

**Romans 8:35-39: Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: Because of you, we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Intro: Thank you, Ryan. 10 years ago today my life changed dramatically. I could not have envisioned how the change would radically transform my life for good. I surely doubted its goodness to me. In fact, 10 years 7 months and two weeks ago I was confused, discouraged, and uncertain when Kelsey, my loving, faithful, longsuffering wife, let me know she was pregnant. I reacted so poorly, not once but with each kid. I construct some goal or expectation that I want to do or reach. With each kid those goals and expectations are radically changed. Yet, I am persuaded that God chose to love me most by giving me 6 kids who require me to sacrifice myself everyday. I don't get to do what I want, how I want, when I want.

God's love for you might not come in the form you believe it should, but I promise it will persuade you into greater hope to believe that greater things are yet to come!

Recap: Paul is encouraging Christians! He is warming our hearts to God's plan and solidifying the ground under our feet in His promises. Pastor Daniel reminded us that The Spirit-filled life in an age of suffering is fueled by hope for future glory. Pastor Jeff sharpened our minds to believe that our hope is in God's providence to supervise and oversee all things for our ultimate good. If that was not enough, Paul concludes this chapter by persuading us to believe our victory is secure because of God's love.

Main Point: Our victory over this age of suffering is secure in the work of God and the love of God because God is for us.

Let's Pray:

## 1. The work of God is for us.

### Romans 8:31 What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Romans 8, as Jeff said a few weeks ago, is the most important chapter in the most important book for the believer. No other chapter in the new testament concentrates so much future hope and assurance as Romans 8 does. Paul expects a specific reaction from his readers. Chapter 8 is meant to persuade you. Convincing you of the guaranteed hope in God's love. He employs rhetorical questions to break loose the rust in our hearts and expectantly trust God's promise to save.

What shall we say about these things? What things is Paul referring to? Is it our election, our inward groaning? Maybe it is a life set free from the law of sin and death. What about our new federal headship in Christ instead of Adam? What if he means to go back to chapter 3, wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord? Or all the way back to chapter 1. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and also for the Greek." I hope the answer is obvious. It is all of these things.

In our present age of suffering, we are tempted to doubt God's disposition toward us. Those doubts are undermined when we consider the work of God done on our behalf. God alone won salvation by his shedding of blood on the cross. We are saved by *his* substitutionary atonement, *his* resurrection, and *his* intercession. What shall we say about these things? God is for us!

- **God is for us!**

By comparison, Greek and Roman gods (small g) were never for anyone but themselves. They were self-serving gods who needed appeasing and wooing to do anything for humanity. Not our God, no, his eternal disposition is for his people. Acting on our behalf regardless of us. What proof should we consider if God is truly for us?

Let's read verse 32, "**He did not even spare his one Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything.**" Our proof is God's will to send Jesus into the world to die on behalf of rebellious sinners. The phrase "gave him up" is the same Greek word *paradidōmi* as Paul used in Romans 1:24 when God, *paradidōmi*, delivered sinners over to their passions to suffer God's wrath. God's elect do not suffer the handing over to God's wrath; instead, God's son was handed over in our place. If escaping wrath was not enough proof of God's favor towards us, God goes on to "grant us everything!"

III. I am a pushover when my kids ask me for something. I want them to know blessings, good times, and fun. My kids know I am the pushover in the family when they want something. Dad, can we go to Wendy's? Dad, can I get an airsoft gun. Even after they have disobeyed and have been disciplined, I want to show them benevolence right away. I also know that it is good for them to hear "no" a lot. I still need to hear no as an adult. Does hearing "no" mean something good is being withheld from us. No, something better is being offered. What could that be, what does Paul mean by everything?

"Everything" pertains to the eschatological blessing promised to all believers. Jesus identifies everything when he directs his followers in **Matthew 6:33**, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.**" These things he mentions are the necessities of life. Food, clothing, shelter, love, adoration, and affection from God. Do not be anxious that God's favor towards us appears to have waned. Seek God's kingdom, and God's promises will come to fruition according to his plan. Remember last week; Pastor Jeff stressed that all things work together for the good of those who love God.

