



## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 17



# THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Rom 5:6-11 <sup>NKJV</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

There have been many significant deaths in history. The first violent death was that of a righteous man, Abel. His blood cried out for vengeance to God from the ground (Gen 4:10-11). "All flesh," with the exception of "eight souls," died in the Noachic flood (Gen 7:21; 1 Pet 3:20). There was the unique death of Moses, whose spirit was taken from him at the peak of his strength, and whom God Himself buried (Deut 34:1-6). Although death was common, these were uncommon deaths from which much can be learned. The death of Christ, however,

is the most profound and thorough death ever experienced.

The most significant and meaningful death of all time is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. No death was, or can be, like His. He died in the prime of life, around 33-34 years of age. His death was a miracle of itself, for no man took it from Him, and He did not die under the curse passed in the garden of Eden, for He had no sin. His death was necessary, and yet it was voluntary. In it He was cursed, but man was blessed. Although God sent Jesus into

the world, and was with Him throughout His life, He forsook Him in His death. His death was required by God for the sins of the world, and not His own. He was appointed to death, but unlike men, the appointment was before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). There surely is no death like that of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Because of the purpose of His death, it had to be voluntary. If, in fact, He did not "lay down" His life, He could not have died, for He was "without sin" (Heb 4:15). Therefore, the Father gave Him a

## LESSON OUTLINE

- I. WHEN WE WERE WITHOUT STRENGTH (5:6)
- II. DYING FOR ANOTHER IS SCARCE (5:7)
- III. GOD HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE (5:8)
- IV. A "MUCH MORE" SITUATION (5:9)
- V. ENEMIES WERE RECONCILED (5:10a)
- VI. ANOTHER "MUCH MORE" SITUATION (5:10b)
- VII. REJOICING IN GOD (5:11a)
- VIII. RECEIVING THE RECONCILIATION (ATONEMENT) (5:11b)

commandment to lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:17-18). In strict and unwavering obedience, He volunteered, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb 10:9). The death of Christ was unique from every consideration.

Much of the contemporary talk about Christ's death is wholly without substance. It does not have the incense of Divine good pleasure upon it, and is sorely lacking in Scriptural perspective. Men compare God giving the life of His Son, with the possibility of men offering their sons. Staggering at such a consideration, they lose a sense of the real nature of Christ's death, looking upon it from a human, rather than a Divine, point of view. **When flesh considers the death of Christ, it never gets at the truth.** The flesh is not capable of perceiving the death of Christ correctly and with everlasting benefit. It will view His death from a sentimental point of view, a medical perspective, or some other human

outlook. Such views always lack benefit.

The death of Christ must be seen correctly for its intended benefits to be realized. Here is a vast reservoir of grace for every humble and contrite heart. Here is a death profound enough to engage our hearts and minds in both time and eternity. In Christ's death, Divine objectives were realized that could not have been accomplished in any other way.

Things were achieved in Christ's death that are so marvelous, only the Holy Spirit can open them to our understanding. Here is an event that is remembered every Lord's day by those who sit at the Lord's table. In this death there is substance for the soul, encouragement for the heart, and considerations for the mind. We learn something about God Himself here, as well as receiving more profound insights into the nature of the Son. When we ponder the death of Christ, we begin to see the enormity of sin, the magnitude of grace, and the profound desire of God to rescue His creatures from the fall.

### SALVATION IS NOT SIMPLISTIC

While I have already made mention of this, I must again elaborate upon it. Salvation is not simplistic. The holy nature of God would not permit Him to simply take sinful man back to himself. He could not ignore sin, and treat it as though it had not occurred. In the death of Christ not only were the needs of men satisfied, but the requirements of God were also addressed. What was required by fallen men, and demanded by a holy God, could only be accomplished through infinite wisdom. After four thousand years, not only had mankind utterly failed to correct their condition, there had been

absolutely no progress in that area. Moral and spiritual decline continued uninterrupted from man's expulsion the garden. The only favorable change that occurred in men followed a divine initiative. But more than this, no one knew what could be done about the human condition. No man and group of men could suggest a proposal for the reclamation of sinners. The plan, and the execution of the plan, had to come from God—the offended Party.

The significance of the death of Christ is seen against the backdrop of the sacrifices made under the Law. There God acquainted men with a substitutionary, or vicarious, sacrifice. The idea of "atonement" and "reconciliation" through blood was introduced. Apart from these types and shadows, the death of Christ is not seen as precisely as possible.

Much preaching about Christ's death is from a sympathetic and fleshly viewpoint. Men are prone to compare God giving His Son for us to the impact of an earthly father giving up his son. Others present the death Christ in such a manner as to lead men to view it as though Christ was a mere martyr. I am careful to say these conclusions are not always preached. Rather, men are left thinking in this way because they have not heard the Scriptural representation of Christ's death. It is seen more as emotionally staggering than spiritually profound.

This passage will show that Christ's death was not a mere favor, but a Divinely **required substitution**. His death was vicarious, and could not be avoided without all men perishing. It was endured by Christ in the place of, and for the benefit of, fallen humanity.

## WHEN WE WERE WITHOUT STRENGTH

*"5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* The spirit will now develop the necessity of Christ's death, and the benefits that have accrued from it. He will also confirm to our hearts that if our natural condition was satisfactorily addressed by His death, there should be no doubts about God finishing the work in those who have been

justified by that death.

### STILL WITHOUT STRENGTH

With spiritual skill, the inspired Apostle has already laid the groundwork for the expression "without strength." This is not a casual word, depicting a condition that was mild. Some versions tend to lead to that conclusion by translating the words "still weak" (RSV,

NRSV), "yet weak" (ASV), "were weak" (Darby), and "still ailing" (Young's Literal). While "weak" may be an acceptable word from the etymological viewpoint, it is altogether unacceptable because of the ordinary understanding of the word—"not strong enough." But that is not the meaning of the Spirit here. He is not saying men were simply deficient in strength, but that they had NONE.

The idea here is that of utter helplessness, or having NO strength at all. It is not that some strength existed, but not enough to accomplish salvation. It is that NO strength was found in humanity at all. Thus other versions more precisely translate the phrase “*still powerless*,”<sup>NIV</sup> “*still helpless*,”<sup>NASB</sup> “*powerless*,”<sup>NIB</sup> “*utterly helpless*,”<sup>NLT</sup>.

This was a continuing condition, unchanged by time, the testimony of creation, the human conscience, or the Law of God. Thus we read, “**YET** without strength,”<sup>KJV</sup> “**STILL** without strength,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “**STILL** helpless,”<sup>NASB</sup> and “**STILL** powerless”<sup>NIV</sup>. The perspective developed by this expression is as follows.

- ▶ Adam and Eve lost their strength when they sinned, and men still have no strength.
- ▶ Men saw the testimony of creation, speaking of God’s eternal power and Godhead, and they are still without strength.
- ▶ Even though men heard the testimony of their conscience, which bore the testimony of holy Law, they still have no strength.
- ▶ Although the Law of God precisely defined sin, and gave sufficient incentives to prompt men to obey it, they still have no strength.
- ▶ After four thousand years of Divine longsuffering, humanity remained totally void of spiritual strength.
- ▶ There was not a single person who had the strength to change his moral and spiritual condition.

Thus, the Divine analysis of humanity is justified, and seen to be totally true: “*There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (3:10-12). Over and again, the Spirit will drive home the truth of these words, confirming the nature and need of a righteousness from God.

Men may argue about the aptitude of unreconciled men. God says they are “**WITHOUT** strength.” The intellectual prowess of men may be exalted, but God

declares they are “**WITHOUT** strength.” Purported scholars may speak eloquently about man’s free will, and how he can make some progress, but God says he is “**WITHOUT** strength.” Men are not hypothetically “**WITHOUT** strength,” they are totally void of it. They are power **LESS** and hope **LESS**.

If the God of heaven did not undertake to save humanity by His own mighty hand, there would not have been a single acceptable individual in the history of the world! If it were not for the death and resurrection of Jesus, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham would **not** have been saved. **In fact, there could have been no faith in the world apart from “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”** (Rev 13:8). The promise of an appointed Savior was the soil from which faith sprang. The atoning death of Christ was as necessary for Adam and Eve as for Saul of Tarsus and you!

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“Without strength” confirms there was a continued degeneration in human nature. The very words “without strength” imply a downward trend, and a certain deterioration. All of this underscores the necessity of the Son of God. His appointment as our Representative, humbling Himself to come into the cursed realm, laying down His life, and taking it up again was a Divine necessity. This is true because we were “**without strength**.”

In summary, “without strength” confirms there was nothing in us that

recommended us to God, or proved us worthy of His praise. It also substantiates we were unable to correct that condition.

### IN DUE TIME

This is a significant expression: “*in due time*.” It is a word of expectancy and purpose. Other versions read “*at just the right time*,”<sup>NIB</sup> “*according to the time*,”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “*at the appointed time*”<sup>NJB</sup>. The death of Christ was accomplished in a timely manner. It occurred at the appointed time. If it has taken place prematurely, its benefits would have been beyond the reach of humanity. If it had been too late in time, it would have been pointless. In order for Jesus to fulfill the will of God, He had to come into the world and accomplish the Father’s will at the appointed time—a precise time for which adequate preparation had been made.

The Scriptures make much of this critical aspect of our salvation.

▶ “*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, **The time is fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mk 1:14-15). The NIV reads, “*The time has come*.” The juncture in time had come when the purpose of God was to be fulfilled, and it was on schedule.

▶ “*Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until **the time of reformation***” (Heb 9:9-10). “*Reformation*” refers to the **real** new order—the time of the New Covenant. During this era, and under the administration of Jesus, God is reshaping men, conforming them to the image of His Son. He is orienting them for glory—the eternal ages. This, the Spirit affirms, is related to a specific time, designated and purposed by God.

