

SAKLC CONVERSATIONS

Mid-week adult study at St Armands Key Lutheran Church, Sarasota, FL
"ROMANS, a letter for today" – a continuation of Romans 8
Session Plan for Thursday, April 6, 2017

A TIME OF JOINT PRAYER

THE EXCHANGE OF GOD'S PEACE

OUR OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION:

1. To complete discussion of Romans 8:26-30 "*OUR GLORIOUS HOPE – ALL IS OF GOD*" from last session (*bring last session's study guide!*)
2. To explore the witness of Abraham as an example of God's love for humankind
3. To note creedal differences between Paul's writing and the Apostles' Creed
4. To fully appreciate the love from which nothing can separate us

"THE LOVE FROM WHICH NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US" - Romans 8:31-39

[NRSV] ³¹ *What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?* ³² *He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?* ³³ *Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.* ³⁵ *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written,*

*"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."*

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹ *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.*

[AMPLIFIED BIBLE] ³¹ *What then shall we say to all these things? If God is for us, who can be [SUCCESSFUL] against us?* ³² *He who did not spare [EVEN] His own Son, but*

gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect (HIS CHOSEN ONES)? It is God who justifies us [DECLARING US BLAMELESS AND PUTTING US IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIMSELF]. ³⁴ Who is the one who condemns us? Christ Jesus is the One who died [TO PAY OUR PENALTY], and more than that, who was raised [FROM THE DEAD], and who is at the right hand of God interceding [with the Father] for us. ³⁵ Who shall ever separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written and forever remains written,

***"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;
WE ARE REGARDED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER."***

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [SO MUCH THAT HE DIED FOR US]. ³⁸ For I am convinced [AND CONTINUE TO BE CONVINCED—BEYOND ANY DOUBT] that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the [UNLIMITED] love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[THE MESSAGE] ³¹⁻³⁹ So, 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:

***They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.
We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.***

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Christ Jesus our Master has embraced us.

FACILITATOR'S COMMENTS ON THIS TEXT:

Vss. 31-32 – This is among the most lyrical passages that Paul ever wrote! It is a wonderful allusion and remembrance that would immediately *stand out* to any practicing Jew. The words Paul uses are words from the O.T. that God used of Abraham {*Genesis 22:16*}, when Abraham proved his loyalty to God, by being prepared to sacrifice his dearest possession – his only son, Isaac. For any Jew this was the greatest human example in the world of a man's loyalty toward God.

Vss. 33-35 – There are 2 ways of approaching these vss.; they represent two statements, followed by two questions which give the inferences to be taken from these statements; in your facilitator's mind, both convey truth!

APPROACH # 1

- a) The statement is that it is God who acquits men; if that is the case, who can possibly condemn men? If man is acquitted by God, then he is saved from every other condemnation
- b) Our belief is in Christ who died and rose again and who is alive forevermore.
- c) If that is so, is there anything in this world that can separate us from the Risen Lord?
- d) Taken in this way two truths emerge:
 - i. God has acquitted us; therefore, no one can condemn us
 - ii. Christ is Risen; therefore, nothing can separate us from Him.

APPROACH # 2

- a. God has acquitted us. Who can stand in judgment over us and condemn us?
- b. The answer is that the Judge of all mankind is Jesus Christ.
- c. He is the only one who has the right to condemn!
- d. But, far from condemning, Jesus is @ God's right hand interceding for us; therefore, we are safe!
- e. vs. 34 is Paul's creedal statement about Jesus:
 - i. He died
 - ii. He rose again
 - iii. He is at God's right hand
 - iv. He makes intercession for us there/pleads for us before God

FOR OUR DISCUSSION: How does *Paul's creedal statement about Jesus differ* from one of the earliest creeds of the church?One that we use frequently in our worship: {*make the comparison below*}

[2nd Article of the Apostles' Creed] ***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.***

Note the following:

1. The Apostles' Creed agrees with Paul on the first three points: i – iii {from above}
2. Paul's Item # iv (above) differs from Creed {***he will come to judge the living and the dead***}
3. It is as if Paul said: "You think of Jesus as the Judge who is there to condemn; but you are wrong. He is not there to be our prosecutor; he is there to be our advocate and friend, to plead our cause; he is not there to state the case against us.
4. Your facilitator's conclusion is that Approach #2 is to be preferred! Paul sees Christ, not as the Judge (CREED), but as the lover of the souls of mankind!

Vss. 36-39 – In these verses Paul is almost poetic, speaking about how nothing can separate us from the love of God in our Risen Lord.

- a. No affliction, no hardship; no peril; the disasters of the world do not separate us from Christ, they bring us closer!
- b. Death is not the end; it is the portal into heaven.
- c. Jewish Rabbis in Paul's time believed in Angels who were grudgingly hostile to mankind and in complete control of the world – they were divided into three ranks:
 - i. A rank that included thrones, cherubim and seraphim
 - ii. A rank made up of powers, lordships and might.
 - iii. A rank that included angels, archangels and principalities
- d. Paul's statement: "These angelic powers cannot separate us from God's Love!"
 - i. There is an ancient Jewish legend about angels attacking Moses on Mt. Sinai because they wanted to keep God for themselves!
- e. Paul references angels elsewhere in N.T. –
 - i. Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12
 - ii. Colossians 2:10, 15
 - iii. I Corinthians 15:24
- f. No age in time can separate us from God in Christ
 - i. Jews divided time into the present age and the age to come
- g. Paul uses astrological terms to describe height [GK- "*humsoma*"] and depth [GK – "*bathos*"]
- h. Paul's world was haunted by the thought that stars had direct influence on life; really, no change from our attention in 2017 to astrological tables!

