

# Outpouring of Love

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 March 2019

Preacher: Rev Donald A Macdonald

[ 0 : 00 ] are applied to my life and yours, the question must be, how can I, the sinner, be justified before God, before the one of whom the Bible states that he will by no means clear the guilty?

How can I, the sinner, be put right with God? That is then the very question with which the Apostle Paul seeks to address us in this marvelous letter.

The standard of judgment is righteousness and by nature we just do not possess righteousness. You find in chapter 3, none is righteous, states the Apostle, quoting from the Old Testament, no, not one, without exception.

None are righteous, not one human being from among the myriads of people in the world is righteous by nature. And so without compromising his holiness, God has found a way by providing the righteousness righteousness which he requires of us and he has founded on Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 31 ] How? By placing our sin upon him so that through Jesus Christ's death and righteousness the sinner's sin is placed on Jesus Christ and they have righteousness bestowed on them by an act of God's grace.

He goes on to tell how this is not something new in this letter. It happened in the Old Testament. Abraham was justified by faith in God's covenant promise.

And this is Paul's conclusion in speaking of the justification of Abraham that is why it depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring.

Then he begins this chapter. Therefore, he says, the linking word, therefore, he says, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that little pronoun we is not all embracive. It speaks only of those who have responded in faith to the call of God.

[ 3 : 03 ] And Paul goes on to speak of the benefits experienced in the lives of the justified. And you note, there is a definitive note of joy in their life.

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, he says, but we rejoice in our sufferings. Rejoice in sufferings.

Does that cause cause a jarring note? Does that not seem to run counter to the world in which we live?

After all, we live in a country where much is done to eliminate physical suffering. And I think we are all grateful for the advances in medicine to that end.

Perhaps more requires to be done regarding assisting the pain of mental anguish and mental suffering. But we also live in a country where vices are raised with increasing frequency to legalize what is euphemistically called assisted dying.

[ 4 : 23 ] And these claims are made or so they would have us believe in order to minimize or even eliminate suffering altogether both mentally and physically and psychologically.

It is a controversial subject and one that in my view ignores the sanctity of life. does the fact that Paul writes we rejoice in our sufferings mean that the apostle takes some kind of perverse delight in suffering?

Oh no. But Paul sees the level of suffering in whatever form it takes as being used to mold and shape believers for the eternal well.

Nothing in their experience, no tribulation is designed for their destruction as believers but every tribulation is designed for their growth for their sanctification and their maturity as believers in Christ.

Knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character hope and hope does not put us to shame.

[ 5 : 55 ] Why does the hope not put to shame? Why is the hope not disappointed? And the answer that Paul gives is this because God's love has been poured out because of the effusive nature of God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Notice what Paul states. It is God's love, it's not our love for God but God's love to sinners. A love that guarantees the certainty of the hope not being disappointed.

A love that in the words of the late Professor John Murray that suffers no fluctuation or reverse.

There is a lavish generosity about this love.

How do we know? Because of the language that Paul uses, it is poured out. And that is suggestive of the lavish nature of the love.

So I'd like to spend a little time then today in pursuing the question as to how do we know about the lavish outpouring of this love.

[ 7 : 09 ] What is the evidence for it? Three thoughts. First, the people who benefited from it. Secondly, the precise timing of his death.

And thirdly, the proof of his love. The people who benefited from this love. What does Paul tell us about the people loved by God?

he says of them in our text that they were weak for while we were still weak. They're weak.

They're helpless. It wasn't when they believed that Christ died for them. What caused them to be weak? Well, if you reflect, they were in a situation where they were enjoying sin so much that they didn't have the slightest inclination to return to God.

They were in bondage to Satan, in bondage to the world, in bondage to the flesh. And in and of ourselves, we had no power to do anything about that.

[ 8 : 27 ] Like Israel of old, they were in Egypt and they were happy to be in Egypt. It wasn't that they wanted out of Egypt, they were happy to be there.

you were eating the pig food with the prodigal son and you were happy to be there. You were weak, you were helpless.

No, the weakness that is spoken of here is not so much physical, it's not physical but spiritual. It speaks of total and utter helplessness. I'm sure most of, not all have stood or sat by a bedside where a loved one was suffering in the grip of terminal illness.

And as you looked on, you felt so, so powerless, so totally helpless and perhaps you tried to pray and you didn't know what to pray for.

You felt just helpless and powerless. So totally weak. You can do nothing. Well, let me illustrate from the Bible.

