

HUMANITY RESTORED



***All things work together for good to those who love God,
who are called according to God's purpose.***

Scripture:

Romans 8:22-39
The Message, translated

Humanity Restored

²²⁻²⁵All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

²⁶⁻²⁸Meanwhile, 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. God 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.

²⁹⁻³⁰God knew what was happening from the very beginning. God decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love the Lord along the same lines as the life of God's Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, God followed it up by calling people by name. After God called them by name, the Lord set them on a solid basis. And then, after getting them established, the Lord stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what God had begun.

³¹⁻³⁹So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture.



NO CONDEMNATION; NO SEPARATION

Romans chapter 8 is one of the most blessed and encouraging chapters in the Bible. The chapter begins with **NO CONDEMNATION** (v.1) and it ends with **NO SEPARATION** (verses 35-39). The key word, in the first part of this chapter is the word "SPIRIT" (occurring twenty times in chapter 8 whereas it only appears four times in the first seven chapters!).

Verse 28:

We know that in all things God works for good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called; those whom he called, he also justified; those whom he justified, he also glorified.

VERBS OF ACTION

The good news of Christian faith is told in the verbs used in this passage:

God works...
God calls...
God predestines...
God justifies...
God glorifies.

FIVE QUESTIONS

Paul asks five questions:

1. If God is for us, who can be against us?
2. Will the God who did not spare his own child, not also graciously give to us?
3. Who can bring any charges against those whom God has chosen?
4. If God has justified, then who can condemn?

5. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ – trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, or danger or the sword?

FIVE CHALLENGES

And the story of faith, when confronted by questions to the faith, leads to five human challenges that God's love overcomes.

Neither life nor death
Neither angels nor demons
Neither the present nor the future
No power, height or depth,
Nor anything else in all creation
shall separate us from the love
of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

PAUL'S CORE TEACHING

If this is true it is the best news in your life.

If this is true this will get you through a lot of temporary adversity.

If this is true, the deepest hope in your heart is confirmed.

This section is the core of Paul's testimony about Christ. He says it's all true.

WHICH CHALLENGE IS YOURS?

Of all the challenges that Paul lists in verses 38 and 39, which one is the most real to you?

- Life and death
- Angels at war with your demons
- Transitioning from the present to the future

- Confronting something that has power over you, or something that is disturbingly high and difficult.
- Or is there something else in all creation that tests your spirit, your education, your wisdom, and your instincts?

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU?

Then today, I ask only, “How can we pray for you? Do you need a miracle?”

If a miracle isn’t available, will you settle for the love of your community, a pastor who has felt God’s love, and a church that is ready to help if we possibly can?

A man told me that his wife suffered from Alzheimer’s disease for years. Hardest of all for this man who communicated with others for his entire career, was when she reached a point that they could no longer talk and have meaningful conversations. And he said that a regular coffee and conversation with his minister and other church members provided a spiritual outlet that kept him going.

Another person said, “I have been hounded by demons, often demons of the night, and I have used my faith as my main way to confront them and keep myself on track.”

A young family was going through the stress of reanalyzing their marriage, and both partners turned to the church for support. For one of them, the church was something that had represented a God whom he thought had been unfair to him. For the other, the church was a familiar place of education, worship, the sacraments, and family gatherings. For both of them, it was the challenges of their marriage that brought them to acknowledge a higher power than their own in their lives.

THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH, IS FEAR.

In this lesson, Paul says faith will overcome your fear.

Step forward in faith, rather than stepping back in the paralysis of fear. God will be with you.

We have had an introduction to a bold program to bring Christians and Muslims into the same room to talk. You will hear more from Bernie after worship. Having tried this experiment in our own community with little success, our church understands how difficult it is to have Christians, Jews and Muslims even agree to meet with each other.

So Drs. Bernie and Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta from Indonesia, Church of the Roses welcomes you. This lesson is also for you. *“In all things God works for Good.”* This lesson is for Muslims. This lesson is for Jews.

Because it says that human labels mean nothing to God.

It says that geography means nothing to God.

It means that who your ancestors were, and how they got to wherever they got means nothing to God.

There is nothing about you that makes you a less worthy human being.

Here is one shining place where our story is absolutely clear, that our faith transcends nationalism, hatred, terrorism, demonization, sexism, racism, or discrimination based upon any human category,

HUMANITY RESTORED

Sometimes we forget what “humanity” means. Paul wants us to remember. That is why I have called these notes, “Humanity Restored,” just as Paul referred to this shared humanity in this epistle to the Romans.

This is what it means to restore our humanity, that we are one in the spirit.

As I read it again one more time, watch for these things:

- What are the verbs?
- What can faith conquer?
- Where does faith lead us?
- Do our own attitudes place us inside the faith or outside?

When we stand inside the faith, we all stand together in a great company of pilgrims.

WORKING FOR GOOD

- Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son... those whom he predestined, he also called; those whom he called, he also justified; those whom he justified, he also glorified.
- In all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loved us.
- All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.



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