

Rom 5:8

“A love that will not let us go...a hope that does not disappoint”

Intro

Vlad the lad

- Post Valentine's day – all we need is love
 - Vladimir Putin
 - o Ex KGB
 - o Hardman image
 - o Hunting – big gun – naked from the waist up
 - o Recently softer side
 - o Secret Abba fan
 - o Bjorn again – secret private concert
 - o Only 9 people in show
 - o So cloak & dagger
 - o Sat on a sofa behind net curtains
 - o erected between him & stage

 - o Fatal blow to hard man image
 - o Belted out lyrics to Honey Honey &
 - o Danced with Kremlin officials to Super Trouper
 - o While dozens of Kalashnikov wielding guards roamed the building
 - o Jennifer Robb (Anni-Frid)
 - o “The prime minister didn't stand but he and his wife, or whoever it was, were jigging about on the sofa and singing the words to Honey, Honey. All his officials were singing away and doing a finger-pointing dance. They really got into it even though there were only 9 of them.
- o Long list of ABBA fans – John McCain, Meryl Streep, Sid Vicious &
 - o My favourite - The Queen
 - o Adores dancing queen - “I always try to dance when this comes on because I am the Queen and I like to dance.”
- Reason – Vladimir Putin
- Not just to show that we're all puppies for love
- A lot of unlovely people in the world
 - o People who stand for all the wrong things
 - o Exalt themselves & seem to get away with it
 - o Sordid underbelly – not just corruption on a mass scale
 - o Horrors of Chechnya & Georgia
 - o Power behind the throne
- Don't have to go as far as Russia to find the same forces at work
 - o Dilbert – Boss with the demonic hair
 - o Ricky Gervaise
 - o Similar dynamics at work
-
- Live in a world that exalts itself but is totally empty
- But we read a letter
- By a man who changed the whole of the known world
- Left such a mark
- Could never be the same again
- Feel a disconnect
-
- Trudge off to our offices
- To the intensity of our families as parents or children

- To our schools, our colleges, our homes
- Paul's experience seems so alien to ours

- Disconnect – all our expectancy on Sunday
- As we sing songs
- God who can break in today, to heal, to save
- Week after week
- Can lead to Disappointment
- Disappointment, that for all the songs & all our prayers
- Life just doesn't seem to change
- We still face the same troubles, the same issues, the same world
- Exalts itself against all that we hold most dear
- All that we find most beautiful

- Word that appears in this passage
- Disappointment
- Also a word that came out of the recent powerhouse prayer evening
- Sense that as a church
- Many of us feeling disappointed
- Vivid picture child opening a present
- Awful feeling of disappointment – wasn't the present that they wanted

- So we come with all our disappointments to this verse
- Any verse in Paul's letters, but in particular in Romans
- Like picking up a buoy & finding it attached – to a very long rope, with a lot of other buoys at the end

1) The proof of God's love & our response

- Lets start with this verse though
- Rom 5:8 "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us..."
 - o God – Distant / mystery
 - Contrast between God & us
 - Humanity capable of great acts of bravery
 - Chernobyl - divers
 - People we care about
 - o God totally different
 - Words to describe us
 - Weak
 - Ungodly
 - Sinners
 - Enemies
 - o God died for us when we were like this
 - Person arrested for arson, Osama Bin Laden, Hitler
 - o God is active in this
 - o Its God proving his love to us
 - eautou - himself
 - How come? – Not God who died?
 - Wasn't it Jesus
 - @ the cross
 - Supreme truth about God's nature is revealed
 - God has given that which is most precious
 - And so has Jesus
 - This is what God is like
 - Not a big man who speaks softly and carries a large stick

- God not looking to exalt himself
 - His greatest moment of exaltation
 - The downward road of humility & pain
 - Becoming like us in every way
 - Just giving it all away
 - Until all that was left of God
 - Was a lonely, tortured, naked figure
 - Hanging outside the camp, outside the city gates
 - In shame, humiliation, darkness
 - While we were still sinners
 - This is what God is like
 - Fact, History
 - The utterly self-giving love of God
- What is our most basic human response to this sort of love?
- George Herbert captures it
 - "And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
 - One of his most famous poems
 - "And know you not, says God, who bore the blame?"
 - Response of the believer v. interesting
 - "My dear, then I will serve."
 - Thank you for all you've done, what can I do in return
- Going to school with Cosmo
 - Like being on the set of Mary Poppins
 - When they go & visit Uncle Albert
 - I love to laugh, loud & long & hard
 - Everyone looks slightly bemused
 - But he just doesn't care
- He just knows that we love him
- And he loves life
- Every minute of it
- By contrast
- T Shirts – "Jesus is coming, look busy..."
 - Sometimes I just want to buy a bucket load
 - Sums up so much of where we are at
 - Look around @ so many of our churches
 - Look @ ourselves
 - Are we living our lives in the "Well done" of all JC has done for us
 - Just loving life, loving all that he has given us, without a care in the world because we know he loves us
 - Or when we're really honest is our tiredness
 - Our freneticism
 - Our constant almost pathological busyness
 - A sign that what we really believe @ the bottom of our hearts
 - Is that Jesus is coming, so look busy
- Because when I'm really honest
 - That's where I spend too much of my time
 - First discovered this
 - Meditation on the cross
 - How have I responded to this?
 - How would you have me respond?
 - As I sat @ the foot of the cross
 - Imagining myself there with all I had
 - Had a sense that I was really somehow there

