

## **The Challenges to Christian Invincibility**

Scripture: Romans 8:31-39

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### The Challenges of Christian Invincibility

Well we return to the eighth Chapter of Romans tonight, this monumental chapter, and I've entitled this brief little series *If God is For Us Who Can Be Against Us?* Borrowing that from verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things if God is for us who is against us?" And the implied answer to the question is no one, no one can successfully thwart the purpose of God for his beloved people.

And so we've been talking about security in an insecure world, talking about our true spiritual security. We've gone through verses 28 to 30. We have made it clear that God is causing all things in the life of those who love him and are called according to his purpose to work for good. That is primarily for their eternal good because whomever he foreknew he predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the chief one among many brethren. Whom he predestined these he also called, whom he called these he also justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified.

God has a plan. The plan was to justify some people and then to glorify those people and in glorifying them conform them to the very likeness of Jesus Christ, so that Jesus Christ would be the chief over a redeemed humanity that were like him. That provides for him a population of redeemed souls who forever will love and honor and serve him.

Now with regard to these people whom God has foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified, with regard to these people whom he will conform to the image of his Son, he is causing all things to work together for their good. And that is to say, once God has determined who they are he will bring them all the way to their glorious end, so that nothing that happens in their lives can work for their evil. In other words, nothing can undo the plan of God. It sweeps from foreknowledge and predestination all the way to glorification.

And I suppose that you could think that all that needed to be said about the believer's security has been said in verses 28 to 30, but that's not the case. In fact, there is much more. There is a crescendo that comes in the final portion of the chapter, actually beginning in verse 31 all the way to the end of the chapter that when it comes to the matter of security is often known as the hymn of security because of its great power and its great richness.

Verses 31 to 39 is our concern for tonight and it's a challenge, as you know, for me to sweep through that lengthy portion of Scripture. But it begins with where we have already been and that is what then shall we say to these things? What are these things? The matters of security, the purposes of God with regard to foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. What do we say to this plan of God that is conforming us ultimately to the image of his Son? What do we say to God working everything together for his will? What do we say to that?

We say this: If that is God's plan then nobody can stop it. That's what that verse means. That's exactly what that means. What is there to say in response? If God is for us then who successfully can be against us? And the obvious answer to that question is no one since God is omnipotent.

Now the Apostle Paul anticipates that some people may have problems with this and they may bring up objections, but there may be some person, or there may be some circumstance that can stop the plan. There may be some person or some circumstance that can cause the purpose of God to be diverted. There may be some person or some circumstance that can cause us to forfeit the right to be seen through to the end.

There are people who have always believed and many who believe even as we speak that this salvation, which is granted in Christ can be lost. I was painfully listening to a preacher on television this afternoon, it's a form of machisim that I inflict upon myself for reasons that my dear wife, Patricia, cannot comprehend. And he was bemoaning the foolish creatures, the unwise and the unbiblical and the less than godly preachers who tell you once you're saved you're always saved and in so saying misrepresent the truth of God. He went on to say you stop believing for a moment you've lost everything. There have always been objections to this. Still are, I suppose there will always be as these errors are passed down from generation to generation through certain denominations and associations and personal influences.

So Paul in a consummate way wants to address this objection that some person or some circumstance could cause the forfeiture of this plan. And first of all he wants to talk about persons and that is the subject of verses 31 to 34, persons. Is there some human person, let's start there, is there some human person who can cause us to lose our salvation by being against us? If God is for us who can be successfully against us? The who here we can refer to a human person. Is there some who somewhere who can interrupt the plan? How about the Judaisers who went into Galatia and assaulted the church and assaulted the believers and who told them no matter what they believed about Jesus Christ if they weren't circumcised and didn't keep the Mosaic law they weren't saved. They're always going to be people who want to assault our doctrine of salvation by grace alone. There are those people who

would do everything they could to dispose us of our salvation. The Roman Catholic Church thinks they have the power to do that by ex-communication. It takes people out of a state of grace and puts

them into a state of damnation.

