

# First Love: A Sign of Sonship

by Dana Congdon

---

*The eternal purpose of God is to reveal the love of God through the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation.*

**Duration:** 1:10:39

**Scripture:** Romans 1:16-17, Romans 2:11, Romans 3:22

**Topics:** "Sonship"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of preaching the gospel in Russia to a small group of people. He emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God at the right time and shares his message on the bread of life from John chapter 6. The preacher discusses the journey of a believer, from initially experiencing God's grace to willingly taking on His yoke and discovering the mystery of Christ in them. He also mentions the concept of being chosen by God and serving Him faithfully, highlighting the impact of missionaries and gospel-sharing in the lives of believers.

---

## Transcript

I'm thankful to be here tonight and to share in this time of ministry regarding the eternal purpose of God. There are certain disadvantages in being last one to speak. And I'm sure you're all aware that both Stephen and Lance have pretty well spoken about eternal purpose for the Christian.

But anyway, I'm very thankful that I was able to go last. I just actually came back last week from Russia, and I've had a little jet lag. I've been trying to acclimate to.

And I'm here to share, and since most of my material has already been taken, I think there's only one thing left to share regarding the eternal purpose. And I'd like to begin by sharing on that tonight. That is, if we could really see that the eternal purpose at the heart of it is the love of God.

The Lord's been touching my heart, just even from this recent trip, how much he really loves sinners. How much he has his eye on people who have no idea what's going on. It's interesting, last Sunday I was in Russia, and they sent me out on a two-hour drive with my brother, who's here, by the way.

And we went out to some town, I can't remember the name of it, but we went to this meeting. And there were 30 people there. It was a pretty lively meeting, you know, they're charismatic, and they were dancing and clapping.

And there's about four people there just standing there like this. Well, my assignment was to preach the gospel at the proper time, and so I did. I preached away from John chapter 6 on the bread of life.

Well, they gave an invitation, and these ones who've been like this ended up getting saved. Now, but the interesting part about how much God loves people. It turns out that the man, who was quite a sinner and far from God, began to wrestle with God over some ensuing weeks.

And Saturday night, the night before I spoke, he did one of those, I'm throwing open my Bible in desperation moves. He threw open his Bible to John chapter 6 and read, I am the bread of life. Meanwhile, Saturday night, I'm back in the dormitory staying there, and the Lord basically destroys the message I wanted to say and turns me over to John chapter 6. And I thought, you know, this is just another one of these mistakes I'm making.

How much God loves people. Imagine what he had to do to get my stubborn mind to change about what to speak and to throw his Bible just by chance to John chapter 6 and make him hungry for the bread of life. And it came down from heaven.

He got saved and his wife and their friend. Praise God. The Lord's faithful, you know.

Now, of course, the book of Romans is full of such messages, the gospel of the love of God. And that's sort of the area that I'll be sharing in. And so I'd like for us to read some verses tonight just to kind of lay claim to a few areas in the book of Romans, and we will try to deal with them.

First, we want to go to Romans in chapter 1. In a sense, we'll deal with the gospel tonight, because that's the beginning exposure to the love of God in Christ Jesus. And in Romans chapter 1, it might seem strange to you that Paul would say, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. But, you know, if we don't embrace the cross, we become ashamed of the gospel.

And there are others who think the gospel is not sophisticated and intellectual. But Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel in verse 16. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous man shall live by faith. And then let's just read some wonderful gospel in chapter 3, verse 21 through 26.

Now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of his righteousness at the present time so that he would be just and the justifier of one who has faith in Jesus. And then in chapter 5, verse 1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exult in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance proven character, and proven character hope. 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, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, 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. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. And then in chapter 8, just a few verses, verse 28.

Chapter 8, verses 28 through 30. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren.

And these whom he predestined he also called, and these whom he called he also justified, and these whom he justified he also glorified. Lord, how we thank you that even something as profound as the eternal purpose of God was experienced and is experienced by us in the love of God. How we thank you that this is the great matter that wraps our hearts and keeps us in Christ Jesus, even as we are taken through from glory to glory on the road in your eternal purpose.

Lord, open our hearts to understand and to see something of this Christian path that is laid before us, that was thought out before the foundation of the world. We thank you for this opportunity, but Lord, we need the help of the Holy Spirit to give us clarity, to quicken our hearts, to cause a response of love to well up within us. Lord, we are indeed your debtors.

We yield ourselves to you tonight. We ask that you would quicken and refresh everybody here tonight, that we might be alive to the love of God. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. We just go back there to Romans chapter 1. I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the just shall live by faith.

Such a wonderful statement, and it makes me wonder why I don't declare the gospel more. It seems that the gospel is a great fountain of release. When somebody declares the gospel, it releases the power of God unto salvation for those who believe.

It releases faith in people, even as they are hearing. It is amazing, from faith to faith. And it reveals the righteousness of God.

In other words, when the gospel is preached, God is vindicated as being right in everything He did, even in the sending of His Son to die on the cross. Well, now I am surprised I don't proclaim that more often. What a wonderful gospel of this releasing of the power.

So let's just talk for a minute about this releasing of the power of the love of God. You know, when I sense this electricity in the air of God's love, to me that's the place I want to be. That's why I enjoyed being in Russia a few weeks ago.

They had a crusade, you know, celebrating the tenth anniversary of this church. And they had a man... Actually, the crusade started on Saturday night. This ice rink was filled with 8,000 people.

And they sang songs and everything. And almost at that time for the preacher to preach the gospel, and somebody got up to sing a special song, all the electricity went off. The lights in the place, everything went dark.

