

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 8, Verses 31-39
Notes from Tuesday December 14 2010
Last Revised on December 16, 2010

Songs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we we read through **Verse 30** of Chapter 8

Tonight we will finish Chapter 8.

But first let's review very briefly.

Please open your text now to Chapter 1 and follow along with me as I review.

Review

Remember the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is ... the **gospel**.

Following some important introductory material in the first 17 verses of Chapter 1, Paul begins in **Verse 18** to examine the **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men. This examination continues through the end of Chapter 1.

In **Chapter 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3**, Paul argues that such ungodliness and unrighteousness has **always** pervaded **all** of humanity, including **even** the most **law-abiding Jews**.

The point, as Paul explains in **the remainder of Chapter 3**, is that **nobody** ever has been or ever will be saved from sin and death, **except** by the free gift of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is therefore no room for anyone to **boast**. We are not saved because of who we **are** or what we **do**. We are saved through our **faith** in who Christ is and what he has done.

Our faith is, **itself**, a free gift from God.

This has always and everywhere been true, as Paul illustrates in **Chapter 4**, which is all

about Abraham.

In the first 11 verses of Chapter 5, Paul speaks of the peace, joy, hope, and love we experience as we come to understand that God in Christ came down to suffer, with us and for us while we were still his enemies.

In the remainder of Chapter 5 (Verses 12-21) Paul explains how God in Christ has overcome the Fall of Man, of which we read in Genesis, Chapter 3.

In Chapter 6, and in the first six verses of Chapter 7, Paul makes it plain that the gospel is not an invitation for Christians to continue sinning, but just the opposite --- an opportunity for them to be finally free of sin.

In the remainder of Chapter 7 Paul makes it clear that religion (i.e. law) does not make us sinful. On the contrary, religion is good insofar as it helps us to understand just how sinful we are, and how much we need a savior.

In Chapter 8, which we will finish studying this evening, Paul speaks much of the Holy Spirit.

All who truly call on Jesus as Savior and Lord have been set free from the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit dwells in them. These are God's children.

It is the indwelling Holy Spirit who makes us aware that we are God's children and gives us faith and hope. None of these things are possible apart from the Spirit. These are His work in us.

Furthermore the spirit leads us to live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh,

Life lived according to the Spirit is a life characterized by suffering, after the example of Christ.

However such suffering is as nothing compared to the glory to be revealed in us,

and in all creation because of us,

we who are children of God, and brothers of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

We therefore learn to wait patiently for that to which we have been called,

for which we have been justified, and to which we shall be glorified.

And while we wait the Spirit, who is God Himself, stays and helps us

Questions or comments, before we finish Chapter 8?

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 28-30

Although our reading last week took us through verse 30 of Chapter 8,

I think it would be good to begin this evening by rereading verses **28, 29 and 30**

Would someone please read Verses 28-30 of Chapter 8 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those verses in English.

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Thank you.

Paul has spoken of our suffering as Christians and of how, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we wait with patience in hope.

Now he reminds us that none of our suffering is in vain

Verse 28 reads

(Verse 28)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

This is a consistent teaching of the whole Bible: that God is just and loving and that he amply rewards those who love him.

This clearly does not mean that each thing that happens to a child of God is pleasant

Neither does it mean that each thing that happens to a child of God is good or desirable in

itself

One thinks particularly of **sin** and its present **consequences**

Illustrated in the life of David for example.

Yet we understand that, when taken all together, **everything** that happens in the life of a believer works together to accomplish his salvation.

The final clause in verse 28 ("*for those who are called according to his purpose*") reminds us that not even David, or Abraham, or Paul (!) can **boast** of the love of God he found in his heart,

Each of them was **called** according to God's purpose,

The **initiative** was and is always on God's side!

In summary, then, **all things** happening in the life of a believer may be understood as happening within the sovereign control of God.

And the initiative is **always** on God's side

Verse 29 continues

(Verse 29)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

It is God's **intention**, Paul informs us, that Christ will be the **first** among **many** brothers,

meaning that we are each being **conformed** to the **likeness** of Christ,

and all that is happening in our lives is happening in accordance with **that** purpose.

The things that are happening in our life are **not intended** to be always **pleasant**

but they are all intended to make us into the **Christ-like** person which God intends to make us into.

Since God's intentions are never frustrated, the Christ-like person we will be is "**predestined**"

and because predestined the Christ-like person we will be is also "**foreknown**"

The reason why Paul is saying this here, I think, is simply to **reassure** us that nothing that is happening to us, however difficult or painful, is happening to us beyond God's design and control.

Christ said the same.

(Verse 30)

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

I believe that the "**calling**" mentioned to in the introductory clause, refers to the saving **faith** in Christ which is found in all true believers.

Most of the letter to this point has been helping us to understand that it is by such faith that we are **justified** and made righteous before God.

We have also learned that we must **suffer** in various ways in this life as we are being conformed to the likeness of Christ.

But we must take heart, and **persevere** patiently, because we shall certainly be **with** him in **glory**.

Hopefully that is all clear, and lays the groundwork for the concluding passage we shall now read.

But first, does anyone have any questions through Verse 30?

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 31-39

OK, will someone please read Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 31-39 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those verses in English.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died---more than that, who was raised---who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank you.

Verse 31 begins:

(Verse 31a)

What then shall we say to these things?

Q. **Which** things?

A. **Verses 28-30** and the remarkable notion of divine providence, whereby all that God has purposed to do is being perfectly worked out to the benefit of his children in Christ.

A. **All of Chapter 8** which speaks of how the Holy Spirit moves in us to accomplish these things

A. **The whole letter up to this point**

However broadly Paul was thinking in 31a, the logic flows similarly into 31b

(Verse 31b)

If God is for us, who can be against us?

This is a rhetorical question.

It is the same as if Paul had said, "if God is for us, nobody can be against us."

This statement is simply and obviously true.

Q. But how can we know that God is, in fact, for us?!

A. The answer is given, in Verse 32, which reads:

(Verse 32)

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

We know that Jesus Christ is God's only begotten son,

we know that Jesus is the only man who ever lived a life of perfect obedience to God,

and we know that God loved and was well pleased with his Son Jesus.

Yet we know that God gave this son up,

as an atoning sacrifice for all our sins,

so that we could live,

so that the Holy Spirit could live in us,

and conform us to the likeness of Christ,

who is our Savior and Lord.

This is how we know that God is for us.

Because of Jesus.

Verse 33 continues

(Verse 33a)

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

Again we have a rhetorical question.

By “*God’s elect*” we understand those whom God is **conforming** to the likeness of Christ.

And because God’s purposes are never frustrated, God’s elect finally **shall** be fully Christ-like.

Moreover, by the **decree** of almighty God, God’s elect are already **reckoned** to be Christ-like.

And God **Himself**, the Holy Spirit, **dwells** in his elect, **leading** them to Christ-like perfection.

Obviously nobody could effectively bring any “*charge*” against God’s elect..

No one has the **right** to make such a charge.

No one has the **power** to make such a charge.

No one has any **grounds** for such a charge.

After all, the latter part of Verse 33 reminds us:

(Verse 33b)

It is God who justifies.

This means that whatever charges are brought against God’s **elect** are unlawful and unholy,

because all such charges are ultimately being brought against God **Himself!**

who is Himself the **judge!**

In short, then, nobody shall [even] bring **charges** against God’s elect

Much less then, shall anyone **judge** them.

Verse 34 begins:

(Verse 34a)

Who is to condemn?

The answer to this rhetorical questions is....**nobody** is to condemn God’s elect.

God **does** not condemn them.

And nobody **else** can even bring **charges** against them.

This is because of what God has accomplished in **Christ**.

Verse 34 continues

(Verse 34b)

Christ Jesus is the one who died---more than that, who was raised---who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Here are four things that give us **assurance**:

First, we know that Christ **died in our place**, thereby placing us beyond the reach of condemnation.

