

I. My Notes ... WWC message 8/23

II. Series: When Justice Meets Love

- Title: Living with Unshakable Hope
- Text: Romans 8
- Quote: When the days don't make sense, God isn't scratching His head and wondering what to do. He is standing with you and helping you make sense of the day. Pastor Rick

III. Introduction

- For the last few weeks, we have been taking a journey to change our viewpoint of discovering truth in life today. Justice and love are huge concepts that go much deeper than we can cover in a few weeks. I am sure we will revisit this topic in the future. That being said, have you ever found yourself at a loss for words—not because you had nothing to say, but because the weight of life made it hard to speak? I think that this is something we've all endured at one time or another. Moments when grief grips us, when confusion clouds our prayers, when the silence feels louder than our faith. In those moments, we wonder: Does God hear me? Is He still working? Am I still held in His love?
- If you are like me, during these moments clichés don't work. In fact, they are often tired and unwelcome. In some of my recent challenges, hearing people say, "God has a plan" caused me to bite my lower lip so I wouldn't lash out. Well meaning people often feel they need to say something. But I have found that often, in those moments, silence is golden (another cliché). It's important to be able to talk about these things so that others can understand they are not alone in having similar feelings or reactions.
- Challenges are part of life. Everyone has them. We've buried loved ones. We've prayed for healing that never came. We've watched injustice go unchecked while the faithful suffer in silence. And in the middle of it all, someone quotes Romans 8:28 like it's a spiritual band-aid: 'All things work together for good.' (I have been very candid with you all about my struggle with this verse). But what if that verse isn't a cliché? Could it mean something different than what it appears to us to mean? What if it's a battle cry?

- The remainder of Romans 8, which we are looking at today, isn't written for people whose lives are tidy, and prayers are eloquent. It's written for the groaning, the confused, the criticized, the persecuted—for people who feel like they're losing. And Paul dares to say: You're not losing. You're being held.
- This passage confronts our deepest doubts:
 - What happens when we don't know how to pray?
 - Is God really working in the chaos—or just watching?
 - Can anything separate us from His love... even our own failures?
- Paul doesn't dodge these questions. He meets them head-on—with the Spirit who groans, the Son who intercedes, and the Father who refuses to let go. I'm not asking you to pretend everything's fine. I'm asking you to bring your weakness, your confusion, your weariness—and let this passage show you what God does with it. Because if this passage is true, then your silence is not a barrier. Your suffering is not wasted. And your story is not over.

IV. Moments When We Can't Speak

- The reality we all face is that we don't always know how to pray or what to say. In moments of grief, confusion, or distress words can be hard to find. We talked last week about Creation “groaning” and the fact that we “groan” too.
- There is another groaning that is hard for many to understand.
- **Romans 8:26-27 CSB**

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with inexpressible groanings. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
- “In the same way” ... Paul is reminding us of that groaning, that crying out, isn't limited to us (humans) and creation. In verses 19-22 he told us how creation groaned, and in verses 23-25 Paul explained our groaning and hope.
- Now, we learn that the Holy Spirit, our Helper, groans in our weaknesses – in ways we are unable to understand. Look at what Paul is saying, there are times that we don't know what to pray for or how to pray. That doesn't mean

that we shouldn't pray but that we need help and guidance in our time of prayer.

- It's in those moments that we get to live out the trust and belief that we have in our Lord. We acknowledge Him in our moments and allow Him to guide and direct things.
- For too long I heard this verse used as a justification and debate for speaking in tongues. This can become an obstacle for many, and it isn't an accurate interpretation of what Paul is telling us. There are times that words are inadequate and that the Holy Spirit prays for us and through us. It may come out like groans or cries but intercession by the Spirit is taking place.
- And because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are united in purpose and understanding, our groans are taken to the throne of grace and handled.

V. All Things

- I'm coming to this part of Paul's letter wondering what will come out as I write these notes. I am utterly dependent on our Lord for His guidance and wisdom. Just to be clear, I believe that ALL SCRIPTURE is inspired by God and that it is His word to encourage and guide us. That doesn't mean there are not passages that I struggle with making sense out of.
- I have passionately debated this passage in classes when it is used to dismiss or justify someone's despair or difficulty. God is God of every circumstance – He is Lord in every situation. And I trust Him completely
- I know no other way to be than honest. So, here we go ...

- **Romans 8:28-30 CSB**

28 We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

- This is what I know. Responding to grace, to God's call, allows us to find purpose. What is the purpose in the life of a believer? To love God through our words, actions, and attitudes. And to love others in the same manner that God

first loved us – sacrificially. God’s heart is for all people to come to the knowledge of His grace and salvation (see 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11). And I know that our Lord has promised to be with us no matter what.

