Romans 5:8-10
Theme: Proof of love

If I told you I could jump from here up to the balcony in a single bound, you wouldn't believe me. If I insisted, you'd demand proof that I do the impossible thing I claim I can do. It would be awesome if I could, but I cannot substantiate my claim by demonstrating to you my phenomenal leaping ability because it doesn't exist. You were right to be skeptical.

A little skepticism is useful because without it, you'd be entirely gullible and a prime target to go along with everything you hear and to be taken advantage of. The problems come when skepticism shows up where it doesn't belong. When God says he's in control of all things, I am tempted to raise a skeptical eyebrow or two toward heaven. When God says he loves the world as much as he does, with an enormous and everlasting love, we may respond skeptically with a "prove it" attitude. God does. He offers a demonstration so astonishing, shocking, offensive even, that it can only come from divine love.

Here's the proof, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* **(Romans 5:8)** God says he loves us in so many places and in so many beautiful ways and because God's the God of promise, his words are never empty but are filled by his actions so they're absolutely dependable. God freely provides indisputable evidence of his love for people by dying for us when were not righteous but sinners. And not in a quick and painless way either. Christ suffered so we don't have to suffer. We didn't deserve this! Yet God substantiated his words by sending his own Son to die for people hostile to him. This love wasn't earned by us; it was entirely God's doing.

Christ's death reveals the fathomlessness of God's love. There was zero moral worthiness on our part, only opposition to his goodness, and he still gave his Son! God said, "Here's my will for you all. It's nothing but good for you to do it," and we say, "No," regularly asserting our counter will. That's what we do. It's why when someone asks us to do something we find arbitrary or pressures us to do it – even if it's something we want to do! – we oppose it. This is why pressing people doesn't work, but backfires spectacularly creating nothing but increased resistance and coerced compliance. It's why we so regularly, against our best interest, do the opposite of the good God says to do. We're every bit as stiff-necked as the Israelites, whom we so often say should have just known better. We should know better, too, but we don't, and still God died for us!! Let that fathomless love revealed in Scripture blow your mind. And it only gets better!

Because Christ died for us while we were sinners reconciling us to God, the last thing we have to fear now is God's wrath over our sin. *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* **(Romans 5:9)** You never have to worry about God's wrath over your sin. Don't let your heart be misled by guilt. Don't let it be burdened when others impose shame on you. Christ became your guilt. Christ removed your shame. You've been made righteous by his blood shed for your benefit when you were dead in sin! God's wrath has been vested in full on Jesus and made you righteous in that very blood he shed. We're free from guilt. We're not afraid of God because Jesus shielded us from God's wrath. This is true everyone, each and every someone you see is an eternal soul desperately loved by God for whom the Lord Jesus died, someone for whom he paid the price.

Paul continues, *"For if, while 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?"* **(Romans 5:10)** The death of God's Son is a heartrending thing but look at the good God brought: your reconciliation with him, peace with God. If something so sorrowful brought good of this excellence, what does the happy thing, the rising to life of God's Son, bring? It brings so much more salvation and assurance of salvation

than we can understand! The glory of Jesus' tomb filled not with death but life, means we are filled with life. Let's say Good Friday, the empty cross, is good for us a million goodness units and a million goodness from God is a wonderful deal. Let's then say Easter, the empty tomb, is good for us a billion goodness units. We know those numbers are vastly different, but to put it into perspective: a million seconds is 11.5 days and a billion seconds is 31.7 years. That's the assurance of Easter, the goodness of cross to the empty tomb. God has given all this, his total and unreserved love, to all people while they were his enemies to bring them into a perfect relationship with him wherein he calls them friends and children. His love for us is so beyond us, but so completely ours.

Imagine a person's reaction to hearing this for the very first time. "I'm at peace with God to what degree??? God made me his family how? HE DID WHAT??" Hearing you are not God's enemy, not at all, but the object of his searching, finding, and saving love; hearing that for the first time, having it wash over and sink in, would be such an amazing relief, a lifting away of a burden, and tears of relief would be gushing as the faith given awareness crystalizes, "Am I right with God? Yes, I am because Jesus lived for me. Jesus died for me. Jesus rose for me." Imagine being able to say this to someone who's never heard it. You don't have to imagine hard. It's what you're called by God to do.

Now, if God loves the whole world this way – and he does – and if we're made new by faith in God's image – and we are – how should we view the world? With love, compassion, with grace and mercy praying for God to forgive, bless, and bring to the saving knowledge of Jesus. I'm sick and tired of Christians, myself included at times, railing against the world devoid of mercy while not taking an honest look at the hostilities, prejudices, lusts, hates, follies lurking in our own hearts. We can and should strive to view the people of this world with much compassion and love, as God does, since so many do not have the sure expectation of eternal life after death that you, by grace alone, have. So prove your love to the world! Speak words of grace and love, then prove them true, even if no one asks for proof, by your faith-filled actions.

I'm not afraid of God, not at all, because I know beyond any shadow of doubt that the Lord Christ, Jesus, is for me. He is the living, all-glorious proof of the Father's love. Even though I sin and am a sinner, he gives me grace, forgiveness and his Spirit to drive this truth deep into my heart. He loves me infinitely. God's not angry at me, ever. I know this because his Son lives for me and that's the ultimate proof of love. Amen.