

July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Theme: Our future is secured

Text: Romans 8:28-39

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together”. Amen

The text for meditation for this morning is taken from the Epistle to the Romans 8: 28-39, which was read before. Let us pray: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Amen

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In today’s world there are at least three different views about life. The Optimistic view, the Pessimist view, and the Realistic view. People who are optimist see everything on the bright side. You could tell them that their homes got fired, their workplace has been closed, girlfriends or boyfriends do not love them anymore, and they would say, **“It could be worse”**. Some of them may say that the world and mankind are improving, that this world is getting better and better, and that one day humans beings will have everything they need to live.

The reality is that this view is utopia. We see the world in which we live and we realize that there are still problems everywhere. We see that there are still hate toward others, civil wars in many parts of the world, there are still tyrants who oppress their citizens, there is still danger everywhere, there are famine. Just this week “The United Nations officially declared a famine in areas of Somalia.”

What about the pessimist view? Those who follow this view would say: what about if the tires of my car blow up at midnight while coming home from work, what if someone enter to my home and kills me, what if the plane has a malfunction while going to Europe. They would say that this world is as bad as it could possibly be. They would say that mankind is on decline, and that the future looks increasingly dark, and with no hope.

And there is the Realist view. Those who follow this view would check everything before doing anything. They look for a new job as soon as they have the first problem at work.

They claim that life is a mixture of good and evil and we must accept both and fight hard in order that we can improve destiny. But many of those who accept this view do not see God's hands in their lives. No doubt we have a little bit of everything sometimes in our lives. In some way, the believer in Christ is not optimistic, because he or she sees that Satan's kingdom is growing, while the kingdom of God seems to decrease. They see evil triumphing over good.

The news is full of events in which those who commit a crime come out from jail very easily, because the law is soft toward them or the penalty given to them is just a few years in prison. How many people had committed corporate frauds or other crimes and the punishment given to them is a nice jailhouse. While other normal citizens when they commit a minor offense they spend years in jail.

The believer knows that at the end of times there will be days of trials and sufferings. However, the believer also knows, or they should know **"<sup>28</sup> that for those who love God all things work together for good,"** Rom. 8:28. The believer walks forward with hope, because he or she sees how God has led them in the past. Believers see God's hand in the creation, and God's fidelity in answering their prayers.

Therefore, believers trust in God. The believer accepts by faith the following statement of St. Paul: **<sup>32</sup> 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?** Rom. 8:32

The hope of the believer is not therefore a baseless dream, a vague desire, a fantasy. It is a certainty. The future of the believer in Christ is assured because the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us.

In a certain congregation, the religious service was accompanied by an out of tune piano. A visitor told the pastor: "I think this out of tune music would clash God's ears." The pastor replied, "for God's ears, the music is well tuned, because He changes our imperfect singing in a perfect worship."

The Apostle Paul in the Epistle of last Sunday puts it in this way: <sup>25</sup>“But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

It is a fact that our lives are hit by many problems. When this happens we are disoriented, and confused. We do not know what to do, and we do not know how to pray to the Lord. But the Eternal Holy Spirit knows very well our needs and He intercedes for us. Therefore, we can pray with confidence to our God. What we do not say well, He turns it right, He fixes it.

Believers also know that their future is really secured despite trials. Paul says in our text: **“<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”**

Believers know that while they are in the world, evil will be around. The prince of this world is Satan who tries to upset everything. Sometimes we are foolish and weak. We bring problems upon ourselves, and sufferings due to our own way of life. Finally, God corrects us through some tribulation in order that we get near to Him. But in the midst of all these sufferings we have hope, because we are covered by the light of Christ.

When we think about some afflictions that we had suffered, we realize that these afflictions have provided us with new direction for a stronger faith or these sufferings have given us a warning that we needed.

Paul says in our text, <sup>35</sup>“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the daylong; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

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

My friends; trouble comes all the time. Every year brings its share of distress. When Paul lists things like persecution or famine or nakedness, he is listing those things that he suffered. Your list will be different. It might be cancer, chronic pain, mourning, war, unemployment, lost friends or lost freedoms. It might be relocation or missed opportunity, regret or depression.

It might be a sense of guilt that you did not help others enough, or lingering resentment toward another who said something to you. You do not know what it might be. But you can be certain that every year has sufficient amount of troubles, as long as you live in a world hell-bent on destruction. You can be certain that trouble is coming.

You can also be certain that none of these things can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus your Lord. But let us be careful here. What I mean is this: famine, nakedness, unemployment and the rest do not destroy faith. None of these affect your standing before God. Only unbelief does.

So, “How might you be protected and delivered from unbelief? How might your faith be strengthened so that you are always comforted that God is for you?” The answer is: the means of grace—God’s Word and God’s Supper for you, His baptized children.

These seem like such little things and unusual rites when compared against the fears and pains that trouble can bring, because we are always tempted to view death and destruction as far more powerful than God and His grace. But if your faith is to be strengthened, go to where God strengthens faith—His Word and His Supper. God grants you this ongoing diet of heavenly food so that you can be sure that He is for you. He is not just for you, as in “on your side.” He is “for you,” as in “present in His means of grace.”

God who is for you is also with you. And because He shares His cross with you, He shares His victory with you. Therefore, even when assaulted by all sorts of troubles, you are more than a conqueror through Him who loves you.

When you are tempted to doubt that God could still forgive you because of your sins and past transgressions, remember: Christ has died for you, and it is God who justifies you. If He says you are not guilty, who says you are? It is certainly not God. It is a liar who contradicts God, like the devil or maybe your own sinful flesh. But God always speaks the truth, and He says that you are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Hold firm to that truth and confess it often, dear friends: because there will be times when you must speak that truth to contradict yourself. Such times are terrible trials and grave temptations.

Dear friends, God is for you because Christ has died for you. And because Christ is risen from the dead, God is here for you. Troubles will come, but you are not forsaken. In Christ, you are more than conquerors; because you are forgiven for all of your sins. In Jesus' name. Amen

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen