

Valentines Day Message

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[0 : 00] Well, just being Valentine's Day, I thought maybe we ought to take a look at the great subject that has been so misunderstood by so many for so many years.

And I'm talking about that wonderful thing that we call love. And it is a travesty how it has been mischaracterized by so many, and particularly Hollywood, because they are much more into romance than they are into love.

And don't get me wrong, I'm all in favor of romance. I think it's wonderful, the hearts and flowers and all that goes with it. I think it's just great, and it is part and parcel of what God uses in the lives of a couple of people.

To engage each other in a meaningful way. But the time comes when the romance does wear off and real love takes up.

And therein is where the staying power is. If you never get beyond romance, the relationship may be in jeopardy. But if you get into real love, then that's got the staying power.

[1 : 14] And I don't know where I got this definition, but I got it a long time ago from somebody or something I read. But I've never found anything that in my mind excels it.

And that definition of love is that love is saying the thing and doing the thing that is in the best interests of the object of your love.

Think about that. It is saying the things and doing the things that are in the best interests of the object of your love.

And essentially what that boils down to is love is an action thing. It is something that is activated by your will, by your volition.

You love because you choose to love. And there's no greater expression of that than what we have, of course, in the scriptures. And we're all familiar with the expression of love that is found in John 3.16.

[2 : 27] And the manner of love there that is wrapped up in. And I really like talking about this. In the English Bible, there's a little word, so, S-O.

And it says, God so loved the world. And the word so in Greek is the word hutos. O-U-T-O-S. Hutos. It starts, the pronunciation is with a hard letter, with an H pronunciation. Hutos. And it literally means in this manner.

So, God so loved the world. It means God in this manner loved the world. And it makes God's love an issue of quality, not quantity.

That means when God loves, He loves with everything He has. And it can't be added to. He does not love by degrees. He loves of a quality and a kind.

[3 : 33] So, we would translate that, for God in this manner, or in this way, loved the world that He gave. And then it goes on, the rest of the verse goes on to express what God did about the love He had.

He gave. And it has been said that you can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving. That's the greatest expression of it. And it isn't sometimes, it isn't just giving things, but it's giving of yourself. It's giving time. It's giving consideration. It's giving thoughtfulness.

But it is an ongoing act of giving, is what love is really all about. And I'd like to direct your attention for the time we have to Romans chapter 5, because it contains some of the best the Bible has to offer regarding what love is like and all about.

And I want you to note, beginning in verse 1, and this is irritating, but there's nothing we can do about it. And besides, if I'd had the responsibility of developing the chapter divisions, I probably wouldn't have done as good a job as the guy who did it.

[4 : 45] But you've got to remember that the Bible was never written in chapters or verses. It was written, the documents and the books were written in one continuous whole, just like you would write a letter.

But the difficulty of that is, it's very hard to locate things. So when you assign chapters and verses to the Bible, then you've got a basis for locating something.

It's like giving an address to the person or to the scriptures. So you can tell somebody, turn to John 3.16, instead of saying, find the Gospel of John and go back about four or five pages and start reading.

So you've got a street address, like you can locate the text. And sometimes they did a good job and sometimes they did a terrible job. And here's a terrible job.

And it begins in chapter 5 with the word therefore. And the word therefore is a word of conclusion. It is concluding something based on what was said before.

[5 : 55] So for these dear souls that just read a chapter in the Bible before they go to bed at night and they stop at the end of the chapter, sometimes you miss the best stuff because it started in the next verse.

And the therefore in chapter 5 is in conclusion of what was going on in chapter 4. And if we just back up a little bit, we'll have to just go back to verse 20.

Well, verse 22, got another therefore. And that too is a conclusion. So, oh, where are we going to go? Well, I would just have to jump in.

Verse 21, being fully persuaded what he had promised he was able to perform. Therefore, as a result of that, it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now, not for his sake only was it written that it is reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

He who was delivered up because of our transgressions. And you really have to keep in mind here who it was that delivered him up.

