

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Salvation is Irrevocable, Part 3

Scripture: Romans 8:35-39

Code: 90-184

Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 8 as we come to the final portion of this great chapter. In Jeremiah 31:3 God said to His people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and that is the kind of love that God places upon those who belong to Him eternally. And that's what we've been learning in this great chapter. We remember the wonderful promise that God is able to complete what He begins in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you were perfected until the day of Jesus Christ." It is an everlasting work of salvation that God does. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed and am convinced He is able to guard what I've entrusted to Him, namely my soul, until that day." Jude 25, again a wonderful and securing promise that the Lord will keep us in these great words, "To the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty and dominion and authority...why?...because He is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy."

Scripture is filled with promises about the eternity of our salvation, that whom the Lord saves He secures forever. And, of course, that is what we have been seeing in this great chapter. It all began in verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." If you're in Christ, if you've been placed in Christ, into union with Christ in faith in Him, there will never be any condemnation. The rest of the chapter goes on to demonstrate why that is true and culminates at the very end in verses 31 to 39 by answering any possible objections. Verse 31, "What then shall we say to these things?" What can we expect as a response? Well, this anticipates that some will object. Some are going to say, "Well, in spite of all that we've learned, we could lose our salvation, it is possible," and so Paul takes the conceivable objections and answers them as he closes this chapter.

He starts in verse 31 by saying, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Who could be successful in overturning God's plan? Well the answer, of course, is no one because no one is more powerful than God. And if God has determined that we're in a no-condemnation status, and that no-condemnation status is eternal, no one can alter that. "You are from God, little children," 1 John 4:4, "and have overcome them because greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world." God is greater than anything He's created, than anyone He has created. And since God is infinite in power, it is utterly impossible to thwart His will. There is no greater power. No one can halt the completion of His eternal plan because my God is all powerful, infinite in power, I can say I will not fear what man can do to me. Because my God is infinite in power I can say in what time I am afraid I will trust in Him. Because my God is infinite in power I can say I will both lay me down and sleep for Thou, Lord, only makest me

dwell in safety. Because God is infinite in power, Moses said, "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Psalm 91 celebrates the security that we enjoy from an Old Testament perspective and is, as well, a Messianic Psalm. But listen to what Psalm 91 says. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." In other words, if you're in God's care and under His protection, that's where you will stay. "I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust, for it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trap and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions and under His wings you may seek refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark, you will not be afraid of the terror by night or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you.'" This is the tremendous protection that God provides. "The Most High...verse 9 says...is your dwelling place. The Lord is your refuge. No evil will befall you. No any plague come near your tent. He will give His angels charge concerning you and to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands lest you strike your foot against a stone and you will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down." And God says, "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him, I will set him securely on high because he has known My name." Psalm 91 is a great Psalm of the security of the believer.

Our security then is founded on the plan of God, on the promise of God and most notably on the power of God. Numbers 14:9 says, "The Lord is with us, fear them not," quoting Joshua and Caleb. Deuteronomy 33:29, "Happy are you, O Israel, who is like unto you, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of your help who is the sword of your excellency." Just in the same way god stood by His people Israel, God stands by to defend His church. And Paul makes a grand and glorious statement in verse 31, "If God is for us, who is against us?" Meaning, who can successfully be against us. "No one can remove our no-condemnation status."

Now somebody might suggest that there are some persons who could change that. God? No, verse 31 says, "God is for us." And verse 32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, God who gave up His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him...that is along with giving us His Son...freely give us all things?" In other words, if He gave us the greatest gift to save us, He will give us the lesser gift to keep us. As we said, that's the argument from the greater to the lesser. So, God who has predetermined to love us, who has granted us salvation through the sacrifice of His Son which was His greatest gift will do whatever it takes now that we belong to Him to hang on to us.

And somebody might suggest, "Well, maybe Satan can free us up from our salvation. Maybe Satan can cause God to let go of us." Verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Answer: Satan will, "He is the accuser of the brethren but unsuccessful because God is the One who justifies." Verse 34.

Satan may be the one who condemns, but Christ Jesus is He who died, yes who was raised, is at the right hand of God who also intercedes for us."