- Now, there are many times that evil touches our lives, this one fact alone is due to living in a fallen world. So, knowing that God – who is always good – is with us, even when evil touches us should be a source of comfort and strength. Yet, devastating things happen. More than having a bad day, there are some terrible things that happen on a daily basis. And this is difficult to reconcile when you hear that “all things” will result in something good.
- The problem arises when people “cherry pick” this verse as a means of encouragement for someone who is going through a difficult moment. The understanding, the intention of what the Apostle is communicating, gets taken out of context. Reading this passage in context takes us back to the truth that we are loved and accepted for who we are. And the situations that we face are not what defines us. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are working together so that we can know the truth of God’s love and understanding, even in the most desperate situation. Whether it’s hurt (physical or emotional) or brokenness or loss or illness or _____ (the list could go on and on) God is at work so that we can find His mercy and grace in our devastation and desperation.
- This points to the remainder of this passage. The work which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing is so that we (His family) can reflect Jesus Christ to others who don’t have a relationship with Him. In other words, they haven’t received Him. Remember what John said near the beginning of his Gospel ... *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12 NASB)*. As we come into that family relationship, God works in our lives to change the rough spots into areas that we can reveal the kindness and compassion of our Lord and Savior. And because He is at work in our lives, we are able to live justly (that means obedient and God-honoring). The ultimate benefit is God sharing His glory with us for eternity.

- **Romans 8:31-39 CSB**

31 What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? 33 Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. 35 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

Because of you

we are being put to death all day long;

we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.,

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- I don't know about you, but I was never the one who was picked first for much of anything. I think this is something that most of us can relate to. After all, there is only one first pick. Let me tell you something ... God chose YOU. He did this knowing that the choice would require an incredible sacrifice. God chose you because of His great love. Jesus chose to be the sacrifice so that you and I could have a right relationship (bond, connection) with God. Because of these choices you and I are justified. Here is the official explanation of this ... "it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law" (taken from Easton's Bible Dictionary). For my simple way of thinking, justification (being justified) means "just as if I've never sinned."
- If God, The Almighty Creator, chose you and me, who is to say that it is a poor or wrong choice? He did this, knowing the cost. And because He made this choice, nothing can get in the way of it.

- At times, people see hardship or difficulty as punishment. They see illness or shocking news as payback for their mistakes (sins). That's not God's way. God is love (1 John 4:8) and He doesn't act contrary to who He is.
- Think about the explanation that Paul has laid out for us to understand. God has done all this so that we can have an eternal bond with Him. How can anything get in the way of that? Others may try to accuse and condemn you – it is their way of saying that you aren't worthy of God's choice. They may try to throw their own "justifications" as to why. None of it is equal to what was done by Jesus on the Cross. Paul explains that not only did Jesus die on the Cross, but He was resurrected. And now He sits at the right hand of God interceding (mediating, intervening) for us. When we stumble, when we fall, Jesus is there to help us pick up the pieces of our mess and turn it into a life that is God-honoring.
- This is the reason we can have joy and peace in every circumstance. Even the ones that don't make much sense. I'm going to use a verse that has come up several times over the last few weeks. I would say that it is a point that the Lord is trying to make for all who are reading and listening. **John 16:33** tells us, *"I told you these things so that you can have peace in me. In this world you will have ·trouble [persecution; suffering], but ·be brave [take courage/heart]! I have ·defeated [victory over; conquered; overcome] the world."* (EXB). Go back to where we started. There is no condemnation because Jesus overcame the setbacks that sin brought into our lives.
- We can become convinced, just as the Apostle Paul was convinced (persuaded) that NOTHING is able to separate us from the love that God has for each of us. As Paul said, *"that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing ..."* (vs.38-39) is able to come between us and the love that God has for us.

VII. Wrapping Up

- We've journeyed through the tension—where justice meets love. We've seen that God doesn't compromise one to uphold the other. He doesn't soften justice to make room for love, nor dilute love to enforce justice. He holds both perfectly in His character, and He pours both fully into His people.

- And now, over the last several weeks that we have spent in Romans 8, we have reached the summit. Here, justice is not just a courtroom verdict—it's the Spirit interceding for the weak, the Son defending the accused, and the Father working all things for good. Here, love is not just a warm feeling—it's a relentless force that refuses to let go, even when we're groaning, confused, or crushed.
- So, what do we do with this?
 - We live like people who are **held**.
 - We pray like people who are **heard**.
 - We suffer like people who are **not abandoned**.
 - And we love like people who have been **loved fiercely**.
- Because when justice meets love, the Cross comes into focus. When justice meets love, resurrection happens. And when justice meets love in us—restoration happens, and transformation takes place.
- So go now, not with shallow optimism, but with unshakable hope. Let your life be marked by the assurance that the love and justice of God hold you securely. Choose to live as those who are driven by the love of God, displaying reconciliation in your daily actions. Choose to reflect His grace and compassion as you interact with others, allowing His character to shape your relationships and responses. Become an advocate for God's mercy, showing compassion and understanding in every encounter. Intercede for others just as our Lord and Savior intercedes for you and me, lifting those who struggle and standing in the gap with heartfelt prayer and support.
- Go as Eagle Christians – rising about the struggles of the day, being carried by God's strength not your own. And remember always ... Nothings can separate you. Nothing can condemn you. Nothing can get in the way of the love that found you, justified you, and will carry you to eternity in the presence of the One who gave His all.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always