

Assurance of Salvation

Romans 5:6-11

John Wesley was raised by a godly mother and was ordained as an Anglican priest. At Oxford University he led the Holy Club, a society formed for the purpose of the study and pursuit of a devout Christian life. 1735, Wesley and his brother Charles sailed to America and to evangelize the Native Americans in the colony of Georgia. After he had been preaching for some time, someone asked him, "Are you sure, Mr. Wesley, of your salvation?" "Well," he answered, "Jesus Christ died for the whole world." "Yes, we all believe that; but are you sure that you are saved?" Wesley replied that he was sure that provision had been made for his salvation.

"But are you sure, Wesley, that you are saved?" It went like an arrow to his heart, and he had no rest or power until that question was settled. Wesley returned to England depressed and beaten.

Many men and many women go on month after month, and year after year, without power, because they do not know their standing in Christ; they are not sure of their own footing for eternity.

Romans 5 is one of the strongest arguments for assurance of salvation in the Bible. Here Paul is expounding on the assurances or benefits of justification by faith. He is showing why our hope of the glory of God, our assurance of heaven, will not disappoint us (5:5). We have already seen that these assurances being justified by faith (5:1), include: peace with God (5:1); access into a standing in God's grace (5:2); the hope of the glory of God (5:2); and, joy in our trials, knowing that God is using them to develop perseverance, proven character and hope (5:3-4). And in verse 5, the thing that anchors our hope, that assures us of heaven, is this abundant outpouring of God's love within our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

So now in verses 6-11, Paul shows us why God's love is a sure thing and thus, our hope of heaven is sure. Please follow again in our Bibles as I read Romans 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.

Our hope of heaven is secure because it is based on God's love that sent Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners. If as God's enemies we were saved through the death of His Son then as His friends the risen Savior will certainly save us from future judgment.

First of all,

1. Our hope of heaven is secure because it is not based on anything good in us.

We begin by looking at four words Paul uses to describe your spiritual condition apart from Jesus Christ. We have already studied several weeks in Romans 1-3 that detail the sinful, lost, unrighteous condition of the human race. Here Paul reminds us again. Look at how he describes our lost condition:

Verse 6: **when we were still without strength,**

Christ died for the ungodly

Verse 8: **while we were still sinners**

Verse 10: **when we were enemies**

Without strength ... ungodly ... sinners ... enemies. Those four ideas describe the spiritual state of every person in the world apart from Jesus Christ.

I'm going to attach a little phrase to each of those words. Each phrase is a simple way to bring the verses home to your heart. Together they show us that there is nothing good in us that could secure our salvation.

First of all, we are ...

A. We Were Helpless to Change Our Basic Nature (Rom. 5:6)

That's the basic meaning of "without strength." The Living Bible renders the phrase this way: "When we were utterly helpless with no way of escape." The word itself actually means "weak" and usually refers to a physical weakness of the body. Here the meaning is not physical, but spiritual. Martin Lloyd-Jones says that it means "total inability in a spiritual sense."

Paul is saying that as we stand before God, we are completely powerless to change our basic sinful nature.

It was Benjamin Franklin in Poor Richard's Almanac that made famous the phrase "God helps those who help themselves." The Bible nowhere teaches any such thing. The biblical view is radically different: "God helps those who can't help themselves." Or if you prefer, "God helps those who are willing to admit they cannot help themselves."

Ephesians 2:1-2 says that we were dead in our transgressions and sins in which we formerly walked. 1 Corinthians 2:4 says that unbeliever does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. Back in Romans 3:11 Paul said that There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. When Paul says that "**we were still without strength**," he means that we were totally unable and unwilling to do anything to bring about reconciliation with God.

But secondly ...

B. We Were Ungodly (Rom. 5:6b)

To be ungodly is to be unlike God, who is holy and apart from all sin. It means that our ways are not God's ways and our thoughts are not His thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). There is a humanly uncrossable chasm between us and God.

Precisely because we are helpless to change our sinful nature, we live ungodly lives. We live as if God did not exist. We invent our own morality; we live to please ourselves;

we go our own way; we do that which is right in our own eyes. In short, we set ourselves up as God and then worship ourselves.

Thirdly ...

