

Reconciling Love

Rom 5:6-11. 8:31-39
SS Lesson for 04/23/2017

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 5:14-21

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Key Verse: Rom 8:38-39

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson seeks to help us understand the concepts of **Reconciling Love** of Jesus. The **study's aim** is to see the relationship between reconciliation and the security of our salvation. The **study's application** is to include the concept of reconciliation to witnessing opportunities.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 8:38-39

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

This section on the doctrine of a believer's sanctification (vv. 28-39) logically follows the discussion of its goal or end (vv. 18-27). To discuss the goal of sanctification—a believer's hope, which he awaits eagerly and steadfastly—is pointless unless realizing that goal is certain. God provided that certainty and confirms the believer's hope, since sanctification from its beginning in regeneration to its completion in glorification is ultimately God's work, which believers appropriate by faith (cf. Phil. 1:6).

8:28. Believers, Paul began, know of sanctification's certainty, and that knowledge is gained by spiritual perception. Christians **know** intuitively (*oidamen*)—though they may not always fully understand and sense it experientially—**that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him** (lit., “to the ones who love God He works all things together unto good”). The things themselves may not be good, but God harmonizes them together for believers' ultimate good, because His goal is to bring them to perfection in His presence (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24). Even adversities and afflictions contribute to that end. The active voice present tense of the verb *synergei* (“He works together”) emphasizes that this is a continuing activity of God. And His working is on behalf of “those who love Him,” who are further identified as the ones **who have been called according to His purpose**. It is significant that a believer's love for God *follows* God's calling of him and is undoubtedly the product of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:19). The word for “purpose” is *prothesin*, God's plan (Paul used the same word in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11). “Called” means more than being invited to receive Christ; it means to be summoned to and given salvation (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30).

8:29-30. These verses give Paul's explanation of what it means to be one who has “been called according to His purpose” and why God keeps on working all their experiences together to their benefit (v. 28). Believers are those God foreknew. This does not mean simply that God foreknows *what* believers will do,

but that God foreknows *them*. Nor does divine foreknowledge merely mean an awareness of or acquaintance with an individual. Instead it means a meaningful relationship with a person based on God's choice (cf. Jer. 1:4-5; Amos 3:2) in eternity before Creation. "He chose us in Him before the Creation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). This eternal choice and foreknowledge involves more than establishing a relationship between God and believers. It also involves the goal or end of that relationship: **Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son** (cf. 1 John 3:2). The entire group that is brought into relationship with God in His eternal plan by divine foreknowledge and choice is **predestined** (*proōrisen*, "predetermined"; cf. Eph. 1:5, 11). God determined beforehand the believers' destiny, namely, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. By all saints being made like Christ (ultimate and complete sanctification), Christ will be exalted as **the Firstborn among many brothers**. The resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ will become the Head of a new race of humanity purified from all contact with sin and prepared to live eternally in His presence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-49). As the "Firstborn" He is in the highest position among others (cf. Col. 1:18). Between the start and finish of God's plan are three steps: being **called** (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:28), being **justified** (cf. 3:24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9), and being **glorified** (cf. 8:17; Col. 1:27; 3:4), and in the process not a single person is lost. God completes His plan without slippage. "Glorified" is in the past tense because this final step is so certain that in God's eyes it is as good as done. To be glorified is another way of saying that God's children will be "conformed" to His Son; and that is God's ultimate "purpose." No longer will they "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

8:31-32. It is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and answered (in vv. 31-39) seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer's eternal salvation is completely secure in God's hands. The first question is general, **What, then, shall we say in response to this?** (cf. 4:1; 6:1; 9:14, 30) The obvious response to 8:28-30 would be to say "Hallelujah," or to stand in open-mouthed amazement. This leads to a series of six more specific questions. The first is, **If God is for us, who can be against us?** Obviously, Satan and his demonic hosts are against believers (cf. Eph. 6:11-13; 1 Peter 5:8), but they cannot ultimately prevail and triumph over believers. God is the self-existent One and the sovereign Creator and, since He is for believers, no one can oppose believers successfully. He is for believers to the extent that **He... did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all**. The word "spare" (*epheisato*, from *pheidomai*) is the same word used in the Septuagint in Genesis 22:12 where the NIV translates it "withheld." God said to Abraham, "You have not withheld your son." Then God directed Abraham to spare Isaac and to offer a ram as a substitute (Gen. 22:2-14), whereas God offered His own Son as the Sacrifice for sin (John 1:29). In view of this supreme act of God's grace, **How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?** Since God gave the greatest Sacrifice of all, His own Son, He will certainly not hesitate to give believers all other things pertaining to and leading to their ultimate sanctification (cf. 2 Peter 1:3).

