

## **“WHO SHALL SEPARATE US.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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### **Scripture Texts: Romans 8:35-39**

#### **Prayer:**

Holy Father, by your power and grace help us to hear and understand and embrace your Word, that it will be fruitfully applied so we may grow in grace and truth. In Jesus name, Amen.

#### **Introduction.**

We started out calling Romans 8 the greatest chapter in the greatest letter in the greatest book ever written. We called Romans 8:28 the greatest verse. So now I have run out of superlatives to describe these last five verses. Maybe I can call it the greatest paragraph.

This is the Hallelujah chorus. This is the much beloved crescendo.

Chapter 8 began with there is no condemnation and the chapter ends with there is no possible separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8 is our assurance that as sinners who struggle with sin (7:14-25) and struggle with suffering (8:17-39), with failure and doubt, who feel these things deeply, we are shown just as deeply we are loved with an unbreakable and inseparable love of God for us in Jesus.

#### **Vss. 35-39 Divine Love**

We come to the fifth and final question of Paul. (Who is against us? Will He not give us all things? Who will bring a charge against us? Who will condemn us?)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Who is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Paul makes three convincing arguments to prove his case.

#### **Vss. 35-36, who shall separate us?**

Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who is up to that challenge? Who wants to try to put up that fight? Bring out your strongest and best. Bring out your heavy weight champions. Tribulation (trial, trouble), distress (inner turmoil, stress, anxiety), persecution (hatred of the world), famine (mother nature), nakedness (striped of everything, worst deprivation, peril (danger), sword (death)? Are any of those a match for God and His love for us in Christ?

The things Paul mentions are givens, these are normal, there is nothing strange here. The Godly will suffer all of these things. Romans 8:18 calls these the sufferings of these present times.

This is why Paul inserts this strange verse from Psalm 44:22, from another psalm of Asaph.

**Psalm 44:22** Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

This Psalm is a lament made by some martyrs, whom God had turned over to their enemies and they were suffering terribly (44:9-17). Not for sin, but for their righteousness. They are suffering for the sake of God and God's reputation.

**II Corinthians 1:8-10** We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

This is not some academic question for Paul, it is a constant, daily reality. Daily exposed to the risk of danger. He has been persecuted, he knows he will be persecuted.

OT, NT, now, this is the experience of God's people, they are nothing new. Get rid of the idea that once you become a Christian, these things don't happen anymore. The righteous have always had troubles. This is real for hundreds of thousands, even millions every year.

**I Corinthians 15:30-31** Why are we in danger every hour? ... I die every day!

**Vs. 37, more than conquerors.**

Paul finds a particular word to capture his meaning, hyper-conqueror, super-conqueror, a victorious, triumphant, champion conqueror. Not just a victor but a super victor.

More than conquerors, through what? Through courage, endurance, determination, will power, superior wisdom, through self? No.

Through Christ. Through our faith in Christ, through our trust in Christ, through our grasp of Christ, through our hold on Him? No, through His hold on us. Through that act in the past by which He proved His love for us.

**Romans 5:6-8** While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... 8 God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**I Peter 1:3-5** According to [God's] great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We are more than conquerors because Christ was more than a conqueror for us.

If you are in Christ, if you are heirs with Christ, then you are on the winning side. Because Christ conquered, those who are with Christ will conquer. We will be vindicated.

Not only can we not be conquered, but we will succeed in conquering.

That Paul calls us conquerors reminds us that the Christian life is a battle, it is mortal combat to the end, to the death. It is spiritual warfare fought with spiritual weapons.

More than conquers means something else. We don't just get a victory, we actually gain from it. We don't just win the fight, there are spoils from the battle. We come out of it better than if we had not suffered at all.

Goliath doesn't just lie dead in the dust, he gets up and serves you. In the words of Romans 8:28 our enemies, our sufferings, our tribulations must work for our good, for our blessing, our benefit. God permits nothing to come into our lives that He has not ordained for good purposes, for our sanctification and our being conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

We must come out of the furnace as refined gold.

**I Peter 1:6-7** ... you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**II Corinthians 4:17** This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

**Vss. 38-39, for I am sure.**

For I am sure is a bit weak, Paul is convinced, confident, persuaded. I know that I know.

Oh, you got more, bigger and stronger challengers? Bring them on. Oh, now you are doubling down, your bringing them in pairs, twins to the fight. The list starts with the biggest, baddest,

worst enemy of all, *death*. Death, that great separator, that dreaded separator. But it's not. To die is gain, to be with Christ.

The grieving at a death of a Christian is like the grieving you see in airports when loved ones are being temporarily separated, they know they will be reunited again one day.

*Life*. Now that's the scary one, that's the dangerous one. Not just the trials and heartache, the pain and disappointment, but the enticements, the temptations, the distractions, the worldly pleasures, trivial pursuits, addictions, idolatry, the mind-numbing entertainment, the soul crushing busyness, the spiritual forgetfulness. The sin, the daily sin.

What about *angels*? Superhumans, cosmic forces we can't see, whether good or bad angels. Nothing in the present, nothing in the future, nothing in the highest heights or the deepest deeps, in heaven or hell, or anything in between. Nothing in time or space. In fact, nothing in all the created universe. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

What would you add to the list? Chronic sickness, cancer, neuropathy, disease, depression, betrayal, rejection, bitterness, financial struggles, legal issues, relatives, friends, enemies, dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, the Zombie Apocalypse.

Things real or imagined, actual or potential, definite or unspecified.

Imagine the most terrifying thing you can think of, your very worst nightmare, no, even one worse than that. The death of a spouse or a child.

Perhaps the biggest of all, what if my sins are too many and too great, what if I have sinned myself out of God's love and patience and acceptance?

Consider all the countless things you have done or failed to do, all your weaknesses, shortcomings and sins you have committed. Add all the things others have done to you or said about you. Is there really one thing left that can separate us, can I separate myself from God?

Jesus suffered and died the very worst suffering and death, to take away the sting of death and give us all victory over death and everything else. This table is our reminder.

That final phrase "nor anything else in all creation" is designed to shut off and close down every possible loophole. No being, no thing, no event, nothing that is or ever will be, not even yourself (after all, you are a created thing) will be able to separate you from the love of Christ.

**John 10:27-29** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Stop being afraid, don't be afraid of death or the devil or the future or any trial or trouble. Stop being afraid, live in the unchanging, inseparable love of God for you in Christ Jesus.

### **Implications and application.**

“Maybe you grew up in a home where all you heard were shame-filled words of condemnation. You were constantly reminded of all your failures and sins. You rarely heard affirmations that encouraged and reminded you of God's love and forgiving grace. Well, if that's you, hear what God says to you through the words of Paul! God is for you! There is no one to condemn you! There is no sin of yours for which Christ hasn't already suffered its punishment. Jesus stands at God's right hand interceding and praying for you, every single day. Do you feel the force of this truth? Can you sense the clean air of God's loving power blowing through your heart, elevating you above the self-contempt and self-hatred that has kept you in bondage for so long?” Sam Storms

**Romans 8:1, 11** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

**8:16-17** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

**8:29-32** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, .... 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

**8:31-32** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure ... [nothing] in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Prayer: Ephesians 3:17-19** Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.