

Lent 1
February 18, 2018

Romans 8:31-39
455-355-419/479-422

“We Are More Than Conquerors Through Him Who Loved Us”

- I. We can be sure of God’s love.
- II. Nothing can separate us from God’s love.

Dear Christian friends,

What’s the greatest thing that has **ever happened** to you? Was it winning a basketball tournament or graduating from college? Was it getting married – the births of your children or grandchildren – reaching your **50th** wedding anniversary – the day you were **finally** able to retire? Or is the GREATEST THING that has **ever happened** to you being a Christian?

All those other things are **wonderful parts** of our lives. But **if** you’re NOT a Christian you are going to hell when you die. You can win the **state championship** – you can **have** a fantastic marriage – a wonderful family – a successful business – but **if you’re not** a Christian you’re heading to hell.

Being a Christian MEANS we have Jesus - we have a SAVIOR - we are forgiven – loved by God – we have eternal life in heaven! **Being** a CHRISTIAN basketball player – a **Christian spouse** – parent, etc. – that’s the ICING on the cake.

Being a Christian is SO FANTASTIC but we don’t always see that, do we? **Sometimes** we may be embarrassed to be Christians. We may feel like LOSERS being Christians. If being a Christian is SO GREAT then why do **so many** fall away from Jesus - why aren’t churches packed with people every week?

Paul here is BUBBLING OVER about **being a Christian**. He just can’t contain his excitement and **enthusiasm**. May God use our study of these verses to give us **such confidence** and excitement! Looking at these verses we say with Paul, **“We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”** AS CHRISTIANS 1)we can be sure of **God’s love** and 2)nothing can separate us from **God’s love**.

I. We can be sure of God’s love.

“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Does God REALLY love us? People do question God’s love – wonder WHERE God is or WHY He doesn’t **“do something”** about whatever. **Maybe** as you’ve gone through a PARTICULARLY TOUGH time or have been really bothered by a **guilty conscience** you’ve also wondered, “Does God REALLY love me? CAN God **really love** me?” Being Christians – **trusting** in Jesus as our Savior – we can be ABSOLUTELY SURE **God loves** us.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” There’s really nothing “IFFY” about God’s love for us. Just look at the PROOF! **“He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all!”** Lent and Holy Week make so clear JUST HOW MUCH God really does love us. Listen to these passages. **“God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were STILL SINNERS Christ died for us.”** **“This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: NOT that WE LOVED God, but that HE LOVED us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”**

As Christians – **trusting** in Jesus as our Savior – we CAN BE SURE that our sins won’t separate us from God’s love. That’s NOT TO SAY **as Christians** we’re perfect little angels or that our sins really aren’t all that bad. Earlier in this letter Paul NAILED EVERYBODY – **himself included!** – as guilty sinners DESERVING ONLY God’s **wrath** – rejection – damnation. **“There is no one righteous, not even one. All have turned away and become worthless.”** EVEN AS CHRISTIANS we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment.” In chapter 7 Paul confessed, **“I know that nothing good**

lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am!”

JUST THAT is what makes being a Christian the GREATEST THING there is. Being Christians means we HAVE JESUS as our Savior. ***“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us there.”***

The word justify takes us into a **courtroom** – GOD’S courtroom. God is the judge – we are the defendants accused of breaking God’s law. It’s a CAPITAL CASE – conviction carries the eternal death sentence. WHO is accusing us? The devil is certainly leading the charge. Our own guilty consciences will SECOND the charges. The evidence against us is OVERWHELMING. The devil could call our PARENTS – our **brothers/sisters** – our **friends** – **neighbors**, etc. – as witnesses – and they could ALL VERIFY that on plenty of occasions we have **ignored** and **broken** God’s clear commandments.

There’s one other Person in the courtroom – our COURT-APPOINTED **defense attorney.** John wrote, ***“If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.”***

Jesus pleads our case. He doesn’t argue IGNORANCE on our part or INSANITY. Jesus doesn’t deny our sins or make excuses for them. Jesus introduces new evidence in our defense – ALL HE DID **in our place.** We owed God a whole life of perfect love, trust, obedience – that’s exactly the life Jesus lived for us. We deserved death and hell because of our sin – that’s exactly what Jesus endured on Calvary’s cross. ***“It is finished”*** Jesus said from the cross – said not as a WISH or a PRAYER but as a STATEMENT OF FACT. Jesus has perfectly obeyed every commandment for us. Jesus’ death has fully paid for all sins of all people. Everything has been taken care of. There’s NOTHING MORE for Jesus – or for us! – to do.

Based on that evidence God pronounces His verdict. We are ***“justified”*** – declared innocent – not guilty – of ALL charges. We are free – free to go and live as God’s GRATEFUL – REDEEMED people. We are forgiven – FULLY and **freely.** **Trusting** in Jesus we are heirs of eternal life. We are going straight to heaven when we die. And it’s ALL BECAUSE of Jesus. It IS GREAT to **be a Christian** and have Jesus! ***“God IS for us!”*** God does love us – and...

II. Nothing can separate us from God’s love.

“Who shall separate us from the love of God?” WHO? Just take another look at the gospel reading – the devil tempting Jesus. **Tempting Jesus just as** he had first tempted Eve – **just as** he comes after us today. Recall Peter’s words, ***“Your enemy the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”***

When you study how the devil tempts people his attacks center on God’s LOVE and **faithfulness.** The devil tries to get us to see God as the BAD GUY. God makes our lives miserable. God TAKES THE FUN out of our lives. We can’t enjoy life with God INTERFERING and **bossing us** around. **Not only** that God doesn’t do a VERY GOOD JOB taking care of us. The devil points to all our pains and problems and he keeps whispering, “See, God REALLY DOESN’T love you!”

When the devil does that tell him to SHUT UP and listen instead to Paul here. **Romans 8** is another one of those AWESOME CHAPTERS of the Bible. You might want to keep a **bookmark** at it so you can find it when you’re BUMMED out – STRESSED out – struggling with doubts and questions. Stick a cork in the devil’s mouth and read again, ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or nakedness or danger or sword?”***

Paul treats those things as **practically** "GIVENS" in life. It's A GIVEN that we will have "**troubles, hardships, etc.**" Like the rest of the Bible **Romans 8** makes us FACE UP to the **real world** we live in. The **real world** is full of ALL KINDS of **headaches, hassles**, etc. But those problems don't mean that God DOESN'T LOVE us. They don't prove that it REALLY STINKS to **be a Christian**. Our problems are REAL – God's love and **promises** are also REAL. Earlier in this chapter Paul had written, "***I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.***" Now we have our "***present sufferings.***" The glory doesn't come UNTIL we're finally in heaven. But when you compare our "***present sufferings***" with the eternal life in heaven that God has promised us – there's JUST NO comparison! It is the GREATEST THING to **be a Christian!** "***We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!***"

Those **sufferings** can also include suffering BECAUSE WE ARE Christians. **Because we are** Christians we are different from the rest of the world. **As Christians** we have different morals and **values** than the world. We have different priorities and **goals** in life than the unbeliever. Life is not ALL ABOUT ME or **all about making money** or **having fun**. Life is ALL ABOUT JESUS and gratefully serving Jesus. Holding on to our **Christian faith** – STANDING UP for our **Christian values** – may get us ridiculed, etc. But there's no need for us AS CHRISTIANS to ever think we are LOSERS. The devil and all who follow him to hell are the losers. As Christians "***we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!***"

As Christians – TRUSTING in Jesus as our Savior – we can join Paul in saying, "***For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***"

I HAVE NO IDEA – and you don't either – what's all in store for us as we go through life. We don't need to know either **because** we DO KNOW that through it all – WHATEVER comes our way – God loves us. The circumstances in our lives **may change** – our health may **fail**, etc. – but GOD'S LOVE for us just will not change. The proof is the CROSS – "***God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.***"

We find God's love "***in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" Being a Christian – HAVING Jesus as our Savior – is THE GREATEST thing in the world. As Christians "***in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.***" Amen.

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