If the infinite, personal, uncaused creator of the universe is for us, who could oppose us? Let's read verses 33 and the first part of verse 34.

**“<sup>33</sup> Who can bring an accusation against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies. <sup>34a</sup> Who is the one who condemns?**

- **Satan and the flesh bear false witness.**

It should be preposterous to us that any accusation can be levied against God’s elect. It is implied in the previous passage that those whom God foreknew he foreordained. When God justifies a person, all accusations at once lose their validity. The unidentified accusers are our flesh and the Devil. How do we know that? Read with me a dispute between Joshua the highpriest and Satan in **Zechariah 3:1-5**:

**3 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD, with Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! May the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Isn’t this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”**

**<sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. <sup>4</sup> So the angel of the LORD spoke to those standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes!” Then he said to him, “See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with festive robes.”**

**<sup>5</sup> Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So a clean turban was placed on his head, and they clothed him in garments while the angel of the LORD was standing nearby.**

Satan is rebuked as the accuser based on God’s choosing of the individual. God’s chosen really are immune from standing trial against lesser accusations. Paul is not creating these ideas as if they are new. He dusts off the truth from the Old Testament that God has already established. God’s foreknowledge and foreordination have made a way for the elect to escape judgment. Instead of entertaining a trial, the Judge throws out the prosecutor from the courtroom for lack of evidence. Then the accused is transformed from filthy rags into a display of honor and righteousness. This is true for all who believe.

I believe it is warranted to spend a brief time outlining who Satan is and what he does. As Martin Luther puts it so wisely “the Devil is God’s Devil.” It is true that we either make too much about Satan and demonic forces or think too little of them.

- **Satan is a created angelic being. (Col. 1:16; Ezek. 28:14)** – One of the most powerful created beings but far inferior to God. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, always present, unchangeable, sovereign, eternal, and immortal. Satan is none of these things. He still retains power that he uses according to his evil will and desire.
  
- **Satan was the originator of sin and is the ruler over evil. (Mat 25:41; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 12:9)** – From the beginning of human history, Satan was in a state of rebellion against God out of jealousy for personal glory and worship. He deceived a portion of the angelic order resulting in him being cast out of heaven along with his evil angels. God has given him some autonomy on the earth that he uses for evil and corruption.
  
- **Satan is limited in power and influence by God's control. (Job 1:12; Jude 6; James 4:7)** – Though powerful and given some dominion to operate in, Satan and demonic forces must conform to God's boundaries. Ultimately answering to him as the judge. They cannot read minds or know the future, but they are observant. Using their knowledge from observation to deceive and destroy God's image bearers.

The Devil is God's devil – Very clearly in Job Satan has to ask for permission to afflict Job. Why does God allow it? For those who believe it will work out for our good and God's glory.

- **God will hold Satan morally accountable for his evil deeds. (Matt. 24:41; Rev. 20:10)** – Satan will stand before God and receive the just rewards for his rebellion. What are his acts of rebellion? Satan does at least four specific deeds continuously to God's elect.
  - **Attempts to distort or deny the truth of God's word. (Matt. 16; Gen 3:1-3)** Seen most clearly in Jesus' temptation and in Genesis when Satan mutilates the words of God ever so slightly to deceive Jesus. In Genesis, Satan says to Eve, "Did God really say?" He's still whispering that lie to us. Did God really say homosexuality is a sin? Did God really say you should pray for your elected officials? Did God really say, abhor what is evil and love what is good?"
  - **Discredits the testimony of God's people through sin. (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Tim. 3:7)** The story of Ananias and Sapphira. Elders' reputation amongst outsiders.

- **Destroying the believer's enthusiasm and trust in God's work. (2 Cor. 7-10; Luke 22:31-34)** When Jesus said it is finished, he wants you to believe it is not. You still need to add to it.
- **Dilutes the effectiveness of God's people. (1 Chron. 21:1-8; 1 Tim. 3:6).** Lies leading us to be lazy, self-centered naval gazers. Too busy to serve, to insecure about proclaiming, prone to compare with others who are just better.

