

**Romans 5:6-11** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup>For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup>Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Why can you boast?

1. Christ died for you
2. God justifies you
3. God saves you

Solomon told us, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2) and "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) We don't like the boastful person. Nobody likes someone who is full of himself, who only talks about what he has accomplished and how great his kids are. But in this fifth chapter of his letter to the Romans Paul tells us three times to boast. Why? With all that's said about the dangers of sinful pride, why would Paul write that? Why can you boast?

Paul wrote, *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Did you hear the words he used: powerless, ungodly, sinners? And later he even calls us God's enemies. We are guilty of breaking God's holy laws.

"There is, however, a danger implicit in understanding our 'problem' as an infraction of God's law. We believe our problem is that we have violated some impersonal code of laws or ethics. This is not the case. When we transgress God's commands, we transgress God himself. What is wrong with going against God's law is that the law reflects God himself. To violate the command is to violate God. It is an affront not merely to the code, but to the person of God." (Jacob Preus, Just Words, p. 112)

So, God's anger burns against those who so violate him. Our hatred burns against God because we want his job. We want to be our own god. Paul wrote later in this letter, "The sinful mind is hostile to God." (Romans 8:7) Here is the problem in our relationship with God.

But what does Paul tell us? *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* A few years ago a forest fire burned one hundred thousand acres in Colorado and caused \$50,000,000 in damage. An investigation traced the cause to Terri Barton. Terri was an employee of the forest service and considered a good worker and one of the nicest persons that people knew. But she was upset by a letter from her ex-husband and she burned the letter in a fire pit. The sparks from that fire were the start of the massive blaze. There is no way that Terri Barton could ever pay back the damages or make up for the loss from what she had done.

We are even more deeply buried in the ashes of our daily lives. We are right to confess that we "have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this [we] deserve [God's] punishment both now and in eternity." We were engulfed in the flames of our own sin when God sent his Son to rescue us even though God knew that it would cost his Son's life. Would you do that? Would you send your child on to thin ice to rescue his drowning friend if you knew your son would die in the process? What if that drowning kid wasn't your son's friend, but the bully who had stolen your son's lunch money and covered him with bruises and ridicule every recess since kindergarten? That's what God did to rescue us.

Paul said, *Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.* Very rarely will someone sacrifice his or her life for a good person or for someone who has been a great help to them. Some of our soldiers may sacrifice their lives to protect their families and country from terrorist attacks.

Now, consider again that God set out to save people who don't deserve a pat on the back but a slap in the face. He didn't rescue cuddly little puppies but snarling dogs that snap at any hand that tries to guide them. It wasn't an easy or cheap rescue either. God didn't just wave a wand and forgive sins. He sacrificed his own Son. Would you do that? Would you send your son to rescue a child molester if you know your son would lose his life in the process?

Like a woman getting ready for a date, people try to make themselves presentable to God. They try to cover up the past and present a pretty face to God. They say, "God will love me if I just quit drinking" or gambling or whatever. And when people try to approach God that way, they will never find peace. You can only have peace with God when you understand that you are one ugly person and completely unworthy of God and his love. What does God see in you? Nothing. But he gave his Son for you anyway. That's something to boast about.

Because of that sacrifice of Jesus, we are justified. *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!* Justify means to declare not guilty. Like a judge in a courtroom giving his verdict on a case, God has declared the world not guilty because Jesus paid the penalty for all sin.

Another way of saying it: we are reconciled to God. *For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!* Thoughts jostled in his mind as the windshield wipers threw the raindrops to the side. It had been so long since he had seen his father. He still heard the echo of the angry words they had spoken. They had not parted on good terms, each of them vowing never to speak to the other again. Each of them stubbornly kept that promise. But everything changed last night.

Mother had called. Father had had a heart attack, and the prognosis wasn't good. He quickly made airplane reservations and was now driving to the hospital. Instead of anger, regret and worry filled his mind. All those years wasted because of a grudge!

When he arrived at the hospital, he found out that his father had regained consciousness. But even better news was that his father wanted to see him. They both realized the wrong they had done each other. They no longer wanted to be enemies. They wanted to be father and son again. (Gregg Bitter)

That's the picture of reconciliation. To reconcile means to change our status from enemies to friends. God did not change his feelings about our hatred and our sin. We didn't change, either. We are still born enemies of God. What has changed is our status before God. When God reconciled us, that means that he changed our status from enemies to friends.

This is the good news of the gospel. The gospel offers us a change of identity. The federal government has a witness protection program. Those who enter into this program are offered a new identity. They can start a new life regardless of what they were before. God has a far better offer: He changes our identity from enemies under God's wrath to friends enjoying his love. And that's something to boast about.

And what does that mean for you? *And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have now received this reconciliation through Him.* The word translated, *rejoice*, is also translated, *boast*. In fact, it would be better to be consistent and translate it the same way throughout this letter. In this letter Paul has been asking what there is to boast about. In chapter three he said boasting is excluded because of faith. In chapter four he asked what Abraham had to boast about. Now, in chapter five he answers what we have to boast about. What do we have to boast about? Reconciliation. We who were enemies have been made friends of God through Jesus.

Do you have that boast? Only two things can rob us of that boast: sin and doubt. Are you wrapped up in a sin that is taking over your life? Do you seem to go back to that sin again and again? Has your heart become hardened to a sin? Like a callous on the hand, a hardened heart doesn't feel sin is so bad. We don't care if we sin or not. That destroys faith and robs us of our boast.

The other thing that robs us of our boast is doubt. We hear God say that we are reconciled but we don't really believe it. Doubt comes from focusing on ourselves instead of turning our thoughts on the cross of Jesus. That's why it's so important for us to be in church regularly. We spend way too much time with ourselves. We need to spend more time with Jesus standing at his cross.

As we stand there, we can boast. We boast that in Jesus we are justified, we are reconciled with God and we are saved. Now, that's something to boast about.