

Sunday August 7, 2016
Romans 8:28-39
A Safe Place

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, shall we say in response 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, along with him, graciously give us all things?

33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered 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 convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 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.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. I greet you this morning with the love and joy that comes from knowing, not thinking or hoping, but knowing that I serve a true and living God. I understand what Paul was attempting to **reinforce with the believers** in Rome and **teach to the unbelievers**. I believe Paul wished for everyone within his hearing to understand that God was always on the side of the believer. That God was not only on their side, but concerned about them. And not only on their side, concerned about them, but working on their behalf.

I have often said to you that it is very hard to preach a sermon from a passage that we know well. The reason it is hard is because we think we know **not only** what it says but what it means. For example, we quote "all things work together for good..." and we use those six words to help us understand the hard things that happen in our lives. The death of a loved one: all things work together for good". The betrayal of a confidence: "all things work together for a good". The loss of a job "all things work together for good. But it seems to me that we forget that there is more to the verse. It says:

²⁸ And we know **that in** all things
God works for the good of those **who love him**,
who have been called according to his purpose.

Listen to the passage, again, from The Message!

²⁶⁻²⁸ Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives **of love for God** is worked into something good. (The Message)

Now I would not be doing my job, if I failed to mention that this is a passage that is often misunderstood and therefore misapplied. This passage does not say **that only good things will happen if you really love God**. Nor does

this passage say that there will be **no good things happening to bad people.** These interpretations of the passage lead well-meaning people to speak and teach things which are not truth. God does not say that loving Him and serving Him means you will not have hardship – God loved Abraham and called him a friend but he had hardships. God loved Solomon and granted him wisdom and wealth, but Solomon had hardship. God loved His Son, but God sent Him to die for sinful humanity. **So anyone that says if you really love God everything will go well, does not have a clear understanding of Scripture and therefore does not speak the truth.**

With that as clarification let us return to the passage.

²⁸ And we know **that in all** things
God works for the good of those **who love him**,
who have been called according to his purpose.

Have you noticed that **the things** are not working for good? **God works for the good** of the people who love Him.

I pray that you are still with me and will join me in prayer as I work with this theme:

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD!

SHALL WE PRAY

God of heaven and earth we come this morning with bowed heads, closed eyes, open hearts and humbled spirits asking that you would speak to us and show us what we need to do in order to be pleasing to you. We say we love you but sometimes we lose sight of just what that means. Renew in us the right spirit so that we may be transformed more into your likeness. Abba, use me in this teaching moment. Grant me the strength and the wisdom to speak your Word. Open my heart and mind to what your people need and allow me to speak it with clarity. In the matchless name of your Son Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD!

Love is one of those English words that gets thrown around in much too casual a way. We love our houses, our flower/vegetable garden, our pets, our children, our significant other. We love a movie, a new game, a TV program, a book, a car. We love things that are alive and things which are not. We love things which have the capacity to love us back and things that cannot love us back. But regardless if what we love is alive or dead; animate or inanimate there are some things that love has in common.

- We care for and about what we love
- We have knowledge about what we love
- We defend what we love
- We tell others about what we love
- We spend time with what we love
- If what we love is alive, animate we ask “do you know I love you?”
- If what we love cannot respond it does not diminish our love.

Well, if those things are true for inanimate and animate objects I wonder if they are true for us when we say “I Love God”.

There are 34 references in the NIV to love God. 28 in the Old Testament and 6 in the New Testament. Jesus, when questioned by a scholar said this:

- ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
- ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ [c]
- ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.
- ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ [d]
- ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

God has told us how to love Him. With all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our mind. God has also said that loving Him is not enough, we have to love ourselves and our neighbor.

Last week many of us demonstrated our love for self and neighbor and God. We spend time with God in study of His Word. We shared our love for the

Word by providing opportunities for our neighbors to also study, enjoy and experience His Word. We worked together, sometimes when we were tired, felt beat-up, discouraged and frustrated to make sure that the plans we had made were executed to the best of our ability.

But I wonder, where were the rest of you? If you are a part of this fellowship of believers, why were you not here? I am not speaking to those who were working, those who are ill, those who had responsibilities that kept them away. I am speaking to those who stayed away and were at home or wherever **doing nothing. Sometimes I step on toes, but today I intend to walk on some feet.**

Someone says "I didn't know" why not? It was announced for months in advance. We have held VBS for the past 13 years. It was in the bulletin. Someone else will say "I didn't think there was anything for me". Did you ask? Did you come to check it out? Did you care?

In our church covenant we promise to work together...

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD!

I believe that all the things we have were provided by God to be used for the glory of God. Let's take social media. We can use it to communicate with absent members of the congregation. We can use it for church related announcements. We can use it to share song lyrics, uplifting messages, daily bible readings and sermons. All of which are **FOR THE LOVE OF GOD!**

But when we use social media to air our frustrations, to share our less than appropriate pictures, to speak without love, then we have allowed the enemy, the devil to take over and what we are doing is not **FOR THE LOVE OF GOD** and we should have no expectations that God is going to work to bring any good out of it for us.

Now listen carefully to these next sentences. I am going to use a **slightly made up example** to make a point.

Someone hurt my feelings.

They spoke about an incident that should have been between me and them on social media.

Someone else, another church member saw the exchange and they called me to ask what was going on.

I decided not to answer the question, because it was just going to add to fuel to a fire that ought not to have been lit in the first place.

Now three people are involved in a two-person conversation.

And if you know people you know it did not end there.

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

I have often wondered why the people who say they love God do not do more of this. As I asked and listened for a response I heard a few things I think you might agree with.

I am afraid to confront them

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

I don't know how

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3)

I want to do it my way

⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15)

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

Vv 29-34 provide additional details on the passage but it is vv 38-39 that provides the summary:

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers,

39 **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.**