



Sermon – July 5, 2020
Wes Wilkinson

Verses Covered This Week

Romans 8:31 - 35

Revelation 12:12 – 11

1 John 4:10

Ephesians 3:17 - 19

Amen. It is good to see you this morning, church family. I am grateful to pastor Phillip for asking me to fill in this morning. And when I say it's good to see you, please understand for me, it's really good to see you. Because the last time I was up here all I saw was a red dot in the camera. So it's exciting to see some people here this morning. Excited that maybe if you're so led to say "amen" I will hear you say "amen" and not read it on a comment on Facebook later on in the day. So it's a joy to be here this morning.

As we open up the word this morning, I want to ask you to ponder this question. Especially in light of the fact that we will take the Lord's Supper today. What are the ramifications of the gospel in our life? If we could summarize down the gospel message, the message that Jesus, the One who was fully God and fully man, He has come and lived the life you and I could not; to die the death that you and I deserve to die. He has risen, He is exalted, He's seated on high, and He reconciles men and women broken and separated from God in sin to His father. What are the ramifications of that in our life, especially given the time and the day and the place that we are living in? What are the ramifications for the five-year-old who came to know the Lord in the last two weeks? For the 31-year-old standing behind the pulpit this morning? For the 95-year-old watching online? What are the ramifications of the gospel?

So if you've got your Bibles, I want you to go to Romans chapter 8. We're going to pick up in verse 31. Romans 8:31. And as you go there, let me just remind you who Paul is writing to. He's writing to the church in Rome. Likely, he's writing this letter sometime in the early to mid A.D. 50s. He is writing to a church that is living in a capital city. A church that is living in a culture that is pagan to its core. A church that lives in a culture that has no regard for Christ. A culture that is sensual and seeks out every opportunity to engage in sexual immorality of every kind. A culture in which there is great poverty. A culture in which the powerful have power and the others do not. A culture in which slams the church with malicious claims such as them being arsonists because they speak of the fire of the Spirit. Them being guilty of incest because they

call each other brother and sister. Them being guilty, and this is true, accusations of cannibalism because the church speaks of taking the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. They accused them, worst of all, of atheism because they believe in a God who was not represented by an idol they could see in front of them. They lived in a hostile culture in the time when the leadership was transitioning. In A.D. 54 Nero would come to the throne. And Nero would ultimately take his reign and in his madness, set fire to Rome and blame it on the Christians. Blame it on the church and use it as an opportunity to engage in a mass persecution throughout Rome. These are the people and this is the situation Paul writes when he says this.

³¹What then shall we say to these things?

What are these things? Well these things, let me just give you a list. Romans chapter 8. Here are things that he's just mentioned. There's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. He's mentioned that the Spirit of God dwells within us, enabling us to put to death the deeds of the flesh. He says the Spirit of God dwells within us and enables us to call God Abba Father. He says we have been adopted as sons and daughters by God and we are now co-heirs with Christ. And the reality of that inheritance is so great that all of creation will be restored to God's purpose. He says that we have hope. It says the Holy Spirit knows our weaknesses and the One who lives within us is praying the perfect will of the Father over us with passion beyond what words can express. It says that God causes all things together, works together for good to those who are called. And speaks of Him conforming us to the image of Christ. What shall we say to these things? But bigger than this, it's really everything he's written in the book from chapter 1, verse 16 forward to this moment as he has unpacked and laid out and walked through the gospel message. What shall we say in light of so glorious a gospel?

If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but He delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

He says if God is for us, if God is on our side, and it's not a statement of if, wondering is He, but it's a statement of reality. Since God is for us it does not matter who stands against us. It is irrelevant if God is for us. Now let's pause for a moment and make sure we understand, what does it mean if God is for us. It does not mean that God is for whatever I want as long as I can couch it in a Bible verse and make it sound good to Him. What it means is what he's just unpacked in Romans 8:28 and 29. God is for us. He is for His purpose. He is for His plans. He is for His work of reconciliation and sanctification in our lives. He is for us being conformed to the image of Christ. He is for us knowing Him truly. He is for us loving Him completely. And He is for us following Him faithfully to the end. He is for us arriving home on that day seeing Him face to face and saying, "Well done good and faithful servant." He is for us. It does not matter who is against us. And so he begins to unpack this, how is he for us? He did not spare His own son. His own Son. His unique Son. His Son that is His. His Son between whom there is no greater love than the love of the Father for the Son. A love that looked down on the Son in the garden crying out, "Father, if there is any other way, take this cup from me. But not my will, Yours be done." A Father who delivered over, according to Isaiah 53, who it pleased to crush. The Son. Why? Because in delivering the Son over it says, earlier in Romans, that He was delivered over on to death on our behalf for our sin. He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, those of us in Christ. So here's the question. How will he not also with him freely give us all things? That word freely give is the idea of a gift of grace. How much will He

not also give us in grace his gifts? There is no greater gift than the Father giving the Son. How much more will He not give every other gift? Every other gift. How much more will He not give His peace? How much more will He not give His joy? How much more will His grace not prove to be sufficient? How much more He has proved there is no greater gift He could give than the giving of His Son. Church family, do you see our value in the eyes of God? We know from the rest of Scripture that God gave His Son. Why? It's the earliest verse most of you learned in church.

For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son.

There is a value that you and I hold as image bearers in the heart of God. A value that in His love causes Him to give His Son. A value that for the Son causes Him to say, "Not My will, but Yours be done." To go to the cross to take our sin. There is a love the Father sent and crushed the Son. The Son humbled Himself and came and took on our sin. This is an objective reality, not tied to how you and I feel on any given day or what circumstances are or are not taking place in the world around us. There is no place for doubt in our lives to doubt the position of our value in the heart of God. Instead when we recognize what He has done that He is for us. He is for us knowing Him, loving Him, following Him. He is for us. Doesn't matter who stands against us. He has given the greatest gift that can be given. How much more will He not give all things.

What is the result of God giving of His Son? Look with me. What does it say? It says:

³³Who will bring a charge? Who will bring an accusation against God's elect, His chosen? God is the one who justifies. ³⁴Who is the one who condemns?

God is the one who justifies. That is, God is the one who looks out and declares a person to be righteous. God's righteous standard we cannot meet. We have fallen short of the glory of God. We have missed the mark. We've come up lacking. No amount of our effort, no amount of our energy, no amount of our merit will ever, ever bridge this gap. Instead, Jesus, Jesus came. Jesus lived. Jesus lived the life that met the standard. Jesus died taking on, taking on the punishment that, that my falling short rightfully deserves. And it says earlier in the book of Romans that God is both just and justifier. He justly pours out what sin deserves upon Christ. And for those of us who respond to faith in Christ, we are found in Christ and He justifies us. Whereas once we were chained to the floor of sin, unable and stuck in death. Christ frees us. He seats us in Himself at the Father's table that we may be able to look and gaze in the eyes of our Father as we were made to be in fellowship and relationship. God is the one who justifies. It is God who has pronounced and said, "If you are in Christ, you are justified. You are righteous." So who possibly can condemn? Who can bring an accusation? Who can sit there and say, "Well you're not worthy. You're not deserving. You don't have a place at the table. You shouldn't belong. You're a second rate." Who can say those things? There is none greater than God. And if God has said this one is just, who can bring a charge? No one can bring a charge. And how are we justified? Look what he says. He says, God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died. Who became my sin. Who died. Oh, but so much more. Yes, rather, who was raised. He's not dead. He's not in the grave. He is alive. And He's not just alive, but He is seated at the right hand of God. He has been exalted. He has been placed at the position of honor and glory. But notice, He's not standing in that position. He's seated. Because His work of reconciliation is finished. No more need be added to it. He said on

the cross, "It is finished." So He is seated. The great High Priest. The high priest would never sit because the high Priest's work of offering sacrifice was never done. But Jesus is the great High Priest. He's made the sacrifice. There is no more sacrifice to make. He has sat down at the seat of honor, of glory, of power, and in this seat it says that He intercedes for us. He intercedes for us. He is the one who stands before God on our behalf. He is the one who makes intercession. We see this unpacked in the book of Hebrews. And what you'll notice as you walk through, a great High Priest who intercedes must be a great High Priest who is also one with the people He intercedes for. This is why in Hebrews 4 it says that He was tempted in every way as you and I are, yet without sin. And far from this making us feel scared and frightened to come to Him it says, He was tempted in every way as we are yet without sin. So in light of this, let us draw near with boldness and confidence that we may find grace and mercy in time of need. Because He is a great High Priest who is aware of what we face. He is a great High Priest who knows how to sympathize with our weakness. Who knows how to sympathize with the temptation we face, with the uncertainty of the world we live in. And He is a great High Priest who desires to be approached because He desires to give because He is seated at the right hand of God making intercession for us right now.

So what does this mean? It means that I am justified. We find earlier in the book of Romans that because I have been justified in Christ, I have peace with God. Church family, do we know, are we aware of the fact that today that the ramifications of the gospel means that you and I are justified. We have peace with God. We have peace with God. We are at the table. At His table. Any thought of separation from God due to sin, if I am in Christ, is false. Our fellowship can be damaged. I can take my eyes off of His. I can become distracted. I can become allured by the sin that crawls down on the ground. But I am still at the table firmly seated in Christ. And when we forget what our justification means, that we have peace with God, we become prone to the voices of condemnation rather than the conviction of the Spirit. The voices of condemnation which are always focused on us rather than focused on God, the voice of condemnation which produces pride and self-pity rather than Godly sorrow and humility. The voice of condemnation which always degrades our value and worth rather than the voice of conviction which tells me I am wrong and I have grieved the heart of God and the reason it matters is because I am precious in His sight and covered in the blood of Christ. Condemnation which leads to a depressing despair versus conviction which leads to restoration. Condemnation which assumes the worst about God versus conviction which believes His character and His word. You see, the struggle with condemnation is there's a nugget of truth in it. When the voice of condemnation comes and says, "You're not worthy." That's true. I'm not worthy. It's a gift of grace. It's not based on my merit. You see, the voice of condemnation says, "You're not worthy, therefore you can have no relationship with God." That's not how God works. God says, "You're not worthy, but I love you because I am good. I will go after you." In Christ I will justify you. The voice of condemnation says, "You don't belong." God says, "You are my son or daughter." The voice of condemnation says, "Ah, the sin you messed up in, you're too gross for God. You're just going to have to settle for being a second rate Christian." And that is nowhere in the word of God. Because I am justified in Christ. I have peace with God. So you and I must reject all forms of condemnation. So whether that means in the last several months as we've walked through this season of COVID. Whether that means, perhaps, you got a little testy and frustrated with your spouse or your children and you make a mistake. You snap off and all of a sudden the thoughts of condemnation, "You just sorry piece of trash. How dare you do that. God doesn't want anything to do with you." That is condemnation. The conviction is the sorrow of going, "Hm,

Lord I treated those in my household less than Christ, how You would treat them. I am grieved because I sense Your grief and so I am turning back to You. I got distracted, Lord. I am turning my eyes back to you to be in fellowship.” Condemnation says you’re not even at the table; so what are you even doing trying? There is no condemnation. Who is the one who condemns? There is no one who condemns because God is the one who has justified us. Listen to what Revelation chapter 12 says. Condemnation comes many times from our own mind. But listen to what it says.

¹⁰“Now salvation and power and kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ has come, for the accuser of our brethren, that would be satan, has been thrown down, he who accuses them, who condemns them, before God day and night,

But listen what it says, verse 11.

¹¹And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony,

We have victory over condemnation because we have been bought by the blood of Christ. Because of what we celebrate in Lord’s Supper today. I have been justified, set right, and at peace with God. Church family, are we sure? It’s a question of peace and freedom here that comes with justification. But there’s a final question. Look what it says, verse 35.

³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶Just as it is written, “For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷Oh, but in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced, I am sure, I am positive, I have no shadow of a doubt, that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is a question of love. He says, “Who will separate?” Hadn’t noticed it before this week, but do you notice it says, who will separate, and then it goes on to describe things? Doesn’t go on to describe people. It goes on to describe things. Here’s why I think this is. Because when you read this list of things, well tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, because those things most frequently trouble our lives. Why? Because they come from the hands of people. They come from the hands of people. Who will? Who will separate us from the love of Christ, the agape of Christ? The agape kind of love. Not a love that looks down and says, “Ooh, I need you to provide me with something.” Not a love that looks down and says, “You know what? You just tickle my emotional fancy at this moment.” No, a love that out of the sheer goodness and brilliance and holiness of God Himself looks out on human beings and says, made in His image, “I pronounce this value on you. I value you in this way out of My sheer goodness.” Which is why the love is unconditional. Because it’s not based on how brilliant I look or how lackluster I look, but it is based on His valuing and His loving of me; the agape of Christ. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? No one will separate. What is the love of Christ? 1 John 4 says this. 1 John 4:9, 4:10.

¹⁰In this, the love of God is made clear, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, for us.

Jesus came, He lived, He died a brutal and horrific death. And on that cross, in spite of all the physical pain and the things that we might be able to try to identify with because we can maybe understand and grasp physical pain. On that cross He bears the full cup of God's wrath. What God will pour out in Hell for eternity, that is what Jesus bore on your behalf and mine. Why? Because God so loved. Because Jesus says in John, a new commandment I give you, that you love each other as I have loved you. No greater love has any man than this that He lay down His life for His friends. The love of Christ that does not, that is not primarily for the purpose of making us feel good, but the love of Christ which actually transforms and makes us good. Who can separate? Can tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword? He quotes a Psalm, Psalm 42. It's an interesting Psalm because the reality of it is, it says this,

For your sake we are being put to death.

It's a Psalm that describes the people who have walked rightly with God but are suffering unjustly. And they are struggling with that reality. But they are declaring their trust in God. Here is the reality, church family. We are loved by God, but His love does not exempt us from the hardships and sufferings of a world that is set against Him. His love did not protect and keep His own Son from the hardships and the suffering of a world that is set against Him. And Jesus says, "Will the student be greater than the master? No, it's enough for the student to be as the teacher." If we are going to walk the path of Christ, if we are found in Christ, we will walk the path of Christ. The path of Christ is one we have to acknowledge of suffering. For He is none other than the suffering servant. God's love does not exempt us from suffering. When we face suffering, it's not a sign that God does not love us. In fact, elsewhere we see that as a sign when we suffer on His behalf, a sign of His favor and of His grace. But here's the reality. That regardless of who we face, regardless of what we face, it says we will overwhelmingly conquer. We are super conquerors. We are ones who will overcome, not overcome in a nail-biting Hollywood scripted finish, but ones who will overcome an absolute and complete and total rout. Why? Because of Him who loves us. Jesus is not a barely winner. Jesus is the overwhelming conquering king. It is He that loves us. And this is why Paul can say with absolute and assured confidence, that he is convinced that neither death nor life; death, that enemy which none of us have ever talked to someone who's gone through it. That enemy which is final, which closes out the chapter of this life. That enemy which is an enemy. Life which produces uncertainty, hardships, highs, lows, angels or principalities, beings of powers, whom we can't see, whom we can't harm, but whom we experience the impact of their work in reality in the world. Nor things present, nor things to come. Things present we have slight control over, but very little. Things to come, next to none. Nor powers, nor height, nor depth. We find ourselves frighteningly small when we look around creation. We are itty-bitty compared to the depths of the ocean. And we are absolutely tiny compared to the majesty and the height of the mountains. When you go out further than the earth, if you see that, yet we are small, we have a fraction of power. There are many things that can harm. There are many people that can bring harm. But here is the reality that in Christ who loves us, we overwhelmingly conquer because we cannot be separated. There should be, therefore, in our lives a confident hope, a confident hope, a confident hope that knows joy in the midst of sorrow and pain. A confident hope that overcomes despair because this world

is not my home. A confident hope that can be modelled for my family, for my kids, for my coworkers, for my friends. A confident hope that says, "I am loved by Christ." Isn't it interesting that Ephesians chapter 3, Paul's prayer is this. Paul makes this statement. He bows his knee and this is what he prays. That we would be strengthened and grounded, rooted in love, that we'd be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, length, height and depth, to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so we may be filled up to the fullness of God. He prays that we would be able to understand and comprehend His love. Why? So that then we would be filled with His fullness. Elsewhere we find in 2 Corinthians that says that the love of Christ is to constrain us, to captivate us, to move us in one objective aim. A path where there is only one way to walk. Perhaps the reason our lives are so little constrained by the love of Christ is because we comprehend the love of Christ very little. Church family, I ask you the question this morning, what is the ramifications of the gospel in our lives. And have we given attention, have we given time, to ponder these things, to reflect these things? We're going to in a moment with the Lord's Supper. Church family, we do not know death and life brings a lot of uncertainty. We cannot see the angels and demons, but we experience their work. We have very little control over the present and the future. Our place and stature is frightenly small. There are countless other things and beings in all of creation that pose a threat to you and I that can bring hardship, pain, and loss into our lives. Yet this we know and in this we must reflect, in this we must rest, and in this we must thrive with the fullness of God. That Jesus loves us, this we know, because the Bible tells us so. He loves you and me. We are His sons and daughters. His special creation. His treasure purchased not with gold or silver, perishable metal, but with the precious blood of the unblemished lamb, Jesus Christ. We cannot be separated. We can only be distracted and unfocused. So let us in this day of uncertainty turn our eyes to Him. Let us gaze upon Him. Let us comprehend the greatness of His overwhelming and unconditional love. May we walk in the peace and freedom that comes from being justified in Christ. And may we reject the voices of condemnation so that we stand hopeful and confident. For we will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

Pray with me.

Father as we move into this time of response, God, there could be someone here today who they know of Your love, but they do not know Your love. Perhaps their faith has been, I've come to church all my life, I'm good. But they've never responded to Your gospel. They have not been justified with Christ and therefore at peace with You. Lord, if that is them, may they respond. May they hear Your kind call of salvation today and may they respond. Father, we Your people, may we not just pass over these truths. May we not just say, "Oh, well that gives me something good to think on, but I'll think on it later." Lord, may we truly comprehend the God that when Paul comes in and he summarizes all in light of these things, what do we conclude? That you are for us; who can be against us, God? We should not be a people of fright and worry, but a people who bask confidently in glory in who you are, Jesus, and the fact that we are justified and loved. So, Father, may we take this seriously as we come to Your table today. It is in Your name I pray. Amen.