

Romans 8 (Part 4): 31-39 - Nothing Can Separate

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Before we get started here, I want to ask you a quick question. If I were to hand you a piece of paper with some numbers 1 to 10, and I asked you to mark on that piece of paper where your confidence in God's love would be. Don't speak it out but where or what would you circle? What would you highlight on that? 1 being the least confident in the love of God. 10 being the most confident in the love of God. Just think about that for just a moment.

The reason I bring up that question is because, in this chapter and in the end of this chapter, the verses we'll be looking at here today, Paul is going to be talking a lot about your confidence in God's love. And I believe that his attempt, or his part, is to raise that number, if perhaps, it isn't a 10 for you today.

We go through things, sometimes, don't we that causes us to be shaken a little bit in terms of our confidence in God's love. And things happen in our lives, we watch other people go through circumstances that are very, very challenging, very trying, very painful, and we're like, oh man. And we're tempted, even as believers, we're tempted to say, if God loves us then why is this happening? Sort of a thing. It's a temptation. It's a very real temptation.

Let's see what the Lord can do to speak to us along those lines here this morning. Let's read the verses, we're going to be picking it up in verse 31 and reading to the end of the chapter. You can follow along as I read and then we'll pray and ask the Lord to open our hearts. Verse 31.

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be 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.”* (ESV) Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word today and let this Word just really permeate all who we are. Lord in order to really grasp things that are given to us in the Scripture. We need your Holy Spirit to awaken our spiritual ears, our spiritual eyes, literally our spiritual heart, that it might be receptive. It can get pretty thorn-filled during the course of a given week.

We pray Lord God that you would just move all that junk aside so that we’re not going to be hindered in any way from hearing what You need to say to us today. Teach us Lord God, we pray. In Jesus’ precious name, amen.

I don’t know if you counted how many actual questions there are just in these last verses of Romans Chapter 8 but there’s a lot. And Paul begins in verse 31 with the question, *“What then shall we say about these things,”* which obviously assumes you know what those things are.

Well, these things are what he’s been saying pretty much since the beginning of this chapter and frankly since the beginning of this book. But just for a short quick summary we’ll just put a little list here just to remind you of the things that he’s been talking about. Such as - you’ll remember in verse 1, we started off with,

- There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (8:1)
- We have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (8:15)
- We are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (8:17)
- ...the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (8:18)
- ...the Spirit helps us in our weakness...(and)...intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (18:26)

- ...those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... (8:29)

There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. He also said, he told us in verse 15, that we *have received the Spirit of adoption* (right?) *as sons*, (and through that Spirit) we cry, “*Abba! Father!*” That personal relationship with God.

He told us in verse 17, that, “*we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.*” A virtual mind-blowing truth. In verse 18, he told us that the sufferings of our life aren't even worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits us one day. That's a keeper, isn't it?

And he also went on to tell us in verse 26 that, the Holy Spirit is our helper. He helps us in weakness. He also intercedes for us with groanings that words don't even begin to convey.

And then finally, in verse 29, Paul told us that, “*...those whom... (God) foreknew he also predestined to... (a future of being) conformed into the image of his Son,*” Jesus Christ. Wow, it's like, I mean, how do you get better than that?

It's just amazing. This is just like; it's like truth after truth after truth he just lays on us and we're just blown away by it all, and so he begins again this section that we're looking at today. So, what do we say in response to all these things? What do you say? You just go, I don't know what you say. I just go, wow!

But Paul actually responds to that question with another question, and that is, in verse 31. “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” Amen. Let's go home. I mean, it kind of almost sounds like that. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Now, you've got to be careful here. Now, Paul isn't saying that you and I don't need to be diligent, and there aren't enemies to try to trip us up along the way, right? That's not what he's saying. He's not trying to lure you and I into some kind of false sense of security in that we don't have to be mindful of the fact that there's an enemy that prowls around. You remember when Peter actually said that? I'll put that on the screen for you.

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV84)

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

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That's a reminder from Peter's first letter to you and I, to be self-controlled and alert because our enemy, right, what's he doing? He's prowling around like a lion seeking, looking for those whom he might devour. And then you'll remember that Paul also said to the Ephesians, he said, hey, don't give any opportunity to the devil. Be careful not to give him a foothold.

Ephesians 4:27 (ESV)

...give no opportunity to the devil.

...give no opportunity to the devil.

You see, there are warnings in the Word of God for you, and I, related to our need to be diligent and watchful because there is an enemy that is attempting to not just give us a bad day. He's trying to take us out of the game. So, if that's the case, then what is Jesus saying here then, or excuse me, what is Paul saying when he says, if God is for us, who can be against us?