- ▶ *“But when **the fulness of the time** was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Gal 4:4-5). The phrase *“the fulness of the time”* confirms that throughout history things progressed toward the introduction of the Son of God. When the appointed time came, He entered unto the world, *“made of a woman, made under the Law.”*
- ▶ *“For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once **in the end of the world** hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”* (Heb 9:26). The *“time”* of Christ’s sacrifice is here seen as a line of demarcation. It introduced the closing age of this world, and the final era of history. Other versions read, *“the end of all ages,”*<sup>NKJV,NIV</sup> *“the consummation of all ages,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“the end of the age.”*<sup>RSV</sup> *“the end of the old order,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the full end of the ages,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“the end of the last age.”*<sup>NJB</sup> The *“end of the world,”* in this case, is an era, and not a point in time. Jesus appeared the first time at the

*times,*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“these final days,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“the final point of time.”*<sup>NJB</sup>

**The Significance of “due time”**

The *“due time”* was the appointed time. It was also the appropriate time. In His infinite wisdom, God did not send His Son into the world until sufficient time had been allowed for the following.

- ▶ Confirm the testimony of nature was not sufficient to recover humanity.
- ▶ Substantiate the insufficiency of the conscience to correct the human condition.
- ▶ Establish the Law was weak through the flesh, and not adequate as a means to salvation.
- ▶ Verify there was none who was righteous, sought God, or did good.
- ▶ Prove the absolute need for a Savior.
- ▶ Allow for the development of a sense of spiritual need under the tutelage of the Law.
- ▶ Develop a special people through whom the Savior would come, and within which He would be properly raised.
- ▶ Culture a special land, *“His land,”* in which the sacrifice would be made.
- ▶ Allow for the development of the a

been met.

In this world, God’s appointments are always related to time—to a specific juncture in history. Noah entered into the ark on the *“selfsame day”* designated by the Lord (Gen 7:13). Israel came out of Egypt on the *“selfsame day”* appointed by God (Ex 12:41). Isaac was born to Sarah at a *“set time”* in a specific *“year”* (Gen 17:21; 18:14). Daniel spoke of times that were *“appointed”* by God (Dan 8:19; 11:27,29,35). Jesus told His disciples both *“times”* and *“seasons”* were in the power of God (Acts 1:7).

The devil was not able to stop the Savior from entering into the world, even though he was the first one to be told about it (Gen 3:15). The slaying of Abel, the barrenness of holy women in the Messianic lineage, the slaughter of the infants by Pharaoh, and the killing of babies two years and under by Herod, could not thwart the entrance of the Deliverer from heaven. He came at the precisely appointed time. Everything was ready, and the world was prepared.

**What Does This Mean?**

This truth is not something to tantalize the intellect. It is a message for the heart. The fact that Jesus came into the world in *“due time”* means He is effective. His salvation is accessible. His grace is obtainable. His mercy can be received. His grace is within our reach. Because He came in *“due time,”* what He brings can be realized. Remission can be acquired, and His fellowship can be enjoyed. His sacrifice is effective, and His intercession is sure. Whoever believes on Him *“will not be ashamed!”*

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beginning of that era. He will appear *“the second time”* (Heb 9:28) at its close. The duration of this period is *“the day of salvation.”*

- ▶ *“Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in **these last times** for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God”* (1 Pet 1:20-21). Once again, the Spirit relates the revelation of the Son of God with the close of the ages, or the end of time. Other versions read *“the end times,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“the end of*

proper concept of God through the Law and the Prophets.

- ▶ Confirm the sinfulness of humanity, and its irreversible downward bent.
- ▶ Culture a longing for a Savior as defined and promised by God Himself.
- ▶ Demonstrate that neither time nor circumstance can abort the purpose of Almighty God.
- ▶ Show that the human condition could not be corrected apart from Divine intervention.

If Jesus had come into the world before *“the fulness of time,”* or the *“due time,”* these requirements would not have

**CHRIST**

The Spirit is careful to use proper words—words that convey the truth in all of its power. He does not say *“Jesus”* died in *“due time.”* Nor, indeed, does He say *“the Son of man”* died in *“due time.”* To be sure, it was the Person of *“Jesus”* who died. It was also the *“Son of man”* who died. His death, however, obtained its effectiveness because He was *“the Christ”*—the appointed and anointed One of God—the *“chosen of God”* (1 Pet 2:4). The word *“Christ”* means **Anointed One, or Messiah**. It refers to one appointed to fulfill a specific task. In this case, it was the reconciliation of the world

to God, with all that was entailed in that awesome commission (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Jesus is the “*anointed*” One declared by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 61:1-4), confirmed by Christ’s own words (Lk 4:18-19), and declared by the Apostles (Heb 1:9).

It would have done no good for a Savior to die for us who was not appointed. Also, if the one appointed did not die, our state would have remained unchanged.

Although this is generally known among believers – i.e., that Jesus is the one chosen by God – it is not something to be taken for granted. We must often be reminded of this reality, for it causes our faith to become more deeply rooted in the Lord. It also moves us away from knowing Jesus “*after the flesh*” (2 Cor 5:16).

God has “*anointed*” Jesus above all others (Heb 1:9). He was, indeed, “*foreordained before the foundation of the world*” (1 Pet 1:20), being the Lamb “*slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev 13:8). Although He volunteered to offer the required sacrifice, He did not take the honor upon Himself, but was “*called of God*” (Heb 5:3-4). It was the Father who gave Jesus the commandment to “*lay down*” His life and “*take it up*” again (John 10:17-18). It is He who sent the Son into the world (1 John 4:14), and “*gave*” Him to be the propitiation for our sins (John 3:16; Rom 3:25; 1 John 4:10).

It is this circumstance that makes Jesus “*the Christ*.” It also puts salvation and all of its benefits within our reach. It confirms the strong desire of God to save us, and His commitment to accomplish what neither man nor Law could do. You may recall the good confession of Peter included Jesus being “*the Christ*.” Here is how God revealed the Son to Peter. “*Thou art THE CHRIST of the living God*” (Matt 16:17-18).

**THE UNGODLY**

“ . . . Christ died for the **UNGODLY**.” The very word “*ungodly*” jars the soul. It is a strong word, speaking

of a condition that is obviously not to be desired, yet in which all were found. This is how “*WE*” are described.

Notice the manner in which this word is given to us. First, the Spirit refers to an event that occurred when “*WE*” were “*without strength*.” Now He affirms Christ died for the “**UNGODLY**.” “*We*,” then, were “*ungodly*,” else there would be no point to the declaration. Further, being “*without strength*” confirmed that we were “*ungodly*,” otherwise Christ’s death would have no relevance and application to us. The word “*ungodly*,” therefore, is used to further describe the condition of “*without strength*.” There is no person out of Christ to whom “*ungodly*” does not apply. It stands for the entire human race. Fix it in your mind, **if Christ’s death was not for everyone, it was for no**

**It would have done no good for a Savior to die for us who was not appointed. Also, if the one appointed did not die, our state would have remained unchanged.**

**one.** A vicarious sacrifice must be for all who have offended God– “*the ungodly*.”

**The History of the Word**

In the New Covenant writings, there is a single word translated “*ungodly*.” It is ἀσεβής (in various forms), which etymologically means irreverent, godless, or wicked. Doctrinally, this word means **unlike God**, for the nature of God Himself defines what is right and true. The “*ungodly*” are “irreverent” because they are not like God. They have sinned, and “*come short*” of His glory. They are godless and wicked by way of contrast. That is, sin, like a virus, has infected their whole nature, making them unlike God in their manners and expressions.

The Spirit uses this word thirteen times in the New Covenant writings. It is always a significant word, summoning up a sense of someone reprehensible to God.

- ▶ God justifies the “*ungodly*” (Rom 4:5).
- ▶ Christ died for the “*ungodly*” (Rom 5:6).
- ▶ The Law is for the “*ungodly*” (1 Tim 1:9).
- ▶ If the righteous are scarcely saved, what about the “*ungodly*”? (1 Pet 4:18).
- ▶ The flood came upon the “*world of the ungodly*” (2 Pet 2:5).
- ▶ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example for those who live “*ungodly*” (2 Pet 2:6).
- ▶ The day of judgment will include the “*perdition of ungodly men*” (2 Pet 3:7).
- ▶ “*Ungodly men*” turn the grace of God into lewdness, and deny Jesus (Jude 4).
- ▶ In a prophecy of the flood, and the coming of Christ as well, Enoch mentioned the “*ungodly*” who had “*ungodly deeds*,” committed them in an “*ungodly*” manner, and sinful words spoken by “*ungodly sinners*” (Jude 15).
- ▶ In the “*last time*” mockers will walk in their “*ungodly lusts*” (Jude 18).

If a person will consider this word through the filter of Scripture, a sense of its meaning will register upon the soul. The knowledge and understanding of these expressions will summon up a whole framework of thought every time one hears the word “*ungodly*.”

**Before Christ**

Before Christ, the Spirit employed a number of different words to convey the idea of “*ungodly*.” Throughout the 1,500 years of the Law’s administration, the Lord was developing a concept of “*ungodly*” among His people Israel. In those spiritually primitive times, He would present the word by contrast, defining those who were in obvious contradiction of His law as “*ungodly*.”

- ▶ **Beilyaal בְּלִיעַל:** Often translated “*Belial*,” mostly “*ungodly*.” It means evil, worthless, good for nothing, unprofitable, base, and wicked (2 Sam 22:5; Psa 18:4; Prov 16:27; 19:28). Twice, this word is simply translated “*wicked*” (Deut 15:9; Nah 1:1,11).

Sixteen times, it is translated “*Belial*” (examples: Deut 13:13; Judges 19:22; 1 Sam 1:16; 2 Chron 13:7).

- ▶ **Rasha** רָשָׁע: This word means wicked, a criminal, or a law breaker. It refers to one who has sinned against God and/or man (2 Chron 19:2; Job 34:18; Psa 1:1,4,5,6; 3:7; 73:12).
- ▶ **Aviyl** אָוִיַל: This word means unjust, or perverse in ones ways (Job 16:11).
- ▶ **Lo N** לֹא־נָ: This is a modifying word closely related to our prefix “UN,” as is “*UNgodly*.” It is used once in the Psalms where it is used of an “*ungodly nation*” or people (Psa 43:1). In that text it means a body of people who are not recognized by God because they are unlike Him in their ways.

### The Concept Developed

Thus, the Holy Spirit developed a conscience within men of what made a person unacceptable to God. Briefly ponder the words and ideas He employed to accomplish this.

- ▶ Worthless, good for nothing, and unprofitable.
- ▶ Breaking the law, and offending both God and man.

**This is what sin produced; the crop that it yielded among the sons of men. They became “ungodly.” Men actually became more like the devil who deceived them, and less like God who made them!**

- ▶ Unjust, perverse, corrupt, and defiled.
- ▶ Not like God, and not accepted.

This is what sin produced; the crop that it yielded among the sons of men. They became “*ungodly*.” **Men actually became more like the devil who deceived them, and less like God who made them!** For who is the very epitome of being worthless, lawbreaking, corrupt, and unlike God? Is it not the devil himself?

### Conclusion

It is no small thing, therefore, that “*Christ died for the ungodly*.” He died for those who had lost their worth, who had offended God, were corrupt, and in whose persons Godlikeness could no longer be found. Men stood in need of a Savior.

“*The ungodly*” refers to the entirety of the human race, not a segment of it. Christ did not die only for the corrupt Gentiles. Nor, indeed, did He only die for the lawbreaking Jews. He surely did not die only for those who had reached the moral depths, like the Gentiles described in the first chapter.

It is important to get the full impact of this declaration. It will highlight the depths to which man fell, and the extent to which God has gone to save him. It is also vital to see that “*ungodly*” is a vivid description of the entirety of humanity. On a personal level, it is a description of **us**—“*when WE were without strength*.”

Here, real insight can be obtained concerning the effects of transgression, and the obvious need for a Savior.

## DYING FOR ANOTHER IS SCARCE

“*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.*” Here a strong appeal is made to our hearts. This is more than passing along information. It helps us to gain a perspective of the remarkable revelation of God and Christ that are found in Jesus’ death. It is exceedingly rare for anyone to die for another—for any reason.

With great power the Spirit will show us the love of God far surpasses any known to mankind. It has no equal or parallel among the sons of men. His love is not distinguished by a certain Greek word, as some incorrectly affirm. Perhaps you have heard some sophist refer to God’s love as the “*agape*” kind of love. This is NOT a true saying. Some examples will confirm what I have said.

**Uses of AGAPE.** One of the Greek words used for “*love*” is *agape* (ἀγάπη). It reflects the idea of deep interest and

concern, choice and devotion to. Its use, however, is not limited to Divine expression. In the sermon on the mount Jesus said, “*For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*” (Matt 5:46). Both references to “*love*” come from “*agape*” (ἀγαπήσητε and ἀγαπώντας). Scripture speaks of those who “*loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*” (John 12:43). The word used there is “*agape*” (ἀγάπησαν). Jesus once upbraided the Pharisees because they loved “*the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets*” (Lk 11:43). Again, the word used is “*agape*” (ἀγαπάτε).

Uses of PHILEO. Another Greek word for “*love*” is “*phileo*” (φιλεῖω). This word indicates a love that is emotional, where the feeling of affection is found. Although generally applied to the love of men, its use is not confined to that. Jesus said of His Father, “*For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all*

*things that Himself doeth: and He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel*” (John 5:20). The word used here is “*phileo*” (φιλεῖ). During His last evening with the disciples, Jesus said, “*For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*” (John 16:27). Again, the word “*phileo*” is used of God’s love (φιλεῖ).

The rich love of God and Christ cannot be fully appreciated from a linguistic point of view. Language itself breaks down when speaking of Divine qualities. We will find that the love evidenced in Christ’s substitutionary death confirms this to be the case.

### NOT TOTALLY STRANGE

It is not that one person dying for others is totally strange. Corrupt Caiaphas, the high priest who headed up the proceedings of Christ’s death, spoke of one dying for many. He reasoned, “*it is*

*expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not*" (John 11:50). He was not thinking of redemption from sin, but of appeasing the Roman government so the nation of Israel could be spared. Yet, God had put this word in his mouth for succeeding generations—to see the truth of a vicarious atonement. Of Caiaphas' words the Spirit says, *"And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad"* (John 11:51-52).

### A PERSPECTIVE IS BEING DEVELOPED

Our text does NOT say "Christ died for the offspring of God." It does NOT say, "Christ died for those created in His image." Nor, indeed, does it say "Christ died for those who had great potential." While there are elements of truth in those sayings, they are not in order when speaking of Christ's death.

Although man still bore the image of God, the need for and reality of redemption could not fully register upon our hearts unless we saw what sin had done to us. Christ did not die for us because we were like God, but because we were NOT like God. He did not die for us because we were good, but because we were NOT good. It was not our potential that compelled Him to die, but our condition. To think in any other manner dulls the significance of His death.

When properly seen, the vicarious atonement will not leave men boasting in their worth. It will not allow an exaggerated view of the attainments or potential of natural men. Rather, it will throw the spotlight of glory upon God and Christ. It will accent the love and grace of God, while showing the shame and degradation into which sin brought man.

In my judgment, there is a great need for this perception in our time. It devastates the foundation of fundamentally false views of mankind as found in evolution, psychiatry, and philosophical views of human need.

### SCARCE AND DARING DEATHS

Political fervor has moved some to

speaking of noble souls who have laid down their lives for their country. We must be careful not to disdain such rare displays of courage. However, this falls far short of the meaning of our text.

### No Such Incident in Scripture

Here is a most noteworthy observation. We have NO example in Scripture of a person stepping forward to die in the place of a righteous person, or for one deemed "good." There are records of martyrs: Abel (Gen 4:3-8), the prophets slain by Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:13), Zechariah (2 Chron 24:20-22), John the Baptist (Mk 6:18-24), Stephen (Acts 7:58-60), James (Acts 12:2), and Antipas (Rev 2:13). But they were slain for a cause, their love for the Lord, and because of their testimony.

### A SOLITARY HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

"The affecting case of Damon and Pythias is one. Damon had been condemned to death by the tyrant Dionysius of Sicily, and obtained leave to go and settle his domestic affairs on promise of returning at a stated hour to the place of execution. Pythias pledged himself to undergo the punishment if Damon should not return in time, and deliver himself into the hands of the tyrant. Damon returned at the appointed moment, just as the sentence was about to be executed on Pythias; and Dionysius was so struck with the fidelity of the two friends, that he remitted their punishment, and entreated them to permit him to share their friendship; (Val. Max. 4. 7.) This case stands almost alone." (Barnes Commentary)

Whether we consider the Word of God covering the period before the Law, during the Law, or in the age of grace, we have no example of a person volunteering to die for "a righteous man," or one considered to be "good." There is no record of one stepping forward to take the place of a martyr, whether before, during, or after the Law.

### An Example of Submitting to Jeopardy

There is an example of noble men who submitted themselves to certain jeopardy for a righteous man. One such occasion is recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Second Samuel. "David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David said with longing, 'Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he

would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. And he said, 'Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?' Therefore he would not drink it"<sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Sam 23:14-17). The response of king David confirms the rarity of such nobility—just as our text says. But we still have no record of one man dying in the place of another.

Peter once told Jesus, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake" (John 13:37), but he was not speaking of a substitutionary death, and really did not realize what he had said. Jesus responded, telling Peter he would deny him three times before the night was over. Still, we have no record of one man laying down his life in the place of another.

The ONLY place this concept is pressed into the Scriptural record is in the animal sacrifices—and those were not voluntary on the part of the animals. Nor, indeed, were they effective to accomplish the desire of the Lord (Heb 10:6).

### The Most Vivid Expression

The most vivid expression is found in the account of Abraham offering up Isaac at the commandment of the Lord. Before he could plunge the knife into his "only son," the angel of the Lord stopped him, saying it was now evident that he truly feared the Lord. It is then written, "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering **IN THE STEAD OF HIS SON**" (Gen 22:12-13). The NASB reads, "in the place of his son."

### What Do We Learn From This?

Herein a most wonderful truth is revealed. **God has so orchestrated Scripture as to accentuate the death of His Son!** While it may be conceptually possible for a one to die for "a righteous man," God did not allow any such record in Scripture. It might even be conceivable for someone to "dare to die" for a "good man." But no such account was permitted in Scripture! Throughout history, there may have been an occasion here or there where some daring soul died in order that a noble soul might live on. There is, however, no such record in Scripture. I

understand this to be by Divine design. God will not share the glory of Christ's death with any other!

Our text leaves us unable to site examples of the possibilities stated. There is really only one such example, and it is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the

Lord Jesus said, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13), a **solitary example leaps to the forefront of our minds!**

It is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, distinguished from all other

deaths. No other death has ever been like His! Abel's death falls short, as well as that of the holy prophets, and even John the Baptist. No martyr's death can compare with this! Profane history cannot produce a solitary example of this kind of love. Jesus, and Jesus alone, proves His word to be true.

