

Unshakeable Hope, Unbreakable Love

Romans 8:28-39

April 16th, 2017

Intro –

Easter Sunday is a highlight of the church calendar as the whole storyline of the Bible is condensed into the events of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as a substitute for sinful man. It was God's solution for man's greatest problem. But because the true story of the cross is so familiar to many, it runs the risk of being a mere sentimental remembrance. We'll see this morning that the cross and empty tomb are at the very center of a Christian's hope and confidence in an uncertain world.

The cross and empty tomb provide what we need to have an unshakeable hope as we battle sin within and suffering from without.

Read 8:28-39

The cross and empty tomb provide ironclad evidence that . . .

1. God is ***for us***, working all things together for good. (8:28-31)
 - a. Good needs to be narrowly defined
 - i. Not always immediate happiness, not always our prosperity, not always the job we want or the girlfriend we want – the good is eternal in scope and involves our conformity to the image of Christ and our eventual assured presence with Christ.
 - ii. God is working for our good by relentlessly ***transforming*** us to be like Christ and securely ***reconciling*** us through Christ.
 - b. The recipients of this promise also need to be narrowly defined
 - i. Those who love God, that is, those who have been called according to His purpose
 1. Not the entirety of human race.
 - ii. There is no blanket promise that people can barrel through life, oblivious to God, unconcerned with His will, set on their own way of life and God will swoop in like Santa Clause and give them good presents in the end anyways.
 - iii. In fact, God says in Romans 1:24 that those who are stubbornly rebellious to Him will ultimately be given over to the sinful desires of their hearts. In other words, one of the worst punishments God gives people is to let them have the desires of their hearts (Keller).
 - iv. "Those who love God" refers not to a sentimental feeling but a commitment to serve God in recognition and appreciation of who He is. (Keller)
 1. **John 14:21** "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me;
 - a. We love Him because He has called us
 2. Believers they can wrap their souls in this promise.
 - c. The certainty of God's follow through on this promise is based on the unbreakable golden chain of verses 29-30.

- i. 100% of people who begin will finish. There are no drop outs, no leakage, not like a university where a large number start their freshmen year but a much smaller number graduate (more freshmen engineering majors than senior engineering majors).
 - ii. Foreknown – not merely knowing facts ahead of time but personal knowledge and relationship ahead of time – God set his love on us in a personal way.
 - 1. ~~Mt. 7:23 – I never knew you – not that he didn't know about them but that he had no personal relationship with them~~
 - 2. Amos 3:2 – You only have I known (chosen) among all the families of the earth
 - iii. Predestined – plan a destination ahead of time
 - 1. Transformed to be like Jesus, not just getting a family name but a family resemblance.
 - iv. Called – internal working that God does to awaken us to truth
 - 1. Foreknowledge and predestination happened in the past, this we experienced in the present
 - v. Justified – pronounced and treated by God as legally righteous and blameless because of the work of Christ in His life and death
 - vi. Glorified - All sin eradicated and to be made perfect in body and soul
 - 1. Future but spoken of in past tense because it is as certain as every other link in this chain.
 - vii. All whom He has set His affection on in eternity past will make it to eternity future with Him.
 - 1. Repetition of “these. . . these...these” throughout. It’s the same group.
- d. What shall we say to these things?
- i. In other words, what should be our response to this truth that God is faithful to work all things together for our ultimate good in conforming us to be like Christ and preserving us all the way through this golden chain to his presence?
 - ii. We should recognize that God is for us so no circumstance or person can stand in His way.
 - iii. Blanket statement over 8:28-31 – this is how God demonstrates that He is “for us” and there is nothing else we could say about it.
 - 1. The circumstances that God is using in our lives do not have the final word.
 - 2. They may be screaming at you – GOD DOESN'T CARE! But that is a wrong interpretation of events.
 - 3. God is for us. He is working even in the miseries of life on a path toward our glorification.
 - 4. God is for YOU. God is for _____.
 - 5. He’s for us not as our butler but as our Lord. He’s not for us in the sense of a cosmic butler helping us to achieve greater self-fulfillment. It’s much better than that.
2. God is generous, freely giving us all we need to persevere. (8:32)
- a. What did our free justification cost? God’s own Son.