No speakers, microphones, nothing. Finally, one of the brothers got up in front and yelled as loud as he can, Pray! And suddenly you hear about 4,000 Christian voices praying all out loud at the same time. I couldn't understand a word of it.

It was tongues to me, but it was Russian, I'm sure. And anyway, for about two minutes they prayed and then electricity came on. The evangelist came up there.

I don't think he spoke more than ten minutes. And he drew the cords of love around the most desperate, sorry, broken bunch of people you've ever seen. You know, I suppose as prejudiced as I am, if I stood out there and looked at these people, drug addicts, most of the men are alcoholics, broken people, old babushkas, you know, little old women over the hill.

I mean, what an audience, you know. Give me some professors, some engineers. But this audience was crammed full of these little people, these poor people, these broken people, these needy people.

And this evangelist said, God loves you. Please come to Jesus. He alone can save you.

We'll help you. We'll talk with you. We'll pray with you.

I'm thinking to myself, what are you saying? But so the love of God was spoken. And so the response came. And of course, hundreds of people came and got saved that night, as they did the night before and the night before.

Because in the midst of the darkness there, there's this gospel light and some Christians willing to help those who are lost and needy. The thing I like about Paul, where he starts here in Romans, you know, he starts with man's need. We've been talking about that, right? That's exactly where Paul starts here.

Anyway, but you know something? In that atmosphere, you could sense the electricity of God. I remember this electricity. Down through the years, I've experienced this.

Whenever this power of God is there to save people, I love this electricity, don't you? It just takes a couple of lost people and somebody willing to declare the gospel and suddenly, all kinds of stuff. I don't know if you heard about the great revival in 1964. In the spring of 1964 in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

You didn't hear about it? Well, a preacher came up from Florida. He's a singing preacher, so he sang. And he preached all week.

He pulled out his best sermons on Zacchaeus and the prodigal son and, you know. You know, nobody got saved all week. Until the last night.

One guy walked up and got saved. That was me. Nobody else felt the electricity, I don't guess.

But, boy, I sure did. I was being electrocuted. And I'm so glad for that revival in 1964.

I'm sorry you didn't hear about it. It was a great time. And wouldn't you know, I was so crazy for God and everything.

I soon felt, oh, I have to be a preacher. So I trundled up the seminary. I remember in 1969 going to the Billy Graham Crusade in Pittsburgh.

Ernie Heil and I went as students to the crusade. And there we would study evangelism and counsel at night. This kind of thing.

Thursday night of the crusade. It was pouring down rain in this outdoor auditorium. Pouring down.

Actually, the rain was sort of horizontal. So they had a little canvas, a piece of canvas. And Billy's under there.

One guy playing the guitar, you know, just rain. It was just so bad. And the people are drenched under umbrellas and holding things over their head.

It was terrible. The guy sang one song with the guitar. Billy just pushed him.

And he came up and said, look, this place is pouring down rain. We can't have a crusade here tonight. But he said, some of you have traveled for hours and hundreds of miles to do business with God.

And I'm going to ask you to come forward right now and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And you know something? A couple of hundred people got saved. Because they were there to do business with God.

And the electricity was, I mean, I just said, my goodness. This is amazing. This is amazing.

I got out of the cemetery and I went up to New York. I remember ministering, but I went into New York City because there was this evangelist, this street evangelist. And I wanted to work with him and learn from him.

So I went in there and he would hold these gospel meetings right in Times Square. It was called Duffy Square back then. Now they have tickets where you can buy cheap tickets there in New York City if anybody's been there.

And right there we would sit down on the ground. I had my guitar and there were 25 other young people, whatever. And we were singing, you know, heavy songs like, This little light of mine.

And thousands of people are coming out of the Broadway shows. You know, on their way to eat or whatever. And here's this guy preaching with a bullhorn, you know.

And he said, come on over here and I'll tell you how to get stoned on Jesus. And then he took every stone in the Bible. The stone under Jacob's head.

The stone that David used to slay Goliath. It's all Jesus. And you know, people were so arrested by this guy that they stopped.

Every 20 minutes he pulled the string and a few people got saved. And he turned around and gave the same message. I heard that rock message, oh I can't tell you how many times.

But every time the electricity of God's love was there. And people coming out of the Broadway shows were getting saved. It was an amazing time.

Then I went with this brother. After one o'clock in the morning you can't preach there anymore with a bullhorn. So now I'm walking around witnessing with this guy.

And we come up to one man who's kind of drunk. And he says, sir. He treated every drunk like a human being, by the way.

He said, sir, I know you're a little under the weather here. But I'd like to talk to you about Jesus. He said, don't you talk to me about Jesus.

But I can see you need a saver. Don't you talk to me or I'll cut you in pieces. And he pulled out a big knife like that.

I, poof, I step. Bold man that I am. And my brother said without even catching his breath.

He said, you cut me in a hundred pieces. And every one of those pieces will tell you Jesus loves you. And he stood right by that knife.

That man fell down and got saved. You could just feel the electricity. You know what I'm saying? It was something so precious, you know.

The love of God. Now, of course, you've also sensed the same electricity when God has apprehended us towards something more, haven't you? I remember it was years ago. And was up at Randolph-Macon when I was just, you know, a preacher.

And God just hit me with his love. Stephen and Lance were speaking on various topics. I was almost, I don't know if I was lifted out of my seat or what.

But that same electricity, you know. Because the gospel isn't just the gospel of salvation. The gospel is the gospel of his son.

If you look there in Romans 1, verse 3, you see. He says that the gospel that he's been called to preach is concerning his son. And again in chapter 1 in verse 9. For God whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of his son is my witness.

