

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 7:6-9

A Chosen People

6 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

7:6 *holy*. Separated from all corrupting people or things and consecrated totally to the Lord (see note on Ex 3:5 – The ground was not holy by nature but was made so by the divine presence (see, e.g., Ge 2:3). Holiness involves being consecrated to the Lord’s service and thus being separated from the commonplace.). (CSB)

God declared the Israelites holy. Their lineage would produce the world’s Messiah, Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

chosen ... His treasured possession. God formed the nation of Israel for Himself, so they might proclaim His praise (Is 43:21) and lead other people to the Lord. (TLSB)

7:7–8 God selected Israel as His holy people by grace alone in fulfillment of His promise to Adam and Eve (Gn 3:15), Abram (Gn 12:3, 7), Isaac (Gn 26:3–6), and Jacob (Gn 28:13–15). (TLSB)

7:7 *chose...because* – Israel might have asked: Did the Lord choose us because we were bigger or greater than other nations? The Lord’s choice wasn’t grounded in any quality found in Israel; it arose instead from a quality found in God. The old poem, “How odd of God to choose the Jews,” underscores how unexpected and unmerited that choice was. That’s what we call grace, God’s remarkable mercy and faithfulness toward sinners who don’t deserve either one. (PBC)

C. S. Lewis once observed that there’s something unscrupulous about the grace of God; He doesn’t choose men and women to be His because of what He hopes to obtain from them. There’s a little voice inside each of us that wants to boast about the Lord’s choice. Jesus, however, told His disciples, “You did not choose me but I chose you” (John 15:16), and St Paul added: “[God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:4-5) (PBC)

He keeps them at the rightful use of the Law by wholly removing boasting and trust in works, and he calls them to trust in grace alone, saying: “Not because all the nations, etc.” as though he were saying: “The fact that God uses your sword does not happen because He needs your power or because He cannot do it without you, since you are very few in number. The glory of the work is not yours, but His, who by using your small number destroys such a great multitude. Otherwise, if He had wanted to conquer with a multitude, He would not have chosen you but other peoples who are much more numerous than you. What, then, is left in this work about which you can boast? Nothing of yours; but “because the Lord [he says] chose you and kept His oath, etc.” (Luther)

treasured possession. See note on Ex 19:5 – The equivalent phrases used of Christians in 1Pe 2:9 are “chosen people” and “people belonging to God.” (CSB)

7:8 *because the LORD loved you.*† The “covenant of love” (vv. 9, 12) stems from God’s love for his people, as expressed in his covenant; it does not stem from the numerical greatness of the people or any virtue of theirs. His love must be reciprocated by his people (see vv. 9–10; 9:4–6; see also note on 6:5 – Love for God and neighbor (see Lev 19:18) is built on the love that the Lord has for his people (1Jn 4:19–21) and on his identification with them. Such love is to be total, involving one’s whole being.). (CSB)

You see that nothing is held out to human trust in any work but the undeserved love of God, by which He is moved to approach us with His Word and promise even before we are born. It is out of the question that He should requite anything after we are born or begin to serve Him. And this is the pure and unalloyed meaning of the First Commandment: We should deem ourselves to be nothing as regards our merit, but to have, receive, and find power to do everything only by His mercy and love, to His glory—mercy which He first promises by His Word and then also confirms afterward by a work which He does through us, as by a sign, just as here He cites the Exodus from Egypt and the destruction of the Canaanites. (Luther)

Therefore you will note that a great spirit is necessary to be able to destroy these things, adorned with the title of a divine name and worship, like the altars and observances of the Gentiles. Who would not be frightened or deceived when the divine name is presented? Yes, who would not become proud of that artificial piety? Certainly those Gentiles, as I have said, had not worshiped any God except the true one, but with a wrong worship and assumption invented by themselves, not prescribed by God. In truth it takes an even greater spirit not to glory in having ruined such worship, and not to set up an internal idol of a most empty trust in place of the external idol. So great a thing it is to know the true and only God purely, and to fear, worship, love, and believe genuinely in Him. Hence Moses has to use so many words to set forth the First Commandment. Therefore he repeats the words of the First Commandment here, saying: “Know that the Lord your God is a faithful God, keeping, etc.” (Luther)

Instead of saying, He hath chosen you out of love to your fathers, as in Deut 4:37, Moses brings out in this place love to the people of Israel as the divine motive, not for choosing Israel, but for leading it out and delivering it from the slave-house of Egypt, by which God had practically carried out the election of the people, that He might thereby allure the Israelites to a reciprocity of love. (KD)

7:9 *steadfast love*. Unlike sinful human beings, God fulfills each promise; He remains steadfast in His love toward those who love Him. (TLSB)

thousand generations. – In the treaty language of the ancient Near East the “love” owed to the great king was a conventional term for total allegiance and implicit trust expressing itself in obedient service. (CSB)

There are no time limits on God’s abundant mercy for those who love Him (Ex 34:7). (TLSB)

By this was Israel to know that Jehovah their God was the true God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant, showing mercy to those who love Him, even to the thousandth generation, but repaying those who hate Him to the face. This development of the nature of God Moses introduces from Ex 20:5-6, as a light warning not to forfeit the mercy of God, or draw upon themselves His holy wrath by falling into idolatry. (KD)

