

The Love of God

Romans 5:5-8

February 8th, 2009

Fredrick M. Lehman was a traveling evangelist. Many do not realize that for a few months he carried a hand written note that had been given to him. After mulling and meditating upon it for months, he would later take that note and use it to pen a famous hymn in 1917. Many people in the Church do not know that the 3rd verse was actually taken off of the wall of an insane asylum. These words had been hand written in pencil and were not discovered until the patient who occupied the room died. They were written down by a nurse and given to Fredrick Lehman. He later penned these words to a song---

***Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.***

As we approach the subject of the love of God, I feel somewhat like A.W. Tozer, when on his last occurrence of preaching about the love of God, he said these words: "I can do no more justice to this awesome and wonder filled topic than a child can grasp a star. But by reaching for that star, a child causes attention to the star and points us in the direction so that maybe some of us who would not have looked will see the star. I, A. W. Tozer, stretch my heart this moment in hope of pointing you in the direction of the awesome love of God."

When we think of the love of God, most of us immediately think of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A passage as equal to that verse in depth, height, width, and length is what Paul writes in Romans 5:5-8.

Scripture

"...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 person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

In the 5th chapter of Romans, Paul begins to teach about the benefits of having a justified life. By faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has brought us out of sin into a right relationship with Him. Paul teaches that one of the benefits of a life that is right with God is that when life puts the squeeze on us, when you get into one of those situations where you know without a shadow of a doubt that this has either been ordained or permitted by God, and life squeezes you and you find yourself between a rock and a hard place, you can rejoice. We do not complain, or bellyache, or bicker, or gripe; we rejoice. Those of us who are right with God understand the principle that when life puts the squeeze on us, it produces the ability to remain under a load. That ability to remain under a load, called perseverance, actually produces Christian character through a life that has been tested by the fire and difficulties. Over time, that tested life produces hope. It is not our English understanding of hope, that if everything works out fine, then maybe I will get to go do what I want to do. But it is the Greek word *Elpis*, meaning a confident expectation. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Because we have been made right with God, we know that one day we will be just like His

Son Jesus Christ, and we are actually going to grasp in reality what He has laid hold on us for. The reason this hope we have will never put us to shame, or let us down, or disappoint us is because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul clearly teaches that after we heard the gospel and at the moment we believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Paul would write to the church of Galatia and say that the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is love. Jesus would teach His disciples before He went back to heaven that "*a new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you. And by this, (your ability to love one another as I have loved you) the world will know you are My disciples.*" Do you understand what this is saying? This is not just teaching that I have been loved by God; I have been. But this is teaching that I now, as one who has been loved by God, have the ability to love with the love of God. What has been brought to me as a benefit of a person, who is now right with God, is the ability to love with the love of God. Then Paul will make sure that we understand how this love differs from the way we have loved before.

I do not know about you, but sometimes I see people and I just cannot help making this observation. Sometimes I say to my wife; I do not see what he sees in her. Have you ever done that? Now many times I say; I do not see what she sees in him. Now where is that thought coming from? It comes because, on a human level, you have to have a reason to love. There is a reason why we love, and normally the motivation for human love is external. It does not lie in the one loving; it lies in the one being loved. We have to have a reason to love someone. Therefore on a human level, we all come to realize that love is something that you begin to work for. Love is something you try to be worthy of. Therefore, we begin to look at love and believe that one deserves to be loved, but another does not, because of what lies within them. If love is something that people deserve, then in order to be deserving, normally the one being loved has to do something. So guys learn to do things so the person they are dating will

love them. They are trying to earn their love. Then they get married and he quits doing what he was doing to cause her to love him. Now that he has quit doing it, she has suddenly does not love him anymore, and he does not know what is going on. You need to understand that if you are going to sweep your wife off of her feet, you are going to have to keep sweeping for the rest of your life. When the thing being done that is causing the love to be evoked quits being done, the love shuts off also. If you are with me, you are suddenly beginning to realize this human love thing is kind of fickle. It is really not something you can be really secure in; it actually breeds insecurity.

Using our sanctified imagination, let's imagine that Celisa married me because I was a hunk. Can you imagine the tremendous pressure on me, after 28 years of being married, to retain that hunkeness? If she married me because I was a hunk, then if I ever lose hunkeness, I will lose her love. Can you imagine the life I have to sustain now to remain a hunk? You see, there is no way a husband can be secure in that kind of love. There is no way a relationship can be secure in that kind of love. That kind of love breeds total insecurity. I am always trying to measure up, always trying to do, because the more I do then the more I deserve love, and then maybe someone will love me, or maybe I will love someone else. Just so we know, what Paul is saying is that God did not love any of us men because we were hunks, and He does not love any of you ladies because you were hot.

Let's look at verses 6-8 again: "*For while we still were weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 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 we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

You and I were weak, ungodly, sinners, and we will talk later in our studies about the fourth thing the Bible says about us, and that is we were enemies. While you were the enemy of God, while still a sinner, while ungodly, and while you were weak, Christ died for you. Here is security of

a believer! Our security is not in what we do, because we did not do anything to cause God to love us in the first place! Therefore, you cannot lose it by not doing, if you did not get it by doing. The security we have in being justified with God and the knowledge that we know will come to future glorification is based on God's love for us, not our love for Him.

