

Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service and in particular with the Congregational Bible passage.

Week beginning Sunday 23 July 2017

God is for us

Pray Thank God that he is utterly committed to us in love and that he is prepared to stand with us in every aspect of life. Ask him for the grace to recognise his presence in the good times and the bad times. Pray too that we would be able to convey this truth to others in a helpful way.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Romans 8:26-39.

Background Without doubt those Paul was writing to were under great pressure. It wouldn't be surprising if some of those who were up against it were feeling somewhat let down that they were having to endure so much hardship for being true to their faith. Inevitably, some would have been questioning why God was allowing them to suffer. Without ignoring the difficulties Paul writes to encourage them that God was with them even in the midst of their hardship. He was not remote and the persecution and hardship was not a sign that they were being forgotten about.

Possible questions/points to consider

1. There are times when we don't sense God near. Can you recall such an occasion? How can difficult circumstances contribute to the feeling of distance? We often tell one another that we can pray when things are tough and generally that is good advice. Sometimes prayer can be very difficult for us. How does Paul encourage his readers in such circumstances? How might that help us?
2. I don't know what to say. I don't feel God very near. I'm not sure that my prayers are good enough – that I am good enough. Paul acknowledges that we are weak and that there will be times when we just don't have the words (or even the inclination) to pray. When we are at very low ebb, when we are stuck and spiritually dry what help is available – from others? from God directly?
3. Paul talks about God seeing into our hearts and sensing our deepest needs. To what extent are we perhaps over reliant on words? Are we open enough with God to let him see what is really going on in our hearts? If so, what can we do about it? What does he want to do about it? Words are important and we should pray if we can. What do you sense here about prayer being more than words?
4. We can use the idea "I'm not good enough" to shy away from God, to retreat from being in close fellowship with him. However, maybe what Paul is saying is that no, we aren't good enough but God loves us anyway. How do you react to that?
5. Paul is very honest that in seeking to live out our lives as Christians in a faithful way we will come up against troubles of all kinds, sometimes from unexpected quarters. Forewarned is forearmed. How might we better prepare ourselves to encounter troubles? Clearly, some people seem to get more than their share of troubles and it is tough when these things come our way. He encourages us to see that "nothing can separate us from God's love". How can we help one another to see this? How can we make this promise a practical reality in face of real difficulties?
6. Anything else arising from the service or the passage?

Prayer Lord, thank you that no matter what troubles come our way, no matter how many knocks we have to face you will never leave us, you will always be there with us, for us and will support and care for us. Help us to grasp the truth that nothing can separate us from your love in Jesus. Amen.