

March 26, 2017 by Steve Brandon



Salvation Summaries

Romans 5:6-11

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1. While We Were Weak (verse 6)
2. While We Were Sinners (verses 7-8)
3. While We Were Enemies (verses 9-11)

As most all of you know, here at Rock Valley Bible Church, we are strongly committed to expositional preaching. That is, preaching sequentially through books of the Bible, with an aim to bring out the original meaning of the text, and appropriate application.

The advantages of such an approach are numerous. Perhaps first and foremost is that it helps us as a congregation to hear the voice of God. In expository preaching, our aim isn't to preach our ideas or our thoughts. Our aim is to let the Biblical authors speak, paying attention to their flow of thought, their reasoning, and their arguments. We pay attention to their points of emphasis, and pay attention to their applications. Our aim is to say what the Biblical authors say. And as we do this, we let God speak. Because, this is how God has spoken.

Another benefit of expository preaching is that it teaches the congregation how to properly handle the word of God. Because, each week, we dig into the text and seek to demonstrate how the Scriptures are to be read to be understood. We seek to model observations from the text. We seek to model how to interpret the text. We seek to model how to arrive at proper application, which comes from the text. And over time, we trust, it will make you better readers of your Bibles.

Another benefit of expository preaching is that it builds a Biblically literate community. Every week, the goal is to bite off a little piece of the Bible. We take another little bite next week. Well, week after week, month after month, year after year. These little bites all add up. And pretty soon, there are entire books of the Bible that have been carefully studied together. Your Biblical understanding increases in depth and breadth.

This gives an appetite to do this in on your own or in smaller groups. The result is a congregation that knows the Bible well.

Another benefit of expository preaching is that our preaching will be balanced. By that, I mean this: we won't fall back onto our favorite subjects, to the neglect of others. We won't fall back onto our favorite verses, to the neglect of others. Because, we are going to work through every verse. The result is that our preaching will be balanced in Biblical proportions. As John Stott said, "One way to escape extremes of neglect and overemphasis is to work steadily through books of the Bible or at least whole chapters, expounding everything, shirking nothing." [\[1\]](#)

Another benefit of expository preaching is that it helps a preacher. For the most part, I don't have to struggle to come up with some preaching schedule with creative flair to keep you all interested. I know that I'm going to take the next text next week. Furthermore, when there are difficult passages with hard-hitting messages, you all know that it's not me to blame. We are all are dealing with the Lord.

And also, when we are finished preaching through a book of the Bible, nobody learns more than I do. Such Biblical knowledge can only be a help in shepherding the church.

For all of the advantages of expository preaching, there are some dangers as well. One danger is that a pastor may not be gifted to preach verse by verse through books of the Bible. He may be an extraordinary evangelist. C. H. Spurgeon is a prime example of this. His gifts were in other areas, and oh, was he gifted!

Another danger is that sermons can easily turn into lectures or Bible study. The proclamation of preaching may easily be lost in the method. Expository preaching can become overly intellectual, and miss the heart.

There may be glaring needs of the congregation or the culture that are not addressed. Ultimately, whatever helps the hearer is most important. There may be congregations or times when expository preaching isn't helping a congregation. [\[2\]](#)

But, perhaps one of the greatest dangers of expository preaching, is that we can be so absorbed in the details, that we forget the whole. In other words, we can miss the forest for the sake of the trees. Particularly, if the pace of preaching is too slow, you can easily miss the big picture of the Biblical author.

That's one of the reasons why I have constantly tried to keep our theme slide for Romans in front of you. Romans is about "The Gospel." And you catch Paul's heart for it in Romans 1:15, when he says, "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." And the application comes rightly to us. "Are you eager to preach the gospel?" "Are you talking to those without Christ about Jesus?" "Are you encouraging other believer by reminding them of the gospel: we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ!"

And regardless of our text, this is the question that Romans requires of us to ask ourselves. "Are you eager to preach the gospel?"

You say, "What is the gospel?" Well, on our slide we have some key words: Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Security, Sovereignty, Service. These words represent the outline of the book of Romans. And they outline the gospel.

The outline the fact that we are all sinners (Romans 1-3). But God has provided salvation through the death of his Son (Romans 4-5). Those who believe will live a life of sanctification (Romans 6-7). Because they are secure in the sovereignty of God (Romans 8-11). Those who believe will lead a life of service (Romans 12-16).