Well, what he's saying is, there is nothing in life that can happen to you that can rob you of what God ultimately intends for you, and the reason is because God is the greatest power there is.

Who's going to overrule Him? That's really what Paul's saying. He's saying, hey, if God's power is working on your behalf, who's going to one up Him? Who's going to overrule Him? Who's going to strong arm God into taking away, or be what He has in store for you? It's not possible, you see. Right?

When you're the strongest guy on the block, there's nobody else that can get to you and that describes the Lord. Paul explains it this way. Look in verse 32 in your Bible. This is another way of saying it. *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously now give us all things?"*

You know what this means? It means you've already been given the greatest gift. And if you've already been given the greatest gift, you think He's going to like, be stingy with lesser gifts? Right?

If He's given you the highest thing He can give you. If He's paid the highest price for you and I in the person of His Son, you think He's going to fiddle

around with any other sort of thing, I mean a lesser price? That's what Paul is saying. You've already been given the best. You think He's going to be stingy with the rest?

Here's another angle. Verse 33 in your Bible, *“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (or acquits) ³⁴ Who is (going) to condemn?”*

Do you understand that God is the Supreme Court? I mean, He is the Supreme Court. Man likes to come up with his own idea of a Supreme Court, but we know He's not the Supreme Court. God is the ultimate Supreme Court. And as the ultimate Supreme Court, He passes down decisions and He has passed down a decision concerning you. Do you know what that decision is? You've been acquitted. You've been acquitted of your sin, of the penalty of your sin and the wrongdoing connected to it.

You've been acquitted. Now, if the Supreme Court, and I mean the Supreme Court, has handed down a decision acquitting you of all wrongdoing, who's going to bring a charge, and have it stick? It doesn't mean the enemy's not going to bring a charge.

But the point here is, who is going to bring a lasting charge and make it stick? Nobody! You've already been acquitted! You accuse somebody who's already been acquitted, and the judge is going to say excuse me. Weren't you listening? They're acquitted. Right? It's a done deal.

And that's what Paul is saying here. He says, who's going to bring a charge? Jesus? Heavens no. He's the one who died for you that you might be acquitted. He's not going to bring a charge against you. No, Jesus, He was in fact, he goes on to say here in this verse, He was raised from the dead to prove that you were acquitted of your sin. And you do know, don't you, that His resurrection is proof positive that God the Father accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, right?

His resurrection proves to you and I, boom, it's done. It's over. And not only that, Paul ends that verse by saying, not only is Jesus not going to charge you, He's actually standing before the Father, praying for you. Isn't that a crazy thought?

You know what? In this chapter alone we have discovered, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the apostle Paul has written to you and I in saying that not only does the Holy Spirit pray for you and I in words that have

no human match but Jesus Christ Himself also prays before the Father at all times for you and I.

Isn't that amazing? It really is amazing. Well, okay, this has all been pretty sweet, and up to this point, the Apostle, as you've noticed, has been painting a very positive picture for you and I as it relates to our lives in Christ and he, like I said, he started off the chapter with some really good news. There's no condemnation for us now who are in Christ Jesus. And this whole chapter has been really just one good news after another. And it might lead you to believe, wow, we Christians, we live a pretty charmed life actually.

But lest you misunderstand what he is saying here, he is not telling you and I that when you become a Christian, you live a charmed life. In fact, sometimes when you become a Christian, your life really heats up, right?

I mean, I've known a lot of Christians, I mean, sin was, it created its own issues and troubles and problems in their life. Then they started walking with Jesus. Suddenly they had this devil on their back chasing them around every corner and trying to get them to fall at every turn and tempting them.

And then the world and the temptations that go with that and the ruts and addictions of their own lives that haunted and hounded them along the way and they're like, this is hard. And it's like, yeah, this is this can be really hard. The fact of the matter is the life that you and I live every day is filled with sadness. It's filled with immeasurable pain. It's filled with heartache, difficulty, and that's the fact of the matter.

Lest anybody think up to this point that the Apostle Paul is suggesting that those in Christ don't deal with those issues, he then goes on in verse 35 to ask this question, Who, or more precisely, *"What, shall separate us from the love of Christ?"*

Now stop there. This is a verse that people have hung on to and clung to many times throughout the difficulties of their life. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Wonderful, glorious verse. But let's ask the question before we dig a little bit further into this. Let's ask this question. What does he mean? What does he mean when he says that? Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Is that the same thing as me saying to my wife, I'll always love you? Doesn't matter, honey.

Doesn't matter what happens. If your teeth and your hair fall out. It's more likely to happen to me, don't worry about that. But is that what Paul is saying

here? Is this, is it a warm, fuzzy? Like, hey, it's okay, no matter what. God loves you. Because if that's all He means, that rings a little hollow. I mean, if it's that human form of just, always love you, man. I know it's hard. I know you're going through really, really difficult things, but I love you.

My love is with you, man. No. I want to submit to you that what Paul is intending to communicate in this verse, when he says nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, it is so much more than you and I simply saying to each other, I will always love you. It is basically Paul trying to communicate to you that in this life of difficulty, which we've already admitted, life is hard. That in this life of heartache and pain and distress, that no matter how bad it gets, no matter how many things may assault you in this life, nothing can frustrate or hinder the purpose of God being played out in your life.

That's what he means. This is not just a warm fuzzy promise. This is a promise that no matter what happens, no matter what comes into your life, no matter what challenges you face, those things are not going to upend God's purpose for your life. God is going to bring to completion that which He started, and no matter what you face in life, those things will not thwart God's purpose. That's what he's saying. So, this is way more than just a hallmark version of I'll always love you. This is God saying, listen, I'm with you.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. And the purpose for which you were created and put on this earth will be brought to fruition no matter what you go through. No matter what you face. Now, here's the problem. Cause there's always a problem. Well, at least where we're involved. We humans we present a lot of problems and no less in this situation as well. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus.

Now you put that through our human matrix of, and here's the problem. There are a good many people, and I mean Christians, who try as they may, cannot convince themselves that God loves them. They just can't. That just, you tell them things like, God, you, nothing will ever separate you from the love of God. And he just goes and bounces off. Really? And they're just yeah, I'm sure that's really nice for somebody, but that just doesn't do a thing for me.

And the reason that they actually come to the place of rejecting the idea of God's love for them is because they know beyond a shadow of a doubt, they don't deserve God's love. It's true and I'll tell you it's true because for a long as I've been pastoring, and I've been telling people about God's love, I always see this look on their face. I'll just tell them God loves you and they just go there's

like what? And so, it has drawn me to a place, over the years, of adding, following that up with a question.

Do you believe God loves you? Are you convinced that God loves you? And nine times out of 10, the person I'm talking to will say, well. Okay, why are you having trouble being convinced that God loves you? Next two words out of their mouth, because I. Because I. And then they'll go on to tell me about some horrible thing they've done either in the past, in the present or whatever. And I find as a teacher of the Word of God that I have to go through a process of reprogramming people's minds because they are so connected to themselves that when we say things to them like you, such as, God loves you.

We immediately go, me? God loves me? And they interpret that statement through those two letters. M.E. Why? Because that's how we interpret everything. Now, do you know why we interpret everything that way? I'm going to insult you now.

We are intensely self-centered people. And that means all of us. Sorry, it's the truth. We think of ourselves first. When information comes to us, we translate it through this little computer called me, and we determine whether or not we think it's valid. And you know what? I kind of know me. I'm fairly connected to me. And so, when somebody comes along and says to me, God loves you, I know what me is all about. Yeah. And I look at that and I immediately I'm just like, eh, I don't think so.

And if you knew me, you'd think the same thing, right? That's the way we do things. And I have to start all over again with people. And when I talk about God's love, and I have to remind them of one very important thing. God's love has nothing to do with you. It has nothing to do with you. It is only dependent upon Him. You don't even enter into the equation, except as the recipient. That's it. God loves you, but nothing. You're out of it. Get yourself out of the picture.

That's hard for us to do, to get ourselves out of the picture, right? Because in my mind, I'm always in the picture. In fact, I'm the center of the picture. That's where the reprogramming needs to take place as it relates to the Word of God. You are not the center of the picture. God is the center of the picture. Get it? And when God says, I love you, it's all about Him. And it doesn't, listen, I'm not saying that God doesn't care how you live, but I'm saying it doesn't affect His love for you. Here's the point. You cannot sin your way out of God's love.

Yeah, I thought, quiet just silence in the whole room. You cannot sin yourself out of God's heart and away from His love. But this is something people readily

believe. In fact when I'm talking personally to people about God's love they will give me the impression, very clear impression, that they believe that they have sinned themselves beyond the reach of God's love. And they'll talk about God's love like it's applicable for other people, but not for them. And it's really interesting, but incredibly sad.

