

INTRODUCTION

Today we finish this wonderful chapter I call the Himalayan Mountains of Biblical revelation. We have climbed to the pinnacle, the peak—Romans, 8:28—"For we know that God is working in all things for good to those who love him, those who are called according to his purpose." We call that, "God's Infallible Guarantee." Last week we talked about "God's Incredible Plan". Those he foreknew, those He predestined to be conformed to the likeness, the icon of his Son; those he predestined he called; those he called, he justified and those he justified, he glorified. We've seen God's Incredible Plan. Today we are going to talk about God's Inescapable Love. Some time ago I saw a photograph in a magazine. It was one of those photographs where time stood still. It was of graduates of the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, when, upon receiving their graduation, they stood and threw their caps into the air. This picture captured those caps, thousands of them, when they were at the height of their toss. You could see the caps suspended in the air and you could see the smiles on the faces of the graduates of the Naval Academy. I thought what a beautiful picture of enthusiasm and joy. If you could just grasp what God is trying to say to you here today about his love for you, you'd throw your cap in the air. You'd shout for joy! You might even do like David and dance before the Lord. It's okay. When you understand how much God does love you.

Let's read about it in Romans, chapter 8:31-39.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He, who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 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. 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." [Psalm 44]

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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."

Amen! Toss your hat into the air. There is nothing on earth that can separate you from the love of God. In this passage I have already called your attention to four questions. We're going to answer those four questions today as we talk about God's inescapable love.

QUESTION ONE: WHO CAN OPPOSE US?

If you will look there in verse 31, he says, "Who can be against us?" Now, let's give the answer to that question. Here's the answer:

ANSWER: MANY TRY, BUT GOD IS FOR US!

The Bible says we have enemies in this world. It is the world, the flesh and the devil. We have enemies, but who's afraid of the big, bad world? The Bible talks about how our flesh needs to stay crucified. We understand we can resist the devil and he will flee from us. There are going to be many people who try to oppose us in the Christian life, but the good news is God is *for* us. You wonder where that comes from? Right here in Romans 8:31. It says, "If God is for us." In the original language that means *since* God is for us, *because* God is for us. "Who can be against us?" That means you and I do not have to fear. We never have to be afraid of *anything* the world, the flesh or the devil can throw at us! A wonderful verse for you to memorize would be Psalms 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?"

I have a pastor friend up in Ypsilanti, Michigan, which is just on the outskirts of Detroit. He and his family moved from the South up to Ypsilanti a number of years ago. He had a junior high school aged son named David who was a small kid. When he went to school in Ypsilanti, some tough guys decided to pick on this pastor's son. Every day they made life at school a living hell for him. They pushed him around. Sometimes he came home without his shirt because they stole it. They were the kind of kids that made him give them his lunch money or they were going to beat him up. This went on for a couple of weeks, and as you can imagine, everybody including David and his parents were simply miserable. They were talking about how they needed to pray for him and pray for the situation. Word got around about David's mistreatment and a big guy named Mike, who was a star athlete, and the biggest, strongest guy in this school, happened to be a member of this church. When he heard about what was going on, Mike went to every one of the kids in the school. He confronted them face to face, and said, "Listen, if you bother David one more time, I mean if you even look at him cross-eyed, I'm coming after you! Do you hear me?" He told every one of them. Then, he went to the pastor's house and knocked on the door, and said, "Pastor, I just want you to know, I have warned all of those guys and they are not going to mess with David anymore!" It's was amazing. When David, went to school the next day, he went with a different attitude. Do you know why? He said, "I'm not afraid because Mike is for me, and Mike is with me!" Isn't it good to have somebody stronger than you who is protecting you? Take that little illustration and multiply it by about 2 million times. Whatever you walk into tomorrow, whatever you walk into this next week, you do not have to be afraid, because not Mike but God is *for* you! Never fear when God is near.

How do we know how much God is for us? Look at verse 32. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" When God has already given you the best, his Son, he will willingly give you everything you need in life. Can you imagine a husband giving his wife a beautiful diamond necklace maybe for Christmas or Valentines Day or for a birthday or anniversary and she opens the box and there is this beautiful diamond necklace. She says, "Oh, sweetheart! Thank you so much. I know this is expensive. Thank you...and you know what, dear, I love the box too." And he says, "Oh, you can't have the box. I want the box for myself. The box is mine." That would be ridiculous, wouldn't it? When he gives you something as expensive as a diamond necklace, sure he'll give you the box. God has already given us the precious diamond of his Son, and now, anything else he could ever give to us is just like the box the diamond comes in. Everything else is so much less valuable than his Son; he willingly and graciously gives us all things. So, question number one: Who can oppose us? Many are going to try, but God is *for* us.

QUESTION TWO: WHO CAN ACCUSE US?

Here's question number two. Who can accuse us? Verse 33 says, "Who will bring any charge against us?" Well, here's the answer:

ANSWER: SATAN ACCUSES, BUT GOD EXCUSES!

Satan accuses us all the time, but God excuses, he forgives, he justifies. Now, let me tell you something about Satan. The very name Satan in Hebrew means *slanderer*. Satan is our accuser. In fact, look at what the Bible says in Revelation 12:10, "For the accuser [Satan] of our brothers who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down." Now, that's in Revelation, 12. So many people think Satan is down in Hell right now. They think Satan is some guy with long red underwear with a pointed tail and horns, with a pitchfork shoveling coal down in Hell. No, friend. Satan is not in Hell now. One day he will be cast into the bottomless pit forever and ever. Do you know where Satan is right now as I am talking to you? Right now he has access to all of us on earth, and he has access to God in Heaven right now.

Let me give you an example of that In Job, chapter 1. The Bible says God was in Heaven and all the angels, both good angels and fallen angels apparently, were appearing before God. God turned to the devil, and he said, "What have you been doing?" This is what Satan said, "I have been going up and down throughout the whole earth." That's what Satan does. He roams about as a roaring lion the Bible says seeking whom he may devour! Then God says, "Have you considered my servant, Job? What a great man he is." Listen to Satan's accusation, "Huh, you blessed him so much, that's why he is a good man." Then, Satan said to God, "God, if you take away all those blessings, he will curse you to your face!" That's exactly what the devil does today. He accuses us before God. Right now you may be the target of his accusations. He may be saying, "Listen to that person. What are they doing praying? What are they doing singing hymns of praise? Why, that person is dirty, rotten! Think of all the bad things they have done before." He accuses us before God day and night but, listen! Satan also accuses *us* to *us*. Did you know that? Satan and his demons come up to those of us who are redeemed—born again—and he whispers in our ear, saying, "Listen, you're no good! You're no good! You're no good! Baby, you're no good. You are a rotten sinner! What are you doing in church today? Why, all those faults that went through your mind last week. Those things you used to do. What are you doing in church today? You are just nothing but a dirty, filthy, rotten sinner." That's what he does. He accuses us, but God has said, "I forgive you. I have justified you. You are pardoned." Now, there's a wonderful passage of scripture. Isaiah, 43:25 says, "God has blotted out our transgressions and he remembers them no more." This is what is happening for those of us who have been redeemed, who have been justified. The devil says, "God, do you remember David Dykes? How dirty and rotten and sinful he used to be?" Do you know what God says to Satan? He says, "No, I don't. I don't remember how dirty and rotten and sinful he used to be." Because the Bible says he has blotted out our transgressions and he remembers them no more. So, question number two. Who can accuse us? Well, Satan tries and he does, but God forgives us and he forgives perfectly.

QUESTION THREE: WHO CAN CONDEMN US?

Verse 34 says, "Who can condemn us?"

ANSWER: JESUS COULD BUT INSTEAD HE IS PRAYING FOR US!