And so, as Isaiah said in those wonderful words, "He is near that justified me, who shall contend with me?" That's Isaiah 50 verse 8. Who is my adversary, says Isaiah in verse 9, "Let him come near to me, behold the Lord God will help me. Who is he that shall condemn me?" Paul may have had that passage from Isaiah 50 in mind when he wrote this.

We are God's elect. God has justified us, made us righteous. He's not about to turn us loose. So God cannot let go of us of His own will because He has predetermined that we should be His forever and He is for us. Satan cannot somehow wrest us, as it were, from the hands of God because God will not let it happen. He has given us a greater gift, He will do the lesser work to hold on to us. Christ won't let us go either, He already died for us, rose for us and now is at the right hand of God interceding for us. And we saw that all in our last study. So it is not possible that we should be taken from the hand of God. There is not a person, or persons who can cause us to lose our salvation.

Then we come to verse 35 and we come to the matter of circumstances. If persons cannot cause us to lose our salvation, if we can't do it ourselves, if other people can't do it, as we saw, if God won't let go of us, if Satan can't cause it to happen, if Christ won't because He is ever living to intercede for us, is it possible that some circumstance could do it? In other words, some circumstance could so effect us as to destroy our salvation. What if under the pressure of temptation we would fall and reject Christ? What if under the pressure of temptation we would abandon our faith and remove ourselves, as it were? What if the cost of discipleship is so high and the price to pay for following Christ so great that we're no longer willing to do that?

Well, that's taking us in to verses 35 to 37. "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?" From our standpoint? Nothing outside of us, no person outside of us, not God, not Satan, not Christ can do it. But what about something that happens to us that separates us from the love of Christ from our side? "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword? 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.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

"What" is really the appropriate word to start verse 35. The context makes this better than "who," although the Greek could go either way. Can we stand the pressure without forsaking Christ? And Paul says, "Yes, absolutely." There isn't anything that can separate us from the love of Christ. And though that implies our love to Him, it most notably speaks of His love for us. Verse 37, "Him who loved us." Verse 39, "The love of God," which obviously in that context He has for us. So those verses would lead us to believe that the primary issue here is His love for us, though certainly it brings into thought our love for Him. Is there anything that can cause us to lose our love for Him and

therefore have Him cease loving us?

Well, the answer to that could come from John 13, listen to what it says in verse 1, this is a wonderful, wonderful statement, John 13:1 says...the feast of Passover was about to happen and Jesus was very much aware that He was going to die, and it says at the end of verse 1, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." He loved them eis telos, He loved them to the max, that's what it means. He loved them supremely, He loved them perfectly. He loved them completely. He loved them ultimately. And what that is saying is, God loves His own who are in the world, listen to this one, to the complete extent of His capability of loving. That is a remarkable thing.

He loves His own in the world to the max, to the fullness of the capacity that He has to love. And I might add that it has nothing to do with whether we are lovable, because there was hardly a time when the disciples were less lovable than at the very moment of John 13. They were in the upper room, it was the night that Judas was going to betray Jesus. They were having the final supper, the last supper, the Passover meal. Judas was about to be dismissed from that gathering and he would go immediately and sell Jesus who then the next day would be taken captive and crucified. The disciples were not only disinterested in what was going on with regard to Jesus, and more concerned about themselves, but they were actually demonstrating their carnality by being in the middle of a debate about which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom...which seemed to have been a constant subject for them. And they were at it again, according to comparative passages. We know that is the case. Jesus told them that He was going to die. He had told them what was coming. They literally let it run off like water on a duck's back. They were indifferent to that whole scenario, that unbelievably horrible sin-bearing which He was anticipating, never captured their compassion at all...not at all. Instead, they were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. They were really very unlovable at that moment.

And isn't it wonderful that the text of Scripture chooses that very moment in which to tell us that Jesus loved them to the max? And the bottom line is...His love for us is an eternal love, set upon us, never due to anything worthy in us or anything we've achieved and consequently it was not gained by us nor is it to be lost by us. He loved His own who were in the world to the max.

