

Romans 8:35-39

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 November 2017

Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0 : 00] Good morning, church. Would you turn with me to Romans chapter 8? We are concluding our series in Romans 8 today, looking at verses 35 through 39.

Next week starts the season of Advent. That's the season of the year when we look back to Christ's first coming and we look ahead to Christ's second coming. There's a lot of good things coming up in the life of our church this coming month.

So check out the bulletin. December 12th is the carol service. December 17th is our longest night service, a service of lament in this time of the year. Christmas Eve is actually a Sunday this year. So we're going to have a candlelight service on Christmas Eve at 5 p.m. in addition to our morning service. And this coming Advent, we're going to be preaching through the life of John the Baptist, the great herald of the coming king, saying, prepare the way.

Prepare your hearts for the one who's about to come. So that's what's coming up this coming month at Trinity, this Christmas season. I'm actually pretty excited about it. I think it's going to be a good December for us as a church.

[1 : 20] But this morning, we are finishing off Romans 8. This fall, we've been studying this great chapter that's sometimes been called the Mount Everest of Scripture, the highest peak from which we can see all the contours of the land below.

That's page 945 in the Pew Bible. Let me encourage you to turn there with me. Romans chapter 8, verses 35 through 39. Before I read this for us, let's pray as we come to God's word.

Father, thank you for being a God who reveals yourself to us. As we come to read this passage of Scripture, we pray that by your spirit, you would be revealing yourself to us afresh through your written word.

Father, show us your glory in Christ this morning. Help us to see him with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we may know your love that surpasses knowledge, and that we might be transformed more and more into his likeness.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. Romans 8, starting in verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[2 : 38] Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake, we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Friend, what would it look like for you to live as if you truly had nothing to fear? I confess I don't often live that way.

I often fear what other people will think of me. I often fear at times how my kids are going to navigate their futures, whether they're going to come out okay. I fear at times sickness.

[3 : 53] I fear at times losing loved ones. There are lots of things in life that can make us afraid, aren't there? But as Paul draws this chapter to a close, he points us to the one thing that Christians need never fear.

And because of that one thing, we can face anything with assurance, with confidence. These five verses are the finale of perhaps one of the most riveting and important chapters in the whole Bible. These verses are Paul's hold nothing back, no holds barred, lyrical fireworks display of what he's been trying to say for the whole chapter, really.

This is the big finish. As I was preparing to preach this morning, Beth asked me, hey, how's your sermon preparation going?

And I said, you know, I feel like preaching this text is a bit like trying to catch a tornado in a paper bag. How could we possibly try to capture the magnitude of these gale force winds in our short time together this morning?

[5 : 06] This momentum that's been building for the whole chapter that's now breaking forth in all of its stunning power. How do we try to capture what Paul wants us to know here deep in our bones? What's the earth-shaking assurance that Paul wants us to grasp?

Well, let's hear three times in these five verses. Verse 35, the love of Christ. Verse 37, him who loved us.

Verse 39, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God's love in Christ is the finale, is the big finish. That's the unshakable assurance. You know, up to this point in the chapter, Paul hasn't actually explicitly mentioned God's love.

The love of Christ. In fact, Paul hasn't explicitly mentioned God's love since chapter 5 of the book of Romans. But you know, that's really what this whole section of the book has been about.

[6 : 17] The beginning of 5, the end of 8. They're like an intro and a conclusion telling us what everything in between has been all about. It's all been about the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So here's the big finish. There are three things we see about the love of Christ in this text. And the first thing we see is this.

That in this world, there are many contenders who will threaten to separate us from the love of Christ. In this life, for you and I, there are many contenders who are going to threaten to separate us from the love of Christ.

Look again at verse 35. Where do we see this? In verse 35, Paul asks the last of his great rhetorical questions. Remember how he started two weeks ago?

If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? Who is to condemn? And here are the last rhetorical questions.

[7 : 19] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who shall separate us from this immense love? And as soon as he asks that question, outstep the contenders one by one.

Here they come, lining up, threatening to sever us, to cut us off from Christ's love for us. Paul lists seven examples in verse 35. Seven of them as if to say, you know, there could be a whole lot more. To start with, there are all the things that happen to Christians just for naming the name of Jesus. Tribulation, distress, persecution.

Friends, you know, for most of the church's history, and much of the world today, Christians are persecuted for their allegiance to Jesus, just for identifying with Jesus.

There are actually missionaries that we support as a church that we can't tell you publicly what country they minister in because it will put their ministry in jeopardy. At best, they'll be severely fined, sent home, and the whole work will be shut down.

[8 : 32] But more than that, in other parts of the world, it's much worse, even to the point of outright physical violence and martyrdom. But those aren't the only contenders who threaten to separate us from Christ's love.

Paul goes on to list some of the tragedies of living in a fallen world. Famine, nakedness, to be left without food, to be left without clothes, famine and nakedness. These things speak of the deprivations, of the losses that we experience, the hardships, the trials, the job loss, the struggling to make ends meet, the spouse who walks out, the friend who cuts you off.