And I have to start at ground zero with people like that, and there may be some of them right in this room. And start convincing you that God's love has nothing to do with you. People say to me all the time, but I just don't feel worthy. I said, it's cause you're not, and you never will be.

And I'm not worthy either of God's love. Do you understand that people? Do you understand that none of us are worthy of His love? Do you understand that none of us deserve it? I don't deserve God's love and neither do you so you're going to let that be a problem?

But I just can't forgive myself. Listen the highest court in the land threw down the gavel and acquitted you of all sin, and all responsibility for that sin, because Jesus himself bore the penalty of your sin on the cross. Are you going to throw that back in His face? I'm serious. You're going to throw that back in His face? Are you going to suggest to Him what He did on the cross wasn't good enough? Of course you're not worthy. You never will be, neither will I. Good thing it's not based on that. Huh? It's based on Him.

God loves you with an everlasting love. And I'm sorry, folks, you aren't getting out of it. And nothing is going to remove you from His hand. The apostle wants us to really see this in the following verses. Look with me at verse 35. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, (All the distresses of life) or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword."*

You know what Paul's listing here? He's listing the things that the early church went through. You and I don't usually go through these things, but the early church did go through them on a fairly regular basis and so, he's listing them here and he's saying, are these things going to separate you from the love of Christ? Here's the point. Not only are they not going to separate you from God's love, they are not proof that you have been separated from God's love.

Do you know what a lot of people do who have, who struggled with this idea of their self-worth, and they don't believe God loves them, is that they make a case for the fact that God doesn't love them or that they're beyond the love of God because of their actions and sins and deeds. And then every time something bad

happens in their life, they consider it a proof that they were right. See, see, look at there. I got fired from my job. God hates me. And it's just like, well, one more notch. Boom. God's just firing at me, and then all of a sudden my grandma died.

My grandma died. See, God doesn't love me. Never mind she was 98 years old. People do die, you know. No, everything is a convince to them. This is a proof that, see, God doesn't love me. No, Paul is citing the things that he is here, not just to say God's love surpasses those things. He's saying when those things happen in your life, they are not a proof text that somehow you are beyond the love of God. When we suffer, and we all suffer in various stages and forms. That doesn't prove a thing about God's love.

God's love transcends all of those things. Listen, it's just an important thing for us to get through our hearts and minds. Those things, those challenges, those difficulties, those are things God is actually using in your life. Look at verse 37. “No, (he says) *in all these things we are*” not just conquerors. We're “*more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”

You see, here's what he's saying. Not only are all the rotten things in life stripped of their power to do you any ultimate harm or to upend the purposes of God in your life. He's actually using those things in your life to bring about His purpose and will, which by the way, is to form you into the image of His Son. All those raunchy things that happen, all of those hurtful, painful, distressing things, God's using them to bring about the purpose of His will. That's why you and I can have hope even in difficulty because we know that God works those things together for good, right?

Here's how Paul sums it up. Verse 38. “*For I am sure* (and that word means to be convinced of something, absolutely, positively) *that neither death nor life, (and that's basically to say, there is no crisis in life, there is no calamity of death) nor angels nor rulers, (your Bible may say principalities and when he talks about angels and principalities, he's considering Satan and his demons), nor things present nor things (even yet) to come, nor (any) powers, nor height, nor depth. (And then if he's missed anything, he did this all-inclusive statement) nor anything else in all creation, (Okay? In case you were thinking there was one I left out. Anything else in all creation none of it) will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Here's the cool thing about this chapter, Romans chapter 8, and what makes it so special. Paul began this chapter by saying that in Christ, for you and I, there's no condemnation, and he ends this chapter by saying, in Christ there's no separation between the believer and their Savior. I don't know if you've ever

read a passage of Scripture and afterward just thought you were standing on holy ground. But I feel that way with these last 2 verses.

In fact, I was sharing how the more powerful the verses are the more I struggled to teach them I sat with these two verses last night. And I just sat and meditated on them, and I was at a loss. I wanted to pull my cloak over up over my face. It's an Old Testament thing to do but I thought it would be kind of cool. I didn't, but you guys we just dealt with that last Wednesday in 1 Kings.

You guys remember when Elijah ran in fear away from the threat of Jezebel. Ran all the way to Mount Sinai where God confronted him with his fear and lack of faith. And the Bible says that Elijah heard a soft whisper, and he knew that he was in the presence of God. And he took his cloak and he pulled it up over his face because he knew that he was in the presence of holiness. And I read these last 2 verses from Romans chapter 8 and I know that I know that I know I'm in the presence of holiness.