

More Than Conquerers - Part 2

Scripture: Romans 8:31-39

Introduction

What can hinder your relationship with God? Sin! Sin is a devastating disease which infects our entire being. Sin distorts the image of our holy God in us. Sin corrupts the purpose for which God created us. Sin breaks the fellowship we should have with God and with each other. Sin hinders your relationship with God. Throughout Romans we have uncovered the sinful nature of mankind. We have seen the devastating effect of sin — we literally earn death by it. We have seen what God has said concerning sin and what His expectations for us are. Unfortunately, we have no means within ourselves to accomplish what God requires of us — namely His Law. But, we have also uncovered in Romans God's extraordinary plan to redeem us from our pitiful existence.

We have seen how God has made provisions for those who will turn from sin and turn to His Son. We have read that God showed His love for us by sending us a Savior. Even while we were His enemies, God loved us so much He sacrificed His Son so that we might be saved from death. But even when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, we are still tempted to sin and we will do what we ought not to do. How many of you have sinned today? On your best day, your good works are filthy rags. The good news of the Gospel is that once you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, once you turn from the futile way of trying to work for salvation and instead turn to Christ as the only means of salvation, then nothing can remove you from that special relationship with God. Once you are saved by grace, forever by grace will you remain saved.

Some Good Questions

Last week, we looked at three good questions Paul raised. The first question was "Who can be against you?" The truth is that a lot of people can be against you, but God is not one of them. If you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then God is for you. We have spent much of Romans reading just how much God is for you. The next question Paul asked was "Who shall bring a charge against you?" Again, there are a lot of people who may accuse you of all sorts of things, but if you know Christ, it does not matter. It is God Who justifies. He is the One Who declares the guilty righteous. The third question was "Who shall condemn you?" As before, many will condemn you. Satan will condemn you. People will condemn you. Even you will sometimes condemn yourself. However, if you are in Christ Jesus, you are not condemned. If you have been bought by the blood Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary, then nothing can condemn you. You are free.

Today, we look at another question Paul raised: What (or who) can separate you from the love of God? We like to think of God as loving. In fact, love seems to be the main characteristic of God that most people remember. Do you sometimes wonder if God's love for you is sufficient to carry you through tough times? Put another way, do you sometimes feel as though times are so tough that if God did love you, you have a really hard time feeling it? Surely, if God loved His children, they would not suffer, right? If

parents allowed their child to suffer when it was completely in their power to avoid it, we might question their love for the child. Remember, Paul was writing this letter to some Christians who were trying to make sense of their suffering. They may very well have questioned God's love for them. Maybe you have yourself.

No One Can Separate Us

What gives you confidence that God's love for you is certain? How can you be so sure of it? You may say that you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you can say that, then that is really good. But, is it possible to receive God's love and grace and then be separated from it? Paul asked this question:

Romans 8:35 ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

This is a great question. Can anyone separate you from God's love? Can troubles in this life? Can evil people who hurt us? What would you say to the Christians in the Middle East who are being slaughtered right now? Would you tell the person who is about to be killed for their faith that no one can separate them from God's love? They may think that the person holding the knife to their neck most certainly can do that. In America, we may not see this type of persecution. We can sit in the safety of our home, tend to the normal routine of our daily lives, or worship freely on Sunday morning with little fear of persecution, but others are not so fortunate. They live in real fear of losing their lives for something as sacred as their faith in Jesus Christ. This is nothing new. The trouble and tribulations that God's people face are not new.

After Paul asked this question and even gave us a list of things that we may face in this life, he then quoted Psalm 44 to show us that these things do happen. This verse describes God's people suffering death at the hands of those who oppose God. Evil people have for a long time opposed God and have persecuted His people. Paul used this psalm to remind us that God's people have always faced such situations, yet, even in the midst of those very difficult circumstances, they must not believe that they are separated from the love of Christ. If God so loved us that He gave us His one and only Son, will anyone be able to separate us from that love? No! We are not promised an easy life. We are not promised a life free of trouble. We are promised a Savior Who will be with us and Who will carry us through the worst times in this life. Do you trust Him?