Here's the answer. It's right there in verse 34. Jesus could condemn us, but instead he is not condemning us, he is praying for us. Look at verse 34, "Who is he that condemns?" Here's the answer:

"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." Now, we have just witnessed in our nation's capitol an important trial. The Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court was sitting as the judge. I put emphasis on United States Supreme Court because there is a Supreme Court that is supreme above every other court. Do you know who the Chief Justice of the *real* Supreme Court is? The Lord Jesus Christ. One day the Lord Jesus Christ will condemn sin and sinners. Revelation chapter 20 talks about how Jesus himself is seated on a great white throne. It is white because of the purity of Jesus. It is a throne because of the royalty of Jesus, and at that time Jesus will condemn sin and sinners. I'm here to tell you the Bible says, "Who can condemn us?" Well, Jesus could, but for those of us who are in Christ, he is not condemning us, instead he is praying for us, because the Bible says in Romans, 8:1 "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You are either in Christ or you're out of Christ. If you are in Christ, there will never be any condemnation come upon your life, but if you are outside Christ, you are the target of condemnation for your sin.

It's like old Noah and the Ark. When God's judgement came as a flood, everybody who was in the Ark was saved. The Ark is a picture of Jesus Christ. Everybody who was outside the Ark perished. You and I must be in Christ or else we will be condemned, but because we are in Christ, he is not condemning us. Instead, look at what the Bible says, "He is pleading for us. He is interceding for us." This is a glorious truth! Satan is like the prosecuting attorney. He's always pointing his finger saying, "Look how bad that person is. Look how evil and wicked that person is." But the Bible says those of us who are in Christ, he is our advocate, he is our heavenly defense attorney. He is standing there interceding to the Father on our behalf. Notice where Jesus is? The Bible says, "He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father, and he is interceding for me."

This is just one more reason why I believe you cannot lose your salvation, why I believe those who are truly saved are *eternally* saved. Jesus Christ is in Heaven praying for me right now. I'll just use me as an example. The only way you could get me to lose my salvation is for you to get Jesus to stop praying for me. The only way you could get Jesus to stop praying for me is to get into Heaven where he is praying for me and the only way you could get into Heaven to get Jesus to stop praying for me is to be born again. Once you are born again, you won't want to make Jesus stop praying for me! Do you see what I am saying? Right now our salvation is not dependent upon how good you are or how good I am. Our salvation and the security of our salvation are bound up in Jesus in Heaven interceding for us. If he is praying for you, no thing and no one can make him stop interceding for you. Who can condemn us? Nobody can! That

leaves us with the fourth and the final and the glorious question in this passage of scripture, question number four.

QUESTION FOUR: WHO CAN SEPARATE US?

Who can separate us? Who can separate us from the love of God? That word, *separation*, is a Greek word which means "to chop off," "to cut off." It would be like our word in English, *amputate*. Who can amputate us from the love of God and who can amputate God's love from us? Of course, the answer is nothing, nobody. But then, the apostle, Paul, gives us several categories of things that are unable to separate us.

ANSWER: JESUS' LOVE IS NOT BROKEN BY: EMOTIONAL FACTORS!

First of all, Jesus' love is not broken by emotional factors. Look at verse 35. He mentions two, "trouble or hardship." The word *trouble* means "inner pressure." Do you feel like there is something inside of you that is giving you a lot of problems, whether it is depression, discouragement or anger or bitterness? Sometimes, these inner feelings of calamity and pain we have make us wonder "Does God really love me?" Well, the Bible says even those inner feelings of pressure can't cut off, or amputate God's love. Then he uses a second word in that verse, *hardship*. That's a word that means "outer pressure." It's a word used to describe being caught between two rocks—like we say between a rock and a hard place. Do you feel like you are not only getting pressure from within, you are getting pressure from without? Whether it's financial pressure, pressure on your job, pressure from family members, pressure from friends? The Bible says even the worst of pressure from without that causes you emotional pain cannot amputate God's love.

He uses another category.

ANSWER: JESUS' LOVE IS NOT BROKEN BY: PHYSICAL FACTORS!

Even physical pain, not just emotional pain but physical pain cannot amputate us from God's love. Look at the next few words he uses. He says, "persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or the sword," which literally is a weapon that can be used to kill a person. He says, "Even these physical threats cannot separate you from the love of God."

Why do Christians suffer? I know right now there are many of you who may suffer physically in one way or another. There is a great man of God from Chicago who lived in the twentieth century. He has now gone to be with the Lord. His name was A.W. Tozer. Let me tell you something he wrote in one of his books.

"It was the enraptured Rutherford who would shout in the midst of sorrow and painful times, 'Praise God for the hammer!' The hammer is a useful tool, but the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence could present another side of the story. For the nail only knows the hammer as an opponent. A brutal, merciless enemy who lives to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and to clench it into place. That is the nail's view of the hammer, and it is accurate except for one thing. The nail forgets that both it and the

hammer are servants in the hand of the same workman. Let the nail but remember that the workman holds the hammer and all the resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head shall be beaten next, and what hammer shall be used in the beating. That is his sovereign right. When the nail has surrendered to the will of the carpenter, and has gotten a little glimpse of his benign plans for its future, it will yield to the hammer without complaint.”

Some of you may feel like you are hammered. You may feel like you are being beaten on. You may feel like you are the target of a lot of pain. You have to remember that even the pain you suffer will not separate you from the love of God. Look at what Psalm 44 says, “Yet for your sake we face death all day long, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. In all these things,” Now, this is a great word. It is a combination word *hypernike*. *Nike* is the Greek word for *victory*, and it is right out of the Bible. This is a word that means *super victors*, *super conquerors*. We are more than conquerors over all these things, but the key is through him that loved us. So, there’s emotional pain, there’s physical pain. Look at number three.

ANSWER: JESUS’ LOVE IS NOT BROKEN BY: EARTHLY FACTORS!

There are earthly factors as well. Look at verse 38. He says, “death nor life, present nor the future, nor height nor depth...” He is saying is death doesn’t separate you from the love of God. Those of us who know Jesus Christ know death ushers us into the presence of God. I heard about a man who was having his tombstone prepared. He said, “I don’t want you to put on there the date when I was born and the date that I died. Instead, I want to have my name, then I want to put the date ‘born again’, and then the next date to be ‘transferred to heaven’” I like that! Death can’t you separate you, life can’t separate you. He uses a couple of words, “height nor depth.” The word *height* means “the highest pinnacle on earth”; the word *depth* is the word *bathos*. We talk about the deepest part of the ocean being the *bathysphere*, even the deepest depth of the ocean cannot separate you from the love of God. No earthly factor can. Nothing you experience in your time on earth can separate you, or *amputate* you from the love of God.

He gives one other category.

ANSWER: JESUS’ LOVE IS NOT BROKEN BY: HEAVENLY FACTORS!

Not just earthly things, but eternal things or heavenly factors. He even talks about angels nor demons. Then he says in verse 39, “anything else in *all creation*. Now that’s an interesting word. It’s a word that means *other created things*. Have you ever thought there is probably life on other planets? I don’t think anything in the Bible prohibits the idea that there is life on other planets, but do you know what that word means? It means *any other type of created things* that don’t fit into these categories. Even if aliens invaded planet Earth, that can’t separate you from the love of God. Nothing in heaven or on earth can separate you from the love of God!

I came across a very interesting paraphrase of this passage of scripture. It is so good, it blessed me so much you may want to carry it with you, or keep it in your Bible.

“God, I may fall flat on my face. I may fail until I feel old and beaten and done in. Yet your love for me is changeless. All the music may go out of my life. My private world may shatter to dust. Even so, you will hold me in the palm of Your steady hand. No turn in the affairs of my fractured life can baffle you. Satan with all of his braggadocio cannot distract you. Nothing can separate me from your measureless love. Pain can’t, disappointment can’t, anguish can’t. Yesterday, today, tomorrow can’t. The loss of my dearest love can’t. Death can’t, life can’t, riots, wars, insanity, an identity, hunger, neuroses, disease. None of these things nor all of them heaped together can budge the fact that I am dearly loved, completely forgiven and forever free through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son.”