Now, one of the drawbacks of walking slowly through the book of Romans is that we can miss this flow. Those in Rome didn't have this danger. Paul wrote it to the church in Rome. And when it arrived in Rome, it was presumably read by someone to the church. And they heard about sin and salvation, which leads to sanctification. They heard about security and sovereignty. They were challenged to live a life of service. They heard this all within the realm of about an hour, which is about how long it takes to read this book out loud.

But, here we are, at Rock Valley Bible Church. We have been going at Romans for 6 months. We began in September, took a month break for Christmas as we looked at the songs in Luke 1 and 2. And this is my 22nd sermon on the book of Romans And we haven't even covered 2 of the 6 themes of the book of Romans. We looked at sin. We looked at sin for three months! And now we are in the process of looking at salvation. We have been at it for a month and a half. And it's going to be a few more weeks until we get to sanctification.

Now, that's not to say that we have neglected these areas entirely. Because, these themes are central to the gospel and consistently come up in my messages. In other words, when working through the sin section of Romans, we didn't just sit there. No, such a theme calls us to address salvation.

And there have been plenty of times that we have looked forward into other portions of Romans to help illumine our text. So, we have covered all of these themes, just not with so much focus. So, we haven't neglected all of these themes.

Nor is it the case that our time in Romans has been unproductive. On the contrary! I trust that God will bear fruit in our preaching in your lives. I trust that we all understand the book of Romans better after spending six months in the book. And I trust that when we finish in a year (or two) from now, you will be able to grasp the message of Romans far better than you do now. In fact, I would argue that you may well be in a position to understand the book better than the Romans did on their first hearing of the book.

Now, why do I say all of this? Why do I talk about expository preaching and its benefits and its dangers. Because, in our text today, Paul is going to bring together some of these grand themes of Romans into a few small verses. He is going to revisit the doctrine of sin. And he's going to bring out the glories of salvation. He's going to call us to live lives of sanctification.

And he's not only going to do it once. Nor is he going to do it twice. But three times, Paul will address our sin straight on, followed by the salvation that God has provided for us in Christ.

This morning our text comes in Romans 5, verses 6-11. My message is entitled, "Salvation Summaries." Because, this is what Paul does. He summarizes the gospel. Three times he summarizes the gospel.

And I trust that, after leaving here this morning, the gospel will be clear to you. Because, Paul lays it all on the line three times.

Let's read our text.

Romans 5:6-11

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Now, before we dig into the details of this passage, I want for you to see the structure of these verses. Three times in these verses, Paul speaks about our condition. He says, "while we were still weak" (verse 6). He says, "while we were still sinners" (verse 8). He says, "while we were enemies" (verse 10).

Three times in these verses, Paul speaks of the death of Christ. Verse 6 says, "Christ died for the ungodly." Verse 8 tells us, "Christ died for us." And verse 10, "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

Each of these verses are a summary of the gospel. When we were weak, Christ died for us. When we were sinners, Christ died for us. When we were his enemies, Christ died for us.

This is the gospel, that we are all weak and helpless sinners, hostile to God. But Jesus, in his grace, came and died for us. And in his death, he solved our problem for us, when we could not solve it ourselves. We were weak and helpless, but Christ came to be strong for us. We were sinners and in need of forgiveness, but Christ came to die for our sins in our place. We were enemies with God, but Christ came to reconcile us to God, so that we are no longer enemies, but now we are at peace with one another.

This is the gospel. This is what Paul repeats three times. And so, accordingly, my message this morning will have three points. Each begins with our desperate situation. Each continues with Christ's death for us. Here's my first point, ...

1. While We Were Weak (verse 6)

Look at verse 6, ...

Romans 5:6

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Paul describes us here as being weak. He isn't talking about physical strength. He isn't talking about us as little children, who haven't yet grown up into adulthood, but are weak and can't lift heavy weights. Paul describes us here as being weak spiritually!

The idea here is that we were so weak that we were helpless. We could not do anything for ourselves. In fact, this is how the New American Standard translates this verse.

Romans 5:6

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly

The idea here is that we were "incapable." That is, we had no ability in and of ourselves. It is as if to say, "For while we were [incapable], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." Some people think and say that "God helps those who help themselves." But this verse would say the contrary. "God helps those who cannot help themselves." "God helps those who are incapable of helping themselves."

And this is wonderful news! Because God isn't expecting us to reach some sort of level of competence before he saves us. He saves us when we are weak. Or, to use a physical illustration, he saves us when we were on the hospital bed. He saves us when we were in ICU--The intensive care unit.