And I'm convinced that if we preach the gospel of his son, which begins with salvation and carries right on through into sonship, that electricity is there. It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Now when we read here in the book of Romans, because we're dealing with eternal purpose, at first I was tempted to just move right over into chapter 8 and start dealing with being called according to his purpose.

Namely, sonship. After all, that was Paul's burden when he wrote this book. But as I thought about it and prayed about it, it seemed like the Lord said to me, why don't you go with Paul's wisdom and take us through this sort of path of discovery into our eternal calling? Because, you know, we don't see it full blown from the moment we're saved.

I have to confess, I certainly didn't see it. And there's a certain wisdom in Paul's taking us at the starting point of our need and moving us from there and beyond and beyond and upward and upward until we really discover these things. And so if you would allow me, I'd sort of like to take that tact.

So please be patient. Those of you who want to get immediately to the heart of the thing, which is Romans chapter 8, right in there, that whole section on sonship, well, we'll get there, promise you, but not tonight. We'll touch on it.

But I want to start with that beginning part of the gospel. You know, I was a sinner until I was 20 years old. But 19 to 20, from 19 years old to 20 years, was a rough year for me because I had these Christian witnesses chasing after me.

Back in those days, we didn't have four spiritual laws. Or when you stand before Peter, how do you know you're going to get to heaven? Any of those methods. There's one method used by all witnesses.

The Roman road. Do any of you remember the Roman road? Some people remember this. Well, these brothers at the church that my wife and I were going to, they came and told me the Roman road.

I almost had it memorized and I wasn't even saved. What is the Roman road? It's the Roman road to salvation. It involves these verses.

I'll tell you quickly. You all know these verses. But in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written, that just shall live by faith. That's first.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel, they'd say. It's the gospel unto salvation. You need to get saved, they'd say.

I'd say, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. They'd say, ah, but how about Romans 3.23? For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And they'd underscore how everybody sinned, even including me, including my wonderful wife.

And we've all sinned and fall short of the glory. And they drummed that into me. They really liked that verse.

But then they took me to chapter 6, verse 23. Right? The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. They said, now you see? You're a sinner.

You should die. That's your wages. But the free gift is through Jesus Christ.

You can be saved. Are you ready to pray? I said, no, no. They said, well, when you're ready to pray, let's go to Romans 10, verses 9 and 10.

If you will confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Are you ready to do it now? I said, no, no.

They said, we've got one more for you. Romans chapter 12, verse 1. I beseech you, therefore, brethren by... Of course, they use this as a non-Christian, you see. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

In other words, I was supposed to come and give God my body, you see. Are you ready for that? No, I wasn't. It's interesting.

The night I got saved, which is actually the night before that crusade I mentioned, the Lord really did something in my life. And I went to my father-in-law, who is a wonderful Christian man, the next day, and I said, you know, something happened last night. I don't know.

Something changed. He says, Dan, now I want you to memorize Romans 10, 9 and 10. If you confess with your mouth, you know.

And I said, well, what does that mean, confess with your mouth? And he said, that means you have to go up to the front of the church and tell everybody you became a Christian. Well, that was the Baptist interpretation. That's what I did.

I was surprised when I turned around to tell everybody, because I was perfectly fine after the Lord had dealt with me about it. But I turned around and everybody was crying. See, they'd all been praying for me for a whole year.

I didn't know. The pastor was... I was the only guy who could talk in the church. I had to give myself the invitation, welcome myself into the church.

But, you see, the Roman road was good enough for me. It's powerful unto salvation. You know, this book is a very powerful tool of salvation because there's so much regarding sin.

There's so much regarding salvation. There's so much as to the detail of it, you know. This is Paul's version of, Come, let us reason together.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. And he spells it out. But, of course, Paul is so wonderful because he realizes that reasoning can only take you to the door and then you've got to see by revelation Jesus Christ.

But it's a marvelous book just the way he goes through this thing. You know, I mean, many, many very intelligent people found this as the place of salvation. You know, St. Augustine, a famous monk.

He was saved. You know, he was so burdened by his sins because he'd heard so much about sin. He was so burdened by it, he couldn't find release.

And then one day he heard a child. You know the story? He was in a garden. He heard a child next door saying, Take and read, take and read.

What is that? And so finally he had his Bible there. He opened the Bible, just... Romans 13, 14. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

He's saved. Martin Luther, he's studying the book of Romans to teach it at school. And he's studying it and he stumbles on chapter 1, verses 16 and 17.

And the thing that caught him was this, for by it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Just as it is written, the just shall live by faith. That's what he couldn't understand.

And God showed him. The just are saved by faith alone. And John Wesley, the unsuccessful American missionary, he came to be a missionary to the Americans and the Indians, went back in defeat.

He'd been seeking God, seeking God, seeking God. But you know, he went to a little church, a Moravian church in London. And of course, the man up in the front, he wasn't even preaching.

He was reading the introduction of Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. And that's how Wesley got saved. His heart was strangely warmed.

You know, just for kicks, I went back and read that introduction. I don't see what he got out of it. But this book, Romans, is an amazing book.

It's an amazing book. When we look at its outline, I'm sure that many of you have studied this book and you see it. But could we just sort of go through it, just up to the point that I want to get to tonight? Because what Paul does right from the beginning is show that the righteousness of God is revealed first by His wrath.

Because of all the sin that's in the world, and men not only sinning in unbelief and in disobedience, but in a downward spiral of greater and greater and worse and worse sins, greater depravity. And God's wrath is basically that He lifts His hands off man. What a story.

