



**And Still We Are Loved**  
**Romans 5:1-11 (NRSV)**

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**Scripture Romans 5:1-11 (NRSV)**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**Anchor Verse**

*<sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*

**Anchor Theme**

God's love is Justifying

**Background Story**

Allow me to begin with an excerpt from The King Center in Atlanta, talking about The Beloved Community.

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because

international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. *Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred.* Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict. (Emphasis added)

My personal passion is working towards the Beloved Community. And so my starting point, when it comes to my ministry is always love. Starting with love is helpful because the Bible uses the word 'love' between 300-600 times, depending on the version, but Jesus says the word 'love' only 13 times. I once heard a preacher say, there are only three things anyone wants to hear: I love you, I forgive you, and supper is ready!

Although there may be 300-600 ways that God's love is spoken about in the Bible, the one constant, that we as Christians and good United Methodists know to be true is this, God's love is unconditional. God's love takes on many characteristics. One of those characteristics is Justifier. By that I mean that because God love us God removes our sin and guilty if we have faith in him. We are justified through faith. Our challenge, however, is that our faith is wavering faith at best but God's love is unchanging. God's justifying love is not a love that is predicated on us doing right by God, but instead God's desire to always do right by us.

### **Engaging the Text**

What I find fascinating about this text today is when I hear people read verses 6-10, the most popular verses in this text,

*<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.*

When I hear people read them, they subconsciously race through the "while we were" and try to get right to the "Christ died for us".

*<sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*

I wonder if they are missing the point that the 'while' is how we get to the 'Christ

died". The word "while" in Greek is "eti" is an adverb that means still, and yet, connotes that it is still happening. So, while we were, weak, sinning and enemies, as the text says, Christ died for us. And that is the ultimate manifestation of God's love. The first manifestation was the birth of Christ, the ultimate was the death of Christ. John 3:16 says,

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.<sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

And still we are loved. We are weak, we are sinning and yes, at times we are enemies...and still, we are loved. Still, we are loved.

One of my most inspiring quotes, is from Mother Teresa,

"I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world."

I love that quote because it helps me to get past the "while we were" that is my life and claim the manifestation of love from God. Despite all that I am, and am not, I can be a vessel for God's love in the world. I can be that little pencil, sending God's love letter to the world. In fact, we all can be that little pencil. My question for you today, is what will your little pencil do? What letter are you helping God write for the world?

We often look at individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr or Mother Teresa and say to ourselves, "well, that's not me." But the truth is God is not looking for you to be them, God just needs you to be you. And to not see yourself as a weak sinner with enemies. But see yourself as a weak, sinner with enemies that is loved by God. Loved by a God who can use all our flaws and misgivings to show the world, they too are still loved. God's justifying love is what then helps us make sense of verses 3-5 in our text.

<sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

## **Conclusion**

Although that preacher said, people often want to hear three things, I love you, I forgive you, and supper is ready, for me as a Christian, who seeks everyday to be a better disciple, it is good to know that God's response to my weakness is love, God's response to my sinning is love, and God's response to me being an enemy of the faith more than a friend is love. That's the three things I want to hear from God, love, love, love. And still we are loved. Amen.