EPISTLE – Romans 8:28-39

Future Glory

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

8:28 *for those who love God.* Emphasized in Gk. Not people in general, but believers, who are loved by God first (5:8; 8:35, 37, 39; 1Jn 4:19). (TLSB)

the good. That which conforms us “to the likeness of his Son” (v. 29). (CSB)

Even the “accidents” of history are God working for our good. (TLSB)

No accident of history made us His; therefore there are no “accidents” in our history anymore. He was in charge, and He is in charge; all the “accidents” of history are His working for our good. (Franzmann)

All things, that also includes the suffering of the present time, serve the best interests of those who love God. For those who love Him God has prepared salvation, has promised eternal life. (1 Cor 2:9; James 1:12; 2:5). Our relation of love to God brings with it that God does everything for the welfare of those who love Him and endure all temptations, that He will finally give them eternal life and glory. Our love to God is never the basis of our salvation. (Stoekhardt)

called.† See v. 30; 1:6; the Holy Spirit calls through word and sacrament. (CSB)

Christians are these things by the calling of God, who “calls things that are not so that they are (Rom. 4:17). Those “called” are from Jews and Gentile; they are “my people,” “beloved,” “sons of the living God” (Rom. 9:24-26).

All men who have heard the Gospel are called, in the sense of invited. (Matt 20:16; 22:14) Most men reject this call and invitation of God. (Stoekhardt)

according to his purpose – God planned our salvation in advance. God planned our salvation in advance. Gk *prothesis*, eternal election in Paul’s writings (9:11; Eph 1:11; 3:11; 2Tm 1:9). The Spirit, in history, has called us by the Gospel (cf 1:7, 16–17). (TLSB)

8:29 *foreknew.*† Knowledge here is not abstract but is couched in love and mixed with purpose. God not only knew us before we had any knowledge of him, but he also knew us in the sense of choosing us by his grace, before the foundation of the world. (CSB)

Not referring to God’s advance knowledge of what will happen to good and evil people alike (which indeed He has), but to His gracious choice of those called, i.e., the elect (cf 1Pt 1:1–2). (TLSB)

Hosea can sum up all the Lord’s loving care for His people in their years of wandering with the words: “It was I who knew you in the wilderness” (Hos 13:5). Foreknow expresses not primarily the omniscience of God but a motion of the heart of God. (Franzmann)

predestined. Predestination here is to moral conformity to the likeness of his Son. (CSB)

God in grace alone made a decision beforehand (Eph 1:5, 11). (TLSB)

conformed – God makes us to be like Jesus, Himself the image of God (2Co 4:4; Col 1:15). (TLSB)

that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. The reason God foreknew, predestined and conformed believers to Christ’s likeness is that the Son might hold the position of highest honor in the great family of God. (CSB)

Gk *protokos*, signifies preeminence of the exalted Lord Jesus. (TLSB)

In God’s great family, in the mass of His perfect children, Christ should receive the position and honor of the Firstborn. He is the Captain of our salvation, who leads many to glory with Him. (Heb. 2:10) (Stoeckhardt)

8:30 *predestined ... glorified.*† The sequence by which God carries out his predestination. This teaching is basic to the scriptural truth that salvation comes only by God’s grace without any merit or assistance on our part. (CSB)

called – *kaleo* – a gracious and divine summons to salvation.

Justified – *dikaioo* – This is both legal and relational and causes a new relationship to him and our brothers.

glorified. Since this final stage is firmly grounded in God’s set purpose, it is as certain as if it had already happened. (CSB)

8:18–30 The Holy Spirit ministers to God’s dear children by giving us hope in our suffering, help in our weakness, and assurance that all things work out to fulfill God’s eternal purposes in our lives. When our hope in God dims, we easily succumb to impatience in distress. The Spirit helps us in our frailty, assuring us of God’s steadfast love. • Father in heaven, never leave or forsake us. Turn our complaints into prayers and our condemnation into glory. Amen. (TLSB)

God’s Everlasting Love

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be [i] against us? **32** 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? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” **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.

8:31-39 The assurance, hope, and comfort from the grace of God revealed through Jesus Christ is nowhere stated with greater confidence and exuberance than in this passage. A sermon on this text should lift every believer’s heart! Romans 8 contains a message of the new life in Christ filled with confidence that our gracious God is fully in control. As Spirit-filled children of God we can trustingly say, “Abba, Father” (v 15). Our text immediately follows a passage which reassures that God in his goodness not only chooses but also justifies and glorifies his people. By a series of rhetorical questions, some of which are replies to previous questions, Paul builds up his hearers in a crescendo of faith which is expressed in a

sublime, incomparable manner in the final verses. Some of the questions are couched in forensic language reminiscent of courts of law. The course of the argument calls to mind also the book of Job and Zechariah 3, both of which wrestle with the issue of justification and conclude with an affirmation of sola gratia and sola fide. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