Have you ever noticed that those who are in the ICU really can't do much for themselves? Many times, they can't even breathe for themselves. They need a ventilator. Many times, they can't even eat or drink for themselves. They receive their nourishment through their IV's. They are at the mercy of the nurses who care for them. Those who make their beds and empty their bed pans. And it's not a pretty sight!

But, that's us when it comes to our spiritual state. We are weak and helpless and totally incapable of saving ourselves. In fact, in many ways, coming to understand your own incompetence is the key to your salvation. When you see that what God requires of you is entirely out of your grasp, you have made the first step toward Christ.

When you read the law and when you come to see your sin and when you acknowledge your weakness, you are well on the way to coming to Christ. You simply need to embrace what he has done for you. And verse 6 tells us what he did, ...

Romans 5:6

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Christ died for the ungodly. In the context of verse 6, surely, the "ungodly" is a synonym for those who are "weak." See, what Jesus did on the cross was what we, in and of ourselves, were unable to do. That is, we were unable to obtain righteousness through our efforts.

Look over at Romans 8.

Romans 8:3

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

In and of ourselves, we can never satisfy the demands of the law. And when we don't meet the demands of the law, we are condemned in our sin. But Jesus came to do what we could never accomplish through the law. Jesus came to condemn sin. That is, he put sin away from us. It will never come and accuse us again.

This is what Paul is talking about in verse 6 of our text.

Romans 5:6

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Christ died in our place. He died for our sin so that our sin might be condemned. And he did so at the right time. After the Jews had been given the law; after the Jews had centuries of trying to live it out; after the Jewish nation was exiled for their disobedience; during the days of the Roman Empire; during the reign of Pontius Pilate, that's when Christ Jesus came. And he came to redeem us.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And he redeemed us by dying for us. Let's move on to my second point.

2. While We Were Sinners (verses 7-8)

Romans 5:7-8

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

From time to time the news will report of heroes who saved the life of others by putting their own lives on the line.

Like Santiago Portillo, who pulled a driver out of a flipped car that was on fire. ^[3] Like seven year old, Selietha Parker, who dove in front of

her mother to use her own body as a human shield to stop the bullets of her mother's ex-boyfriend who had held them captive. Like 14 year-old Marcos Ugarte who saw flames in his neighbors house and climbed a ladder to rescue a seven year-old who was on the second floor. Like 90 year-old John Shear who threw himself in front of a racehorse who as charging directly toward a 5 year-old girl. Like Ryan Raso, a 35 year-old homeless man, who wrestled a woman off of a police officer. Like Addissu Anhabo, an auto mechanic from Dallas, TX, who rescued a woman locked inside a burning car by breaking the window and pulling her out. Like Henry Ricketts, who dove into a septic tank in Maricopa, AZ to rescue a 2 year-old who had fallen in and saved her life through all the disgusting sewage. [\[4\]](#)

These are but a few of the of stories that could be told of those who risked their lives for the sake of others. That's what Paul is acknowledging here in verse 7. He is acknowledging that people will sacrifice for others. Though it's not all that common.

Paul says, ...

Romans 5:7

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

But what God did topped all of these rescues. Verse 8, ...

Romans 5:8

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When Jesus died upon the cross, he died for sinners. He died for those who had disobeyed the law of God. He died for those who had willingly resisted his will.

In the examples that I have mentioned there on the screen, we see mostly strangers risking their lives at moments of great peril as they acted upon instinct. They all lived to tell about it.

Let me tell you one more story about a man who didn't live to tell about it. His name was Arland D. Williams. Perhaps you have heard of him.

On January 13, 1982, he boarded an Air Florida flight that took off in a blinding snowstorm. It crashed into the 14th street bridge that crosses the Potomac River near Washington D. C. After hitting the bridge, the plane plunged into the frozen waters of the Potomac River. Arland D. Williams happened to be seated in the rear section of the plane that was partially above the water. When the U. S. Park police helicopter arrived to commence the rescue efforts, they lowered a line to carry survivors to safety. Rather than taking the line himself, Arland D. Williams helped others to take the line first, that they might be rescued. Time after time, the helicopter came back to rescue a survivor of the crash. Each time, Arland D. Williams refused the rescue line and helped others with it. After six people were saved from the icy rivers, the helicopter returned for another rescue. But, by this time, the tail of the plane had plunged beneath the waters. And Arland D. Williams was never found.

Now, this is a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus. Arland D. Williams died in the place of others.

Rather than living, he sacrificed his life for the sake of others. He gave his life for theirs. This was the death of Jesus. Jesus died in our place. He was our substitute. His death was for our life.

But the scenario isn't quite what Romans 5:8 is talking about. Look there again at the verse, ...

Romans 5:8

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

It's not because we were so worthy of being saved. It's not because we deserved rescue. It's when we didn't deserve it that we were rescued.

Such is the love of God. Such is our salvation.

Let's move on to my third point, ...

3. While We Were Enemies (verses 9-11)

Romans 5:9-11

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

I trust that you notice the progression in Paul's words. First, he talks about us as being weak. Then, he talks about us as being sinners. Thirdly, he talks about us as being enemies.

By the progression, Paul is seeking to show how great our salvation is. It's not that we were simply weak or passive sinners. It's that we had actively rebelled against him!

God's wrath and anger were upon us (Romans 1:18). We were at war with God. He was our enemy. We were trying to take him down.

Let me try in one small way to illustrate what God has done for us in our salvation. Come back again to Arland D. Williams. Let me re-tell the story, in an imaginary way.

Imagine that the President of the United States was on the plane that crashed into the Potomac river. Arland D. Williams would easily have given the life-line to him.

But, imagine that when Arland D. Williams arrived on that plane, that he was seated in first-class. He was given all of the luxuries of the flight. But onboard comes a guy, who was unkempt. This man was wearing shabby clothes and was drunk and obnoxious. As this man passed through the first class section, he spilled his hot coffee on Mr. Williams. When he realized what had taken place, rather than confessing that he was sorry, this man began to accuse Mr. Williams of tripping him intentionally. Soon, this man was yelling at him, accusing Mr. Williams of being hateful and prejudiced and irresponsible. Imagine he continued his rage until finally, he was demanding that Mr. Williams give his seat to him. He said that Arlan should get to the back of the plane like he deserved. And so, suppose that Arlan D. Williams heads to the back of the plane without a word of argument.

Now, imagine that the plane crashed and the helicopters were there with the life-line. And this loud, obnoxious, antagonist is there. And now, imagine that Arlan D. Williams gave him the lifeline. Allowing this obnoxious, insulting and dreaded person to live rather than living himself.

Why would he do that? Why would he give the lifeline to this man, who abused him so clearly? It is only because of an incredible love within him that would do such a thing. That's a bit like the love of Jesus Christ to rescue sinners.

John Newton said it this way:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found; was blind, but now I see.

Such is the love of Jesus. He died when we were his enemies. But, this imaginary illustration with Arland Williams still falls short. "Enemies" is war-time terminology. We are talking military and guns and hostility and death!

So, take the plane again, and imagine Air Florida taking off from Washington D. C. Imagine that shortly after take-off, several men stand up in the front with guns. They declare that they are taking over the flight. They break into the cockpit. They order everyone to the back of the plane.

After all settles down, they begin to call people forward, and proceed to kill them.

Seeing what's going on, Arland Williams steps up to be next in line to die. As he walks the aisle to his would-be executioners, the plane takes a nose-dive and crashes into the icy Potomac River.

Now, we imagine that when rescue crews are there taking people of the airplane, Arland Williams defers to the hijackers, letting them be rescued first. Then, he notices that one of them was knocked unconscious. He drags him out and attaches him to the lifeline. The hijackers are all safe and sound, and Arland Williams perishes in the river.

This made-up version of the story is the real picture of verse 10.

Romans 5:10

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

See, Jesus died for us while we had our guns pointed at him. Such a rescue can only bring us to worship. We have done nothing. Christ has done it all. In the words of the songwriter, "Jesus Thank you; once your enemy, now seated at your table." [\[5\]](#)

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 26, 2017 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Stott, John. "The Preacher's Portrait," 26.

[2] <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2010/expository-preaching-time-for-caution/>

[3] <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1197970/incredible-footage-shows-passer-by-risking-his-own-life-to-pull-a-stranger-from-a-burning-car/>

[4] <http://ijr.com/2014/10/180258-9-times-civilians-heroically-risked-lives-save-another-persons-life/>

[5] Music and words by Pat Sczebel. © 2003 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (ASCAP)/Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP). Sovereign Grace Music, a division of Sovereign Grace Churches. All rights reserved. Adminstrated worldwide at www.CapitolCMGPublishing.com, excluding the UK which is adm. by Integrity Music, part of the David C Cook family. www.SovereignGraceMusic.org