***Jesus Christ was our Substitution  
RO50-01***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

Please open your Bibles to Romans 5:6-8. We are continuing in this second segment on the demonstration of God's Love.

The apostle Paul has already pointed out that because of justification, the love of God is poured out upon believers; that is, it is poured out upon those who are in His family. To prove this fantastic statement that God's love is poured out upon sinners, He has proceeded to describe what God's love is for unbelievers who are not in God's family. His general line of thinking is going to be: if God feels this way toward unbelievers who are not in His family, and if God is willing to do this that He has done for unbelievers who are not in His family, what do you think His attitude is toward those of you who are His children; who are regenerated; and, who are in His family? What do you think He will do for you in His love?

So, we have proceeded to examine in these verses just exactly what God's attitude is toward the unbeliever. God has dealt with man's sin problem when he was helpless to remove his own moral guilt, and the wrath of God consequently had against him. God solved that problem. The unsaved sinner, we have seen, could do nothing to produce divine good for salvation. The old sin nature contaminates everything that a person does. Therefore, a lost person can do nothing to be saved. So, all human doing is absolutely worthless with God. Man, therefore, Paul has established, needs a great gift salvation, one that is apart from human doing, from human rituals.

So, Paul says that at precisely the right time in human history, Jesus Christ came on the scene to provide salvation by the method of grace – salvation as a grace gift for all. This provision fully satisfies the demands of divine justice to punish sin. That's the heart of what Paul is saying. When Paul speaks about the love of God, he is stressing, first of all, that God's love has been set free because His justice has been satisfied. That's the key feature that people need to understand about their relationship to God. Then they'll understand how they can be saved once, and completely justified, and remain permanently in that status. It is because the justice of God has been fully satisfied.

**Man is Helpless**

God's timetable for demonstrating His love for the helpless sinner has been on schedule. That is exactly the condition of the individual. He is what Paul has described as being helpless. We pointed out that this word "helpless" actually connotes a physical infirmity. It connotes an incapacity to be able to do anything to help yourself. So, we mentioned that 1 Corinthians 11:30, describes this same condition, using the same word "asthenes" that Paul uses here in Romans 5. Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 11:30 when he says, "For this cause, many are weak." And that's the word in the Greek. The word translated as weak is "assignees." What Paul is saying is, "Many of you are physically incapacitated."

Then he goes on and says, "Some of you are sick, and some of you even goes so far as to experience physical death at the hand of God. In that particular context, it is because of your abusive approach in participating in the Lord's Supper."

So, Paul's point is that nothing can frustrate the realization of the divine purpose that God has, which is to bring each justified person into heaven as per His schedule. God is working on His own timetable, and nobody can frustrate that.

So, we begin with verse 6 which said, "For when we were yet without strength (when we were helpless – when we were "asthenes") in due time (at God's precise scheduling), Christ died for the ungodly." The word "Christ" looks like this in Greek. It's the word "Christos." "Christos" is the Messianic name for the Son of God as the anointed one to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. This is the word that is the subject of this sentence. As we pointed out to you last week, "For when we were without strength" might lead you to think that the word "we" is the subject of the sentence. That is that particular Greek construction that I described for you is a genitive absolute that just separated from the rest of the sentence.

Now we get to the main part of the sentence, and that is the word "Christ." "Christ" is the subject of the sentence. Now in the Greek Bible, in order to direct attention to the person of Jesus Christ, to the One Who is the Savior, this word stands first in the sentence. There are a couple of words before it (the words that indicated "for"), but right up there at the first of the sentence comes the word "Christos." We have to put it much further down in the English sentence, but the Greek sentence put it up first in order to emphasize it.

Furthermore, it does not say *the* Christ. It does not have that definite article "the" which gives it a specific connotation. Because it does not have the word "the," it stresses the quality of this person rather than a specific individual as such.

So, what the Holy Spirit is saying here is, is that He wants you to notice carefully what kind of a person it was exactly who paid for your sins. It was a special person. Of course, that special person was in the form of a God-Man, Jesus Christ, who had, on the one hand, no old sin nature, and who, on the other hand, never was guilty of personal sins. So, it is a very spectacularly special kind of person.

