

Romans 5:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Analysis

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die—Paul contrasts human and divine love. Even extraordinary human sacrifice requires some worthiness in the object: one might die for a δίκαιος (dikaios, 'righteous/just' person, one who gives you your due) or ἀγαθός (agathos, 'good' person, one who goes beyond duty to show kindness). The distinction is subtle—the righteous are strictly just, the good are benevolent—but both possess qualities making them worthy of ultimate sacrifice.

Paul sets up the stunning contrast of verse 8: human love at its zenith might die for the worthy; divine love died for enemies. The word μόλις (molis, 'scarcely/with difficulty') emphasizes the extreme rarity even of dying for someone admirable. The apostle marshals human moral intuition to highlight the shocking superiority of God's love.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture celebrated heroic self-sacrifice but always for worthy causes: Socrates drinking hemlock for philosophical principle, soldiers dying for Rome's glory, friends dying for friends (John 15:13). Paul acknowledges this highest human achievement—then declares that God's love infinitely surpasses it by loving enemies. This would challenge both Jewish expectation of Messiah dying for righteous Israel and Greco-Roman celebration of noble death for noble ends.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Can you think of someone 'good' for whom you might be willing to die—what qualities make them worthy of such sacrifice?
2. How does meditating on Christ dying for you 'while you were His enemy' affect your willingness to love difficult people?
3. What does the rarity of dying for even good people teach about the costliness and counter-intuitiveness of true love?

Interlinear Text

μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖν· ὑπὲρ γὰρ
scarcely For for a righteous man one die for For
G3433 G1063 G5228 G1342 G5100 G599 G5228 G1063

τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾶ ἀποθανεῖν·
G3588 a good man peradventure one even dare die
G18 G5029 G5100 G2532 G5111 G599

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:16 (Parallel theme): Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Acts 11:24 (Good): For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Romans 16:4 (Parallel theme): Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

John 15:13 (Parallel theme): Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

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