the message we bring?
- How many of us woke up this morning with joy because the blood of Jesus cries out “neither do I condemn you”

#### **- Abundant Life by the Spirit**

**Romans 8:11** <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

- How many on this resurrection Sunday realize the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you?

#### **- Adoption by the Spirit & Heirs of Eternal Blessing**

**Romans 8:15-17** <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- How many of us need to be reminded that sonship is a permanent thing?
- How many of us are as confident in our heavenly Father’s love as a young child is in their earthly father’s love?
- How many of us are as joyful as orphans or foster kids adopted once for all into a loving family?

#### **- Future Blessings like the Glory & Redemption of our Bodies**

**Romans 8:18** <sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

How many of you, as your bodies are deteriorating, & aching, each day a battle for joy, how many of you see the glory coming?

**- Present Blessings like the Spirit helping us in our weakness**

**Romans 8:26-27** <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

-How many of us need an advocate, a comforter, someone who picks up your slack & carries you along?

-How many of us see that we already have one before the Father?

**- Past, Present, and Future promise:**

**Romans 8:28** <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

NOTE: Paul goes on to explain why this is the case,...what it means for all things to work together for the good of God's people,...

NOTE: v.29 **“FOR”** what's the “for” for? What's the therefore there for?

**It's got all the force of “because”**

**Foreknew & predestined** us to be like Jesus Christ in a relationship with him

**Ephesians 1:3-6** <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

**Called us** – there was that moment in time when you heard the call to come to Jesus,...and you came willingly to him because he had moved in your heart

**Justified us** – what is justification?

Declaration of Pardon  
Imputation of Christ's Righteousness  
Declaration of Acceptance

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>1</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Glorification** – one so certain & firm that it can be said to be present reality

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**What then can we say to these things?**

- God's love brings us into a relationship that is permanent
- God's love accomplishes a permanent change in us
- God's love brings countless blessings

**What then can we say to these things?**

- If God loves you, he has got you he will not let you go, he will never leave you or forsake you
  - If you are in Jesus Christ then your future is certain & his goodness & faithfulness to you unchanging
  - If God is "for us" who can be against us?**
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**Do you know that God is for you, that he loves you, this morning?**

[if yes, how]

**More to the point - How do you know God is for you this morning? How do you know God loves you this morning?**

Paul has been focusing on the fringe benefits,...the "these things" which in themselves are comfort & assurance & precious promises,...

But the hope of the gospel & the assurance of God's love isn't pinned down to any one thing, or one blessing

...it's pinned on one **person**, one **event**, one **gift** from which all others flow

**How do you know God is "for you" this morning? What proof can you point to? What does God's love look like?**

**Romans 8:31-32** <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

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**"spare"** – a judge spares a criminal if they deserve something far worse, but get off with nothing at all

- a parent spares a child if they deserve punishment, but they tell them it's ok after all

How do we know God loves us? How much does he love us?

**He loves us *this* much** – that he did not withhold one bit of his wrath when he poured it out on his son

**He loves us *this* much** - he's not making a list of your really bad sins and stashing them away for the judgment day,...he didn't withhold from his son, which means there's nothing left for you to be punished for.

**He loves us *this* much** – that he “gave him up” for us all.

**How do we know God is “for us”? because he gave his son “for us.”**

Jesus is the ultimate gift, the ultimate expression of love from the Father to his people. And if he loved us so much as to give Jesus to us as a gift of grace,...how much more will he “graciously give us all things”

**AGAIN – what are the all things?**

**Where is the focus? Christ.**

**Where's the proof? Christ.**

**Where's our confidence laid up? Christ.**

**What does God's love look like? Giving us Christ.**

**What does Christ's love look like? Going to the Cross**

**Now Paul switches to legal language here –**

**Romans 8:33-34** <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Interesting questions – like v.31,...I can think of answers.

**Who can be against us?** Ourselves,...family member, devil,...government,

**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?**...again,...our sin does it everytime,...our neighbors do it,... “hey, you're a hypocrite,...” a guy at work, a girl who overheard something snide you said,...

**Who is to condemn?** Satan approaches you every time you get locked in to the same old sin with his ministry of condemnation

**But the love of God brought you into a legal relationship, a permanent relationship, a secure relationship,...It means that the courtroom is over with...You are no longer on trial or at risk.**

**God is in the business of justification**, he's where your eternal security lies,...not your track record of faithfulness/lessness

**God dismisses all charges against you**,...they may come but those who bring charges are knocking on an empty courtroom,...the proceedings are over.

**Jesus Christ was the one condemned** – and rose again,...so who can rightly condemn anyone in Him? God says, take it up with my son & Jesus says, “paid in full”

My sins are awful & deserve death – and that's exactly what's been accomplished.

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**We CONCLUDE v.33-v.34: Just as our sin or our unworthiness can't separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, because Jesus is perfect & Jesus is worthy & you are united to Jesus**

,... neither can our circumstances.

**Romans 8:35-39** <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Interesting – what does the love of Christ accomplish? What does God's love & goodness mean?

**Removal from trials? We're American's.**

**We think love is a feeling**

**We think that's God's love means we get what we want,...**

When the famine comes, when the danger comes, when death comes, when sickness comes,...**we think God's love is waning for us.**

**But when things are going well, we think “God must love me more now”**

**God's love, Christ's love means eternal security in the midst of these very things,...eternal security amidst temporary uncertainty.**

**How is it that all things work for the good?**

-Because those God calls he does not let go.

-Because those God brings through trials he does not abandon.

-Because the good work that he began in you will be brought to completion and though all hell wages war against you you get the victory through Christ.

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Are you confident this morning that the things you struggle with will not separate you from the love Christ?**

**Are you confident this morning that the trials you find yourself in will not separate you from the love of Christ?**

**Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was, 3:16-19** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**Why Pray that we might know the LOVE OF CHRIST? Because we are prone not to.**

**Perhaps we're nervous & confused Calvinists –**

- 1. mortification becomes the chief end of man, and not the enjoyment of God himself**
- 2. we don't know if God does or not,...we don't feel we deserve it, surely the person next to us doesn't**

**Perhaps habitual focus elsewhere –**

- 1. if I asked all of you right now to stand up and tell about the Lord's love to you,...90% of us would freeze up. Because we don't regularly talk about the fullness of Christ & our security in the love of Christ,...it becomes an oddity.**
- 2. most of our conversations revolve around other things,...**
  - a. perhaps even the places where Christ is to be most magnified, this Sunday school class, your undershepherd/small group ,...the deaconate, the session, wic**

**,...is Christ the focus,...is our main concern Him, is our heart wrapped up in his fullness,...is the theme of our song his love,...**

**Or do we place God's word on the table and spend our time bringing the focus back onto ourselves & feeling refreshed to have shared with others,...but no more satisfied in our hearts.**

**I need to see Christ. That's who I need to see in you. That's who you need to see in me. I need Jesus. I need your incarnational ministry & you need mine. This church needs to see Christ in you.**

**I need you to talk about Christ. I need to talk about Him. The folks who walk through this door need to hear you talking about the one who loves you *this* much.**

**Your family needs to hear you talk about the goodness of Christ.**

**Why? b/c we all lose sight of the love of Christ & I fear we might be our own biggest hindrance.**

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**I began our time by mentioning that there's a inescapable link between what you believe and what you do, how you live, what you say.**

**And the danger is for us to charge into 1 Corinthians 13 or some 20-pt. "here's how to love someone else" when on a fundamental level**

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- we aren't 100% confident in God's love for us
  - we aren't 100% clear on what God's love looks like
  - we aren't 100% clear on what Christ's love looks like
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**But here's the good news – we can refocus on Christ. We can change, why?**

**Because his love has brought us into a secure relationship that provides the perfect context for that very change...**

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**Let me explain**

**We've seen #1 – the whole passage is about eternal security, everlasting presence, precious eternal promises,....**

God's love overflowed into a choice, a choice to set you aside since the foundation of the world for Him.

God's love overflowed into a gift, the gift of his Son,...and all the blessings that flow from Him,...

God's love meant the action of adoption, the action of justification, bringing you into a relationship with himself

**APP – here's why it's key to focus on your eternal security in Christ's love**

**Personal application** – the less secure you are in God's love, the less secure you are that your identity is in Christ,... the more you will demand from other people what they can not give, the more entitled & disappointed & bitter you will become.

The less you know God's love, the logic chain ends,...because the less secure you are in the love of Christ the more you doubt that "he will graciously give us all things"

The less secure you are that God loves you,...& you are secure in him,...the less you believe He will meet every need in Christ Jesus

So you look to your kids to meet your needs of self-worth, you look to your spouse for fulfillment,...you look to your job for a sense of who you are,...you look to your retirement for a sense of worth,...you look to your pastors, elders, deacons,...to be the ones who meet your needs,...

-You need Jesus. Your spouse isn't going to love you like Jesus. Jesus is going to love you like Jesus. Your job, your pastors, your finances,...these people and things are not Jesus substitutes. So they let you down & you let them know.

SUB APP – phenomenally powerful for counseling, witnessing,...they don't need you. They need Jesus. We tend to look at problems and not at people,...and we tend to direct people to technique and verses,...and they need Jesus.

**Corporate / Outreach App – love means forming secure relationships,...there's no escaping it. Change occurs in that context,...[Tripp] this is the big picture of Romans,...**God's continued love for you provides you with the security to stumble and yet never fall, to take one step after another towards Christ-likeness,...

Does our church life, does this or that program foster those kind of Christ-centered relationships? If not, why have em?

**#2 – to model, incarnate the love of Christ,...that secure unconditional love looks like selfless-service, self-sacrifice.**

**John 15:12-13** <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you..." but HOW? ,...how has Christ loved us,...what does it look like,...

John 15:12-13 <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

**Romans 8:32** <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

It's the same connection Paul draws in Eph 5

Ephesians 5:25-27 <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church [HOW] and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Mk 10:45

### **Corporate App – how can we incarnate / embody the love of Christ to one another?**

**It begins** with praying, thinking, talking, dwelling on the goodness & love, and selflessness of Christ.

When we are secure in the love of Christ will we stop demanding it from one another, and start focusing on giving it to one another.

Because we'll stop the game,...well if I serve here, or if I show love in this way, and it's not paid back in full will it be worth my time,...

... stop asking when will x or y do that for me, and ask, what does Jesus want me to do for x or y.

You are freed to serve in the church, rather than be served,...because Jesus is filling you and feeding you better than any person or program.

It means the younger generation stops asking, when are the older folks going to start serving in ways that affect me...and begins with asking, how can I serve them

It means the older generation stops asking, why don't the younger families help out with the things important to us...and asks what these families need that I could give?

Would a visitor to EP this morning see folks who "loved" like Jesus loved,...a bunch of servants so satisfied in Christ that they seek out lasting relationships in which they can serve one another?

What is love?

What does God's love look like?

What does Christ's love look like?

Do you know how much God loves you?  
Do you see the fullness of Christ?

Q & A – Testimony Time