I still find people who do not understand that Jesus Christ was born sinless. I still find people who do not understand that Jesus Christ was born in the same condition that Adam was at first, with no moral guilt. And because He was born sinless, and because He remained sinless, He is the kind of person who is qualified to die spiritually and physically for the sins of the world.

So, the Greek Bible shows us something which is in the mind of the Holy Spirit which you don't see in English. And that is that he is pointing very graphically to the kind of person that he indicates has died for the ungodly – the kind of person, the God-man, morally free of all guilt, of all sin, the God-man, Jesus Christ.

**Death**

What He did is described by the word "die," which in the Greek is "apothnesko." This word connotes the separation of the soul and spirit from the physical body, and that results in what we call "death." On the human realm, death is signaled by the fact that breathing stops. That's the most obvious external evidence that death has taken place. The Hebrew language actually thinks about death in terms of the stopping of the breathing. The breath was viewed as the spirit of life. When the breathing stops, the picture that they held was that a person just breathed out through his nostrils his life; and that was the end, and now the soul and the spirit were gone. That is what this Greek word "apothnesko" connotes.

**Death Does not Mean Non-Existence**

The word "life" does not mean "existence," so the word "death" does non-mean "nonexistence." Because a person dies does not mean that the individual has ceased to exist. You will never cease to exist. You will never fall into a status of unconsciousness once you leave your body.

**Death Means Separation**

What happens is that the person who dwells in your body separates from that body. The body then stops functioning, but you continue in existence, and you continue living.

The word here includes, in reference to Jesus Christ, His physical, as well as His spiritual death on the cross for the sins of the world. This is the other important word in the sentence. These are the two important words: "Christos" is way at the first in the Greek sentence; and, "apothnesko" is way at the last in the Greek sentence. So, God the Holy Spirit is tying these two words together in a very emphatic way in order to teach us that it is the kind of person known as the God-man, Jesus Christ, and what He did to solve your problem of sin is that He died. Those are the two key features.

"Apothnesko" is the main verb of the sentence. The main subject is "Christ;" and, the main action is that He died. This is in the aorist tense, which means that it's at the point of Christ's death on the cross which is in view. It is active voice, which means that Jesus Christ Himself did the dying. And it's indicative. It's a statement of facts.

Now we come to a very critical and important word. It is one that I want you to learn; to learn well; and, to understand, because it is a word that is challenged by the liberal theologians, and challenged in such a way as to undermine completely what Jesus Christ has done to save us from our sins. And that is the English word "for," which in Greek is the word "huper." "Huper" is a preposition. This word literally means "over and above." You see it used in our sentence here: "As in due time, Christ died *for* the ungodly." Exactly what does that mean? He died for the ungodly.

This preposition is used with what we call the ablative case 126 times in the New Testament. It's also used with the accusative case, but we're not interested in that at the moment. With the ablative case, it has two primary meanings. The first is in the idea of benefit. In the idea of benefit, we translate it as "in behalf of," or "for the sake of someone or something." It connotes doing something good. This is the most common usage of this preposition in the New Testament. The idea of benefit really comes very naturally from the basic meaning of this word, which is "over." "Huper" basically means "over." And the idea of benefit comes as a very natural idea because it connotes that here you are as an individual, and over you is what "huper" describes in terms of a protective shield. Therefore, you are benefited, or you are protected in some way. And that's what this word "huper" pair is conveying – that somehow a shield is placed over you so that you come under a certain kind of protection.

Let's see how it is used. Please turn to Galatians 3:10. We have one very good example: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. For is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them." The atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ is explained in this context in three Greek prepositions. We look at them. But they will also explain to us then this particular key: the preposition "huper."

The verse that we just read, Galatians 3:10, declares that those who are trying to be saved via the Mosaic Law are under a divine curse. Here you have the first Greek preposition which is "hupo" ("under"). A great deal of the doctrine, which God the Holy Spirit has recorded in the New Testament, is contained in these prepositions. These are keywords. Nobody can understand the Greek New Testament who does not understand the meaning of prepositions in the variety of their uses. These little words are the ones that clarify specifically what God is saying to us. And I think that you'll see it in this passage.

So, verse 10 said, "As many as are of the works of the law are under ('hupo')." They are under the domination of the Law system, and so they are under a curse as the result of that.

Now drop your eye down to verse 13. It says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." verse 13 says that believers are removed out from under this curse of the Law by Jesus Christ, Who became a curse for us. Here we have our second preposition, which is "huper" ("for"). We are under the curse of the Law. We are removed out of it by Jesus Christ, Who became a curse for us.

Here's what this particular word is describing for us. The preposition "huper" views that somebody is doing a thing in behalf of another. And when he is doing that, he is bending over the person. So, again, we come back to our picture of a person who is doing something in terms of bending over the individual.

**Man is under the Curse of God**

Verse 10 has told us that a person is under curse. He is under the curse of God. He is under the wrath of God. He is under the judgment of God. If he dies in this condition, his destiny will be hell – the lake of fire. The Bible described that by this word "hupo." That's the picture. "Huper" comes in and says, "But Jesus Christ came in, and He bent over us." He bent over us in terms of a protective shield. You will notice that in the process of His doing that, He has interjected Himself between us and the curse of God's wrath that we naturally are under.

So, when Jesus Christ came over the sinner, He came, in effect, between the curse of the Law, hanging over that sinner, in order to rescue him. So, the believing sinner benefits from this protective cover because Jesus Christ has, in effect, done what? He is under the curse of the wrath of God. You still have the idea of "over," which is the basic idea of this preposition "huper." The thing ties together very beautifully.

So, what Galatians 3:13 says is that the result of Jesus Christ, under the curse of God, is that the believers are set free from the curse of the Law. And our third preposition is "ek," means "out from under." So, here, in these two verses, you have summarized the whole panorama of what God has done for a sinner who is headed for the lake of fire. What it says is that we believers walked out from ("ek") under ("hupo") the curse of God's holiness because Christ has come between ("huper") us and the curse.

So, this tells us something about this word who prayer. Remember that we're looking at it in terms of benefit: "I do something for your benefit. I do something in your behalf."

We have other places in the New Testament where the preposition "huper" is used in the idea (in the sense) of benefit. For example, we see this is Matthew 5:44; Acts 8:24; Acts 21:13; Romans 9:3; and, Romans 10:1. All of these are "huper" as benefit, meaning in behalf of" or "for the sake of."

**Substitution**

Now there is a second major use. This word "huper" has about four uses. We're going to look at just the two major ones. The second major use is this: substitution. Therefore, it's translated as "instead of" or "in the place of." One way we know how the Greek language was used in New Testament times is because we have many business records preserved from that era, particularly what we call the papyri fragments. In the papyri, the Greek scholars notice that, with a regularity that was hard to ignore and that was quite impressive, there appeared these words at the end of business letters: "huper houto." "Huper houto" means "in behalf of him." A letter would be written, obviously by secretary who was taking dictation, and at the end of the letter would be written this code: "huper houto" again, and again, and again. And what the phrase meant, they discovered, was that the person who was writing the letter was writing it in the place of some illiterate person who could not write. He was acting as a substitute.

So, we have indicated to us that, in the Koine Greek (the common Greek language of the New Testament word, which is what our Greek Bible was written in), it was common for people to use the word "huper" in terms of substitution. We've already seen that it does mean "benefit:" "I do something for your benefit," or "I do something for your sake." This doesn't exactly in itself mean "substitution," but generally, if you do something for a person, you do it in terms of substituting for him. Jesus Christ, as He is being described as having taken our curse, could only do it by taking our place. The only way He could take the curse of God which was upon us upon Himself was because He took our place. And that is the critical point I want you to notice – that the meaning of "huper," even though it's for the benefit of the individual, and even though it's for your benefit as a sinner, that you be saved from the destiny in hell, yet the only way Jesus Christ could give you that benefit was by taking your place so that the curse of God no longer rested on you. But it now rested on Him.

However, here we see that in the Greek world, they used this word "huper" to mean "substitution:" "I take your place." This is a very important insight for us to discover.

We have this illustrated, for example, in this sentence that's found in one papyri fragment. The man says, "I have written instead of (and he uses the word "huper"):" "I have written instead of him since he does not know letters;" meaning that he does not know how to write. Now you have a clear declaration of what this key phrase (this code phrase) "huper houto" meant. Whenever a person saw this at the bottom of the letter, he automatically said, "Oh, this person has written this on behalf of the man I'm doing business with. The man I'm doing business with has not done the writing himself." So, it was commonly used to convey the idea of substitution.

Notice Philemon 13, where you have this word "huper" used, and what could it mean in this verse except the idea of: "I'm taking your place?" Whom I would have retained with me," (referring to the slave Onesimus, speaking to Philemon). Paul says, "Whom I would have retained with me, that in your stead ("huper"), he Peter he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel." Now what can "in your stead" mean except that: "Philemon, you are not here, but your servant Onesimus is here, and he will serve me in your place, as you would have served me had you been here." So, you have "huper" used very clearly here as substitution.

Notice John 11:50: "Now consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation not perish." Here is the principle being enunciated that it is better for one person to die in behalf of a crime (in payment for a crime) than that the whole nation should have to die. So, clearly you have here the idea of one person substituting for the life of all the people. In this case, the high priest Caiaphas means that Jesus, because he claimed to be king, and has bestirred the wrath of the Roman authorities, should be put to death for having made that claim, rather than that many of the Jewish people should die because He claimed to be their King – the King of the Jews. Caiaphas is saying: "Better that He should die in place of all the people dying." The word used here is this "huper." So, again, here in the New Testament, you have whooper, which can mean "for the benefit of," but in this case, it clearly means "in your place." It meant "substitution." Christ's death here was substituted for that of all the people.

I have two more verses that I think are very critical, and that tell us something very interesting from this great preposition "huper." 2 Corinthians 5:14: "For the love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge that if one died for all, then all were dead." if you read that verse, you discover that the phrase "one died for all" leads to the conclusion, "then we're all dead." Both those phrases are in verse 14. If one person had to die for everybody; that is, made payment of death for everybody, then all were dead. Because everybody was dead, Christ had to make a payment for that fact. So, if the Bible says, "He died because everybody was dead, it indicates that He had a very special kind of death in terms of a substitution. This verse says that He died in place of those who were dead.

Now were these people dead physically? No, they were quite alive physically. Therefore, he must be speaking in this verse about Christ dying a different kind of death for people; namely, a spiritual death. It says that everybody was dead. They weren't all dead physically. But it is true that they were all dead spiritually. And He had to substitute for them in spiritual death because all of them were spiritually dead. The wages of sin is spiritual death. There was no way for them to pay that. When a person is already spiritually dead, he does not have the means (the assets) in order to meet that demand of the justice of God that he pay with spiritual death.

Consequently, this verse s saying that, since the wages of sin is spiritual death, which the spiritually dead sinner is unable to pay, someone spiritually alive must die in his place to pay for his sins. So, the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ here refers to His spiritual death in place of the lost person.

So, when it says, "If one died *for* all," and that word "for" is "huper," it means "as a substitute for the spiritual death of all mankind." So, obviously, "huper" is used here in the sense of substitution. Jesus Christ provided salvation by taking your place in spiritual death – not just by doing something that was a benefit to you.

The first idea of "huper" as benefit can be viewed as Jesus Christ dying simply as an example, or as a martyr. He did something that you benefit from, but He is not doing it as in your place. In other words, you cannot say that just because a martyr has suffered in your behalf, he has taken your suffering. But Jesus Christ said, "I didn't die just as a martyr. I died as your substitute." So, if God the Father says, "You must die spiritually," you can turn to God the Father and say, "Jesus Christ died spiritually for me. Therefore, I don't have to die spiritually." But if He only died as a martyr spiritually for you (as an example for you), then you still have the problem of spiritual death to pay yourself. That is the important thing. When He died spiritually, He died spiritually in your place so that you are free from ever having to make that payment. That penalty has been met.

Now notice the next verse, 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." Here again, this verse is discussing the death of Jesus Christ in providing salvation for sinners. And, again, at the end of this verse, it says, "Who died for them." And we have our same preposition "huper," meaning again here "substitution."

Now notice what it says. It says that: "Christ died in place of all mankind" ('huper' – all mankind). We have this on the Bible doctrine principle of vicarious atonement, and the context here in verse 14. He is dying as our substitute. Now what kind of death does verse 15 refer to? Well, you have a clue at the very end. It says, "He rose again." Verse 14 is very clearly speaking about the spiritual death of Christ in behalf of our sins. But verse 15 is speaking about the physical death of Christ in behalf of our sins. So, while you and I may say: "Jesus Christ died in my place spiritually on the cross," we must also say Jesus Christ died in my place *physically* on the cross," because that's what this verse is referring to. When it uses the key codewords "rose again," that's resurrection. You do not refer to coming alive spiritually as a resurrection, but coming alive physically. That is called a resurrection. That is what the Bible means by "rising again."

So, the believer is admonished to live his life as unto the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are told here has died physically in their place – substitution. So, here in two verses, interestingly enough (it has just recently struck me) – that in verse 14, you have the spiritual death being substituted for the believer on the cross. That was necessary for our salvation. Verse 15 also makes it clear that you have our physical death being substituted for by Christ, and that makes it necessary for our salvation also.

Well, the word "huper" is used in other places in the New Testament to convey the idea of substitution (in place of). For example, this is the case in Mark 14:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:32; Titus 2:14; and, Hebrews 2:9. We won't take time to read those verses, but if you run through those verses, you'll see that here the word "huper" used in every one of these verses can only mean "substitution."

So, what does this give us? Well, this gives us the principle of substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. But you may say, "Well, sometimes it could mean just 'for your sake, like a martyr. That's true. We see that it is used also in your place as a substitute, but how do we always know which is which, and how can we be sure that the death of Christ really was as our substitute?"

Well, fortunately, we have another great proposition that comes to our rescue. It looks like this: "anti." "Anti" means "in place of." That's all it means: "in place of." It means substitution. It is a word which basically means "face-to-face;" "over;" or, "opposite." It's used only in the Koine Greek language to mean "instead of."

Now again, we could go back to the papyri, and we would find many, many examples of this. We come to the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint version. For example, in Genesis 22:13, we have the words translated "in the stead of" as "anti." The Septuagint used the word "anti," meaning "substitution." In Genesis 44:33, our translation is "instead of." The Greek there has "anti." Numbers 3:12 has "instead of." The Greek has this word "anti." Every one of these means pure substitution.

When you come to the New Testament you have the same thing in many places. For example, in Matthew 2:22, the English says, "In the place of." The Greek has this word "anti," obviously meaning "substitution." Luke 11:11 has the word "for." 1 Corinthians 11:15 and Hebrews 12:2 also have the word "for." All those passages use the word "anti," and all of those we know mean "substitution." If you were to run through these passages, you would discover that they are explaining to us what Christ has done in behalf of our sins, and that he has done those in terms of substitution.

For example, let's look at Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat set down at the right hand of God the Father." "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross?" Now, what does that verse mean? Here's an example of how the word "anti" gives us an interpretation which we could not get in any other way. Most people read that verse and say, "Jesus looked to the suffering of the cross. He hated to face it. He was reticent to have to go into that suffering, but He looked beyond the cross to the joy that would then result from salvation being provided, and the joy that people would enjoy, because now there was a way to escape the consequences of the curse and the wrath of God." That isn't what that saying it all. From English, that's exactly what it sounds like it's saying – that Jesus was looking beyond the cross to some happy consequence, and that's why He set His face like flint to the cross, because He was looking to the joyous results beyond it.

However, when you look in the Greek and you see the word "anti," which is that is used here: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, *for* the joy (instead of the joy) that was set before Him." And the word "before Him" means "instead of the joy which was in His presence, endured the cross." And what this verse tells us is that Jesus Christ, instead of the fantastic joy that was His as the Son of God in heaven, in fellowship with the Father, and in fellowship with God the Holy Spirit, the perfectly sinless One, with all the joy that permeates the Godhead – instead of all that, He substituted the cross. That's what it means. It wasn't that he was looking for what was beyond the cross. It is telling us that Jesus Christ, who didn't owe us anything, and Who had to leave a state of absolute perfect happiness in order to bear are suffering in our place – He willingly substituted that suffering for that joy that He already had. He had the joy. The suffering is what He substituted for the joy.

So, this word "anti" clearly describes the atonement of Jesus Christ as a substitution for the sinner; that is, Christ's actually taking the sinner's place. Matthew 20:28: "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life ("anti") a ransom for many" ("anti" many) – to give his life in payment (in substitution) of others. So, there the atonement is very clearly spoken of as a substitution.

Mark 10:45 also illustrates the use of "anti:" "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" – the idea is "in substitution."