8:33-34. The next two questions Paul raised and answered are forensic or legal in nature. **Who will bring any charge** (*enkalesei*, "make a formal accusation in court; press charges"; cf. Acts 19:40; 23:29; 26:2) **against those whom God has chosen?** Satan is identified as "the accuser" of God's people (Rev. 12:10; cf. Zech. 3:1). His accusations are valid, because they are based on the believer's sinfulness and defilement. But Satan's accusations will be thrown out of court, because **it is God who justifies**. The Judge Himself declares the accused person righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:1). As a result all accusations are dismissed and no one can bring an accusation that will stand. The related question is, **Who is He that condemns?** The Greek participle *ho katakrinōn* can have a future sense, "will condemn," which seems preferable here. (Cf. *katakrima*, "condemnation, punishment" in 8:1.) Jesus Christ is God's appointed Judge (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31), so Paul answered this question by stating, **Christ Jesus**. But Jesus is the very One whom the believer has trusted for salvation. Furthermore, He is the One **who died—more than that** (lit., "but more") **who was raised to life—who is at the right hand of God** (cf. Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22) **and is also interceding for us**. The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Judge, but He is also the One with whom each believer is identified by faith. As a result he is a believer's Sacrifice for sin (cf. Rom. 5:8; 8:32), his new life (a believer shares in Christ's resurrection life; 6:4, 8, 11; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:13), his Intercessor (cf. Heb. 7:25; also the Holy Spirit intercedes, Rom. 8:26-27) and his Defense (1 John 2:1). Certainly the Judge will not condemn His own who are in Him by faith! (cf. Rom. 8:1)

8:35-37. Paul's final questions are in verse 35: **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** The context (vv. 37, 39) shows that "the love of Christ" is His love for believers (not their love for Him; cf. 5:5). The apostle suggested seven things a believer might experience (Paul experienced all of them; 2 Cor. 11:23-28) that some might think could come between a believer and Christ's love—**trouble** (*thlipsis*,

“pressure or distress”; mentioned frequently by Paul in 2 Cor.) **or hardship** (*stenochōria*, lit., “narrowness,” i.e., being pressed in, hemmed in, crowded) **or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword**. These things—stated in increasing intensity—do not separate Christians from Christ; instead they are part of the “all things” (Rom. 8:28) God uses to bring them to conformity to His Son. Then Paul quoted Psalm 44:22 to remind his readers that in this life the people of God must face much affliction (cf. John 16:33) including even martyrdom for some. In the early days of the church one or more Christians were martyred every day, or faced the possibility of it. Their persecutors valued Christians’ lives as nothing more than animals to be butchered. In all these adversities (cf. “all things” in Rom. 8:28 and “all things” in v. 32 with **all these things** in v. 37), rather than being separated from Christ’s love, believers are **more than conquerors** (pres. tense, *hypernikōmen*, “keep on being conquerors to a greater degree” or “keep on winning a glorious victory”) **through Him who loved us**. Jesus Christ and His love for believers enable them to triumph (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14).

8:38-39. Paul then ended his discussion on believers’ safety in Jesus Christ and the certainty of their sanctification with a positive declaration—**For I am convinced** (perf. tense, “I stand convinced”; cf. 15:14) **that nothing can separate believers from the love of God** (God’s love for them, not their love for God; cf. v. 35). Paul’s list of 10 items begins with death, where the list of 7 items in verse 35 ended. These elements in God’s universe include the extremes of existence: (1) **death** and (2) **life** (in either death [2 Cor. 5:8-9] or life, believers are in God’s presence); the extremes of created spiritual armies: (3) **angels** and (4) **demons** (angels would not and demons could not undo God’s relationship with His redeemed ones); the extremes in time: (5) **the present** and (6) **the future** (nothing known now, e.g., the hardships listed in Rom. 8:35, or in the unknown time to come); spiritual enemies: (7) **powers** (perhaps Satan and his demons; cf. Eph. 6:12; or possibly human governments); the extremes in space: (8) **height** and (9) **depth** (nothing overhead or underneath can suddenly come swooping down or up to sever believers from God’s love); and (10) everything in the entire created realm. Absolutely nothing in His **Creation** can thwart His purpose for believers **in Christ**. What a climactic way to affirm the certainty of believers’ salvation!

