

The Inseparable Unity of Infinite Love

Romans 8:33-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Introduction: One of the joys of being a part of God's family in the church is witnessing and observing new relationships and new life. Over the past few weeks, we have celebrated several engagements, with a wedding only a couple of weeks away, and the continual stream of announcements of God blessing couples through pregnancy. Both marriage and children are directly enjoyed by the family they are given to, and indirectly enjoyed by all those surrounding in support. These are not only unique and God given, they both express one of the highest forms of love, that of **volition, unconditional commitment, and choice**. Do you remember when you married your spouse that you committed to love one another until God separated you in death? Do you remember holding your child for the first time and thinking that there was not anything that this little person could do to change the way you loved them? This capacity to love is an expression of an *image bearer of God*, since it mirrors the type of love God has for us.

There is a limitation, however, to the love that we can have for each other, even those committed in marriage and with children. In marriage, that commitment can be short-lived when the other spouse does not live up to their end of the bargain (in our minds) or falls short of our expectations, which leads to an inevitable **separation called divorce**. No married couple goes INTO marriage thinking that they will get a divorce, mind you, but it happens when the commitment to love whole-heartedly fails. In parenting, we love our kids no matter what, but that does NOT ensure that our kids will respond in kind throughout their lives. On top of this, we face the reality that we may be separated by death, and our love, though strong, is not enough to withstand forces of separation outside of our control.

This is the essence of what Paul addresses in the end of **Romans 8**. For the last few weeks we have looked at how the gift of God the Holy Spirit indwells and assures us, promising to lead us, help us mortify our sin, and intercede for us in our groaning. This life will be full of **suffering** that is part of God's design, NOT a form of punishment, so we need supernatural reassurance that at the end of all suffering, **glory awaits**. Paul not only gave assurances through the presence of the Spirit, but in the **security of salvation**, an indestructible chain of truth, inseparable from all the work God does from **beginning to the end of our salvation**. He knew us, chose us, called us, declared us righteous, and glorified us in the future. This was all done through the pre-ordained, predetermined, foreknown plan of God to give up His own son on the cross for us (Acts 2:23-24), to offer us forgiveness and the grace to believe in the work of Christ in redemption. Now Paul ends this joyful, magnificent, glorious section with an emotion filled, rapid fire list of questions with obvious and already covered answers, to instill **the SURE, POWERFUL, and INDESTRUCTIBLE SECURITY that we have in the love of Christ, and THAT should enable us to live joyful, obedient, and risk-taking lives**.

This demands a *radical reshaping of our thinking* in order to fully grasp the implications. Just like marriage requires one to die to self, take on the mindset of a servant, and to uphold the true good of the other before ourselves to be healthy, so the gospel requires that we see life through the lens of **God's finished and perfect work on our behalf**. We can be far too easily *earth-bound* in our thinking, allowing past experiences drive our decisions and giving token commitment to central promises of God. In other words, this morning the challenge is NOT so much **understanding** this passage, but rather **believing it fully** so that it actually changes the way we think, act, trust, obey, serve, and commit. To the degree a person commits to Biblical love in their marriage is to the degree they experience the fruit God

produces, and to the degree that we believe in the depth, breadth, and height of God's infinite love for us is the degree we experience the full security of God in all of its implications.

Four Questions That Remind of Legal Security

Again, the goal of the end of this chapter is to move the Roman believers and by extension, us, to understand our security in Christ. Paul frames these questions *rhetorically* and offers obvious and unobjectionable proof of the validity of his premise. As a *lawyer* (expert in the Law), Paul brings us back to the courtroom to examine the indestructible aspects of our salvation to strengthen our resolve.

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.

Question 1 – *What then shall we say to these things?*

We looked at this last week as Paul expressed both amazement --- “*can we even say any more?*” --- but also resolve as he knew their needed to be further clarification in the minds of his readers.

