

Victorious – Love on Full Display

9/28/25

Romans 5:6-8

Sunday AM

In 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 tragically crashed into the icy Potomac River in Washington D.C., w/ (79) people on board. As rescuers rushed to the scene, a helicopter lowered a lifeline to the survivors. Arland Williams Jr., a passenger on the flight, repeatedly caught the cable and passed it to a fellow passenger. Until he sadly slipped beneath the ice – but not before sacrificing his life so that (5) others could live.

Since that day 43 yrs ago, the (5) people whose lives were spared regularly speak his name, share his story, honor his family, and gather to remember his life.

Truth is – we often honor people like Arland Williams for the kind of sacrifice they've given, but in Romans 5:6-8 – we learn of an even greater love – a love shared not toward an admirable victim or a grateful friend, but for a sinful people at enmity w/ God.

LWF – *There is none righteous – not even one... and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

As we discussed last week, b/c of the fall of Adam/Eve – we're all at enmity w/ God – at war w/ a holy, holy, holy God – and sinners in need of a Savior. It doesn't matter if we want this or think we deserve it – this is our reality. Yet the good news is that in spite of this enmity, God still loves us and seeks relationship w/ us.

Before we go further, let me explain a vital theological truth relevant to today's message/LIFE Group lesson. I refer to this as the **position/practice** of salvation.

This is an essential lesson b/c it explains what occurs in our salvation – and too often, people only get half of it correct leading them to confusion about their salvation and how it all works.

I think of an airplane requiring (2) wings to fly – if we only get half of the truth of salvation, our faith won't fly. W/ faith, the (2) wings are our **position** and our **practice**. Our position has to do w/ the permanent condition or state of our faith, while the practice or standing has to do w/ our day-to-day intimacy w/ God.

If we only focus on the **position** of our salvation, we might think that b/c we're saved that our flesh is no longer capable of sinning leading us to think that we can live any way we want to w/out consequences – but this isn't true. As a believer, our flesh can still sin and there will be earthly ramifications this side of heaven.

Conversely, if we ignore the **position** of our salvation and only focus on the **practice** of it, we can think we've got to do something to keep our salvation or risk losing it – and that's not true either.

The **POSITION** of salvation refers to our legal status (state) before God based on our point-in-time faith response to His grace.

That is, the moment we received Jesus by faith, we're justified, set apart, adopted, and reconciled to God – born again and made citizens of heaven. Key verses:

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption thru His blood – the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come – the old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Our **PRACTICE** refers to the day-to-day condition of our fellowship/intimacy w/ God based on our trust, surrender, and obedience to His Word, will, and Spirit.

I have been crucified w/ Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Since you've been raised w/ Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden w/ Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear w/ Him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

Did you see it – b/c of your position, now go practice your faith by setting your mind/heart on things above.

I share this b/c Romans 5:1 to 6:11 is specifically about the ***position*** of our salvation; while Romans 6:11, Paul transitioned to speak about the practice of our faith.

LME – look at Romans 5:1-2 – *Since we have been justified thru faith, we have peace w/ God thru our Lord Jesus Christ, thru whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

This is the **POSITION** of our relationship w/ God – we're no longer enemies of God but b/c of His grace that's invested in us, we're now at peace w/ Him.

So, Paul asked a relevant question in 6:1 – *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who've died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried w/ Him thru baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead thru the glory of the Father – we too may live a new life.*

The phrase *how can we live in it any longer* refers to being set free from having to sin b/c our ***default*** has been changed. See – before salvation, we were unable to say no to sin, but now we're able to b/c of the cross.

Why – b/c our spiritual condition was changed by the way of the cross – no longer lost but found. No longer enemies but friends. No longer sinners but saints.

But notice vs. 12 – *Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who've been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, b/c you're not under the law, but under grace.*

Paul transitions from the ***position*** of our salvation to our responsibility to live daily in good ***practice*** by living our faith not in our flesh, but thru the indwelling presence of the H.S. who is now in us.

Meaning – the secret to living in good practice w/ God is learning to live daily from the position of who you are b/c of whose you are. You're an adopted king's kid, so live like a king's kid and not as an orphan. You're no longer lost, so live like you've been found.

So – the ***position*** of our salvation is our unchangeable position in Christ while the ***practice*** of salvation is the variable condition of our intimacy as determined by our daily walk w/ Jesus. So, when we sin by following the desires of the flesh, our position doesn't collapse or end, while our practice or intimacy is disrupted until we confess our sin and repent.

This is why 1 John 1:9 says – *if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.*

WTM – let's take a few min. to consider one of the most important passages pertaining to salvation.

