

Week of June 17-June 23

HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES ME NOT?

Scripture Reading: Read Romans chapter 5

As a pastor for almost thirty years, I have had the privilege of ministering in some fashion or another to thousands of people. One of the greatest struggles believers have, based on my experience, is the struggle to know that they are loved by God. Oh, don't get me wrong, most believers know with their minds that God loves them but believing it and knowing it in the depth of their being is another matter altogether. Many believers live like the adolescent girl, who, with each pull of a petal from a flower, declares "he loves me" alternating with "he loves me not." If they read their Bible, go to church, pay their tithe, pray and live right, they feel loved by God. If they fail in any (or all) of these endeavors, they feel that God's love for them has been reduced. They live like spiritual yo-yos or like they're riding spiritual roller coasters, up one minute and down the next, depending on whether they feel like they have met the standard or not.

What a contrast to what Paul teaches us in today's chapter reading. Rather than comment on it, I simply want you to read what he has to say...SLOWLY...paying attention particularly to the underlined portions and allow the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to see its truth. **"And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 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!** Not convinced yet? Try what Paul says in Romans 8 on for size. **"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** You see, folks, God loved you before you trusted Him, before you loved Him, before you obeyed Him, before you read your Bible, prayed, went to church, and paid your tithes. He loved you before you did anything right. He loved you when you were His enemy and didn't deserve anything but judgment and wrath from Him. He loved and still loves you because it is who He is. It depends on Him and not you; his nature and not your merits. He loves you unconditionally. Your actions don't make Him love you more and your actions can't make Him love you less. And, if God loved you like that when you were His enemy, how much more, Paul says, now that you're his friend, will he not finish what he started in you and bring His work to completion in you.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Commit to memory Romans 5:8 and/or Romans 8:38-39. Ask the Lord to open your eyes and heart to grasp His love for you.

Take-a-way: *It doesn't matter how many petals you pick, the answer will always be "He loves me!"*