[ 9 : 49 ] Remember the man carried by four friends. The Bible speaks of him as a paralytic. And when they reached the place where Jesus was, Mark tells us in his gospel, they could not get near to Jesus because of the crowd.

But they weren't to be deterred. They removed the roof above where Jesus was and they made an opening. They let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. It's a picture of total helplessness.

Powerless to move, this man. And that seems to me to symbolize our spiritual state when the Bible says you are weak.

That is before grace. do you remember how Jesus dealt with this paralyzed man? Son, he said to him.

Oh, what exceptional concern and tenderness in that one word son. Seems to me that word son is soaked in divine love.

[ 10 : 58 ] Here is a powerless man incapable of movement. And immediately there is recognition of his deep need. Son, says the Savior, your sins are forgiven.

Now, perhaps his friends were not overly impressed. After all, they had brought this man to receive visible help, not invisible encouragement.

But you see, this was his primary need. And it is your primary need and mine too, to be cleansed from the guilt and the power of sin.

And you see, in attending to his primary need, in such a gracious act of mercy, his secondary needs are also addressed.

Rise, pick up your bed, and go home. Weak. And you notice, Paul expands on his description of those who benefited from this love.

[ 12 : 08 ] Not just that they are weak, but they are ungodly. It's not just that they are powerless. It's not just that we're helpless. It's not just that we're weak.

It's not just that we can't get ourselves out of the bondage that we're in. but we're ungodly. In other words, we don't want to worship God.

We want to worship ourselves. We don't want to worship God. We want to worship idols. Ungodly. And while we were ungodly, Christ died for us.

And then Paul, in verse 8, adds a further description of those who benefited from this lavish outpouring of love. God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, not just while they were weak, helpless, not just while they were ungodly, but sinners.

Not only transgressed his law, not only broken his law, but we've done what we shouldn't have done and we've not done what we should have done. We have actually failed to do and to be what he made us to do and be.

[13:31] So Paul is speaking here of total failure. It's not just a minor imperfection in our lives.

It's I'm missing the whole point for what we are and supposed to do. We've missed the mark. Weak ungodly, total failures, sinners.

And it gets worse. Look at verse 10. If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of a son. Weak, ungodly, sinful, enemies of God.

At enmity with God, waging war with God. Now I suppose one could say and it would be it would be correct to say that God would be within his rights to crush all those who are weak, ungodly, sinful, and enemies.

Crush them into a lost eternity. But do you remember the picture that is given to us in the Old Testament of the suffering servant of Jehovah? Behold my servant whom I have chosen says God in whom my soul delights.

[14:49] I have put my spirit upon him. And what is true of the suffering servant of Jehovah? The very opposite of what we might expect.

He has not come to crush but to mend. A bruised reed he will not break.

And a faintly burning wick he will not quench. This truth is reaffirmed in the New Testament.

Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased, says God. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench.

You can't get much weaker, more helpless, or even more useless than that. A bruised reed. Does little strength in its stock?

[15:48] It's the very emblem of fragility. It is representative of every person who is weak. weak. Because God demonstrates our lack of strength in illuminating, thin, darkened minds, so that we truly feel our weakness and our need.

And we can't rise to maturity unless we see our immaturity. We cannot rest in his grace until we see our need for grace. to be bruised is to see our sin and its consequences, to see our weakness.

The bruised reed cannot mend itself, but the servant of Jehovah can. And the picture is reinforced by the illustration of the faintly burning or smoldering smelly wick on the point of being extinguished. Yet the Lord is malfunctioning and unattractive. He does not snuff it out. He trims it and sets it back in the oil to keep it alight all part of the healing process and of the ministry of the suffering servant. Oh, the wonder and the marvel of divine love and exercise in the lives of the weak, the ungodly, the sinner, the enemy, the people who benefit it.

[17:33] Helpless and unattractive. Friend, do you think that is a fair description of you today?

Or do you consider yourself as being strong, having an attractive character with much to commend you to God? Well, if you do, you are deceived, because there is nothing in my life or in yours to commend us to God, weak, ungodly, sinners, hostile to God.

But when was this love most clearly made known? That brings me to my second point, the precise timing of his death. death, Paul states it was at the right time that Christ was sent to die, or that Christ died.

What do we understand by the right time? Well, if you look at Paul's letter to the Galatians, he makes a similar statement. When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth a son born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so might receive the adoption of sons.

The right time, the fullness of time, both referring to a time determined by God the Father, when God the Son would come and die.

