

For Good
Romans 8:28-39
July 26, 2020

I like to watch a show that was on TV when I was growing up. It is called Death Valley Days. Some of you may have seen it. It was sponsored by the twenty mule team borax company. Borax was put in clothes washing solutions and had other uses that made it a valuable find in death valley. The finding of it was a little by accident as the story goes. Most of those in death valley were looking for gold, so you see characters, searching and searching, living with little, always needing another grub stake, promising their wives or girlfriends that they are bound to strike it rich.

Why such a pull to suffer the heat and dryness of death valley for gold? They were looking to something that would make their lives so much better. They knew what finding gold would mean for their lives. They knew that things were tough now but what would life be like if they found that gold strike.

So what about the borax? Yes, he was looking for gold. He brought a wife to death valley. She supported him but it wore on her too and she was to the point of leaving him and he agreed that maybe she should (or so the death valley episode goes). She didn't leave because she knew he loved her very much. She went with him a couple times in his search for gold and one day she was walking through a flat area that had this strange rock. It was white and flaked off onto her dress.

Some time later one of their friends came by with an announcement of something new that if you put some acid and alcohol on it and lit it on fire it would burn green. He said it was something called borax. They didn't think too much of it, trusting in the ultimate finding of gold but one day they got to thinking about that day and the white stuff all over her dress so he decided to pick up some acid and some alcohol and try it on that stuff they had found. Yes, it was borax and it was strewn all over the ground in that area they had looked. They then became rich from it, not with what they thought they would get rich with but with a new found find.

The lesson from Matthew is like that where Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven. He equates it to treasure, and to a pearl of great value. He then points to the outcome of sorting out those who are going to be in the kingdom in the end. Jesus talks of the kingdom and really pointing out the worth of the kingdom, it is worth going through whatever it takes for there is a treasure, a pearl of great value, of the value of borax or gold that in the end will all be worth so much. If we were to compare what a

person would give or would go through to get into the kingdom, would it be like the guys from Matthew or those who went off to Death Valley?

Each had their eyes on the future. The guys from Matthew knew what they were looking for, what they found. They saw the worth. They knew what it meant for them. We know the kingdom of heaven is awaiting us. It means that we don't have to endure sun scorching days looking for it but it is more like the borax find where they didn't know the value that was right there, laying out there for all to see and yet no one knew its value as we sometimes don't act like we fully know what our faith's value really is either.

The love of Christ is right there for all. It is all around us and yet, so many only see it as something strewn around, no perceived value. In fact in certain parts of the world, the declaration of faith will get you persecuted, even killed as if it doesn't have value but is something that should be done away with, destroyed. We, here in the U.S., up until now have been spared most of those things Paul listed. Yes, we may have undergone some remarks or some negative comments when we brought up Jesus and faith but most of us haven't even undergone what many went through in their search for riches in Death Valley.

You might say that was their choice. They chose to go to that valley in search of riches. The problem with us is, we were reborn with a silver spoon in our mouth. Most of us were taken to the font and given the treasure, the pearl of great price. The treasure of the kingdom of heaven is ours. The love of Christ is living in us through His Holy Spirit, who is going to be with us until death.

Nothing can separate God and His love for us in Jesus. He loves everyone and yet people choose to do evil to others, believers included. God loves all and eternal life is open to all and yet so many who say they love God, want to continue in their sin, even though they think they aren't really doing anything wrong and in some cases there are churches who back them in their sin even though our loving God has pointed out in His Word that it is sin.

So many have been deceived by the devil, the world and yes even their own sinful nature, that old Adam that raises up his head in their lives and points to their so called "RIGHT" to live their lives as they see fit, as they see is "GOOD" for themselves at the expense of what a loving, but JUST God says is sin.

We look at those who don't have the Holy Spirit directing their lives and aren't following Jesus and we wonder how we might get through to them. Yet if it involves "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword"

are we willing to head out into “death’s valley” that death valley where our focus is not on how much were are going to have to endure but on those who need what we have, the kingdom of heaven?

God has our backs, for that matter fronts, sides, tops and bottoms. We are His and He will do all for us, to keep the faith He has given us alive through whatever this world would throw at it. There is nothing that He will allow to take away the treasure that is ours. Paul put it this way: **Rom. 8:38-39** For I am sure 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.

Paul was sure of this, as he had to deal with many of these things. He was jailed in Rome. He knew of many of these causes of separation that he had to contend with as he was beaten, shipwrecked, endure times like death valley days. He dealt with rulers who would eventually see to his execution. Yes, he saw the devil and demons at work in the lives of people that he knew Jesus loved and went to the cross to save.

Paul personally was one of those who brought persecution on the heads of those who trusted in Jesus. He knew he did things against the will of God, hunting down believers. He was even in the process of the hunt when Jesus stepped into his life and saved him and prevented his scouring the world around him not for gold but the blood of those who dared say Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Son of the Virgin promised to Adam and Eve.

Many times we have heard the quote of Paul in Romans. We have heard it and have used it. We usually shorten it to: “all things work together for good”. We count on those words of promise that Paul put pen to paper. We trust that all that we have to go through will, in the end, will eventually be worth it. We are promised paradise and yet what it will be like, we can only dream of what it will be like. We have accounts of Genesis and a little of what it was like. We had a flood that destroyed it all. We have fossils from those days and yet having an animal buried in rock layers really isn’t a whole lot like having the live animal roaming around.

We have heard of fossil fuels, what was the world like to have the coal we have, the crude oil that supposedly what once was on the surface of the earth, what amount of creation was buried with the coming of the flood? So much destruction, loss of life, human and animal and even plant life and yet, it was, ultimately for good.

Noah and the seven others probably wondered if it would ever get back to “normal” again. Yet, they knew why they were saved, why God had to do what He did, to save the promise, the eventual Son that would come, bringing with Him the solution to the sin started in that perfect garden. Noah and his family had lived in a land that was close what it was like in the garden. They could understand what sin had caused but without the destruction that came from the flood, did they realize how God saw what sin had done? They saw what it was like before and after with the physical world. They also knew what it was like with people, all people who were only thinking of bad things. Don’t you know how they must have been like Abraham who bargained with God as to the saving of Sodom and Gomorrah. Only 4 made it out of there and one of them even had to desire to go back and lost her life.

We may not know exactly what it is going to be like but Jesus tried to point out what it is like. Like a treasure or pearl that is worth all you can get your hands on, Jesus points out the value that Paul says is because of our value as God’s chosen people.

He has valued us so high, He was willing to send His Son who wanted to come to earth to have us experience His great love for us, the pinnacle of His creation, formed in His image to live our lives to Him as well as, to our neighbors.

Our future is secure in Him. We have the treasure the perfect pearl of eternal life that awaits us. We are more than conquerors over sin, death and hell. There is nothing that can separated us from our salvation, given in love to us. Some may think I am saying once saved always saved but salvation can be rejected if a person chooses to.

The man who found the borax, could have gone on searching for gold, instead of realizing the great value of his find but didn’t. Why would he? If he still held on to the dream of finding gold, he could have not utilized what he had right before him and as believers, we have a hard time thinking of what it would take for us to turn our backs on Jesus but we must always leave that possibility open because we have heard of others who have done just that.

Adam and Eve had it all and they rejected God and His plan for them. It would be arrogant of us to think we could resist temptation on our own either. No, we have the Holy Spirit to keep us on the straight and narrow, conversing with God the Father what is going on, keeping us as conquerors through Jesus.

We need to remember there is nothing that can separate us from God. He provides for our lives, day in, day out even in the midst of all that we have to go through, so that, in the end, all things will work together for our good.