Isn't that amazing? God wants to and intends to have His hand on all men. But because of sin, He takes His hands off. He gives them over to these sins and just lets the wages of these sins take their toll.

And so in chapter 1, we have the story of just men, sinners getting worse and worse, separated from God and feeling His wrath. And in chapter 2, which is carried on further, wherein Paul shows that God shows no partiality. The Jews are just as guilty as the Gentiles.

The Gentiles are convicted by their conscience. The Jews are convicted by the law. But God shows no partiality, He says in chapter 2, verse 11, for there is no partiality with God.

And then in chapter 3, verse 22, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. He is just showing the complete state of ruin of all men. Even given the law, the Jews were unbelieving and disobedient.

Even giving their father Abraham, it turns out that faith isn't passed along genetically. Even given the humility of Moses and the law, but even the Jews were disobedient and unbelieving. All have sinned.

There's no distinction. And you know, this is our starting point. This is where God has to get us.

I'm amazed, brothers and sisters, you know, in dealing with young people, that many of our Christian young people actually feel separated from God. They're convicted of their sins. They have some unconfessed sin.

They're dealing with something in their life. And this is where they're at. We can talk to them about, you know, adoption of sonship.

But right now, they feel very far from God. I'm amazed sometimes when we have a gospel meeting somewhere and I see a young person raise their hand, and I know that person's been a Christian for five years. I'm saying, why are they doing that? It's because they still sense they're separated from God.

They still don't understand. There's still something there that makes them feel, well, maybe they were saved or maybe they weren't. Maybe I believed, maybe I didn't.

You know, there's all of that going on in their dear little hearts. They're struggling and struggling and struggling. And this is where most men are.

This is where most women are. They feel very separated. You don't have to tell people really they're sinners in one sense.

But Paul says, I have to convince you of this. And you need to see it by revelation. And isn't it amazing sometimes in our Christian lives, after we've been Christians for five years, and suddenly we realize what real sinners we are.

You know, I was saved in a sense as a favor to God because I thought I was pretty good. But there was the dealing that came a few years later. And boy, I really hit the skids when I saw the depth of pride, you know.

It's something, it's just like a bottomless pit you go down in. Because every Christian, if they're going to be founded upon justification by faith, has got to see the desperation of their own position. And so Paul just rubs our noses in it.

I mean, there can be no doubt about the fact that we're all sinners. There's none righteous, no not one. All of our tongues are vicious and our actions are cruel.

I mean, the list goes on and on as he writes this story, as he starts with the need. He brings us under conviction. He makes us aware of the separation.

All that to bring us to that chapter 3, verse 21 that we read. Now the righteousness of God is revealed in justification by faith through Christ. Now comes that first revelation.

And it's a revelation of the love of God. The cross of Calvary. Jesus died on the cross for me.

When I saw how sinful I was, I was so happy that Jesus loved me and he died for me. And that was my first touch of the eternal purpose of God. And I'm going to hang on that.

The eternal purpose of God is when you really touch the depths of God's love. And I did it at Calvary, and I did it on April 1st, 1964. That's when it came alive for me.

April Fool's Day. And I knew that Jesus loved me, and I sure was glad because I knew that I was a sinner. That's the first touch.

Oh, I was justified. I was redeemed. He was satisfied.

He loved me. And to realize by faith. That was the second great thing that was like a revelation to me.

Number one, that God loved me. Jesus died for me. And number two, I had faith to obey.

Now Paul uses this expression only in Romans. The obedience of faith. Which he uses here in chapter 1. Let's just take a look.

In verse 5. Through whom we've received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles. And I had the faith to obey. Now, you see, at that point I had no idea this faith was given me as a gift of grace.

An election. I had no idea. To me it was my action.

He said, whosoever will believe in me will not perish but have everlasting life. Here I go. I believe.

Faith. Obedience of faith. I got saved by the grace of God.

Through faith. Just like it said in the Bible. And this is the first great revelation we come to.

God's great love for us on the cross. The love of God. Our justifier.

And then, as we make this act of faith, you see that Romans chapter 4 is all about Abraham. The father of faith. And that he was justified by faith.

I said, you know what? I'm just like Abraham. I'm just talking from where I was coming from, you see. I'm just like Abraham.

He believed. God says, you're righteous. I believe.

God says, you're righteous. I said, praise God. This is wonderful.

I'm a child of God just like Abraham. And so I began to take some steps, you know. Steps of obedience.

Doing things. Reading my Bible. Doing things.

Getting rid of some sins. Outward sins. You know.

All of that kind of thing. What a wonderful time in my life to realize. To be in chapter 5. There's the first stopping place.

To be here in chapter 5. Having been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And I could say Abba.

And he would say Dana. And I knew I was saved and I had peace with God. And through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith.

Good old faith. Into this grace in which we stand. Oh man, I was standing in grace.

I was feeling forgiveness. I was praying prayers. God was answering prayers.

I mean, I don't know if you heard about the revival in 1964. I guess I told you. A few other bits that happened is within that year.

My father got saved. My mother got saved. My brother got saved.

My sister got saved. You know, it's just faith. You just pray.

It's magic. Jesus loves me. And he listens to me.

He answers my prayer. I mean, this was amazing stuff going on. And to be in this place of peace and be in this grace room.

It was like a great sort of, what do you say, like a buffet. You need some peace right over here. You need some love.

It's right over here. You need some direction. Open your Bibles.

It's right over there. This is grace. God's grace.

A couple of little cracks into eternity. It says there, not only do we enjoy the grace of God. But it says we, at the end of verse two, we exalt in the hope of the glory of God.

While we're eating in the grace room, you know, eating all the sandwiches and everything, you know. And I had my filth. But there's a little window, the glory window.

