

Romans 8:31-37 If God is For Us.....

When we follow Jesus we start to want the same things that God wants for us.

Has that been your experience too?

Let's test it out a bit.

Do you find yourself wanting to trust God and be open with him like little kids are with their Dads and Moms.

Do you find yourself wanting to obey him like a soldier? So that when he says, "love your enemy!". You say, "yes sir. Right away sir!" And you do it.

Do you find yourself wanting to praise him with your whole heart? To not be a bit embarrassed for anyone to know how much you love God?

Do you wish you could love your neighbour and care as much about your neighbour's loneliness as your own? Or your neighbour's hunger as your own?

Do you ever wish you could speak like Jesus? I do. I wish I could know what Jesus would say and be able to say it in the tone of voice that Jesus would use.

Do you long for a prayer life where you pray because you love to pray and you take time to listen for God's response? Are you tired of the prayer yo-yo.

(Pray in need, forget God, pray in need, repeat) I am.

We get those kinds of longings because God gets into us with his Spirit and works to change us from the inside out. He is making us more like Jesus.

Where do you notice those longings in your life? What do you do with them? When are you most aware of them? How are you acting on what the Spirit is prompting?

We have also seen in Romans 8 how God's promise is for much more than changed hearts and personalities and lives. God longs for his whole creation to be made new. Creation is on tip toe, waiting for the day, creation groans waiting for the day. God promises that we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ. The slaves inherited the land of Canaan. The people whose hearts have been transformed into servant hearts will inherit the new creation (Romans 4:13, 8:17)

We start to long more and more, to want what God wants for his world. We dream with the prophets. Listen:

*"The great writing prophets of the Bible.....[knew how many ways human life had gone wrong because they knew how many ways human life can go right. And they] .....dreamed of a time when God would put things right again.*

They dreamed of a new age in which crookedness would be straightened out, rough places made plain. The foolish would be made wise, and the wise, humble. They dreamed of a time when the deserts would flower, the mountains would stream with red wine, a time when weeping would be heard no more, and when

people could sleep without weapons on their laps. People could work in peace, their work having meaning and point. A lion could lie down with a lamb, the lion cured of all carnivorous appetite. All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood; and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God, and delight in God, their shouts of joy and recognition welling up from valleys and crags, from women in streets and from men on ships.

(Cornelius Plantinga jr. Educating for Shalom)

The key to all of this, our own renewal and the renewal of all of creation is God's work in Jesus Christ.:

Through Jesus Christ God justifies **us**.

Justify is a courtroom word. The person who is justified is declared by the judge to be innocent.

God has declared all sinners who believe in the gospel to be in the right. No one can overturn God's verdict. We are justified by believing, by accepting and trusting that Jesus, the crucified and risen one, is Lord of the world. God justifies sinners and he says that we are now members of his family and he will never let us go. (as per Tom Wright)

We do not need to hide from God, we do not need to be ashamed before God, we are forgiven, loved and free to live for him.

-in his strength we start to live for Jesus.

-we do our jobs as work dedicated to God

-we worship with joy, we take steps in obedience

-working together we see life begin to take the shape of the life to come.

-someone without a car has a reliable ride to church

Houses are being built to give families a home and a place in a community.

One more refugee far away has hope for a home.

People in Cuba get bicycles and use them to be able to do ministry to more and more people.

Creation, even now shows glimpses of renewal. A government mandates that cars have to be more fuel efficient and the people who make cars find ways to do it.

Some guys playing ball hockey in BC were growing playoff goatees. They got the idea to challenge people to buy a goat for needy villages in Kenya for every Vancouver Canucks win. On Friday I checked their website [www.goatcanucksgoat.com](http://www.goatcanucksgoat.com) "facial hair for world peace". They are at 875 goats! People in Kenya are praying for the Canucks to win 100 games next year.

And then I have a book on my desk. It's called 28 because it has the stories of 28 people with AIDS. The author picked the number 28 so that each person represents a million people with AIDS in Africa.

How do we ever hope to make a difference there or here?

Last Sunday's Edmonton Journal carried the story of Charlene Paliwoda, an Edmonton grandmother who has given all she has for a school in Malawi. Now she is broke and the school has closed for lack of funds.

A sidebar to the story says.....

In the past five decades, rich governments have spent \$2.3 trillion on foreign aid, and the Canadian International Development Agency hands out more than \$2.7 billion to aid initiatives each year. Nearly half of Canada's money goes to sub-Saharan African countries like Malawi, which received more than \$17 million from Canadians in 2006-07. It is a tiny fraction of the \$669 million Malawi received in development assistance from donors that year, contributions that made up 30 per cent of its gross domestic income.

Despite the flood of donor dollars, Malawians are worse off than they were in the 1990s. An estimated 12 per cent of all adults have HIV-AIDs, and extended families struggle to support more than one million orphans. The country is one of the least developed in the world. The vast majority of its 12 million citizens are farmers, and the per capita GDP is \$800.

William Easterly says in his critical 2007 book, *The White Man's Burden*, "The tragedy of the poor inspires dreams of change," "But if rich people want to help the poor, they must face an unpleasant reality: If it's so easy to end the poverty trap, why haven't the planners already made it history?"

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Life/Innocence+abroad/1604967/story.html>

The wrong seems oft so strong. In the world, in us.

And now we are ready to hear the good news. Or really, we are ready to speak it. This part of Romans 8 is all questions, we supply the answers. Let's read it together. (Romans 8:31-37)

What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who is against us?

**No one!**

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not also along with him freely give us all things?

**Of course he will!**

Who will bring a charge against God's elect?

God who justifies?

**Of course not!**

Who is there to condemn? Christ Jesus who died, rather was raised to the right hand of God, who intercedes for us?

**Absolutely not!**

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? **No one!**

Shall tribulation?

**No!**

Distress?

**No!**

Persecution?

**No!**

Famine?

**No!**

Nakedness?

**No!**

Peril?

**No!**

Sword?

**No!**

In all these things, we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us.

And if God is for us, we have the courage to keep on dreaming, longing, and most of all doing. We have the courage to keep on giving our lives away, to keep on following Jesus on his path of suffering love.

May the Lord be gracious to you.

May the Lord be gracious to me.

**And all God's people said, Amen.**