- & had a picture of myself looking @ the cross, sitting @ the foot of the cross
- Then just running off to try to serve God, to give all I could for God
- With all my heart
- And I knew that somehow this wasn't enough
- This wasn't what God wanted
- All God wanted was for me to stay there
- To somehow experience the end of all my ambition, all my drive
- The end of all that I was
- Because all that I was
- Just ended up in putting him there
- And all he wanted me to know
- Was this
- That that part of me
- Had died with him
- And this
- This was his doing
- My toil
- My work
- This endless burden
- That I was trying to carry
- And couldn't
- Could only result
- In disappointment
- Deep disappointment
- And that was a country
- That God didn't want me to live in any more
- Because of all he had done for me

2) A hope that does not disappoint

- Brings up the next buoy
- Verse 5
- In fact I've been really talking about this verse already
- When I've talked about my experience

- "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"
- two verses are really inextricably linked
- the train of thought that ends up in verse 8 starts @ verse 5
- Where in verse out – Paul talking about the demonstration of God's love
- Here he's talking about the experience
- Really 2 sides of the same coin
- God has proved his love for us once for all
- By giving all that was most precious to him
- JC has proved his love for us once for all
- By giving all that he had
- But the only way I can understand this love
- Is through experience
- Verse really touches on the now & the not yet of our lives
- Our hope
- In the midst of all the trials & tribulations that this world can throw at us – as described in the previous verses
- Our hope is that as it says in verse 2
- (Another buoy)
- we will share in the glory of God
- Wow

- Actually share in the glory of God
- Such a certain hope as Paul puts it in verse 2 it is his
- Kauchema – (NIV – rejoice) – boast – his boast
- Something he exults in
- It's a certain hope

- Why?
- Because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit
- That's what I experienced when I did my meditation
- That's what we all experienced when we became Christians & as Paul describes here
- It's a love expressed through the Holy Spirit
- That calls us into a future (hope)
- When we will literally stand before the throne of God
- And reflect his glory

- A hope that can transform the unloveliest of people
- In the unloveliest parts of the world
- Shane Taylor
 - o Considered one of the most dangerous men in the prison system
 - o Attempted murder
 - o Extended, 4 yrs
 - o Prison officer, broken bottle
 - o Prison riot
 - o Sent to Britain's most secure Cat A prison
 - o Solitary confinement
 - o Segregation unit
 - o Close supervision circuit

- o No contact between them & prison officers
- o Given food through a hatch
- o Door opened – six officers in riot gear with riot shields
- o Longlarton prison
- o Alpha course?
- o Other inmate – shane you get free chocolate biscuits, gateaux & coffee
- o Yeah get my name down
- o On the course – prayed like this
- o JC I know you died on a cross for me, please I don't like who I am, please, forgive me, please
- o As I talked, I began to feel a weird feeling in my belly
- o I felt what's that – but I kept talking to JC
- o Then I started to feel this bubbly feeling, coming up through my legs & into my chest
- o I began crying my eyes out – I hadn't cried for years
- o My friends said
- o That's the HS
- o In that split second I knew it was real
- o God existed
- o JC had touched me
- o I was going to live for him forever
- o Prison guards – “It's real”
- o “What's real”
- o Jesus Christ is real
- o Allright then – see you later
- o Everything changed overnight
- o Went from segregation, to the most trusted job in the chaplaincy within a few weeks

- Started sending money to this charity in Africa
- Prayed constantly, prayed for the officers
- Prayed for my enemies
- Probation board – do you think you’re going to go back to prison
- No – why – because the Lord JC Christ touched me – I’m telling you its real
- I got out in May ‘07
- Started going to church
- Helped out on some of their Alpha courses
- Got a job in a local store
- Met a girl called Sam who had also had a tough life & been on drugs
- Into criminal activity
- She too came to faith in Jesus
- Got married
- First baby in March – “Angel Mary Elizabeth”
- JC has shown me how to love & how to forgive
- I did struggle with anger but that’s gone
- Stopped using bad language
- A lot of things have changed in me
- Now I’m helping in Alpha courses in prison
- Miracle – allowed to go into prisons when just released from a maximum security prison
- Now I’m able to tell other prisoners about JC
- Mum
- I’m so proud of you you’re the best son ever
- JC has saved me – he’s forgiven me for what I’ve done
- He’s turned my life around

- Finish – going back to that picture of the disappointed child
- Opened a present & just wasn’t the one they wanted
 - There was a second part
 - Present may not have been what the child wanted on the outside
 - But it was exactly what God wanted to give them
 - & was in fact far better
 - Much much better
 - Than anything that they wanted
 - If only they could just see
- God’s love
- Can transform the unloveliest of people
- That’s why it can transform you
- & it can transform me
- And this is our hope
- And it does not disappoint us
- Whatever life throws at us
- Wherever we end up
- However far from God we fall
- His hope will never disappoint