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

I was horrified. In mute terror, I stood looking down at my grandmother's candy dish. It lay in pieces on the floor, with candy scattered all over her living room carpet. That dish had held a favored position on her end table for years, but now it was ruined. Worse yet, I could hear my grandmother's footsteps on the basement stairs. I knew that she had gone down to get something for supper. I had only seconds before I would have to account for the candy dish. Fear had me frozen to the spot as she approached. "What happened here, Jenny?" she asked me, hands on her hips. "Do you have something to tell me?" I blurted out the whole tale—how I had been sneaking a candy from the jar while she was gone, how my hand had caught the edge of it, and how it had plummeted to the floor. As I finished telling her, my head was hanging low. "It was your favorite, and I am sorry, and if you never want to see me again, I will understand," I bawled. "Now, what would make you think that, child? That was just a dish. It could never be worth more than you." I felt my grandmother wrap her arms around me. I was stunned. I had just broken her favorite candy dish, and she was hugging me. How had that happened? Sad to say, stunned disbelief is how many people respond to God. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard people say, "God cannot possibly forgive me. I have done some really bad things." They assume that God has eternally rejected them. That is where they underestimate God's love. You see, God is not like us. Human love can be conditional. Someone does a certain thing to us, and we get angry. We refuse to forgive and let hate rule our hearts. We stop being loving; the relationship is forever broken. God, on the other hand, is quick to mend His relationship with us. Because of remaining sin within us, He knows that believers will fail sometimes. We are in a daily battle between our sinful tendencies and the new nature we received through His Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17). That is why it is so wonderful that He extends grace to us. As believers, we know that this grace is greater than anything we do (cf. Rom. 5:17). It is what brings us into right standing with God (vs. 21). What does all this mean? It means that God's love is greater than all things. He loved us enough to send us His Son, making reconciliation possible (John 3:16-17). His love is so great that there is nothing that can separate His people from Him. No matter what the obstacle, He is able to reach past it. As believers, we can be confident that God's love penetrates any barrier. When we sin, we do not have to worry about eternal separation from our loving Father. Like the father in the parable, He yearns and watches for our return (Luke 15:20-24). We only have to turn to Him, knowing that He is quick to cleanse us of unrighteous behavior (1 John 1:9) and restore our relationship with Him.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We've just passed the time of year known in the sports world as March Madness. Media was saturated with coverage of this, the highlight of the year in college basketball. That coverage is certain to include analysis of the preparations that coaches and players undertake to assure victory. Such preparations cover a wide spectrum, from the eminently practical to the hilariously superstitious. But history tells us that there is no 100 percent assurance of victory, no matter what preparations are made. Upsets happen! By contrast, the two text segments of today's lesson speak of that which is assured absolutely. God has done all the work through Christ to bring about this blessed assurance.

Paul's letter to the church in Rome sets forth the grand scope of what he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25). This scope includes how it addresses the deepest need of rebellious humanity, how it fulfills the foundational promises that God made to his people in history, and how it transforms death to life and slavery to freedom. The result is nothing less than fallen humanity's reconciliation with their Creator. In laying out these truths, Paul was urging the Christians in Rome to renew their commitment not just to God but also to one another. Apparently the church had experienced a certain division between Christians of Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. Each group seemed to have been asserting a greater claim to God's forgiveness (compare Romans 2:17-29; 11:13-24). This tawdry game of one-upmanship was intolerable, so Paul demonstrated that no group can claim a privileged position; all people are rebels against God (3:9-18, 23). But through Christ all can be reconciled to God (Romans 3:21-26). To be a Christian is to be one "whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" by the blood of Christ (4:7). This state of blessedness is available to both Jew and Gentile, without prejudice (4:9). These facts are preparatory for Paul's unfolding argument.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Basis of God's Reconciliation (Rom 5:6-11)

6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

10 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.

11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Love of God (6-8)

Love that prompted God to provide Jesus as our sacrifice (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Love that is incomparably rich (Eph 2:6-7)

6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Love that God expressed in mercy (1 Tim 1:15-16)

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Love that is defined as Jesus laying down His life for us (1 John 3:16)

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

Love that shows itself through living through Jesus (1 John 4:9-10)

9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Character of God's Love (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

The character of God's love is such that it causes Him to reach out to the helpless and the needy and literally pour into their lap all of His resources. God's love cannot remain inactive. God's love requires action. As our text says, "God commendeth (or demonstrated) his love toward us" even though we were still in our sin.

Reconciliation through Jesus' blood (9-10)

Blood that makes peace (Col 1:18-20)

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Blood that brings redemption (Eph 1:7)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Blood that cleanses my conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14)

14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Blood that brings me near to God (Eph 2:13)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Blood that cleanses and forgives me (Heb 9:22)

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Blood that make me holy (Heb 13:12)

12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

Joy in reconciliation (11)

Joy expressed in praise and song (Ps 33:1-3)

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. 2 Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Joy expressed in our souls (Isa 61:10)

10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Joy expressed in spite of circumstances (Hab 3:17-19)

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Joy expressed because the Bible tells us to do so (Phil 4:4)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Joy expressed because we believe and love God (1 Peter 1:8)

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

Provisions of God's Reconciliation (Rom 8:31-34)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Provision of deliverance (31-32)

Deliverance through transformation (Phil 3:20-21)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Deliverance through trust (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance through righteousness (Ps 34:19)

19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance because God knows how to deliver (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Provision of righteousness (33)

A righteousness that brings eternal life (Rom 5:21)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A righteousness that we have in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

A righteousness that God made through Jesus (2 Cor 5:21)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

A righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)

5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

A righteousness that comes from God through faith (Phil 3:9)

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Provision of intercession (34)

Deliverance from Satan through Jesus' intercession (Luke 22:31-32)

31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Intercessions because it is commanded (James 5:16)

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Intercessions for God's wisdom and revelations for others (Eph 1:16-17)

16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Intercessions for inner strength for others (Eph 3:16-17)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Assurance of God's Reconciliation (Rom 8:35-39)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Assuring love through suffering (35-36)

Love during suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Love during suffering because of future glory (2 Cor 4:17-18)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Love during suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Love during suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

Assuring love through power to conquer (37)

Conqueror because whether we live or die it is gain through Jesus (Phil 1:21)

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Conqueror because we can overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Conqueror because we have the victory (1 Cor 15:56-57)

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conqueror because God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Assuring love through challenges (38-39)

Challenges that test (Matt 4:5-7)

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Challenges where trusting in God who takes small things to defeat the large (1 Sam 17:41-49)

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" 45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." 48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

Challenges that should be overcome by standing firm in God (Dan 3:15-25)

15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the

strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." 25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Challenges that may be like being sent out as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:1-3)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Challenges to pray while suffering (James 5:13)

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Work of Jesus Christ Has Brought Us Peace and Fellowship With God (5:1-11)

Jesus Christ has given us peace with God

If someone were to ask you, "What is the most sought-after possession in the world," what would you answer? Some would say money, some would say wisdom, some would say beauty or popularity. But if you were to analyze these, I think you'd find that it isn't money people want but rather what they think money will get them. It isn't wisdom or beauty or popularity but it is the security and peace people believe these things bring. But do these things really bring what they advertise? King Fasel was the most wealthy man in the world, but today his body lies in an unmarked grave. Marilyn Monroe was the beauty queen of Hollywood, but she committed suicide. Leonardo Da Vinci was the most brilliant man of the Renaissance, but he died a discouraged man having admittedly failed in finding the purpose of life.

You see, it is not money, wisdom, beauty or popularity people want most. Just ask the people who have these and you'll see they aren't satisfied. Rather, the most sought after thing in the world is inner peace and security. This is the real need of every person. Inner peace is not the cessation of problems on the outside. Rather, it is the ability to remain stable because you can see the end of the problems and know that you will come out on top. The problem we as individuals face is that we are not able to control our circumstances completely. Furthermore, there is someone who is in control of our circumstances—God, and if He is against us, we have no chance of having inner peace. The only way we can have inner peace then is by making peace with God, but how can men who are sinners and stand in God's wrath become reconciled, changed, to the point that God will make peace with them? Paul tells us in Romans 5:1-2 that Jesus did this for us. He died and paid for our sins. We are then justified, as proved in chapters 1-4, by faith in Him. Now, says Paul, those who believe can and do have peace with God through what Jesus has done.