And you look through that window and say, you know, there's something better. There's something out there. There's something eternal.

I had the hope of glory. I'm going to heaven, you know. That's mainly what I thought.

But this hope of glory. You know, see, eternity was kind of coming through the window just a little bit, you know. And it also, there's a little crack in the door, too.

Now, at the end of chapter five, we learn this wonderful fact. That we're no longer in Adam. We're now in Christ.

We're a new creation. All things passed away. Everything's become new.

And there I am in Christ, a new creation. And by that, I understood I'm in the church. My brothers and sisters.

Wow, this is great. Hey, love Jesus. I love Jesus.

We're all one. This is wonderful. You know, I thought that church that I got saved in, I thought they were perfect.

Until after I got saved. And suddenly, you know, there were some problems, you know, splits. All kinds of stuff going on.

I had no idea. God just covered my eyes. All I saw was, oh, we're one.

We're the church. This is it. And this is something bigger, you see.

I'm in something big here. I don't know. It's being in Christ.

This is something big. I don't know what it is. You see what I'm saying? I'm not really aware of what it is, but I know there's something eternal.

There's something upward. But I had no idea. He's drawn me up into the heavenlies.

I had no idea he chose me before the foundation of the world. I had no idea, you see. I had no idea of eternity.

I had no idea there was an eternal plan. I thought it was kind of being etched out day by day, depending on whether I obey or not. You know? And actually, I had no idea that this whole thing was wrapped up in a person.

I knew that Jesus was about 5'6", and he was my Savior. I had no idea he was humongous. Universal Christ.

I had no idea. I just thought he was my friend. The first devotional book I bought, you know, because there were so many crummy books out in those days.

But the first devotional book I bought was Oswald Chambers. You know? Oh, I loved this book. But the second book I bought was Are You Walking With Me, Jesus? That's a terrible book.

Some liberal minister who was calling Jesus, Just call Jesus your pal. Hey, are you running with me, Jesus? You know? Oh, it was a terrible book. But I didn't know.

I didn't know good from the bad, you know? So there we are at this first stage, loved by God, feeling the love of God, and just sensing a little bit of cracks of glory. Of course, you know, there's going to be the second episode next time I share, Lord willing. And that's where we go through chapters 6, 7, and 8. That season of discipline in my life.

I didn't know anything about that. Nothing in my salvation contract said I was going to have to go through Romans 6, 7, and 8. I was just happy to be in the grace room. I didn't know sometimes He took the food away and sent me through tribulation tunnel.

I found out, you see, this period where He says, Take my yoke. I said, Sure, Jesus. Oh, man.

Do we learn from Him? About ourselves, first of all, of course. And the season of discipline we go through. You know, we take a stand by faith.

I know the old man's records are vile. I reckon on it. I present my body.

And then I start collapsing and failing because of my flesh. The I, I, I, I is always in the way. Oh, what's going on here? And especially, you see, this is like God's trick.

Because you love Him so much, you want to serve Him. And yet every time you serve Him, you do a terrible job. You make an awful mistake.

Are you tricking me? I want to serve God and I try, but there's so much flesh. There's so much. Oh, and I, well, I had a hard time.

I don't know about you. Maybe you made it through easy. But you know something? It was worth the whole thing to discover the mystery, which is Christ in me, the hope of glory.

Why, when I began to discover this, that Christ lives in me. It's not my life, my energy. It's His life.

This is, well, you see, I didn't know that. Did you know that at stage one? Sitting in the grace rooms, like being on the pod on the ground. You haven't even shot off yet.

I thought the grace room was it. You stand in the bottom of the rocket ship and you just eat. But because you love God, you want to serve God.

You put His yoke on you. And next thing you know, you're going through things and you're discovering this mystery. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And of course, eventually, and more and more, you learn this life of abiding. And you start to understand, hmm, some of these things were planned in my life. All things working together.

What's going on here? And then the curtain, of course, opens up. And of course, we get to episode three, the last time, where we realize we're chosen of God. Where we render to Him responsible service.

And when we turn out, we're elected as heirs. And we give it all away. And we serve Him and suffer.

Stage three, are you there yet? The place got very quiet. Oh, well, okay. Well, you see, but there we are.

But you know what? The thing that I am seeing again, again, and again is this. You know, the Lord opens these things up to us progressively. He lets us be where we are in stage one.

And He loves us. Then we go on, stage two, and He loves us. Stage three, and that love never lets us go.

Wherever you're at, brother, sister, young person here, maybe still being established in the foundations of the gospel there in Romans chapter three. Praise God, you know He loves you. He takes care of you, and all of these things.

These are the things we learn. So when we look at Romans, we see Paul. Indeed, he is burdened.

And he seems burdened, A, with laying a proper foundation. Why? Well, we know he wrote Romans really at the zenith of his ministry and freedom. He'd been serving even in Ephesus for three years.

And now he was collecting a contribution for Jerusalem. And during this period of time, we believe he wrote Romans regarding his intentions to go to Rome. But now he's never been there.

He knows many workers and brothers and sisters there, but he's never been there. And Paul, being apostolic, is burdened to lay a good foundation. Now this is something that I just want to stress and move on.

But, you know, we cannot come to a realization of sonship unless the foundation of His salvation is firmly established in us. His finished work, what it has done for us, how we stand in there in the grace of God. And Paul, so he's careful.

You see, he wants to lay this groundwork because how was the church in Rome started? Well, we don't really know. It was Jesus who was building His church. Probably some of those saints who were visiting on the day of Pentecost from Rome got saved, went back, began to meet.