And then it goes on to tell you something else about these...these typical believers. They were sitting at dinner already eating and nobody had washed feet. Now that's not a big issue in your house, cause you keep your feet covered all day. It's a big issue there because the roads are either muddy or dusty, nothing is paved except some stone streets, but those were only thoroughfares and most people would walk on dirt all day. They wore sandals and supper like this, a Passover meal like this was hours together and it was more than sitting in a chair, it was reclining and if your head reclined, you tended to recline toward somebody's feet. Common courtesy indicated that there should be a foot washing. And it was the lowest slave on the social totem pole who had that job. And since they rented the upper room, probably no slave came with it. And none of the disciples was about to volunteer

since they were all arguing about who was the greatest, and none of them wanted to disqualify himself from such consideration by taking the role of a servant. They were exhibiting selfishness, indifference and pride. And Jesus Himself had to get up, take off His outer garment leaving only His inner cloak, put a towel around His waist, do the dirty work Himself.

I say all of that to say there's nothing to indicate that they were worth loving at this moment. But the love of God is not dependent on how we act in any given circumstance in life. It is an unending love. At that very time He loved them to the very max. That is just a profound and profound truth.

So, the question is then, back to Romans, is there anything that can separate us from Him loving us to the max? He loves us to the fullest extent that it is possible for Him to love His creature. He cannot love any creature more than He loves His own. That's just incredible. Is there anything that can come into our lives and effect us in such a way as to cause us the forfeiture of that love?

Well, the answer is here. "Is it tribulation, is it distress, is it persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword?" Can any of those things do it?

Tribulation is from the Greek word *thlipsis* which means pressure, literally the word for pressure, outward difficulty, could be bodily harm, accusation, rejection. And then the word "distress" really two words, *stenochoria*, probably means not outward difficulty but inward difficulty. This is an interesting word. "Distress" means to be hemmed in to a narrow way from which there is no escape. Are there temptations that are so inescapable? External pressures, internal temptations so inescapable that we just can't sustain our faith? Can they cause us to totally collapse so that there's absolutely no way out?

What about persecution, *diogmos*? What about abuse for the cause of Christ which can get very weary, physical, mental suffering at the hands of Christ rejecters and God haters? Can that break the back of our faith? What about famine? Not even having necessary food, being deprived? What about nakedness? That means you don't have any clothes, nothing to wear, you're so bereft, you're so poor, you're so impoverished, you don't have any food and you don't have necessary clothing.

What about peril? That simply means being exposed to danger that you can't identify. Fear is what's involved there, the dread of potential and impending disaster. What about *machaira*, the sword? What's that talking about? Execution.

What about all that? Can that do it? Is that a powerful enough catalogue of circumstances as to destroy true faith?

Well we know one thing, it will destroy shallow illegitimate faith, won't it? Because in the parable that Jesus told of the soil and the seeds, He talked about seed that went in to the stony ground and came

up for a little while but as soon as there was persecution, it died and never bore any fruit. We know false faith can be destroyed by persecution. False faith, according to the rest of that parable and that thorny weedy ground can even be destroyed just by the love of the world, the love of riches which is a form of temptation. But the question is...can the real stuff, real true faith, genuine salvation be devastated by these things? Can they drive us to doubt if we're genuinely God's? Can they drive us to sin? Can they drive us to the rejection of Jesus Christ and the abandonment of our faith and hope and trust in Him?

Well this is not theory with Paul, and we know that as well as anybody because we've been in 2 Corinthians so long. This is not theory. Ask yourself the question...did Paul suffer external pressure all the time? Did he suffer internal pressure? Yes. Was he depressed? Yes. Was he fearful? Yes. Did he suffer persecution? Yes. Did he go without food? Yes. Did he go without clothing? Was he in danger of death? Yes. Was he facing execution? Yes. So we're not talking theory here, folks. Paul is literally giving you a recitation of things parallel...listen to 2 Corinthians again, we've been studying it, 11 verse 23, "I've been in far more labors, far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, in danger of death five times, I received from the Jews 39 lashes, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I've spent in the deep. I've been on frequent journeys and dangers from rivers, robbers, countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea, among false brethren. Been in labor, hardship, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, without food and cold and exposure...no clothes."

