

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 5:6-11

Student Notes

Verses 6-11: Four descriptions of our condition before we became God's children; why suffering is a good context in which to discover God's love.

1. "Powerless" – v. 6

"You see, at just the right time, **when we were still powerless**, Christ died for the ungodly."

Powerless: The Greek word here, "Asthenes", has a lot of different shades, but the primary meaning is "without strength". It is used in many different contexts -- in both the Hebrew equivalent and the New Testament context: Job 26:2; 2 Chronicles 14:11; Daniel 8:7; Jeremiah 14:9; Galatians 4:9; Hebrews 2:14

In the context of Romans 5:6 the definition is clear; as a race, humans were powerless to work out their own salvation. They couldn't save themselves -- period.

Not confusing our response with God's invitation; Peter's first sermon after Christ's Resurrection: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..."- Acts 2:38-39

Peter is not inviting the crowd to save themselves -- not in the sense of paying for their transgressions and clearing their debt of sin. But, he is telling them there is a response necessary.

God has given the invitation, but they must make a decision as to whether or not they are going to take him up on it.

See: Luke 14:16-24: "I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet."

A Second thing connected to this "powerlessness": The timing of God's provision of salvation.

Paul writes, "You see, at just the right time, **when we were still powerless**, Christ died for the ungodly."

"When our powerlessness had reached its highest point, then Christ died, at the

time which God had previously determined, and in such a manner, that He died neither too soon nor too late, and was not held... longer than was needful under the power of death." (Stott)

2. "Ungodly" - v. 6

"Christ died for the ungodly."

Referring back to Romans 1:18: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them."

Ungodly: The Greek word is "asebes". It's actually negation of the word "sembomai" -- which means to respect someone.

In its basic root, "ungodly" means to fail to respect God. In other words, to lack reverence or to fail to honor. With respect to inanimate objects, the word means to fail to regard what is *sacred* – especially in the *outward* and ceremonial sense.

- Used nine times in the New Testament: 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 4:18; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 4; Jude 15.

Cross Reference: Romans 4:5: "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

Each of these "ugly" descriptions of the human race are meant to magnify the love of God that is demonstrated by His sacrifice of His One and Only Son for that same race of people who refused to worship Him.

- **The essence of Romans 1:21-23:**

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." -- Romans 1:21-23

3. "Sinners"

"Sinners": Basic meaning -- failing to hit a designated mark. It also has connotations of leaving the right path, or, falling short of a standard. Hence, Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

There is an interesting compounding of words here ... The human race is powerless ... ungodly ... and now, "sinners".

As the ungodly, we have refused to worship God for who He is. We have failed to acknowledge his right and proper place in the universe and in our lives. But in the process, we have become "sinners".

- **The serpent's lie:** "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." - Genesis 3:5

We use the phrase, "They fell". By rejecting God's commands -- essentially refusing to worship Him in his rightful sovereignty -- they fell short of the mark. They became "sinners".

- **Corporate Sin:** Romans 5:12: "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."

In Adam -- we have all acquired the same fallen DNA. As our corporate head -- Adam represents us all -- and his sin falls to all of us.

See: I Timothy 15-16:

4. Enemies – v 10

"For if, when we were God's **enemies**, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

- **The Blanket Statement:**

"When we were God's **enemies...**" Compare to Colossians 1:21: "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior."

The picture is pretty stark; prior to God sending us His Son, he viewed the human race as his antagonists. That's what the word "enemies" really points to.

Question: "What if you never felt like God's enemy?"

1. The Meaning of Enemies:

The English word, "enemy" comes from the Latin word, "inimici" – "not friends". (Our enemies are those who are not our friends).

When Paul speaks of those who are God's enemies -- such as "the enemies of the cross of Christ" -- he doesn't just mean people who actively oppose Christianity. He also means those whose opposition stems from worldliness and idolatry or the love of pleasures.

In that sense, humans are the "enemies" -- "not friends" of God.

2. "What, in the first place, made humans the enemies or antagonists of God?" Sin is what made us the antagonists of God.

Romans 5:12: "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."

Romans 8:7: "...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

We cannot honestly say, "I have never been God's enemy", because "all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory". All, in their minds have been hostile to God because all have a sinful mind.

- **Helpful terms: Active and Passive hostility:**

1. Active Enemies: Atheists who attack Christianity

2. Passive Enemies: Until we accepted God's offer of eternal life, our minds were in hostility to God's commands -- and our status in respect to the kingdom of God was "enemy combatants".

- **The "Last Problem":** The hostility between humans and God cannot be said to have been a "one-way" street. If we were enemies of God by our fallen nature, our resistant minds, and our ungodly behavior -- God was also our enemy.

C.H. Hodge: "There is not only a wicked opposition of the sinner to God, but a holy opposition of God to the sinner". -- C.H. Hodge

- Verses to consider: John 3:19; James 4:4; 1Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8

"Sinners", "ungodly", "enemies" and "powerless" -- these are Paul's fourfold "ugly" descriptions of the human race that Christ was sent to redeem.

Next time: How God's LOVE is balanced against our fourfold, fallen natures.