

Security in God. Romans 8:31-39

A true story: A retired couple was alarmed by the threat of nuclear war so they did a serious study of all the inhabited places in the world. Their goal was to find place in the world was the least likely to be affected by a nuclear war. They were looking for ultimate security. They studied and traveled, traveled and studied. Finally they found the place. That Christmas they sent their pastor a card from their new home--in the Falkland Islands. However, their "paradise" was soon turned into a war zone by Great Britain and Argentina.

There's a lot in our world that unsettles us.

We can't put our trust in the economy. The global debt crisis has the economic world on tenterhooks. New world leaders have created an economically unpredicable landscape. As Australia's real estate bubble threatens to burst, Jay & I are wondering if anyone is going to buy our little farm in Jindabyne. It's all very unsettling.

We can't put our trust in science. It seems that much scientific discovery is subject to profitability. Drug companies are notorious for putting profit before the welfare of the consumer. We hear of alternative energy inventions being suppressed, because current, expendable sources are more profitable. We are pillaging the earth, and though there are scientific alternatives, it is not financially viable in the short term to stop. Unless it becomes profitable to do so, I suspect that significant changes won't happen environmentally - not until there is absolutely no alternative .

And we can't put our trust in nature. Our world is ravaged by droughts, floods, cyclones, earthquakes. The atmosphere is deteriorating, and the globe is warming up – something for which we are largely responsible.

There's no real security in anything, is there? It's enough to make anyone depressed.

But thanks be to God! He has the final word. The reading we had from Romans 8 this morning lifts our thoughts beyond the temporal and points us to a far greater, eternal reality. I find this passage, particularly verses 31-39, amongst the most encouraging in all of Scripture. It points us to the fact that in Christ – we have freedom from the things that undermine our true security.

1. Freedom from death!

A man had a checkup and then went in to see his doctor to get the results. The doctor said he had bad news and worse news for him, which did he want to hear first? The man was a bit shaken and said he'd rather hear the bad news first. The doctor said, "The bad news is that you only have twenty-four hours to live."

At this the man jumped up, totally flabbergasted and distraught. He paced the doctor's office and complained, "Twenty-four hours to live? I can't possibly get my affairs in order that quickly. I can't believe this, it's tragic! What could be worse news than this?"

The doctor said, "The worse news is that I was supposed to tell you this yesterday but I forgot."

In this context in Romans, death of course, doesn't mean physical death. It means spiritual death, which comes about as a result of our estrangement from God. We are born under this sentence of death. We are condemned by our very humanity, as it is our humanity – our self-centredness - that causes us to live our lives without reference to God. The Bible calls this SIN and is the root of all the evil we see around us. The end result of sin, Paul tells us earlier in Romans, is DEATH – eternal separation from God.

But listen to these verses: - wonderful, triumphant verses!

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?

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

The language here brings to mind a court of law. No charge can be brought against the Christian, because God has already pronounced a verdict of not guilty. Not Guilty!

It doesn't matter what we've done, v33 tells us that NO ONE can bring any charge against God's chosen ones. And that includes ourselves!

I don't know about you, but I sometimes find myself looking at the way I've handled something, or things I've said, or even the way my mind ticks – and I find myself asking "how can God accept me?" I actually condemn myself!

If we ever start to feel that way, we should remember that all the heroes of the Bible were flawed human beings – just like you and me. Moses was a murderer, Jacob a cheat and a deceiver, David an adulterer, Jonah a coward – and so it goes on. Yet they were not condemned by God, because they trusted in Him. If we have given our lives to Jesus, neither are we condemned – no matter what we've done. NO-ONE can bring any charge against us – not even ourselves.

1. We have freedom from defeat!

We are free from defeat, because Christ lives in us by His Spirit, and we share His life. God has equipped us with everything necessary to be conformed to the image of His Son.

v. 32 tells us,

“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?”

The argument here is, that if God gave the supreme gift of his Son to save us, he will certainly also give us whatever is necessary to bring to fulfillment the work begun at the cross. He knew us before time began, he predestined us to be conformed to Jesus image, he called us, he justified us, and he glorified us. Note that being glorified is in the past tense. God sees it as already accomplished in us.

The trouble is, we all know what a struggle it is to live in victory. Sometimes that's because our circumstances are too much for us. Sometimes it's simply because we are weak. Paul knew this struggle too, personally, and goes on to encourage us. He says in v 35,

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

The tendency some of us have when hardship hits, is to think that we've done something wrong, and that God is punishing us. That is not the case. As Christians, God does not necessarily shelter us from the difficulties of life.

In Rom 5:3-5 Paul reminds us that suffering actually helps us to grow spiritually.

He says, “but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

In this morning's reading, God assures us that in the difficulties we experience in life, God is working *for* us and not *against* us. God uses them for our *good* – that “good” of course, being that which makes us more like Christ – not necessarily more comfortable.

Then in v.37, we have a most inspiring statement. Paul says:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

The phrase “more than conquerors” is more literally translated “superconquerors”! So in all these things – in all the trials and difficulties of life – we are “superconquerors” through him who loved us.

Pause for a minute. What Superheroes can you think of? (Give me some names?) Batman, Spiderman, Superman, Wonderwoman!

What's the nature of a superhero? They always win, don't they? And so can we! As "Superconquerors". I'm not kidding you - that's the sense the Greek. As "superconquerors" in Christ, we can overcome *anything*.

So in Christ, we have *freedom from defeat*.

The third thing that we have in Christ, is *freedom from discouragement*.

Discouragement tends to follow on the heels of defeat. If we are not experiencing victory in our Christian lives, chances are we are discouraged as well.

Paul, in the last few verses of this chapter bursts out with a magnificent declaration of the powerful love of God.

"we are superconquerors", he says, and then passionately declares,

"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."

Paul's declaration is all-embracing. The terms he uses cover everything that the people of his time would have considered threatening or frightening. To the first century Hellenists, terms such as angels and demons represented those things that malevolently exercised control over human life. Paul is coming against the tyranny of astrology and the belief that everything was in the grip of pitiless fate.

None of this, says Paul, no beings, no powers, no superstitions, nothing in the present or the past, or the future, not even life and death itself – has ANY power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In our present age, we might add "neither terrorism nor war, nor materialism nor profiteering, nor secularism nor postmodernism, nor apathy nor unbelief, nor anything else in all the world that we might fear – can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What great encouragement – there is absolutely nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God, or that can stop the glorious consummation of His Kingdom.

What wonderful security we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So...

We are free from *death*, because Christ died for us and we have his righteousness,

we are free from *defeat* because Christ lives in us by his Spirit and we share his life, and we are free from *discouragement* because nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God.

Let's pray