

God's message to the world

Pastor Wyley Jenkins, Jr.

How much do you know? Imagine everything that could ever be known. How much do you know out of that? What percentage of all the knowledge in the universe do you know right now? 10%? 5%? 1%? 0.000001%? Here is the point of this exercise. None of us should be closed-minded about God. I was an atheist, and for all the openness I had to every idea, I was closed-minded toward God. How much do you know about where the universe came from? Are you sure you don't have a purpose given to you by God? Are you sure that your version of right and wrong is accurate? Is there life after death? How much do you really know? I think none of us gets to 1% of all that could be known. What if the 1% that you do know is not enough to make decisions about the 99% you don't know? You may have so many questions about God right now. I know you may have what feels to you like legitimate doubts. One helpful question I have for you is this: Do you ever doubt your doubts? Do you question your questions? Could you be wrong? Have you ever thought that something was missing or that something did not quite make sense?

Maybe you seek to be loved, but no one really loves you. Maybe you can't stop worrying. Maybe you are just numb, and you feel dead on the inside. Maybe you are sick and could possibly die, and you can't get out of your mind that there might be something after this life. Maybe there is an intellectual question that you just can't seem to answer, and God is on your mind. Maybe you feel like you are on earth for a purpose, but you just don't know why. I personally had this sense that I had a hole inside of me that I could not fill. Nothing I did could fill it. I was empty, and I tried so many things, but nothing filled me. The message I am about to share is the one I believe can answer all of those thoughts. You see, I believe that each one of us is experiencing the effects of a broken relationship with God. We are cut off from the source of life, and it comes out in different ways.

Here is what I am asking you to do. Today, would you please give me a few minutes to share something you may not believe now, but it is something that has changed my life, and I really believe it can change yours. The Bible is a big book. It was written over 1,500 years by at least 40 authors from every social class, profession, and situation of life. The amazing thing is that though it has many stories and messages, there is really only one message that moves throughout the whole book and can be found in different ways in all 40 authors' writings. That is the message I want to share today. I believe one place we can see this message clearly is in the letter that the Apostle Paul

wrote to the Roman Christians. To help us study and find places in the Bible, we use a system of chapter and verse. This message is found in Romans, chapter 5, and verses 6-11. Let's read it.

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:6-11)

There are three things that we can learn from this passage that I want to make very clear:

1. Our sins have separated us from God and the good he provides.
2. God shows his love by sending Jesus to die for those sins and to give us an opportunity to be forgiven.
3. When we turn toward God and trust in Jesus, we are saved and begin to experience a relationship with God.

Let us look at each thought, one at a time.

1. Our sins have separated us from God and the good he provides

If you have a Bible, maybe this would be a good time to stop the video for a moment and do this exercise with those around you. What words do verses 6-11 use to describe people? If you can circle the words or write them down, it might help you.

Here is my list. Verse 6 says we were weak. Verse 6 also speaks of Jesus Christ's death for the ungodly. Verse 8 says we are or were sinners. Verse 10 says we are or were enemies of God. Verse 7 also speaks of humans being willing to possibly die for other righteous and good people, but it is a hypothetical statement of how people see other people, not how God sees us. How does God see us? God sees us as weak, ungodly, sinners, and as his enemies. Do you believe you are those things? Is that possible? C. S. Lewis, a famous Oxford scholar, says this: *“No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good... We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.”*

I wonder if you have ever really tried to be as good as God is. God says we are ungodly, in verse 6. Un-godly means not like God. We are like a 2-year-old trying to dance K-pop, telling everybody we are good at it. You are like a 3-year-old saying we can play for Real Madrid. We are like a 4-year-old telling others that we are an investment banker and that they can trust us with their retirement funds. Those kids have no idea of what they really are. They imagine themselves to be something they are not. I think we can be like that when we talk about how good we are. As a Pastor, I ask people at times, “if you meet God after you die, and he asks you ‘why should I let you live with me in

heaven', what would you say?" Almost all of them answer that they would tell God that they are good people. That seems a little overconfident. Can you imagine calmly and confidently telling a timeless, all-seeing, all-knowing, super-intelligent, perfectly good being that you are such a good person that he should want to hang out with you forever?

We don't understand what good means to God. We don't understand how much he dislikes evil. God says that we are sinners, and he means that we constantly offend him in our thoughts, our actions, and our attitudes. Think about it this way. I really dislike roaches. I eliminate them without mercy. They are disgusting to me in every way. They draw the violence out of me. I don't know why, but that is how I feel about them. I think that our bad thoughts, our hurtful actions, and our horrible attitudes are like roaches to God.

God sees everything and hears everything. He can't turn it off. There is no escaping your thoughts for God. He is hearing them constantly. God also has a perfect memory. He never forgets anything. You and I sleep and wake up and forget; even if it takes years or decades, we will eventually forget most things. Not so with God. He is able to perfectly recall every thought, word and action we have ever had. He is not impressed with our efforts to change. Even when we strive to be good, we are so weak. We can't stop lying, lusting, manipulating, being arrogant, ignoring friends and loved ones. We spend money that we should not, eat what we should not, and care about things we should not. We do not care enough about the poor or the abused. We don't care about our parents, even though they have given us so much. We laugh at others' pain. We desire to look like somebody else, have their money, wife or husband, children, house, job, or car. We are envious. We are so weak. Worse than all of these, God wants to be our friend and father, but we are his enemies, as it says in verse 10. He seeks to reach us, but we ignore him. John Piper speaks of the way we ignore God like this:

"What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. That is sin."

