

## **Romans (49)** **God's Love for His Elect (part two)**

Last Lord's Day we gave an introduction to the last paragraph of Romans 8, which includes verses 31 through 39. We showed that this is a concluding word with respect to all that the apostle Paul had written in the previous 8 chapters.<sup>1</sup> It sets forth the special, covenantal, love that God has for His elect that may assure them of God's concern and care for them and of His control of all things to their appointed end, even their glorification. Although His chosen people were as all the guilty sinners born of Adam, who had no claim upon God or ability to recover themselves from their fallen and lost condition, God loved them with an everlasting love. God took action by predestining the ones whom He foreknew so that they would be conformed to the image of His Son, that in time they would be called unto salvation. God justified them, He does sanctify them, and He has decreed that he will glorify them one day. The people of God, who have been the objects of His saving love, may be assured of His provision for their every true need and of His preservation of them unto their final destiny.

Here, then, is a word from God that should shape how Christians should view ourselves, which is based upon how God regards us and due to what God has done for us. From this context we may discern our self-identity as Christians. This is the state of our existence before God that should govern how we interpret all that falls out in each of our lives as Christians. This is a statement of truth to which we may resort whenever doubts arise within us of our standing before God, whenever our foes oppose us so as to unsettle us, whenever we feel that our sins condemn us, whenever we wrongly think that the events of our lives give certain evidence that God is not for us. Our understanding of who we are and what will most certainly come to pass respecting us is bound up in God giving to us His greatest gift, that being His one dear Son.

And so, if you are in Christ, you may be assured that God loves you with the same love that He has for His Son Jesus Christ. He gave over His Son for you, because He loved you as His own Son. Our Lord voiced these words to His Father: "I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and *loved them even as You loved Me*" (John 17:23). But if you are outside of Christ, God has been loving toward you in spite of your neglect and rejection of Him. But in your unbelief you are, nevertheless, "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). God has been so loving to His world that whosoever believes on Him as Lord and Savior shall never perish, but will inherit everlasting life.

Today we want to consider the details of these verses within this paragraph. But we will also look at some lengthy passages in the Old Testament. Because I know that many of us were impoverished respecting Old Testament teaching in the past, when it is suitable I attempt to recite Old Testament promises and then show their New Testament fulfillment in Christ. And so, we will attempt to do so today. But let us begin by reading once again **Romans 8:31-39**.

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,

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<sup>1</sup> This is not universally agreed by interpreters of Romans. Some see the "these things" of verse 31a as a reference to all of what Paul wrote in his epistle to this point. Others say Paul was referring particularly to the matters of Romans 8:18-30 only. This was the view of John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1959), vol. 1, p. 322. But others see Paul as referencing "these things" primarily to the content of Romans 5:1-8:32. "The word *ταῦτα* (*tauta*, "things"), then, comprises all that is contained in 5:1-8:30" (Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 458.

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

There is difference of opinion on how the details of this paragraph should be understood in relation to one another. Most scholars have suggested that there are *five sections* to this paragraph. They would see an outline in this way:

1. Verse 31a, “What then shall we say to these things?”
2. Verses 31b-32, “If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”
3. Verses 33-34, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”
4. Verses 35-37, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”
5. Verses 38-39. “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.”<sup>2</sup>

Others have divided the paragraph into *two major divisions*. First, there are verses 31-34, which speak of matters *judicial*. Second, there are verses 35-39, which speak of *the love of God*.<sup>3</sup> It seems to me that the statements of this paragraph are not easily organized into several statements (theses) with supporting points; rather, Paul’s statements build upon one another, reaching a culmination in his assertion of verse 39 that nothing shall “be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Let us begin to work through our passage. **Verse 31** begins our paragraph with a question. “*What shall we say to these things?*” It is as though he wrote:

What use shall we make of all that has been said? He speaks as one amazed and swallowed up with the contemplation and admiration of it, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things the less we wonder at them; but the further we are led into an acquaintance with gospel mysteries the more we are affected with the admiration of them. If Paul was at a loss what to say to these things, no marvel if we be.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, it is difficult to determine with certainty what Paul intended to refer by the use of “these things.” But it would not be wrong to say that he had in mind all that God has desired and decreed for the benefit of His elect.