And how about church discipline? Can a church in disciplining a person confronting their sin, putting them out, treating them as an unbeliever literally by the force and power of that act divest them of their salvation? Or have they been by their sin divested and the church is merely recognizing it? And what about myself? Do I have the power to forfeit my salvation by rejecting Christ, by denying what I once believed and stepping away? In other words, is there any person, a part of a religious organization, or a part of a religious influence, or even myself who can interrupt and end the plan of God that moves execrably from foreknowledge to predestination, to calling, to justification, to glorification.

Now you have around you people who would like to do that, your unsaved family, some of them might like to do that, sever you from Christ. Your professors at certain universities would like nothing better than to sever you from Christ, to destroy your faith in the word of God. The amoral culture would love nothing more than through the influence of their literature and their music and their media and their emphasis on style to divest you of any Christian convictions. Legalists would like you to reject grace alone as a way of salvation. The cults would like for you to reject Christ alone as a way of salvation and force you into some works righteousness system. Satan, believe me, he's a person. We'll talk about him in a moment along with his demons. They would very much like to divest you of your salvation. They tried it with Job. Satan tried it with Peter in Luke 22, and the messenger from Satan assaulted Paul as indicated in II Corinthians Chapter 12. There are those persons who would like to do that. And the question for Paul is if God be for us, or better since God is for us, who can be successfully against us. And we have been pointing out that that is answered no one, no one, because God is causing all things to work together for good to take us through that process to the ultimate glorification because from the very beginning his purpose was to conform us to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ who would then be the chief one over a redeemed humanity who would reflect his glory and honor and serve him forever.

So, if we say, no human person can do it, somebody will say will God can do it. God can stop the process in our case. God can change his mind. God can withhold us from salvation in its final sense. God can see us sinning. God can see us in an ungrateful condition, in a disobedient condition and God can take back the gift that he gave us. God can let us fall back. Well look at verse 32 because here Paul anticipates this objection.

He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? Now this is an amazing statement, really an amazing one. It's a somewhat typical Hebrew argument. Arguing from the greater to the lesser. If God did the greater thing, that is, giving up his own Son, will he not do the lesser, that is giving us what we need to be sustained in our salvation? What we need of faith, and what we need of obedience and what we need of sanctification. It's a simple point.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. That was the big gift. He gave the best. He gave the most. He made the greatest sacrifice. We can only in a small measure comprehend the strangeness of the Father saying to the eternal Son, go down into the world, be surrounded by sinners and actually go to the cross under the animosity and hatred of those sinners and be punished for their sins. That is strange beyond strange for the Holy Son. That is a condescension that is incomprehensible and inconceivable. That is a sacrifice that is beyond our understanding, the supreme sacrifice that taxes our mental faculties to even comprehend.

If Romans 5:10 is true we were reconciled to God through his Son, through the death of his Son, shall we not be kept by his life? In other words, God made the supreme sacrifice in order to provide our justification. Will he not then do what is lesser to sustain that to glory? That's the point and a great point it is. Look back at verse 32 just some elements of it, "He who did not spare his own Son," didn't hold him back. In fact I read this morning in Isaiah 53:10, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." How amazing. It pleased the Lord to subject his Son to a sin-bearing sacrificial painful horrifying death. It pleased him? Yes, because God could look past the suffering and the pain to the glory that would come to the Son through that redeemed humanity. And even the Son who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross was able to see beyond that.

So God spared not his own Son. Emphasis there on eddias, his own particular personal Son to make an emphasis of what a sacrifice this was. He didn't spare him, didn't hold him back, but delivered him, delivered him, totally gave him over. In Luke 22:53, Jesus put it this way, "When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against me. I was here every day. But this is your hour and the power of darkness." And at that time God gave him over to Satan and Satan used his weapon of death on him. And what Satan thought he was accomplishing he wasn't. He thought he was ending the life of the Messiah. The fact of the matter is the Messiah was offering himself for sin.

So the Father delivered the Son to the abandonment, to judgment that his justice required. This was God. When you ask the question who delivered Jesus to die? It wasn't Judas for money, it wasn't Pilate for fear, it wasn't the Jews for envy, it wasn't any of those, it was the Father for love. John Murray writes, "It is only as the ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary is viewed in the perspective of damnation vicariously born, damnation executed with the sanctions of relenting justice and damnation endured with the host of darkness were released to reek the utmost of their vengeance, that we will be able to apprehend the wonder and taste the sweetness of love that passes knowledge, love eternally to be explored, but eternally inexhaustible."

