

Grace, mercy and peace are yours through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when 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! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Friends,

You probably don't remember the name Dylann Roof but in 2015 he was attending a Bible Study at a church in South Carolina. After about an hour he stood up, took a pistol out of his backpack and started shooting. There were 13 people at that Bible Study and after the shooter ran out of ammunition 9 of those 13 were dead. Dylann Roof was caught and a year later convicted. You would think that the families of the victims would want revenge but many of them, when given a chance to speak, expressed forgiveness to Dylann for what he had done. We might ask ourselves, "How could they do that?" But as we look at our sermon text this morning a better question might be, "How could they not?"

I. We talk about God's love and how it has changed our lives and how we want to reflect it in all that we do but do we really understand God's love and what that means? In this portion of scripture Paul is trying to help us gain insight into the unconditional love God shows us. That's why he begins with, **"6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."** Jesus came into this world at just the right time – a time of God's choosing – and he died for the ungodly. That is pretty much everybody in this world including us. Paul points out that we were powerless to do anything for our salvation – we weren't even born but even if we had been living at the time of Christ, there was nothing we could do to benefit him or that would earn us his love. When it comes to our salvation, our sin makes us powerless and ungodly. But we see God's unconditional love in the fact that he died for us anyway.

To expand on that Paul tells us, **"7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die."** What does unconditional love look like? With these words Paul is trying to help us see that most of the times our love is conditional – it's based on what we will get or what we have already gotten from this person. You might risk your life for a "good person" because they benefit your life in some way but for a righteous person that has no benefit to your life, well you would probably not take the same risks. It's like saying, "If I do this, what will it cost me? Or in a way evaluating the cost versus the gain." But God doesn't do that.

“⁸ God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus did not consider what he would gain from us by paying for our sins. He didn't weigh cost versus benefit. His love wasn't dependent on us at all Paul points out that we are sinners and yet God loves us.

We can see that unconditional love of God in the cross where Christ suffered and died for our sins. He went to that cross willingly because he loves us. The Greeks have a word for that kind of love – it is called **αγαπε** love – a love that God has for us not expecting anything in return. God loves us because he wants to.

We see that unconditional love of God in his promise to send a Savior. We see God's unconditional love as Jesus came into this world and paid for our sins. We see God's unconditional love as he sent the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of faith and to bring us into his family. And even as we fall short of God's expectations, we see his conditional love as he brings us forgiveness for our sins.

That does change our lives and our relationships and how we respond to God's love.

II. Paul wants to make sure we understand and so he comes at it from a little bit different direction. **“⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”** We have been justified – declared not guilty of our sins because they have been washed away by the blood of Christ. That saves us from God's wrath and God's wrath is something we never want to experience.

“¹⁰ For if, when 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!” To reconcile something is to make it match up. We reconcile our bank statement to make it match up with the transactions that have occurred. Christ reconciled us to his Father by making us match up with his Father's demand of perfection. He did that by being perfect in our place and suffering and dying for all the times we sin. We are reconciled through his suffering and death. And we are saved through his resurrection for his resurrection proves that our debt has been paid in full and because he lives we too will live.

That is the kind of love we want reflect in our lives as a child of God but it is not always so easy but we try. We try as we speak to:

- the relative that hates you,
- the neighbor that annoys you,
- the person who isn't like you,
- the sinner (the addict, the homosexual, anyone else who normally gets looked down on—love overcomes that and speaks),
- the homeless,
- those who seem to always be asking you for something—love speaks,
- the ones whose commotion disturbs your worship,
- the ones whose attitude is always grumpy or negative,
- to someone whose views are different than ours,
- to the gossip, and
- to the one who always disagrees with you.

Love speaks unconditionally to all. When it does—and when God chooses to change a heart through the Word your love speaks—you know exactly what Paul is talking about in verse 11 when he says that we **“rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”** We rejoice. Rejoice in that—whether it’s your family member or neighbor—someone you might have had hours of conversation with or someone you only impacted for minutes. But rejoice when the gospel has an impact on their lives.

We come in contact with people every day that seem to be unlovable but that is what we once were – before we were brought to faith by Christ’s unconditional love for us. As we talk to people every day may we remember this unconditional love our Savior has for us and may we reflect it in our conversations and our actions and may God help us to feel the joy that comes through his unconditional love. Amen.