[7 : 10] It was the Father who delivered up the Son. Concept we simply cannot get our brains around.

He who was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification.

Therefore, having been justified by faith. That literally means having been declared righteous and acceptable to God on the basis of believing.

justification by faith. Which is the coin of the realm of the universe, so far as God is concerned.

Justification by faith. As a result of that, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the scriptures talk earlier in Romans about a state of enmity existing between God and man. That literally means a state of war.

[8 : 19] A kind of conflict that exists between God and man. Whereby, where there is opposition between the two. And when Christ comes into the life, and one becomes a new creature in Christ, the basis for peace has been established and the war is over.

And you and the God who made you are no longer enemies, but now you are allies.

You are in this thing together. And that's the meaning of peace. It means a cessation of hostility and a cessation of anger. There is nothing but a love bond that exists now between the saved sinner and the Savior.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, declared righteous on the basis of believing, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever you do, don't leave out that last phrase, because that's the basis for all of the peace. He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us. Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.

[9 : 38] And we exult. It's another word like for rejoice. We rejoice or exult in hope of the glory of God. Excuse my morning voice.

And I've explained this word hope before, which in the Greek is elpis. And it means absolute confidence. It is completely different from our present day usage of the word hope.

And when we use the word hope, it always comes with a question mark. Because we don't know what the result is going to be. And we may say we're planning to have a picnic today.

And we hope it won't rain. And all that means is we really don't know if it's going to rain or not. But we don't want it to. And we hope that it won't.

The Bible never uses the word hope that way. It uses it in the sense of an absolute slam dunk certainty, no doubt involved.

[10 : 39] This is why Paul said when he wrote to the Colossians that Christ is in you, the hope of glory.

Means the absolute ironclad guarantee of your glory. What does that mean? It means your glorified body.

It means your body that is one day going to be fashioned like unto the body of Jesus Christ. Paul's talking about in Philippians. It will be a glorified body, no longer subject to death, disease, and all the kinds of things that we have to deal with now.

That is our absolute certainty. And that's what he's talking about here. And he says we exult or we rejoice in hope.

And fellas, like I mentioned, the way we use the word in English today, it comes with a question mark. But there is no rejoicing in a question mark.

[11 : 41] How can you rejoice in something that is uncertain? You can't. So what this is talking about is the peace, the tranquility, the stability that comes from knowing you are in Christ and Christ is in you.

It just removes barriers, removes anxiety, removes, it allows for a spiritual, emotional relaxation that is not possible otherwise.

And you know, it was this Valentine's Day. We can translate this into a boy-girl relationship. When they meet and the sparks fly and all the good feelings and all the wonderful stuff that goes along with it.

And the guy is thinking to himself, boy, I really, really do love this girl. And I could easily see myself being married to her.

Man, that would be something. I'd really like that. I wonder how she feels about me. I'd give anything to know if she shares my sentiment.

[12 : 55] If it is mutual or maybe I'm just kidding myself. Maybe this is just a one-way thing and she doesn't feel the way about me that I feel about her at all.

And that would crush me. So he hopes against hope. And then finally the time comes for that romantic evening. And they've had several dates together and they've gotten better acquainted and everything.

And he cranks up his nerve. And he's going to say it. And he's on edge. And he's nervous.

But he feels like he needs to do it. So he holds her hand. Looks at her across the table. And says, I love you.

And there's just a few seconds of pause. His heart stops. She looks at him and smiles and says, I love you too.

[14 : 04] Wow. Cloud nine. Roll it out. The pressure's off. He enters into absolute euphoria.

This is the high point of his life. You may think it was being born. But you know, Her saying that, I love you too.

It's a mutual thing. And you know, before she said that, his love for her was a question mark. But when she responded, the question mark got straightened out and it turned into an exclamation mark.

And it makes all the difference in the world. And now, you've got two young lovers, both of whom are on cloud nine. And it doesn't get any better than that.

My, oh my. That means the certainty, the assurance, the confidence is there. The wondering and worrying and thinking is gone.

[15 : 15] There is a commitment made. And when that is solidified in a more legal way for the world to see as an altar where they pledge their love to each other, it is just, there's just nothing like it in the world.

So, that's the confidence. The glory of God that he's talking about here is the absolute certainty.

And fellas, I think, and I don't, I don't think, forgive me, but I, I've lived in this thing long enough to know that the second greatest blessing of your salvation is wrapped up in your assurance.

First greatest blessing is coming to faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and knowing that your sins are forgiven. And the second greatest blessing is knowing, not hoping, suspecting, wishing, praying, trying harder, praying more, but knowing and the calmness, the serenity that that brings in not suspecting, but knowing you are in Christ and Christ is in you, having the assurance.

And it's, it's tragic that there are people who have had a real, actual, salvation experience with Jesus Christ, but they lack the assurance that they are entitled to as a believer because God wants you to know that you are His child.

He is your God and you are His child. And you can take it to the bank. And no, that doesn't mean, that doesn't mean that you've arrived at some kind of perfection, but it does mean that you have entered into a relationship that is unbreakable.

[17 : 16] And the bond and the maintenance of the bond is not dependent on you crossing your T's and dotting your I's and doing the right things and all the rest of it.

It is dependent upon the integrity and the Word of God, the truthfulness of God. So you can relax in that and take it to the bank.

And you know, some people are afraid. They're afraid of assurance. They're afraid that, well, if I knew that, maybe I would just go off and do thus and so and thus and so.

Well, hey, I'll tell you what, you can. You can. As a believer, you can kick over the traces. You can go your own way.

But you can't do it without the love of God following you. And do you know what He'll do? The hound of heaven will discipline you because He loves you.

[18 : 15] And He will discipline you as the Father disciplines His Son when He goes astray. And no chastening for the present is joyous, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby.

You know, it's a beautiful thing. God is committed to you more than you are committed to Him. Think of that. Our level of commitment can fluctuate from hot to cold.

And sometimes it does, depending on what's happening in our life and depending on whether or not God answers our prayers the way we think He ought to. There can develop some coolness, some estrangement between you and God because you're just not on the same page but God's love for you does not diminish one bit.

After all, guys, look at the tremendous extreme that He has already gone to to buy you and pay for you. You are His investment.

God's not going to lose on His investment. So, we not only, someone said, one dear fellow said, well, you know, I appreciate this getting saved and being forgiven of your sins and all the rest of it but later, I'm afraid that I know me and I'm capable of really blowing it big time and then I won't deserve to be saved anymore.

[19 : 48] And I said, listen, you never deserve to be saved in the first place. Nobody deserves to be saved. And your salvation is as secure as the day that Christ saved you and came into your life.

And without that assurance, without that confidence, I'll tell you one thing it'll do. It will give you or has the potential at least of giving you a boldness in sharing your faith with others.

How can you share something with somebody else when you're not sure that you have it? You can't, really. Everything is tentative. But when you are confident and you know where you are in Christ, that not only gives you a responsibility but it gives you an assurance in sharing others with others what you have come to appreciate and experience.

Let's move on. We have obtained an introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand and we exalt or rejoice in the absolute confidence that the glory of God will be realized in our life.

And not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulations. Now wait a minute. Wait a minute.

[21 : 04] does that really mean what it says? Rejoice, exalt in our tribulations?

You know what the meaning of the word tribulation is the way it's expressed in a Greek illustration that I heard a Greek professor give of it. He said the word tribulation tribulation is expressed in taking a grape, just one grape, and put it between your fingers and your thumb and you start squeezing and you squeeze and squeeze and squeeze the grape until it cracks, breaks open and the juice runs out.

That pressure is tribulation. That's what the word means. It is being under extreme pressure even to the breaking point.

Well, I got a question to ask you. Who in their right mind is going to rejoice in that? Well, only if the previous passage that we have just read is true can you rejoice in that.

That's the whole point that he's saying. Actually, what he's saying is if you are a believer in Christ, you are in a win-win position. It doesn't make any difference what comes into your life.

[22 : 51] That's the meaning here. That's what we're getting at. It's a win-win no-lose proposition just by virtue of being in Christ. And he goes on to express his conviction about that and the evidence of it.

we exult in our tribulation knowing, not thinking or hoping or suspecting, but knowing, being certain, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.

Fellas, you can't develop muscle and tone without activity, without exercise.

That goes with it. And we're talking about developing spiritual muscle and tone with spiritual exercise. You know what the spiritual exercise is? Tribulations.

Stuff that's hard to cope with. Adversities that come into your life that create all kinds of question marks and you wonder, what is God doing?

[24 : 07] What is he trying to do? What is he trying to show me? What's going on here? And where is God when I need him? These are the kinds of tribulations and because we are in Christ, it doesn't mean we're exempt from these things.

It just means we have a new basis for dealing with these things. Our living in the fallen world as fallen creatures doesn't change because we become a believer in Christ. The world's still nasty. Cancer is still nasty. Heartache is still nasty. But there is a basis for coping with it that doesn't exist outside of Christ. That's what he's saying. We exalt even in our tribulation.

This isn't sadism. This guy has gone off the edge. But he's speaking. I guess we could say it isn't natural and it isn't.

It isn't natural to rejoice in tribulation. It's supernatural. It's supernatural. When you came to faith in Christ, God deposited something in you by way of a quality that enables you to not simply thrive, but to thrive magnificently.

[25 : 29] He has given us the wherewithal to do that. And it's all about perspective. It's all about being who you are and where you are and knowing that. Because if you don't know that, then you're up in the air, you're adrift, you can't figure out what's going on, why, where is God, when I need him, does he really love me, why is he letting this happen to me, what did I do to deserve this, and on and on.

And there's no basis, there's no frame of reference there. And you know how this comes and what it comes from? It comes from spiritual growth. And that's why we need to grow as quickly as we can without the hindrances.

Yes, Don? My body uses the word suffering rather than tribulation. Yeah, well, suffering, tribulation, tribulation, I can promise you, is a form of suffering, whatever it is, whether it's physical, material, financial, whatever, it's pain producing.

And guys, I don't know about you, but I'm not into pain. I am not into pain. I really like, a nice, relaxed, painless, free life.

After all, that's the only way to live, you know? But I'll tell you what, there are times when what we need is for our faith and our confidence to be tested.

[26 : 59] There will come a time in your life, if it hasn't already, when you are going to have the screws put to you, and you will have an opportunity to see if you really believe what you say you do.

And to every life, this kind of thing comes. We are not going to escape it because we are Christians. Christians. But we have resources that the unsaved world does not have or even know about.

And as we draw upon those resources, we are strengthened and stabilized. And it has been said that Christians grow best in the shadow, not in the sunshine.

sunshine. But you know, in my flesh, I'll take the sunshine any day. Give me more of that sunshine. I don't need the shadows.

I don't want that. I wouldn't volunteer for that. But God knows what we need and when we need it. And your tribulation, pain, heartache, all those things that go with it brings about perseverance.

[28 : 12] Perseverance is staying power. Staying power. The ability, in our case, it's a God-given ability to hang in there when the going gets tough.

And someone says that when as a Christian you reach the end of your rope, what do you do? You tie a knot and hang on. That's perseverance.

That's staying power. And all of us, if you have not already, time's going to come when you're going to have an opportunity to put this into practice, if you haven't already.

And some of us here who have more maturity on us than some of you young pups do, can identify with that. And you know what you call that?

It's life. Got to remember we live in a fallen world as a fallen creature. don't expect a bed of roses. And someone said, and even if you're smelling the roses, you got to remember that they come with thorns.

[29 : 24] And that's life. Perseverance. Perseverance, proven character. That simply means that will test your mettle and let you find out what you're really made of.

And proven character, hope. And what is that again? that's that same word, a settled confidence, an absolute assurance, a confidence, and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For while we were still helpless, helpless, when you're helpless, that means you can't do anything for yourself.

I remember another pastor friend of mine years ago, he said, boy, he said, I really got a firm handle on that word that is used here, helpless.

He said, I was in the hospital, had tubes stuck in me and IVs and all kinds of stuff wired up, couldn't even get myself out of bed to use the john.

[30 : 40] All I could do was just lie there, couldn't do anything for myself, even had to provide the intravenous meal for me to have nourishment through the veins, and all I could do was just lay there, helpless, dormant, couldn't lift my finger to help myself.

and the word that came to my mind was, helpless, helpless, without strength, can't do anything on your own behalf.

And that's exactly the expression that's used here, and the idea is, you are totally unable, you know, the description that I just gave you physically, that's the true description of us spiritually, and our inability to make ourselves acceptable to God, we are helpless, we can't move a muscle, we can't do anything.

Hope does not disappoint, the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit. We were still helpless at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly, I don't know how else to interpret that other than that passage in Galatians that says, in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son made of a woman made under the law to redeem those that are under the law, and in the fullness of time means that God had in mind all along what the most opportune time would be for him to send his son into the world to do what he did, and that's the time he chose, and it was just the right time.

Christ died for the ungodly, and the reason he died for the ungodly was because there weren't any godly, there weren't any godly, they were all ungodly, for one man, for one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man, someone would dare even to die, and we know there are all kinds of stories about that, you've read them and heard them yourself, and some of you may have heard from somebody you know personally, where a person voluntarily puts their own life at risk, or even maybe gives up their own life for the life of someone else, it's a heroic thing to do, but it happens all the time, especially does it happen in times of war, when men are in combat, and opposing an enemy, and the bullets are flying, and the blood is flowing, and the wounds are popping up all over the place, and the casualties, and the stretchers come in, and all the rest of it, we've heard all kinds of accounts where a man would give his life for a buddy, for somebody in the trench with him, he would put himself at risk, he would fall on the grenade, and take the full impact of it himself, rather than have it discharged, and maybe kill, two or three of his buddies there with him, all kinds of stories like that have survived from all of the wars, and you do that out of love, that's giving, you do that for a friend, but you don't do that for an enemy, the enemies are those who are shooting at you, and you're shooting at them, and the name of the game is kill the enemy, man, but Jesus died for his enemies, that is beyond the pale, that's exactly what the text is expressing here, while we were still helpless at the right time,

[34 : 42] 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, conjunction to contrast here, God demonstrates, means God put on display, God made a public spectacle of his love, in the cross, and the Christ who was on it, and you know, the world at large does not see love when they look at that cross, they don't see that, they don't see love there, what they do is they see death, and they see sacrifice, but they don't see love, that is the real expression, now after you come to faith in Christ, oh yeah, you see it then, you look at that cross and love comes out of it in bold relief, but that's when you are on the right side of the issue, on the other side, for a lot of people that cross is a piece of jewelry, that's all it is, just a piece of jewelry, but for those who are believers, we see the

ultimate, the ultimate expression of love in someone suffering an ignominious death in the cruelest way possible that they could find to subject someone to, and for the believer in Christ, that scene has got love written all over, that's the point that he's making here, but God demonstrates,

God put on display his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. much more than, having now been justified, declared righteousness, righteous, declared righteous by his blood, that is, by his death, life, 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.

Here's talking about reference to his resurrection life that will deliver us. And not only this, but we also exalt or rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

[37 : 51] Man has no greater need than to be reconciled with God and the reconciler is the person of Jesus Christ. And it's just like when two people are at odds with each other, they had a dispute and maybe they're not on speaking terms because of the anger and the wound and the insult or whatever, and there is a great need for reconciliation.

Boy, do we see this ever in marriages today? In so many marriages where couples may, you know, they may even still be sleeping in the same bed, but they're miles apart.

There are something or some things that have come between them emotionally and psychologically and spiritually and they just don't feel toward each other the way they used to.

Back when they had those feelings that they couldn't imagine would ever be gone, they're gone. They're gone. Thank you.