Accumulate our ungodliness, our constant sins, and our rejection of God as if he was our enemy, and we start to get a view of the way God sees people. The question is not, "why do bad things happen to us?" The question is, "why should good things ever happen to us?" After all, we have not just offended a friend, neighbor, or co-worker. Think about it. If I slap a bodybuilder and MMA fighter, what will he do to me? He will surely beat me up. If I go up to a group of police and slap one of them, what will happen to me? I will probably get beat up, arrested, and spend time in jail. If I go up to the King of Saudi Arabia and slap him, I will probably lose my head.

But what happens when our lives are like a slap in the face of God? What will happen to you when you meet him? Do you see that your sins have cut you off from God and the life that is in him? But how does God react to us? Here is where the truly shocking news comes in. God loves us even when we are weak, ungodly, sinful enemies. When we slap him, speak badly about him with our 0.000001% knowledge, when we curse him as he is calling us to him, he extends a hand of love to us.

2. God shows his love by sending Jesus to die for those sins and to give us an opportunity to be forgiven

Listen carefully to verses 8 and 9:

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” (Romans 5:8-9)

I worry today about Christians. I worry that they have forgotten who God is. Maybe some are even embarrassed of the God they know. We would rather tell people about a God who is more like a vending machine than the God who is so Holy people died when they came to close to his presence. God is the just judge who must punish all sin after death. The Bible says that there will be a day of judgment where our acts will be judged. Verse 9 speaks of being saved from God's wrath. Our sin is like a debt that must be paid. There was no way we could save ourselves from God's wrath and pay our debt. So, God sent his Son, Jesus, to go innocently to die on a cross. Jesus received the just punishment we deserve, and when we trust in his death for us, he gives us his goodness. In God's eyes, it is like we have switched places with Jesus when we believe. That is how God's love saved us from God's wrath. God saved us from God.

Pay close attention to verse 8. It does not say that God showed his love for us 2,000 years ago, when Jesus died. It says, ***“but God shows his love for us”***, that means, shows his love now, today. When you want to see what God's love for you looks like, look to Jesus on the cross. Look to the pain he took for you. Look to the suffering he went through. Look to the crown of thorns and remember that he took that for you. Look at the nails. Look at the mocking and the cursing. Look at the injustice done to an innocent man. He was sinless, but he took your sins. We are sinful, but we take his perfectness. That is the love of God. There was no other way.

To help you understand what God's love means, just imagine that a man's daughter is abused and killed by a criminal. The judge declares that the criminal deserves to die. Now imagine that man going to the judge and saying, "Here take my innocent son, whom I love, and I would like you to kill him in the place of that criminal so that I can be the Father and Friend to that criminal." Do you think anybody anywhere would do that? What person would love his enemy enough to kill his own son? What person would adopt his enemy? Who would do that? God would do that. That powerful extravagant love is what God is offering you today.

3. When we turn toward God and trust in Jesus, we are saved and begin to experience a relationship with God

“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:10-11)

The word reconciled and reconciliation appears 3 times in verses 10-11. The dictionary defines reconcile as: to restore friendly relations between two parties. God tells us that we are dead in our

sins. That means that living people are dead in sin. It is like a bouquet of flowers. When you receive or give flowers, they are dead in a sense. They are cut off from the source of life, but they look alive. That is what we are without God. We are missing something. That is the way all humanity feels. We have been cut off from God, the source of life, like the flowers that were cut off from the ground. We seek to keep ourselves from feeling that death. We all seek to give ourselves things to replace God. They will always leave us thirsty. They are like saltwater. They may quench our thirst for a moment only to kill us of thirst later. God sent Jesus so that you can be close to him. He desires a relationship with you. That is why he sent his Son. He promises to draw near to us. He promises to help us. He promises to be with us. He promises that when we die, we will go to be with him forever. He promises reconciliation. That is not the case for those who reject him. God must be just. Either you will pay for your sins, or Jesus will. Somebody will always pay.

God asks two things of you, if you want to accept his offer of friendship and reconciliation. First, God asks that you commit to change. You are going away from God; now turn toward him. You spoke badly about him; now speak well of him. You did not care for his words; now you must strive to know them. He wants you to live in the reality of what he says. God is not silent. He has much to say. In the Bible, He speaks of love, marriage, family, forgiveness, sexuality, hope, sin and suffering. He wants you to commit to learn, listen and to change. This is called repentance.

The second thing God wants is your trust in what Jesus has done for you. He asks you to listen to this message in Romans 5:6-11 and that you place your faith in him and in Jesus. No one is perfect, but God invites you in all your imperfection to place your faith in him and honor his love by giving him your life. Will you come to him? Will you trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins? Will you walk in the new and amazing relationship that he offers you? I know that many times it is a slow journey. I want you to consider this message well. Maybe you would like to hear real-life stories about how a relationship with God has changed people. There is a website called www.Iamsecond.com that contains hundreds of interviews with people telling how a relationship with God has changed them. Lastly, if you genuinely have a question that is keeping you from faith, or one that is hurting your faith, I would like to invite you to share it with us in English or Spanish at this e-mail address: searchingforGod@lbcmadrid.com

Questions for reflexion:

1. How has a relationship with God changed you?
2. Do you think that any human could ever know enough to know all the answers to their questions about God?
3. Why do we care more about what people around us believe than what God says to believe?
4. How does Romans 5:6-11 speak to you in your current situation?
5. Who do you think you could tell this message to?