

VILLAINS, HEROES, AND CHRIST

Romans 5:6-8

By Raymond White

What is the difference between villains and heroes? Villains cause injury to help themselves and heroes endure injury to help others.

Most people are not villains or heroes. Most are just ordinary people disinclined to do or suffer injury — they just want to get along and not get involved. Villains and heroes find themselves on the fringe of society quit apart from more ordinary people.

As heroes go, some are more heroic than others. In particular, some of the most heroic would *lay down his life for his friend (John 15:13)*. They are the “cut above” heroes — the most heroic heroes, those who would die for another.

But there is one hero in *that* group (the most heroic heroes) who stands above them all and is the most heroic of the most heroic heroes. And that hero is Jesus Christ.

What sets Jesus apart from all other heroes is not his willingness to die (many heroes do that), but who he was willing to die for.

Think of heroic examples: A mother jumps in front of a rushing car to save her child. A fireman runs into a burning building to save a trapped person. A soldier faces gunfire to save his nation. Some will risk their lives, but always for those who are, in some sense, deserving.

But what about undeserving people? Who dies for them? Not me. There are people I would risk my life to save, and there are people I know I would not risk my life to save. But I'm not Jesus. Now this question: Who did Jesus die to save?

Romans 5:6 *For when we yet were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. :7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. :8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Let's make sure we understand what Paul is saying. Are there heroes who are brave enough to die for someone else? Yes, there are, but only for “a righteous man” would a hero dare to die. The point is that not even heroes will die for an unrighteous man. Except, that is, Christ who did, in fact, die for us *while we were sinners*.

Let's say it another way. What most people would not do for us even if we were worthy (although if we were worthy some heroes would dare), Christ did for us when we were unworthy.

Let's say it still another way. If we were good, then God would not need all that much love to save us. Everyone wants to save the lovable, the cute, the pretty, the smart, the good. We all seek good things. That's our nature. But if we are ungodly sinners who have all come up short? Then the love that seeks to save such people, must be a very great love indeed.

Who did Christ die for? Ungodly sinners. Some are heroes, some are villains, and some are just ordinary folk. But Christ's heroic love offers salvation to all.

Is it not interesting that this doctrine was written by Paul, who was, by his own admission, the world's greatest sinner. And why did God have Paul in particular pen this? Because: ***1 Timothy 1:16*** *...for this cause I obtained mercy...for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe*. In other words, if Jesus could save Paul, he could save petty near anybody.