

1/12/20 -- "How Can We Cultivate Community?" (Romans 8:31-39)

Notebook: P&T: Cultivating Community

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OPENING WORDS

Good morning family!

Hear the Word of the Lord from Psalm 103:8-11...

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him"

You may be seated

- **Believer**--No matter how long you've been a Christian, no matter how much Bible you know, I can guarantee you this: God loves you more than you think He does.
- **Unbeliever**--you have one enemy, God. But He's a loving enemy, and He is pursuing you, wooing you to Himself.
- *If you're our guest, you can learn more about us in the brochure in our pew Bibles*
- *Turn to Romans 8:31 (page 1123)*
- *While you're turning there...*

- **NextGen Lunch**—calling all volunteers (and those interested in volunteering) with our children's ministry for a special informational meeting on January 12 after

the AM service. The meeting should last an hour and lunch will be provided.

- **Fellowship Groups** will begin on January 15 (deadline to sign up is today! Please)
- **Now turn your attention to Romans 8:31 as Chloe Figgers reads for us**

SERMON

Van Halen and brown M&M's

<https://www.insider.com/van-halen-brown-m-ms-contract-2016-9>

Been talking about cultivating community

- **Why Should We Cultivate Community?**
- **How Should We Cultivate Community?**
- **What do We Need to Cultivate Community?**

The only thing we truly need to cultivate community is to behold the love of God.

- Goal today is to invite you to fill your tanks on the fuel of God's love in the confident hope that this fuel is what you and I really need to cultivate community.
- To do that i want to take you what I believe is the most powerful picture of God's love in all of Scripture

Turn to Romans 8:31

- My favorite section of Scripture, but *starting* here is a bit like watching the newest Star Wars or Marvel film without watching anything else in the series: it may be dazzling to behold, but hard to understand. Even worse, you may *think* you understand it but be dead wrong in your understanding because you don't understand the context.

- So while you turn to Romans, let me briefly explain what Paul has been doing in this marvelous book of Scripture...

Romans is a book about *Righteousness*.

- **Romans 1:16-17** -- *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed . . .*”

Chapter 1

- God is righteous
- God righteously pours out His wrath on *all* unrighteousness
- **Romans 1:18** -- *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*
- *That's fine as long as you're righteous*

Chapters 2:1-3:20

- Gentiles are unrighteous (no surprise there)
- Jews are unrighteous!
- EVERYBODY is unrighteous
- **Romans 3:10-12** -- *As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*
- *7x in those verses Paul condemns EVERYBODY!*
- **Recap so far. . .**
 - Good news: *God is a righteous creator who judges all unrighteousness*

- Bad News: *I'm not righteous!*

Chapters 3:21-5

- **Romans 3:21-26** -- *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
- God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to this earth.
- Jesus was completely righteous
- Yet Jesus died as if He were unrighteous
- Jesus' death wasn't an accident, it was God's righteous plan to save an unrighteous people
- When sinners repent and believe in Christ, a spiritual transaction occurs...
 - Your sin is credited to Jesus (propitiation)
 - Jesus' righteousness is credited to you (justification)
- *Sinner, have you received this gift righteousness by faith? You can today.*
- *If you have, the story doesn't end there...*

Chapter 6 -- receiving gift righteousness frees us from the *power of sin to control us*

Chapter 7 -- receiving gift righteousness frees us from the *power of the law to condemn us*

Chapter 8:1-30 -- receiving gift righteousness frees us to *live in the power of the Spirit*

When Paul gets to **Romans 8:31** and says "*What shall we say to these things? . . .*" he's talking about everything he's already said in the whole book. In other words, how then do we respond to all of this?

Paul then asks five rhetorical questions, and in answering those questions we see . . .

Five Staggering Dimensions of God's Love for His People:

1) God Loves Us With a Prevailing Love

Romans 8:31b -- ". . . if God be for us, who can be against us?"

Rhetorical Q#1—“who can be against God's people?”

Answer—“Nobody!”