Question 2 – *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

The issue is NOT that there are people or things against us, since there are plenty who would oppose us: *the Creation itself in its broken state*, enemies of the cross, our Satanic enemy, and even our own flesh. But the point Paul made in terms of **security** is from *greater to lesser*. The God of the universe is FOR US. **How do we know?** He was willing to give up His Own Son through a predetermined and foreknown plan (Acts 2:22-24) to go to the cross to save us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). Jesus went willingly (John 10:18), since no person, though culpable for their own decisions (Acts 4:27-28), were instruments in the Redeemers hand to bring about the fullness of the gospel. The point Paul made was this: *if this God is truly FOR US*, willingly giving up His Beloved Son on the cross to face suffering, death, and becoming a curse (Gal. 3:13), then *won't that same God give us all things by His grace?!?*

God's character and promise keeping nature could NOT be proved in any other massive way, so we can trust that He will give us anything and everything that we need to honor and glorify Him in the midst of *any circumstance, all forms of suffering, and in the midst of our groaning*.

Question 3 – *Who can bring any charge against God's elect?*

We live in an overly litigious culture today. Someone can slip and fall in the park, and the one who fell will look for someone to blame and pay for the expenses and then some. People have made a living merely by bringing lawsuits against others, charging them with anything they can in order to profit for themselves. Here Paul frames a question **in the courtroom**, where we are standing in the defendant box and hearing the charges read, waiting for a verdict to be given. *Who brings charges?* Again, any and all who would accuse us of being *hypocritical, or beyond saving, or too far gone*. But here again in the beauty of Paul's argument: ***we know all the charges against us already!*** In other words, there is nothing that someone can bring up against us that we do not acknowledge, know, or are aware of. **What is the hope? GOD JUSTIFIED HIS ELECT!**

Do you see that in this verse? God has already brought us in the courtroom with a list of sins committed and an appropriate guilty verdict ready to be announced. But instead of hearing those eternally damning words “**GUILTY of all charges**”, we instead hear, “**JUSTIFIED ON ALL COUNTS!**” What??!! How could that be?! The answer is this: God does not look past our sin, cover it up, bury it, or make excuses. We are **justified** through the gracious gift of Jesus’ blood, when He made propitiation for our sin and we receive it by faith (Rom. 3:24-25). Mark this in your Bible and heart! Does this mean charges will not be brought by people? No, but when they come, we look at Christ and His work on our behalf, those whom He chose, foreknew, predestined, called, and thus justified. He did it. It was not up to us. THAT is good news.

Question 4 – Who is to condemn?

Tied to bringing charges is bringing accusation – which our enemy Satan has done before God throughout history: he accused Job of only trusting God when life was good (Job 1:9-11), Joshua the High Priest of filthy garments (Zechariah 3:1-4), and accuses Christians consistently (Rev. 12:10). Satan is a deceiver and father of lies (John 8:44), and though he cannot *take away* our salvation, he can sure make us think he can. One of the ways he does this is to play on our **insecurities**, in the fact that our **heart CAN condemn us at times** (1 John 3:20-21), and he will play that up through other people or simply deceptive whispers. We can get caught into a Romans 7 reality --- where we do the things we do not want to do, but participate in things we hate --- without standing firm in a Romans 8:1 foundation: “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*”. Why does this happen? **Because we ARE still sinful, we DO give fuel to our enemy, and we can easily fall back thinking that we need to secure our own salvation!** This is why the answer is so beautiful, since Paul reviews the depths of the gospel:

Christ Jesus died – This is an earth-shattering reality: *The God of the universe, who created all things, sustains all things, and FOR whom all things were made* (Col. 1:15-17), allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross by the hands of the same people He came to save. He died with an explicit purpose: “for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3) so that He could be the justifier of our lives in our sin.

Christ Jesus WAS RAISED – If Jesus had merely died, it would have been a tragedy, but not a victory, an act of love but not one of infinite power. The fact that the grave and death could not hold Him shows that **victory over sin and death was the goal**. And continuing the same line of thought, Jesus did not simply raise Himself from the grave, but it explicitly states in **Acts 2:24 & 32** that it was God who raised Him up. God’s power is seen as a means of security since Christ was the first fruits of our own glorification that we look forward to one day (Rom. 8:23).

Christ Jesus Intercedes for us – But here Paul adds another layer of the glorious nature of the gospel and security it brings. We’ve seen that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, with groaning that is understood by God the Father as the Spirit knows our groaning in suffering (Rom. 8:26) and weakness. But here, we have one of two precious texts that speak to what Jesus is doing right now, as He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20). The other is Hebrews 7:25, which says Christ lives to make intercession for us. **Why did Paul bring up Jesus’ ministry of intercession in the midst of accusation and condemnation?** Because one aspect of intercession before God the Father is **advocacy**, where Jesus is our personal advocate in the midst of any accusation or perceived condemnation:

1 John 2:1-2 *“My little children, I am writing these things to you **so that you may not sin**. But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the **propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Why do we need an advocate and intercessor? Because we could not advocate ourselves on our own merit! We are called not to sin. Period. A true believer desires NOT to sin, and definitely not to presume on grace (“I can sin all I want and still be forgiven? Giddy-up!”). But sin IS a reality of our post salvation life, so how do we handle that tension? Jesus is our Advocate before the Father that each time we sin, or are accused, or feel self-condemned, we look to Jesus, HIS RIGHTEOUS LIFE, and the fact that He took our place on the cross and SATISFIED the Father. This is why we say a Spirit indwelt believer cannot out-sin their standing with God, because Jesus already paid for it. This is **security** for those that struggle with **guilt and shame, with the desire to hide sin or wrestle with the fact that they are a believer or not**. Justification was NOT up to us, and keeping ourselves justified is not up to us.

Now, all of this should jive with our thinking, which should connect with our mind and heart. All of this information is definitely enough for us to be secure and feel assured. But Paul ends with a flurry of truths that echo with our affections and emotions, and majors on the **love of God for us and the security THAT brings**. If He asked questions in the courtroom, he moves to the house, where familial love is most felt and answers one grand last question.

One Question that Reminds of Loving Security (8:35-39)

*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.***

Question 5 – Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Far from being cold and calculated, God is a God of infinite love, a love that pours from His love within the Trinity down to us. The desire to BE loved is God given, which is why every person possesses it. Love is objective and factual, but also can be felt and experienced. The love we crave is often misplaced, since we CANNOT love perfectly. But true, perfect, and infinite love is the true source of **security in our lives**. Isn't that what we want to give our children? We tell them, demonstrate to them, and remind them of our love **no matter what**, and our love is NOT conditional on their performance or accolades. A child who is loved this way is **confident, and a confident person is willing to live a full life without having to consistently seek approval or security from others**.

Now there are a few things to point out about this text before looking at its parts. 1) **The love mentioned here is Christ's and God the Father's love for us, NOT our love for Him** – Notice that the security from separation is based on His love, not ours. This is huge. If our security in His love was based on our ability or amount of love for Him, our security would bounce up and down, back and forth, based on where we were at in any given state of life. But we will not be separate from His love because we are

loved **IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD**. **2)** Notice that the answer to the question of separation is a resounding “NO”! NOTHING can separate us from His love, just like no one can take us out of His hand (John 10:28-30). **3)** Paul is making a point more than talking about specific things. In other words, he is going to extremes in writing to show there is NO BOUNDARY in God’s love for His own, and the security of that love for us. So let’s take these section by section to see his point:

- **No persecution in the name and service of Christ, even that leads to death, will separate –**
These words put together (*tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword*) all paint a picture of suffering specifically for being a Christian. This is admittedly outside our experience, but NOT by those who claim Christ today around the world, especially in Africa, where thousands are killed each year, especially in Nigeria. But that is NOT to say it will not be our experience, or our children or grandchildren’s experience in the future. Clearly, persecution can make us **feel and think** that God has abandon us, but it is exactly the opposite. When Hebrews 11 lays out our forefathers who endured stoning, being sawn in two, and killed by the sword, believed this promise:

Hebrews 11:39-40 *“And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”*

This means that Old Testament saints suffered in hope by faith that there was something greater ahead, and WE have experienced that in the New Covenant of the gospel of Jesus, or all that Paul just covered. But we ALL look forward to an even GREATER reality, a better city, a glorified existence that we will experience together. And going back to **Romans 8**, notice that **Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22**, a Psalm that cries out to God in the midst of suffering *in the midst of living righteously*. If you read all of Psalm 44, you will see that the sons of Korah were asking how long the persecution would last, but they knew it was a result of God’s plan, NOT a result of their sin.

