

Being the Church in Christ:

Wisdom from Pastor Paul

(The Brentwood Sermon Series for 2015)

Memorize & Ponder Text – Romans 8:38-39

(Full Reading – Romans 8:31-39)

Week of Aug 23-30, 2015

Nothing Can Separate Us from God

Romans 8:38-39 (NRSV)

For I am 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.

*Throughout 2015, the Christian community at Brentwood Presbyterian Church will be considering how to be the church in Jesus Christ, guided by the wisdom of Pastor Paul. We invite you to **listen** for what the Spirit is saying in the text, then **question** how those insights might change the ways you see things and act in the world. Share your thoughts during the week on the meaning the Spirit creates for you in this text by posting a comment on our website – www.brentwoodpc.ca.*

A Provocative Pondering

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us provoke one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... (Hebrews 10:23-25a)

This is one of the best known passages from Paul's letter to the Romans. In our day, it is often used in funeral services. It is a ringing affirmation of God being for us, no matter what gets in the way of our relationship with him. And that this promise is eternally true. This, for Paul, is the core reality that both judges and saves us.

It judges us because we continue to resist, ignore, or deny the reality of God's love that rules the world. It saves us because we have no power to undermine the desire of God to reconcile us to himself and make us authentic blessings in his world.

This week, I listened to a provocative Charlie Rose interview with Bryan Stephenson, a black lawyer who works with black prisoners in the US to try and get them the justice they deserve (www.charlierose.com). He is the founding executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. He has been called 'America's Nelson Mandela.' He is a disturbing and deliberate witness to the darkness of racism in the US throughout its history and suggests that they need a truth and reconciliation process to address the deep roots and hurts of this history. Central to that process, as we know from our own TRC experience here in Canada with our First Nations, is the willingness to admit our responsibility and complicity for the wrongs.

What enables Christians to do that is this assurance of God's forgiving and restoring love. In gratitude for that grace, we face the truth and commit ourselves to practice reconciliation in the future, no matter what seems to get in the way of that. That's tough work, but in it we are assured, especially by these powerful words from Paul, that nothing separates us from God's love.