8:31 *these things* – “This” (*tauta*, literally, “these things”) refers not only to the preceding discussion of God’s predestination, calling, justification, and glorification of his people (8:29–30), but also to the entire first 8 chapters of Romans. Paul has written a masterful exposition in which he first condemns the whole world of sin, Jew and Gentile alike (1:18–3:20), and then describes in detail the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ (3:21–6:23). He then addresses the subject of the sanctified life of the man of faith, the ongoing struggle with sin (chapter 7) and life in the Spirit (chapter 8). Paul now asks his readers to respond in joyful faith to this Law/Gospel message of condemnation, justification, and sanctification. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Rhetorical questions demanding a powerful, even defiant, challenge: “No one!” (TLSB)

The response of faith is implied by the rhetorical question: God is for us! This corresponds to the pro nobis (“for us”) emphasis in Lutheran theology. The man or woman of faith realizes that God has done all this “for us men and for our salvation” (Nicene Creed). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

If God is for us. The form of the condition makes it clear that there is no doubt about it. (CSB)

“God for us” is a three-word summary of redemptive history, that history of God’s free, elective love that culminated in the sending of His Servant and Son, called “Emmanuel, God with us” (Matt 1:23). (Franzmann)

Since we have God on our side, no one can hinder our salvation. (Stoekhardt)

8:32 The argument (from the greater to the lesser) here is similar to that in 5:9–10. If God gave the supreme gift of his Son to save us, he will certainly also give whatever is necessary to bring to fulfillment the work begun at the cross. See note on Ge 22:16. (CSB)

When God in these last days said once more and said climactically to His people and to all mankind, “I will be your God,” He wrote these words in blood. (Franzmann)

spared not – Just as Abraham did not withhold his only son (Gn 22:12, 16), so God gave His only Son (Jn 3:16). (TLSB)

The reference to God not sparing his Son is verbally similar to Gen 22:16, where Abraham did not spare Isaac and was willing to sacrifice him. Gen 22:2, 16 in turn are echoed in the Father’s words at Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration (Matt 3:17; 17:5 and parallels). Abraham’s near sacrifice of his one beloved son provides a sermon illustration of just how immense the love of God must be for him to have given his only Son. God wrote his promise of mercy and forgiveness in the blood of his Son. The word *paradidōmi*, “give up,” is used elsewhere of the sacrifice of Christ (Rom 4:25; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

God is not neutral. He is either for us or against us. Paul stipulates under what terms he is for us: Christ was given up for us, and is now risen and intercedes for us on the basis of his atonement. This is the basis for Christian assurance. No danger or trouble can make the believer forget the love of Christ and his consequent actions on their behalf. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The logical analysis of human experience using human wisdom and the “law” of cause and effect leads to the conclusion that things happen in life randomly. Life is without purpose or meaning. This is the conclusion of many agnostic and atheistic philosophers, as well as biological scientists following the theory of evolution. Then follows the decision to “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” (Is 22:13; Luke 12:19; 1 Cor 15:32), a kind of hedonism and materialism often blatant in our society today. Only reliance on the sovereignty and grace of God can give the kind of assurance this passage in Romans expresses. Without Christ, God would be against us; in Christ, he is for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

gave him up – Gk “handed over.” Judas (Jn 18:5), the chief priests and elders (Mt 27:2), the people of Jerusalem (Ac 3:13), and Pilate (Mk 15:15) all handed over, betrayed, and delivered Jesus. But here, God delivers Him over to death (4:25; cf Is 53:6, 12) (TLSB)

for us. “God for us” is a “three-word summary of redemptive history” (Franzmann, p 157). (TLSB)

all things – Another rhetorical question. Everything belonging to God’s Son now also belongs, by grace, to believers, truly co-heirs. (TLSB)

8:33–34 A court of law is in mind. No charge can be brought against the Christian because God has already pronounced a verdict of not guilty. (CSB)

8:33 *bring any charge* – Using legal language, Paul asks what prosecutor can bring any charges against the elect. The answer: none; the case is closed. God has declared the defendant not guilty! (TLSB)

God’s elect? Those whom God has graciously chosen from eternity. (TLSB)

The “elects” innocence and inviolability is grounded in the eternal and unchangeable designs of God. (Franzmann)

Christians do have enemies who accuse them. They are all hostile power, as Satan, the world and the flesh. (Stoekhardt)

justifies. “The word *justify* means ... ‘to absolve, that is, to declare free from sins’ ” (FC Ep III 7). (TLSB)

Only God himself could bring charges against his elect, but he himself has justified us by the sacrifice of his Son. The Judge is himself the Redeemer! Because of Christ, our record before God is clean. We are exonerated! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

8:34 *who is to condemn* – The worst enemy of our salvation is sin, which still clings to us. It gives our adversaries occasion for accusation and condemnation. Yet, this proof of guilt is invalidated through Christ’s death, atonement and intercession. (Stoekhardt)

Christ Jesus ... hand of God. Because Christ, our Savior, died for our sins, was raised by God for our justification (4:25), and has been exalted to God’s throne on high, we know that there is “now no condemnation” (v 1). (TLSB)

interceding for us – From Christ’s heavenly office “as the Mediator, Atoning Sacrifice, High Priest, and Intercessor” before God, “He has promised that He will hear our prayer” and that this is “the worship

He approves above all other worship, that He be called upon in all afflictions” (AC XXI 2–3; cf 1Jn 2:1). (TLSB)

Christ’s intercession in the presence of God is taught in Heb 7:25 and reflected in 1 Jn 2:1 (“advocate with the Father”). That the Suffering Servant “will make intercession” is taught in Is 53:12.