So he didn't spare his Son, he delivered him up for us all. For us all means in our place vicariously. The us is the same us of verse 31, "Who is against us." The same us that we find back earlier implied in verses 28 to 30, "Those who are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified." It's all believers. And so the Father gives up the Son for us. His sacrifice is monumental obviously and then

the question comes at the end of verse 32, "How will he not also with him, at the same time he's giving him up for us, freely give us all things? The point is if the Father didn't spare the Son but gave him up to the shame and horror of sin bearing on the cross, he certainly wouldn't fail to finish the work. I mean he wouldn't nullify the sacrifice of Christ by not giving us what we need to keep us saved. And that's why Ephesians 1:3 says, "We've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Right? The one who gave his Son to purchase our salvation will give whatever he needs to sustain it to eternal glory. Will he not also with him freely give us, I love this, all things, all things necessary for our perseverance, all things necessary for our security, all things necessary for our eternal glory? So God is not going to condemn us, rather he's going to freely give us all these things. Freely.

Is there any human who could stop this glorious salvation process? No. Would God himself stop it? No. If he already gave the gift of his Son, the greatest, at an immense and calculable sacrifice he'll certainly do less than that to keep those for whom he gave his Son.

At this point somebody might say, "Well Satan can take your salvation away." Maybe we can't do it and maybe God won't do it, but Satan can do it. Cannot he sort of pull us out of this process, cause us to forfeit our right to its continuation. Well verse 33 is designed to answer that question. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Verse 34, beginning of the verse, "Who is the one who condemns?" Same question really asked two times with synonyms. Now you tell me who is the accuser of the brother? Who is it? According to the book of Revelation it is Satan. Satan loves to go before God, as he did in the book of Job, and accuse the people of God. He loves to go before God and say I can destroy their faith. The only reason they love you and serve you is because you're so good to them. Satan is identified as the accuser of the brethren. That's what he does, Revelation 12:10. He likes to go before the throne of God all the time and heap accusations against us. He wants to condemn us before God reciting all the bad that he knows about us. And by the way, he cannot read our minds. He is not omniscient. He can only get reports observed by the forces of evil, the demonic hosts, who can observe our conduct. The primary accuser is Satan, and can't Satan go before God and bring a successful indictment? Can't we be legitimately condemned, legitimately indicted and accused? Well he answers the question. Who will bring a charge against God's elect, verse 33? God is the one who justifies.

I would like to see that as a question so that it would read like this: who will bring a charge against God's elect? Shall God, the one who justifies? That's ridiculous. Satan can't make you loose your salvation. Satan doesn't have the power to do that. He tried with Job. He tried with Peter. He tried with Paul. He's probably tried with many of us as he has throughout all of history. He can't do it, so what he does is he goes to God and he recites an indictment. He becomes the prosecutor. And when he gets there and brings his accusations against us are they going to succeed? Is God going to buy into these charges? God, the one justifying us?

It's a very simple principle here theologically. God alone condemns and God alone justifies. And if God has covered us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, if God has granted to us his own righteousness not ours, then no accusation can stand against us or one would have to find an accusation that could stand against God or against Christ with whose righteousness we have been covered. So there goes Satan into the presence of God, accusing us, listing all of the violations that we have made in our lives that he knows of, appealing to God to damn us for violations of his holy law, but God can't do it because all our sins have been paid for by Jesus Christ and his righteous life has been granted to us so that there is as Romans 8:1 says, "No condemnation for those who are in Christ." God wrote the law, God enforces the law, God judges all violators of the law, but once his judgment is satisfied no indictment stands. So God has declared us just by faith in Jesus Christ. No indictment can stand.

Well you say maybe if Satan appealed to Jesus it might be different. So in verse 34 it deals with that? Who is the one who condemns? Who is the one who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus? Is Christ Jesus going to condemn us? Who died, yes who rather was raised, who is at the right hand of God who also intercedes for us? It's an absolute impossibility. It can't happen. John Wesley wrote, "Bold shall I stand in that great day, for who ought to my charge shall lay, fully absolved from sin I am, from sin, fear, from guilt and shame," as we heard tonight. What safety there is in our salvation? Christ Jesus? He died for us. Christ Jesus? He was raised for us. Christ Jesus he's at the right hand of God for us and he's interceding for us. That's what he's doing for us. Would it be Christ that brought us in and then send us out?

There's a four-fold protection here. Look at it in verse 34. First, he asks, "Shall Christ Jesus who died, shall he? He makes the point by emphasizing it as an absurdity. The point is that when Christ died he received the just condemnation that was due for all our sins. That's why he died. He was sinless and therefore did not need to die. And no one found any guilt in him, not even Satan. He died for us. He paid the penalty for our sin. The penalty was paid in full. He said, "It is finished." God was satisfied; therefore he can't condemn us because his death proves that he took our condemnation for all our sin. His death was the only condemnation you'll ever know and I'll never know.

So it's ludicrous to think that someone could go and read off a list of condemning indictments before Christ Jesus and get Christ Jesus to somehow disqualify us for final salvation, because he died for us paying in full the penalty for the sins that could be listed against us.

Secondly, in verse 34, he says, "What is more, or in addition, who was raised. Christ death blotted out our sins and God put his stamp of approval on that sacrifice by the resurrection. Paul made this point I think very clear in Chapter 4, verse 25, "He was delivered up because of our transgressions. He was raised because of our justification." God raised him from the dead because he had provided

justification. That's a big subject we could go into in detail, but just in looking at it as an overview I think you get the point. Christ died paying in full the penalty for our sin. He rose again, the stamp of God's approval on his act, which justified us. The resurrection proves his sacrifice was complete. The resurrection proved that he paid the penalty in full and God was satisfied. When God raised Jesus from the dead he demonstrated that every demand of his holy law had been met, both in what is called the active and passive obedience of Jesus. The active obedience of Jesus, his perfect life applied to us. The passive obedience of Jesus, his sacrificial death in which he paid the penalty for our sins.

There's not going to be any way that Satan can make some kind of appeal to God successfully. God has declared us just by the merits of Christ, not our own. There's not any way that Satan is going to be able to make an appeal to Christ because Christ rose again having died as a sacrifice for sin and therefore provided satisfaction for the law and righteousness for us. Further he says, "Who is going to condemn us? Is Christ Jesus who is at the right hand of God?" It's an echo of Psalm 110.1, "The Lord said to my Lord, the Father said to the Son, sit at my right hand." Hebrews 1 lays that out, that's such a wonderful passage, Hebrews 1:3 talks about when Jesus made purification of sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high because he had obtained a much better name than the angels inheriting a much more excellent title than they.

So when the Father seated the Son at his right hand on the throne the Father was indicating again his satisfaction for the work that Christ had done on the cross. Jesus Christ was so supremely exalted, so highly exalted that Paul says in Philippians, "He's given a name above every name." He was exalted as Ephesians 1 says, "To the right hand of God in heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the age to come, he's put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him his head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

And then he goes on to say in your word that in trespasses and sin but in Christ you have been made alive and the future that God has for you is one of glory. We are risen with Christ, we died with him, we rose with him and we have been exalted with him. We literally, according to Colossians 3:1, "Have been lifted to the heavens." This is a great verse. "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

The plan of God literally has us dying with Christ as he bears our sins, rising with Christ in inheriting his righteousness, and actually being exalted to the right hand with Christ as we take our place spiritually in the heavenlies and become the recipients of all spiritual blessing.

If that's not enough verse 34, fourthly says, "Whose going to condemn you? Christ Jesus who also intercedes for us? That's another absurdity. These are all absurd ideas. The one who died for us and fully paid for all of our sins is not going to listen to condemnation. The one who rose from the

dead having offered a satisfaction for sin and gaining for us eternal life and righteousness is not going to listen to condemnation against us. The one with whom we are now seated in the heavenlies will not condemn us nor will the one who constantly makes intercession for us, and this is an ascendancy in this verse, now you get to the peak, he keeps on making intercession for us. Whenever an accusation comes to God from the enemy of our souls Christ advocates in our behalf. He is the lawyer for our defense. God is the judge, Satan is the prosecutor, Christ is the lawyer for the defense of his own, and he constantly intercedes for us.

In John 11:42 Jesus said to the Father, "I know Father that you do always hear me." "You do always hear me." Hebrews talks about he is a faithful and merciful high priest constantly interceding for us. He knows our weaknesses and our infirmities and he bears us to the Father and pleads on our behalf. So, Paul says, no human, not some false teacher, not some person from a cult, not some legalist, not some family member, nobody has the power to sever your relationship to Christ, not even you as a human. And God's not going to do it and Satan can't do it, and Christ wouldn't do it. There is no person. There is no human being, there is no demon, and there is none in the Holy Trinity that would do it. Say well, what about the Holy Spirit? Maybe he would get upset if we quenched him or grieved him. Well no. Back in verse 26, "The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." The Holy Spirit living in us goes before the Father all the time interceding for us and he who searches the hearts, that's the Father, knows what the mind of the Spirit is because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." God wills our continuance. Christ wills our continuance. The Holy Spirit wills our continuance and Christ from his right hand of the Father posture intercedes for us all the time, the Holy Spirit from within us intercedes before the Father all the time in an unutterable divine language, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit and the mind of the Son and that they're in perfect agreement with his mind, which he has purposed and that is to take us all the way from foreknowledge to glory.

Not anyone, not Satan, not God, not Christ, not the Holy Spirit can altar this mighty work, the inexorable continuity of our salvation. On the other hand, somebody might say okay no person and that should be enough, but Paul really wants to make it clear. Somebody might say what about a circumstance? Aren't there some theoretical circumstances, some imaginable ones that could cause us to lose our salvation? So in verses 35 to 39 he addresses that. And here he wants to talk not so much about the persons who might condemn us or bring charges against us, or be against us, but the circumstances of life. So the who at the beginning of verse 35 is really a what. That little Greek word *tis*, *t-i-s* here is not referring to persons as it is earlier. In say verse 33 and 34, but it is referring to circumstances, things, because of what it says. It should read, What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

So the point here is this: are there any non-persons, any circumstances? What if the temptation is just too great? What if the trial is just too powerful, too overwhelming? What if we can't stand under the pressure? Isn't there some kind of an assault coming against us that could possibly separate us



from the love of Christ? I love that little term separate us. It didn't say separate us from Christ, separate us from the love of Christ, and there he puts us back in touch with the motivation. The reason he keeps us is because he loves us. The reason God saved us is because he loved us. It is the love that God has for us that binds us to him. It is the love that Christ has for us that binds us to him.

Verse 37 refers to him who loved us. Verse 39, again, nothing can separate us from the love of God. It is God who loves us. It is Christ who loves us and that embrace, that loving embrace holds us and against that, the power of that loving embrace there is no circumstance that can alter it. See your continuing sanctification, glorification is not founded on your goodness it's founded on God's election. It's not founded on your wisdom it's founded on God's call. It's not founded on your personal submission it's founded on God's justification on an otherwise obstinate sinner. It's not founded on your perseverance though that is what the Spirit of God produces, it is founded upon the power of God to keep you and what holds that altogether is undying love.

John 13:1, Jesus looks at his disciples, John writes, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the max he loved them to perfection." This bond of love is so profound and so unbreakable that Paul asked the question: shall tribulation, Phillips says in the Greek, pressure, affliction, outward difficulty, accusation, rejection, bodily harm, persecution? The old Latin word meant flagellating, beating. Can literally your faith in Christ dissipate under physical or mental persecution, anguish, suffering, pain? And that's basically looking at outward difficulty. The next word distress looks more at inward difficulty. The word basically it comes from two Greek words that means to be squeezed into a narrow space, hemmed in, no way out, feeling compressed. Can you be in such constraint, such apparently inescapable temptation that it has the power to separate you from Christ's love? What about persecution? Deagman, abuse? What about famine? What about nakedness? What about peril, which means exposed to treachery or exposed to danger, gumintisor rather kindinas? The other one before that was gumintis. What about the sword? Death, that's what the sword means. I mean can any of these things do it?

Now let me just stop right here and say something. Paul is writing this but it is not theory, 'cause I could take you, if we had time, through a little bit of a brief look at the life of Paul and you would see that every one of these things was his experience, not occasionally, but most of the time. Most of the time Paul was experiencing tremendous outward rejection, sometimes actually bodily harm, stoned, shipwrecked, he was flagellated, what the Latin version of that word means. By the Jews who did it with whips and by the Romans who did it with rods. He knew the inward stress of being squeezed in and pressed in with apparently no escape. He knew persecution for the testimony of Jesus, the anguish suffered at the hands of those who hated the gospel. He knew what it was to go without food. He knew what it was to be inadequately clothed in a cold and damp place, to say nothing of that being his experience in a prison. He knew what it was to be in danger. He said he died daily literally. Every day he woke up he knew it could be the end of his life because there was so many

plots to kill him. He knew what it was to await the sword. So Paul is not talking theory here. He is saying this is my life. This is my biography. Did the tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, threat of the sword separate me from the love of Christ? Not at all. In fact in II Corinthians Chapter 12 he said, and this is a great testimony, he says in verse 9 and 10, "I will boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me. I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, many of the same words, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then I am strong." Just the opposite happened. When those circumstances came into his life they didn't make him weak, they made him strong. They made him strong.

Paul says I've lived, verse 36, I lived Psalm 44:22. He quotes it. "Just as it is written for thy sake we are being put to death all day long. We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." He just threw in an Old Testament verse as the Spirit inspired him. This originally was a plea for God to deliver Israel in distress. Paul says I know what that's like. I know what those Jews must have felt when they cried out to God all day long asking to be delivered because they felt like they were just sheep headed to slaughter. I understand that, Paul said. I've lived it. And for your sake I've lived it. For our sake, just as they said, for your sake I've lived that. But when those kinds of things happen they don't make us weak, they make us what? Strong. It's in those times we could give you testimony after testimony to that effect. It's in those kinds of times that the real strength of God is manifest.

So in verse 37 he says, actually no he starts out, "No, these things can't separate us because in all these things," and here's the principle that I just mentioned to you from II Corinthians 12:9-10, "in all these things we overwhelmingly what? Conqueror through him who loved us." We become Huper Nikerman, Huper Nikerman means super conquerors. The word Nike is the word for conquer. We are more than winners. We are more than conquerors. We are Huper, super conquerors. Sweeping victory, overwhelming victory.

The trials, as we learned in verse 28, work for our greater good. The trials work for our greater glory because the more one suffers here, the greater the eternal weight of glory. II Corinthians 4:17 comes to mind, "Momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." So he says look, they do not have the effect of destroying our salvation. They have the effect of making us super conquerors because in those times of weakness we are infused with divine strength. Those trials work to our greater good. They work to our eternal glory. Then he goes back to the same basic motive, the same basic reason that it all holds together because of him who loved us. That is why the bond is eternal. God loves his own forever. Christ loves his own forever and thus brings us to glory.

Paul wrote this during a winter in Corinth and I don't think nor certainly the church at Rome who received this letter could know how short a time would elapse before they would stand in need of this comforting truth. Paul, himself, was eventually killed by a sword or an ax that chopped his head off.

His readers in Rome were soon involved in a blood bath that would soak the sands of the Roman amphitheater as Christians were killed in a number of ways and some of the Caesar's even used them to light their parties in the garden, poured oil over them and made them human torches. It didn't matter what came. It didn't matter the extremity to which the suffering was taken. There was nothing that could separate them. Whether they were mauled by wild beasts, whether they were soaked in tar and burned like torches, whatever it was they were safe in the love of Christ.

You say well haven't there been some people who were involved Christians and they confessed Christ and they went away, they couldn't take the pressure? Of course! Jesus in the parable of the soils in Matthew 13 said some seed went into rocky ground or thorny ground, sprung up for a little while, choked out and died. But you have to understand those people were never real Christians. I John 2:19 is one of the most important and I think helpful verses because that question is asked so much. I John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us they would have remained with us, but they went out in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. But you, you have the Holy Spirit, the anointed." There's always going to be people who hang around, look like Christians, disappear under pressure, but they are not of us and the fact that they left is proof of that.

So in a final crescendo in verses 38 and 39, Paul gives us a capstone, actually it's a capstone on the whole epistle to the Romans up to this point, and in particular the section on salvation, justification that started in Chapter 6, but really the whole epistle. Verses 38 and 39, it is a doxology. "I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created things shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What a statement.

You know it really is a hard thing for me to believe how someone can read that and come us and say, "Well you know you could lose your salvation." That's just unthinkable. Paul says, I am persuaded, confident declaration, Holy Spirit inspired, a settled conclusion, and absolute fact, and I am telling you folks these are things in many cases that Paul himself experienced. I am convinced that even death, the great enemy, the gates of Hades, can't separate you. And you remember Paul was stoned and left for dead, don't you? And I am convinced that not only death but not even life whatever it might bring with all of its dangers and all of its difficulties, you can stop right there Paul. If there's nothing in death that can separate you and nothing in life that can separate you, that's it. Right? You're either dead or alive.

So what he's saying is there's no state of being in which you could ever be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. No state of being! And further there's no spiritual being, no angel, no principality. Angel, perhaps referring to good angels, principalities probably meaning evil angels or demons, there aren't any holy angels that could say to God, hey God really caring for your holiness the way I do I just don't think he ought to be up here. And there is no demon who could successfully

alter our eternal glory. Okay. There's no state of being and there's no spiritual being. That's enough for me, but Paul's not done.

Nor things present, nor things to come, nothing here and now in the age of time and nothing in the future in eternity. No state of being, no spiritual being, and no age, neither time nor eternity. No dimension of time and no dimension of eternity can ever separate us. And he says at the end of verse 38, no powers, no mighty works done by Satan or whoever. No mighty severing power, breaking the purpose of God, shattering the chain. And there's no height. It's an astrological term, hoopsma. That was the word used to speak of a star when it was at the zenith of its movement. Nothing way up there. And no death, bathas, that was used to refer to a start at its lowest point. That is to say from one end of the universe to the other, from one end of heaven to the other, there is nothing that can separate us.

And then just to put one final statement that shuts the door and puts the padlock on nor any other created thing. And that's for the people who would sit around and try to think up something else. Nothing. So be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That love to us is in Christ and it's because we are in Christ that that love is unbreakable. It's not that we've become lovely. We are no more lovely now than we were when we were unconverted. It is that we are in Christ. Our sins have been atoned for. He paid the penalty. Our sins were laid on him. He took the full wrath of God. Justice was satisfied. His holy righteous life is imputed to our account and it's as if we were Christ. That's how God treats us because we are in Christ. And because we are in Christ Jesus, our Lord, God can fully and eternally love us. And so there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from that love.

One of the loveliest hymns, I'll close with this, testimony to this love was penned by George Mathison in June 6, in 1882. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1842 and as a little boy he had visual problems. He had partial vision. His sight failed rapidly and he was totally blind at the age of 18. In spite of the handicap of his blindness he was a brilliant scholar. He finished the University of Glasgow, graduated from the seminary there, became pastor of a 2,000-member church in Edinburgh, one of my favorite cities. I'll be over there in a few months to preach at a conference at the University there. George Mathison became one of the greatest preachers and pastors of his time in the late 1800's. He never married, however because his fiancée left him just before the wedding when she learned that his progressive blindness would render him totally blind. She said I don't want to live with a man who is totally blind. Out of the pain of that experience he wrote a tribute to the love of God. You know it. It goes like this: O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee. I give Thee back the life I owe, but in Thine ocean depths its flow, may richer fuller be. This is the love that the Lord has for us, the love that will not let us go. Jeremiah put it this way. Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Father, the reminders in this passage of your grace are staggering to us. This is such immense love for us who are so unworthy. We thank you for a salvation that is secure in an insecure world. We thank you that all of the onslaughts of men and demons cannot sever this love. We thank you that there can never be brought against us a just indictment. There can never be brought against us a legitimate condemnation. There are no people and there are no circumstances from one end of the universe to the other, there is no condition of time and eternity, there is no state of being in life and death, there is no one and nothing that can ever alter your eternal love for us. We rejoice in that love that will not let us go. And all to the honor of Christ as we contemplate that this is ours because we are his and he is ours. What profound grace and goodness is this. We thank you in his name. Amen.

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