**Verse 31b** is also a question, but should be understood to be the answer to the question, “What shall we say to these things?” It reads, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” This is the reasonable conclusion of all that we have learned that God has done for, and has promised to His people. This is covenant language. It reflects the assurance of people for whom God has promised, “*I will be your God and you shall be my People.*” Because of Jesus Christ this promise is assured to us. He is our God. We are His people. Because He gave His

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<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 458.

<sup>3</sup> This is the view of Douglas Moo, *Romans*

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 6., p. 744f.

Son as a gift to us, He was able to secure us unto Himself and was able to make us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Our covenant relationship with God is based on what the Bible describes as “the new covenant.” It is called new, because it replaced a failed “old” covenant that had promised people that God would be their God and they would be His people based upon their faithful obedience to God’s laws. God had established that covenant (which came to be known as “the old covenant”) with Israel at Mount Sinai. That covenant was in effect until Israel and Judah had broken that covenant in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Because Israel and Judah had rebelled against God, had sought other gods to worship, and refused to keep God’s commandments, the curse of God had come upon them. But God promised that He would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah, whereby He would secure forever His covenant relationship with that nation. The Lord Jesus instituted that promised new covenant with His people. He Himself is the new covenant for His people. We are citizens of “Israel” under this new covenant that Jesus Christ has inaugurated for His people. We believers are fellow members of the Israel of God, the church of the firstborn. We are members of Israel under its new covenant although we are Gentile believers. Paul wrote of this to the church at Ephesus. We read in Ephesians 2:

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup>remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup>And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

<sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:8-22)

The apostle Peter also wrote of that the New Testament church is the realization of the Old Testament promise of a renewed covenant with God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Pet. 2:9-11)

Peter describes Christians as citizens of Israel. He uses covenant language to declare that God is our God and we are His people. The church is depicted in terms of what God had promised to Israel that He would bring to them through the Messiah. Peter identified us as Israel, having been delivered from bondage to sin. And just as Israel had been delivered from Egypt, so Peter describes God having delivered us. And then just as Israel journeyed through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, so similarly, the Israel of God under the new covenant—New Testament believers—are temporary sojourners in a hostile and barren world and that we journeying through this life on our pilgrimage to our heavenly Canaan.

To show more fully how we are presently enjoying the long promised new covenant relationship through Jesus Christ, in that God is our God and we are His people, I would like us to consider several passages in the prophecy of Jeremiah. The first rehearses the failure of Israel under the old covenant. The second is a prophecy that God gave through His prophet to a returning remnant of Israel from exile in Babylon. And so first consider **Jeremiah 11:1-17**, in which God indicts the failure of Israel to keep its covenant with God, which resulted in God's curse and its desolation.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; <sup>3</sup>and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant <sup>4</sup>which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; *so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,*’ <sup>5</sup>that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ as it is this day.”””

And I answered and said, “So be it, LORD.”

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying: ‘Hear the words of this covenant and do them. <sup>7</sup>For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, “Obey My voice.” <sup>8</sup>Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done.””

<sup>9</sup>And the LORD said to me, “A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; *the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers.*”

<sup>11</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will surely bring calamity on them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I will not listen to them. <sup>12</sup>Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. <sup>13</sup>For according to the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to that shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.

<sup>14</sup>“So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.

<sup>15</sup>“What has My beloved to do in My house,  
Having done lewd deeds with many?  
And the holy flesh has passed from you.  
When you do evil, then you rejoice.

<sup>16</sup>The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree,  
Lovely and of Good Fruit.  
With the noise of a great tumult  
He has kindled fire on it,  
And its branches are broken.

<sup>17</sup>“For the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal.”

The judgment of God came upon the generation to which Jeremiah prophesied. He witnessed Judah's defeat and Jerusalem's destruction. He saw the temple of God destroyed. But God also revealed through Jeremiah His promise to a remnant of Israel and Judah that He would inaugurate a new covenant through the Messiah. God promised that to them He would be their God and they would be His people. In **Jeremiah**

**30:12ff**, God first spoke of Israel's failure in keeping its original covenant, then God promises a remnant that He would restore them to Himself. We may begin reading in Jeremiah 30:12.