Christ now sits at the right hand of God; He has the same power, honor and Godhead as God. Therefore, when He intercedes with God for us, when He entreats for us when we sin, the goal of this intercession is certainly also reached. Christ’s intercession is the continuous urging of His bloody merit before God. (Stoekhardt)

† Three reasons are given as to why no one can condemn God’s elect: (1) Christ died for us; (2) he is alive and at the right hand of God, the position of power; (3) he is interceding for us. (CSB)

Who dares dispute the verdict of this judge, who is both Judge and Deliverer on the men whom He has chosen? Beside the Judge is He who shares His throne, the Christ, the anointed King. (Franzmann)

Because most punctuation marks are absent from the oldest NT manuscripts, it is unclear whether the second half of v 34 is a question or an assertion. It seems more consistent with the sense to take it as an assertion, just as the question in v 33 is followed by an assertion. If God acquits, who can condemn? The resurrection of Christ is the proof of our acquittal, and it is his sacrifice on our behalf that Jesus pleads for us at the Father’s right hand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

8:35–39 Paul wanted to show his readers that suffering does not separate believers from Christ but actually carries them along toward their ultimate goal. (CSB)

8:35 *who will separate us from the love of Christ* – Rhetorical questions with mounting intensity. The same answer follows—“nothing and no one!” (TLSB)

Shall tribulation ... sword? Paul lists seven things that threaten to come between us and Christ’s love—all of which Paul himself experienced. Cf 2Co 11:16–33. (TLSB)

The list of seven trials were faced by Christians through the ages. Some believe the list of seven represents an actual inventory of challenges endured by first-century Christians, Paul among them. (LL)

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to see in the seven nouns which follow the compressed history of a Christian martyrdom. There is first, (1) “tribulation” (literally, pressure), the constant pressure of a pagan society against whose culture, religion, and morals the Christian life is a perpetual witness. The comes (2) “distress” (literally, “narrowness”); the pressure mounts to (3) enmity, and the place in which the Christian dwells has no room for him. (4) He flees and is pursued (5) persecution”. His pursuers press him hard, (6) “peril”, and he is overtaken. At the end, the (7) “sword” of the Roman executioner awaits him. (Franzmann)

Paul asks a penetrating question: can something, anything, separate us from the magnificent love of God he has so eloquently described? While it is possible for individuals to reject the objective justification Christ has accomplished for them, believers can rest assured that no external force, event, or circumstance can force them to do so. To make his point Paul lists seven nouns that name the dangers believers will encounter: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword. Paul himself had endured all of them except the last, and that lay before him. Historians agree that Paul likely was

beheaded under the Roman emperor Nero in A. D. 64 or 65, about 8 years after writing Romans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

John 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

John 15:4 “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

8:36 Ps 44:22 is quoted to show that suffering has always been part of the experience of God’s people. (CSB)

God’s people were troubled, almost to despair, by the suffering they endured—a temptation familiar to all God’s people. (TLSB)

Paul then quotes Ps 44:22 to show that the suffering of believers is no accident; the faithful in the OT likewise were persecuted because of their God. Since suffering is prophesied by Scripture, Paul’s readers are assured that God is in control. Their suffering does not mean that they are separated from the love of God, since throughout history suffering has been the common experience of believers who have received God’s love. Tribulations, far from contradicting God’s love, may paradoxically be signs of God’s care. Modern dangers that Christians face include pressure, scorn, and ridicule from a society whose lifestyle contrasts so definitely with Christian commitment. There are also dangers common to believers and unbelievers alike, such as hunger, lack of shelter, natural disasters, tragedies, and violence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

1 Peter 2:20 “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”

8:37 *conquerors* – Heightened form of Gk *nikao*, “to prevail completely.” (TLSB)

The new people of God can also renew their strength at those same wells of life from which the psalmist drew, the wells of the “steadfast love of God” (Ps.44:26; cf 44:3). (Franzmann)

Paul promises even more! Literally, he says that we will be “hyper-victorious” or “super-conquerors.” That, however, is no credit to us, because it will not come about by anything we do. It will not be accomplished by our love and devotion for the Lord. Rather, it is entirely the other way around. We’re conquerors “through him who loved us.” when it is his love that carries the day. (PBC)

who loved us. Referring especially to Christ’s death on the cross. (CSB)

To the point of death on the cross (5:6–8). Christ gained total victory for us. (TLSB)

How great is the contrast between the trials and tribulations of this life and the glorious future in God’s very presence! How vast the difference between the confident faith that affirms “we are more than conquerors” and the feeble hearts we often have at the moment the storms of life strike us. Yet no matter how weak we may be, we are confident of victory, not because of our own strength, but through the power of “him who loved us” and who conquered all, even death, for us. Years ago Karl Barth said, “in his love our love celebrates its victory.” It is in our very defeat, in our weakness, and in our time of

greatest need that the victory of Christ Jesus, who died, rose, and intercedes at God's right hand for us, aids us most. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

8:38-39 Paul hints at mysterious powers that seek to wreak havoc and chaos in our world. Our true battle is against these demonic powers of evil that threaten to engulf us and destroy our lives (Eph 6:12). But Paul assures us that whatever there may be in all creation that haunts or threatens to overwhelm us is subject to the Creator. Because of God's surpassing grace in Jesus Christ, nothing of human or diabolic devising, none of the terrors of human existence "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Tenfold list is all-embracing inventory of superhuman realities that threaten, in vain, to break the grip of Christ's love. (See FC SD XI 48-49.) (TLSB)

8:38 Each suffering undergone has made our hope more sure. It is like building up an immunity to a illness. (Franzmann)

angels ... rulers ... powers. Unseen cosmic forces. Though created by God (Col 1:16), they now stand in opposition to God's eternal purpose because of the fall (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16). They threaten to separate us from Christ's love, but Christ has triumphed over them (Eph 1:20-23; Col 2:15). (TLSB)

In the NT, ἄγγελος is regularly used for an "angel," that is, a spiritual being who serves as *God's* messenger. But this is not exclusively the case.

The word "angels" can be used of evil spirits, angels that kept not their first estate (*cf.* Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). But it is questionable if the term "angel" without any further qualification is ever used in the New Testament of evil spirits.

δυνάμεις—This unpaired form is the nominative plural of δύναμις. While its basic meaning is "power," as in 1:16, the plural form and the context indicate that "some kind of spiritual forces are denoted here." (CC)

Romans 5:3-5, "³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

8:39 *neither height nor depth.* It is impossible to get beyond God's loving reach. (CSB)

Perhaps it is best to leave the meaning more general, referring "height" and "depth" to the geographical framework of our lives. The meaning would be: no power from on high has power to destroy us; the sun shall not smite us by day nor the moon by night (Ps. 121:6). No power from below has power to harm us really; the earth which spews forth lava or quakes and opens up beneath our feet is no terror to us now, nor are the depths of the sea. (Franzmann)

nor anything else in all creation. Includes all created things. Only God is not included, and he is the one who has justified us (v. 33). (CSB)

8:31-39 Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation at God's right hand guarantees our victory over anything and everything that would separate us from His love. When following Christ brings distress, we sometimes distance ourselves from Him. But Christ never draws back from us. • Lord Jesus, though You are exalted at the Father's right hand, You still hold us. Keep us in Your love to the end. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 13:44-52

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

13:44-52 Jesus told these last four parables, found only in Matthew, to His disciples. (TLSB)

13:44–45 These two parables teach the same truth: The kingdom is of such great value that one should be willing to give up all he has in order to gain it. Jesus did not imply that one can purchase the kingdom with money or good deeds. (CC)

[THE ABOVE PARAGRAPH REFLECTS WHAT MANY COMMENTATORS HOLD. WHAT FOLLOWS IS FROM CONCORDIA COMMENTARY BY JEFF GIBBS AND GIVES A DIFFERENT PICTURE.]

In the twentieth century, a few scholars have advocated, in various forms, a Christological reading of either the Hidden Treasure or the Pearl of both. Their voices, however, are few and far between. Virtually all commentators known to me have read these stories as intended to describe or motivate the reader to discipleship and commitment in following Christ, in seeking God’s grace, or some such understanding. (CC)

The theme of the valued object that a person purchases at the cost of everything else that he possesses speaks not just of the value of the object involved, but specifically about how the object is obtained. In the face of this repeated and emphatic theme that interpreters – especially Christian interpreters – typically retreat. Christian interpreters who hold to the discipleship reading of 13:44-46 are compelled to dilute the natural force of this remarkable, repeated language, and for obvious reasons. No one wants to say that the parables teach that disciples are (able) to purchase the reign or Christ or anything else for their own salvation. (CC)

I have tried to accept the discipleship reading of these two parables, but I find myself unable to do so because a simple yet very strong argument can be marshaled in favor of a Christological interpretation. I begin with a crucially important (if somewhat obvious) comment. The reign of heaven/God concerns what God is doing to reestablish His reign in His fallen creation through Jesus of Nazareth. By definition, the “reign” (Basileia) primarily involves the great saving deeds of God in Christ. (CC)

Whenever a reign parable has a lone human figure acting in the symbolic narrative, that figure always represents (more generally) God or (specifically) Jesus, and when there are multiple characters with one in central position always represents God/Jesus. The reign of God has to do chiefly with what God is doing in Israel and in the world through Jesus, and so the reign parables are centered in the present and future deeds of God in Christ. (CC)

I underscore that the repeated language is not that of merely leaving or forsaking. It is the language of exchange and purchase. (CC) [DO TO LENGTH I HAVE SKIPPED THREE PARALLELS GIBBS USES AS EXAMPLES. IF YOU WANT TO SEE THEM, PLEASE CONTACT ME.]

I may summarize the argument in favor of a Christological reading of 13:44-46. The reign of God is about what God is doing in Jesus. The reign parables, especially when they involve a sole figure who acts, reveals something about what Jesus Himself is doing in His eschatological ministry of deeds and words. (CC)

But what about the instinctive move of the discipleship reading to equate the reign of God in Christ or some such reality with the valuable object in each parable? With regard to the only other occurrence of the term “pearl” in Matthew’s Gospel, I have argued there that is precisely one’s fellow disciples who are to be regarded as holy and pearl-like. (CC)

I have suggested above that if the man/merchant in 13:44-46 represents Christ in His deeds of manifesting the reign of God, then Jesus’ chosen disciples are the treasure and the pearl. This part of the parables’ symbolic meaning, in my experience in teaching, seems to strike people as remarkable. Many Christians recoil, finding it impossible to swallow. On the basic theological level, however, this image is simple an expression of divine grace. Jesus’ disciples – then and now – are clearly nothing special in themselves. In God’s royal rule and economy, however, they are to their Father as a treasure and a pearl. (CC)

Supporting exegetical evidence is not difficult to find. In the interpretation of the Weed of the Field that immediately precedes these two parables, the eschatological destiny of the righteous is to “shine forth like the sun (shines forth) in the reign of their Father” (13:43). Having been called by Jesus to believe and follow, His disciples are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (5:13-16). Moreover, Jesus’ disciples, centered in the Twelve, are the nucleus of the new/true Israel. The OT theme of Israel as God’s “precious possession” (Ex 19:5; Deut 14:2; 26:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17; Ps 135:4) provides additional scriptural background and precedent for reading the valued object in Mt 13:44-46 as Jesus’ disciples. At least one early rabbinic parable gives voice to a similar expression. By God election, OT Israel was a treasure to Him. By Jesus’ call and forgiveness, His disciples are like a treasure and an exceedingly valuable pearl. (CC)

I can summarize my proposed interpretation of 13:44-46 to this point. In the context in which opposition is rising and discouragement is close at hand for Jesus’ disciples, He tells them two small stories. What Jesus is accomplishing in restoring God’s reign in Israel and the world is compared to the action of a man who because he had found an object of great value, extravagantly sold all that he possessed in order to purchase that valued object and to make it his own, Jesus Himself is the man. To use language from elsewhere in the NT, He gave up the glory He possessed from eternity past as He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant in His incarnation (see John 17:5; Phil 2:6-7). His entire ministry, culminating in His death and resurrection, can be compared to the extravagant action of purchasing. The object of His desire and affection is His disciples; they are to Him as a treasure and an exceedingly valuable pearl. They do not, therefore, need to fear that they will be overwhelmed or taken from Him by the forces arrayed against them in Galilee or anywhere (cf. John 10:28-29). He has made them His own, and He will make them His own, giving everything in order to purchase them (cf. Rom 8:31-39). (CC)

In to search out the meaning of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl, I have focused on the common refrain of selling everything and buying, arguing that this is a picture of what Jesus’ ministry of bringing the reign of heaven is all about. In line with this, I have argued that the valued object in each parable is a symbol for the disciples of Jesus. I would suggest that perhaps only one more motif found in these parables is intended for theological interpretation, precisely because it connects well with the context. (CC)

I do not think it is significant that in the Hidden Treasure the man purchases the entire field. To be sure, this action could be read as a symbol for Christ giving His life for all, and not just for

some. The context in Matthew 13, however, is precisely emphasizing the distinction between the disciples and the crowds. The theme of Christ's universal atonement, while a true doctrine, seems not to be an emphasis here. I also agree with the many who think that nothing should be made of the fact that the man apparently does not tell the field's former owner about the treasure hidden there. Nor can anything be made of the detail in the Pearl that the merchant was searching for fin pearls (in the plural). All of these features are there simply to adorn the telling of the stories. (CC)

I refer to the repeated theme of hiddenness in the field in the Hidden Treasure. It is mentioned twice: the treasure is hidden in the field before the man finds it, and after he finds it, he hides it again! In addition, Matthew has already given his hearer/readers the Weed of the Field in which the field is interpreted as the world, as well as the Mustard Seed in which one could infer that the field is the world. To what in the neat context does the motif of hiddenness in the field relate? (CC)

It relates to the disciples themselves and their lives as those whom the seed has been sown in a world that, in their experience, is increasingly rising up against the Sower-Master. The context both immediately before and after Matthew 13 is filled with discouraging news. Nor will the situation change radically as Jesus' ministry continues; the opposition will intensify. This is precisely why I have argue that the impact of the four units that comprise 13:36-50 is one of encouragement for the disciples. They are "buried" in Galilee, following as increasingly unpopular Lord. No matter, however. They are secure, for their Lord has gone – and will go – to extraordinary lengths to secure them as His own. (CC)

The message and the impact of the Hidden Treasure and the Mustard Seed can be the same for the disciples of Jesus today. Those parables bring an image and a message of assurance and comfort. The man/merchant did whatever it took in order to possess what he valued so highly, even to the point of selling everything he had. So has Jesus done what needed to be done to possess His holy Christian church on earth today. Though we disciples may often feel buried under the challenges and dangers presented by our own sinful flesh, by the hostile world around us, and by the great enemy and father of lies, there need be no doubt that we belong to Jesus. WE have been acquired. Christ has purchased us at the price of everything that He had. In the breathtaking reckoning of grace, we are as a treasure to him. Secure in that confidence, we can continue to follow Him. (CC)

13:44 *treasure hidden in a field* – In ancient times it was common to hide treasure in the ground since there were no banks—though there were “bankers” (Mt 25:27). (CSB)

Different interpretations of this short parable exist. One may naturally see the man as any man and the treasure as the kingdom he discovers. However, a more Christological interpretation describes the field as the world, the treasure as you (the hearer), and the man as Christ, who gives up the glory of heaven to win you. (TLSB)

The Word of God and its precious Gospel are very available to people but are completely hidden and meaningless until God himself reveals the meaning. It was a common practice for a wealthy person at that time to divide his wealth into thirds. One part he would keep in cash for carrying on business transactions. Another part he would invest in precious stones and jewels, which he could easily take with him if he ever had to flee from an advancing enemy army. The third part he would bury in the ground somewhere, hoping to dig it up and reclaim it when he was able to come back home. Of course, such a person did not always come home, and his buried treasure's location might not be known to anyone else. Evidently, the man in this parable happened to find such a treasure. He very likely was not even looking for it. (PBC)

In Palestine people often secured their treasure by burying it in the ground, especially when unstable political situations threatened for foreign conquest. (LL)

The Kingdom of Heaven has hidden value, and is, in its outward manifestation, unobtrusive and unpretending, but is withal the highest and eternal blessing. Nothing can be likened to the salvation in Jesus for the human soul. (Ylvisaker)

covered it up – This does not mean that it was meaningless to him but that he prized it very highly.

In his joy he goes – chara – This is used 59 times in the NT. Except for its use in an axiom (Jn 15:21) it is never used of unregenerate man. It is used often of the joy of faith, especially in trying circumstances and deep sorrow.

Sells all that he has – Read Philippians 3:2-11. Of all Jews Paul could have based his relationship to God on earthly prerogatives and works more than any other Jew. But when God revealed the Gospel to him, Paul considered all previous gain loss, dung, manure. He had found the righteousness of God which came to him by faith, quite apart from works and human worthiness. When he came upon it he recognized its value. Without hesitation, he sold all his possessions so that he could buy the field and the treasure it contained.

13:45-46 In contrast to the previous parable, this merchant was busily seeking to discover fine pearls. When he found one perfect in size, shape, and color, he sold all he had and bought it. (TLSB)

13:45 *again* – If the hidden Treasure and the Goodly Pearl are treated together in one text, the P.C. would be: AS the treasure and pearl were supremely valuable, so the value of the Kingdom surpasses all else, The C.T. might be: “Jesus, Priceless Treasure.” (Sermon Theory II)

Pearls were very much prized by the ancient world because of their beauty and value. (LL)

The buried treasure and the costly pearl both represent the kingdom of God or Christ the Savior, who established that kingdom and rules over it with the gospel. That kingdom is more precious than anything else in the world, and only those who are received into that kingdom can correctly evaluate their other possessions. Those who recognize God’s kingdom as the ultimate good will judge their other possessions on the basis of their usefulness in supporting and extending Christ’s kingdom. That is the main purpose we are to serve in this world. (PBC)

merchant – emporos is a merchant who travels far and wide to buy wares. The dealer in costly pearls made it his business to search far and wide for the finest pearls. When he found a pearl more perfect in size and shape and color than he had ever seen before, he just had to have that pearl. So he also sold all his possessions in order to buy that single pearl. (PBC)

13:46 *finding* – euron is used precisely as in verse 44. Though he was seeking, he comes upon, accidentally finds. Some people of today may come upon the pearl of great price while they are searching for pearls of much lesser value among the writings of the great thinkers and philosophers of this world. They do not even know that the perfect pearl exists. Once they have found it, however, and the Holy Spirit has convinced them of its value, they realize that the gospel of Christ is in a class by itself, that it is the only way of salvation for sinners. (PBC)

There are about 160 million unchurched in the USA. The most unbelievable statistic is that 80 million of these people would be willing to come to church if they were invited. (The Unchurched Next Door – Thom Rainer)

went – apethon means that he has ceased searching. The dealer in costly pearls made it his business to search far and wide for the finest pearls. When he found a pearl more perfect in size and shape and color than he had ever seen before, he just had to have that pearl. So he also sold all his possessions in order to buy that single pearl. (PBC)

sold that he had and bought it – Just as the two men in these parable sold everything they had in order to purchase what they found, so the kingdom of God must be bought for all of us. But the price is much more than we could possible pay. The whole world would not be payment enough for a single soul. The filthy rags of our own personal righteousness could not even begin to make a down payment. The only possible solution was for someone else to pay the price for us, and the only one who could do that was God’s holy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The price he paid was his own holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. Now he offers us all the blessings of his kingdom for time and eternity as gifts of his grace. He bought and paid for these blessings in full, not for himself but for us. And we do not lose these treasures when we share them. The more we give them away, the more richly we possess them ourselves. (PBC)

13:44–46 In the parables of both the hidden treasure and the precious pearl, Jesus reinforces this basic truth: earthly possessions cannot compare with the immense value and cost of God’s kingdom. We must not press the details of these parables to say that one can buy entrance into God’s kingdom by sacrificing all possessions. We inherit the kingdom by grace through faith in Christ, who purchased and redeemed us with His precious blood. • Heavenly Father, grant me Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)

The Parable of the Net

47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13:47–51 The parable of the net teaches the same general lesson as the parable of the weeds: There will be a final separation of the righteous and the wicked. The parable of the weeds also emphasizes that we are not to try to make such a separation now and that this is entirely the Lord’s business (vv. 28–30, 41–42). (CSB)

The strengthening message of the Dragnet, however, aims in a somewhat different direction than the Weeds of the Field. In the latter, Jesus’ words give the ability to carry on while accepting that the community of Jesus’ disciples will always be an imperfect, flawed, frustrating reality. There will never be a time when wheat and weeds are not intertwined here in the world, but do not lose heart; the time when all things are put right will surely come. (CC)

In the Dragnet, however, Jesus’ teaching imparts strength to carry out the mission mandate that the Master has given in the first place to the Twelve (chapter 10) and in general terms to all disciples (5:13-16). The image of the net gathering in sea creatures of every kind inevitably evokes the original call of Jesus: “come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men” (4:18-22). The mission must and will go on, through Jesus’ words and deeds and those of His disciples after Him, calling people to salvation and discipleship. All kinds of sea creatures will be gathered into the visible community, both good and rotten, but what of that? The angels will sort it out on the great day. Jesus’ disciples only are not lose

heart, and to carry on as they follow Him in His outreach to Israel and ultimately to all nations (28:18-20). (CC)

13:47 *the kingdom of heaven* – Again is the Gospel, here compared to a net.

The sea is humanity, the net is the Word of the Gospel. Where this Word is proclaimed in its purity, there is a church, however composite in its constituency. (Ylvisaker)

like a net – Fishermen used a dragnet, which was a square net with cords at each corner. It was weighted so that, at rest, it hung upright in the water. When the boat began to move, the net was drawn into the shape of a great cone into which all kinds of fish were drawn. The net was dragged to shore, and the catch was separated. (LL)

A dragnet was drawn through the water between two boats and onto the shore. When the net was full, edible and inedible fish were sorted from one another. (TLSB)

13:48 *into containers* – Into safe keeping and not thrown back into the dangers of the sea.

13:48 *threw away the bad* – *sapra* means the worthless. (QV)

13: 49-50 Jesus interpreted this parable in a way similar to the parable of the weeds (cf. vv. 37-43). However, the weeds were allowed to grow over a period of time, whereas there was no delay in the sorting of the fish. Both parables teach clearly that God’s rule includes a final judgment at the close of this age. (TLSB)

13:49 WILL BE AT THE END – Very similar to verse 41-43, but this time there is no mentions of the gathering of the righteous into heaven. This parable ends only on a note of warning. Luther said: “When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said ‘Repent ye’ he meant that the whole life of the Christian must be one of repentance.” The Kingdom of God, Christ and his merciful Gospel, is present in the Word.

13:47–50 Jesus’ parable illustrates what will happen at the close of the age. Believers need not worry about that day, for God is gracious to us through His Son, our Savior, in whom we are chosen (Eph 1:4). • Let not my heart be troubled, dear Lord, by thoughts of the final judgment. I know that You have prepared a place for me in heaven. Amen. (TLSB)

New and Old Treasures

51 “Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” 52 And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

13:51 *have you understood* – *Sunakate* means “have you gain insight into these things.

The disciples had earlier asked Jesus to explain the parable of the weeds (v. 36). Now Jesus asked them whether they understood, something that was vital for a disciples (cf. vv 13-15, 19, 23). In saying “yes” would later show that their confident answer was overstated (15:16). (TLSB)

13:52 *every scribe...been instructed* – Literally “has become a disciple.” Jesus trained disciples so that they could make disciples of others (28:19-20). (TLSB)

master – Owner of the house. (TLSB)

brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old – This speaks of all true teachers, be they pastors or laymen. They know the lesson that they have been taught is the past and add new as they continue to be in the Word. (CC)

The disciple who understands these things, then will have a treasure-store of wisdom and truth that comes from the Christ, who fulfills the OT Scriptures, and therefore from those Scriptures as well. (CC)

Fresh food items and aged ones, such as cheese and wine. (TLSB)

13:51–52 With this parable, Jesus encourages His disciples to imitate the master of a house who brings out food for his family and guests. Jesus had trained His disciples to be teachers for the kingdom of heaven. In their teaching, they were to bring out both old and new. Without giving up the OT, they were to add the NT. The OT needed to be understood on the basis of the new revelation that they had received from the Father (11:25). Christian pastors, teachers, and students of God’s Word continue to follow this practice today. All the Holy Scriptures teach Law and Gospel and “are able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2Tm 3:15). • Lord, keep me steadfast in Your Word, and lead me out of death to life. Amen. (TLSB)