

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #33

Romans 8:35-39

You and I who know the Lord are a sinful, fleshly mess. I doubt we realize how sinful we truly are. We are people who sin by our pride, by our speech, by our thoughts and by our acts. To complicate this mess further, we are living in a sinful world with all of its entertainments and lures and we have an enemy, the Devil, who is constantly seeking to devour God's property. If it were possible for us to lose our salvation, we would lose it; but thank God it is not possible.

In moments of personal hardship and setbacks and sin and suffering, God wanted us to know that we are very secure and that the entire Godhead was on our side:

1. God the Spirit is on our side - He prays for us. 8:26
2. God the Father is on our side - He is for us. 8:31
3. God the Son is on our side - He will not condemn us. 8:34

But there was one more amazing thing God wanted us to know, **God wanted us to know that we are forever and eternally loved by Him.**

THE BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST IS GUARANTEED GOD'S LOVE FOREVER NO MATTER HOW NEGATIVE THINGS MAY APPEAR.

We may notice that three times in these verses the word "love" shows up - **8:35, 37, 39**. It is the Greek word agapao (αγαπαω), which means to make a mental calculation to esteem something highly. This is much more than an emotional giddiness. Before each word "love," an article appears referring specifically to "the" love of God which saved us. In other words, God esteemed us so highly that He sovereignly saved us and that love He has for us cannot ever be stopped.

AMAZING REALITY #1 – Nothing can stop Christ's love for us. **8:35-36**

Now you will immediately notice that the list of catastrophes mentioned in these two verses are caused by someone identified with the pronoun "who." The "who" is none other than Satan. Satan would love nothing more than to make us think that we have been abandoned by God. Satan tries to get believers to think that Christ does not love them anymore, and he will try to create seven types of catastrophes that can begin to play with a believer's mind.

Catastrophe #1 - Tribulation may cause us to think we are not loved. **8:35b**

The word "tribulation" (θλιψις) is one that speaks of intense pressure (G. Abbott Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 207-208). This word was used of "crushing or squashing something." Satan is out to crush or squash your confidence and commitment to God. This kind of intense distress and pressure may come at you in a variety of ways - business, relationship, job and sickness. During these times of intense pressure it is easy to think that perhaps Christ doesn't love us anymore. Paul says "tribulation cannot stop Christ's love."

Catastrophe #2 - Distress may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35c

The word “distress” (στενοχωρία) is one that has to do with severe mental anxiety, the kind of anxiety that comes when you feel compressed or that space is narrow (*Ibid.*, p. 417). This would be like when we see our world fall apart and it begins to play havoc with our minds. One of the keys to coping with this pressure is to rivet your mind on the fact that nothing can ever separate you from Christ’s love.

Catastrophe #3 - Persecution may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35d

The idea of persecution (διωγμός) actually is one that has to do with being ridiculed or pursued because of our faith. This opposition comes from other humans and these are real, literal, physical enemies who are out to harm us. When you stand for God and His Word there will be those who will stand against you and will seek to ridicule and harm you.

Catastrophe #4 - Famine may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35e

“Famine” could actually mean a time agriculturally when the cosmic disaster of an actual famine hits. There was an actual famine which hit the Roman world. In Acts 11:28, during the reign of Claudius who reigned from A.D. 41-54, a famine hit the Roman world and it would have affected many believers. When Christians have to wonder if they will have enough food to eat, they can begin to question God’s love.

Catastrophe #5 - Nakedness may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35f

Nakedness in our day typically is associated with immorality, but it was not so in Paul’s day. The idea of “nakedness” is the idea of not having enough money for clothing. This is extreme poverty. Many of the first century Christians were slaves. They had very little financially. When you are so poor that you don’t know if you can pay the bills or even buy the clothing you need, you can begin to wonder about the love of God. It is at those moments when people need to realize that we have the wealth of God’s love !

Catastrophe #6 - Peril may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35g

The word “peril” is the word for danger or things that could literally threaten our lives and put us in dangerous situations.

Catastrophe #7 - Sword may cause us to think we are not loved. 8:35h

A sword was a weapon which was used for murder or killing. There are brutal people and things in this world that can and will kill us, and when we see such things or get close to them we may begin to think we are all alone and unloved.

In fact, Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 in **verse 36** for this reason. In this Psalm Israel was faithful. She boasted in God (44:8). Yet God still allowed Israel to suffer (44:9-13), but through it all Israel remained faithful (44:17). Israel was not prospering, she was being hunted. The world looked at Israel as if she were some sheep heading to slaughter, but she was God's elect nation and He loved her.

AMAZING REALITY #2 – Nothing can stop God's love for us. **8:37-39**

The verb “I am convinced” is a perfect, passive verb which means that God had persuaded Paul, in the past and right on into the present, that nothing could separate him from the love of God. Paul lists ten different intimidations that can cause one to think he is not loved by God.

Intimidation #1 - The intimidation of death. **8:38a**

Aristotle called death the “terrible of terribles.” For the believer, death does not separate him from the love of God; it actually ushers him into the presence of God.

Intimidation #2 - The intimidation of life. **8:38b**

Intimidation #3 - The intimidation of angels. **8:38c**

Intimidation #4 - The intimidation of principalities. **8:38d**

What about those with great authority? This may refer to powers in this world or in the unseen world.

Intimidation #5 - The intimidation of things present. **8:38e**

What about anything in this present world?

Intimidation #6 - The intimidation of things to come. **8:38f**

The future is intimidating!

Intimidation #7 - The intimidation of powers. **8:38g**

What about those things which are powerful, things with tremendous strength?

Intimidation #8 - The intimidation of heights. **8:39a**

Intimidation #9 - The intimidation of depth. **8:39b**

Intimidation #10 - The intimidation of any created thing. **8:39c**

Nothing, nothing, nothing can ever separate us from God's love !
Not yourself and not anything else.