

The Security of Salvation, Part 3

Scripture: Romans 5:5b–11

Code: 45-42

INTRODUCTION

A. The Unfaithfulness of Man

We live in a day of unfaithfulness. Man cannot be trusted—he doesn't keep his promises. That's true of both individuals and nations. Husbands are unfaithful to the vows they made to their wives. Wives are unfaithful to their husbands. Children are unfaithful to the principles taught by their parents. Parents are often unfaithful to meet the needs of their children. Employees are unfaithful to the promises they make to their employers. And employers are often unfaithful to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to those in their employ. We also have to acknowledge that Christians frequently are unfaithful to God, although God is never unfaithful to them. Not one of us can claim immunity from the sin of unfaithfulness.

B. The Faithfulness of God

Only God is always faithful and keeps every promise in full. That fact is vital because everything we believe in stands on the faithfulness of God. Our eternal destiny is at stake. In contrast to the unfaithfulness around us, it is refreshing to lift our eyes to our beloved God, who is always faithful.

1. Promise

Scripture is replete with verses that declare God's faithfulness.

a) Deuteronomy 7:9--"Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God." b) Isaiah 11:5--"Faithfulness [is] the belt about [God's] waist" (NASB). Faithfulness encompasses God and holds all His other attributes in place. c) Psalm 36:5--"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." d) Lamentations 3:23--"Great is thy faithfulness." e) Hebrews 10:23--"He is faithful that promised."

2. Preservation

God's faithfulness stands out especially in His preserving His people for glory. He secures our salvation.

a) 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24--"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." b) Philippians 1:6--"[Be] confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

REVIEW

The security of the believer is premised on the faithfulness of God. All the Scriptures we have looked at, including Romans 5, describe God's implementation of His faithfulness. In Romans 5:1-11 Paul describes six links in an unbreakable chain that unite us to the Savior. So far we have examined three of them.

I. PEACE WITH GOD (v. 1)

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. STANDING IN GRACE (v. 2a)

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand."

III. HOPE OF GLORY (vv. 2b-5a)

"[We] rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing

that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."

LESSON

IV. POSSESSION OF LOVE (vv. 5b-8)

A. The Heart of Love (v. 5b)

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us."

God has begun a love relationship with us that stretches throughout eternity.

1. The internal reality

a) Awareness When you became a Christian, God deposited the Holy Spirit within you. In Ephesians 1:14 the apostle Paul calls Him the down payment--the guarantee of our salvation. We are guaranteed ultimate glory and ultimate salvation in heaven. The Holy Spirit then produces in us an awareness of God's love. b) Assurance The eighteenth-century hymn writer William Cowper wrote in "There Is a Fountain": E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme And shall be till I die. The most overwhelming concept in all Christianity is that God loves us. The personal, internal ministry of God through the Holy Spirit takes the issue of security beyond cognition to the deep recesses of the heart. By pouring out His love on us, God is assuring our hearts in a subjective manner that we belong to Him. (1) The presence of the Spirit Romans 8:14 says, "Foe as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If you've ever been led to do anything for the glory of God--such as righteous behavior, faithful study of God's Word, prayer, or worship of the Lord Jesus Christ--the Holy Spirit has led you. If you have sensed the Holy Spirit's leading, you know you are a child of God. If you have ever felt led to cry out to God, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15), you have sensed intimacy with God. (2) The absence of the Spirit The unregenerate individual senses no affinity, no intimacy, no communion with God. For those of us who know Jesus Christ, God has put His Spirit in us to draw us into an intimate love relationship with Himself. Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." That doesn't refer to our love for God, but to God's love for us. Romans 5:8 says, "God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's love for us has been deposited in our hearts through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit gives us the sense or feeling that God loves us. c) Affection We are emotional beings who respond to the Spirit of God. That truth solidifies everything we know intellectually about God. For example, we can know intellectually that we have peace with God because a divine transaction took place on the cross. We can know intellectually that we stand in grace and have been redeemed for future glory. But God goes beyond the intellectual, wanting us to feel His truth in our hearts. So His love is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Forfeiting Assurance

You can forfeit that subjective sense of assurance if you disobey God. Galatians 5:22 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, [and] peace." Disobedience, unrighteousness, and unconfessed sin grieves or quenches the Spirit of God and hinders Him from bearing fruit through you. It is important to recognize that although God has put His love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we won't experience assurance unless we're walking in the Spirit.

Christians who disobey God do not have a sense of security in their salvation because they're leaning only on what is cognitive. They can say they have peace with God, stand in grace, and have hope of glory, but they don't experience the internal, subjective ministry of God's Spirit affirming that they belong to God. At that point they need to follow the injunction of 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (NIV).

I know I'm saved because of the transaction at the cross that made peace and grace and hope a reality. But I also know I belong to Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit reassures my spirit that I'm a

child of God (Rom. 8:16).

2. The internal river

Romans 5:5 says that the love of God is "shed abroad" in our hearts. The Greek word translated "shed abroad" refers to something that is being poured out profusely or lavishly. God doesn't give us a little drop of love--He isn't stingy. John 7:38 says that when a man receives the Holy Spirit, "out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water." God never gives out anything in drops; He gives it out in rivers!

3. The internal revealer

a) The agency of the Spirit According to Romans 5:5 God's love for us is made available through the Holy Spirit. He is the agent through whom God works in the life of the believer. He is the gift of God's love.(1) The testimony of love That the Holy Spirit lives within each believer is itself a great testimony to the love of God. Would God plant His Spirit--the third member of the Trinity-- within you if He didn't love that you?(2) The guarantee of love The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our salvation, proving once and for all that our final salvation will come to pass (2 Cor. 1:22).(3) The seal of love Ephesians 1:13 says we are sealed by the Spirit--sealed with the stamp of God--never to be broken or opened by anyone else.b) The assurance of the Spirit(1) We are conquerors through Christ In Romans 8:35, 37-39 Paul says, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." What can separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing! (2) We are confirmed through the Spirit The sense of that assurance is confirmed by the Holy Spirit Himself, God's blessed gift to us. Based on Romans 5:5, no one can truly know the love of God in his heart unless he has the Holy Spirit living within him. Only those who have the Holy Spirit in them are Christians. So if a Christian experiences a time when he loses the sense of God's love for him, he undoubtedly has quenched the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Height of Love (vv. 6-8)

"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

1. The pitiful people (v. 6a)

"When we were yet without strength."

Prior to our salvation, we were powerless, impotent, and totally unable to do anything that pleased God. We were without strength to overcome sin, Satan, the world, death, or hell. We couldn't live a righteous life or save ourselves because we were paralyzed by our sin. Romans 8:7 says we were at "enmity against God": We were the enemies of holy God.

2. The compassionate Christ (v. 6b)

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly."

When God looked at us before we were saved, all that He saw in us filled Him with wrath and anger. Why? Because we were ungodly--the very opposite of Himself. It is amazing to realize that God, who is absolutely pure and holy, could still love beings who repulsed His holy nature. And he loved them so much that "in due time [at the time God prescribed] Christ died for the ungodly."

a) Sovereign love (1) Constancy It would be easy to understand God's loving those who are good, godly, and pure. But the mystery of divine love is that He loves those who are anything but that. Charles Hodge said, "If he loved us because we loved him, he would love us only so long as we love him, and on that condition; and then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But as God loved us as sinners, as Christ died for us as ungodly, our salvation depends, as

the apostle argues, not on our loveliness, but on the constancy of the love of God" (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], pp. 136-37). God doesn't love you because you're worthy of His love. Human love is like that--it is attracted by the nature of the object. But God's love is built into His nature, so if you happen to exist, you get loved. There was nothing in us that attracted Him. (2) Consistency Since nothing was in us to cause God to love us in the first place, what could be in us to make Him stop loving us now? Nothing. Since Christ died for us when we were ungodly, impotent, ugly sinners, it isn't a problem for Him to love us now. b) Substitutionary love Romans 5:6 says that Christ died for the ungodly. The Greek word translated "for" (hyper) is better translated "on behalf of," "instead of," or "for the sake of." Christ became a curse on our behalf (Gal. 3:13). At the proper moment in time, Christ put away sin through the sacrifice of Himself. The marvel of it all is that He lovingly died for such unlovely, godless people.

3. The supreme sacrifice (v. 7)

"Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die."

The Greek words translated "righteous" and "good" are synonyms. There are times when someone might die for a good person. But the point of verse 7 is that no one would die for a bad person--no one, that is, except God.

4. The gracious God (v. 8)

"God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Our infinitely holy God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). The God who hates every sin--every evil deed, thought, and word--is the same God who reaches out and loves ungodly, impotent sinners. That is the surpassing nature of divine love. The Greek word translated "commendeth" means that God proved the nature of His love by having Christ die for us while we were yet sinners. That is the security of our salvation.

Since God loved us when we were ungodly, wicked, impotent sinners--since He loved us enough to let His Son die for us-- will He not love us enough to keep us after we have become His children?

When we were saved, we were wretched sinners. But we will never be that bad again.

The love of God fills the heart of the believer. It's the kind of love that redeems an impotent, godless sinner. Since His love will do that, it will certainly hang onto a part-time sinning saint! And His forgiving love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He loved us when we were wretched, and He still loves us now that we know Him.

V. CERTAINTY OF DELIVERANCE (vv. 9-10)

A. The Permanence of Our Salvation (v. 9)

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

1. Its extent

In the past we were justified by Christ's blood, and in the future we will be saved from wrath through Him. By definition salvation is past, present, and future. We will be saved from wrath because biblically, there is no such thing as a part-time salvation. We were made right with God by the blood of Jesus Christ, and will be saved from the wrath to come through Him as well. The "wrath to come" is the lake of fire that burns with fire and brimstone, which is where the godless will be sent forever (Rev. 20:11-15).

2. Its essence

God is a God of wrath. But the wrath due to be poured out on all mankind was intercepted by Jesus. When we put our faith in Him, God's wrath is set aside and we are no longer children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). We have been saved from wrath. Paul reiterated that promise to the Thessalonians: "[We] wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). No Christian will ever know the wrath of God. The full fury of God's wrath for your sin was poured out on Jesus Christ.

B. The Preservation of Our Salvation (v. 10)

"If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

1. Friendship with God

Since God brought us to Himself when we were enemies, we will be reconciled continually now that we are His friends. Sin can't prevent that from happening. When God first reconciled us, we were wretched, rotten, vile, godless, impotent sinners. Since that was not a barrier to His reconciliation then, there is nothing to keep Him from reconciling us now. Since He redeemed us when we were His enemies, He certainly will keep us now that we're His friends (John 15:15).

2. Fortification through Christ

Verse 10 says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Since a dead Savior can redeem us, don't you think a living Savior can keep us? Through His death Jesus provided our salvation. So just imagine what He can do for us in His glorified resurrection life! Since God has done the greater act--saving us when we were wretched sinners--will He not do the lesser, which is to keep us?

All Through Jesus Christ

All that God did for us was accomplished through Jesus Christ. For example, verse 1 says, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 2 says, "By whom also we have access." Verse 6 says, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Verse 8 says, "Christ died for us." Verse 9 says we are "justified by His blood" and "saved from wrath through Him." Verse 10 says we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" and "shall be saved by his life." Verse 11 says, "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

God never loved us because we were lovable; He saved us while we were in the midst of our sin. And He did it for His own glory--to show what a glorious, gracious, merciful, and loving God He is (Eph. 1:5-6). What kind of God would He be if He turned His back on us now? He would receive no glory for that. But He reconciled us to Himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

Hebrews 7:25 says, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." When you come to God through Jesus Christ, He will save you to the uttermost--to the fullest point of salvation. How can He do that? Verse 25 continues: "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Christ can save us by His life because He is alive right now at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. He takes our case before the Father and pleads it on our behalf. He tells God that He bore our sin and received God's judgment and wrath. For that reason we are to be forgiven. He continually intercedes for us, and thus carries our salvation to its uttermost point, which is our glorification (Rom. 8:30). When Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19), He was referring to His continual intercession on our behalf.

VI. JOY IN GOD (v. 11)

"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

A. The Origin of Joy

Another subjective reality of our belonging to God is a heart filled with joy. Galatians 5:22 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love [and] joy." Salvation is not merely a future hope, but a present and abundant joy. Internal joy is one of the great securities of salvation. This is the third time Paul has referred to our rejoicing in God (cf. Rom. 5:2-3). The Greek word translated "joy" means "to exult," "to rejoice jubilantly," or "to be thrilled." So our present sense of internal joy is an additional guarantee of our future salvation.

B. The Object of Joy

The focus of the believer's joy is God Himself--not your own righteousness, ability, or worthiness. That's why the psalmist said, "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Ps. 34:3). In the midst of death or disaster, we don't lose our perspective because we rejoice in a God who keeps His own. The psalmist also said, "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation" (Ps. 35:9). Psalm 43:9 says, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy." We don't boast or rejoice in ourselves--we joy in God.

The final link that anchors us to our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is our joy in God. It is through Christ that we have received reconciliation with God. And that makes us secure!

Focusing on the Facts

1. What attribute of God is the foundation of everything the Christian believes in?
2. In what way does God's faithfulness especially stand out?
3. Why does Paul refer to the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our salvation?
4. Why does God give us a subjective assurance of salvation?
5. How does the believer know that God loves him?
6. How can a believer forfeit the sense of his assurance? Explain.
7. Why do we need an internal, subjective assurance of salvation in addition to a cognitive assurance?
8. How much does God love the believer?
9. Why were we without strength to please God?
10. What is the mystery of God's love? Why is it a mystery?
11. Why is God's present love for us so secure?
12. How did God prove His love for us (Rom. 5:8)?
13. What does the believer's salvation encompass?
14. How do we know that God keeps us in a constant state of reconciliation?
15. Why did God save us?

Pondering the Principles

1. Are you a faithful person? Do you tend to do the things you say you are going to do? Contrast God's faithfulness with your own. List as many reasons as you can for trusting God's faithfulness. Based on your response, how can you best encourage people who are enduring trials?
2. Memorize Romans 5:8: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (NASB). Replace the words us and we with your name. What does that verse mean to you? Meditate on your answer and thank God for His love.
3. Look up the following verses: John 5:26; 10:28-29; 14:19; Romans 8:34-39; Colossians 3:3-4; Revelation 1:18. List all the securities you can find. How does Christ save you by His life? What are the chances of your losing your salvation? As a result of knowing how secure you are, what kind of changes do you need to make in your life to bring God the most glory? Prayerfully consider the steps you need to make to implement those changes.

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