Nothing Can Separate Us

Just as no one can separate us from God, nothing in this world or beyond this world can possibly separate us from God's love. Paul assured us of God promise to us:

Romans 8:38–39 ³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹ *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.*

Think about this promise. Think about what God is saying here. Jesus had said that Paul must suffer much for the sake of His name. (Acts 9:16) Paul, a man who knew persecution, experienced difficult circumstances, and whose life was threatened numerous times for the sake of Christ, wrote about a confident assurance that he had in God's love for him. In this list of things that we experience in life, Paul confidently assured us that death, supernatural forces, things present or things in the future, or anything else in all of God's creation will not be able to separate those who are in Christ from the love of God that is in Christ. Death will not separate us. If you know Christ, when death comes, it will not be the end of your life, but the beginning of a new one. Nothing that is happening right now or will happen in the future will separate you from God's love for you, if you know Christ as Lord and Savior.

That may be little comfort to some of you. Many, if not all of you, worry about things in life. You worry about paying your bills. You worry about your health. You worry about keeping your job or having a job. You worry about the future of this church. What is worry? Another pastor once said that worrying "implies that we don't quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what's happening in our lives." Is that you? Are you going through something that is challenging your faith in God? Are you having a hard time trusting God or believing that He loves you or cares for you? Hard times will consistently be here, but so will Christ. We can expect trouble, but if we know Jesus, we can know for certain that He is there with us. If you know Christ, you have the greatest assurance anyone could have. If God so loved us that He gave us His one and only Son, will anything separate us from that love?

Nothing Can Defeat Us

Now, this is a wonderful promise, but it is another thing to go through trouble and confidently believe that all things are going to be Ok. The reality is that sometimes circumstances are so overwhelming that we forget God's promises to us. Do you sometimes feel defeated? Notice, Paul did not say that we will be free of trouble. We ought to expect trouble, but all of life's trouble will not defeat us. Look at this promise.

Romans 8:37 ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Notice that Paul wrote that we are "more than conquerors". Another way to say this is that we are more than victorious. That sounds great. Who wants to conquer their problems? Who wants to conquer what is troubling them? We all do. We do not want to be defeated by anyone or anything. But notice, the text does not say we conquer these things, but it is "in all these things" that we are conquerors. We are conquerors through these things. God does not promise to remove trouble, but that through trouble we will be overcomers. It is also "through Him who loved us" that we are more than conquerors. It is through Jesus Christ. If you try to conquer this world or the trouble and suffering that comes your way, you will be defeated. If you try to do it yourself, you will be defeated. It is only through Christ that we overcome the world. Why? Jesus Christ is the only One Who has overcome the world. He told us the following:

John 16:33 ³³...*In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*"

Jesus told us to expect trouble, but He also told us to not become discouraged. He has overcome the world. No matter what happens in life, we have peace through our Savior Who overcame this world. It does not mean that when something bad happens in your life, you can remove whatever that bad thing is from your life. What it means is that those circumstances in your life will not destroy the work God is doing in your life nor will they separate your relationship with Christ. Any accuser — Satan, circumstances, sin — pale in comparison to our risen Lord and Savior. You may have great sin, but you have an even greater Savior. You may have great circumstances, but you have an even greater God. If you are in Christ, nothing can remove you from His tender care. If someone or something desires to defeat you, it will have to go over Jesus' dead and now resurrected body, and I know nothing that can overcome that.

I realize that you may not feel like an overcomer in the midst of trouble. Think of it this way. What is the difference between watching a whole series of games from start to finish and being the sports player playing in the moment? The one who has seen the whole series know the ups and downs, knows the wins and losses, and also knows who ultimately is victorious at the end of the season. The player does not have that knowledge during the game. The player is focused on overcoming the challenges of the moment and hoping his or her team wins in the end. The defeat of one game may be discouraging. God already knows the future. In fact, God is working out all things so that the future will be good. God sees the completed game while we are playing it out. The difference is that our Coach has never lost a game. Our Coach has a perfect record.

Conclusion

So, what can hinder your relationship with God? Sin does. You do. That is why you need Christ. If you do not know Christ as your Savior, then you are eternally separated from God. But if you know Christ, then you have victory. Do you have that victory or are you still trying to overcome this world in your own strength? It will not work. You cannot win without Christ. It is only through Christ that we overcome this world. It is only through Christ that we can claim victory. Anything else is defeat. It is just like the song we sang earlier, there is victory in Jesus, which is right out of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 15:57 ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

If you feel defeated today, then ask yourself if you are trusting God. If God feels far away, ask yourself if you have left Him. Ask yourself if you are where you need to be. The good news of the Gospel is that we overwhelmingly conquer through Jesus Christ who loves us and now lives within us. When you are uncertain of the future, remember that in Christ, you are overwhelmingly victorious. When you are depressed about some predicament, remember that in Christ you are more than a conqueror. If God is for you, what can possibly be against you? Absolutely Nothing! That is good news. Amen!