[19:02] Jesus himself, at the very outset of his public ministry, recognizes that he had come at the right time. After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and

saying, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

John Calvin makes the observation that his coming was when the time that had been ordained by the providence of God was seasonable and fit.

Now, most commentators are in agreement that the right time refers to the time when in the providence of God, through the spread and influence of the Roman Empire, there was a network of roads making communication and travel easy.

I'm sure those who were in the administration of the Roman Empire never considered that God was using them for this purpose.

We don't often see God's hand in the providences of life. I have no doubt but that that may be true.

[ 20 : 25 ] That is what had taken place in the overruling providence of the Almighty. The right time was a time eagerly awaited by some despite the 400 year intertestament interval when there was a period of silence.

The right time was a time eagerly anticipated by some despite that long interval of silence. How do we know? Well, do you remember Simeon's testimony?

When he greeted Mary and Joseph in the temple as they brought, fulfilled the demands of the law and brought the infant, Lord Jesus, to the temple.

Lord, says Simeon, remember, in ecstatic wonder and delight. Now you are led in your servant, depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

God. But notice especially what Paul says about this at the right time. Paul is saying that the right time is not saying it's something to do with the road network or the facility of communication.

[ 21 : 53 ] What Paul is saying here is that the right time was when we were weak and without strength. you see the emphasis that Paul is placing here is when the world was not ready.

When the world was ungodly, that was the right time. When no one was perfect, that was the right time. You know, some people persuade themselves, when I am better, I will follow the Lord.

And what Paul is teaching here is that Christ came when none of us were better. When we were weak and ungodly and sinners and hostile to God.

That was the right time. And God's timing is always perfect. Oh, perhaps we're not always convinced of this.

And maybe I can illustrate this from a very notable biblical episode in the Old Testament.

Remember Abraham in the evening of his life? He was given a sternest test.

[ 23 : 08 ] God asked him to offer up the son of his love on a mountain in the region of Moriah. It involved a journey of three days, not once.

Are we given a glimpse during these three days into the emotional life of Abraham? However, we are told, and it seems to indicate that Isaac wondered what lay before them as they ascend the mountain.

He speaks to his father, Abraham, my father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And there is a marvelous reply, given from the man of faith, my son, says Abraham to Isaac, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

And the reply appears to satisfy Isaac. For we read, so they both of them together.

They went both of them together. In other words, Isaac seemed very happy with the response that Abraham came. It's a picture of harmony, as they both trusted in the provision of God.

[ 24 : 27 ] But now come with me to the mountaintop, where we are told Abraham built an altar. No message from heaven. He placed the wood on the altar. No message from heaven.

And the tension is mounting. He bound Isaac and placed him on the altar, and still there is silence. The tension is palpable.

Isn't it? It's unbearable. He raised his hand with the unsheathed knife ready to slaughter. Already in his mind, he has offered his son.

And then, and only then, does the authoritative voice speak, Abraham, Abraham, do not lay your hand on the boy, or do not anything to him.

For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, come from me. And we read, Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.

[ 25 : 33 ] God's provision at the right time. Down through the years, Abraham's reply echoes and re-echoes in the sacrifices, in the sacrifices that offered up, all pointing to the one who came at the right time.

The one of whom John the Baptist speaks, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You know, to us it seems as if God is delayed, but you know his clock is so different from ours.

With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. At the right time. Never before it. Never until we have found out how much we required it and never too late. Precision timing. That's God's time. At the right time. The precise timing of his death.

[ 26 : 46 ] The people who benefited and finally the proof of his love. 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 even dare to die. But God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Note the repetition in these verses of the verb to die. And notice too that it is in the context of God's love that this verb is placed.

Christ died. There's no question about it. Here is indisputable proof of the reality of divine love. Christ died. The cross is the supreme demonstration of the love of God. And someone once expressed it like this, amazing love.

[ 28 : 02 ] Can it be that you, my king, would die for me? Amazing love, I know it's true. It's my joy to honor you. Amazing love, how can it be that my king would die for me?

Amazing love, I know it's true, it's my joy to honor you, and all I do, I honor you. I'm forgiven because you were forsaken. I'm accepted. You were condemned.

I'm alive and well. Your spirit is within me because you died and rose again. Christ died.

Now remember, Christ is not a personal name, you know, like you and I have. It's a title, meaning the anointed one.

And we should also remember that he was anointed to a specific work, and the work for which he was anointed involved death.

