

Sermon preached by Phillip Jensen, Dean of Sydney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on Wednesday 22nd August 2007. Reading: Romans 8:31-39
Topic: "The Love of God"

1 Insecurity

The world is a very insecure place. There are wars and rumours of wars, falls and rises on the share markets, terrible accidents on the roads, family fights and disputes and there is sickness and illness. This is the great insecurity, you cannot tell when you will be sick, when different virus or illness will attack, when some illness will take us off into death. As we cannot tell when this will happen, likewise we cannot tell how much disruption of life it will bring, how much pain, how debilitating loss of work or mobility or hobbies and the loss of self and our sense of who I am.

Sickness is one of those things that comes upon us, not something we do, but is done to us. It is unasked for, unwanted, and unwelcome. But it comes to us all at different times and in different seasons of life and when it comes, it raises questions for us. Questions about life and self, questions about God and questions about what is our life and why are we living. For some of us these are good questions, for we were living without God, without purpose or meaning and our sickness wakes us up to the emptiness of life. Wakes us up to our need - our need to depend upon God. For some of us these are not good questions for they are the questions of the evil one, accusations made against you, accusations made against God. Why are you suffering as you are? Has God left you? Is God unhappy with you? Is this the punishment for sin?

2 The Devil's Work

The Devil's work of death is done by lies and accusations. The devil makes :-

(a) **accusations** against God and his people. He says that God is not interested in our welfare.

He says that God's word is not true. Think back to the Garden of Eden where he said to Eve *He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* and he accuses God's people of sin deserving judgement and condemnation. But notice how the Devil tells:-

(b) **lies**. He denies what God said, he lied to the woman, he always lies. He is a liar and the father of lies. When he lies he speaks his native tongue. That is what Jesus said in John 8
44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

What do you imagine is the power of the devil? Some kind of magnetic power? No, it is telling lies. We underestimate the danger and consequences of the lies. We are just so familiar with lies and lying that we take them for granted. But lies - especially about God and his people has devastating effect, especially when we believe them. For then we give to the liar the power that he does not have. For the devil has no power other than the power we give him when we believe his lies. And so in our sickness, in our depression, in the low moments of our lives we hear the devil's voice. "God is not there. God is not listening to you. God has left you behind. God is punishing you. God is unhappy with you." - and so the Devil's work is:-

(c) **death** for his lie that all humanity believed is that we will not die. That God will not bring death on humanity **and** that God can be rebelled against with impunity. But our passage tonight declares with great vigour :-

3 God's Victory

(a) **over all** God is God (V27) God works everything for our good that we may become like his son, that we may be glorified. There is nothing outside his control. There is nothing too big for him to

control. There is nothing too small for him to be interested in. But God's victory, especially his victory over the Devil came:-

(b) in Christ for when Christ hung on the cross, dying for the sins of the world, he was breaking the Devil's power over us. For he was removing the grounds of accusation against us, He was justifying us before the court of God and as he rose from the dead he demonstrated that death had been defeated, that the Devil's domain was completely destroyed. No longer will sickness and death reign over our bodies, but we will rise with him in eternal life. So Satan is not the final victor but is defeated and will be destroyed. And the reason God did this was:-

(c) His love. This is where you see God's love (V)8 *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* The gospel tells us that *God so loved the world that he gave his only son.* Here is the love of God displayed *not that we loved him but that he loved us and gave his only Son.* It was just out of his kindness and loving mercy that he sent his son to die for us, that he forgave us. So we have divine:-

4 Security

Look at our passage again v31 *If God is for us, who can be against us?* And see how we know that God is for us (v32) *“he did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all”* In v33 he *justifies.* This is the answer to all the accusations of Satan. Declared righteous because of Jesus Death for us and the Christ who died, raised and sits - now *intercedes* v34 He is praying for us. He who has paid for the sin of the world. He who has conquered and risen from the dead. He who sits in all power and glory ruling the universe. He is now praying for us. He is now praying to his father for us. He is presenting our needs to the father. Whoever may or may not be listened to. This one will be listened to. For he is the dead and risen glorious Son of God. So God is described as v37 *him who loved us.* And because God is for us we have security and are secure - in all face of all world's troubles. So we are assured of his love irrespective of anything that comes our way. Be it spiritual or physical, mental or bodily, enemies or the enemy. We are assured of his love. Look how it is said here v31 *If God is for us, who can be against us?* v32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* v 33 ***Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*** 34 ***Who is to condemn?*** v 35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* 37 ***No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*** 38 *For I am sure 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.*

Friends we are come together tonight for healing. It is only God who can give healing. Our illness and sickness attacks our very person and is used by the evil one to discourage and demoralise us. But we have God on our side we have the risen Lord Jesus praying for us. Do you have Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, if so we live in security, if not we live in insecurity. Turn to God in prayer.