- **All of the loss through suffering produces victory in Christ (37) –**
The word here is “HYPER” conqueror, MEGA victor, SUPER winner. We WILL certainly lose on this earth through suffering, and if we think that somehow we are to conquer this era, we will see losing as a negative. But in the context, all loss in the name of Christ actually is a means of victory, since Christ has already defeated sin and death, and one day He will reign and rule from this earth with us.
- **NOTHING in the seen or unseen world can separate us from Christ’s love –**
Verses 38-39 are designed to leave us with no wiggle room to question any part of God’s love for us. Paul uses couplets to accomplish his purpose in areas that **could possibly** cause separation: **1) Death or life** – Why did he start here? Because death is the unfortunate reality of all those who live in this broken world and inherited a sin nature. Death stinks, and causes **separation** between loved ones, which is why it is always heart-wrenching, no matter how old one is. But we have promises that death actually increases or closeness to God (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8), so death merely ushers us into His presence, which is the place of greatest joy (Ps. 16:11). **2) Angels or rulers** – We’ve said that Satan and his demonic host can cause havoc, lie, deceive, and even affect our physical lives. But these were all defeated at the cross (Col. 2:15), Christ put them all under His feet (Eph. 1:21), and we are positionally seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6), so they are utterly powerless against Christ and thus us, relegated to lies alone. **3) Time & Space** – As if

the other two were not pervasive enough, Paul covered all the basis in time --- and we often can fear the unknown future ---- and space can separate us from the love of God. *Do you get the gist of his argument?* Nothing man made, nothing in the spiritual realm, nothing now or the future, nothing that is done to us or we do can separate us from **the love that God has for us in Christ.**

Now, here, it is important to see some clear implications. God's love for us DOES NOT take us out of suffering or hard circumstances, but it does give us the ability to **bear up under them with joy and hope.** We have assurance that NOTHING will separate us from Him and assures that all what is going on will lead to a greater **victory in the end**, which allows us to live with **confident security in life today, including embracing the risk of obedience to all that God has called us to.**

Look one more time at verse v. 38. Paul uses the word "sure" of this, which is a small English word but a great Greek word. It means "*being convinced*" or "*persuaded*", confident and immovable in resolve. This was the aim of Paul and our aim this morning, that you would be so convinced of God's immeasurable and infinite love for you as a believer that we would live a life embracing the obedience of faith that would elicit persecution. We've talked in the past as a church that at almost every level of life, **faith demands risk --- and we have much to lose in the lives we've created for ourselves.** We embrace risk in:

- **Relationships** – When we are secure in Christ, we risk losing relationships for speaking the truth in love, or leaving a caustic and sinful relationship that leads us down a pathway of sin.
- **Finances** – We see our money as a conduit to glorify the Lord, to further the gospel, and to walk by faith, rather than finding our security in our accounts
- **Evangelism** - We open our mouth to those who will think our message foolish and the messenger even more so. We risk reputation, social standing, and credibility in order to share the greatest message of hope in the world.
- **Personal comfort & pain** – We trust the Lord in the midst of the hardest of circumstances, to obey Him fully and trusting Him implicitly, when leaving or changing would bring temporal ease. We will continue to bang the drum here in Simi Valley: *the most risk laden decision that many can and will make is to STAY here in California, NOT for the weather or culture, but for the sake of the gospel.*

Pulling all of this together, I will leave you with this quote about risk, victory, and the infinite love of God:

*"On the far side of risk --- even if it results in death --- the **love of God triumphs.** This is the faith that frees us to risk for the cause of God. If is not heroism, or lust for adventure, or courageous self-reliance, or efforts to earn God's favor. It is **childlike faith in the triumph of God's love** --- that on the far side of all our risks (and pain, suffering, and groans), for the sake of righteousness, God will still be holding us"*

John Piper