

Written Copy For: Romans 8:28-32-God's Plan from the Beginning
Proper 12-8thn Sunday @ Pentecost
Sunday, July 26th, 2020

Text: Romans 8:28-32

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. 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?

Exegetical Statement

As we suffer and groan along with Creation awaiting the restoration of all things on the Last Day, and as the Spirit given in baptism intercedes for us in prayer, we also know that for us who have been blessed with God's love in Christ, God is at work bringing together all that we must experience to result in what is best for us now and into eternity. He has been at work for us before we were born, knowing and loving us, foreordaining that He would call us to faith and declare us righteous-acquitted of all sinful disobedience and then working that out in our lives so that we receive the glory of a new life now and eternal life to come. Since God has done all this for us who has the power to cancel His work? He gave His only Son over to death on behalf of all of us so that we would forgiveness of sins as His gracious gift. We were chosen by God; can anyone bring charges that would condemn us to eternal hell? God the righteous judge over all is the one who declares us to be innocent of all charges on behalf of Jesus sacrifice for us. Christ the judge on the Last Day is the One who died and rose again to save us and is now at the right hand of the Father pleading on our behalf, continuing to cover over all our trespasses with His blood. There is nothing in all creation that can separate us from Jesus love for us, not persecution from the unbelieving world that causes distress and feelings of hopelessness, not persecution, not lack of food or other bodily needs, not danger, not the sword of vengeance that might take our life. Believers must share in the suffering that Christ endured. But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ because He has overcome the world for us. So neither death, nor life, nor angels or demons, nor things that are at hand presently around us, not what is fixing to come, nor Satan's powerful deeds, nor elevated thoughts or deep insights; nothing in all Creation has the power to separate us from the love of God that we are given through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Focus Statement:

The LORD God, Creator of the universe planned from the beginning to call me to faith. He loved me from the beginning and chose me to be a part of His family of faith. He arranged all things in my life so that I would be called to faith and kept in faith. Even though I continue to sin, the righteous judge on the Last Day is the same One who willingly gave His life to forgive all my sins, and is even now interceding on my behalf with the Father even as I continue to sin. I stand acquitted of all wrongdoing because Christ Himself declares me innocent. And there is nothing or no one in all Creation that can separate me from Jesus love that pours into my life by faith

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Because I continue to sin, I might think that God has given up on me, that I've squandered all of His grace. I see the bad things that happen around me as threatening to disqualify me from salvation and eternal life.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Hold by faith that the God who arranged all things to ensure I would be brought to faith and remain in faith will not give up on me. He who predetermined and foreordained that I would live forever with Him in eternal life will see that promise come to fruition.

Subject Sentence: God foreordained your salvation and sees it through

Introduction: Not Living Up to Expectations

How many of you know that professional baseball is back? How many of you care? This might not mean a whole lot for some of you, but for those who have missed watching America's Great Pastime, it does. Our Tigers are 1-1 in their first series against the Cincinnati Reds, regarded as a pretty good team this year. The opening game on Friday featured the supposed ace of our pitching staff: Matt Boyd. He has an arsenal of four pitches and when they are all working opposing batters struggle to connect for hits. But Friday night in the early going not a lot was working for him. In the very first inning it took him 30 pitches to retire the side. During that opening inning he hit back to back batters. He ended up allowing four runs, and the bullpen gave up three more. All the Tigers could manage was one run off the home run, hit 447 feet by first baseman CJ Cron. That was the only real highlight of the game for Tigers fans.

The Tigers have been officially rebuilding since 2015. Ron Jonas might contend they've been rebuilding longer than that. In that time they have released or traded some star pitchers like Justin Verlander, David Price, Anabel Sanchez, and Matt Scherzer. The players they chose to replace them have not lived up to expectations. Detroit baseball fans are looking for results and they are still waiting. Jack Morris, former All-Star Tiger Pitcher made this comment Friday night: "You have to get use to failure" No Major League pitcher has a perfect strike out record every game. A batter is going to fail to get on base more times than he'll get a hit. But we as fans are looking for something better than what we've seen from the Tigers over the past 5 years. The same can be said of our lives of faith.