Satan is real, he is powerful, but he answers to God. So, do not be deceived. The Devil is roaming around like a lion seeking to devour. But, thanks be to God, we are free from the law of sin and death because of work. Yet the flesh remains, which Satan uses to deceive us. Our flesh, the old man, still lingers around, reminding and accusing us of sin. Satan preys upon this weakness to rebel. Therefore, we need God's word to undermine the false witnesses against us.

What truth undermines the lie that God's work is not done? In Romans, it is two questions. Who can bring an accusation against God's elect, and Who is it that condemns? The answer is, emphatically, no one. The prophet Isaiah certainly filled Paul's mind when he penned these questions because the prophet writes: **Isaiah 50:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup> The one who vindicates me is near; who will contend with me? Let us confront each other. Who has a case against me? Let him come near me! <sup>9</sup> In truth, the Lord GOD will help me; who will condemn me? Indeed, all of them will wear out like a garment; a moth will devour them.**

Notice that the judge is for the defendant, and all accusations will wear out like old clothes over time. The prophet declares that the one who vindicates is near. Whom do we know that to be? Who is near us? Paul points to Christ. Let's read the next part of Romans 8:34:

**<sup>34b</sup> Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us."**

- **We are secured by the work of God in Christ.**

The apostle gives us a fourfold defense for our position's security in the work of God. One would be sufficient evidence to prove our case, but four are given as means of persuasion. First, Jesus died on our behalf. Second, God accepted his sacrifice, raising him for the dead. Third, he sits at the right hand of God as his co-ruler, Lastly, he pleads to God for us.

The work of God is for us, and that finished work secures us. Satan wants you to believe it is too good to be true, that there must be a catch or some component you must add. The flesh also deceives us by distorting our belief that Christ's finished work on the cross applies to us. Trapping us in a snare that God's love has waned as we continue sinning; therefore, He is only "kinda for us." God is for us, whole and complete. His work has always been for us because his love is unconditional. Let's continue reading Romans.

**Romans 8:35-36, “<sup>35</sup> Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “Because of you, we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

## **2. The love of God is for us in Christ.**

God’s work issues from his beating heart for us. Isn’t it easy to doubt God’s love? All it takes is a prolonged trial, persecution, a nasty comment, a missed opportunity, or an unanswered prayer. Like Peter walking on water, we focus on our surroundings and forget who calls us forward. Our faith is little, but his love is greater. Doubting God’s love is nothing new. Clearly, Paul faced the same challenge.

Paul’s list is just that, a list. We are not really intended to mine each word for unique meaning, but we are supposed to comprehend the scope of what he is including. We will face internal and external emotional trials. There will be social pressures to conform or recant our beliefs. We will have to endure material circumstances pressed upon us because of the world’s subjection to futility. Still, other sufferings might even require our life. Yet we should never interpret these circumstances as exclusion from God’s love. On the contrary, they are affirmation of God’s love.

I know what you are asking; I ask it too. How is suffering an affirmation of God’s love? Reread Paul’s quote of Psalm 42:22. **“Because of you, we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.”** This is an odd verse to quote, given the context of encouragement found in Romans 8. Odd unless the definite mark of a person loved by God is clearest in suffering. Therefore, It must be true that:

- **Suffering affirms God’s love.**

Pastor Daniel labored faithfully two weeks ago to show that suffering signifies our fallen state. Leading to a longing for a perfect future when suffering will give way to Glory. Additionally, suffering also signifies God’s, abundant love. That may seem like an oxymoron, but we were sinners. Our minds are subjected to sin, our desires are impure, and our motivations are questionable. God is not cruel; we are fallen. Is a loving father content to see his children wallow in sinful depravity? No, a loving father disciplines those he loves.

**Hebrews 12:6-7, “<sup>6</sup> for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. <sup>7</sup> Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?”** – We ought to conform our understanding of suffering to recognize it as loving discipline, not painful punishment. Easier



said than done, sure, but it is still true. Our greatest joys have come through hard times. We must remember what hard times in communion with God produce: righteousness.