This is one time when I need you to stop and put yourself in the sandals of the audience to whom Paul wrote these words. They were even more meaningful to them. Remember they were in Rome in the first century. Christians were being put to death by the thousands. In fact, that one little word that we read in Romans 8, when it says, “sword”, the last word in verse 35, you probably just read over it like that, “sword” but imagine how they must have felt when they read that word.

I’ve done a little research into the different ways Christians were put to death. The Romans were brutally ingenious in their methods of execution. Sometimes young teenage Christians were put into a leather bag and it would be tied around their neck. Inside the bag was poisonous snakes and scorpions. Paul was saying, “To all of you who go in the bag with the snakes, even that can’t separate you from the love of God. God still loves you.” Sometimes young Christians were tied to the horns of a bull and then the bull would be sent into the arena to fight against a lion. As the lion and the bull fought each other of course the Christian was torn to bits. Do you know what Paul was saying? He was saying, “Listen, even when they tie you to the horns of a bull and take you into the arena, God still loves you.”

CONCLUSION

I used to read this reference in some of the early writings from the 1st century. They spoke of virgin martyrs and for a long time I wondered about that. Why were they called “virgin martyrs”? I did some research and discovered Tiberius decreed years before that a virgin could not be put to death, because even in that pagan, godless culture, they still revered the virtue of virginity. So, some of these young sisters who belonged to Jesus Christ were taken and because it was against the law to crucify or to execute them since they were virgins, they were cruelly violated before they were taken into the arena. Yet, in the writings of the early Christian fathers they were called “virgin martyrs” still. The apostle, Paul, is writing to these believers in Rome and he is saying, “Listen, even when they take you and do the worst things you can imagine to you, God’s love is still there.” Even the apostle, Paul, himself, the Bible tells us he was put into prison in Rome. We know from other historical writings he was released and then later put back into the Mamortine Prison in Rome. When he was an old man after he had written the letter of 2 Timothy, he heard the footsteps of some Roman soldier coming down the hall one day. They opened the door and pulled him out. Historical writings tell us they took him out into the sunrise, laid him down on a block and a big Roman soldier lifted up a long, heavy sword. I can imagine the apostle, Paul, looked up at that sword, and must have remembered the words he wrote when

he said, "famine, nakedness or even a sword cannot separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, my Lord—swish—clunk—and in the next split second the apostle, Paul, was looking into the face of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Do any of you have it that bad? Is there anybody in this room who for one half second doubts how much God loves you? The very worst the world can throw at you cannot separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord!

OUTLINE

QUESTION ONE: WHO CAN OPPOSE US? (31)

Answer: Many try, but God is for us!

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? *Psalm 27:1*

QUESTION TWO: WHO CAN ACCUSE US? (33)

Answer: Satan accuses, but God excuses!

"...For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." *Revelation 12:10b*

QUESTION THREE: WHO CAN CONDEMN US? (34)

Answer: Jesus could but instead He is praying for us!

QUESTION FOUR: WHO CAN SEPARATE US? (35)

Answer: Jesus' love is not broken by:

1. Emotional factors!
2. Physical factors!
3. Earthly factors!
4. Heavenly factors!

Paraphrase of Romans 8:35-39 by Ruth Harms Calkin:

"God, I may fall flat on my face; I may fail until I feel old and beaten and done in. Yet Your love for me is changeless. All the music may go out of my life, my private world may shatter to dust. Even so, You will hold me in the palm of Your steady hand. No turn in the affairs of my fractured life can baffle You. Satan with all his braggadocio cannot distract You. Nothing can separate me from your measureless love—pain can't, disappointment can't, anguish can't. Yesterday, today, tomorrow can't. The loss of my dearest love can't. Death can't. Life can't. Riots, wars, insanity, unidentity, hunger, neurosis, disease—none of these things nor all of them heaped together can budge the fact that I am dearly loved, completely forgiven, and forever free through Jesus Christ your beloved Son."



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes