

Sermon Outline

“Better News Than You Think” – Romans 8:28-39 – Mark Lauterbach – January 20, 2013

Introduction

1. Look back at your life...
 - a. Look back at your circumstances – Have you faced any significant adversity in your life? Have you faced a heart-breaking disappointment or a prolonged trial that has gone on for years?
 - b. Look back at your relationships – Have you come from a family that harmed you? Do you have a broken relationship (even a divorce) or been sinned against deeply by others?
 - c. Look back at your own sin – Have you made some big mistakes against God? Have you made bad or foolish decisions?
2. Look at the gospel...
 - a. When we look back at our lives without looking through the lens of the gospel, we are tempted to live in the regret, disappointments and failures of the past.
 - b. But the gospel speaks to all this. The gospel speaks to our history, our circumstances, our sins and to the sins of others against us. The gospel is better news than you think because the gospel addresses ALL of the past and present and gives us a certain hope and boldness for the future.

God of Hope (Romans 8:28-29)

1. Hope is how we view the future. If we leave God out of the picture and view only a bad past, we conclude we will have a bad future and become hopeless. With the promises of Romans 8:28, we can view our bad past from God’s perspective and experience a transformed future and hope.
2. Romans 8:28 applies to all Christians. At times we can dismiss the promises of Romans 8:28 because we assess that we don’t love God enough; therefore, we think, the promises do not apply to our lives. But that is wrong thinking. We once hated God; we were once hostile toward God and his enemies. But now we have believed and trusted in Jesus as our Savior and, therefore, love God and are called to his purpose of being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29).

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- a. In verse 28, the God of Hope promises that ALL things will work so they will shine and turn out for our glory on that final Day. All things means all things - things in our past or even our present that tempt us to lose hope for the future. All things...even evil things, even sins of others, even disappointment and broken hopes, even heavy burdens...will be turned to good and to our glory before him.
 - b. Consider the words of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 29: "What do you mean when you say you believe in God the Father Almighty?" Answer: "That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...is my God and Father because of Christ the Son. I trust God so much that I do not doubt...he will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world. God is able to do this because he is almighty God and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father."
3. How do we make the gospel application? Romans 8:28 is a description of the cross. Jesus endured what was bad – slander, rejection and murder – to bring about all the good that God wanted, the salvation of multitudes. Because Christ has so triumphed over every enemy of our souls, God now takes every experience, every circumstance, every thread of sadness or sin and weaves it together to conform us to the image of Christ, so that we will share in his glory. Nothing God brings into our life will ultimately harm us. Rather, he will turn the greatest evil into the good of making us like Christ.

God of Provision (Romans 8:31-32)

1. God is for us. This is the language of covenant and promise. God is not for us for what we want in life – happiness, health, wealth, etc. God is for us for our good, for our spiritual flourishing and for our glory. To be like Christ and to see and share in his glory – that is what God is for.
2. How do we make the gospel application? In verse 32, God paid the ultimate price in giving his own Son to die in our place. Therefore, God will supply and will provide all that is necessary for our good. The *Heidelberg Catechism* states, "I trust him so much that I do not doubt that he will provide for all my needs."
 - a. God doesn't waste our trials. Nothing that is necessary is withheld. Nothing unnecessary is given. Instead God is committed to our good and will make every provision to accomplish what he purposes.

God of Purpose (Romans 8:38-39)

1. The love described in verses 38-39 is not sentimental. It is not a mood that God gets into. Instead, it is his eternal purpose and promise. God was not provoked to love us by our attractiveness. Instead, God delights to give of himself. It is his very nature and God will always keep his promise and his purpose of love.

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2. God's purpose of his love is to form a bride for his Son and to give her all the riches of his grace. We know this because of the gospel. God's love was demonstrated in the giving of his Son: "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).
 - a. The words of verse 2 of "A Debtor to Mercy Alone" wonderfully convey these truths:
"The work which Your goodness began
The arm of Your strength will complete
Your promise is yes and amen
And never was forfeited yet
The future or things that are now
No power below or above
Can make You Your purpose forego
Or sever my soul from Your love"
 - b. Our circumstances do not trump God's purposes. Therefore, how we view our past and present should change. God's loving purposes are unerringly and wisely being worked out in our lives.

Conclusion

1. The gospel is better news than you think...
 - a. The gospel tells us that God took the worst sins of men, killed his Son, and turned it to good – our salvation. Therefore, the God of hope will also work all for our good.
 - b. The gospel tells us that God considered our greatest need, deliverance from sin and judgment, and provided all that was required –his Son. Therefore, the God of provision will also supply all that we need.
 - c. The gospel tells us that God is love and purposes to give his love to us in Christ. Therefore, the God of purpose will never stop working his loving purpose in our lives.
2. The gospel is a call to interpret our past and present lives in light of our God. We can look at life through his promises, not through our disappointment, bitterness or condemnation. We can look at life through his ability, his provision, his purpose. Why? Because no evil will not be transformed into good; no resource will be withheld and nothing will cause him to break the promise of his love.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Romans 8:28-39.

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2. Do you have any past regret, disappointments or failure that is keeping you from walking in the gospel's forgiveness, peace and hope?
3. How do you perceive the future? Do you believe your future will be defined by your past experiences? How can you take whatever of your past you think ruins you and entrust it to Christ for His transforming work?
4. Do you believe the promise of Romans 8:28 applies to you? How can you view your past and present in light of God's promise of hope – God takes every experience, every circumstance, every thread of sadness or sin and weaves it together for good?
5. The *Heidelberg Catechism* states, "I trust him so much that I do not doubt that he will provide for all my needs." Is that your confession, as well? How can you look at your present circumstances and trust the faithful love of your Father for His provision?
6. If our circumstances do not trump God's purposes, how can you believe and trust that God's love is moving His purposes unerringly and wisely forward in your life?
7. What area of your life (past circumstances, broken or strained relationships, or your own sin) do you need to interpret in light of your God – His ability, His hope, His provision, and His purpose?