I don't know how later on the Gentiles began to meet with these Jewish believers, but we know that Priscilla and Aquila eventually moved back to Rome. Maybe it was through them that this kind of came together because when you read the end of the book of Romans, you see a lot of Latin names, a lot of Greek names, as well as Jewish. So this church was a church of many Christians, but we don't know who was the apostle who laid the foundation.

Maybe it just happened. Many times the church just happened by the grace of Jesus Christ. And so sometimes Paul felt the need, maybe in conversation with different brothers and sisters, to really lay this foundation regarding justification by faith out in a very step-by-step way.

It's interesting that the Romans, as a culture, their legacy is jurisprudence. They understood justice. And so the justice, the righteousness of this whole salvation matter needed to be clearly spelled out.

And not only that, but there were Jews who were believers as well, and for them as well, they had a legal understanding that needed to be satisfied scripturally. Paul would not just jump into some revelation of the sonship and God's eternal purpose without laying the foundation in the scriptures in the Old Testament and clearly spelling the thing out for everybody to see. Now, Paul did this in a very painstaking way.

He asked a lot of questions. I don't know if you've ever noticed, but when you read the book of Romans, he's asking rhetorical questions all the time. So what does that mean now? Because of grace, can we send all we want? No, no, no.

He's doing this right on through because he wants people to understand the reasoning behind this whole thing. He's laying this foundation. But of course, he's writing this book because he's burdened that these Christians come into sonship, into maturity.

They were, in fact, Christians, whatever their foundation was. And yet, you know, what happens to every Christian is, after you've been a Christian a while, you start to ask some questions. Now, why am I saved? The answer that usually lasts for about five years is you're saved to serve.

That keeps people busy for about five years. You're running around doing stuff, so that's good. And the Lord uses that.

But eventually the question comes back, no, no, wait a minute. Now, why am I saved? And it's important at that juncture to understand the revelation of God's fuller, eternal purpose for you. Not only do you begin to wonder why you were saved, but you also become confused by the fact that you're a Christian, and yet you're going through inexplicable suffering.

These all things working together for good, they don't seem so good to you. And they won't seem so good to you and I until we understand there's a larger purpose, right? So it's important. And not only that, even at the more intuitive level, you find yourself groaning with a dissatisfaction.

Now, I should be happy. I'm a Christian, I'm saved, I'm under the blood of the Lamb, I'm worshiper of God, I read the Bible, but I'm groaning, there's something more, there's something, I'm dissatisfied, I'm incomplete. Well, what is this? And until we enter into the groanings of sonship with understanding, these things become confusing to us.

And so, Paul lays out this doctrine of salvation very clearly to make sure everybody was there. And then, of course, he comes to Romans 8 and he starts to say, you know something, in eternity, there is one purpose toward which everything is working out. The glory of the Son.

All things are good. Now, you know, I have some pet peeves, and one of my peeves is that secular people use this phrase all the time now. Oh, it all works together for good.

To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose, amen. There is no coincidence for such a person. But don't think some sinner can just say, Oh, it'll all work together for good.

Every cloud has a silver lining. No, no, that's pop psychology. But that's not the Word of God.

The aimless wanderings of disobedient, faithless people is not working together except as God is using these things to draw them into the net of His salvation. But in any case, in eternity, there's one single purpose. The glory of His Son.

And the glory of His Son will only be fulfilled when many sons are brought to glory with Him. And that's where you and I come in. But we'll have to wait till next time to see that.

Now, in this book of Romans, already, just the claim of salvation that Paul has made in his gospel has raised a serious issue. And I just want to talk about this one issue. The righteousness of God.

Now, I would say today, to be honest with you, most people, that's not an issue. But to serious people, it's an issue. The Jews are serious about their Bibles and they're serious about the righteousness of God.

And I suppose we could say some judicious Romans as well question a salvation that seems so glib. How can God be just and the justifier of all who believe in Him? Now, that is a big issue. In chapter 3, you know that's a verse in chapter 3. Verse 26, just look at it for a second.

You notice in verse 21, by the way, as he starts to share this gospel, he says, Now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifest being witnessed by the law and the prophets. And Paul always lays the groundwork in Scripture for the gospel and the glory that he talks about. And in verse 26, it says, So there's question number one.

Now, if God is just, what should He do? He should nuke everybody. But of course, the Jews are sort of saying, especially the Gentiles. I mean, at least we're trying to be righteous.

But if God is truly just, the wages of sin is death, cut them off. Now, it doesn't seem to be fair that somebody who just says, I believe in Jesus. Oh, he's OK.

Wait a minute. You see, they ask this question. It sounds legitimate.

A second question asked by maybe even Jewish believers is this. Now, if God made the law the standard of righteousness, how come God is saving people apart from the law? As it says in chapter 3, verse 21, Now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested through faith in Jesus Christ. Now, wait just a minute here.

You set up rules for the ball game. Now, we Jews are trying to pursue this righteousness and doing these things the right way. And now suddenly you're saving people who just come to Jesus.

They're not circumcised, they're not cleaned, they're not kosher, they don't observe feasts, they don't do anything holy. You just save them because they say, I believe in Jesus? Does that sound just to you? And the third question, which Paul will deal with later on, is this. Anyway, is election in itself inherently just? For God to say, number six, you're in a fix.

Number seven, you go to heaven. Now, what's just about that? It sounds like it's inherently unjust here now. And the Jews again say, especially regarding the Gentiles.

You notice in chapter 9, verse 30, Paul just makes a statement. Now, I just can imagine Jews reading this verse. In chapter 9, verse 30, And now what shall we say then? He's sort of wrapping a thought up.

That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness attained righteousness. Even the righteousness which is by faith. But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at the law.

They say, that's not fair. The Gentiles aren't even pursuing and they get it. And the Jews are pursuing like crazy and they don't get it.

That's not fair. That's not fair, that's not fair. You know, I forget that quote.

Brother Deverne gave that great quote about the beginning of sin is the insinuation that God is not fair. You see, these questions are actually the reasoning of the unrevealed mind. All of these questions.

Is this thing righteous? Is this thing just? Can this be a just God who would just choose anybody he wants arbitrarily? I like you, you're in. Paul says, this would be an insoluble problem except in the cross of Jesus Christ, every bit of God's righteousness is exonerated and justified. In the cross of Jesus Christ, God is seen to be both just and the justifier.

And so he proceeds this wonderful argument regarding the justification by faith. Let's just look at that for just a second. Back there in chapter three.

Let's just look at these verses. Because what it shows us is this. Jesus Christ dying on the cross and being raised again is a revelation that reveals that God was right.

Man's reasoning can't come to that conclusion. Man's reasoning still says, that's unfair. But when somebody sees the revelation, you say, that's fair.

But the key is to see Jesus Christ on the cross. It's the work of the cross that makes God's righteousness vindicated. God has to be judged, just.

He has to penalize those who sin. He has to do it. But if God's going to be the justifier, that is the forgiver, how's he going to do that unless he pays the price? How can God both condemn and judge and pay the price? Ah, you get it now, right? In Jesus Christ, that's exactly what he did.

In threefold fashion, as Paul so wonderfully tells us right here in verse 24. First of all, by being justified as a gift by his grace. Justified, this is a legal term, that means we have been forgiven and acquitted by the grace of God because Jesus paid the price that the law required.

This satisfies the law. God is just and a justifier. Secondly, by the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus.

Now this satisfied the ownership problem. Sin owned us. We were slaves to sin.

We were owned by sin until Jesus' precious blood bought us to himself. He says, I own him now. The ownership question is satisfied.

The devil no longer owns us. Sin no longer owns us. We are slaves of Jesus.

Praise God. And then third of all, he mentions, as we go right through this, in these verses, let me see here, I just lost my spot, redemption, verse 25, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith. And this satisfied God's holiness.

This was the atonement that was done through Jesus' blood. This was the satisfaction of God. This was the ending of any enmity between God and man.

This was the peace. This was the atonement. And so God can be just and a justifier.

When we see Jesus upon the cross, we see the righteousness of God revealed. So listen, when you have somebody that accuses God of being unfair, you point them to Jesus, because if they see Jesus, they'll see God was right. God is right.

He does things right. And he made men right. As the passage goes on, it's so wonderful, because it even goes on and says at the end of chapter 5, which we won't go into, but it says, he not only saved us, justified us, redeemed us, and expiated us, but he took us out of Adam and he put us into the last Adam.

It is a whole new race of people. Started us all over again. We're a whole new creation.

I mean, what a gospel of the love of God. I mean, what a job well done. This is not a partial salvation.

This is a full salvation. We've been transferred out of darkness into His light. The whole thing has been changed for us as Christians, as individuals.

This is a great gospel. But what is the basis of it? What's behind the whole thing? The love of God. That love of God that's pouring into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The love of God that he expresses here in chapter 5. You know these verses so well in verse 6. While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. We were helpless. That trip through Romans chapter 1 and 2 should leave us with the conclusion that we're helpless.

We can't get out of that cycle. We're down in the well throwing the ball up, as Bob shared with us this morning. It's just coming back and hitting us on the head.

We're helpless at the right time. Christ died for us. And then he says that God, in verse 8, God demonstrates His love for us even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Not just helpless, but sinners. I mean, sinning sinners. People who wanted to sin.

And yet He demonstrated His love. And He died for us while we were sinners. And verse 10.

And while we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God. I mean, if this isn't love, I don't know what is. God's love to man, seen in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I like that verse. You know that song? At Calvary. Well, that one verse that says, Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan. Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. And then here.

Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary. Of course, this gospel song talking about the gulf that was spanned or bridged by this wonderful gospel. It's talking about the separation between man and God.

And this gulf was bridged by Jesus on Calvary. But, of course, there were even greater bridges that were made when Jesus died and rose again. Think about this gulf.

The gulf between God's eternal plan for us and actually getting us there. Let me make it more personal. The gulf between your calling as a son and where you're at now.

Only Calvary bridges that. Only the finished work of Christ can bring us there. Can bring us into that full, responsible, workable sonship.

Where we're conformed into the image of the Son of God. I mean, there's a gulf. You see it? Do you believe Calvary is that which can close that gap? By the work of the Holy Spirit working to cross into us? We'll be singing that song in glory, I think.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan. Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.

When somebody is saved, they're a son. They're just a babe. They're just a child.

But they're already a son. When you're saved, well, eternity's come down to earth and touched you with the love of God. And we may not really understand yet what's happened, but we're saved.

And we know that Jesus loves us. And we call Abba Father. And we've entered into something that's the beginning of the eternal purpose of God.

I believe the gospel is the beginning of the eternal purpose of God. And I don't want to leave it out of the whole thing. You see, if we just talk Romans 8 and don't do the first part, we might give somebody the misunderstanding that gospel stuff is for kindergarten.

Gospel stuff is passé. The important thing is sonship. I'm telling you, when you get saved, you're a son.

And if you live in this response called obedience to faith, you're living as a son. And when you sense the love of God, and you sense that love of God pouring through your heart, and you're responding back to God with love, even as a new child of God, do you know something? You're a son acting like a son and moving toward God's eternal purpose. Let's start right there.

Let's not say you don't have a clue. We have much more to learn. But the more I travel, the more I see, the more I'm impressed by the first love of His children.

Again, I recently went to Russia, and I saw young believers with first love. Can I say this? We're not really effectually realizing sonship unless we have that first love. We can talk the doctrines, but if we have not first love, we have nothing.

I was so humbled by meeting different brothers, sisters. I met a brother. I said, how are you doing? How long have you been out of the Bible school? They go to Bible school for one year.

He said, I've been out three years. I said, well, what have you been doing? He said, well, I went out to a place, out to a village, a remote village. And I rented a home.

I began to preach the gospel, bring people into the home. I said, well, so you've been there three years. He says, yeah, now I have eight houses.

We have 350 people. And because what he does is, when the house gets full, they rent another house in the next town. And they preach the gospel and people get saved and they minister to them and help them.

And then what happens is somebody in that group right there, they say, okay, now you keep preaching the gospel here and I'm going to go over there. And this brother's been a Christian five years. And all he does is love the Lord Jesus with all his heart, mind, soul and strength.

He knows nothing of kingdom of God. He is the kingdom of God working out. And he's a son.

And Jesus is not ashamed to call him my brother. Because he has first love in bringing many sons to glory. This is where he has to start.

Saving us, loving us and seeing if we'll respond back to him in total love. And so, brothers and sisters, my final plea is very simple. First love, a sign of sonship.

Dear brothers and sisters, I'm sorry if I've ever conveyed the idea that if you're just a brand new Christian, you're worthless to God. Because you're his son. He's pouring out his love on you.

Are you pouring out your love back to him? Don't you know he'll lead you? You know, when I look at people that I see, I estimate, are really touching this purpose of calling of sonship. When I look at people that I really feel have some reality of that sonship, every one of them started out as a Jesus lover. They were working for Jesus, burning up the fields.

They were either, what was it, catching or mending. But they loved Jesus. You couldn't take that away from them.

They would make mistakes. They were just on fire. They were like that fox going through the fields.

You know, the fox is tied up by Samson. I mean, they were burning all kinds of things. But they did it out of love for Jesus.

And I'm telling you, if we don't have real first love for Jesus, we will never come into that sonship. Forget about it. That's all just talk.

We need to start right now. And for you young people, you love Jesus with all your heart. You tell people about Jesus.

You share that gospel and watch that faith come alive. You feel that electricity in the air when you talk about Jesus. And you'll see what I'm talking about.

Without this first love, why even carry on? Why talk about theory that we'll never get to? This is the beginning. We are sons of God. Do we act like it? Do we love Him? Do we serve Him? Do we worship? You know, I have to say, you know, of course, I'm getting older, as you can see.

We're almost all gray-haired now. But even, you know, as I listen to some of these young people's songs and feel like, well, they're in a little different mode than I'm used to. But when I hear people wanting to get back to the heart of worship, I'm hearing something.

A real love. I am burdened for the young people that you not fall away or leave your first love and just become sort of mature, sardonic know-it-alls. You know, I mean, we need to serve God and love God with all our heart.

Don't you know God will direct such a person? Don't you know God will discipline such a person? Don't you know the Lord will bring them through that season of learning that Christ is their life? But if you're not going anywhere, if you're not loving Him with all your heart, there's no room to work. This is our starting place. Dear brothers and sisters, don't just be normal Christians.

We've got enough of them. If we want to see the Lord do what He wants to do in our day, we need to start out as sons of God. I've touched eternity when I touched the love of God.

And I love Him and I'll follow Him all the way up into the heavens. That's what we need to say. We need to love the Lord.

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Exercise the Gospel. Wasn't it wonderful? I'm so thankful for missionaries I've met and people who've just for years just been sharing the Gospel, sharing the Gospel, sharing the Gospel.

You know what I find? They're also becoming sons and sons and sons. They're learning the lessons of God's love. They're going more deeply into it.

Now, we need to have an understanding about God's purpose. God brings us to the place where we say, God, give me understanding, and then He opens this up. But all in its time.

Are we being faithful right now? Don't say, I have nothing now, but I'm going to be a son. If you are a son of God, are you a son of the kingdom? Are you one of those people Jesus plants? You're the good wheat? The sons of the kingdom? Oh, may that be our desire tonight. Because if the Lord comes beside us, and He's not ashamed to call us brethren, surely He will continue to open up who He is to us.

Reveal more and more and more who He is. And lead us into this sonship that we have recorded in chapter 8. May the Lord help us. Let's pray.

Lord, somehow we believe in this last day, as you are surely preparing and maturing sons. Preparing your bride. Perfecting your church.

Accomplishing your will in Christ. Surely in this day, you're calling a people to be lovers of thee. Oh, Lord, I pray that you'll remove from us that sense of wise restraint.

And give us a desire just to be all for Jesus. All for Jesus. Oh, Lord, do restore our hearts if we have gotten down the road and somehow left the first love.

And find ourselves just talking about sonship. Oh, Lord, we want to be seen as your sons because all we do is talk about you. Lord, forgive us when so much of our thoughts have been more cerebral than heartfelt.

Lord, we know everybody in this room has been called according to a purpose that we've yet to discover fully. But, oh, Lord, you have called us all already. Help us be those who respond and follow in the obedience of faith and see the Gospel and your righteousness declared and to move in such a way that you can continue to work and develop and mature us.

Oh, Lord, bring us as Christians into the fullness of your eternal purpose. We pray in Jesus' name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0997.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dana-congdon/first-love-a-sign-of-sonship/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**