

## “The Loved or God, or Loving the Unloveable” • Romans 5:6-8

1. As part of my preparation for this message, I was looking up a definition for a “strong Christian” — Google sent me to The Power Team! :) [nitro, timber, country boy...]
2. When we call someone a strong Christian, what are not talking about whether or not they can tear a phonebook in half. :)
  - Commitment? Behavior? Theological knowledge?
  - Holds an office or special position of leadership in the church?
3. **When we say “strong,” I think we mean “mature.”** So, what does it mean to be a *mature, growing* follower of Jesus? For starters —> (1) *an acute awareness of my moral inability to live a godly life; AND (2) an acute awareness of God’s radical love for me [I really struggle w/this!]*
4. In fact, this is where becoming a follower of Jesus **BEGINS** - **READ v. 6**
  - Did you expect Paul to say that? Do I *believe* that?
  - Let’s admit- this goes against conventional rel. wisdom - **READ v. 7**
  - Religion tells me to **work on** my moral ability; the gospel tells me to **confess** my moral inability!
5. The growing Christian continues to confess this to an **increasing** degree — not a **decreasing** degree. That is **counter-intuitive**; but the entire gospel is counter-intuitive: **to be strong, I must first be weak.**
6. **2 Cor. 12:9-10**, *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (less of me; more of Jesus)*
7. Again, this is nice in **theory**, but goes against our religious sensibilities.
8. But this is where we are **converted** and begin to **grow**— when we are **convinced** of God’s radical, counter-intuitive love - **READ v. 8**
9. **TWO CRITICAL QUESTIONS:**
  - First, why did Jesus have to *die*? *to fulfill justice; paved road for mercy*
  - Second, how is his death an expression of love? *define love —> to bless; through the cross I receive the opposite of what I deserve!*
10. **KEY POINT: The gospel is about radical love being demonstrated to the unloveable—to the ungodly!**
  - **Agape** — coined in the NT; from *agapao* (others: *storge, phileo, eros*)
  - *Self-sacrificing, unrelenting, unconditional love — I’m not a Trekkie... but seen episodes -- tractor beam pulls a ship in; can’t escape*
11. **1 John 4:9-11**, *“9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the*

*propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

12. Notice the **TWO CHANNELS** of love: the *inflow* and the *outflow*
13. Like a fresh pond (sustains life) - inlet/outlet (or stagnant)...
14. First, let’s talk about the **INFLOW**
  - The faith valve [this is the big challenge for the Xian]
  - It revolutionizes my personal identity: **“I am the loved of God”** [in the Gospel of John, “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*”]
15. Now, let’s talk about the **OUTFLOW**
  - The love valve - the ideal - I am able to love the unloveable
  - The problem - **I don’t usually feel like loving the unloveable**
16. We need to understand **three key aspects** of how *agape* love functions:
  - The **emotional** aspect - *feeling*
  - The **volitional** aspect - *decision*
  - The **sacrificial** aspect - *action*
  - *All perfectly manifested by Jesus in the cross - “the joy set before him”*
17. **WHICH COMES FIRST?** *well, it depends... may be the volitional*
18. Corrie ten Boom -- shaking the hand of a former Nazi labor camp guard
19. It helps to recognize that when loving the unloveable, *I was the unloveable one who was loved* —> *then, the INFLOW begins to affect the OUTFLOW*
20. Before I can be a **CONDUIT** of love, I must be a **RECIPIENT** of love
  - Understand - *agape* love is not a *reward*; it is a *gift* [grace]
  - “*Agape* love is grace made personal and practical”
21. Have you heard of Gary Chapman’s book, *The Five Love Languages*?
  - Encouraging words
  - Acts of service
  - Gift giving
  - Quality time
  - Physical touch
22. **Agape love is POWERFUL** — it changes us and changes others (in marriage, w/children)— **2 Cor. 5:14**, *“the love of Christ compels us...” (not law, judgement)*
23. You have heard of Norma McCorvey (Jane Roe v. Wade)... her story / planned parenthood/operation rescue... and her book, *Won by Love...* *kindness and love from those who could have judged/condemned her... love —> totally diff. life trajectory...*

**24. Have I been won by radical love? Have you?**