

Our Future Is Secured in Christ Jesus

Texts: Genesis 29:15-28

Romans 8:26-39 (Series A, 9th Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 105:1-11, 45b tone 12

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Let us pray:

An old church building needed some repairs, so during his sermon the minister made a passionate plea and looked directly at the richest man in town. At the end of the sermon, the rich man stood up and said, "Pastor, I will contribute \$1,000.00"

Just then plaster fell from the ceiling and struck the rich man on the shoulder. He stood up and said, "I will increase my donation to \$5,000.00." Before he could sit down, another chunk of plaster fell on him, and he stood up and said, "I will double my last donation."

He sat down and a larger chunk of plaster hit him on the head. He jumped up and shouted, "Pastor, I will give \$20,000.00" This prompted a deacon to shout, "Hit him again, Lord! Hit him again."

So many Christians cherish this passage that it's sometimes easy to lose sight of its central meaning. Paul talks in it about fundamental truths like *providence*, *predestination* and *justification*. Yet all of those things are like signs along the road that point to one central truth: God's love is as invincible as it is sometimes profound.

So, this Sunday's Epistle Lesson is not first of all, about misery or salvation. No, Paul first and foremost wants his readers and hearers such as us to understand something about the persistent love of God for his adopted children in Jesus Christ. Yet we can't really appreciate that tenacity until we are confronted with human misery, and pain that sometimes seem to threaten it.

Have you ever wondered why God allows bad things to happen to his people? Well, God uses all of our circumstances to work for our good when we have faith. In other words, when we are Christ-like, God can take the negative circumstances of our lives and use them for our good, especially if using them for good fulfills his will for our lives.

Take Joseph, for example. He was sold into slavery by his brothers and ended up in jail in Egypt, but God used all of these experiences to prepare Joseph for his ultimate role of saving his family and the people of Egypt from famine.

Joseph trusted God through many years of hardship, and God worked all of those ugly, and painful circumstances for the good of Joseph, his family and God's chosen people in the generations to come.

Even despite our trials, our weakness and our sins, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (verse 28). God does not cause all things, but he allows them, and works with them for his purpose. He has a plan for us, and we can be confident that he will complete his work in us (*Philippians 1:6*).

We are protected by Christ's death and resurrection. Anyone who attempt to take away our salvation would have to be stronger than God, and since no one is stronger than God, we can never lose our salvation. God speaks of love as Christ's love for his people. Christ's love protects us from the trials of life.

No one and nothing can separate us from God. A believer can never be condemned by God because of Christ's death and resurrection, Christ's exalted position and his continual intercession for us.

We are part of the body of Christ, and he loves us so much that nothing can separate us from him. God's love is not human or normal. God loves us because of who we are-his children. Paul affirms the incredible power of the love of Christ in Romans 8:26-39. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we can't find the words to pray.

My friends in Christ, our Christian baptism doesn't include a money-back guarantee that we won't encounter death, angels or even demons. God doesn't guarantee that we won't experience the loss of our job, health or memory lost.

Pandemic, floods, wild fires, terrorism and global warming may strike very close to home. Jesus' adopted brothers and sisters may endure broken relationships, miscarriage, infertility or even random violence.

Yet God tightly holds us closely to himself in his love. While God may not spare us at times us danger, God goes with us, by the Holy Spirit, right through that trouble. God's love, in fact, stays right with us until we enter God's glorious and eternal presence.

When believers are hurting so much that they can't mention their desires, the Holy Spirit intercedes with groans that words can't express. Paul urges us to recognize the depths of our despair, but we must remember that we are not alone. God is always with us, even when we feel alienated, separated and alone.

When we are saved, God doesn't stop with justification. He gave up his son, so he will freely give us everything we need for sanctification and glorification. When we are redeemed, we receive a new heart and we begin the lifelong process of transformation.

God takes our negative experiences and use them to shape us and use us for his purposes. That doesn't mean that God is pleased with all of our negative circumstances. He is sad when we are persecuted for our faith, God is sad when we walk on the wrong path. God loves us enough to be with us and walk with us when we face the storms of life.

Sometimes we can only learn great lessons of faith when we face difficulties. God's plans are not always our plans, because his plans carry a greater purpose. Sometimes he has to let bad things happen to us so that our lives and plans are realigned with his divine purpose for our lives. We do not always know why bad things to happen. But one thing I do know is that, God is always there for us.

God speaks so that we may be made more like Jesus. When we trust in Christ, we are his forever. Because he paid the penalty for our sin on the cross, at the cross,.... at the cross, we are eternally secure. Therefore, nothing can take that away from us, and nothing can take us away from him. We gain the healing Spirit of God.

For the home stretch.... We wait, with both patience and eagerness, for the resurrection of our bodies, when our adoption will be completed. We live in the situation of “already but not yet”: already redeemed, but not yet completely redeemed.

We are already freed from condemnation, but not yet completely freed from sin. We are already in the kingdom, but it is not yet in its fullness. We live with aspects of the age to come, even as we struggle with aspects of the old age.

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (verse 26). God knows our limitations and frustrations. He knows that our flesh is weak even when our spirit is willing, so his Spirit intercedes for us, even for needs that cannot be put into words.

God’s Spirit does not remove our weakness, but helps us in our weakness. He bridges the gap between old and new, between what we see and what he has declared us to be. For example, we sin even though we want to do righteousness (7:14-25). We see sin in our lives, but God declares us righteous, because God sees the end result even while the process has just begun.

Despite the discrepancy between what we see and what we want, we can be confident that the Holy Spirit does what we cannot. He will see us through. “He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God” (8:27). The Holy Spirit is on our side, helping us, so we can be confident!

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?” (verses 31-32).

If God went so far as to give us his Son even when we were sinners, we can be sure that he will give us everything else that we need to make it. We can be sure that God is not going to get angry at us and rescind his offer.

The climax of this chapter: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered’” (*verses 35-37, quoting Psalm 44:22*). Can our troubles separate us from God? If we are killed for the faith, have we lost the battle?

Absolutely not, Paul says: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Even in pain and suffering, we are not losers — we are better than conquerors, because we share in the victory of Jesus Christ. Our prize — our inheritance — is the eternal glory of God! The prize is infinitely greater than the cost.

“For I am convinced, Paul continuous that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*verses 38-39*).

Nothing can separate us from the plan that God has for you and me. Absolutely nothing can separate us from his love! We can be confident in the salvation he has given us. Amen.

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