

Notes on Romans 8 : 26 – 30 ‘In Jesus we have hope’

In all our work lives there will always be things we love to do and that is equally true for me as a Pastor. For me it is an astonishing privilege to be given the time to soak myself in Scripture, to be a person of prayer, to sit and listen with you, to be the presence of Jesus in schools and in our community. These are the things which really make me tick and for myself and Gilli, one of the privileges of being parents is to see our children excel at what they love to do. Our oldest daughter Sarah is an incredible archaeologist and one of the best demonstrations of this was when she was a student excavating an iron age site. From the viewing platform she was able to distinguish a post hole from a front door or a fire pit but all that I saw was a whole set of browns which made little sense to me!!

Our text here in Romans 8 asks us ‘Who do we see at work in and among us?’ The answer is God whether it was last Sunday and the baptisms or the many other times we see God at work among us whether it be Holiday Club and DTI last summer, of Faith, Food and Fellowship and the God on Mute course, of Coffee Pot, of our incredible leadership team, of the ways our ukulele group blesses so many people or the ways I see God at work in our schools. All of these describe in very different ways the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and among us. The Spirit works in and among us in times when we are ‘weak’, when we struggle, when we are in difficulty, in times of confusion and of disappointments and frustrations. Yet we also rejoice to see him at work in times of joys, of clarity as well as in times of success and blessings. In all these times it is the Spirit who intercedes for us as he groans deep within us at the point of our deepest need because this is what he loves to do the most for us as this is what we need the most.

It has been said that verse 28 is perhaps one of the most wrongly translated verses in the Bible. I am told this because we usually think the verses focuses on **WHAT** works together for good for those who love God, whereas a better translation of the verse focuses not on what but **WHO** works all things for good. In this part of Romans 8 it is always God who is the subject of all the verbs Paul uses since it is God who is at work in us and his heart for us is that we will all know this deep within ourselves and know that we are loved by God. Yet, the above mistranslation goes further since Paul is not only speaking about God being at work in us, he is also speaking about our being at work with God in this too. The Greek verb Paul uses is *synergo* and what Paul is saying here is that part of God being at work in us includes how we live our lives of service in responsive love to this God. Paul uses this verb *synergo* because he wants to remind us that we serve Jesus never in our own strength but in and by the life and the presence of the Spirit within us.

In verse 30 when Paul writes of our being predestined, called, justified and glorified, what are we to understand by this? Is he speaking about the steps, as it were, in which we come to be saved in our entirety? To understand these astonishing words in such a way is to actually shrink their value and their significance as these four words describe God's determined intent to fulfil his purposes which we see described in Jesus in Romans 1 – 8. Paul, once again, is wanting to paint in immensely broad brush strokes about how the Father is being faithful to his Covenant and his commitment to fulfil all righteousness as spoken of in chapter 1 verses 16 and 17. Within this, he wants us to realise deep within ourselves his absolute and utter resolve for us to live for his Son Jesus by our being conformed to the image of his Son, as in verse 29, since this is both our privilege and our future.

Easter celebrates resurrection coming early. It speaks about our future breaking into our today and this is what Paul is urgently pleading with us to know and live today. He assures of our place in the heart of the Father today and tomorrow too, and he calls us to live today as if we were already resurrected because today we can be filled with the Spirit and live this out as we love our God and our neighbour with all our heart, our soul, our mind and our strength.

Questions on Romans 8 : 26 – 30 'In Jesus we have hope'

1. What did you particularly enjoy about your work life?
2. How do you see God at work within this church and how do you see God at work within your life?
3. What difference does it make to you for the Spirit to intercede for you with inexpressible groanings?
4. Why is it important for God to be the subject in verse 28 and not all things working together for good?
5. What do you think the Greek verb *synergo* is saying here and why is it important that it not only describes God at work but us also?
6. What do these four verbs in verse 30 say to you and why are we to focus more upon God's faithfulness to his Covenant than our experience of salvation?
7. Why is our being conformed to the Image of the Son both our privilege and our future?