“In Christ Alone”

April 8, 2018

I Peter 1:18-25

Please find with me the 5th chapter of Romans.

I want to say “thank you” again for giving me the opportunity to preach and teach God’s Word. It’s a joy and an honor to lift up the name of the LORD from the pages of the Bible.

You all know John 3:16, right? Would you say it aloud with me this morning? *“For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

If there is one thing that changes you more than anything else, it’s the love of God. As the days of my life go by, I am more and more enjoying that love. It’s knowing that His love is personal and that He loves *me* specifically that; for the most part, makes life very worthwhile. I really can’t imagine what it’s like to go from day to day without it.

Look with me at the fifth verse of this fifth chapter of Romans. Romans 5:5 *“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad [poured out] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

God loves you so much He gave you His Son the LORD Jesus. And after you came to Christ; after you believed on Him and were born again, you now have a growing, more wonderful experience in knowing the love of God. Why? Because the Holy Spirit pours it out into your heart.

Each of us needs to know personally that God loves us. His love motivated Him to send His Son into the world. And His love so permeated the Person of Christ that everywhere Jesus went, they felt it. Jesus loves people. Then, His love for us was so powerful that it carried Him to the Cross where He paid the penalty for all your sins.

This is Clarissa Goh (Yates). She’s from Singapore and moved to Australia in 2008. She presently does research on hearing as a Research Assistant at the University of Western Australia.

*“I come from a single-parent family. My parents got divorced when I was five years old. I was not brought up as a Christian and didn't know the Lord personally. During my childhood, love felt scarce, as my mother had to work three jobs to support four young kids.*

*During my teenage years I felt so empty and loveless that I began experimenting with many things teenagers experiment with in order to find some love or acceptance. I ended up doing a lot of things that pulled me further away from God and I led a very sinful life for a very long time.*

*I was also self-destructive and had to go to therapy as doctors thought I had a risk of committing suicide. I tried very hard to find love anywhere I could, but no matter what I did, I always felt even more empty and unloved. I always felt like I was running away or chasing after something. I had my heart broken countless times as I placed my trust in all the wrong places.*

*Back then, I didn't believe in a loving God at all, as I had always felt that God wouldn't let me suffer this much if He did love me. I was angry all the time, I hated the world, I hated my life and worst of all, I hated who I had become.*

*My big turnaround did not come until late 2009. It was my second year of my undergraduate degree studies, and I had suffered tremens-dously when I came over to Australia. Stripped from my comfort in Singapore, my friends and my life, I was left to support myself finan-cially as well as succeed in a demanding science degree.*

*I was stuck in an emotionally-abusive, manipulative long-distance relationship and one night, I thought I couldn't take it anymore. Everything was too much for me, and I remember the night I was brought down to my knees, at last. With all the strength and heart I could muster, I asked “God, if you are really there like you say you are, be here for me. I can't take it anymore. I am going to do something really drastic if you don't meet me here. I am nothing and I need you.”*

*Suddenly I felt a supernatural kind of feeling that overcame me. I truly experienced God in the most remarkable way. I felt a kind of overwhelming sense of peace, a kind of feeling like you were being hugged by something or someone that wasn't physical. It felt supernatural to me.*

*Immediately I rose from my knees, took a Bible out and I was led to read this passage from* 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 12-13*: “Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.”*

*At that point of time, I didn't know what the verse meant. But I knew one thing; my suffering in life had a purpose, even if I didn't know what that purpose was yet. I slept peacefully, something that I hadn't been able to do for a very long time.*

*One year from that fateful night I accepted Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour. Now I have been a Christian for the past nine years and I never can forget that night. So much has happened since then. It took time, but in faith, I saw God's plan and purpose for me slowly unfold. I found a personal love in Christ and Christ in me, and over all the bad times I've had since I never ever felt empty or loveless again because the love of God became so evident in my life through Christ.*

*So, the love of God for me is something so real, that when I think about it, I feel this sense of purpose and hope in my heart that is so overwhelmingly filled with something so incredible. And to be able to share this is my greatest pleasure and honour.*

*I know that God's love for me is supreme, because I have been convinced that nothing can ever separate me from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither my fears for today nor my worries about tomorrow--not even the powers of hell can separate me from God's love.”* [Found on christiantoday.com.au “A Personal Testimony: The Love of God” by Clarissa Goh].

God’s love is personal. And it’s practical and persistent. Without it you wither and with it you flourish. And that love is known and felt when you have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. There is nothing you can do to stop God from loving you. And there is nothing you can do to increase His love for you. In spite of everything you’ve heard about in the world about what true love is, true love is found in Christ alone.

So, I’ve titled today’s sermon “In Christ Alone.” Shall we pray?

Paul, you know, was a man of prayer. Actually, we have no less than thirty-three prayers the Apostle Paul recorded in his writings. So, before we take a closer look at Romans five, I want you to see with me just one of his prayers. And, as I read it, look for Paul’s understanding of love. Ephesians 3:14 *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

*(17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”*

Here’s picture of Christ carefully guiding the hand of a surgeon while he performs an operation. You see, His love is not based upon His approval of you. He’s not as concerned about your performance as He is about your living in the light of that love. So, whatever you think of the LORD Jesus Christ, narrow it down to Him being exactly Who He is, a Very Personal loving Savior.

Now, please look with me at Romans 5 and verse six. Romans 5:6 *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth [shows] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

When you read a passage like Romans five, it’s important to see it in context. Here’s what I mean. Look at the entire Book of Romans in one large picture. Now, what is Paul saying in this fifth chapter? This is one of three chapters in a section on the theme “The Way of Salvation,” which answers the question “How does God save us?” Paul’s answer; “through justification.” Justification: the act of God in which He declares a believing sinner righteous.

And what is Romans 5:6? It’s is an explanation of the first five verses. Look with me at verse one. Romans 5:1 *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: …”*

And how is it that we entered into a state of quote “peace with God”? It was through the act of God in which He declared you righteous. It was through justification.

So, Paul proceeds to explain it; verse six. Romans 5:6 *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely [rarely] for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure [perhaps] for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth [shows] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

What then, did God see? And what did the angels see? And what did even Satan Himself see when the LORD died that day on Calvary? God was commending. The word means “demonstrating and showing” His love towards us. The Cross placed into striking view for everyone to see the love of God shown and seen in Christ Alone. When something is striking, it’s very unusual and it’s easily seen. And therefore it attracts a lot of attention. At the Cross, you see the display of the love of God in Christ alone.

First, then, before salvation you are helpless; verse six. Romans 5:6 *“For when we were yet without strength (ἀσθενής), in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Everyone here knows what it’s like to be without strength. Think about a time when you had no strength. You couldn’t do anything. No power. And generally, we don’t like it very much when we don’t have strength. In Psalm 88:4 we read this from a man named Heman who was experiencing a time when he was without strength physically. Psalm 88:4 *“I am as a man that hath no strength: …”*

According to this passage, you have no natural strength when it comes to accomplishing anything spiritual. And this is true *before* you came to the LORD and *after* you are saved. You may try and try and try. You may do good deeds every day of your life. But trying is not trusting. “I’m trying to be a good Christian.” “I’m trying to not sin.” “I’m trying to keep the Ten Commandments.” “I’m trying to pray every day.”

Effort is what you apply to your life to correct your not having strength. But, says the Holy Spirit in Paul, all the effort in the world cannot get you saved because you are powerless. The meaning of the word “strength” is the opposite of the word “power.” It means “incapable.”

And, what’s even more important, it’s often translated in the NT by the word “sick,” which I’m sure you also fully understand. Listen with me to Jesus when He uses this very same word. Luke 5:31 *“And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick (ἀσθενής). (32) I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

And earlier in the book of Romans Paul says this about our natural spiritual condition. Here’s Romans 3:11 *“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”*

What does the Bible say is the expression of God’s love towards you when you had no strength? You are helpless when it comes to the matter of saving yourself. And what is this helplessness and weakness? It’s moral weakness. Sin has made every person morally weak. And the Holy Spirit adds this through King David. Psalm 39:5 *“…verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity [emptiness].”*

Now, granted, it’s very humbling to agree with God and admit that you are spiritually and morally helpless. But, what did God do for those without strength? When we were helpless; when we were powerless; when we were incapable of saving ourselves, Christ died for us. Folks, the sooner you recognize your helpless state before God, the sooner you will be saved.

First, Paul says, before salvation we were helpless.

What else then initiated God’s love for us?

Second, prior to salvation we were godless; verse six again. Romans 5:6 *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time [at the right time]* ***Christ died for the ungodly****.*

Most of us, or many of us, think that we are basically good. After all, don’t we try to be good? Don’t we try to do good things in this world? Don’t you do good works? Yes, we do. But suppose, for just a moment, we change the word good to godly. Do you try to be godly? Do you try to do godly things in this world? Are you known for doing godly things? Would you say the basic nature of man is godliness? Never.

If you were drowning and a good person came along and saw you struggling in the water, he or she might even go so far as to die, trying to rescue you. And that’s a good thing.