C. We Miss the Mark (Rom. 5:8)

Verse 8 says, "While we were yet sinners." The word "sin" means to "miss the mark." It's the picture of the archer who takes aim, looks straight at the bull's eye, pulls the bowstring taut, shoots the arrow ... and misses the entire target. No matter how many arrows he shoots, the result is always the same. He always misses the mark. Paul said in Rom. 3:23, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**

That's what it means to be a sinner. You try and you fail. You try and you fail. You try and you fail. You do your best but your best isn't good enough. You may set high standards for your life, but somehow you always fall short. We did not live for His glory. We had no concern for His glory. Rather, we lived for ourselves and our own glory.

D. We Were Enemies of God (Rom. 5:10)

Think about it. Before you came to Christ, you were one of God's enemies. You say, "But I always loved God." No you didn't. Apart from Jesus Christ, it is impossible to truly love God. How can you love him without also loving his Son? How can you love the Father while rejecting the Son? No amount of sentimental sugar-coating can reduce the stark truth. You were an enemy of God!

In Romans 8:7 Paul says in the flesh we cannot please God, **"because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so."** (NASB)

Let's sum up what we've discovered so far. To be powerless means you can't change your basic nature. To be ungodly means you live as if God does not exist. To be a sinner means you keep on missing the mark. To be an enemy means hostility toward God.

This truth leaves us with no hope in ourselves. You are utterly unable to save yourself. Your condition is hopeless apart from Jesus Christ.

We may therefore draw one major conclusion from all this: God's love is not dependent on anything in you because there is nothing in you worth loving. That is, there is nothing in you that forces God to love you. It's not that you are such a naturally loveable person. You aren't. And neither am I. Sin has infected your life so that it has distorted and destroyed even the parts of you that you believe to be beautiful. Sin "uglyfies" everything it touches. Sin has made us so ugly that God finds nothing in us that is worthy of His love.

There is no reason for God to love us. No reason except this: That's the kind of God he is. He loves you and he loves me because God is love and he can't help loving us even when we are his enemies. His love is both greater than our sin and in spite of our sin. God shouldn't love us ... but he does. This is the wonder of the ages. That God would love his sworn enemies.

Maybe you're thinking, "This is awfully depressing. It doesn't help me to feel good about myself." Listen, Christ didn't come to help you polish your self-esteem or to feel good about yourself. He came to die for your sins in order to reconcile you to God. If you don't see yourself as a helpless, ungodly sinner, an enemy of God, then you won't see your need for the Savior. And, you'll never have assurance about your hope of heaven,

because you'll base that hope on your own goodness or merit. Our hope of heaven can only be secure if it is not based on anything good in us.

2. Our hope of heaven is secure because it is based on God's love in Christ.

Verses 7-8 reveal the unearthly nature of God's love. These verses show that salvation is totally from God and His great love. There was nothing in us that was lovable or that motivated God to send the Savior. Here is how God loved:

A. God went far beyond what we would do. (Rom 5:7)

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

How many people are you willing to die for? If the chips were down, the moment came, and in a split second you had to make a decision, how many people would you be willing to lay down your life for—with no hesitation or reservation?

We all are impressed by great acts of heroism and sacrificial love. Imagine it is the Vietnam war. It's late at night and a Marine sergeant is talking with his men. They are far into the jungle, deep in enemy territory. It's cold and the men huddle around a tiny fire to keep warm. Suddenly a grenade flies in from the darkness, landing at the sergeant's feet. Without thinking, he throws himself on the grenade, taking the full force of the blast with his body. He is blown to pieces, but in his death he saves his men. He gave his life for his friends.

But listen carefully. Romans 5:7 is telling us that God's love is not like that. As great as that is, God's love is much greater. We understand friends dying for friends and loved ones dying for loved ones. But God went far beyond what we would do. We would never think of doing what he did.

B. God Did What Only He Could Do (Rom 5:8).

Verse 8 says,

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

Let's go back to Vietnam, only this time imagine the Marine sergeant has been captured and is taken up the Ho Chi Minh trail to the prisoner of war camp in Hanoi. His captors torment him day and night, trying to break his will. He is beaten unmercifully. His teeth are broken, his cheekbone shattered, his legs disfigured, his ribs cracked, his back permanently stooped from hanging upside down in mid-air.

Now imagine a rescue operation is mounted. As the American forces move in, his captors are between him and those who are seeking to free him. Suddenly out of nowhere comes a projectile. It's an American grenade. It lands in the middle of the guards. Just before it explodes, the American Marine sergeant throws himself on the grenade, taking the full force of the blast, dying in the process but saving his Viet Cong captors. Blown to bits, he dies so that those men who savagely beat him, his enemies, might be spared.

You say, "Who would ever do anything like that?" His name is Jesus. That's exactly what He did when He died on the cross for us. He didn't die for good people. He died for bad people. He didn't die for saints. He died for sinners. He didn't die for his friends. He died for his enemies. He didn't die for people who loved him. He died for people who hated him.

The death of Jesus is the final proof of God's love. Look to the cross. Gaze upon the bleeding form of the Son of God. There you will see the love of God.

This is tremendously good news! It means that our hope of heaven is secure because it doesn't have anything to do with us. In fact, it's in spite of us! It has everything to do with God's gracious love demonstrated in Christ "while we were yet sinners."

3. Our hope of heaven is secure because God will do much more for us now that we are reconciled by Christ's death.

In verses 9-11 Paul argues from the greater to the lesser. If the greater thing is true, then the lesser thing must also be true. He twice uses the phrase "How much more" you see in in verse 9 and verse 10. His major point is to move from the death of Christ to the certainty of our salvation.

This is one of the greatest statements on eternal security in the New Testament. Paul sums up our infinite gain through the death of Christ in two tremendous statements.

A. Because we were justified by Christ's blood, we will be saved from God's wrath.

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

By virtue of Jesus' death, we have been justified before God, we have been declared "not guilty." When we trusted in Christ and His shed blood to save us, God banged the gavel and declared, "Not guilty! The penalty has been paid by My Son!"

It is important to grasp Paul's "much more" line of reasoning here. To send Christ to shed His blood was the big thing. If God loved us enough to send Christ to die for us while we were sinners (the greater thing), then how much more will He save us from the wrath to come (the lesser thing)?

I should point out that the Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses. Sometimes it looks at salvation in the past (Eph. 2:8), "**For by grace you have been saved through faith**" This happened the moment we truly trusted in Christ as our Savior. He delivered us from the penalty of our sins. At other times, the Bible looks at the present process of salvation (1 Cor. 1:18), "**For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**" And, sometimes (as in 5:9), it looks at the future and final deliverance that will be ours on the day of judgment, or as Paul calls it in Romans 2, "**the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.**"

Here Paul wants us to know how we can be sure that on that awful day because if God justified us in the past He will save us from wrath in the future. If you have trusted Jesus Christ, you will never face God's wrath. It is impossible for a born again child of God ever to go to hell. That's what it means to be justified.

B. Because we are reconciled by Christ's death, we will be saved by His life (Rom 5:10).

To be reconciled means that once you were enemies but now you are friends. It means peace has broken out where once war reigned. Through Jesus Christ we who once were enemies of God are now called his friends. Through Jesus Christ we who once were far away have been brought near to God. We who once were aliens and strangers are now part of God's family.

Charles Hodge captures Paul's logic this way, "If Christ has died for his enemies, He will surely save his friends."

When God raised Jesus from the dead, He gave to Him all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He exercises this authority for the salvation of His people (Eph. 1:22). Paul says in Rom. 8:33-34,

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.

Hebrews 7:25 says, "**Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**" We can know that our salvation is secure because if God did the greater thing by reconciling us to Himself through the death of His Son, He will do the relatively easier thing by saving us from judgment because we are now partakers of His resurrection life.

Let me sum up the argument of these three concluding verses:

If God has done the most, will he not do the least?

If God has done the best, will he not do the rest?

If God gave his Son to die while we were sinners, will he not now save us to the end?

If God reconciled us while we were enemies, will he not save us now that we are his friends?

If Jesus died for his enemies, will he not now take his friends to heaven?

The answer to all those questions is the same: Yes!

If God has done all this, how much more will God make sure that all his children end up in heaven!

So what should be our response to all this? Verse 11,

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

If you understand this truth, you've got to exult in God! As we've seen, Paul exulted in hope of the glory of God (5:2). He exulted in his tribulations (5:3). But now he exults in God Himself. To exult means to glory in or boast in. It's an emotional word.

Paul in effect says, "We shall be saved rejoicing." Matthew Henry writes, "We not only go to heaven, but we go triumphantly. Not only do we get into the harbor, but we come in with full sail."

Have you spent any time this past week exulting in God because of all that He has freely given to you through the Lord Jesus Christ?

Are you sure of your salvation today? If not, right now is the time to make sure by trusting Christ.