## GOD HAS COMMENDED HIS LOVE

"<sup>8</sup> **But God demonstrates** (commendeth, KJV) **His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" We are, indeed, on hallowed ground! The **existence** of God's love is beyond all question, for it is integral to His nature. The spirit twice affirms, "**God IS love**" (1 John 4:8,16). His love, however, extends beyond the perception of natural men. Creation, with all of its magnificent expanse, has never uttered a single syllable about "*the love of God.*" It can only speak of His "*eternal power and Godhead*" (Rom 1:20). The concept of God has been entertained by men throughout the world, and is reflected in their idolatries. But not a single tribe or people have ever conceived of a God who "**IS love.**" No idol has ever been made to a loving God. No philosopher, however astute and disciplined in thought, has ever conceived and declared that "**God IS love.**" Idolatrous men have conceived of a "goddess of love," but NEVER of a god who IS love.

Even after God has **revealed** His great love, it is exceedingly difficult for some poor souls to perceive it. And all who have perceived it in any degree acknowledge they have seen only the hem of the garment of Divine love. This is the love that is "*poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*" (Rom 5:5). Only the heavenly Guest can open its fulness to us. Take, for example, "*the love of Christ*" that is nothing less than an expression of the love of God. It is said that the effectual ministry of the Holy Spirit includes making us able to "*know the love of Christ which passes knowledge*" (Eph 3:19). Divine love cannot be deciphered by word studies and

academic discipline. At some point, the human spirit must be influenced by the Holy Spirit if this love is to be comprehended.

We now enter into a consideration

**In the death of Christ more of God's love is seen than was perceived in His earthly ministry. It constitutes a more extensive witness, and confirms things only suspected by those who saw His marvelous works and heard His wondrous words.**

of God's love that is transcendent to philosophy and human reasoning. It is described as "*His OWN love.*" This is not a description of love from an academic viewpoint, as is so common in certain circles. **Here is a love that is seen in an action rather than a definition.**

### A LOVE THAT IS COMMENDED

The KJV reads, "*But God commendeth his love toward us . . .*" Additional versions employing this word include ASV, Websters, Darby, Duoy-Rheims, and Young's Literal. Other versions read, "*But God shows His love for us,*"<sup>RSV</sup> "*But God proves His love for us,*"<sup>NRSV</sup> "*But God has made clear his love to us,*"<sup>BBE</sup> "*So it is proof of God's own love for us.*"<sup>NLT</sup>

I prefer the word "*commends,*" for it appears to carry more of the meaning of the text. Although incapable of disclosing the full intent of the expression, the word

translated "*commends*" literally means "to stand with." The picture is that of God Himself standing along side the dying Jesus saying, "See how I love you," or "This is your evidence of My love," or "My Son is doing this because I have loved you."

This parallels a previous expression concerning the death of Christ: "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*" (3:25). The meaning is that God has placed the death of His Son in a conspicuous place, where all of the light of glory can shine upon it. When it comes to deeds done in the earth, the Father has elevated the death of His Son above them all. **The greatest witness of His love is seen here, in the vicarious and atoning death of Jesus Christ!**

The greatest confirmation of Divine love is **not** found in your deliverance from trouble. As great as that may be, many heathen and blasphemers have experienced similar things. The greatest attestation of God's love is **not** found in your healing or the provision of your needs. As great as those may be, many of God's enemies can point to such occasions in their experience.

In the death of Christ more of God's love is seen than was perceived in His earthly ministry. It constitutes a more extensive witness, and confirms things only suspected by those who saw His marvelous works and heard His wondrous words. In Christ's death, God **CONFIRMED** His love. He **EXHIBITED** that love, forever removing all doubt concerning its reality from those who believe. For those who will believe the Gospel, there will be no doubt of His love.



In my understanding, the declaration of this verse is not intended to provoke thanksgiving—although it surely will. **Rather, it is to move us to trust, reliance, and confidence!** Thanksgiving springs from faith, and not vice versa. If the people of God can believe, they not only step into the realm where impossibilities become possible (Mk 9:23), they will provoked to unparalleled thanksgiving and praise.

### Something Noteworthy

There is something that is particularly noteworthy in this text. The expression is in the PRESENT tense, not in the past. Inadvertently, some might read it this way, “God commended His love toward us,” or God demonstrated His own love toward us.” But that is not how it reads. God **COMMENDETH**, or commends, His love toward us. Other versions read, “demonstrates,” “shows,” “proves,” It is in the present tense.

So, what does this mean? Is it at all significant that God speaks in this manner? Indeed it is! God is **in the process** of confirming His love to us. This is something He is doing now through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is nothing less than an elaboration of what was said earlier, “*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (5:5).

Here is a facet of being “*taught by God*” (John 6:45). It is not possible to consider the death of Christ without the living God drawing near! **He has forever associated Himself with the death of His Son!** Wherever faithful souls look intently upon God’s dying Lamb, they will come under the influence of the mighty God. That, and more, is involved in this verse. God is still commending His love through the death of His Son!

### WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS

After affirming that unlikelihood that anyone would lay down their life for a worthy person, the Spirit now strongly affirms the conditions under which Jesus died. Rather than dying for righteous people, He died for sinners. He did not die for good people, but for sinners. But even

that is not the whole of it. He did not die for them after they had made some attempts to reform. He did not even die for them after they had conceded they were not sufficient. He did not die because they had asked for God to supply a remedy for their sinful condition. Rather, He died “***while we were yet sinners.***”

### The Scriptural Concept of a Sinner

Among the many deficiencies of modern religion, is the perception of “*sinner*” that it has fostered. Men do not tend to assign the significance to this word that is intended in Scripture. As a result, the value of Christ’s death has been greatly obscured. Until the weightiness of our state is perceived, the importance of Christ’s death will not be clearly seen, and consequently will be

**The love of God and Christ was not motivated by our love, or our response, for neither existed when Jesus died. At that time, we were “yet sinners.” Further, His death was not required because of what we COULD be, but because we were “yet sinners.”**

neglected and under-emphasized.

Ponder some of the uses the Spirit makes of this term—“*sinner*.” The wicked men of Sodom were “*sinner* before the Lord exceedingly” (Gen 13:13). The Amalekites, whose name was blotted out by God, were known as “*the sinners*” (1 Sam 1 5:18). Jesus said He came to “*bring sinners to repentance*” (Matt 9:13). Jesus was betrayed into “*the hands of sinners*” (Matt 26:45). The healed blind man affirmed “*God does not hear sinners,*” and the Spirit ratified his words by recording them in Scripture with no disclaimer (John 9:31). The entirety of Adam’s progeny were “*made sinners*” by his act of “*disobedience*” (Rom 5:19). Jesus Himself, although He came into the world “*to save sinners*” (1 Tim 1:15), was Himself “*separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:25).

“*Sinner*” are sinful. That is their nature, and sin is what they do. Regardless of the degree of their expression of sin, they are “*sinner*” by nature—because of **who they are** as well as what they have done.

The sin of sinners clings to them. That is another reason for them being “*sinner*” – not only because of what the **are** doing, but because of what they **have** done. “*Sinner*” are given over to sin. Such are “*servants of sin*” (Rom 6:17,19). When the publican sought mercy from God, it was because he knew he was “*a sinner*” (Lk 18:13).

### All Merit Is Removed

Christ did not die for those who WERE “*sinner*,” for those who were “**YET sinners.**” All merit, or worthiness, is therefore removed. There can be no ground for boasting, for the required death was accomplished WHILE we were still sinners.

The love of God and Christ was not motivated by our love, or our response, for neither existed when Jesus died. At that time, we were “*yet sinners.*” Further, His death was not required because of what we COULD be, but because we were “*yet sinners.*”

### CHRIST DIED FOR US

What a marvelous affirmation: “*Christ died for us.*” There is no way to improve on that word. Every major translation reads precisely this way: “*Christ died for us.*” Some paraphrases read “*Christ gave His life for us,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*Christ did die for us.*”<sup>YLT</sup> And what is the intention of this expression? It cannot be any ordinary or common word, for the love of God is being commended in this death of Jesus Christ.

### Vicarious

Here we come to the matter of substitution—of Christ’s death being vicarious. The expression “*for us*” does not mean because of us, but in our stead, or place. Christ’s death was vicarious.

In the English, “vicarious” is a very weighty word. It involves paying a penalty that was due another, thereby bringing an advantage to sinners that is wholly

undeserved. The idea of appointment is involved in the word, so that a person who does something vicariously cannot take the matter on himself. What is done must be accepted by the one to whom it is presented, else it has no value whatsoever.

In such a substitution, the punishment due to one is inflicted upon the another—the vicarious one. But that is not all of the matter. **In salvation, the punishment is inflicted by the One who was offended, and to Whom the debt is owed—the Living God.**

Jesus did more than simply “die.” He did not die naturally, but supernaturally. Some affirm He died of a broken heart, as indicated medically by water and blood flowing from His side. But the Spirit makes no such statement. This is a human analysis, not a Divine one. Jesus **laid down** His life. No one took it from Him (John 10:17-18). He dismissed His Spirit, it was not taken from Him (Lk 23:46). He offered Himself to God (Heb 9:14).

**The Requirements**

**TRANSFER OF SINS.** In order for Christ’s death to be effectual for us, the sins of the world had to be placed upon Him. In the Kingdom, one cannot die for another unless the infractions that incurred the penalty are transferred to the substitute.

This requirement was pictured under the Law, where the sins of the people were transferred to the atoning victim. Because of the complexities involved in atonement, several sacrifices were used on the day of atonement. Most of them were killed, but one was not. It was the “scape goat.” The law specified, “*And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:*

*and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness”* (Lev 16:21-22). There the Lord portrayed a key factor in a substitutionary, or vicarious, sacrifice.

