

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

We Are Weak, But He Is Strong

Romans 8:26-39

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 12)

Analysis by Betty Krafft

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. 27 And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? 33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written,

*“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DIAGNOSIS: SEPARATED, SEVERED, RENT ASUNDER

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Separated

No one can deny that modern life is hectic. The “labor-saving” devices we own increase the demands on our time. We want to buy more things (after all, President Bush asked us to), but in order to do that we need to earn more, which means more hours at work. In our leisure time, we “play hard”—pushing for our personal best. Or we spend hours isolated from others in front of the television set. We spend time grooming the perfect body at the fitness center. We plan vacations full of activities and neglect to plan for down time. Time for God? Time for quiet talk with each other? Life does not permit it. We are separated.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Severed

The forces in our lives work against each other to pull us apart. Our loyalties are in conflict: We want to succeed at work. We want time for our families. We want to stay physically fit. We want to relax. We want to play. These contrary desires pull us in so many directions we are paralyzed and exhausted. Even if we chose a direction, we’d have no energy to go there.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (External Problem) – Rent Asunder

We are exhausted by the possibilities, too tired to pull our lives together. We no longer know who we are. “We do not [even] know how to pray as we ought” (v. 26). So how could we approach God with our troubles? And why would God even be interested to hear from us—given the poor condition of our lives? So the separation is complete. We’re not only cut off from each other, we are cut off from God.

PROGNOSIS: RECONCILER, RECONCILED, REUNITED

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *The Reconciler*

But there is One who is stronger than the forces that want to pull us apart. In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes, “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself . . .” (2 Cor 5:19). Through his death and resurrection, Jesus overcame all the forces that would separate us: from our selves, our neighbors, and from God. Through Jesus, we find out God is “for us” and “if God is for us, who is against us” (v. 31)?

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *The Reconciled*

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (v. 28), Paul tells us. Knowing what God has done in Jesus, and the contrary forces in our lives do not exercise power ultimate over us. No longer do we feel torn apart by life. Instead, the forces of this world are our earthly tools, not our masters—for they are under the mastery of Jesus. So we are “convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vv. 38-39).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Reunited*

The divisive nature of life is overshadowed by the reconciling love of God for us in Christ Jesus. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution

or famine or nakedness, or peril or sword?" (v. 35). No. Why? Because we live in Christ's domain, under Christ's power, now. And that means that not only are we reunited with God, we are reunited with our neighbors too.