You see, when we were still powerless, at just the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8

I The Reality of Our **CONDITION** – Helpless

Paul's uses a word that's not very flattering – calling us **powerless**. The Greek term (*asthenēs*) means to be helpless or utterly incapable. This doesn't mean we've chosen not to help ourselves, but that we're totally incapable to do anything about our lost condition.

Jesus used a similar term in the SOTM – He said we're *ptochos* – or bankrupt w/ no ability to make a penny.

Look at the words Paul uses to describe our condition – helpless, ungodly (v.6), and sinful (v.8).

It's a downward spiral – b/c of our fallen condition, we have NO grounds for boasting. Think of it this way – if God only loved us b/c we loved Him first, He'd only love us so long as we kept loving Him – and our salvation would hang on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But God took the initiative. When we are helpless He helped us.

See – our God isn't reactive but proactive. He first loved us, in spite of our spiritual condition as helpless, bankrupt sinners – to help us. As a result, our salvation hangs on the constancy of His agape loving heart.

This means that our helplessness isn't a disqualifier; it's our admission ticket. It's when we finally see ourselves as helpless sinners that we begin to look for a viable solution to the problem of our sin – Jesus!

Some of us fear – *I've made too big a mess of my life, there's no way God can forgive me.* It's actually just the opposite. We're right where we need to be b/c Jesus came to bless our mess.

Helplessness doesn't repel grace; it summons it.

So, let me give you the Bad News | Good News – we're all great sinners, but Jesus is an even greater Savior.

II The Precision of God's **TIMING** – Perfect

kata kairos – according to an appointed, strategic moment – but this isn't an afterthought or to control the damage but precisely/timely planned intervention.

When the fullness of time had come – God sent forth His Son. Galatians 4:4

God waited until (1) the Law had exposed our sinful condition and inability to earn His favor thru morality.
(2) He waited for the Roman Empire to provide roads into all of the world;

(3) He waited for when Israel was most open to receiving the Messiah – to introduce Jesus.

The world was prepared spiritually, economically, linguistically, politically, geographically for Jesus and the Gospel's spread. Guzik

I'm reminded of the old Russian tale about a just tribal leader who decreed 40 lashes for a theft – only to discover the thief was his own mother. Faced w/ the decision to uphold justice or show mercy, he ordered the punishment – but just as the lashes were to be dispensed, he wrapped his arms around his mother and took the lashes himself.

At just the right time and at the right place – he satisfied the justice deserved. He loved his mom sparing her punishment. In the same way, in the nick of time, at history’s most climactic hour, God judged sin and justified the sinner – by bearing our punishment upon Himself.

III The Gift of God’s **LOVE** – Jesus died for us

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

demonstrates – to put on full display as a standing exhibition – a ongoing living piece of evidence.

Point – God didn’t just see a problem and wink at it – He saw a problem and chose to solve it. Starting in the Garden, God sacrificed an animal to clothe Adam/Eve – and this theme repeated thru-out the O.T. w/ Noah, Abe, Moses, Elijah and more culminating at the cross where Jesus put His love for humanity on full display.

He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53: 5

God made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

IOW – When we were ***powerless*** to escape sin, death, and Satan... at just the right time, God put His love on full display in Jesus by offering Him to die on the cross on our behalf to save us from the *penalty, punishment, power* of sin – and one day, *presence* of sin.

This is love – not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
1 John 4:10

What we learn in these verses is that God doesn’t love us b/c we’re loveable but b/c He is love.

God doesn’t love us b/c Christ died for us; Christ died for us b/c God loved us. Stott – Cross of Christ
You are more sinful than you ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted in Christ than you ever dared hope. Timothy Keller

B/c of the habit of his dad, Welles Crowther grew up carrying a red bandanna in his back pocket. As he trained to become a volunteer firefighter – he gained the reputation as the guy w/ the red bandanna. 24 yrs ago this month, on the morning the South Tower was struck, Welles, who worked on the 104th floor, fought his way down to the 78th floor sky lobby – and in the midst of smoke, fire, chaos – started ordering hope. He called out, “Everyone who can stand, stand now. If you can help others, do so.” Then he led the group down the stairs to safety – then turned around and went back up doing this over and over again saving dozens of lives until the building collapsed taking his life. Of the survivors who credited him w/ saving their lives, they only remembered him as the guy w/ the red bandanna. Months later, a news story spoke of an unknown rescuer w/ a red bandanna. Welles’s mother read it and wept, “That’s my son.”

Rightly, we honor a man who kept going back for strangers – but Jesus did even more – *He demonstrated His own love for us in this way – while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Welles might’ve run into a burning building to save the helpless – but Jesus ran to a bloody cross to save His enemies. If such love found *us* there, then let’s let that love now live *thru* us here.