Discipline is more than a consequence of sinful actions. It is derived from a father's plan to bless his kids. I don't ask Peyson to mow and edge the lawn because he did something wrong. I make it his chore because he was created to work. I know if I don't instill in him or any of my kids a work ethic, they will endure greater hardship bearing the burden of laziness. They also will entirely miss the joy and favor of working faithfully unto the lord as His co-creators. It may be hard to fathom, but God uses illness, disasters, emergencies, problems, and the like in the same way I give my children chores. To make them perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Satan and the flesh attempt to trap us in a lie, doubting God's love, questioning his goodness, or even denying his existence when faced with trials. Read what is true to put off the lie:

**John 15:1-3, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."** Pruning is not Painful punishment; it is purposeful production. The fruitless branches are cut off, but they are unbelievers who reject God's gospel. The believer, and fruit bearer, are cared for through the loving act of pruning. The father is not removing us from his presence when we suffer pruning. Rather, it is a sign that he is producing joy in us. A joy that we could not achieve for ourselves.

Is your suffering an affirmation of God's love? Could you say that with confidence, or do you need the Lord to supply you with the ability in faith? Ask him, and it will be done. I encourage you to invite others around you, even today, to petition God with you for your heart to believe what he is doing. To believe that we are already victors in this present age of suffering.

Read the final verse with me, **"<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

- **We are secure in the love of God.**

We live as victors over sin, death, and this age of suffering, secure in the love of God. Paul is rejoicing as he writes these words. Who else would know this better than he does? For when he writes, "I am persuaded," it was not a written argument that persuaded him. God's providence has worked all things for Paul's good. Paul has been stoned, beaten,

shipwrecked, chased out of cities, ridiculed by his own. He received rejection after rejection yet is persuaded he is secure in the love of God.

Remember what Jesus said to Ananias when Paul was confronted on the road to Damascus, **“I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”** We read this judicially as a verdict of his sins, but now reading Romans 8, we must recognize these were words of love to Paul. We are co-heirs with Christ, given we also suffer with Christ.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Do you know what that includes? You. are you not a created thing? We are tempted to believe that we are unlovable to God due to our actions or the actions of others. Some of you are victims of evil brought on by another person, and others of you have done evil to another. Many of you men are burdened by shame and guilt brought on by addiction. Still, others of you are haunted by a past life of sin that you can only assume God tolerates you instead of lavishly adoring you.

Chapter 8 begins with, “there is no condemnation,” and ends with, “there is no separation.” Let’s commemorate that promise by reminding ourselves of the truth that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Let’s unite together as a body of Christ around his table, affirming that God’s love is persuading us to believe what he began, he will finish.

Pray:

Communion:

Brothers and sisters, we come now to the holy table of the Lord as Jesus instructed in saying, “do this in remembrance of me.”

Coming to this table, we are to remember Christ and all he has done for us:

- He was sent into the world according to the promises made in the Old Testament

- He draped himself in humanity, becoming flesh and blood like us.
- He bore the wrath of God on our behalf, freeing us from everlasting death
- He lived in perfect obedience to divine law and imparted to us his righteousness resulting in the promise of everlasting life.
- He took the curse of sin upon himself so that we would inherit God's blessing apart from the demands of the law
- He confirmed the new and eternal covenant of gracious reconciliation by the shedding of his blood and the affirmation that "It is finished."

Though the invitation of this meal is to all who believe, we cannot approach this table frivolously. Jesus, Himself dismissed Judas from the table before instituting the ordinance. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that some in their community were sick and had died because they partook in an unworthy manner. It is good and right to self-reflect and see if we have, by our sin and selfishness, divided the body of Christ. If we have, let us turn to confession, repentance, and reconciliation with our brothers and sisters before we partake in the meal.

As symbolic of our unity as the family of God, we hold on to the communion elements until all have received, and then we take them together. If you need a gluten-free option, please hold your hand up, and an usher will bring one around to you.