

ROMANS 8.30-39

I'M SURE YOU HAVE NOTICED HOW A LITTLE CHILD CLINGS TO A PARENT WHEN IT IS INSECURE OR THREATENED. IN THOSE SITUATIONS THE CHILD REALIZES THE SAFEST PLACE IS WITH THE MOTHER OR FATHER, AND NO OTHER WILL DO. I REMEMBER A TIME IN MY FATHERHOOD WHEN THE PLUMBER WAS AT THE DOOR TO FIX OUR FURNACE AND MY DAUGHTER, FRIGHTENED BY HIM, MADE A RAPID BEELINE TO MY LAP. THE CHILD TRUSTS THE PARENT MORE THAN ANY OTHER PERSON.

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE REFORMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. AT ONE POINT IN HISTORY THE CHURCH HAD STRAYED FROM SCRIPTURE, FROM THE BIBLE, AND CERTAIN FOREIGN BELIEFS HAD CREPT INTO THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH WITH THE RESULT THAT THE CHILDREN OF GOD WERE CONFUSED AND KNEW NOT TO WHOM THEY SHOULD RUN FOR

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM. THEY WERE LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN NEEDING THE SOLACE AND GUIDANCE OF A PARENT. THAT PARENT WAS HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD WERE IN FEAR FOR THEIR SALVATION. WHAT WERE THEY TO DO? WHAT COULD THEY DO? THERE WAS NOTHING THEY COULD DO CONCERNING THEIR SINFUL NATURES ALTHOUGH THEY TRIED ALL SORTS OF FALSELY PIOUS WORKS-RIGHTEOUS SCHEMES. THEY NEEDED SPIRITUAL PARENTS TO FLEE TO IN THEIR FEAR AND INSECURITY. THE PARENTS WERE THE WORDS OF OUR LORD AS WRITTEN IN HOLY SCRIPTURE. **FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH. AND THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST** (EPHESIANS 2.8).

THEREFORE GOD HAS PREDESTINED HIS CHILDREN OF FAITH, BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH, TO ETERNAL

LIFE IN HEAVEN. PAUL IN ROMANS EXPLAINS THIS PREDESTINATION: **AND THOSE WHOM HE PREDESTINED HE ALSO CALLED, AND THOSE WHOM HE CALLED HE ALSO JUSTIFIED, AND THOSE WHOM HE JUSTIFIED HE ALSO GLORIFIED** REMEMBER HOW YOU FELT ONCE IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU RECEIVED AN UNEXPECTED AND WONDER OF WONDERFUL GIFT. MAYBE IT WAS A TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR CHECK FOR YOU TO REBUILD YOUR BURNED DOWN HOME. MAYBE IT WAS A DIAMOND RING. MAYBE IT WAS THE BB GUN YOU GOT FOR CHRISTMAS. REMEMBER THE JOY IN YOUR HEART AND THE TEARS IN YOUR EYES! TO BE SO GIFTED IS AN HONOR AND A GRACE. A GIFT IS THE GREATEST OF GRACIOUSNESS. CONSIDER YOUR GIFTS. LOOK AT WHAT GOD IN JESUS CHRIST HAS GIVEN YOU AS SPELLED OUT FOR YOU BY THE APOSTLE PAUL: PREDESTINATION TO SALVATION. PREDESTINATION IS THE CAUSE ALONE

OF MANY STANDING, BUT THE FALL OF NONE (HERRICK).