The Scriptures say this of the Lamb of God. “*the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isa 53:6). Again it is written, “*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree*” (1 Pet 2:24). The placement of our sins upon Jesus, and Him carrying them in His body on the tree, fulfilled the type introduced in the scape goat.

**SIN MUST BE JUDGED BEFORE THE BLESSING CAN BE GIVEN.**

In A remarkable statement of what occurred when Jesus died, the Spirit says, “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles*

5:21). Here again, two requirements are fulfilled. Jesus not only carried our sins, but was “made” to be sin by God. This was no mere technicality! When Jesus was born, He was “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). When He died, He was “*made to be sin;*” that is, He was the embodiment of sin—sin incarnate!

These are the righteous involvements of a vicarious atonement. Not only must the sin of man be addressed, the righteousness of God must be satisfied. God Himself must exact the penalty on a victim He has chosen. It must result in God being just in conferring righteousness upon those for whom Christ died—“*sinners.*”

**Foreshadowed Complexities**

The complexities of salvation were foreshadowed in the Law. A multiplicity of sacrifices, an altar, high priest, and tabernacle were all necessary to prefigure what was going to be accomplished in Christ. Christ, the vicarious sacrifice, was

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*through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal 3:13-14). Notice what marvelous accomplishments are here declared. The curse of God was expended on Christ. This was done that the blessing might come upon those who believe. Both accomplishments are realized by means of a vicarious sacrifice.

Again it is written, “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor

the High Priest, sacrifice, altar, scape goat, and “*fit man*” all in One.

All of this is involved in “*Christ died for us.*” His death was vicarious because we were “*yet sinners.*” It is effective because He was pure and undefiled. It satisfied God because the due penalty was paid. Now He could be “*just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*” (Rom 3:26). Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift (2 Cor 9:15). What great and unparalleled wisdom is revealed in this arrangement.

**A “MUCH MORE” SITUATION**

**“*Much more than, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*”**

Our text is doing much more than establishing an official theological position. There is a vast difference

between edifying the people of God and making sure they hold to what is conceived to be, a properly structured, or

systematic, theology. Sectarianism has contributed to a lifeless view of Scripture, which, in turn, has yielded a spiritually weak and emaciated people.

If people are considering the coming of Christ and the end of the world, it is not strange to find them enamored about the sequence of events, with little regard for being prepared to meet the Lord. In the matter before us, it is not uncommon to find people haggling over whether or not being justified means you can fall away or not, as though justification were the end of the matter. Now, the Spirit will launch the vessel of thought upon the sea of ultimate reality. He cares nothing for the traditions and speculations of men, but is wholly devoted to filling us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may *“abound in hope”* through His power (Rom 15:13).

**THE “MUCH MORE” VIEW**

The expression *“much more”* is mentioned seven times in the book of Romans—five times in the fifth chapter. This is its first occurrence (5:9,10,15,17,20; 11:12,24). The workings of God are like a swelling wave that grows larger and larger. They differ from such a swell in that they do not dissipate or grow smaller. Thus, on a very broad scale, what God is doing in salvation is infinitely larger than what He did in creating the natural order. On more focused level, what He is doing in the New Covenant is larger than what he did under the Law.

On an even more microscopic level, what the exalted Christ is doing now is on a larger and more magnificent scale than what He did in His death. I must state this with care, lest it appear as though the death of Christ has been rendered obsolete by what Jesus is doing now. God forbid! **What He is doing now is based upon the accomplishments of His death.** He is now building the superstructure of Divine purpose upon His indispensable and foundational death **“for us.”**

The phrase *“Much more then”* moves us from the foundation to the building, from the beginning to the culmination, from the start to the finish.

It involves, but is not limited to, the remission of sin. There is a certain mentality afoot among believers that views man’s extrication from sin as more difficult than bringing him the rest of the way to glory. This is a fatal error.

From our limited perspective, was getting Israel out of Egypt a greater work than getting them into Canaan? What answer do you suppose Moses would give you? How would Joshua and Caleb answer? And, were you able to ask ancient Lot whether getting into Zoar took more than getting out of Sodom, he would no doubt ask you to remember his wife. Time is the great tester of man. We sorely need an exalted King to bring us safely through

**The mother of much erroneous theology is traced to this precise misconception: that bringing someone into glory who has been justified, requires little more than a word. The big work is thus perceived as coming away from servitude to Satan, and being delivered from a condemning conscience.**

it to the obtaining of our inheritance.

The mother of much erroneous theology is traced to this precise misconception: that bringing someone into glory who has been justified, requires little more than a word. The big work is thus perceived as coming away from servitude to Satan, and being delivered from a condemning conscience.

Let no one doubt that being conformed to the image of God’s Son is a most magnificent work. Jesus could not do it before He died, and He did not do it before He ascended back to the Father. But let the Lord speak for Himself on this matter. *“Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who **is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us**”*<sup>NASB</sup>

(Rom 8:34). That is the *“much more”* picture!

If Christ could justify us when He was *“crucified through weakness”* (2 Cor 13:4), what will He do now that He has been enthroned in the heavens! To say it another way, if Christ could free us from the dominion of the devil at His weakest point, what will He do for us at His strongest point—in His majesty?

**JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD**

*“Much more THEN”* refers back to verse eight. If God commended, or demonstrated, His love toward us when we were *“yet sinners,”* what will He do now that we have been justified? We ought not expect anything mediocre.

The Spirit will not let us forget the role of Christ’s blood in our justification. He fulfilled the requirement of the Law itself—*“life for life”* (Ex 21:23).

To this point, several different views of justification have been presented. **1--** We are justified freely by God’s grace (3:24). **2--** We are justified by faith (3:28; 5:1). **3--** We are justified by Christ’s blood, or the forfeiture of His life. Among other things, this confirms that faith lays hold of both cause and benefit. The cause is Christ’s blood. The benefit is remission and the imputation of righteousness—and faith takes hold of them all.

We are justified **“NOW.”** For those who believe on the Son, this is a present reality. Iniquities ARE forgiven, sins ARE covered, and God WILL not impute sin to the justified one (4:7-8)! Those in Christ NOW have their names written in heaven (Lk 10:20; Heb 12:23), are *“accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph 1:6), and are *“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”* (Rom 8:17). Being justified, they NOW have peace with God (5:1) and access to the grace wherein they stand (5:2). They are no longer of the world (John 15:19), are not debtors to the flesh (Rom 8:12), and are the *“sons of God”* (1 John 3:1-2). All of that is involved in being **NOW “justified by His blood.”** Sin does not make sense within the context of reconciliation.

Now that we are justified, Christ can “*dwell in our hearts by faith*,” while the Holy Spirit is bringing us from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). Now God can work in us, “*both to will and to do of His own good pleasure*” (Phil 2:13). But lest we begin to take His work for granted, the Spirit reminds us of Christ’s blood—of the dying Lamb, whose life was required if we were to be made clean. Before God could receive us, He had to deal with our sins in the person of His Son. Life through death! Blessing by means of a cursing!

**SHALL BE SAVED FROM WRATH**

God did pour out His wrath upon the Son, cursing Him (Gal 3:13), forsaking Him (Mk 15:34), and making Him “*taste death for every man*” (Heb 2:9). But that occasion did not exhaust the wrath of Almighty God. Upon the Divine calendar, there remains “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Rom 2:5). At that time God’s wrath will be “*revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (Rom 1:18). Then it will be poured out “*without mixture*” (Rev 14:10).

Jesus has delivered us from the coming wrath. As it is written, “*You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son*

*from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Thess 1:10). That deliverance is sure to those who cling to the Son by faith. But that relationship is imperative.

**THROUGH HIM**

We dare not leave our “*first love*,” as did Ephesus (Rev 2:4). It is good to give heed to the Psalmist. “*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him*” (Psa 2:12). You do not want Him to say to you, “*I have this against you*” (Eph 2:4). He is your only guarantee of deliverance from “*the wrath to come*.” Jesus does not deliver you from sin and Satan, and then recline until the work automatically runs its course. And, if He does not do that, how could any mere mortal justify such conduct? If God has “*called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1 Cor 1:9), that fellowship must be maintained. We must remain sensitive to His tutelage and guidance, else deliverance will not be possible.

How appropriate is the exhortation of the Spirit to Ephesus. “*Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding*

*darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:17-24). That is the process by which God is saving you now, through Christ.

If this work seems too good to believe, remember, this is the “*much more*” work. As you “*continue in the Son, and in the Father*” (1 John 2:24), standing faultless before the Father and being excluded from His wrath is “*much more*” possible that getting you out of sin in the first place. That is an extremely weak way of saying it. Yet, it is how the heart must reason when assailed by doubt.

Remember, this passage is intended to strengthen your faith, and to convince you of the greatness and sureness of salvation in Christ Jesus.

**ENEMIES WERE RECONCILED**

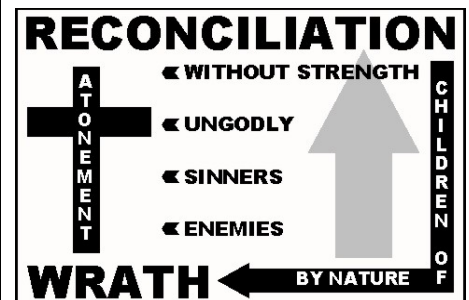
“<sup>10a</sup> *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son . . .*” Now the Spirit expands our perception of salvation, revealing what an extensive and glorious work it is. The further the Spirit takes this matter, the greater the distance that is created between the believing heart and conventional religion. We will find that our condition was much worse than ever conceived by the natural mind.

**WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES**

The thought of being an enemy to God is most arresting. There are people who cannot receive such a notion. They reject it forthrightly, openly affirming that God has no enemies—that He has a deep and abiding affection for everyone. However, after they have presented all of their imaginations, the Spirit refers to a

time when “*we were enemies*.” Those who are not in the Son are, in fact, God’s enemies. Take, for example, the Jews, who are a chosen people. Of those who are not in the Son, the Spirit says, “*As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes*” (Rom 11:28). Paul mentions some teachers who were “*enemies of the cross of Christ*” (Phil 3:18). In a vivid description of our former state, the Spirit says, “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*” (Col 1:21). David spoke of the scattering of God’s “*enemies*” (Psa 68:1), affirming He would wound their “*head*” (Psa 68:21). In a great Messianic prophecy, Isaiah said the

coming Savior would “*prevail against His enemies*” (Isa 42:13). “*His indignation*,” the Lord declares, “*is against His enemies*” (Isa 66:14).



Should men be reluctant to perceive the Living God in this manner, Nahum speaks to the nations. “*God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will*

take vengeance on His adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for His enemies” (Nah 1:2). Jesus, we are told, will rule “till His enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:13). Let no one question that God has enemies!

The whole matter comes even closer to home when believers who are flirting with the world are solemnly told, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whoseever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Were that single morsel of truth to be ingested by the contemporary church, a revival of epochal proportions would break forth!

If anyone should understand these sayings, it is those who “were enemies.” If anyone should be able to make sense of them and shout the “Amen” to them, it should be those who are now in the Son, who “were enemies.”

**What Is An Enemy?**

An enemy to God is hostile toward Him, and fights against Him. It is a futile hostility, and a vain fight, but it nevertheless exists. God’s enemies will crucify the Son of God if given a chance to do so! They will contradict His word, and vilify those who bring it—and all without a twinge of conscience.

God’s enemies hate Him. God spoke of those who “hate me” (Ex 20:5; Deut 32:41). The first chapter of Romans mentioned “haters of God” (1:30). Jehu once said to king Jehosaphat, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?” (2 Chron 19:2). These are very real conditions, and we were all in that category before God put us into Christ, delivering us from the power of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13).

**What Made Us Enemies?**

“When we were enemies,” we were alienated from Him in our minds and because of our wicked works. Scripture puts it this way. “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” NIV (Col 1:21). We did not think like God. To

put it in words taught by the Holy Spirit, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9). There can be no accord with God or acceptance by Him where this condition exists. These verses are preceded for a stern exhortation—one that could not be fulfilled under the Law. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for

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*He will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7).*

Those who are enemies of God have the wrath of God abiding upon them, and are condemned all ready (John 3:18,36). When at last they confront the Lord, they will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess 1:9). It is ever true, “But the wicked will perish; And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, They vanish-- like smoke they vanish away” (Psa 37:20).

Ponder, precious soul, when you were in that classification. As an enemy of God, you were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

**RECONCILED TO GOD**

From that inimical state, we were

“reconciled to God!” The hostility between us was replaced with peace (Rom 5:1). The variance between our thoughts and His was replaced with the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Our disparate ways were removed when He put His law into our mind, and wrote it on our heart (Heb 8:10).

To be “reconciled” to God is to be brought into conscious harmony with Him. It is to think like Him, and no longer be set to resist His thoughts and ways. There is fellowship and accord in reconciliation.

Those who simply cannot see things God’s way are not reconciled to Him. It should be of deep concern to every believer that variance with God is so common in the professed church. As James would say, “My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10).

**THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON**

This marvelous reconciliation is not without cost. As great as our God is, making us one with Himself required “the death of His Son.” Without this death, you could not have “the mind of Christ.” Without this vicarious atonement, the law of God could not be put into your mind or written upon your heart. You could not have peace with God apart from Christ’s death. Apart from that death, you could not be welcome in the most holy place!

When you come to the Lord’s table, this is an area of especially fruitful meditation. As you take the bread and the cup, speak to yourself. “Father, if Your Son did not die, I could not see Him as You do—the Beloved Son in whom You are well pleased.” Think, “If Jesus did not die, I could not hate sin as I do, or desire to be with the Lord as strongly as I do.” This is involved in being reconciled to God! “If my Savior did not lay down His life for me, I could not delight in the Law of God, or comprehend something of its depth.”

**When Were We Reconciled?**

And when did this reconciliation take place? Provisionally, it took place when Jesus died. As it is written, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled

us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation<sup>NASB</sup> (2 Cor 5:18-19). The work was done right there, when it looked to the flesh as though Jesus had been overthrown! Now the cry goes out to all, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). It is a word backed up by eternal purpose, fortified by everlasting love, and

implemented by a eternal High Priest.

And what were we when all of this took place? **We were "enemies!"** We were reconciled to God "**when we were enemies.**" Christ's vicarious death, and our faith in His blood (Rom 3:25) **changes our state!** It corrects our condition! The thing that caused the variance --sin-- was removed.

Not to be forgotten is the fact that sin had stirred God's anger toward us. He

has promised no good to His enemies. In fact, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa 7:11). Yet, even though His nature moved His angry against the wicked, His great mercy compelled Him to provide a covering for their sin. While they remained His enemies, He provided a means to change them that was both righteous and effective. It was a means that would change their nature, for He could not change. As He Himself said, "*I am the LORD, I change not*" (Mal 3:6). A marvelous work, indeed!

## ANOTHER "MUCH MORE" SITUATION

*" 10b . . . much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."* Here is another "*much more*" affirmation. The Spirit is reasoning with us concerning the firmness of our salvation. He is confirming to our hearts that we have good reason to expect the work to be finished, performed "*until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil 1:6). Because believers are engaged in a fierce and unrelenting warfare, they require "*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*" (2 Thess 2:16). Indeed, the Spirit is delivering such a precious and sweet elixir to us!

### HAVING BEEN RECONCILED

**Here is something human reason cannot perceive, but faith can see clearly. We are presently in the state of reconciliation! We have been reconciled to God, and can come to Him , entering into the holiest with a true heart, a conscience that is free from guilt, and bodies that have been washed with pure water.**

Here is something human reason cannot perceive, but faith can see clearly. We are presently in the state of reconciliation! We have been reconciled to God, and can come to Him , entering into the holiest with a true heart, a conscience that is free from guilt, and bodies that have been washed with pure water (Heb 10:22). There is no need for any child of God to live aloof from Him, or conduct the affairs of their life while relying on human wisdom and strength!

### A Sad Situation

While I do not desire to dwell upon this, we are living in a time when the truth of reconciliation is generally neglected in the church. Satan has deceived the professed church into eating from the forbidden fruit of the world's wisdom. There exists in the modern church a most profound reliance on human wisdom. It is staggering to consider! Academics have been exalted above atonement. Rudiments occupy a more prominent place than reconciliation. The wisdom of God has been replaced by the wisdom of the world. Myriad believers wander through life under the oppression of a condemned conscience, unaware they

are reconciled to God. It is a sad and pathetic situation.

But it is sadder still that so little concern can be found about this condition. There is so little talk these days about the reconciliation accomplished in Christ that one wonders if the bare facts of it are known. In over fifty years of contact with religious leaders, teachers, and preachers, I am astounded I have heard so very little about reconciliation or justification. I have

been in circles where more is said about the role of women in the church than of Christ in redemption. I have heard more discussion about the shepherds of the local assembly than the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. In some circles, more is said about purported experiences of the Holy Spirit than the Savior who sent Him.

For some, these are forbidden topics, but someone must speak up about them! There is a languishing spirit in the Western church that can be changed to rejoicing by the awareness that we have "*been reconciled.*" There is still an exchange program in place that can be enjoyed by every believer! Jesus is here to "*appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations*" (Isa 61:3-4).

### The Biggest Mission Field

The biggest mission field has always been, and still is, the church! The Holy Spirit, who moved holy men to write Scripture, gave us precious few words that were delivered to unreconciled people. The words of Peter to the Jews are provided (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12). We have the words of Stephen to the Jewish council (Acts 7:2-53). There is Paul's discourse to the Athenians and Stoics (Acts 17:22-31). We also have a record of his words to some opposing Jews (Acts

22:1-22). We have some summary statements Paul made to Felix (Acts 24:24-25) and Agrippa (Acts 26:29). All of them—every single letter and syllable, and word—could fit in a rather small booklet—one of very few pages.

The only extensive words of Jesus following His enthronement are addressed to “the churches” (Rev 1:11-3:22). All of the Epistles were written to believers, and the Gospels appear to have been also. There is a resounding message that comes through in all of this writing. It concerns Jesus Christ, and the reconciliation accomplished through Him. All of the correction and practical instruction were given to guide people back within the circumference of hearing.

The church needs to be told they are reconciled to God! This necessity is not wholly due to their ignorance of the truth. Rather, it is because they have an accusing adversary who is working night and day to deprive them of this knowledge. He accuses them in their own thoughts, through distorted teaching, and through their enemies. His accusations and fiery darts can only be repelled by the shield of faith. That faith can only come by hearing, and hearing can only come by the “word of Christ.”

Before the Spirit can take us to higher realms, He must first convince us we have been justified through our faith and reconciled to God. There is a welcome sign in heaven confronting every believer who will draw near through the blood of Christ!

### SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE

But this is not the end of the matter. The Spirit reasons further with us, revealing the implications of our reconciliation. If God reconciled us when we “were enemies,” what will He do now that we are “joined” to Him (2 Cor 6:17)? If Jesus’ death reconciled us, what will His life—His present life—do?

Here is the glad announcement. “**Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**” If Jesus threw Himself into reconciling us, what do you suppose He is doing now? If, when it came

time for Him to die and return to glory, “*He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*” (Lk 9:51), how determined is He that we be with Him? I will tell you! It is “*much more!*”

### Christ’s Intercessory Ministry

The expression “*saved by His life*” refers to the intercessory ministry of Jesus. Contrary to the benighted teaching of some, God has not put salvation on an automatic pilot. He has positioned the Son at His own right hand, and given Him all power in heaven and in earth. The purpose for this allocation is that the Son might “*bring many sons to glory*” (Heb 2:10). He is bringing “*us to God*” right through the land of the enemy (1 Pet 3:18). It is Christ’s commission to “*give*

**Many a soul has experienced times when it was more difficult to come to God as a Christian than it was when a sinner. Because of some foolishness, or snare of the devil, their conscience has become contaminated, and a cloud of despair has settled over their soul. They learn first hand of the impotency of human wisdom and natural ability.**

*eternal life to as many*” as God has “*given*” to Him (John 17:2).

Christ’s intercessory work is more challenging and extensive than His reconciling death. To accomplish the reconciliation, He appeared “*once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Heb 9:26). He made “*one sacrifice for sins forever*” (Heb 10:12). It was an aggressive and difficult work, but it was a “*short*” one, never again to be repeated.

But what of His intercessory work? What does the Holy Spirit say about it? This is Christ’s present “*life*,” the life by which we “*shall be saved.*” Here is what the Spirit says. “*But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to*

*make intercession for them*” (Heb 7:24-26). Those who speak simplistically of salvation do well to give heed to these words! If you are in Christ, you are presently being “*saved*” by Christ’s life. It is His intercession that is presently saving you. Should Jesus cease to intercede for us, we would forthwith drop into hell, and that without remedy!

Notice how the Spirit speaks. He says Jesus is “*able to save completely those who come to God through him.*”<sup>NIV</sup> I understand such an affirmation does not fit into certain views of salvation, but what matter is that? Who should be concerned when God contradicts men? The solution is very simply. Discard what man has said, and take hold of what the Lord has said. He has declared you are being saved by Jesus AS you come to the Father through Him.

Many a soul has experienced times when it was more difficult to come to God as a Christian than it was when a sinner. Because of some foolishness, or snare of the devil, their conscience has become contaminated, and a cloud of despair has settled over their soul. They learn first hand of the impotency of human wisdom and natural ability. Such poor souls, laden with guilt, have sought the aid of their brothers and sisters. They have fallen into the slough of

despondency, and wrestled with feelings of rejection and unworthiness. They will tell you there are times when it takes all the spiritual energy you have to draw near to God.

There have been champions of the faith, like Paul who have had “*fears within*” (2 Cor 7:5), “*despaired of life*” (2 Cor 1:8), and nearly had “*sorrow upon sorrow*” (Phil 2:27). Every child of God will become acutely aware the work is not yet finished in him. Life, with all of its complexities and difficulties can cause men to confess, “*Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet*” (Phil 3:12-13).

There is a message for such

souls—and all believers will experience this at some time. It is this: **“WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE!”** This is even more apt to be take place than our deliverance from bondage to sin! It is a **“MUCH MORE”** circumstance!

You can believe our God is *“able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy”* (Jude 24). He is able to do it because of an appointed and interceding King, our High Priest! The One who wrought the salvation is

maintaining it.

**Two Conditions**

The passage has presented two conditions, contrasting them for us. There are two conditions of believers, and two of Christ. One set of conditions is in the past, and one exists now. In the past we were enemies and Christ died. In the present, we are reconciled and Christ lives. Our condition is better, and so is that of Jesus.

Our text, however, concludes that our betterment is owing both to Christ’s

death and to His life. His death without His resurrected life would have left us enemies to God, dead in trespasses and sin. His life without His death would be ineffective for us now, and we would perish in the way.

Without Christ’s death, God could not reconcile us. Without His life, He could not bring us to glory. And, if we needed Christ’s death, **“much more,”** we need His life. Thank God He *“ever lives to make intercession for”* us! Put the accent where God has put it!

**REJOICING IN GOD**

**“<sup>11a</sup> And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”** The manner in which the Spirit speaks to the churches is both refreshing and challenging. Even after He has brought us to the mountain of justification by faith, and lifted us higher to behold a living, reigning, and interceding Christ, He does not stop. Those with small appetites for spiritual things cannot remain long with the Spirit of God. While you are still standing amazed at the insights He ministers, He continues to speak.

**THE “NOT ONLY THAT” VIEW**

Here is another expression, similar to *“much more.”* Through utterances like this the Lord expands our thoughts and assists us to grow in our understanding. He has used this terminology before, in the third verse of this chapter.

**“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.”**<sup>NKJV</sup>

Here, the Spirit is continuing the thoughts initiated in the beginning of this chapter. This is showing us the harvest reaped in justification. It is abundant, and it is precious. Let me remind you of them, lest they slip from your mind.

- ▶ We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1).
- ▶ We have access into this grace wherein we stand (5:2a).
- ▶ We rejoice in hope of beholding and participating in the glory of God (5:2b).

- ▶ We glory in tribulations (5:3-a).
- ▶ We know tribulation results in endurance (5:3b).
- ▶ We know that endurance develops character, or trustworthiness (5:4a).
- ▶ We know that character results in a confident hope (5:4b).

**Those with small appetites for spiritual things cannot remain long with the Spirit of God. While you are still standing amazed at the insights He ministers, He continues to speak.**

- ▶ Hope does not make us ashamed (5:5a).
- ▶ God’s love for us is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (5:5b).

**Verses 6-10 are an elaboration of the love of God, which the Spirit has poured out into our hearts.** They have expounded the extent and effectiveness of that marvelous love. It found us when we were sinners, and wonderfully reconciled us through the death of His Son. It provided for us when we were enemies, and resulted in our reconciliation. The love of God not only provided deliverance from sin and the world, but has supplied a way of entrance into the presence of God, now by faith,

and finally in all fulness. That is the love that is poured out as a mighty river into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is refreshing and abundant!

Now, the Spirit resumes the unfolding of the effects of justification. In this manner, He has anchored us to Jesus instead of to the benefits. He briefly touches on the effects of justification, but lingers upon the means by which it was accomplished. This is the Divine manner, and can be seen throughout the Epistles. The accent is always placed on the redemptive role of Jesus, with the secondary emphasis upon the effects of that redemption upon the believer. After that problematic areas are addressed, and always with a mind to get back to the Savior and His *“great salvation.”*

**REJOICING IN GOD**

**“And not only that, but we also rejoice in God.”** Here again is a most powerful expression. Rejoicing in God is something unique to those in Christ Jesus. Prior to Jesus, some few souls rejoiced in the Lord. It was always urged upon the righteous, and most generally related to temporal deliverances. The Psalmist urged the *“righteous”* to *“Rejoice in the Lord”* (Psa 33:1; 97:12). Isaiah told his peers a day was coming when *“You shall rejoice in the LORD, And glory in the Holy One of Israel”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Isa 41:16). Joel urged the people to *“rejoice in the Lord”* because of the rain He had given them, causing their floor to be *“full of*



wheat” (Joel 2:23). The faith of Habakkuk rose above his generation when he shouted, “*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation*” (Hab 3:18).

This precise phrase, “*rejoice in God,*” is mentioned one other time in Scripture, and it is by David. “*But the king shall rejoice in God*” (Psa 63:11). But his was not as lofty a statement as our text. It was not owing to any deficiency in David. Rather, he lived during a time when greater things were not known as fully as they are now. He rejoiced at the faint outline of God. Those in Christ rejoice in a more fully revealed God!

#### What Does It Mean?

What does it mean to “*rejoice in God,*” or “*rejoice in the Lord*” (Phil 4:4), or “*joy in God?*”<sup>KJV</sup> It is to make our boast in God, or to glory in Him. It is to joyfully speak of His doings, and savor the knowledge that He is for us.

Joying in God involves tracing our reconciliation back to Him. It flows from the spring of spiritual understanding that can only account for our change by pointing to the Lord.

Such rejoicing is often associated with words, although it is not limited to them.

Hear Mary rejoice in the Lord following Gabriel’s announcement to her. “*My soul magnifies **the Lord**, and my spirit has rejoiced in **God my Savior**. For **He** has regarded the lowly state of **His maidservant**; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For **He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him** from generation to generation. **He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever**” (Lk 1:46-55).*

There are EIGHTEEN direct

references to God in this joyful expression. It was the articulation of a heart filled with faith. Mary was joying in God. Her spirit, or her real person, was rejoicing in God her Savior. She believed what was said, and her heart began rejoicing.

To rejoice in the Lord is to enjoy Who He is and what He has done. It is to confess with gladness that you have been a recipient of His favor and mercy.

Before Christ, this kind of rejoicing was not common. Some few souls would break forth in this manner. However, this is no longer the case. Now those who are reconciled to God, who have been justified by his grace, DO rejoice in God. That is their manner. It is the mode, so to speak, of the Kingdom. Wherever such rejoicing is **not** found, there is little or no knowledge of justification. Mark it well, and see if this is not the case.

Too, this is not a commandment or an exhortation, as in Philippians 4:4. In our text, joying in God is the **result** of being reconciled to Him. It is something that IS done, not something that ought to be done. This is confirmed by the Spirit’s assessment of the people of God. “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Phil 3:3). The phrase “*rejoice in Christ Jesus*” parallels the expression of our text, “*joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

I will go so far as to say it is not possible to know you are reconciled to God, and have access to Him, without rejoicing in Him.

#### THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Even rejoicing in God must go up to the holiest place “*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” I am continually impressed with the Spirit’s insistence that we consider this. He will make no allowance for acceptance with or access to God apart from Christ Jesus. The marvelous change

that has already been wrought in us by faith has not removed the continued necessity of Jesus. Salvation never removes the need for Jesus!

Although I do not wish to stand in judgment of others, I have often wondered if much of the modern expressions of “*praise*” could be classified as “*rejoicing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” I wonder how much of it is accompanied by even a minimal awareness of God. I wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ is really

**Joying in God involves tracing our reconciliation back to Him. It flows from the spring of spiritual understanding that can only account for our change by pointing to the Lord.**

in the forefront of thought.

I say this because I am impressed with how very little of God and Christ are known today. It is staggering to consider the sparsity of the knowledge of justification and reconciliation. If it is true that “*joying in God*” is a fruit of being justified, and being reconciled to God, how then can those who are ignorant of these things rejoice in the Lord?

Let it be clear, rejoicing in the Lord, or joying in God, is not a mere obligation. It is part and parcel of justification. The soul that has been cleansed from sin, and knows it, will be “*glad in the Lord*” (Psa 32:11). Such joy cannot be subdued. It will break forth when one is beaten for Jesus’ sake (Acts 5:41). It will rise above the groans of prisoners in a dark Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

Even when hard tribulations come upon the reconciled one, this joy will erupt like an unstoppable fountain. Satan cannot stop it! Our enemies cannot stop it.

It flows as strong as your faith allows.

One of the great handicaps of much of the religion of our day is its suppression

of the joy of the Lord. Because of a fleshly emphasis, reconciliation has been pushed into the background of thought. It is neither dominant in preaching nor

thinking, and men are the worse for it. Where men are ignorant of reconciliation, Satan gains the advantage over them, forcing them into defeat.

## RECEIVING THE RECONCILIATION (ATONEMENT)

*“<sup>11b</sup> . . . through Whom we have now received the reconciliation.”* The KJV and The Webster Bible use the word “*atonement*” instead of “*reconciliation*.”

### Atonement

The word “*atonement*” is anchored in Old Covenant procedures, which were a shadow of what we have in Christ. The word “*atonement*” is used an extraordinary number of times in the sacrificial law (Exodus through Numbers). The KJV uses the word seventy-six times. The NKJV uses it eighty-three times, the NASB seventy-nine times, the NIV ninety-three times, and the NRSV seventy-seven times. It is a prominent word under the Law, to say the least.

Under the Law, there was only a ceremonial cleansing, which left the conscience defiled (Heb 10:1-4). It actually had more to do with sparing the people from wrath rather than bringing righteousness to them. It denoted a covering for sin.

This, of course, was fulfilled in Christ, yet to a fuller extent. A real removal of sin took place, and an effective cleansing of the conscience.

### Reconciliation

The English word “*reconciliation*” only occurs once in the Law, and that only in the KJV (Lev 8:15). Even then, the altar was the object of the reconciliation, and not the people. Other versions use the word “*atonement*” in this verse.

The English word “*reconcile*” is also used only once in the Law, also only in the KJV (Lev 6:30). There it refers to the sin offering which was brought into the holy place, whose blood had been presented for atonement, or “*to reconcile*.” It was to be burned with fire, and not to be eaten.

### Why Mention This?

There is a reason for this brief explanation. In my judgment, there is very good cause for the KJV’s use of the word “*atonement*” in our text. When reading the word “*atonement*,” something unique would be experienced. The individual whose mind was bathed in Scripture, and who was familiar with the procedures of the shadowy Law, would at once recall those ancient ceremonies. That would provide a greater insight into the death of Christ, which fulfilled those ceremonies.

**It is a principle in Scripture, that Divine provisions are to be appropriated. It is not enough to simply speak of them. The salvation of God is never to be reduced to a set of theological theorems. It is something to be experienced, just as surely as sin and alienation have been experienced.**

### A PIVOTAL TRUTH

Here is a pivotal truth of Scripture, and one we do well to consider deeply. It is one thing for Christ to have atoned for the sins of the world. It is quite another for that atonement to be “*received*.” It is one thing for God to have been “*in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself*.” It is quite another thing for that reconciliation to be “*received*.”

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is something to be experienced, just as surely as sin and alienation have been experienced. This is embodied in the statement of First Corinthians 4:20. “*For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.*”<sup>NASB</sup>

### THROUGH WHOM

It is not possible to be reconciled legally or experientially apart from Jesus Christ. Let it be clear that this is the Christ presented in the Gospel, which is “*the record God has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10). Much of what is presented as Gospel today is really “*not a Gospel*.” The presentation of the Lord Jesus as a grand problem solver and supplier of mere temporary provisions is a gross distortion of the Christ of the Gospel.

Those who have to do with Jesus will have to deal with sin, for He is a Savior from sin. They will have to face the matter of being an enemy of God, for Christ reconciles men to God. Consideration will have to be given to the sure punishment of sin, for Jesus was “*smitten of God and afflicted*” because of the sins of men. Where men do not come to grips with these issues, they cannot be reconciled to God, for that is what reconciliation is all about.

Now, our text affirms that we “*receive*” the reconciliation, or atonement, through Christ Jesus. By that, it means He alone wrought the reconciliation, and He alone can bring us into it. That is involved in our Lord’s word to His disciples. “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). “*By me*” is more than a mere legal provision. It speaks more of Jesus **escorting us to God**, rather than us coming using Him much like a ticket into the Divine presence. We are told Jesus “*once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring*

*us to God*" (1 Pet 3:18).

In this text "*through Whom*" means the Lord Jesus Himself has brought the reconciliation to us.

### **WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE RECONCILIATION**

While our salvation has not yet been fully realized, we have received much. In

presently enjoying Divine acceptance and favor! We have "*received the atonement.*"

However, one may reason, "It does not seem to me that I have received the atonement." How can a timorous soul be assured of this? Consider the fruits that have been declared. They will tell you the truth of the matter. Receive their testimony, and rejoice!

in the thought of being freed from mortality and the propensity to sin? Do you, in fact, prefer to be "*absent from the body and present with the Lord?*" If this describes you, then you have "*received the atonement,*" for that is the fruit of being justified from sin and reconciled to God.

Are you able to see good that has come from your tribulations? Can you rejoice in seeing how you have become more stable, and able to endure through them? Has your hope grown as you have perceived more of the love of God? If this describes you, then you have "*received the atonement,*" for that is the fruit of being justified from sin and reconciled to God.

**Receiving the atonement always yields a crop of good things for the soul. And, if you are doubtful that you have received it, go to the banquet of salvation and receive it afresh. Drink in the good things of God as though it was for the first time.**

And, does the thought of God delight your heart? Do you rejoice that He is your Father, and has done good to you? Does the consideration of what He has brought to you in Christ bring joy and refreshment to your heart? If this describes you, then you have "*received the atonement,*" for that is the fruit of being justified from sin and reconciled to God.

this case, we have "*NOW received the reconciliation.*" This is why we have access to God. It is why we have access into the grace wherein we stand. It is why we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and can perceive the benefits of tribulation. This is why we "*joy in God.*" **It is because we have been reconciled!**

Do you have "*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?*" Are you desirous to come into His presence, and feel at liberty to make your requests known to Him? Do you know you have access to this grace, and feel a freedom to seek it? Have you been liberated from the goads of a condemning conscience? If this describes you, then you have "*received the atonement,*" for that is the fruit of being justified from sin and reconciled to God.

Receiving the atonement always yields a crop of good things for the soul. And, if you are doubtful that you have received it, go to the banquet of salvation and receive it afresh. Drink in the good things of God as though it was for the first time. There are things involved in your justification that you have not yet seen, and they will rejoice your heart.

But we must not leave the matter there, lying like a cold and lifeless stone in our hearts. We must take this truth up and reason upon it. Note the affirmation. "*We have NOW received the atonement.*" What Christ has accomplished NOW belongs to us. Its benefits have been passed to us through our faith. We are

Are you set to rejoicing at the thought of seeing the Lord, and being forever with Him? Do you "*rejoice in hope of the glory of God,*" finding great delight

## **CONCLUSION**

See what a rich bounty the Spirit has spread before us! The Lord Jesus, as a vicarious sacrifice assumed all of our liabilities. He bore the full brunt of Divine judgment against them. His obedience, and perfect fulfillment of every Divine requirement, has so thoroughly pleased God that He has opened the wells of salvation. Now, by the grace of God, we can draw water from them with joy (Isa 12:3). The water in them is abundant and most refreshing. Draw it out! Draw it out!

*Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth*" (Gen 26:15). The "*earth*" of human reasoning and the wisdom of men has been thrown into the wells of salvation. Large clumps of religious tradition have stopped the water of life from flowing to thirsty souls. Some have even forgotten there are "*wells of salvation,*" given to produce a "*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*"

them once again. "*And Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water*" (Gen 26:18-19).

For a long time, many of these wells have been stopped by the traditions of men. Like the wicked Philistines of old, the once rich wells have been largely "*stopped.*" As it is written, "*Now the*

But that is not the end of the matter, praise the Lord. As in ancient times, those wells can be unstopped. Their restricted flow is not permanent. Isaac revisited those stopped wells, and opened

There are wells to be uncovered—wells that refresh the people of God. We have dealt with one in this text: the well of vicarious atonement. We have previously dealt with others: the wells of justification by faith and imputed righteousness. Have they not yielded

refreshing water? And once they are opened, the saints will be encouraged to look for more refreshing wells. Perhaps you, like Isaac's servants, will dig in the neglected valley, and find "there a well of springing water!" Drink and dig, child of God! Drink and dig! You will never be the same for doing so, for Christ has unleashed a torrent of refreshing water.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/8/2000 Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 5:12-21, "ONLY TWO MEN" In the last analysis, there are really only two men. They are federal heads: that is, they each head up an order of mankind. As federal heads, they stand for all of their progeny, or offspring. The two men are Adam and Jesus Christ. This section of Scripture provides an indispensable key to the understanding of God's great salvation. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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