We want to live lives of obedience to our God and His laws. We want to please Him. But as we examine ourselves and the things that we struggle with, we might wonder sometimes if God made a mistake in picking us. Sure, we have our high moments where our faith shines through. But there are always those moments we'd rather not discuss. Moments when we can't make the pitches, moments when we fail in obedience to what God requires of us. As one of my Seminary Professors once said, "We all have our pet sins that we struggle with." Flaws in our character, sinful thoughts, words, and actions that we try to eliminate from our lives. We may even do pretty good at conquering them for a while. But then, when we least expect, they come back to bite us. They rear their ugly head, and we are left in sorrow. We want to believe that Jesus continues to forgive us, but deep down we wonder if that's still true. We wonder if we've used up all the grace and forgiveness that He has for us. We wonder if we've made God sorry that He chose to grant us faith. We wonder how long it will be before He gives up on us all together. For those times when we worry about God giving up on us, our text today from Romans Chapter 8 is a great place to turn.

Your Salvation: God's plan and work beginning to end

Paul emphasizes in our reading today how we are believers in Christ and members of His Church for no other reason than God chose us. He chose us not because He knew we would be such fine upstanding super Christians, because we're not. He didn't choose you because you were any better than your next-door neighbor who doesn't believe. Moses explains the basis for God's choosing Israel to be His precious chosen people in our Old Testament Lesson: **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** ⁷ **It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,** ⁸ **but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."** God chose Israel to be His special people because He loved them, and He promised Abraham and the Patriarchs after him that He would make their children His special people and give to them the Promised Land. They certainly did enough to warrant God's giving up on them and casting them aside. But God keeps His promise. And what God begins to do He always sees it through.

The same is true for you and me. God chose you to be His child of faith from before you were born. He knew all about the struggle with sin you would have. He knew at times you would be unfaithful and disobedient. And yet He chose you not because of your win/loss record, but simply because He loves you. His love is greater, deeper, and stronger than any other love. It's not based on our love for Him, or what we could ever offer Him. He loves you because He is the God of love. He not only chose you before you were born but arranged for all things to fall into place so that you would be given saving faith. He predetermined and predestined that you would come under the waters of Baptism. And He made sure that the faith granted you in Baptism would be alive in you today.

Paul says in **Romans 8:28** **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** Note that this doesn't say 'For those that love God everything will be good. He will give you a winning season.' Bad things will come into our lives: Sickness, plague, problems in the marriage, problems with our children, loss of loved ones. These things don't come from the hand of God. They come because of the broken sinful world we live in as well as our contributions to the broken sinfulness through thought, word, and action. It means that God takes both the good and the bad that happen in our life and uses them all for our eternal good.

As someone who spent time out in the world, running from the God that chose me in Baptism, I have a clear picture of how this works. There got to be a point as a teenager that I no longer wanted to be a part of His team. I no longer wanted any part of his family of faith. But that didn't matter to Jesus. He made sure I was baptized as a child and put His name on me. He claimed me as His own. What He started at the beginning of my life He was going to see it through. And when the time was right, He brought to bear all the good things and bad things for my eternal good.

That time chosen by the Lord was when Susan and I were married with our three children. I was unhappy with the world and where I was at that moment. Guys that I had graduated with had become successful businessmen with the house and lifestyle to show for it. I was only an Assistant Grocery Store Manager working a job that I hated but couldn't leave and make the same money and have benefits anywhere else. We were in debt. We bought a house that was actually more than we could afford. But one of the biggest things that brought me to the end of myself was my children. Susan and I both worked so we needed a babysitter until one of us got home. We had some bad experiences; not abuse or anything like that. But just a babysitter who we found out was cold and unloving. When the kids would ask for help with something, she considered them to be a pain and let them know it. They would walk away with tears in their eyes and she didn't really care. I realized that try as hard as I might, I couldn't provide for and protect my children as they needed or deserved.

All this was preparation for my visit to a worship service at Living Word Lutheran Church. I wasn't there to worship the LORD. I was there because in order to keep our oldest daughter Samantha in the Lutheran pre-school we enrolled her in we needed the regular attender credit. And so there I sat, biding me time for the hour this service would take. But Jesus had different plans for me. He used the law preached to break my sin hardened heart. But not just that, He used all these struggles and disappointments that were nagging at me. He had marked me as His own as a child in baptism and He worked all things so at this Church service He called me back to faith. He did so through the Gospel where it hit home that Jesus loved me. He loved sinful rotten me. He loved me so much that He endured the shame, the suffering, and the death on the cross to save me. And He rose again so I might know of the glorious eternal future that awaited me one day. And He loved not just me, but Susan and the kids. He loved them more than I do. And He is always there to care and watch over them, even when I'm not. It wasn't just by chance that I found myself in that Sanctuary at that time listening to that sermon. It was all His working, even through my sinful attitude and decisions. My fate didn't hang in the balance. He had predestined me to be His precious child and then worked out that saving faith in my life. It wasn't what I earned or deserved. But it is His free gift of grace and salvation given to me. And He continues to grant to me grace and forgiveness even as I keep sinning. I sometimes think that if I were God, I would've given up on me a long time ago. But He hasn't and He won't.

And that is true for you as well. What God begins He always finishes. He didn't call you to faith to let you go easily. Jesus suffered, bled, and died so that there would be nothing left in your life that would disqualify you from being His precious child now. He rose again from the dead so that you would know that despite your continued sinning, your fate is not Eternal Death, but life everlasting. Your Savior is at the right hand of the Father interceding on your behalf. Whenever you do sin, whenever a charge of sinful disobedience is written, Jesus takes it and stamps on it "Paid in Full" in His own blood. God not only worked all things out for you to come to faith but continues to work all things out so that you remain in faith.

What God's Eternal Election Means For You

That is important to know because being a baptized child of God doesn't mean our lives will be filled with success. As Paul wrote earlier in Chapter 8 we groan along with Creation under our burden of sin. When bad things happen, like the diagnosis of cancer, the death of a loved one, the loss of something precious, the straying from faith of a loved one, we can feel like God has given up on them, or given up on us. We read **Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose**, and see these tragedies unfold in our lives and wonder where the "good" is in them. But what Paul is really saying is that in your life and my life everything that is allowed to happen works toward God accomplishing His plan and purpose in your life, my life, and the lives of our fellow believers around us. He uses the good and the bad to bring you to faith and to keep you in faith. He uses the good and the bad as a means to bring others around you to faith and keep them in faith. They see you struggling as they are, and also see your resting your hope and faith in Christ alone.

Bad things happen in the life of a Christian. Bad things happen because of the sin in our lives and in the lives of those around us. The devil uses bad things and our own struggles with sin in an attempt to draw you away from your faith in Christ. But God is so powerful that even when the worst disaster befalls you, He is at work through it to ensure that you remain in faith toward Him now and unto Eternal Life to come. What Satan may propose for you eternal damnation God uses to ensure your eternal salvation. When bad things happen we can hold fast to God's promise in **Romans 8:38-39** 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.** Did you get that? Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love that moved Christ to die and rise again for you.

We have this promise in **Romans 8:32 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?** Jesus gave all that He had so that you could have all that He has to give to you. Not everything you want, that would only serve to feed our sins. He gives to you a gift much better: life with Him now that stretches out to eternal life to come.

Conclusion

If our life in Christ was based on our performance, then we would be sunk. If our life in Christ was like a baseball team and God was the manager, He would've traded us away long ago. Sometimes we look at our life and think that God made a poor choice when He chose us. We wonder how much longer He will keep forgiving us of the same sins over and over. When bad things are allowed to happen, we wonder if He is punishing us, or if He has just given up on us as a waste of His time. But in your life and mine all things that we go through are used by God for His eternal good purposes of bringing us to faith and keeping us in faith. He makes no mistakes. He chose you from the beginning of the world because He loves you, even when you aren't very loveable. The Father gave His most precious gift, His only Son, so that we might stand before Him now and on the Last Day acquitted of all charges, made perfect by the work of Christ given to us by faith in our Baptism. He chose to give you this faith and worked it out through your life. Having given so much for you He will not let you go. And because of who He is, the Creator of all things, above every other person or power in this world, no one can thwart His plans or separate you from His love. You may consider yourself a poor choice. But in the eyes of the Father, as seen through the work of the Son, and the continued work of the Holy Spirit, you are His precious child that He adores. He desires above all that you are part of His kingdom now, and will have a place in His eternal kingdom to come. Amen