- i. God didn't spare His Son from any aspect of bearing the full brunt of sin's punishment
 - ii. The cross declares something about humanity. There is no other way.
 - iii. Man has a problem. That problem is sin. Cosmic treason.
 - b. No conflict between the Father and Son as Jesus willingly gave Himself up
 - i. **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - c. "All things" needs to be narrowly defined as well.
 - i. All things needed for this golden chain of promises carrying us from God's foreknowledge through our conversion and present sanctification and ultimately to our glorification.
 - ii. 1 Peter 1:3-9
 - 1. He caused us to be born again through the resurrection
 - 2. Our inheritance is imperishable
 - 3. We are protected by the power of God
 - 4. Even our present trials, though distressing and real, will not derail His plan
 - d. You may wonder, "Life is hard. My failings are obvious. Do I have enough to make it through this life and stand before Christ one day and hear Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"
 - i. No, and yes. On your own, no. With His enabling grace, yes. He will give you all things that you need to persevere. He started this plan, He will carry it out.
 - ii. Illustration – Wealthy man who saved, planned, researched, and finally bought his dream car. Would he change the oil? Would he fill it with gas? Rotate the tires? Follow the maintenance schedule? Of course!
 - iii. God met man's greatest problem with the only available solution.
 - 1. Man has a problem. God has a solution. We have a responsibility.
 - 2. Our responsibility is to turn from sin and trust Christ. Romans 8 looks in the rear view mirror and see how God is working to set His love on you and draw you, but from the steering wheel looking forward we have a responsibility to turn from sin and trust Christ. We look back and see that He was at work behind the scenes, but that doesn't take away our responsibility.
3. God is **gracious**, removing our condemnation through the cross. (8:33-34)
 - a. What kind of charge? The charge of condemnation, of guilt
 - i. **Romans 8:1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - b. Ash – the message "no condemnation" only makes sense to those who have grasped that without Christ we are and must be condemned. We need to feel the wonder of 'no condemnation' and never take it for granted.
 - c. Illustration – accused of a crime, go through the trial, declared by the judge to be not guilty, neighbor says, "I still think he did it." Who cares what your neighbor thinks! You're not going to jail!

- i. Likewise, if God has pardoned you, justified you, who cares what someone else thinks?
- ii. If we are to be condemned it will have to be over Christ's dead and now resurrected body.
(Hughes)

Believer, sin cannot separate you from God. You are secure. But what about suffering? That makes us feel like we are separated and forgotten. Are we?

4. Therefore, we should be **convinced** that nothing can separate us from God's **love**. (8:35-39)
 - a. We feel like there is a contradiction between God's love and our circumstances. If God loved us would He really let . . . happen?
 - i. Really saying, If "I" were God, I wouldn't have let . . . happen.
 - ii. Smacks of the prosperity gospel, that God is only committed to your present happiness, health, and wealth so adversity won't be a part of a faithful believer's life.
 - iii. Illustration of some couples where for better for worse, for richer for poorer is changed to for better, for best; for richer for richest on the grounds that for a Christian it is never going to be 'poorer' or 'worse.'
 1. Recipe for disillusioned people.
 - b. Look at this list:
 - i. Tribulation – affliction, oppression, lit. pressure, pressing together
 - ii. Distress – lit. narrowness or tight space
 - iii. Persecution – opposition, sometimes violent, for religious reasons
 - iv. Famine
 - v. Nakedness – exposure
 1. Get what this is saying – if you are so impoverished that you literally cannot buy clothes and are starving, what God has done for you in Christ is so significant you still wouldn't have reason to doubt His love for you.
 - a. On one side of the scale of evidence is the mounting pile of opposition, physical suffering, starvation, destitution and on the other side of the scale of evidence are the cross and empty tomb. The conclusion: God loves me.
 - vi. 2 Corinthians 11:27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.
 1. Experienced by Paul first hand, not hypothetical
 - c. Quotes Ps 44:22 to show that the tribulations faced by believers are nothing new but have always been characteristic of God's people. (Hughes)
 - d. Overwhelmingly conquer even in these miserable circumstances.
 - e. List 2 confirms nothing can separate us from God's love
 - i. Life or death
 - ii. Spiritual forces
 - iii. The uncertain horizon of the future

iv. This love is located in Christ. Not an abstract love. It is demonstrated in Jesus.

v. Does God love you? Behold the cross and behold your answer.

5. Acting On Truth

a. Be sure you have **personally trusted** in Christ as Lord and Savior.

i. Man has a problem

1. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

2. **Isaiah 59:2** But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

ii. God has a solution

1. **1 Peter 2:24** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

2. **Isaiah 53:6** All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

iii. We have a responsibility

1. **John 3:36** "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

2. **John 5:24** "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

3. **Romans 10:9-10** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

b. Remember that your unshakeable **hope** and God's unbreakable **love** are displayed in the cross and empty tomb.

i. Illustration – gigantic scale, on the one side are all the pieces of evidence that life is hard and God must not be good and must not love you if he allows them (cancer, chronic pain, family heartache, poverty, anxiety, fear, rejection). On the other side is the evidence that God is good, He loves you, and He will carry you through to the end (the cross and empty tomb). The weight of the cross crashes the scale to the floor as if the other side is weighed down by Styrofoam packing peanuts.