

May 15, 2022 (Romans 8:38-39) A Meditation Romans 8:31-39

As people who live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have lots of questions. As people who have learned to live through and deal with the challenges of a pandemic, a plague of disease such as we had not seen at any time in our lives, we have questions and doubts. As people who believe in God, in Jesus, in the presence of the Holy Spirit which is simply another way of saying we believe God is present every moment of the day, and that HIS hand is upon us, every moment of the day... we have questions.

This morning we are concluding the Lenten series we began weeks ago. We have celebrated our way through Holy Week. We hosted the Christian Community here in Stirling on Good Friday. We celebrated the historic reality of the resurrection. And we have spent time considering the believability of our faith, in the midst of a culture and a time when believing is neither easy, nor widely accepted. Many in our nation, our province, our community just do not accept the fact that it is possible to believe....what we believe. Yet we proclaim and celebrate that Jesus Christ is Lord! To God be the glory.

Here are the historical facts. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was nurtured as he grew to manhood by his earthly mother Mary, and protected by HIS earthly father Joseph. He was always under the guidance of HIS heavenly

Father. When HE reached the age of 30 he was baptized by John the Baptist and began a public ministry which took place primarily in Galilee. HE taught those who were interested and HIS ministry was accompanied by signs and wonders. At the age of 33 HE led his followers to Jerusalem. When the Passover was celebrated HE was arrested and beaten. On the Friday Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea, sentenced HIM to be whipped and crucified. He died. His body was placed in a tomb before sundown. It is a technicality but it was still Friday when HE was buried. On the Sunday morning, HE rose from the dead, was seen by many over the next 40 days and HE went to HIS Heavenly Father and with HIM poured out the HOLY SPIRIT on HIS followers. These are matters of history. But what about us?

This morning I have drawn your attention to Paul's letter to the Romans, that is, the believers, the disciples, the followers of Jesus who gathered to worship together in the city of Rome. These 2 verses are incredibly important to me. They should be incredibly important to you. We speak of faith. We hope for heaven...when we should be...certain. Paul writes, "For I am convinced 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!" (Romans 8:38-39)

You should underline these words in your Bible. You should type or write these words on a piece of paper and

hang that note on the bathroom mirror so that you will see them every morning when you rise, and every evening when you go to bed. They are that valuable.

Paul had blood on his hands. He persecuted the church. People like us. Jewish people like us. He held the coats of those who threw stones at Stephen the first martyr, the first Christian, the first disciple of Jesus to be killed for simply believing in Jesus and following HIS teachings. Paul confessed those sins...the death of believers....when he was baptized, when he met Jesus on the Road to Damascus, when he wrote letters to people who were like us struggling in their time, as we struggle in ours, to keep the faith. We see so much. We experience so much that we find difficult to put into a context where God is in control...the whole world in HIS hands. Believe me, Paul had reasons to wonder if he was really saved, if he could really depend on the grace of God in Jesus to be all he needed to receive eternal life. To possess blessed assurance. And that is what these two verses are about.

He looks across the span of time that has been his life, and the things he has learned from the Scriptures, and from Jesus, and from the church in his time. And he makes a list and shares it with the Christians in Rome who are being hunted out and killed.

“I am convinced that neither death nor life will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus, our Lord. We know it as surely as we know our birth dates. The time will

come when this body will cease to function. Our hearts will stop. We will cease breathing as we do. We will die. Paul with his record declares death will not separate us from God's love in Jesus. That is big. Huge. But he says something bigger! All the things that will happen and might happen in what remains of our lives, all the things we have done in our lives in the past. The worst and the best of what you did, I did, we did...will not be able to separate us from God's love in Jesus.

“Neither angels nor demons.” Are you concerned that some angelic creature will rise up when you die to accuse you of something you did, as a reason that your so-called faith in Jesus should not get you into paradise? Paul says not possible. He says I am convinced it is not possible. Jesus died for us to save us from our sins, whatever the record shows. Well, if not an angel, surely there is a demon, a servant of Satan that would simply like to make you and I suffer, instead of enjoy, the eternal love of Jesus our Lord. Paul says, “No! I am convinced Jesus love is greater than anything any kind of being might accuse you or I of doing.

What about mistakes we make later today? Things we have not yet done? Or things we have forgotten that we did in the past, things we have never asked to be forgiven for? Paul says, “No!” You are saved by the blood, the love of Jesus for you. The future and the present and the past will not change God's love for you in Christ Jesus.

What about height or depth? Things that have to do with dimension. Perhaps occult forces? Paul says, “No! I am convinced time and space, alternate realities, cannot separate you from the love of God in the ONE called Christ.

What about things in creation. I have just returned from Thunder Bay. Port Arthur was where Barbara and I were born. My attachment to that landscape is visceral. After all these years lived away from there, I still feel something very special when I am there. The rock, the trees, the hills, Lake Superior, the ice in the Bay on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May...can that somehow...? Paul says, “No! Nothing will separate us from the love of God, that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.” And what Paul is really saying is, that is what Jesus said. That is what the Scriptures teach.

Think on this: Paul writes in chapter 9, verse 14, “God says to Moses, ‘ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Jesus, the grace of God, is about saving those who believe on HIM whom God sent into the world to redeem it. Remember the words, “I am convinced...that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

Let us pray;

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the saving blood of Jesus: that HE is the Christ. Lord God Almighty, we praise your name

that you called us to faith in HIM. Some of us have great faith, some of us have a little. We give thanks for the measure we have and the assurance that is enough....not because of ourselves, but because YOU are the ONE who IS. Because YOU are the ONE who saves. Because YOU love us more than we love ourselves. We thank YOU for the assurance that nothing will change that reality. Receive our praise. We give you the glory and the honour. This we pray in Jesus name. Amen