Verse two gives us a picture of how this peace with God was accomplished when it says "Through whom we have obtained our introduction." The Greek word for introduction means "to bring to." It is not that we went to God but rather Jesus brought us to Him and reconciled us, made us right before God by His death. Our peace with God then is not obtained on the basis of what we do but on the basis of what Christ did for us. It is in His work, not ours, that we depend for eternal life and so our peace with God can never be lost for Christ's work is already done and will never change.

Because of our secure salvation, we can boast in three things

(1) In verse 2, Paul says we can boast in the hope of the glory of God. In chapter 3, Paul has already shown that boasting or placing confidence in man's works is out of order. But here, he tells us we can place confidence in the hope of the glory of God. Now the biblical definition of hope is "to plan on a future that is guaranteed to us." That future as explained in Romans 8:30 is that we will be glorified, that we will be conformed to the image of Christ. Here, Paul is saying that we can boast about this because it is accomplished by Christ and not dependent on man's works. So we can exult or boast in our position for we are at peace with God and assured of a future of glory.

(2) In verses 3-10, Paul tells us that we can boast or exult in our pressures. The Greek word for *tribulation* is "pressure." It is an outside force that pushes on you and exerts pressure on you to yield and conform to it. Paul tells us that we can exult in these pressures as believers because of what they produce. The pressures of life, says Paul, are used by God to produce perseverance. This is the quality of a person who when faced with problems he has no control over and to which his only responses are either to endure with anger or to endure with patience chooses to endure with patience. Paul goes on to say that the practice of perseverance under pressure produces in us character which has been proven. Perseverance in trials proves that the godly qualities we practice are what we really are like, rain or shine. This proof of our growth toward godliness then encourages us all the more to trust in our hope—our plans for future glory that God has guaranteed us.

But someone might ask, "How do we know we won't be disappointed? How do we know God will bring us through our trials to be conformed to the image of Christ and be saved forever?" Paul's answer is, "We know because of God's love for us." Verses 6-10 comprise a profound passage which there is not time to do justice to in a short time. Please listen as we read them together and the import of God's word brings this truth home to you.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while 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 (Romans 5:6-10).

(3) Verse 11 gives us the third reason for boasting—that we have received reconciliation with God through the death of Jesus Christ. The word, *reconciliation*, means "to be changed." Earlier in this book we learned that because of our sin, we were enemies of God. But Jesus' death changed man as far as God was concerned. Now, God is free to be at peace with man without blighting His holy and just nature. It is important to note that the effect of Christ's death toward man is called reconciliation—that is, that the effect was to change man in the eyes of God. The effect of Christ's death toward God is called propitiation which means that God's justice was totally satisfied. Reconciliation, the manward aspect of Christ's death, is never said to save anyone. It only renders all men savable. Although as verse 10 tells us, reconciliation occurred while we were enemies, dead in our sin, 2 Corinthians 5:20 points out that we must **receive** that reconciliation to enjoy its benefits. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.)

So in verses 1-11, Paul has proclaimed that because of the object of our faith—Jesus Christ, and what He has done—we have peace with God and we can boast in our position, our pressures, and our possession of reconciliation.

(Adapted from [URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/object-our-faith-romans-5](https://bible.org/seriespage/object-our-faith-romans-5))

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Based as they are in the facts of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, today's texts paint a picture of enormous comfort: God's love reconciles us to him with utter certainty. Because our relationship to God is founded on his love in Christ and not on any goodness of ours, we can have complete confidence that we are now, and will always be, his saved and blessed people. Even so, every believer has times of doubt as the turmoil of life raises questions about ourselves and our relationship to God. What transforms doubt into renewed faith is the good news of the cross and empty tomb. The divine Son of God gave his life for us to pay sin's price when we were his enemies. His resurrection assures our own. Even in our darkest moments, the light of God's love in Christ can shine brightly.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. The world loves because of something; God loves in spite of everything (Rom. 5:6-7)
2. Believers live in fellowship with God because God chose to love His enemies and make them friends (vss. 8-10)
3. Through all situations, rejoice in God's love (vs. 11)
4. Because of God's sacrificial love, we can be confident that He is always with us (8:31-34)
5. Even in hardship, we have victory through God's love (vss. 35-37)
6. Many things threaten to distract believers throughout life, but none of these things can separate them from God's love (vss. 38-39)