I've had it all and I'm not alone. Listen to some other folks who had that. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah...Hebrews 11:32...David, Samuel, the prophets who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put armies to flight, women received back their dead by resurrection, others were tortured, not accepting their release in order that they might obtain a better resurrection. Others experienced mockings, scourgings, chains, imprisonments. They were stoned. They were sawn in half, tempted, put to death with the sword, went about in sheepskins, goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill treated, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. Not only Paul, but a lot of other folks, great heroes of the faith have endured these kinds of things.

Does that break the bond of Christ's love for His own? When we struggle with those kinds of things, does He stop loving us? No. In fact, verse 36 says, "We expect it, this stuff is supposed to come just as it is written." I mean, Jesus said it, didn't He? "In this world you shall have all that tribulation." In John 16 He says, "They're going to take you prisoner, they're going to bring you before the councils, they're going to take your life." This is what it says and Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long. We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

All the saints have endured that. That's not surprising. That just kind of goes along with belonging to God because the hating world is going to persecute the Lord's own. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:37 to 39. "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." It could cost you your family. It could cost you your life. And all the saints through all the ages have endured this.

Let me tell you something. If that drives someone to reject Christ, they were never His. "They went out from us because they were not of us, if they had been of us they would have continued with us; but they went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not of us," 1 John 2:19. "For Thy sake," back to verse 36, expresses a willingness. God's people for His sake, "Christ's own for His sake are willing to suffer." Listen to Luke 9:57, "As they were going along the road someone said to Him, 'I'll follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'" That's interesting, isn't it? Somebody comes along, some would-be disciple and says, "Oh, I'm impressed with You, I'll follow You wherever You go." And Jesus doesn't say to him..."Well, I'm headed to a Kingdom and glory and power and riches." He says, "Well, I probably ought to tell you, I'm homeless. I can't offer you anything."

This is...this is really basic in discipleship. He offers us in this world persecution, tribulation, suffering, alienation. We are the off-scouring, in that sense. It is a willingness that Christians have, a willingness to go all the way to death. Listen to Matthew 16 verse 24, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me, for whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." It's...you come to Christ acknowledging a sacrifice, a willingness to suffer. When true Christians face things, they don't abandon their salvation, it's just part of it. True believers persevere. It's a great truth.

And Paul says that, look at verse 37. "No...he says...but in all these things we overwhelmingly...what?...conquer through Him who loved us." We are hupernikamon(?), we are super-conquerors, winners of a resounding victory. To put it in the sport's vernacular, we trounced them, we obliterate them. We defeat them in an overwhelming fashion...that's what that word hupernikamon means, super conquerors. In all our trials, in all persecutions, in all our temptations, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, in all of that we don't just barely eke by, we are triumphant, we are victorious. The trial works to our greater good, as we've seen. Those kinds of trials in our lives make us humble, drive us to God, expose us to greater grace, break our self-confidence and make us powerful. They enable us to strengthen others. So he says we overwhelmingly conquer, not in our own strength but through Him who...what?...loved us.

See, when we're going through all of that, He never lets go. He loves us all the way through that and He holds on to that. It is an unbreakable bond.

Paul wrote this during a winter in Corinth and neither Paul, I think, nor the Romans could know how short a time would elapse before they would stand in need of this very comforting truth. Paul himself would be killed by a sword, a Roman sword. And his readers were men and women whose blood would soak the sands of the great Roman amphitheaters, under the massive Roman persecution. But the honor of Christ was safe in their keeping because they were safe in His love and He would never let them go and He would give them the strength to endure and to persevere and He would give them the faith to be sustained through whatever came, and an undying love for Him. They didn't need to fear to die. They didn't need to fear being mauled by wild beasts. They didn't need to fear being soaked in tar and then told to deny Christ or they would be lit as torches in the gardens of Caesar. They didn't need to fear fighting with gladiators. They didn't need to fear fighting beasts. And they didn't need to fear conflict with hell's demons. They were safe in the undying love of Christ. Those who abandoned their faith never belonged to Him, never. His love is an everlasting love. He loves to the max. And there is nothing, absolutely nothing that can separate them from that love.

You know, I'm drawn to what is an incredible illustration of this love. Turn to Ezekiel 36...Ezekiel 36, a little bit of an aside here, it will take a few moments, but it's...Ezekiel 16, I don't know what I said the first time, Ezekiel 16. This illustrates the unbreakable love that God has. This...this chapter, by the way when I was doing the series on "The Love of God" some years back, this chapter was one of the most remarkable in that series. This is a chapter that many rabbis have forbidden to be read in synagogues. It is very graphic and it is very tragically dishonoring to Israel...and that's why rabbis have not allowed it to be read. But the Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel as he was over by the river Chebar, already in captivity, and the Lord was telling him that he had been deported with one of the earlier groups and God was about to destroy Jerusalem and Judah. And so in verse 3 the Lord speaks and He says to Jerusalem through the prophet, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite." You remember that that was the land of the Canaanite when the Israelites came there and conquered it. "Your father was an Amorite," not your genetic father but your forbearers in the land, "and your mother a Hittite," those were the pagan nations that were there when Israel came in. "As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing, you were not rubbed with salt," which was done to infants as a disinfectant, "or even wrapped in cloths."

You know what happened? A baby was born and somebody just took that baby without cleaning that baby at all and leaving the umbilical cord hanging out of that little body and just pitched that baby out in an open field. Verse 5, "No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you, rather you were thrown out into the open field for you were hated on the day you were born." Abortion was less common in the ancient world, but throwing away newborn babies was quite common. And when somebody didn't want a child, they just took that child, ripped it, as it were,

out of the mother's womb, left it in the condition it was in and just pitched it into a dirt pile.

That was Israel. God found Israel like an unwanted baby lying in the dirt, unwashed, unclothed. Verse 6, "When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live.' I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live.'" That's sovereign love, folks...that's sovereign election. God just finds this dirty outcast and gives it life purely because He chose to do it and made you numerous like plants of the field, and now we see God nurturing this life. "You grew up, you became tall, you reached the age for fine ornaments. Your breasts were formed and your hair grown, yet you were naked and bare." This is like a little girl who reaches the age of puberty and it is no longer appropriate for her to be unclothed. "I passed by you and saw you and behold, you were at the time of love," that's puberty. "So I spread my skirt over you and covered your nakedness." It's time now to put on your clothes, and it speaks of God's wonderful blessings to Israel when He brought them, as it were, out of the infancy and the barrenness and the nakedness of the wilderness wanderings and brought them into the land of Israel and clothed Israel.

"I bathed you with water. I washed off your blood from you. At the start I anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and I put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet." I always want to remind the "Love the Dolphins" people of that verse. "And I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hand..." It's like God raising a daughter and just decking her out. "Put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears..." And by the way, that's not a big ring like a bull so that you can pull her around, it would be a small ring on the side. "You're adorned with gold and silver, your dress was fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth, you ate fine flour, honey and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful and you advanced to royalty." In fact, the royalty of that nation was so remarkable that even the Queen of Sheba came to see it, didn't she? This is the story of God rearing Israel.

"Your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," says the Lord God. And God says I did all that. And what did they have to do? They were nothing but a dirty, filthy, little infant lying in dirt and blood in the middle of a field.

And verse 15 is quite interesting, "But you trusted in your beauty and you played the harlot, and you took off some of your clothes and you made for yourselves high places of various colors," verse 15 says, "You poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing."

They were so vile, they didn't even care with whom they committed harlotry. This is idolatry, by the way. This would be like a wife who had been given everything a husband could possibly give a wife who went out as a prostitute and could care less who it was that she engaged herself with. "And you played the harlot and you took all that I gave you and you turned it into idol worship, forms of idol worship. You offered incense and oil to the false gods," and He goes on to describe this. Verse 21,

"You slaughtered My children," they actually offered their babies on a fire to the god Moloch. This is just an incredible story.

And even after all of that, verse 28 says, "You weren't satisfied so you played the harlot with them and you still weren't satisfied." You had such a lust and such a passion for evil it couldn't even be satisfied. No matter what you did it couldn't be satisfied.