And if that weren't enough, they keep coming. Last, there are the things that threaten our very lives. Danger. Or the things that even take our lives.

Paul says, the sword. And by sword, Paul probably means the executioner's sword. Which we know that he himself would face later in life.

And succumb. Here they come. The things that threaten our lives, that take our lives. Cancer. Car accidents. Execution.

[9 : 54] All threatening our lives. All threatening to separate us from Christ's love. So what do we know about the love of Christ then? We know that the love of Christ for the Christian doesn't guarantee him or her immunity from evil and suffering and persecution in this life.

There are countless candidates ready to stand up and to threaten to separate us from the love of Christ. So friends, know this, know this, that these things will come. Hardship and loss will come. Persecution and distress will come, whether severe or subtle. Danger and death will come. Both to you and to your loved ones.

Sometimes at an old age, after a long life. Sometimes suddenly, tragically. In verse 36, Paul quotes Psalm 44, 22, which was a prayer to God when the people of Israel were being persecuted and afflicted.

Paul says, this is the Christian's experience. We will feel like this many times. Like you're a sheep to be slaughtered. Undergoing death every day.

[11 : 22] So what will you make of this? As one by one, these contenders come around, how will you view them? The temptation will be to see them as signs, as evidence, as proof that you have in fact been separated from Christ's love.

The temptation will be to say, Christ must not love me if this is happening. But is that true? Brings us to the second thing that we see about the love of Christ here.

Yes, on the one hand, the love of Christ guarantees no one immunity from suffering. But on the other hand, the love of Christ entails no possibility of separation.

In verse 38, Paul says, I am sure. There's a resounding confidence that comes flowing out of this passage for each one of us in Christ.

Confidence that nothing in our human experience, Paul says, whether death or life or anything in between, that nothing in the spiritual realm, whether angels or heavenly rulers, that nothing in the course of time, whether present or future, that nothing that is opposed to God's plans, whatever power it may be, that nothing in the vast reaches of space, whether height or depth, that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[13 : 03] Friends, whether you can see it or not, or feel it or not, or understand it or not, there's not a single thing in all of creation, nothing at all, that can separate you.

But how can Paul be so sure? How can you and I be so sure that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ? Well, maybe this is a good point in our sermon series to take a step back and listen again to what Paul has been showing us in Romans 8.

Go back with me to verses 1 through 3. If you are in Christ Jesus, if you've placed your trust in Him, then God has done for you what the law could not do.

God sent His own Son from the glories of heaven to take on the likeness of sinful flesh to die as a sacrifice for your sin in order to condemn sin in the flesh, Paul says.

That is to judge it and to fully exhaust its penalty so that there's nothing left for you to bear. So that united to Christ through faith, you might be counted not as sinful, not as guilty, but as righteous, as loved.

[14 : 20] That's how much God loves you. But not just that. Having justified you in Christ, pronounced you righteous, God has now sent His Spirit to dwell in you.

This is verses 4 through 13. And that means that you have a whole new mindset. You have a whole new principle of life within you, Christian, that is overcoming the old pattern of our old fallen nature. As verse 13 puts it, we can put sin to death by the Spirit and truly live. God has given you His Spirit. That's how much He loves you.

But the indwelling Spirit means more than just a new power for holiness and godliness. Paul goes on to say that it means that you're now God's adopted child. Verse 14, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, children of God.

You can call God your Father, Paul says. You can know the glory of an intimate relationship with Him. And as daughters and sons, Paul says, you are heirs, in verse 17.

[15 : 34] You will inherit with Christ the coming new creation. That is how much God loves you. Then in verses 18 through 30, Paul says that as we wait for that day of resurrection, as we wait for the coming glory, for the new creation, the Spirit comes and prays and intercedes within us.

And God works all things around us for our good. In fact, Paul says that God from eternity past has known you. That from the stretches of eternity past, God has known you and set a purpose for you to be like Christ.

And flowing out of that eternal purpose of God like an unbroken chain, God has called you in time and God has justified you and God will most certainly one day glorify you.

That's how much God loves you. But ultimately, this is how much God loves you. Verse 32, He did not spare His own son but gave Him up for you.

In Romans 5, Paul says this about God's love. He says, while we were still weak, you and I, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[17 : 06] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Friends, there it is. The unshakable proof and demonstration of God's love for you. because God loves you, He sent His own Son to die for your sins.

And He purchased for you through Jesus' life and death and resurrection everything that you could possibly need for eternal life with Him now and for forever. So that all you and I need now to do is admit that we can't make ourselves right with God.

That we're sinners and hopeless in His sight. And we need to turn to God and receive Christ. Take hold of Christ through faith so that all that's His might become ours. That His righteousness and His status and His life and His salvation become ours through faith and faith alone.

And friends, if that is true, think with me now. Let's use our, let's use some logic this morning. If that is true, if God has given His only Son for you, then no matter what comes, whether persecution or famine or sword, no matter what it is in all creation, if God has given His only Son for you, then those things cannot mean, they cannot mean that God doesn't love you.

[18 : 48] Christ went to the cross for you, friends. He took your sin and your death. He was forsaken for you. Paul says in Galatians, Christ loved me and gave Himself for me.

And that's true of every Christian. And if Christ endured the cross for you, no matter what you face in this life, it can't be because He doesn't love you. You might not know the exact reason why you're going through this particular suffering or pain or persecution, but it can't be because you've been separated from the love of Christ.

His was a love, friends, think about it, that went through distress and persecution for you. His was a love that went hungry and naked for you on the cross. His was a love that was pierced for you and upon whom the sword of the powers and principalities of this world fell.

He did that for you, so what could separate you from His love? Friends, stand before the cross and see that no matter what comes, there's no possibility of God's love being removed from you.

But there's one last thing to add, if that weren't enough. And this is the third thing that we see that this text shows us about Christ's love. We've seen that, although there's no immunity from suffering in Christ's love for us, there's no possibility of separation from Christ's love for us, but third, there's no doubt of victory because of Christ's love for us.

[20 : 27] Look again at verse 37. No. In all these things, and what are these things? Being slaughtered like sheep.

In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. whatever the opposition, danger, or difficulties that tempt us to give up, nothing will stop us from sharing His victory.

You see, friends, nothing can break that chain of verse 30. Those whom He predestined, He also called. Those whom He called, He also justified. Those whom He justified, He also glorified.

Amazing that Paul uses a past tense verb to describe a future reality. How much more confident and assured could Paul be in God's purpose and plan for us?

It's done. If you are in Christ, you will be glorified. Nothing's going to stop it. Can you stop the love of God for you?

[21 : 33] Take out your paper bag and try to catch the tornado, friends. It's not going to happen. No matter what circumstances may come, even if it's death itself, we are more than conquerors.

But how can this be? Verse 36 says that we're like sheep to be slaughtered. How can we be more than conquerors if that is true? And the answer, because of Him who loved us.

Because Christ died and rose again, everyone who is united to Christ by faith, even if they die, they will rise again with Him. Every contender that stands up threatening to shake our assurance in Christ's love, whether it's persecution or distress or famine or nakedness or danger or sword, ultimately, friends, they are defeated foes.

Even if that foe happens to have a little bit of life left in it to shake its fist or try to swing, even if it lands a punch, ultimately, our victory has been won. Christ is risen.

Death has died and love and life have conquered and you and I in Christ will rise with Him. And even as we saw in verse 28, God's even now, God is even now working all things for your good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

[23 : 06] So no matter what we're facing in the present, God's plan to glorify us will be achieved. Because ultimately, our confidence is not in our love for Him, which, if we're honest with ourselves, is frail and fickle and faltering.

Our confidence is not in our love for God, but in the love of Christ for us, which is steadfast, faithful, persevering, and victorious.

So friends, what are you afraid of? What are you really afraid of? Deep down, what do you fear? What are you tempted?

When are you tempted? Where are you tempted? To disobey Christ because you're afraid of losing it or never getting it. What if you put that fear into the list of verse 35?

Verse 35. Would you begin to feel the power, the assurance that this passage brings? Would you then begin to see how these verses can give you an assurance that nothing can take away?

[24 : 30] What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Come now. Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Shall singleness or joblessness or childlessness? Shall cancer or depression or miscarriage?

Shall embarrassment before my peers or loneliness or disapproval from my parents? No.

In all these things we're more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I'm sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the eternal burning immense love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

the love friends that created the worlds the love that has lifted our condemnation the love that has filled us with his spirit the love that has made us heirs of his glory the love that has gone to the cross willingly for our sins nothing will be able to separate you from that love the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[26 : 02] Let's pray. why don't we take a moment and just be still before God this morning why don't we take a moment and reflect in our hearts and before God those things that we are so afraid of perhaps this morning you would identify as a believer in Christ and yet you would confess that this love of Christ for you doesn't feel like a very thrilling or driving reality perhaps for you you're not sure what to make of the claims of Jesus and this talk of the love of God that is inseparable in him

Father I pray for my friends in this room that by your Holy Spirit we would be able to see afresh Father that you have given up your son for us and that because of his life and death and resurrection for all who trust in him nothing will separate us from that love oh Lord would that be the thrilling driving center of our lives and would we be able to face fears and hardship and distress without losing our joy and confidence and assurance in you oh God thank you that you keep us and you hold us all the way from eternity to eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord Lord for my

Christian brothers and sisters would it become more and more real in their lives Father for those who are here and who don't know you who are still wondering and deciding and figuring out where they stand with Christ oh Lord I pray that you would help them to see the beauty of the message of Jesus of who he is and that you would lead them to real repentance and real saving trust in him we ask all this in Jesus name amen amen amen Thank you.