

## **Nothing Separates Us from God's Love**

Romans 8:31–39

Turn to Romans 8 please. How much do you think God loves you? We all know the right answer is that he loves everyone and he loves the world; but how much does he love *you*? If he knows how many hairs are on your head, he knows a lot about you. Does he loves you personally?

I preached this message at our church camp about four months ago. As I was preparing that, I thought to myself, “Ed, this is such important stuff, why have you not said these things more often?” And after church camp someone here said I should not wait too long to teach this again. So you’re getting it again.

It would be so good to have total confidence about God’s love for us. Most of the time I do not. If someone asked me out of the blue, “Ed do you know that God loves you,” I could not answer quickly. I know what the right answer is, but in my heart of hearts I still have to say, “I believe you love me, Lord, help my unbelief.”

So, let’s begin with our imagination. We cannot believe what we cannot even imagine. Strong faith requires a good imagination. For now, just imagine that God’s love is the most important force acting on your life.

Gravity acts on us all the time, it never stops. Gravity always pulls us toward the earth. Imagine that God’s love pulls you toward him, all the time, it never lets up, ever. Imagine that nothing could separate us from that love. And it is far stronger than gravity. Every hour of every day, God’s love is the strongest force acting on your life, by far.

The Almighty Loving God is entirely determined to bring us into his presence blameless, without fault, and with great joy (Jude). That’s where his love pulls us. We could at least imagine that.

Romans 8:31 “*What shall we say to these things?*” Paul has been describing our salvation, and now he shifts to response. Now Paul will lead us in the only sensible response to God’s salvation. What shall we say to these wonderful things?

### **1 Is God really for us? Yes! Romans 8:31**

Still in verse 31, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Nobody! The answer is so obvious that Paul does not need to say it. If God is for us, nobody can be against us. No doubt there.

But, is God really for us? How do we know that? Here’s how we know: Back in Romans 5. “Here is how God shows his love for us: while we were sinners, Christ died for us. While we were God’s enemies, he reconciled himself to us by the death of his Son.”

Think about this. We were sinners, we had made ourselves God's enemies. While we were in *that* state, God loved us. He wanted to collect us and bring to himself. So he gave up his Son. To death. What God did is almost inconceivable. A parent hands over their child to death to accomplish some greater good. It is a horrible thought. What parent would do that? What greater good could there possibly be? And it was not just death, it was humiliating and gruesome death.

This is God's love for us, while we were sinners and his enemies. "Here is how God shows his love for us: while we were sinners, Christ died for us. While we were God's enemies, God reconciled himself to us by the death of his Son." And we will say to God, "I'm not sure you love me?"

People, that's how we know God is for us. That's how we know God loves us, by what he did to bring us in. 1 John 4:10: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice for our sins." God sent his Son to die, so he could bring us to himself: that's how we know he's for us. If God is for us like that, who can be against us? Noone!

## 2 Can our sins separate us from the love of God? No. Romans 8:32–34

Verse 32: *He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* God sent his Son to be a sacrifice for our sins. That's a gift of love and grace that we can hardly imagine. God did that to bring us his chosen ones to himself. So, Paul asks us: do you think that after that, God became stingy? Does God say, "I gave that much for you, but I'm giving no more. Now you have to earn your way in."

Is that what we think? That after that indescribable gift, God turns into a miser, a grace miser? "No more grace for you!" It is crazy to think that, but we do. We insult God, and we make ourselves miserable, because we can't believe that he will *graciously* give whatever we need.

"No!" says Paul. Never. God did *not* become stingy with grace. "*He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all—he will certainly, along with him, graciously give us all things!*" If he was that gracious when we were sinners and enemies, his grace will certainly see us through, *whatever* grace we might need from him now.

Verse 33 – "*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*" Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? Certainly not God! God our accuser? Never! We do actually fear that God has charges against us, don't we. One of the things we fear will separate us from God's love is our sins.

We still sin. Paul says, yes, but that will never separate us from God's love. *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* God's whole project was make atonement for sinners who were his enemies. For Paul, that God would then turn around and accuse us, bring charges against us, is ridiculous. It would be God betraying himself. Everything God did through Christ was *to get rid of* the charges against us.

And again: Everything God did through Christ was to get rid of the charges against us. God is never our accuser. Our sins will not separate us from the love of God.

In verse 34 Paul shifts to Christ: *Who then will condemn us? No one. 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.* Who then will condemn us? Certainly not Christ!

Let's talk about Christ's love. Ephesians 5: "*Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice to God.*" "*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her.*" 1 John 3: "*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*"

This still goes after our fear that our sins will separate us from the love of God and of Christ. Who then will condemn us? Certainly not Christ! Would God accuse us? Never! His whole plan was **to get rid of** the accusations. Would Christ condemn us? Never! His whole purpose was to lay down his life so that we could **not** be condemned.