[ 29 : 02 ] death. He experienced what lies at the very heart of the curse, death, abundant, abandonment from God.

And you remember how that led to the cry of dereliction. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? If my memory serves me right, I think it was Hugh Martin who made the observation, Christ's soul, being a true human soul, could not possibly behold all elements of truth in the act of contemplation, hence the object of dread, for an instant, engrossed the whole reflective faculty, when he was above.

My God, my God. Why is Paul showing us this? Because this is just what Christ is doing on the cross.

He's not on the cross because there's something wonderful about you or me that compels him to be on the cross. He's on the cross because there's no other way to deal with what we are but by his substitutionary death.

We are weak, we are ungodly, we are sinful, we are enemies, and we and no one else are in any position to be able to do anything about that.

[ 30 : 44 ] God. And so Jesus intervenes by shedding his precious blood for the weak and the ungodly, for the sinners and the hostile.

Jesus says, I'll take that man's place, I'll take that woman's place, I'll take that boy's place, I'll take that girl's place.

Oh, can you and I say today, in my place, condemned stood. He bore the penalty due for my sin, in my place.

Through his sacrifice he turned away the just judgment and wrath of God. God. And Paul is saying here, when Christ died, he's on the cross not to try and get God to love his people, but he's on the cross as the supreme demonstration of God's love for his people.

God could not have given a more expensive gift than his own son. God is all begins with the Father's love.

[ 32 : 16 ] love. You know, perhaps you sang when you were a child, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

It's a simplistic statement of a profound truth. God loves me. God the Father loves me.

How do you know? Because Christ died. he loved them when they were ungodly and rebellious, weak and helpless.

When his justice demanded that they be the objects of his wrath, God found a substitute who would bear his wrath.

And the substitute was one who had been in fellowship with him from all eternity. And the substitute wants a multitude that no man can number from every tribe and tongue and people and nation to rise up and to extol the love of the Father so that it is a marvel in the eyes of every delivered child of grace.

[ 34 : 01 ] Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon you. you know, this passage is the first reference to the love of God in the letter of Romans.

The love that sent the anointed one of God to die in the room of the ungodly. You know, chapter 1 speaks of the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against what?

Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. It is revealed against the ungodly, the practitioners of ungodliness.

People under divine judgment. There is no question of the justice of this decision. It is the ungodly who experience, even in this world, manifestations of his wrath.

It is not kept for some future date. But even now there are signs of living under the wrath of God and rejection of God. You find it repeated again in the first chapter.

[ 35 : 13 ] God gave them up. God gave them up. But here is the amazing thing. Since the fall of Adam, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, God has shown his love only to those who were under his wrath, and deservedly so, can you get your head around that today?

Amazing love. How can it be that you, my king, would die for me? Let me conclude just with a biblical example of this love in action.

You remember when Jesus was crucified, he was crucified between two thieves. And these two thieves were on the cross because they were ungodly.

They're not denying that they were there for any other reason but that they had broken the law of the land.

And one of these men cries to Jesus on the very brink of death, Lord, remember me. Lord, remember helpless me.

[ 36 : 29 ] Remember weak me. Remember ungodly me. Remember me, a sinner and at enmity with you. Lord, remember me.

And if you had been at the cross, you might have concluded and you would have concluded wrongly that that man was going to a lost eternity.

But do you remember what the Bible tells us? Remember the wonderful reply of a gracious, compassionate Savior.

Today, today, says the Savior, you're the weak one. You're the powerless one. You're the ungodly one.

You're the sinner today. You will be with me in paradise. Why? Yes, because implied in his prayer was the request for forgiveness.

[ 37 : 34 ] And in the response, it is equally implied, your sins have forgiven you. But supremely because of this, I am taking your place.

I am taking your place. Christ died for the ungodly. That is why that man was welcomed into paradise.

Because Christ took his place. Oh, what marvelous love. Little wonder that the apostle speaks of the lavish nature of this love.

the people who benefited from it, weak, ungodly, sinners, had enmity with God, the precise timing of his death at the right time, when we were helpless and powerless, paralyzed by the power of sin.

The proof of his love. There is no greater proof. Christ died for the ungodly.

[ 38 : 48 ] Christ died for in place of in place of. Oh, how important these little words in the Bible.

And now the question for you and me, my friends, is this. Can you say, in my place, condemned distilled?

Because if you come, then you too are a recipient of this wonderful magnanimous love that infuses the hearts of sinners through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray.