

Romans 5:1-5

Theme: The warm heart.

Purpose: to illustrate (from W otherwise) that a heart-warming presence of God is possible for all, that the warm heart is evident in all areas of life, that it is necessary to Christian life, and to urge that it be sought after

Text: Romans 5:3a & 5b : "...we rejoice" ... "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

Date written: May 21, 1960.

Dates and places preached:

May 22, 1960, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m., Sheridan, Wyo
May 23, 1965, 8:30 & 11:00 a.m. - Maxwells, Cal
for May 26, 1974

for May 23

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Introduction:

1. "In the Spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love," according to an old saying. The pursuit of this particular thought is marked by amorous passion which can lead to many things, both good and bad. Romance is characterized by a warmth and an enthusiasm which seems to go to the very core, center, or heart of ones being. The symbol of romantic love is the shape of the heart, used so plentifully around Valentine's Day. No one can deny that the strong attraction and affection of a lad for a lass, or a girl for a boy, is a warm-hearted thing. Today we are not thinking of this type of warm heart!

2. Sometimes we use the terms "warm" and "hot" so interchangeably that we hardly distinguish between the two. One husband jokingly says about his wife, "she has cold feet and a hot head." One use of the word "warm" is to refer to that which is marked by anger, fiery passion, and an irascible temper. It is that meaning which the husband had who spoke of his wife's hot head. Today we don't use the phrase "the warm heart" to refer to deeply-felt temper.

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3. There are many meanings of both the word "warm" and the word "heart." About as many ideas could be included in the expression "the warm heart" as all the definitions of both of the main words of the phrase. We have thought of two ways in which we do not use the term today. There is one specific meaning of the words "the warm heart" at which we would arrive here. We plan to point out this meaning, chiefly through illustrations.

I. A basic Christian heart-warming experience is possible to anyone.

1. The reason we picked this particular Sunday (May 22, 1960) to think about "the warm heart" is because the first Methodist, John Wesley, had a heart-warming experience within a few days of this date in 1738. An account of that experience as Wesley recorded it is in his journal (and is reproduced for us on the back of our bulletin).

a. We need to recall that John had been reared in a christian home. His father was a minister in The Church of England. His mother spent time

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with each of her nineteen children to give personalized religious instruction. The Wesleys held daily family devotions.

b. In college John was among an unusual group of students who spent time practicing what they called "holy habits." These included regular daily periods of group and personal devotions, sincere efforts at moral purity in their personal living, and frequent acts of helpful service and kindness to the needy and to the imprisoned.

c. When he was finally admitted as a full minister of The Church of England, Wesley sought and received a commission both as a chaplain to the English colony in Georgia, under Governor Oglethorpe, and as a missionary to the American Indians. On the ship in which he sailed to Georgia was a group of Moravians, people of a simple, trustful, heartfelt type of Christian faith. Wesley was much impressed ~~by their~~ when during a fearful storm at sea the Moravians sang hymns joyfully and confidently while

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he prayed fearfully. In Georgia he couldn't seem to minister effectively to or get along well with the colonists, and was a complete failure as a missionary to the Indians. He felt so much a failure that he wrote in his journal "I who went to America to convert the Indians have never myself been converted to God."

d. After three years he returned to England. Depressed, without confidence in himself, wondering what to do, he kept searching for meaning in life. On May 24, 1738, he had the experiences (related on our bulletin) which culminated in the central experience of his life. "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

e. This experience meant so much to Wesley that he spent the rest of his life preaching to other people in an effort to help them have a similar heart-warming experience. He was

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obviously rather successful, for within 20 years others who had heard him and thereby experienced an inward assurance of God took the message throughout Britain. From there it spread to America. Our church exists today because of the truth that people do experience within them in their innermost conscious beings, in their hearts, a warming assurance of the ~~kw~~ love, presence, and help of God.

2. We could take illustration after illustration from Methodist history, and from the history of other great Christian denominations, to show that people do have something great happen within which can only be described as a heart-warming experience of God's loving presence. Many of you could testify to this truth.

a. The heart-warming experience is available to anyone who will seek it. It may be sudden in coming. It may come only after a long process of preparation, as did Wesley's. But each person can have it

b. Let us turn now, instead, to a realization that

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II. Evidence of a warm christian heart must be given in daily living.

1. As we have observed, Wesley and his immediate followers devoted much effort to trying to help others share the warmth they had received from God. Not only did they preach. They set up orphanages, schools (so that people might learn to read the Bible for themselves), and hospitals. They worked to abolish the debtors' prisons, child labor, and excessively-long hours for women who worked outside the home. The early Methodists, in both England and America, were both evangelistic and social-minded. They never separated the social gospel from spiritual things. For them God's warm love ~~for~~ people had to be expressed through them in both word and deed. As people accepted salvation from the evils of this life and received life eternal, they felt love-driven to serve both the physical and spiritual needs of God's other children, the less-fortunate people around them.

2. Things today have not changed. He who has experienced in his heart the warming presence of Christ is one who

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energetically and compassionately seeks out others, to share with them his warmth, to help them meet their physical and emotional needs.

III. The warm heart, as we have been talking about it, is characteristic of Christian life and necessary to it.

1. Years ago Francois de Fenelon wrote in Christian Perfection, "Most people, when they wish to be converted or reformed, expect to fill their lives with especially difficult and unusual acts, far more than to purify their intentions, and to mortify their natural inclinations in the most usual acts of their condition. In this they often badly deceive themselves. It would be much more valuable for them to change their actions less, and to change more rather ~~their~~ the disposition which makes them act. When one is already leading an honest and regulated life, it is far more important, in order to become a true Christian, to change the within rather than the without." (#291, A Second Reader's Notebook, Gerald Kennedy Harper & Bros., 1959).

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If ~~we~~ stress the basic inward experience -the warm heart- we need have no fear about the outward expression of our faith.

2. At a meeting of a ^{primitive} tribe in New Guinea the missionary was offered some pigs, if only he would go away and take his God with him. For while he was there they could not go on practicing their pagan customs. But some of the young men replied, "It ~~is~~ impossible to send this God away again. He lives in our own hearts. As soon as we want to do something, a voice asks whether it is right before God. And we don't want Him to go away." (#294, A Second Readers Notebook, Harper & Bros., 1959).

3. The Scripture which we read today gives an expression by Paul of the happiness, warmth and joy about which we are speaking: "We rejoice...because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

4. To be a Christian ^{one} must have this sense of the presence of God, the assurance, the warmth, which it provides

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at the core, at the heart, of your being.

Conclusion:

1. An experience of the warm heart, similar to John Wesley's experience, can be yours.
 2. When you have it you will give outward evidence of it in your attitudes and actions toward other people.
 3. Ever at the root of your outward warmth toward people will be the warm heart within you, made warm by your assurance of Christ's presence and love.
 4. Seek him, put your trust in him, and experience the warm heart!
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