

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!
The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.
(Ps 34:8-10)

Two weeks ago today, my family and I packed up the cars and headed to my Aunt Mary's little cottage on the shore of Lake Huron. No internet, minimal phone reception, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life makes "Mary's Point of View" a simple, but lovely place. While there, I have often reflected on the goodness of God. That weekend was no different as I spent most of my time doing one of two things, enjoying the company of my family or studying in Romans in preparation to teach Sunday school.

When Sunday rolled around, I was up much earlier than normal, before the sun was up, looking over my notes. I was delighting in Romans chapter 8 once again (one of my favorite spots in scripture) and pondering the goodness of God toward us who are in Christ. Romans 8 opens with, **"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"** (v1), continues with, **"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies"** (v 11), and again with, **"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us...we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."** (v18,23-24). It wasn't hard to see his goodness.

At some point in the midst of the contemplation, I noticed a trickle of natural light breaking through the darkness. I woke Teren and we sat together enjoying the sunrise over a peaceful Lake Huron. It struck me at that moment that Romans 8 is like a sunrise in word form – beginning with a piercing light breaking the dawn and followed by an ever increasing brightness that dispelled all darkness. After it shines for 30 verses, the natural conclusion is this, **"If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?"** (v31-32) It's like basking in the warmth of that sunrise! Topping those thoughts off with reflections on family and sharing a sunrise with my wife...I was tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, feeling in my soul that I lacked no good thing. It was a wonderful morning. How could it not be!

Nearly two weeks later, while reading again from "A Memoir of Allen F Gardner" by John W Marsh, I was humbled by a different shoreline scene. After decades of deep struggle and tremendous hardship, amidst often thwarted attempts to share the gospel among unreached people groups, Allen Gardner found himself stranded on the shores of Picton Island off the coast of Tierra Del Fuego with no help on the way. Completely isolated, He watched his fellow crew and ministry partners die of sickness or starvation over the months of suffering that followed, before dying himself from lack of food and water. I have never read of a life containing more suffering and tragedy than his. This particular hardship was merely its capstone. If there ever a man

could answer the cry of Job's wife, "Curse God and die!", this would be the man. Yet each trial and horrible circumstance was to him a means of drawing closer to God.

On June 16, 1851, in the midst of deep suffering on that largely barren shore, he copies Psalm 34:10 into his journal, "...**they that seek the Lord shall not want for any good thing**" (KJV). With food stores running thin, he pens a poem about the goodness of God. Here is an excerpt,

There is no path so rough, so drear,
No thorny wilderness so dry,
But living streams are flowing near,
And one to guide our footsteps nigh;
'Tis unbelief alone, that hides
The blessings, which our God provides.

Oft in affliction's darkest night,
When all our earthly gourds decay,
The spirit takes her loftiest flight,
And soars to realms of endless day.
In that pure light she sits serene
And calmly views the troubled scene.

Over the remaining 2 ½ months of his life, as every human comfort *and necessity* was stripped away, he filled his journal with praise and gratitude (and poetry). Death and hardship all around, he never stopped seeing the goodness of God, even to the end. His last written words were found on the shore, torn and discolored by the same exposure that would take his life. "The Lord has seen fit to call home another of our little company....doubtless he is in the presence of his Redeemer, whom he served so faithfully; yet a little while, and through grace we may join that blessed throng to sing the praises of Christ throughout eternity. I neither hunger nor thirst, though five days without food! – marvelous loving-kindness to me a sinner."

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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. (Rom 8:35-39)

Allen Gardner did not figuratively experience each trial listed above, he lived them firsthand repeatedly. His last day was likely no different. The shore upon which he gazed would have looked a lot different than the one I enjoyed a couple weeks ago. His would likely have been icy, cold and wind-whipped. Everything stripped bare. No family sleeping contently nearby. No wife beside him. But I am confident that he did not meet that final morning alone or without hope. He was with Jesus, as was his practice. And the ever increasing brightness of his Savior's presence dispelled the darkness all around...and that was more than sufficient. As I read, I was humbled again by the marvelous loving-kindness of our Savior to me a sinner.

As you seek the Lord today, may you lack no good thing.

Pastor Brad