

## **Sermon for Mike Friend's Funeral June 17, 2011**

Normally I would have prepared this sermon and have given it to Mike to check for accuracy. I can no longer do that so I guess you will just have to check it for yourself. Please read the book of Romans for yourself to make sure everything I am telling you is true.

Mike was our preacher at Ferndale Baptist Church for 28 years. Before that he taught many of us as staff at Mt Top Youth For Christ. The truth is, he brought us all together at Ferndale through the preaching of the Word.

I grew up in a church and got around in Christian circles. I have heard a lot of preachers, but I never heard one quite like Mike. He could detect an error a hundred miles away. He was obsessed with making sure that whatever he preached was true. He didn't let his guard down until the day he died.

His sermons are still on [sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com) for anyone who wants to hear him. He didn't believe in sermonettes. He said that sermonettes were for Christian-ettes. So when you login to listen to his sermons you better pack your lunch.

Mike expressed one major concern for every human he came in contact with. His concern was for where they stood with Jesus Christ. Did they believe or did they disbelieve? Were they saved or were they lost? And he would do whatever he could to see that people had a chance to hear the saving message of Jesus Christ. That was his heart toward people.

When he was dying he mentioned to his family that Grace is the underlying theme in a believer's life. And he died firmly entrenched in the grace of God. Some of his final hours were spent remembering and quoting scripture verses, even when he could barely speak.

Mike was preaching through the book of Romans when he died. We had been in Romans for a couple of years and had reached Chapter 8. He had almost reached the passage we heard read this morning. Well Mike's study of Romans is over.

But while Mike was going through Romans Mike taught us to live **by faith** in the grace of Christ. Today Mike is living **by sight** in the grace of Christ. Today he is **experiencing** the facts he

preached. He is currently experiencing the truth that nothing was able separate him from the love of Christ. He is seeing first hand that whom Christ justified, he glorified. Mike's **faith** in Christ through good theology has been rewarded with the **presence** of Christ in absolute reality.

If you knew Mike well, you would know that he could never get enough true fellowship. I always felt that I was letting him down in that regard. His desire for it was insatiable. Well, beginning Monday morning, his need was finally met. Mike is in unbroken fellowship with Christ and all his saints. We are so happy for him, and so sad for ourselves.

Well, keeping in mind the things that Mike cared about and what he believed, the family requested that the message I share with you today come from the book of Romans. I will focus on Romans 8:28 and will end with verses 35-39.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good **to those who love God**, to those who are **the called** according to His purpose.

Romans goes into great detail in describing the two kinds of people on this planet. The first kind are those **who love God**, the **called according to His purpose**. The second kind are those who **do not** love God and are **not called** according to His purpose.

God is working all things together for those who love God.

God is not working all things out for the good for those who do not love God. In fact Romans tells us that those who do not love God are treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of **wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**.

With this being true it becomes vital to understand which kind of person the Bible says you are.

You might think that the lovers of God are people who have lived so well that they have earned God's favor. You might think they are people who naturally have a friendly disposition toward God. But if you thought that, you would be as wrong as you can be. It is just the opposite. The lovers of God are people to whom God has first revealed how bad they are naturally. He has

revealed to them their sinful state. The people called lovers of God **were originally from birth**, according to Romans, people who were self seeking, who did not obey the truth. Romans goes on to say that "there is none righteous, no not one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside. There is none who does good. No, not one. There is no fear of God before their eyes." What these verses are telling us about is **true** human potential. We like to think we are born like wonderful spiritual flowers just ready to blossom. But that is a lie and all of our histories will prove that if we will just be honest with ourselves. The Romans passages describe us as we were born into this planet. A drastic change is needed from how we entered this life. Yes, a miracle is needed. We were each born into this life as sinner, as a rebel against God, and we need saved from the consequences and the effects of sin.

Ephesians 2:8,9 tells us that 8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Do you know what Grace is? I'm sure there are many here who could answer that question. It is unmerited favor. It is God showing us favor that **we do not deserve**. Do you realize what that means? It means there is a prerequisite to receiving God's favor. And what is the prerequisite? You must know and agree and be fully convinced that you **don't deserve** God's favor. Do you understand what that means? It means if you think that you deserve to enter heaven by your good work or your good nature or by your good disposition, you are absolutely and totally **disqualified** for heaven. You **cannot** and **will not** enter. You are in the same status as the Pharisees to whom Jesus said Mark 2:17 "Those who **are well** have no need of a physician, but **those who are sick**. I did not come to call the **righteous**, but **sinners**, to repentance."

Jesus told a story about this. Luke 18: 10"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me **the** sinner!' 14I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

I pray that you understand this today. The Pharisees compared themselves with others and saw themselves as being better than others and therefore, deserving of God's reward. Yet they were destined for God's judgment.

But the tax collector saw his state as it truly was. He fell short of God's righteous demands. He fell short of the moral perfection that God's justice demands, and he knew it. He deserved God's judgment. And all he could do was cry out for mercy. He was a sinner. He knew he was a sinner. And he knew he could never deserve God's reward. That was the man that met the prequalification for heaven. That was the man that God would save.

Mike knew he was a sinner. A friend of Mike's once told him that all preachers say that they are sinners but Mike is the first one he really believed. He could say that because Mike was very realistic about his sin or about his life in general. And Mike was eternally grateful for the grace that would save a sinner like him. One of the things that hurt him the most is when those who preach grace could not find it in their hearts to extend it to him.

Do you know that **you** are a sinner this afternoon? Does your heart ache regarding the sin you have done against God? Do you know for sure that you are not deserving of God's reward? If so, **congratulations!** You qualify for grace. You are in a good position. You can call out, like the tax collector, for the mercy of God. You can repent of your way of living and trust in Christ as paying the penalty of your sin. The book of Romans tells us that Christ was set forth as a **propitiation** for our sin. He took the sins we deserved to be punished for and **He Himself received that punishment for our sin.** He was Just and the Justifier of everyone who would be saved.

Some think that sin isn't a big deal. They think that God likes to forgive, so we don't need to worry about sin. He'll just ignore

it. He'll overlook it. God is just some cosmic Santa Claus. Well do you understand that sin was **such** a big deal that **God put Christ to death for it**? Sin **always** has a penalty. **Always**. And it is death. 100% of the time. And God is perfectly just. So he will never just overlook the penalty that sin deserves. So either **Christ** pays the penalty for your sin or **you do**. **What Christ has done is provide us a way out, a way of escape from the penalty of our sin.**

The Ephesians passage says 8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast.

You see we are saved **through faith**, through believing that **I am a sinner, but Christ took on, and paid, the penalty for my sin**. And Christ pours out on me the favor I could **never** earn. And is any of that because of me? Absolutely not. I have nothing to boast about. Even the **faith in God that I express was given to me by God**. I get no credit whatsoever.

You see, that is what those people referred to as **lovers of God** went through. And you can see why. It is the people who are forgiven much who will love much.

If you know that you are a sinner this morning there is good news. Christ will save you. Call out to God with all that is in you. Repent of the life you have lived. And trust what Christ has done for you. He took the sin upon himself of everyone who would ever believe on Him and suffered in their place. Believe in Christ.

This is the message that Mike lived for. This is the message that gripped him as a young man and changed his life for eternity. This is what he would want you to **know**. This is what he would want you to **do**. Mike wanted to share the love of Christ with everyone he met.

Now back to our text. Romans 8:28And we know that all things work together for good **to those who love God**, to those who are **the called** according to His purpose.

So we see that **those who love God**, those who are **the called according to His purpose** are those **who have trusted in Christ**. It is those for whom God has opened their eyes so they could see their need and call out to Christ to meet it.

Now what is in store for those who love God? What we have here is **an absolute promise** from the God who created heaven and earth. This is a promise from the God **who never lies** and has all the power needed **to deliver** on every promise He makes. And what is His promise?

He promises that "All things work together for good for those who are His." Wow! Mike's family, Mike's church family and those of you who are his friends are staggering. We have taken a tremendous blow this week. We don't need to pretend that we have not suffered a great loss on Monday. We have. None of us are trying to sugar coat that. And those of you who were Mike's friends, you know exactly what I am saying. But there is another truth, a greater truth to every follower of Christ. God took Mike to Himself on Monday and will work that event together for our good. God has a plan. And your good is part of that plan. He didn't ask us if he should take Mike. He knows we would have said no.

But we as friends and family must never allow the enemy to use this event as proof that you are not loved by God. You watch God's hand in action. You just watch as he works this tremendous loss that you have suffered out for your good. Keep track of each thing. Note it in a journal. We will see it. It will happen. Because it is a promise of God. And it will be evidence of just how deeply our God loves you. This event is not meaningless or purposeless. It will be used by a sovereign God for our eternal good. He promises that. And He never lies.

And one day, when we stand before Christ, it will all make sense to us. We will see the loving wisdom that crafted the plan. And we will talk to Mike. And he will have nothing but gratitude toward his Savior who would craft such a plan. That is the perspective from eternity that is so hard to grasp now. We who are left must **believe** it by faith. Mike **sees** it by sight.

I pray that God will use Mike's example, in the lives of us who knew him, to awake us from our stupor and to raise us from our lethargy. I hope that we will copy his zeal, his persistence, his rock solid faith in his Savior.

And you young people.... It's time. It is time to recognize that you have received enough to now put your faith into action in

service to Our Lord. There is work needing done in the service to the saints, and you are **equipped** by God to do at least some of it. There is work needing done in evangelism and you are **called** to do it. At Ferndale we rode on the coattails of Mike's hard work for a long time. We can't do that anymore. It is now time for all of us to step up to the plate and apply ourselves to the things that Christ cares most about.

If you say that you loved Mike, do what he did. Do what he would tell you to do. Serve Christ. Seek first the Kingdom of God and let the rest of the stuff take care of itself.

Now let's look at the rest of this passage.

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;  
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37Yet in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through Him who loved us. 38For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

We believe this passage by faith. If Mike were able to speak to us today, he would tell us it true by his own testimony. He would tell us, yes it is true. I have seen it. Mike is living in the love of Christ. A Christian cannot and will not be separated from the love of Christ. **Nothing** can do it. No **one** can do it. It cannot be done. Death may be able to separate us from our breath, but it cannot separate us from God's love.

So for you who have never made your peace with Christ, for you who have never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord of you life, the Bible says now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. It says All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. Christ said, "28Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,

for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Christ also said, ““Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life”

Call upon Christ today for salvation. He will save you.

And for those who are the called, who are the lovers of God, rest today in His promises. Have faith that God will work this out for your good. Watch for it. Count on it. And thank Him for it as he does.

Also recognize that our time on earth is short. We only have **now** to do those things Christ wants done in our world. Mike filled his days with things that last forever. He served his Master well. We would do well to make as good a use of our time as he did.

When you remember Mike,  
when you think to ask him a question, but you can't,  
when you remember a special time you spent with him  
when you remember advice he gave you that helped you  
when you remember something he taught you  
when you just plain miss him  
when you hurt just because he is not there

Let that memory stir us into serving our Savior  
the way **he did**  
and the way he would **want us to**  
and to rest our faith in God's promises.