“For thus says the LORD:

‘Your affliction is incurable,  
Your wound is severe.

<sup>13</sup>There is no one to plead your cause,  
That you may be bound up;  
You have no healing medicines.

<sup>14</sup>All your lovers have forgotten you;  
They do not seek you;  
For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,  
With the chastisement of a cruel one,  
For the multitude of your iniquities,  
Because your sins have increased.

<sup>15</sup>Why do you cry about your affliction?  
Your sorrow is incurable.  
Because of the multitude of your iniquities,  
Because your sins have increased,  
I have done these things to you.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured;  
And all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity;  
Those who plunder you shall become plunder,  
And all who prey upon you I will make a prey.

<sup>17</sup>For I will restore health to you  
And heal you of your wounds,’ says the LORD,  
‘Because they called you an outcast saying:  
“This is Zion; No one seeks her.”’

<sup>18</sup>“Thus says the LORD:

‘Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents,  
And have mercy on his dwelling places;  
The city shall be built upon its own mound,  
And the palace shall remain according to its own plan.

<sup>19</sup>Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving  
And the voice of those who make merry;  
I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish;  
I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

<sup>20</sup>Their children also shall be as before,  
And their congregation shall be established before Me;  
And I will punish all who oppress them.

<sup>21</sup>Their nobles shall be from among them,  
And their governor shall come from their midst;  
Then I will cause him to draw near,  
And he shall approach Me;

For who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me?’ says the LORD.

<sup>22</sup>***‘You shall be My people,  
And I will be your God.’***”

In the next chapter, **Jeremiah 31**, God made His promise of the new covenant very explicit. First, we read in the opening verses of Jeremiah 31 of God's commitment to save a remnant of Israel.

“At the same time,” says the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.”

<sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD:

“The people who survived the sword  
Found grace in the wilderness—  
Israel, when I went to give him rest.”

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

<sup>4</sup>Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt,  
O virgin of Israel!

You shall again be adorned with your tambourines,  
And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.

<sup>5</sup>You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria;  
The planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food.

<sup>6</sup>For there shall be a day  
When the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim,  
‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,  
***To the LORD our God.***’”

<sup>7</sup>For thus says the LORD:

“Sing with gladness for Jacob,  
And shout among the chief of the nations;  
Proclaim, give praise, and say,  
‘O LORD, ***save Your people,  
The remnant of Israel!***’

<sup>8</sup>Behold, I will bring them from the north country,  
And gather them from the ends of the earth,  
Among them the blind and the lame,  
The woman with child  
And the one who labors with child, together;  
A great throng shall return there.

<sup>9</sup>They shall come with weeping,  
And with supplications I will lead them.  
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters,  
In a straight way in which they shall not stumble;  
For I am a Father to Israel,  
And Ephraim is My firstborn.

<sup>10</sup>“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,  
And declare it in the isles afar off, and say,  
‘He who scattered Israel will gather him,  
And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’

<sup>11</sup>For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,  
And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,

Streaming to the goodness of the LORD—  
For wheat and new wine and oil,  
For the young of the flock and the herd;  
Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden,  
And they shall sorrow no more at all.

In **Jeremiah 31:31ff** God makes explicit His promise of the new covenant.

<sup>31</sup>“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>32</sup>not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and ***I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*** <sup>34</sup>No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The Lord Jesus instituted the new covenant through His death. The night He was betrayed He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:25). In addition the writer to the Hebrews quoted this passage from Jeremiah 31 twice, proving that the Old Testament promise of a new covenant to the remnant of Israel, was fulfilled and being fulfilled through Jesus Christ (Cf. Hebrews 8, 10).

Let us return to our Romans 8 passage. In **verse 32** Paul sets forth the reason that we can confidently be assured that God is our God and He will bring to realization all of His promises of blessing in our lives. ***“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”*** This is the greatest case that can be made for the promise of God’s favor to the believer. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser. “If God the Father gave up His Son for you, would God fail or refuse to give you anything less?” God did not ***spare*** His Son for you.

