

Unstoppable Love In a Broken World

Good Morning everyone, it's so good to be with you today.

Let's just start by taking a breath.

Seriously, just let it out because I know for a fact that many of us walked in here carrying a massive amount of burden.

Have you ever had one of those steering wheel moments?

You know exactly what I mean.

It's when you pull into your driveway after an exhausting day, or you arrive at the parking lot at the hospital or a difficult meeting and you can't bring yourself to open the car door.

You just sit there with a huge feeling of dread.

Your hands are gripped tightly on the steering wheel, you're staring blankly through the windshield and you are completely out of words.

I can't tell you how many of these moments I've had over the years.

You want to pray. You know you Should pray. But the grief is just too heavy, the financial stress is too acute, the anxiety is paralyzing.

Let's face it, the news cycle is too scary and disheartening.

You don't even know what to ask for anymore.

You just sit there in the silence, groaning under the weight of it all.

If you have been there this week or are sitting in that exact place right now, I want you to hear me.

You are in the right place, and you are in very good company.

Today we are diving into the book of Romans, specifically chapter 8.

When the apostle Paul wrote the letter, he wasn't writing to people who had it all together.

He was writing to a tiny group of believers living in the heart of the Roman Empire.

And let me tell you, their lives were incredibly messy.

They were dealing with poverty, social isolation, political hostility and the constant threat of violence just for saying that Jesus is Lord.

They were exhausted.

But Paul doesn't give them a shallow pep talk. He doesn't tell them to chin up and try harder. Instead he gives us a truly deep look into who God is. Over the next few minutes, we're going to look at our scripture lesson from this morning and discover how the hardships those early Christians faced mirror the exact things we face today—and why, in the midst of it, we Can have hope?

When you're out of words, the Spirit speaks

Let's look at how Paul starts in verse 26.

He writes,

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

I love the honesty of this text. Paul straight up admits that sometimes we don't know what to pray for.

Think about the early Christians reading this.

They are groaning because they were being persecuted by their peers.

Families were disowning them. Believers were boycotting them.

Now, let's fast forward to tomorrow morning in our own lives. We might not be facing Roman soldiers, but we groan under a completely different, yet equally crushing form of exhaustion.

We groan under the burnout of culture that constantly whispers, "You aren't doing enough, you aren't earning enough, you are falling behind. We groan through the quiet battles with anxiety, depression and mental health.

We groan through the agonizing pain of watching our families fracture.

This brings to mind a time when my kids were teenagers, we hit a season where we struggled a lot. If you've ever parented teenagers through a rough patch, you know it's a unique, soul deep kind of exhaustion. You lay awake at night, your mind racing with every worse case scenario, completely out of answers.

During the worst of it, I remember sitting down with a close friend, just venting out of sheer desperation.

I looked at her and brought up that old phrase people love to toss around.

I said, "you know, I always heard that God never gives us more than we can handle. If that's true, why does He think that I'm so strong?"

I was totally broken down, but my friend looked at me, smiled and completely flipped my perspective.

She said, "Oh I think you have it slightly wrong. God never gives us more than we can handle through Him."

That changed everything for me. And that is exactly what Paul is saying right here in his letter. God does not demand eloquence or strength from broken hearts.

When you don't have the words and you're sitting at that steering wheel feeling like you've been given way more than you can handle, the Holy Spirit steps in and takes that raw pain, translates it perfectly and gives it to the Father.

Your weakness isn't keeping God away, it's the exact place where His Spirit steps in to carry the load for you.

Once Paul establishes that the Holy Spirit is fighting for us in our weakness, he drops one of the most famous— and honestly one of the most misquoted verses in the entire Bible,
Romans 8:28

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”

Now, I want to be perfectly clear about this verse because it's often used as a bandaid to try to cover up pain.

People often read it and think,

“Okay, so if I just have enough faith, everything is going to turn out perfectly, and I'm going to get exactly what I want.

But that's not what Paul is saying.

He doesn't say all things are good.

He said God works in all things for good.

Think about table salt.

Salt is made up of two elements, sodium and chlorine.

If you ingest pure sodium, it's very dangerous.

If you inhale chlorine gas, it's lethal.

On their own, they are toxic.

But when a chemist binds them together, they create something that seasons our food and preserves our very life.

It's the same way in the kitchen.

I love to cook and combine flavors.

If I would taste each ingredient separately before putting it in the pan, I would think it tastes awful!

But after the flavors are combined and heated up they taste delicious.

(Ideally)

That is what God is doing in your life.

He is not saying the pain you are going through is good. He's not saying the broken relationship, the illness, the job loss is good.

These things are indeed the bitter raw ingredients.

But He is the Master Chef of our souls.

He takes those raw, painful moments— things that the enemy meant to break you—and He blends them into the 'All Things' of your life.

He simmers them to create something beautiful, lasting and good in the end.

That brings us to the bigger question.

"What good is He producing?"

It's not a perfect life.

It is, according to the next verse, making us more like Jesus, so when we look at our lives, we don't look for a smooth path.

We look for the ways God is taking the mess of our lives and using it to shape us into a more Christ-like person.

As Paul moves toward the end of this chapter, you can almost hear the passion rising in his voice. He asks a series of questions to a church that was constantly being accused and condemned by society.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?
Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns?”

In first century Rome, Christians were legally condemned as criminals. But today, the condemnation we face is usually cultural and psychological.

The enemy uses our culture to condemn us, telling us we’re on the wrong side of history or that we’re not enough.
We sit and hear that we failed this week or that we’re terrible Christians.
That God is tired of us.

But Paul looks at the highest court in the universe, looks at the enemy and basically says,
“Sit down, the case is closed.”

Jesus died, rose again and is currently sitting at the right hand of God, cheering for You!

The only Judge whose opinion matters has already looked at your life through the lens of the cross and declared you are loved, forgiven and accepted.

Paul brings it all home in verse 35.

He lists the very real hardships the early church was looking at.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or sword?”

Paul’s answer is a resounding No!

“No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ Our Lord.”

Notice what Paul does not say.

He does not say God will wave a magic wand and take us out of trouble.

He says we are conquerors in all these things.

My friends, your current hardships cannot break you because it cannot separate you from God’s Love.

You are held by a love that will carry you through whatever you have to face tomorrow morning.

So when you find yourself back at that steering wheel this week, take a deep breath.

Remember that you don’t have to be strong, because He is!

You are pushed, but you are completely, totally inseparable from the Lord.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, thank You for the comfort of your word today.

We confess that in our weariness we don't often know how to pray as we ought to.

Thank You for the beautiful assurance that You are working in all things for our good and Your glory.

Give us courage to remember that nothing can separate us from your love.

In Your Holy Name we pray

Amen