Well He goes on through the chapter, it's the longest chapter in Ezekiel, I won't go through the whole thing. Down in verse 46 He says, "You were worse than Samaria and worse than Sodom." Now listen to that, very important. "You were worse than your northern sister Samaria, and you were worse than Sodom." And believe me, Samaria was wretched and Sodom was more wretched. God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone, didn't He? At the end of verse 47, "You acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they did." You were worse than Samaria and worse than Sodom.

Go to verse 60, "Nevertheless..." Boy, you ought to underline that word. "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you." Is that unbelievable? In spite of all of that, My love for you is unbreakable. Verse 62, "I'll establish My covenant with you, you will know that I am the Lord in order that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation when I have forgiven you for all that you have done."

Let me tell you something. There's a principle here and Israel is distinct as a nation from us as individuals but the principle is the same. When God sets His love on someone, nothing breaks it. I'm not saying that we're not going to fall to temptation. I'm not saying we're not going to sin. I'm not going...I'm not saying that when persecution comes we don't fear those things. I'm not saying that we'll never question God about those things. But God loves us to the max with an unbreakable love through which He will provide for us forgiveness, and for us in the New Covenant, 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation will ever overtake us but such is as common to man and God is faithful who will also make a way of...what?...escape that you may be able to bear it." When God sets His love on someone, it's permanent in spite of all their failures, it's permanent. And Israel, He says, will some day remember and be ashamed. And Zechariah says some day Israel will look on Him whom they've pierced and mourn for Him as an only Son, a fountain of blessing will be open, a fountain of cleansing and Israel will be saved because God has set His love on that nation, individuals in that nation that constitute His special people.

Well, back to Romans 8, that was just a digression of thought. So what will separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing. In all the things that come we will overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us because His love for us will never be broken and in that love He provides sustaining faith. Our faith will not die. We may have our moments of doubt, our faith will not die because He grants to us sustained faith. And so he says in summing it up in verse 38, "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 thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Folks, that says everything that could possibly be said. I am persuaded...this is a confident declaration of a Holy Spirit inspired man, I have a settled conclusion and I'm telling you this, not even death, the great enemy, not even death can separate us, not even the gates of Hades which Satan wants to use against us, Hebrews 2 says it's the weapon he uses. For us, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Death can't separate us from the love of Christ, in fact death just ushers us into it, doesn't it?

Well what about life? Life with all its dangers, life with all its difficulties, life with all its temptations, life with all its trials? What he is saying here is there is no state of being here or there, live or dead, there is no state of being in which we can be separated from the love of Christ. Listen to 1 Corinthians 3 verse 21, "All things belong to You, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all things belong to You and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God."

There is no sphere in which you could exist. There is no state of being in which you could exist which would be outside the eternal love of Christ. Nor are there any personalities that could separate you, nor angels...he says. And Paul probably here is thinking about good angels...no good angel, not that they would, this is hypothetical, but no good angel can alter our salvation. It's not possible for even a good angel to do that. It's impossible. And then he says principalities, and probably there he has in mind evil angels because he uses that term to express evil angels in Ephesians chapter 6 and Colossians chapter 1. No holy angel and no demon. That is to say there is no state of being in which you could be separated from the love of Christ and there are no supernatural angelic beings either good or evil who could effect such a separation. No state of being and no demons, or angels, can alter our eternal glory.

And then just to throw in anything else, "Nor things present, nor things to come." There is nothing here and now, there's nothing in the present age, in the present time at the present moment and there's nothing in any future time, any future age or any future moment, including the judgment of God that's coming on the world.

You know, it's really sad when you meet people who don't know if they're Christians, who don't know if they're going to make it, who don't know if they're going to hang on. Who are worried that it may be okay right now, but I don't know what's going to happen in the future and they live in fear and the worst fear is...I heard a preacher say this one time...if you ever die with any unconfessed sin, you might not know about it but God does and when you get to the judgment you'll be cast into hell. There is nothing that could happen in the future, including the judgment of God, that could separate you

from the love of Christ. No state of being, no supernatural power either good or evil angels, and no dimension of time or eternity...not the present and not the future, not now and not ever could we be separated from the love of Christ.

And then he adds, "Nor powers..." When plural...when used plural in a plural form in the New Testament, it frequently, most frequently refers to miracles. There is no...there is no mighty work, there is no mighty miracle, no mighty power. No state of being, no supernatural creature, no period in time or eternity and no power source in existence could separate you from the love of Christ.

And then if that's not enough, he says, "Nor height, nor depth..." You say, "What does that mean?" Well, that just covers everything. Height is an astrological term, hupsoma, it was a term used to describe the orbit of a star or the apex of the orbit of a star, when a star was at its zenith, the highest point that they could imagine, or conceive of. There's nothing...there's nothing in infinite space above, there's nothing...and bathos, depth, was the term used to describe the star at its lowest point of orbit. There's nothing that the extreme and infinite point of the highest heaven and the extreme and infinite point of the lowest heaven...there's nothing anywhere from one heaven to the other that can separate us from the love of Christ.

There is no state of being, not in time or eternity, there is no created being whether holy angel or an evil one, there is no dimension of time either in time or eternity, there is no source of power, and there is no place in the endless universe where there is anything that can ever sever us from the love of Christ. Nothing in this life or the life to come, nothing in time, nothing in eternity, nothing in the world of angels, nothing in the world of demons, no power, nothing on earth, nothing in the infinite heavens, nothing...nothing...and just in case someone says, "Except..." he adds, "Nor any other created thing." No exceptions, none shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You understand that the love of God toward us is all bound up in Christ and the reason God has set His eternal love on us is because He has covered us with the righteousness of Christ so that His love for us is not conditioned on what we are, but on what Christ is. Understood? And that can't change, that's unalterable.

You notice in verses 31 to 34 the emphasis is on the love of God, in verses 35 to 39 it's on the love of Christ and the two are linked inseparably...inseparably. Nothing can change it. All of our failures and all of our foibles and all of our stumblings and all of our sins and all of our willful disobedience doesn't change the fact that He loves us to the max and His love is ours from eternity to eternity. He has set His love upon us in eternity past, and He will love us throughout eternity future. And He loves us not because of we are...of what we are but because what we have become in Christ, right? He loves what we are in Christ.

One of the loveliest hymns to the secure love of God was penned by a man by the name of George Mathison(?), it was written in 1882, in fact on June the sixth of 1882. And George Mathison was born in the city of Glasgow in Scotland, was born there in 1842 so he was 40 years old when he wrote this. And he had as a boy only partial vision. His sight failed rapidly and by the time he was 18 George Mathison was totally blind...so he had been blind for about 22 years when he wrote this lovely hymn. Despite his blindness, by the way, he was a brilliant scholar at the University of Glasgow, both in the university and the seminary...and amazingly became the pastor of a two thousand member church in Edinburgh, became one of the greatest preachers of his day and one of the purest pastors of his day as well.

But George Mathison missed something in life, I guess we might say, he never married. But there's a story about why he never married. He was engaged to his fiance and all was going well until he told her just before their marriage that he had just learned that he would soon be totally blind. Upon hearing that, he was in his late teens at the time, she left him. It was out of the pain of that very experience that he wrote a tribute to the love of God which never forsakes. In fact, Carrie sang the words that George Mathison wrote. The hymn went 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 that in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer fuller be."

With a girl it was a love that easily let him go. With God it was a love that wouldn't. And we're right back where we started, Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Father, we thank You for this great, great chapter. How thrilling it has been to ascend the heights. We remember the words of the hymn, "That soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I cannot desert to its foes, that soul though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake." We thank You that You love us with a love that will not let us go. And we are not worthy of it, we are like the disciples, we are not worthy to be loved to the max, to be loved to the perfection of Your capacity to love Your creatures. What privilege, what joy, what gratitude that elicits out of our hearts and what devotion and what obedience it calls forth. And indeed with George Mathison we say, "O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee. I give Thee back the life I owe." That's all we can give for such love...is to give You back the life we owe. We know that we will love you only because You first loved us. For that we praise You and thank You and are called again to faithful obedience. We want to love You. We want to love You with all our heart, soul, mind and strength but we fall so short. Flood us with the grace that can sustain the love of which You are so worthy. Amen.

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