Sparing refers to suffering inflicted. Parents spare their children when they do not inflict the full measure of chastisement due. Judges spare criminals when they do not pronounce a sentence commensurate with the crime committed. By the way of contrast, this is not what God the Father did. He did not withhold or lighten one whit of the full toll of judgment executed upon His own well-beloved and only begotten Son.<sup>5</sup>

God did not diminish in the slightest degree the intensity of our Lord’s suffering in His sacrifice for His people.

We read that God gave His Son up ***“for us all.”*** The word, “all” is a pronoun. And every pronoun will have its noun or antecedent to which the pronoun substitutes within its context. Here “all” does not mean all humanity, but rather, all the elect. All those whom the Father foreknew, all that He had predestined, all He had called, all He had justified, all He had glorified, for all of them, God gave up His Son. Here in this context, then, we have the doctrine of grace--limited atonement, taught in the Word of God.

The point of emphasis, however, is that God will most certainly bring to pass all that He has promised His people. All of the blessings of God’s grace are assured to us. They come to us from God because of Jesus Christ.

We next read of the truth that God will receive no charge against us that rises to the level that He would dispossess us. **Verse 33** reads, ***“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?”*** The implication is that no one can do so. Paul cites two reasons. First, “It is God who justifies.” and then second, Jesus Christ is the judge of these matters and it was He that died and rose for us, and that it is He that is defending us in the face of any and all accusers. Where verse 33 affirms the first, **verse 34** affirms the second, which reads, ***“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”***

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<sup>5</sup> Murray, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 232.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” Paul stands forth like a herald, and he looks up to the holy angels, and down to the accusing devils, and round about on a scowling world, and into conscience, and he asks, Who can accuse one whom God has chosen, and Christ has washed? It is God who justifieth. The holy God has declared believers clean every whit.<sup>6</sup>

Verse 33 is worded in the future tense. It probably looks forward specifically to the final Day of Judgment. On that Day no charge will be able to be laid against you, if you are a Christian, so as to damn your soul. It will not be because there will be no efforts to do. Perhaps the devil will be there charging you. Perhaps others in attempting to justify themselves before the Judge, will accuse you, attempting to show that they are no more deserving of damnation than you, for you did many of the same things. And our own sins would accuse us also, if it were not for the fact that Jesus Christ will stand on our behalf and defend us, calling upon His own life and death as the grounds of our exoneration.

Not only has Jesus died to secure our justification—“more than that” he has “been raised” and has also ascended to the right hand of God, so that he may intercede for us, ensuring that the justifying verdict for which he died is applied to us in the judgment. The language of Jesus being at “the right hand of God” is taken from Psalm 110:1, one of the most quoted OT verses in the NT. The language is, of course, metaphorical, indicating that Jesus has been elevated to the position of “vice-regent” in God’s governance of the universe. But it is not with the universe, but with Christians, that Paul is concerned here. Because Christ lives and has ascended, he is able to “intercede” for us, acting as our High Priest in the very presence of God.<sup>7</sup>

Paul then in effect stands back and exclaims the wonder and glory of the matter, that God loves us in Christ. **Verse 35** reads, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*” The answer is an understood resounding, “Nothing and No one can do so; our relationship with God is secure and our future exoneration at the judgment is certain.” Here the love of Christ refers to Christ’s love for us.<sup>8</sup> Nothing will ever cause the love that Christ has for His own to cease.

Now, there are some who argue that a true Christian can lose his salvation. In spite of all of the assurances having been piled upon one another showing that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, there are those who argue, “Yes, but Paul never says that one cannot separate itself from the love of Christ and thereby lose his salvation.” But that is to deny the entire context and undermine the entire effort of Paul to underscore the security of the elect of God. All who are justified will be glorified. If some could lose their salvation, then it would mean that some whom God justified, nevertheless fail to be glorified. This is nowhere allowed in our passage. Here is the eternal security for the true child of God. Once one is truly saved, he can never become unsaved. God has decreed it so. Christ has secured the reality through His life and death. And Christ reigns even now preventing that from ever occurring.

Now these terrible things described by Paul are often the common experience of devout Christians in an unbelieving world. He cites the worst kinds of things that could happen to us, declaring that they are incapable of severing us from our relationship with our God. Sadly, if and when we experience these kinds of things, or even things far less than these, we tend to think that God has it in for us and that indeed we have been separated from the love of God in Christ because these things make it appear so. “How could God love me and I get handed these kinds of difficulties?” And so, it is not as though Christians are immune from those who would harm us. In fact, because of our relationship with God we can expect to be maltreated in this life due to our relationship with God through Christ.

**Verse 36** reads, “*As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’*” This is taken from Psalm 44:22.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Murray M’Cheyne, in his sermon, “Who Shall Separate Us?”

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 542f.

<sup>8</sup> In other words, for those who have Greek ears to hear, this genitive, of Christ, is a subjective genitive (Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 463).



The adversity of which the apostle had given examples (vs. 35) was the lot of the people of God in all generations (cf. Acts 14:22; Heb. 11:35-38). It is noteworthy that by adducing this quotation attention should have been drawn to the fact that it was for the Lord's sake the people of God were downtrodden and regarded as fit only for slaughter. This injects an eloquent, though easily overlooked ingredient into the assurance which the apostle is unfolding. It is the reproach of Christ that persecution betokens. "All the day long" expresses well the thought of the original. It is not simply "every day." The violence unto death at the hands of persecutors is always present.<sup>9</sup>

Paul affirmed that these things can in no way defeat us, in fact, we are not only conquerors of these things, but we are "more than conquerors" through God who in Christ loves us.

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

We have now come to an end of Romans 8, which concludes the major division of the epistle, Romans 1 through Romans 8. What is coming next in Romans 9? Consider these words:

One of the striking themes in chapter 8 is that the blessings originally promised to Israel have become the province of the church. Israel was promised the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26-27) so that they could keep the ordinances of the law, but this promise has come to fruition in the church through the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). Israel had the pledge of a future resurrection (Ezek. 37), and yet Paul speaks of the resurrection of believers (Rom. 9:10-11). Israel was God's son (Exod. 4:22), but now believers in Christ are sons and daughters of God and adopted as his own (Rom. 8:14-17). The future inheritance was promised to Israel (Isa. 60), but now it is pledged to the church (Rom. 8:17). Israel was God's chosen people and the only foreknown among the nations (Amos 3:2), and yet now the church is said to be foreknown and chosen by God (Rom. 8:29-30). Yahweh had promised never to forsake Israel (Deut. 31:6), yet now this promise is extended to the church (Rom. 8:38-39; cf. also Heb. 13:5). With the application of so many OT promises to the church in chapters 5-8, the relationship of Israel to God's saving plan cries out for resolution, and Paul turns to that question next (i.e. Romans 9, 10, and 11).<sup>10</sup>

Let us close with these words of **Robert M'Cheyne** exhort any who have not become a beneficiary of these blessed and glorious assurances:

*How shall I know I am in the love of Christ?* By your being drawn to Christ: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Have you seen something attractive in Jesus? The world is attracted by beauty, or dress, or glittering jewels—have you been attracted to Christ by his good ointments? This is the mark of all who are graven on Christ's heart—they come to him; they see Jesus to be precious. The easy world see no preciousness in Christ; they prize a lust higher, the smile of the world higher, money higher, pleasure higher; but those whom Christ loves he draws after him by the sight of his preciousness. Have you thus followed him, prized him—as a drowning sinner cleaved to him?—then he will in no wise cast you out—in no wise, not for all you have done against him. 'But I spent my best days in sin'—Still I will in no wise cast you out. 'I lived in open sin'—I will in no wise cast you out.' But I have sinned against light and conviction"—Still I will in no wise cast you out. 'But I am a backslider'—Still the arms of his love are open to enfold your poor guilty soul, and he will not cast you out.

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<sup>9</sup> Murray, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 331.

<sup>10</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 466f.