

I.N.I.

Fourteenth Sunday in Pentecost
August 25, 2013
Romans 8:28-30

In Christ Jesus, through whom we have been called, justified and some day will be glorified,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the Bible we are told that the main reason God gave us His Word is to **“MAKE US WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”** If the Bible had not revealed to us our Savior, our one and only Redeemer from sin, death, Satan and hell, we would all be lost, groping around searching for a god and a way of salvation that could only come from our natural knowledge, our reasoning and our imagination. And that is exactly what every religion outside of Christianity is: man invented, imagination based, reason oriented,. That can be clearly seen by the fact that every other religion outside of Christianity bases man’s salvation upon man, what he must do for God. That is natural. That is man’s reason. Unfortunately it also leads to hell. For God has revealed Himself to us in His Word. He has revealed to us our sins, our miserable lost, spiritually dead condition and also revealed to us how He sent His Son as our Substitute, our Perfect Obedient Substitute and our Suffering Sacrifice.

But the Bible has also been given to us for many other reasons. Paul tells us in II Timothy **ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** In Isaiah 40 the LORD tells Isaiah to speak words of comfort to Israel: **COMFORT, YES COMFORT MY PEOPLE SAYS YOUR GOD. SPEAK COMFORT TO JERUSALEM, AND CRY OUT TO HER, THAT HER WARFARE IS ENDED, THAT HER INIQUITY IS PARDONED AND SHE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE LORD’S HAND DOUBLE FOR ALL HER SINS.**

COMFORT! That is a major reason for the Scriptures. For it is the will of God that His people be a comforted people, a people at peace in a world of turmoil, so that we bring that same comfort and peace to others; so that we can be comforters and peacemakers to others. Paul tells the Corinthians and us in his second letter: **BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES AND GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION, THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY TROUBLE, WITH THE COMFORT WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE COMFORTED BY GOD.**

One of the most glorious passages of comfort is in our text this morning. And one of the reasons it is so comforting is because of the blessed assurance that this passage bestows upon the child of God; the believer in Christ for time and for eternity. And that is our theme from our text for this morning. What is the believer’s glorious comfort for time and for eternity?

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD!

Did you hear that, really hear that? **ALL THINGS!** “Do you mean, Lord, our sicknesses; our unemployment; the sudden loss of our loved ones; our troubles; our trials; our loneliness; our injuries?” Yes, **ALL THINGS!** How can that be?

Well if we read this passage literally it becomes clearer. Paul writes: **AND WE KNOW--**This knowledge comes through revelation rather than from experience. We know it, we believe it because the Holy Spirit has convinced us that these things are true from His Word. It is not common sense or human reason that tells us this. In fact reason and common sense would say just the opposite-- “these terrible things cannot be good for us.” But through faith **WE KNOW---WE KNOW THAT FOR THE ONES LOVING GOD, GOD WORKS TOGETHER ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.** How can all things work together for our good? Because **GOD WORKS TOGETHER ALL THINGS FOR OUR GOOD!**

It is our loving God, who sent His Son to suffer and die for us, who takes everything in the world, every event in all of history, every circumstance in life and makes them work together perfectly to serve the best interests of His children. What an awesome God! This passage is the foundation for

every day's new hope and trust, confidence and assurance. Again today, my day is assured, my week, my month, my year, yes my life is assured of being one in which **ALL THINGS**--good, bad or indifferent--God will work them together for my eternal good! What a tremendous comfort, what a beautiful soft, pillow of promise upon which to lay our worried, burdened and heavy laden heads and hearts on.

Paul has been leading up to this glorious climax from the very first verse of chapter 8: **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS... vs. 18 FOR I CONSIDER THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US...** Then comes the amazing, almost unbelievable words of our text...**ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD!**

But again, how can we be assured of that, that both the good and the bad days; the triumphs and losses; the joys and the sorrows; the pleasure and the pain work together in some mysterious way for our good? Our assurance is found in the second half of this verse: **TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.** We can be assured of this truth

BECAUSE OF OUR ETERNAL ELECTION

Paul continues in verses 29-30: **FOR WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. MOREOVER WHOM HE PREDESTINED, THESE HE ALSO CALLED; WHOM HE CALLED, THESE HE ALSO JUSTIFIED; AND WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, THESE HE ALSO GLORIFIED.**

Notice the chain of events that began already in eternity and have been carried out in time. God has a **PURPOSE, A PLAN** from all eternity. That purpose/plan had to do with the salvation of mankind. God planned to and then sent His Son into this world to redeem the whole world so that whoever believes in Jesus, whoever is led to repent of their sins and trust solely in Jesus as their Lord and Savior for forgiveness and salvation, is saved. This God planned already in eternity before He even said, **LET THERE BE LIGHT.**

And in eternity God also **FOREKNEW** us. That doesn't mean that He just knew who we were going to be in His omniscience, but He knew us as His own from eternity. He claimed us as His own. He elected us, He chose us as Paul says in Eph. 1:4: **JUST AS HE CHOSE US IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.**

The ones whom He **FOREKNEW**, He also **PREDESTINED!** And this predestination God has unfailingly carried out here in time. He has called all of the elect to faith in His Son Jesus through the Means of **Grace:** the Gospel in Word and in the Sacraments. He has justified all of the elect in Christ; that is we are declared righteous in God's sight, clothed with Christ's righteousness and some day we and all of the other elect will stand before the Father glorified in Christ in heaven.