But, godly is a much higher level, to say the least. Look at the next verse, verse seven. Romans 5:7 *“For scarcely [rarely] for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure [perhaps] for a good man some would even dare to die.”*

Folks, you might do lots of good things. You might be praised and honored because of some act of bravery. Maybe you’ve been given the title “hero. But why did Jesus come into the world? And why did *He* die? Why did He go to Calvary? Why was He crucified on a Roman cross? He died, not for the good or the righteous or the heroes or the godly. He died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6 *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time [at the right time]* ***Christ died for the ungodly****.* This is what the Bible teaches about the death of Jesus.

Now, what did Jesus say about it? Luke 5:31 *“And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick (ἀσθενής). (32) I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

The word “ungodly” means “unlike God.” Practically speaking, by nature, we’re more like the devil than we are like God.

But, let me say a word here about ungodly. When *we* use the term, we use it as an adjective. For example, you might say “King Herod was an ungodly king.” Or “Hitler was an ungodly man to do what he did to the Jews.” [Found on <http://idahobaptist.com> “Christ Died For The Ungodly” by Pastor David Oldfield].

But that’s not how God uses the term in the Bible. Psalm 1:1 *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of* ***the ungodly****, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (4)* ***The ungodly*** *are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*

*(5) Therefore* ***the ungodly*** *shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. (6) For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of* ***the ungodly*** *shall perish.”*

Romans 4:5 *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth* ***the ungodly****, his faith is counted for righteousness.”*

I Timothy 1:9 *“Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for* ***the ungodly*** *and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, …”*

I Peter 4:18 *“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall* ***the ungodly*** *and the sinner appear?”*

II Peter 2:5 *“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of* ***the ungodly****; …”*

Now, yes, the word *is* used as an adjective in the Bible. But, it’s most often used to describe a class of people; you and me, as opposed to those who are like God.

Will you agree with me and will you agree with the Bible that it’s a truly humbling thing to see the truth about the ones for whom Christ died?

What else was it then initiated God’s love for us?

First, Paul says, before salvation you were helpless.

Second, prior to salvation you were godless.

Third, before coming to Christ you were a sinner; verse eight. Romans 5:8 *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Helpless, godless sinners. That is the group for whom Christ died. He died for us. Now, folks, if you’re in that group, you can be eternally grateful. Why? Because Jesus did not come to call the righteous but rather, sinners to repen-tance. If you’re helpless; if you’re godless, and if you are a sinner, then you are in that group of people for whom the LORD died.

One man puts it this way. *“What did Jesus do? He died as a Substitute for the ungodly, that they may never die. Voluntarily he assumed their nature and took their place; that he might suffer, bleed, and die in their stead. He died as the one glorious Mediator, who came between God and man; that he might render to God his due, and procure for man salvation. He died for us — to change our STATE, so that instead of being condemned, we might be justified. He died for us — to change our CHARACTER, so that we might be made holy as God is holy. He died for us — to change our RELATION; that we may become the children of God, by faith in his blessed name. He died for us — to change our EMPLOYMENT, that henceforth we should not serve sin — but serve God, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. He died for us — to change our PROSPECTS so that instead of looking for wrath and fiery indignation, we may look for glory, honor, and immortality.”* – All attributed to Christ Alone.

[Found on www. <http://gracegems.org> “Christ Died For The Ungodly” by James Smith (1860)].

In the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul writes this about God’s love. Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

*(3) Among whom also we all had our conversation [lifestyle] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for* ***his great love wherewith he loved us****, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)…”*

James Smith, an author and a Pastor from the nineteenth century, wrote a story titled “A Child Is In The Well.” Here’s what he wrote. This is a true story.

“A child is in the well! A child is in the well!” It is now more than fifty years since I heard that cry. It was a terrible scream, and it is as fresh in my memory, as when it was first uttered by that affrighted woman. A boy had been sent by his mother to the well to draw water, and had taken his little brother with him, and while he was engaged in drawing it, the child unperceived by him — was looking down into the well, and fell in! The wonder was that he was not killed in the descent, by striking against the large iron bucket.

The excitement was great. The neighborhood was aroused, and all were filled with alarm, as the well was unus-ually deep. But it happened that a young woman came for water at the very moment, and in her fright she dashed her pitcher to pieces, and screamed out, “A child is in the well! A CHILD IS IN THE WELL!”

This piercing cry reached the ear, and entered the heart of a laboring man, who was at his dinner nearby. He flew to the rescue, and without stopping to consider his danger — descended by the chain, just in time to catch the child, as it was sinking under the water for the third time!

Now all were at work to get the man and the child up in safety, ropes and ladders were procured, and success crowned the efforts of the kind-hearted neighbors. The child was put into the arms of its distracted mother, and the poor man was praised for his kindness and courage.

But who shall say how much depended upon that cry — that tearful scream of a woman, “A child is in the well”? The child’s life hung upon that cry. Another minute — and the child would have certainly drowned! But, “Not a single shaft can hit, Until the God of love sees fit!”

The cry of that affrighted woman aroused the man, the man fled to the rescue, the child was saved from drowning — but the hand of God was not seen or acknowledged, until years rolled on! For more than thirty years, that child has been a preacher of the gospel, and has written many useful works.

He has been the instrument in the hand of a wonder-working God, of rescuing many poor ungodly sinners from a far deeper well. Through that child, thousands have heard of the name and fame of Jesus, and those thousands have in some way been useful to others, and thus the effect will be felt to the end of time. How much depended on, and resulted from, that scream, “A child is in the well!”

“God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform!”

My one undying desire of my soul, is that Christ may be magnified in me, and be glorified by me, both in life and in death. Many years ago, this desire was kindled at the cross, by a sense of the infinite love of Jesus, and nothing has ever been able to extinguish it yet, nor do I believe that anything ever will.”

Folks, in Christ Alone you find the love of God exhibited beyond anything and everything you find in mankind. His love is mighty and marvelous. His love is amazing. His love is what is needed in every single heart of every single person you know.

Now, based upon what you’ve seen here in the fifth chapter of Romans, won’t you take that same love to someone in your family or in your neighborhood or in your school or at work? The answer to the cry of every soul drowning sin is this: Christ Alone.

I don’t know where you are at in your relationship to Romans five. But God does. If you haven’t trusted in Christ and received His free gift of righteousness, today is the Day of Salvation for you.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Here’s what the Bible teaches. Repent and believe.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Have you repented? Are you believing on Christ alone for your Eternal Security? If not, why not?

And if you are repenting, here’s a simple prayer you can pray.

The Sinner’s Prayer. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

About twenty years ago a song-writer by the name of Keith Getty wrote a beautiful melody. He met a man named Stuart Townend at a conference and they began to talk about music and song lyrics. Soon after that meeting Keith Getty sent his song sheet to his new friend Stuart Townend. Stuart liked the melody so much, he sat down and wrote some words to it and sent them back to Mr. Getty. The result was a beautiful song titled “In Christ Alone.”

The words present Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and the impact the LORD’s death has upon each one of us. I’d like for us to sing it today as we conclude. Let’s in it together. “In Christ Alone” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend.

The following hymn story is true.

Frederick M. Lehman was a California businessman that lost everything through business reverses. He was forced to spend his working hours in manual labor, working in a Pasa-dena, CA packing house packing oranges and lemons into wooden crates.

Mr. Lehman was a Christian who rejoiced in his salvation. He was so moved by a Sunday evening sermon on the love of God that he could hardly sleep. The next morning, the thrill of the previous evening had not left him. As he drove to the packing house, the makings of a song began to come together in his head, with God’s love as the theme.

Throughout the day, as he packed oranges and lemons, the words continued to flow. He could hardly wait to get home and commit these words to paper.

Upon arriving home, he hurried to his old upright piano and began arranging the words and composing a melody to fit them. He soon had finished two stanzas and the melody to go along with them, but now what was he to do? In those days, a song had to have at least three stanzas to be consid-ered complete. He tried and tried to come up with a third stanza, but to no avail. The words just would not fall into place.

It was then that he remembered a poem someone had given him some time before. Hunting around, he found the poem printed on a card, which he had used as a bookmark. As Mr. Lehman read the words, his heart was thrilled by the adequate picture of God’s love they pictured. He then noticed this writing on the bottom of the card:

“These words were found written on a cell wall in a prison some 200 years ago. It is not known why the prisoner was incarcerated; neither is it known if the words were original or if he had heard them somewhere and had decided to put them in a place where he could be reminded of the greatness of God’s love –

whatever the circumstances, he wrote them on the wall of his prison cell. In due time, he died and the men who had the job of repainting his cell were impressed by the words. Before their paint brushes had obliterated them, one of the men jotted them down and thus they were preserved.”

Mr. Lehman went to the piano and began to voice the words with the melody he had just written. They were a perfect fit. It was a miracle! The song was published - and remains today. [Found on <http://nickel-notes.blogspot.com> “Hymn History: The Love of God” by

1. The love of God is greater far  
   Than tongue or pen can ever tell  
   It goes beyond the highest star  
   And reaches to the lowest hell  
   The guilty pair, bowed down with care  
   God gave His Son to win  
   His erring child He reconciled  
   And pardoned from his sin.
2. Could we with ink the ocean fill  
   And were the skies of parchment made  
   Were every stalk on earth a quill  
   And every man a scribe by trade

To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry   
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky

1. O love of God, how rich and pure!  
   How measureless and strong!  
   It shall forevermore endure  
   The saints' and angels' song