So, the doctrine of substitutionary atonement is taught in Scripture. Whether the other preposition "huper," at any particular use, means "for your benefit" or actually means "for your substitution" has to be decided on the basis of the context, and on the basis of the particular subject matter. But we know that it can be used in terms of substitution, and we do know that when it refers to the death of Christ for our sins, that is the basic idea that it conveys.

Therefore, Romans 5:6, the verse that we're looking at – how does it use it? When it says that Christ died here "for the ungodly," we interpret it as being "as a substitute for the ungodly" ("in place"). Jesus Christ received the penalty of suffering and death, which are due to me. Jesus Christ took my place in death under the justice of God. Jesus Christ died as a ransom for all, meaning "a substitute payment for all men." Jesus Christ was God's innocent Lamb sacrificed to the justice of God in my place.

So, divine justice has been satisfied toward the sinner, and God's love is free to impute absolute righteousness to the believer's account. The death of Christ, therefore, we say, was vicarious. That's where the expression "vicarious atonement" comes from. It means that He took my place in atoning for my sin. He actually took my sin. It is not just an example of a martyr in self-sacrifice in order to inspire us and to direct us.

After you have seen that from the Scripture, which is taught us by these particular Greek prepositions, it may come somewhat as a shock to you to realize that most theologians reject what I have just told you. Most theologians do not believe that Jesus Christ died in your actual place so that what He did you no longer have to do. You will not suffer the consequences of the wrath of God, and that His death was in terms of a substitution.

I'll give you just one quotation from a bishop in the Methodist church called G. Bromley Oxnam, who, in a book entitled A Testament of the Faith, said this: "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if he is the sacrifice for all the sins of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone."

Well, I'm sad to say that the Bishop has now changed his viewpoint on that subject. The Bishop now believes in substitutionary atonement, because he made the monumental mistake of dying. I guarantee you that where he has gone, he has discovered the reality of Christ dying in his stead, and the consequences of rejecting the meaning of substitution.

So, when Paul says, "Christ died for the ungodly," you better believe it. And notice who He died for. He died for what the Greek Bible calls the "asebes." The "asebes" means "the impious." It connotes not merely people who are sinful or irreligious, but those who are outright rebellious against divine standards. It's more than a person being indifferent to God. There are many people who are indifferent toward God. But the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ didn't just die for people who are indifferent toward Him, or people who have never heard of Him. Jesus Christ died for the people who loathe Him; for those who know about Him; those who know His standards; those who know His requirements; and, those who know that He says, "This is sin," but who revel in participating in their sin.

I've had the occasion to have to be exposed to a lot of dirty jokes in my time. And I've noticed that men do not hesitate even to bring deity in. They certainly do it in their curse words. But one person that seems to have been immune from cursing is the Spirit of God. They don't use God the Holy Spirit in cursing. But I have had occasion to hear people using God the Holy Spirit as the brunt of an obscene joke. That is an "asebes" type of character. And what this is describing is the person who deliberately rejects divine viewpoint standards; deliberately rejects divine good production with contempt; and, deliberately wallows in the filth of his old sin nature. This one possesses no love for God, and he has no ground within himself for God to love him. Yet this is Paul's point: this divine love is demonstrated because it is extended toward a rebellious sinner – the Father sending His Son to die for this kind of a person: an absolutely impious rebel.

Now, if God loved us when we were so utterly detestable, and there was nothing within us to commend us in any way, it's easy enough to see that what he told us back in verse 5, that the Spirit of God is poured out in the heart of the believer, is indeed true, because God would love an obscene character, and send His Son to make it possible for that obscene character to receive eternal life, and thus to have God's love poured out upon him. God's love wasn't even motivated by what he was going to do for that sinner though. God's love was not motivated by what grace was going to produce in the sinner. Please remember that. God's love was motivated only by the fact that His justice was going to be satisfied. And His justice having been satisfied, He was now able to save sinners without compromising His own holiness.

So, Paul's point in verse 6 is that when we were absolutely helpless in terms of our moral guilt, at the right point in time in history, Christ, the special, unique, God-Man Person died physically and spiritually for the obscene impious rejecters of God's standards and of God's viewpoint. And He did it because He loved them. If he would do that for the unbeliever, can you begin to fathom how much love He has for you and me who are in the family, and what He will do for you? And that's exactly what Paul is going to explain to us in the verses which follow.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)