What has happened here in time to us is the direct result of decisions God already made in eternity. So it is that **ALL THINGS** cannot but work together for good in the life of the child of God. Everything that happens to us is like a piece of a puzzle, which when the last piece is fitted in place, no matter how many years we live on this earth, it will reveal the picture of a child of God elected, chosen from eternity for salvation and led in time to faith through life to the unspeakable glory of eternal life in heaven.

In the final verses of this chapter, which we, the Lord willing, will be meditating on next Sunday, the Apostle Paul says that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. This is because we are **CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.** If there would not be this divine purpose or plan then our future would be based upon chance, fate or luck. If our salvation rested upon our will, our desires, our plans and purposes, how easily then might one evil encounter, one bad break or one distressing moment hinder or destroy our salvation. But we are not saved by chance, fate or luck. In fact nothing happens in this world by chance, fate or luck. No, we are saved and kept safe in this faith by God's purpose and will, found in His grace in Jesus Christ.

I: GRACE

That is the one reason why God has taught us this doctrine of election. To confirm and impress upon us that we are saved **BY GRACE ALONE!** There is always need for this because even we

believers are continuously plagued by our sinful flesh which never ceases to suggest that God has chosen us because we are either better or at least not as bad as others who are lost. We need to be reminded over and over again that we all are in the same condition by nature: dead in sins! We have been elected and saved purely out of God's **grace alone in Christ Jesus without any merit or worthiness on our part**. Paul writes in Romans 3 **FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD...THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS; THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS AFTER GOD. THEY HAVE ALL GONE OUT OF THE WAY; THEY HAVE TOGETHER BECOME UNPROFITABLE; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, NO, NOT ONE**. But Paul also writes in II Timothy **GOD HAS SAVED US AND CALLED US WITH A HOLY CALLING, NOT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE WHICH WAS GIVEN TO US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE TIME BEGAN**. And in Ephesians Paul writes: **FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANYONE SHOULD BOAST**.

II: COMFORT

This doctrine of election is indeed terrifying to anyone who trusts in himself for his salvation, but it is most comforting and humbling to all who have been led by the Spirit to despair of their own works and deeds and to trust God's grace in Christ alone. What a glorious comfort. Despite the many fierce evil foes and temptations present in this life; despite all of the grief, sorrow, hardships and troubles that come our way, despite the many, many times we have failed and fallen in the past we can be assured of surviving in Christ. Though our faith is attacked from within by our flesh and from without by Satan and this world, God has elected us in Christ. He has called us by the Gospel. We who believe in Jesus have learned to recognize our Shepherd's voice in the Good News of forgiveness and salvation earned for us by His suffering, death and resurrection. Our Good Shepherd assures us: **MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE AND I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW ME; AND I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, NEITHER SHALL ANYONE SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND**.

Our election in Christ, revealed to us in God's Word, is our comforting assurance that we shall overcome and receive the crown of life that Jesus speaks of in Revelation. But before we shed this mortal frame and enter our temporary tombs to await the bliss of eternity, we must pass through adversity, trials, tribulations and sufferings not only as human beings but as Christians. When these things come sometimes it seems that for a moment our God has forgotten about us, forsaken us. We feel so helpless, so alone, so doomed to despair. Then we need to remember what Jesus said on the cross: **MY GOD, MY GOD WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?** God forsook His Son so that we would never be forsaken, so that we can confidently, even in perilous times declare with Paul the words of our sermon text: **AND WE KNOW(FROM GOD'S WORD) THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD TO THOSE WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE**.

We will then learn to look at the events and circumstances of our lives from God's perspective. In the midst of suffering, loss and sorrow we may not understand or be able to see how this can be good for us, but the Lord assures us that it will be. He will see us through and carry us on to the end and our simple trusting in His Word is one of the good things that comes out of our suffering and grief. Another is the testimony we give to others when we endure grief and suffering patiently in Christ.

III: ENCOURAGEMENT

And finally we see that God teaches us about this doctrine of election for our **ENCOURAGEMENT**. A gross misuse of this doctrine would be to believe that since we are elected and no one can pluck us from our Savior, therefore it doesn't matter how we live, we need not concern ourselves with sin in our lives, we need not hear His Word or partake of His Supper. The error of that kind of thinking is that God did not choose people irrespective of the Means of Grace. He predestined people in Christ through the Gospel. God chose us according to the order of salvation--called by the Gospel to faith in Jesus-- justified us, sanctified us and preserves us in saving faith by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. Knowing this we then will not want to misuse our election by despising that very Gospel that creates, preserves and keeps us in the one true

faith.

For the certainty of our election is not found in our reasoning out of this teaching, but in our meditating, reading, hearing, studying, inwardly digesting what God has revealed to us in the Gospel--by hearing and believing what God has done in Christ for our salvation.

In conclusion, the doctrine of eternal election will lead us, encourage us and move us to use the Means of Grace--His Word and the Sacraments-- all the more, so that growing in faith and in the knowledge of our Savior we will become more and more certain of our election and live the confident life assured that our future is secure and that our life is in His hands. That is our glorious comfort for time and for eternity!

Amen.