Weak

We were weak...boy, we just do not pity the weak, do we? We men sure don't. You go to the gym and you see those guys trying to lift more than they can lift, and there they are caught under a barbell, and they cannot do anything with it. They are weak, they have no power to lift it, and we have to be a humanitarian and go get it off of them. What we really want to do is let it crush them, right? You pathetic man...that is a picture of this word. You see, the picture Paul has been painting is of sin and its chains wrapped around us. There is this heavy weight of sin on us, and this debt we have to pay to God, and here we are trapped under it, totally weak and pathetic. We cannot get it off of ourselves, we cannot free ourselves, we cannot wiggle out from under it at all; we are weak!

Ungodly

Now being weak is one thing, and that is bad enough. But then the Bible says I was ungodly. At first, when I began to look at this word I thought this was not really a problem because ungodly just means to not be like God, and we know we are not like God. But when I began to investigate this word, I discovered that is not what this word means. It does not mean to be opposite of God, it means to be opposed to God. It means that while we were this poor, pitiful spiritual weakling, we stood in opposition. We stood opposed to the holy, powerful God of heaven.

Sinner

The word sinner in verse 8 means to be a transgressor, or a lawbreaker, or a rebel. Can I just humbly say that I do not see what He saw in us? I hope you are smart enough to see that too. He did not love us because of what

was in us, He loved us in spite of us. His love was not caused by us, His love was caused by Him being who He is, and He showed His love.

This word, love, in the ESV is trying to translate a continual tense verb to say He is still showing us His love. He does not just tell us He loves us, He shows us His love by demonstrating it. Have you ever been in a love relationship with someone and they tell you how much they love you, but their actions betray what they say with their words. You finally come to that point to say, "Just quit telling me how much you love me and show me. Step up to the plate and love me." God not only said He loved us; He stepped up to the plate. In the person of His Son, He went to a cross and He died for the ungodly, for the weak, for the sinner, and He died for the enemy. That is not four different people; that was you, and that was me. Paul is going to contrast this love, because we understand someone dying for someone that is good. We understand someone dying for someone that is righteous. But every time a death is died that way, all that death does is to extend the life of the righteous person. I could give you story after story of a mother who has given her life for a son. I can tell you of soldiers who have given their life for men under their authority. I believe that I would give my life for my grandson, and I know as a dad that Kory would. Every one of us believe that we would die for someone we are in a relationship with, but who in here would die in the place of someone like Osama Bin Laden? Jesus did. And He did for you too.

In 1987, Northwest flight 225 crashed shortly after takeoff from Detroit airport. There were 156 people aboard that plane, and 155 people died. There was only 1 survivor and her name was Cecilia. As that plane was falling out of the sky, Cecilia lived because her mother unbuckled her seatbelt. As that plane was falling to the ground, she wrapped her arms around her 4 year old daughter. Her mother wrapped her body around Cecilia's body and did not let go, and she lived. You would have done the same. That mother's love just extended the life that Cecilia had. If I was ever put in a situation where I was to die for Celisa, or my kids, or grandkids, all my death would accomplish would be to extend their life for

maybe another 30 to 60 years. There is story after story of that kind of love, but that is not the kind of love that God had for you and I. Christ did not die to extend a life we had, He died to give us a life that we did not have. I can die to save someone I love, but my death cannot redeem them from the life they had. When you stop and think about it, Christ did not die for those who live, He died for those who were already dead. He demonstrated God's love. God loved us with a love that not only paid our sin debt, bore the consequence of our sin on the cross, caused Jesus to become a curse and bear the wrath of God, and to face eternal separation from God, but His life was given to us. And His life brought a new life to us so that we are not weak now. We are not ungodly now. We are not sinners now. We are not enemies now. If God loved us while we were all of these things, how much more are we secure in that love, now that we are His child? If He loved you while you were a sinner, do you think He would ever quit loving you now that you are His child? The amazing love of God!

I read this week about a school teacher who called Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith's little boy, Sammy, was in her third grade class. The teacher said, "Mrs. Smith, I am calling you because something has happened in class that has never happened in all of my years of teaching and I must tell you what your son did." That mother's heart froze for a few minutes. Then the teacher began to say, "In all of my years of teaching, I always have a creative writing assignment to the kids. In the assignment I tell the story of the ant who works hard all summer and puts back plenty of food for winter. But the grasshopper plays all summer, so when winter comes, he has no food. Then I tell the class to finish the story. Your son raised his hand. Sammy asked if he could draw a picture. I didn't think I had ever been asked that before, but I said yes you can, but only after you finish the story. All of the papers were turned in to me, and I began to read the stories. I must tell you that I have only had two reactions to this story in all of my years. The majority of kids always finish by saying, 'Mr. Grasshopper came to Mr. Ant and told him that he had no food for the winter and asked if he would share his food. Mr. Ant shares his food and the ant and the

grasshopper lived through the winter.’ But the other kids finish the story by saying, ‘Mr. Grasshopper came to Mr. Ant and asked for food, but Mr. Ant said no. I worked hard all summer and put my food away. You played so you don’t eat, and the ant lived and the grasshopper died.’ But Mrs. Smith, your son wrote, ‘Mr. Ant said yes, and he gave Mr. Grasshopper all of his food. Mr. Ant died that winter and Mr. Grasshopper lived.’ At the bottom of the story, he drew the picture of 3 crosses.”

You have been loved with the love of God, and you can love with the love of Christ.