- **REALLY?!?**
- On December 26, the **Islamic State** released a video claiming to show the execution of 11 Christians in restive northeast Nigeria. At one point in the video a masked man looked at the camera and said “This is a message to Christians all over the world.”
 - **Really Paul? Nobody can be against us?**

- Obviously that's an extreme example that seems far away from home. In August last year **George Yancey**, a sociology professor at Baylor University released his findings regarding anti-Christian bias in our own country. He surveyed a group of progressive activists to determine their views on Christians. Here's what some of them said about people like you and me
 - *“Kill them all, let their god sort them out.”*
 - *“A torturous death would be too good for them.”*
 - *“I’d be a bit giddy, certainly grateful, if everyone who saw himself or herself in that category were snatched permanently from our societal peripheries, whether by holocaust or rapture or plague.”*
 - *“I am only too well aware of their horrific attitudes and beliefs—and those are enough to make me see them as subhuman.”*
- **Really Paul? Nobody can be against us?**
- Or what about the opposition that isn't flesh and blood? What about our sinful flesh? Or the devil and his minions? Or death itself?
 - **Really Paul? Nobody can be against us?**

How can Paul say that nobody can be against us?

- Paul's not naive to the reality of opposition to Christ-followers. He writes about tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, and slaughter. None of these things are *hypothetical* to Paul. He's dealt with these personally.
- **So he must *not* mean that nobody ever opposes those who are loved by God. What he means is**

that even when all the forces of hell unite against Christians, God's love will prevail .

*And though this world with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us;
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*

- **Yes, the world will be against us, but in the end Jesus wins!**
- **John 16:33b** — *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

Dear Christian, God loves you with a prevailing love. And that love is the only thing we truly need to sustain us as we cultivate community.

But how can I be sure God is for me? Because . . .

2) God Loves Us With a Providing Love

Romans 8:32 -- *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

Rhetorical Q#2—“will God give give us all things?”
Answer—“Yes!”

- **REALLY?!?**

- **That might be hard for some of you to hear, because you feel like God *hasn't* provided for you the way you feel He should**
 - He hasn't provided a husband/wife . . . or you feel you have the *wrong* husband/wife
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

 - He hasn't provided a child . . . or you feel you have the *wrong* child
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

 - He hasn't provided a job . . . or you feel you have the *wrong* job
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

 - He hasn't provided a certain skill/ability that you desire
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

 - He hasn't provided healing for you or someone you love
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

 - He hasn't provided what you believe you need financially
 - *Really Paul?* God will give us all things?

How can Paul say that God will graciously give us all things?

- **What is your greatest need? *Salvation!***
- **What is the greatest thing God could give you? *Himself!***

A wealthy Roman had a son who broke his heart, and a slave whom he loved. So on his deathbed he decided to disinherit his son and leave everything to the beloved slave. He drew up the papers and called his son in the room to tell him what he had done. "I have deeded everything to the slave Marcellus," he said. "But I'll let you choose one item from my estate for yourself."

Without missing a beat the son replied, "I'll take Marcellus."

If we have Jesus, we have *everything!*

- ***If God wasn't stingy when providing your greatest need that required the greatest sacrifice, why would He be stingy in meeting your lesser needs?***

Imagine a wealthy friend who owns a beautiful beach house shares the keys with you for a getaway for your family. You pull into the driveway and are blown away by it's beauty! It's a glorious beachfront property with 6 bedrooms, an indoor movie theater, an elevator, a billiards room, a mini arcade, heated pools and hot tubs! Now, if your friend gave you the keys for the weekend and said, "My home is yours. Enjoy!" Would you text him and ask him if you can use the refrigerator? "Am I allowed to use the toilet paper in the bathroom or do I need to bring my own?" "Can I use the dishes in the cabinets?" "Do I need to bring my own pool cue or do I need to bring my own?"

Your friend wouldn't give you the keys to the house (a big thing) if he also wasn't willing to let you have access to everything in it (small things)

So too the Father, if He didn't withhold His own Son, why would He withhold anything you need?!? ASK HIM!

Why then does God say no to some of the things I want?

- God gives us everything we *need* to work every circumstance in your life together for good (**Romans 8:28-29**)

Dear Christian, God loves you with a providing love. And that love is the only thing we truly need to sustain us as we cultivate community.

But how can God love me this way? I don't deserve it!

3) God Loves Us With a Perfecting Love

- **Verse 33--** *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. "*

Rhetorical Q#3—“who can accuse God’s people?”
Answer—“Nobody!”

- **REALLY?!?**
- **We are constantly accused by Satan (the Accuser of the Brethren), fellow humans, and our own consciences!**
 - **When you're reminded of the dark sins in your past before you came to Christ. Things that**

you've tried to forget. Or what's worse, things that you sometimes *miss*.

- *Really Paul?* Nobody can accuse God's people?

- **When you're reminded of another failure as a Christian.** You already broke your New Year's resolution to read the Bible every day. You fell asleep in prayer again. You slept in and missed Sunday School. You allowed that conversation to turn into gossip *again*. You went to far with your boyfriend *again*. You went to that website *again*. You drank too much *again*. You're a miserable failure of a Christian who can't seem to get his act together.

- *Really Paul?* Nobody can accuse God's people?

- **When you're accused by somebody else, whether you deserve it or not.** When your co-workers call you out for saying a word that Christians aren't supposed to say. When your mom or dad points out again your failure to fulfill your responsibilities. When your husband/wife exposes your failures in your marriage.

- *Really Paul?* Nobody can accuse God's people?

How can Paul say that nobody can accuse God's people?

- God justifies = declares righteous! God sees you as perfect in His sight!

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** — *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
- **C.H. Spurgeon** -- *“Christ did not love you for your good works. They were not the cause of His beginning to love you. So, He does not love you for your good works even now. They are not the cause of His continuing to love you. He loves you because He loves you.”*
 - **He loves you because He loves you.**

Dear Christian, God loves you with a perfecting love. And that love is the only thing we truly need to sustain us as we cultivate community.

But as glorious as it is, this love comes at a cost.

4) God Loves You With a Purchasing Love

- **Verses 34** -- *“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”*

Rhetorical Q#4—“who can condemn God’s people?”

Answer—“Nobody!”

- **REALLY?!?**
- Logically flows from the 3rd question. If nobody can *accuse* you, than nobody can *condemn* you either.

But if we're honest, even Christians often allow themselves fall under the weight of condemnation

- There's a reason Paul has to write Romans 8:1
- *Doctrine of Penance* were invented because many believed they had to pay God back for the sins they committed as His followers
- **We believe in a functional doctrine of penance when we act as if we must pay God backpack when we do something bad**
 - *"What did I do wrong to deserve this trial/suffering?"*
 - *I messed up too bad to go to God right now. I need to suffer a little bit before I can go to Him.*

How can Paul say that nobody can condemn God's people?

- Jesus paid the price for your sin in your place!
- Sometimes vendors take advantage of customers with dementia by collecting cash for a product or service, and then when the customer forgets that they've already paid they collect payment again. *God is not a shady vendor. He doesn't demand payment for a sin that's already been paid for.*

August Toplady

From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hath not the Father put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?

Complete atonement Thou hast made,

And to the utmost Thou hast paid
Whate'er Thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest!
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.

**Dear Christian, God loves you with a purchasing love.
And that love is the only thing we truly need to sustain
us as we cultivate community.**

But what if I mess it up somehow?

5) God Loves You With a Persevering Love

- **Read Verse 35a** -- "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*"

Rhetorical Q#5—“who can separate us from God’s love?”

Answer—“Nothing!”

- **REALLY?!?**
- **He cannot love you more, He will not love you less**

"But you don't understand what I'm going through! If God loved me, why did He allow ____ to happen?"

Read Verses 35b-39 — *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that 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."*

Runaway Bunny

Dear Christian, Jesus loves you with a persevering love. And that love is the only thing we truly need to sustain us as we cultivate community.

So how should we respond to this?

John 13:34 -- A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, *even as I have loved you*, that you also love one another.

John 15:12-13 -- This is my commandment, that you love one another, *just as I have loved you*. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Ephesians 4:32–5:1 -- Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore *be imitators of God*, as beloved children.

1 John 4:10–11 -- In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the

propitiation for our sins. Beloved, *if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*