

The Eternal Love of God
Romans 8:31-39

Colossians 1:1-23

Colossians 1:24-2:10

Responsive Psalms 65: 1-10

This morning we are going to be finishing up Chapter 8 here, looking at the last few verses which is in many ways the culmination of Paul's teaching in the previous chapters. Everything he has been saying has now come to a point, and that point is the assurance of salvation by the grace of God, through his Son, Jesus. Everything builds upon this reality, and it is through this reality that we, as children of God can persevere through temptations, trials, tribulations and death. Looking to the promised reward, which is to be found in the very presence of the Father. Last time we were here in chapter 8 we talked about the inevitable suffering that is found in this world, and how, that suffering is not a mere coincidence, but rather is part of God's design that fulfills his glorious purpose within the church, and within its individual members. The sufferings of this world point us to a hope which transcends this world, we to, like Abraham, and all of those of this faith who came before us, are looking forward to that promised land, recognizing that this world is not our home but we, like Israel wandering the desert, are pilgrims and foreigners in this land.

We are reminded daily of the temporary nature of this life, through the fall of Adam God has cursed this world into a cycle of futility and death so that we are reminded that in this life all things fade and pass away, yet the eternal soul that we have been given yearns for something greater, something more than we can find here. Lost humanity is afraid to face the futility of this world, so they seek to numb themselves from it through coping mechanisms, entertainment, alcohol, drugs, anything to feel a sense of freedom from the realities of a dying world. But this is not the case for the Christian, who has been given a new life, become a new creature in Christ. Nature itself likewise tells of this redemption through the cycle of death and birth. Fall and Winter always give way to spring, Children are born amidst a dying generation, and even anything we have that falls into disrepair or is broken we replace with something new, something better. This motif of death and rebirth is intrinsically part of the human experience, we see it all around us, and experience a shadow of its reality each and ever day.

All this points to a better home, an eternal home, that is clothed in the glory of God, forever, eternal, and glorious. As Matthew recorded in his gospel account, the teachings of Christ, who said (chapter 6:19) Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” That is our hope, bound in the promises of God, that through his Son he has redeemed for himself a people, freeing them from the futility of this world, for the home and treasures of his people are not of this world but rather we are pilgrims and sojourners passing through it. Looking to Jesus, and glory he has prepared for us in the day that we shed this robe of flesh is the meaning and purpose that we find in this meaningless and futile world.

Have you ever had anything in your life that you were so excited for it made everything else just sort of fade as you eagerly await the hoped for outcome? We have an example living in that state right now I think in Aidan and Ellie, as they are both eagerly anticipating their upcoming marriage, it is exciting, something they are actively pursuing, and striving toward. but now at this time there is probably some doubts about how its all going to fall into place, and maybe some difficulties as they plan, prepare, and live each day waiting....but the so called suffering of this moment does not compare to the glory of that day in which they are preparing and hoping. And really this is just a shadow of the true marriage, the true consummation that we have in Christ.

Just how Aidan and Ellie are in this state of hopeful waiting, so to are each and everyone of God's children, as we await that day. Verse 22, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves grown within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Every Mother here in this room can relate here to what Paul is saying, as they have eagerly awaiting the birth of their children, through the pain and suffering of pregnancy and labor. And when that child finally arrives, all of that fades and is of little importance, all those months of discomfort and hardship pale in comparison to the joy, for the hopeful expectation of a child has come and that glorious arrival makes the sufferings that came before all worth it. And again, this is just a shadow of the reality, and why Paul writes in verse 18, "For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." The glorious awaited day of marriage, or of the birth of a child pales in comparison to the glory of the day that Paul is talking about, the day that we shall meet, face to face with the one who has redeemed us from the sufferings and futility of this world.

So then, how should we as Christian conduct ourselves in a futile and dying world? Well, with hopeful expectation in the reality of the future set before us by God through his Son. Again we have the example given in scripture which talks about the church being the bride of Christ, being prepared for the day when we are united with him, what is the attitude of a bride and groom as they are awaiting the day of marriage? Depressed? Angry? Heads hung low and moping around? No, there is an excited anticipation, a mutual working together toward that day, that it is glorious and perfect. So to should we be as we eagerly await the coming of Christ, full of hope and joy for the promises he has given that he we will one day join him, that he has gone and has prepared a place for us, and Paul says that this joyful expectation of this reality is how God's children can endure through all things. Let us go ahead and read our passage for this morning, Starting at verse 18, but we are going to be focusing on verse 31 to the end of the chapter. (READ 8:18-39)

As believers verse 31 should be our mantra, drilled into our brain, this reality that the sovereign creator of all, is for us. And if he, the God of the universe, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end is for us, then any who are in opposition, who bring trial and persecution have little to no power over us. Our sojourn through this life is full of dangers, but it is a journey that we are called to accomplish by a God who loves us. When God called Israel to leave Egypt and to journey to a land that he was giving them, it was not as though that journey was simple and easy, it was 40 years wandering in the desert, the generation who had escaped captivity in Egypt has all died off by the time they arrived. It was a journey full of crisis, wild beasts and bandits, internal strife in an often divided community, threats from surrounding nations, and physical discomfort as they traveled and had no permanent place to call home. But all the while, God's presence was with them, and they could look at the pillar of fire by night, or the pillar of smoke by day and say... God is with us, who can be against us! Paul here in his writing is imploring the Roman believers to the same, you are the predestined, called of God, there is no opposition that will arise that can change that reality, there is no hardship that will thwart the plans and purpose of God.

We know that Christians were brought to the Colosseum, were murdered for sport, tore apart by animals for the entertainment of the people, but through it all, these words rang true all the more, If God is for us, who can be against us, for though they may kill the body, God has rescued their souls and to be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord. This is a reality that no man can take away from God's children, this is a triumphant testimony to the faithfulness of God and the future glory he has prepared for us.

We have yet to be put to such a test, we have yet to have our lives threatened because of our faith, but the message is still yet the same for us today. We have this hopeful expectation of being united with our God, a reality that should make all this life has to offer pale in comparison to that joy which is set before us. That no matter what may happen in this body, we are secure in the arms of our Lord and Savior. In verse 32 Paul reminds us of the seal of this promise so that his readers have no excuse to doubt God's faithfulness and that he is indeed for us. He writes, "He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Again we see this theme of pilgrimage, of suffering through while holding on to a hopeful expectation of the future. As the Roman believers journeyed through with their weakness, Paul reminds them the lengths that God has taken to redeem them, by giving up his own Son for them, and if he has gone so far as to send his Son to die for their sins, will he not also accomplish what is his purpose and plan for them? He has given them adoption, redemption, and the spirit, all things which transcend this life, there is nothing in this world that compares to this gift given to those who are the called according to God's purpose.

Verse 32 is not a promise that some false teachers will tell you that God has a plan for you, and that plan is success and an easy life, all you need to do is believe...and if you struggle and haven't taken a hold of the life of success and ease that God has for you, it is because you lack faith. No, that is not what Paul is saying here, the reality is that God has already given us all things, through his Son. And even the hardships that we endure in this life, only further sweeten the reality of our inheritance. If we had it all now, there would be no expectation or hope for anything greater, so God in his infinite wisdom subjected all things to futility, so that we in hopeful expectation await something greater. We can take encouragement in knowing that God loves his children, and that he will provide what we need. Again we have the example of Israel in the wilderness, as our journey in this life mirrors their journey in the wilderness. Scripture shows how God provided step by step for them, fed them, gave them water and protection. If God has given us his Son to bring us out of the captivity of Sin, will he not also provide a path through our pilgrimage to the promised land? There have been many times in my life where I have been doubtful of the outcomes, yet I can look back, just as Israel and see how God has provided step by step through the wilderness of trial.

Such remembrance, brings forth a comfort and bolstering of faith for the next one, for you see how God has always provided in your life and that we can rest in him now, through whatever it is. Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, God is not going to turn against us, or let us ultimately fail, for no matter what happens to us in this life, nothing can separate us from the redemption he has provided for his children. And if God is for us, if he has loved us in such a way that he sent his Son to die so that we may be reconciled to him, given the ultimate sacrifice to pay the price so that we may become his adopted children and direct access to him through the son, then as Paul says in verse 33, "who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." If we are Christ's, there is nothing that anyone in the world, or even Satan himself can say, or point to, or do that will change the reality that we are God's children. There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We do not stand condemned before God, but by Jesus we stand holy and justified having been washed and cleansed by the blood, having every single one of our sins, our rebellions, our shortcomings, and failures forgiven, wiped clean, and nothing shall be held against us.

The accusations of Satan, or of this world mean nothing to God, for he sees his children through his Son, and he loves them. Verse 34, “Who is he who condemns? IT is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” The very Son of God who died, for us had accomplished the redemption that he was sent to fulfill, and was raised up, victorious and seated in a place of honor in the courts of God, where he makes intercession for us. Though, I doubt it really goes down like this for God is much more than our examples, or even our understanding, I have always pictured Christ's intercession as pointing to himself, to what he has done. Like in the account of Job, I picture Satan before God pointing out my every failure, but Jesus stands and says, “ I have already died for him, that sin which you refer to, has already been paid. And in Christ instead of an expectation of punishment and fear, we find provision, love, and peace. If the one who is Lord over all of his creation is for us, there is none who can stand against us.

This bond that we share with Christ is an eternal everlasting bond. It is not contingent upon anything that we can do, or say, but solely upon Christ and his blood which was shed for us. It is he who has bound us to himself, it is he who has lifted us up from the futility of this world, and opened our hearts and mind to be able to understand and comprehend something greater, to see his greater purpose and to be able to see and share in his redemptive grace. This is a sure thing, beyond any shred of doubt and there is nothing that can separate us from the one who has called us, for we are held secure in the very hands that have created all things. That is why Paul writes in verse 35, “who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?” From eternity passed God has laid forth a plan to bring his people to himself, just as he told Jeremiah, “before I formed you in the womb I knew you.” This is an infinite all knowing, all powerful God who exists outside of the time and space he created for us, he is larger than this world, larger than our understanding of it...and he chose for himself a people and those people in the proper time he calls, and all who have been called by God will be justified through the death, burial and resurrection of his Son whom he sent to accomplish that redemption.

We live in this created world, we are created creatures, who are constrained by the rules of this creation which God has set forth, each moment, each day builds upon the next and what happens tomorrow, or the next day we don't know for we live in this linear timeline. But God knows, because he has set it forth and is not constrained to our rules of existence which he has restricted us in. There is nothing that surprises God, for it is he who has set it all in place...and it is this God in which our lives, and our salvation is secure. Which is why Paul concludes after all of these things, in verse 37, “Yet, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is nothing more secure than the Christians status before God, all things fade, all things die, but our redemption in Christ is eternal, forever. While we are on a pilgrim journey now, our destination is secure, The God who predestined, and called, is the God who will redeem and there is nothing that can change that reality. We have all heard the phrase, “once saved always saved.” And though, it largely seems to be used be falsely to convince those who believe that by their own power and decision have come to faith and that their salvation is true, though it maybe often misappropriated, it is none the less a true statement. If we are Christs, then we are God's children and heirs to the promises given to Abraham, a nation of priests, whose high priest and representative sits at the right hand of God making intercession for us daily.

And there is nothing that can alter or change that reality, Gods children will persevere, they will endure, they will run the race, and they will gain the prize. All those who fall along the wayside, the ones who lose their faith, who turn from God, who may have started out strong but falter and fail in the end, were never truly believers to begin with. It is not possible that those whom God has predestined and called should in the end lose their salvation, for if they did, God has failed and if God fails, he is not sovereign, and if not sovereign then, he is not God. Paul is encouraging his readers here, remember your calling, remember the one who loves you, for hardship will come, but God will never leave you nor forsake you, he is with you in all things, and will carry you through. There is nothing in this life, or the next that can separate the children of God from the father, for it is by his mighty sovereign will that power that we are secure in Christ Jesus, and there is nothing that can change that reality.

So the out flowing that comes from this reality, is a worship and love for God, a bold testimony to the one in whom we are secure. A peace that defies all understanding, for though it may seem that all things are hopeless and dire around us, ultimately our hope rests on the one who has called us, and set us apart for his glory. For in all these things, through Christ, we are more then conquerors, he has by his death defeated sin, hell, and the grave, and by his grace has grafted us into that victory. We have entered into the promised Sabbath rest, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Son of God has come and accomplished redemption for us, and we can now cease from he works of the law, and rest in him, knowing and believing that our redemption is secure, and that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.