THE CALL BACK TO GOD WHO ONCE WAS YOUR ENEMY; JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH WITH YOUR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER THROUGH HIS GIFT OF FAITH; GLORIFICATION AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT WHERE ONCE WE WERE SHROUDED IN THE DARKNESS OF SIN AND DEATH. ALL THESE MIRACULOUS MARVELS WERE OFFERED BY GOD AND HAD NEARLY BEEN FORGOTTEN. PAUL SAYS IT ALL: **WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?**

YOU HAVE HEARD OF CULTS, HAVEN'T YOU? THEY ARE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES WHICH ARE SPIRITUALLY UNTRUE. OFTEN TIMES THEY INDULGE IN EXTREMES SUCH AS THE CULT CURRENT A FEW YEARS AGO THAT PROMISED PEOPLE THAT IF THEY COMMITTED SUICIDE THEY WOULD BE TAKEN TO HEAVEN ON THE HAIL-BOPP COMET THAT WAS FLASHING IN

THE SKIES AT THAT TIME. AS CHRISTIANS WE REGARD SUCH BELIEFS AS ABSURD. BUT THERE ARE OTHER CULTS THAT ARE MORE SUBTLE AND CAN EASILY LURE CHRISTIANS AWAY FROM THEIR PARENT, NAMELY THE WORD OF GOD. ONE SUCH CULT TEACHES THAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER WOULD NEVER HAVE GIVEN HIS OWN SON TO DIE FOR MANKIND. FATHERS SIMPLY DON'T DO THAT KIND OF THING. SO WHAT IS THE TRUTH? AGAIN THE APOSTLE PAUL SPELLS IT OUT FOR US AS THE WORD OF GOD : **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?** SO MUCH FOR THE CULT WHICH FALLS TO PIECES ASIDE THE WORD OF GOD.

BECAUSE OF THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS, HE SHALL GIVE US ALL THINGS WHICH ARE ETERNAL AND ETERNALLY GOOD.

ONCE UPON A TIME SATAN WAS ABLE TO CHARGE US WITH A CRIME. THE CRIME WAS SIN WHICH HELD THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH. YES, ONCE UPON A TIME. BUT RECENTLY, THAT IS, ABOUT TWENTY CENTURIES AGO, SATAN LOST HIS HOLD ON US SO THAT HE COULD NO LONGER CONDEMN US TO HELL. **THE FATHER DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON BUT GAVE HIM UP FOR US ALL** AND SO JESUS DIED FOR US ON THE CROSS TO SAVE US FROM OUR SIN AND BRING US OUR SALVATION IN HEAVEN. NOW GOD THE FATHER IN HEAVEN HAS JUSTIFIED US SO THAT WE ARE ONCE AGAIN HIS VERY CHILDREN. ONCE WE WERE DIRTY; NOW WE ARE CLEAN. ONCE WE WERE GUILTY; NOW WE ARE INNOCENT. WE STILL SIN AT TIMES BUT, SORRY AND REPENTANT AS WE ARE, WE RECEIVE THE SON'S FORGIVENESS RIGHT FROM THE CROSS. AS PAUL SAYS, **WHO IS TO CONDEMN? IT IS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES.**

WE CHRISTIANS GO TO THE WORD OF GOD, TO SCRIPTURE, AND ARE THOROUGHLY AND ETERNALLY PROTECTED AND AT PEACE WITH GOD. WE CAN ASK THE BIG QUESTION AND RECEIVE THE BIG ANSWER, THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS AND ALL OUR CONCERNS. HERE IT IS: **WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?** PAUL ANSWERS THAT QUESTION WITH A NUMBER OF ANSWERS. IS IT TRIBULATION OR DISTRESS? HAS YOUR HOUSE BURNED DOWN OR BEEN WASHED AWAY IN A HURRICANE? NOT TO WORRY. IT WILL BE RESTORED AS IT WAS FOR JOB, AND WHEN YOU DIE, YOU WILL HAVE YOUR HEAVENLY HOME. A WRITER, MARY COLERIDGE SAID IT WELL:

SUNSHINE LET IT BE OR FROST
STORM OR CALM, AS THOU SHALT
CHOOSE;
THOUGH THINE EVERY GIFT WERE LOST,
THEE THYSELF YOU COULD NOT LOSE.

NOTHING SEPARATES CHRISTIANS FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST. SO SAYS SCRIPTURE.

IS IT PERSECUTION? REMEMBER, IF PERSECUTION COMES TO YOU ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, EVEN IN THIS LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE, REMEMBER, IT IS REALLY MOMENTARY WHILE ETERNITY LASTS FOREVER. NOTHING SEPARATES CHRISTIANS FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST. SO SAYS THE BIBLE.

IS IT FAMINE OR NAKEDNESS—IN OTHER WORDS, POVERTY? NEVER FEAR, THIS TOO WILL PASS WITH THE WELCOMING HANDS OF CHRISTIAN SERVANTS WHO WILL AID YOU WITH THEIR GIFTS UNTIL THE TIME WHEN YOU WILL FEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. PERMIT ME TO INSERT HERE A PERSONAL NOTE. WHEN MY FAMILY AND I MOVED TO ST. LOUIS FOR SEMINARY OUR HOUSE AT HOME HAD NOT YET BEEN SOLD, AND WE WERE STRAPPED. BUT THEN A CHECK FROM AN LWML A THOUSAND MILES AWAY APPEARED IN OUR MAILBOX. NOTHING

SEPARATED US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST, JUST AS SCRIPTURE SAYS.

IS IT DANGER OR THE SWORD, THE SWORD STANDING FOR VIOLENCE? IT IS A DANGEROUS WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE, EVEN IN THE US OF A. MORE AND MORE VIOLENCE RUNS WILD IN THE STREETS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFTEN UNABLE TO QUELL IT. ONE CAN BE VICTIMS TO ACCIDENTS, EXPLOSIONS, MAYHEM AND MURDER JUST BY WALKING DOWN A CITY STREET. PEACE KEEPERS AND SOLDIERS MUST RUN THE RISK OF RENDERING THEIR CHILDREN ORPHANS AND THEIR SPOUSES WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS. BUT THE LORD DOES NOT ALLOW THEM TO SUFFER, AND THE ONES WHO DIE HE EMBRACES IN HEAVEN. NOTHING CAN SEPARATE THEM FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST. SO SAYS SCRIPTURE.

PAUL CONTINUES: **AS IT IS WRITTEN, FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG; WE ARE REGARDED AS SHEEP TO BE**

SLAUGHTERED. HERE PAUL IS REFERRING TO LIFE IN GENERAL WHICH ENDS IN DEATH. IT IS DIFFICULT TO LIVE IN A FALLEN WORLD WHERE THE SUN IS TOO HOT, THE WINTER IS COLD, NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, THINGS DON'T WORK OUT, THE LONGER YOU LIVE, THE OLDER YOU GET . . . AND THE MOSQUITOES BITE. "WE ARE TROUBLED, ALMOST TO DESPAIR, BY THE SUFFERING WE ENDURE, A TEMPTATION FAMILIAR TO ALL GOD'S PEOPLE" (LSB).

BUT JESUS ASKED US NOT TO WORRY, AND PAUL LISTS TEN THINGS THAT PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT AND SHOWS THEM AS FUTILE TO OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST. LIFE. IT WILL SOON BE OVER. DEATH. WE WILL BE RESURRECTED FROM IT. ANGELS, THE FALLEN ONES, THE DEMONS. THEY ARE MUTE BEFORE JESUS. RULERS. THEY ARE ONLY TEMPORAL. THE PRESENT. IT WILL PASS. THE FUTURE. IT TOO WILL PASS AS HEAVEN NEARS.

POWERS. THEY MAY KILL THE BODY BUT
NOT THE SOUL. HEIGHT AND DEPTH.
THEY ARE ONLY EARTHLY THREATS.
AND ANYTHING ELSE IN THE CREATED
UNIVERSE THAT YOU CAN THINK OF IS
ALL POWERLESS. HEAR THE WORD.

AS ONE OF OUR HYMNS SAYS,

IF GOD HIMSELF BE FOR ME,
I MAY A HOST DEFY;
FOR WHEN I PRAY BEFORE ME
MY FOES, CONFOUNDED, FLY
(GERHARDT)

**NOTHING IN ALL CREATION WILL BE
ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE
OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. AMEN.**