Second, we know that Christ **rose from the dead**, showing us that death itself has been overcome.

Third, we know that Christ ascended **bodily** to where God is, assuring us of bodily resurrection and eternal life with Christ in the presence of God.

Finally we understand that the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, has been exalted to the right hand of God where he **waits** for us and **intercedes** for us and **prepares a place** for us.

All that God has accomplished in Christ, he has accomplished on **our** behalf!

Verse 35 begins with another rhetorical question:

(Verse 35a)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

The answer, of course, is **nobody can**.

Christ sits at the **right hand** of **God Almighty** having demonstrated, together with the ministration of the Holy Spirit, unimaginable love and power and grace, all on account of God's great and abiding love for us.

No**body** shall separate us from **them**.

 Nobody shall separate us from their great love **for** us.

 It is quite **impossible**.

 Just as no **body** can separate us, no **thing** can separate us either.

 Including the **things** listed (again as rhetorical questions) in the remainder of verse 35

(Verse 35b)

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

 “*Tribulation*” includes all kinds of **troubles** and **difficulties** and **disturbances** such as come into every human life.

 “*Distress*” points more to physical and emotional discomfort, such as **fear**, **anxiety**, **pain**, **fatigue**,

 “*Persecution*” includes **undeserved torment** suffered by Christians because of their faith.

 “*Famine*,” “*Nakedness*,” “*Danger*,” and “*Sword*” are all fairly self explanatory.

 It is well to remember that Paul himself had suffered **all** of these **repeatedly**, except perhaps the last one, although he had been stoned and beaten with rods and left for dead...

 Paul’s point here is that **our lively sense of God’s love for us** must not be, and often wonderfully is not, diminished by suffering of the most extreme variety.

 We remember that **all** of these things which Christians **do** experience are within the purview of God’s sovereign will and intended for good.

 Verse 36 quotes from Psalm 44...

(Verse 36)

As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

This is an important sentiment which runs right through the Bible, from beginning to end.

 God’s people very often are treated in this way...like sheep to be slaughtered.

and very often this is for “God’s sake”

It speaks of martyrdom.

The list of afflictions which Christians have experienced could be expanded, but suffice it to say that it runs the gambit from mild and trifling things, straight through persecution, torture, and death.

In every instance, Paul means to say, our **suffering is victory**.

Verse 37 reads:

(Verse 37)

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

This does not necessarily, or even mainly, mean that **we** will be super-brave, strong, and heroic when we suffer.

On the contrary, what Paul means is that the victory which has **already** been accomplished in Christ cannot be overcome and will not be diminished in the slightest by our suffering.

Rather our suffering is **part** of that victory and is redeemed by it.

God does not grant unto anyone **more** suffering than they can profitably endure.

Now Paul moves to the climax of this section, adding his personal testimony.

Verse 38 reads:

(Verse 38)

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

Death **certainly** does not separate us from the love of God in Christ.

On the contrary, Paul himself viewed death as **gain**, an opportunity to be **with** Christ.

Life is **more** difficult than death, yet as we have read in this Chapter 8, God has caused his Spirit to **dwell** in us and to **lead** us and to be our **comforter**, **guide**, and helper while we here.

He has also poured out his Spirit in the **Church** and given us to one another, to **minister** and to be ministered to, so that we can endure faithfully until the end.

Angels are **also** sent to help us and, of course, **would** not seek to separate us from the love of God in Christ,

nor would they be **capable** of doing so, however exalted and powerful they might be, even if they could be turned to such an evil purpose.

At **no** point in time or in eternity can **anything** come between us and God.

The last word in the series (translated “*powers*”) probably supernatural powers of some sort.

Verse 39 continues

(Verse 39)

nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as **time** does not proscribe God, neither does **space**.

Paul’s summary point comes last:

He is convinced that there is **absolutely** nothing in time and eternity, on earth or in heaven that is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the Gospel.

Within the love of God we are perfectly and eternally safe.

Christ is the Way to go there.

Closing Prayer