Furthermore, Christ Jesus is beside God and is interceding for us. Christ lives to bring us to the Father. That's his passion. He's interceding the way Moses prayed for Israel in the golden calf story. Christ makes sure that no one will condemn us. He is the last one to condemn us.

People, we're probably about as bad as we think we are. But if we think our sins will separate us from God's love and Christ's love, we have lost sight of how much they loved us when we were lost in sin and enemies of God. We have lost sight of how much they have done to make sure that accusations and condemnation can no longer happen.

Too many believers think they are worse than other believers. We think to ourselves, if only others knew how bad I was. That is common. I guarantee you that the worst believers are not thinking that they are the worst.

Let's thank God for the ways his grace has changed our lives for the better. Why do we not list those things to ourselves? There is an accuser, my brothers and sisters, and he has too much success in our minds. Use this Scripture to silence him.

### **3 What About God Disciplining His People? 1 Corinthians 11:30–32**

The Corinthian believers were being rude and inconsiderate to each other, humiliating each other, at their potluck and Lord's Supper meals. Paul corrected that, and at the end he says this:

*That [behaviour at your meals] is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [died]. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.*

*When we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*

In the New Testament, the normal explanation for our troubles is that Jesus had troubles, the Son that God loves, so we have troubles also, to be made more like him. That's the normal New Testament position.

But occasionally the Lord brings troubles because we sin. He does this so we will not be condemned with the world. What is the Lord saying to himself when he judges us this way? "How can I make sure this beloved sister of mine is not condemned with the world? What should I do here to save this beloved brother from the coming wrath?" People, that is love. He wants to save us from final condemnation and the coming wrath. That comes out of his love.

We get impatient and irritable with the failures of others, and we project our impatience and irritability or even rage onto God. We assume God feels what we would feel. Let's never do that. Even when trouble comes because of our sin, he's *not* venting because he's fed up. He is *protecting* us from tragedy, steering us away from danger. Our sins do not separate us from God's love.

*He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all—he will certainly also, along with him, graciously give us all things! Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? Certainly not God! God our accuser? Never. It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? Certainly not Christ. Christ condemn us? Never. Christ Jesus who died is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

God might address our sins from time to time, but they never cause the slightest hesitation or pause in his relentless love, his overwhelming love. All God did through Christ's death, and all that Christ did in going to the cross, was precisely so that our sins would not be any barrier between us and God.

#### **4 Can our troubles separate us from the love of Christ? No. Romans 8:35–37**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Troubles can make us wonder if the Lord is angry at us. At the very least, severe ongoing troubles make it seem as if the Lord is not paying attention at all. If he cared for us, he would not let this happen. In the situation, it is hard to believe that the Lord could have any real love for us, and still let this happen.

But troubles never mean separation from the love of Christ. Never. Remember what happened to Christ. Because of God, Jesus was considered as a sheep to be slaughtered. Now we are.

When we suffer, that's the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. God is creating a bond between Christ and us, because he suffered and we suffer. We suffer because we are bound to Christ, and he suffered. We participate in his sufferings. His sufferings overflow to us. We don't like it. He didn't either. We feel forsaken. So did he. But he loves us as much as ever.

In all these things, we are more than conquerors. This is incredible. We not only survive, we not only endure, we conquer, we triumph. In fact, we not only conquer, we are more than conquerors, we are not only triumphant in all these things, we are more than triumphant.

We don't feel like that at the time, but we are. Christ did not feel triumphant at the time, either. Do you know what being more than conquerors looks like? It is when our face is being pressed painfully into the mud, and rubbed there. In those situations, we are more than conquerors. That is actually the victory scene. That's what happened to Jesus, and to Paul, and that's what he's talking about.

God will find ways to hand us over to things we don't want. He's binding us to Jesus. He never stopped loving Jesus, and he never stops loving us.

Why are we more than conquerors in all these things? Because Christ's love for us makes that happen. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ***“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”*** Christ's love for us is so great that right in all our troubles, we are actually more than conquerors. Total victors. Through Christ who loves us.

Our sins cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ. Our troubles cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ. And lastly, nor can anything else.

### **5 Nor can anything else separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:38–39**

*Romans 8:38–39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This list collects everything else not already covered. These won't separate us from God's love either. Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How do we know that God loves us? We know God loves us because he handed over his Son so he could bring you and me to himself. We know Christ loves us because he laid down his life so that nothing could separate us from his Father's love. And now, every single day, Christ is beside the Father praying for us.

When we think about God's love, we need to have a firm grasp on how we know he loves us. When we think about Christ's love, we need to have a firm grasp on how we know he loves us. Amen.

PRAYER: Father, plant us and root us in your love. Give us strength to grasp how great Christ's love is. May we know his unknowable love, Father, so that we all can be filled to the brim with you. Help our unbelief. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and into Christ's perseverance. May the Lord of peace give you peace at all times in every way. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.