

Loved and Victorious

Romans 8:31-39

“Who shall separate us from *the love of Christ*? ... Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God *in Christ Jesus our Lord*.”

Love is a word that gets thrown around a lot these days. People in movies and TV shows are constantly professing their love for each other. Arguably the most classic exchange of love in movie history was Princess Leia’s shout to Han as he was about to be frozen in Carbonite. He hears her profession and, like the man’s man that he is, he responds, “I know.”

Later, in Return of the Jedi, as two storm troopers force Han to raise his hands in surrender, Leia has her blaster in hand and Han looks down on her affectionately and chooses that moment to say, “I love you,” and she - very symmetrically - responds, “I know” before blasting the two Imperial Troopers.

The latest Star Wars movies showed how the fictitious Han and Leia did not stay together, despite their professions of love. And the actors playing those roles - Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher - who had an affair while shooting the original trilogy, did not stay together beyond those few moments together.

Is that love? A short-lived romantic affair? Our culture would have us believe that is the glory of love - that it can be short and fiery and passionate and then be transferred quickly on to another person.

Here’s the reality as I see it. Most of the time when someone today - especially in the movies - says, “I love you,” what they mean is **“I love how you make me feel.”**

“I love you.” = “I love how you make me feel.”

And if what I love about you is how you make me feel, then do I love YOU or do I really love ME?

“I love you.” = “I love how you make me feel.” = “I love me.”

The reason relationships are so disposable today is that most people don’t know what love actually is. They confuse love with a short-lived, fiery emotional state probably better defined as a CRUSH.

And they run from one match-stick crush to the next, looking for that feeling and never actually finding love.

When the Bible tells us - as it does here in Romans 8 - that ***“Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,”*** - this is something far more real, far more powerful than what masquerades as love in our culture today. This is true love. And true love lasts. It burns hot for a time but the test of true love is that it burns LONG. It is not a match that flares up and goes out, it is like coals in a stove - they need to be tended but with the proper care, they can heat your house indefinitely. (Sorry about that analogy - up in the north people have to think about how to heat their homes and some people actually still use a wood or coal fired furnace.)

We heard **Josh McDowell** speak at family camp a few years ago. He is one of the great defenders of the Christian faith of this generation. He shared how he and his wife challenged their four kids, and especially their daughters, to know **how to define love**. They told their girls, if a guy wants to date you and starts paying attention to you - and especially if he starts thinking he might LOVE you - be clear about what he means by love. Does he mean he wants to USE you and the relationship to make him feel a certain way? Does he actually love himself and he is just saying he loves you to get certain things from you? Because that is not love at all - that's actually called selfishness.

LOVE is sacrificial. Love gives up what it wants for what the beloved needs. McDowell then offered a helpful, memorable and Biblical definition of love. **Love protects and provides.**

Love protects and provides.

Young women and girls - remember that. Love protects and provides for the beloved. If a guy dares to start talking like he loves you - you ask him what he means. Does he mean he is committed to protecting you - to doing only what is best and safest and healthiest for YOU? Does he mean he is committed to providing for you - taking care of your needs?

Or is he actually saying, “I love how you make me feel” - which you should translate, “I love me.” Remember that. Some Dads here today are going to remember that one.

Now look with me at Romans 8 - the closing section, starting in verse 31.

“What shall we say to these things? 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 with him graciously give us all things?”

That is love. God sacrificed His only Son to protect us and provide for us. So when v. 31 says, “God is FOR US,” and when this passage ends by talking about how nothing can separate us from the love of God, what it means is that ***God protects and provides for His children.***

First, let's reflect on how God protects us.

How is God for us?

1. He Protects us in Christ our Savior

"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 with him graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:31-32

Here is the essence of the Gospel - God did not spare His only Son, but gave him up as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of mankind. You can summarize the Gospel in four simple words - ***"Christ died for us."*** (Rom. 5:8). Each one of us should have to die for our own sins, but God provided a substitute in Jesus who died in your place and died in my place. He died so we don't have to die. He endured God's wrath, He suffered hell on the cross so that we don't have to pay the penalty for our own sin. That is tremendously good news!

God offers to protect everyone who will come to Jesus in faith. What does God protect us from? Two dangers - two deadly dangers: accusation and condemnation. V. 33.

How is God for us?

1. He Protects us in Christ our Savior

o From Accusation

"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." Romans 8:33

Has anyone ever brought charges against you? All of us have experienced this, even the youngest ones in the room. When Mom or Dad sits you down and says, "What have you done?" they are bringing charges against you. And let me encourage you to go ahead and plead guilty quickly, accept the sentence and say you're sorry and you won't do it again. Fighting the charge doesn't help your case.

Some of us have experienced this in more serious ways. A good friend of mine is a teacher and a female student filed charges against him for inappropriate touching. Thankfully another student was there and was able to testify to what happened so the charges were dismissed. But when someone is accused of doing wrong, the consequences can be very severe.

Think about the charges that could be brought against you by God. Every human court or human relationship has limited knowledge and has to investigate to try to figure out what happened. God has no such limitations. He knows not only everything you have ever done but every single motive and reason for why you did it. You can fool some of the people some of the time, but nobody can fool God.

The Bible makes it very clear that **there will be a judgment day**. Everyone will have their day in court. Books will be opened that will detail everything you've ever done, said or thought. On what basis will you be judged? Jesus said these sobering words, **"For with the judgment you**

pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”
Matthew 7:2

However you judge other people is how you will be judged. “With the measure you use it will be measured to you.” Let that sink in.

- Do you judge other people for their **selfishness**? Do you get fired up and fussy when people don’t consider your needs and feelings? God will turn that around and show you how you did not consider the needs and feelings of others.
- Do you judge other people for their **pride**? Can you see the arrogance and stubbornness in others and do you bristle when someone won’t bend to admit he was wrong? God will turn that around and show you how you were stubborn, how you wouldn’t admit when you were wrong, how much you defended yourself rather than humbling yourself.
- Do you judge other people for their **stinginess**? They don’t give enough, they’re not very generous to you. How generous have you been to others?
- Do you judge people for their **materialism**? How much have you been collecting?
- If you look down on others because they’re not as **spiritual** as you are? Be careful. God will turn that around and evaluate your prayer life and your service to the church and your evangelism by how you have judged other people.

Every one of us is in grave danger of being accused before God - unless someone has borne that accusation for us already. Verse 33 says, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect. It is God who justifies.”

How is God for us?

1. He Protects us in Christ our Savior

○ From Accusation - the Lamb is our Substitute

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” Romans 8:33

God has provided a protection against these accusations. This is why Jesus came. This is why he died. All of the judgments, all of the accusations that should be leveled at you - everything that should be on your record and brought out as evidence in your final judgment, was applied to Jesus Christ, if you have put your faith in Him.

This is **the doctrine of the substitution**. Jesus offers to be your substitute. Just as the nation of Israel offered animals as sacrificial substitutes, so **Jesus is the Lamb of God** who offers to take away the sins of the world. When an Israelite would bring his sacrifice to the temple area, he would place his hand on the head of the animal and then the priest would cut the lamb’s throat. The sins of the one bringing the sacrifice would - spiritually speaking - be transferred to the animal and the lamb’s sinless state would be transferred to the worshiper.

That is exactly what happens at the moment when a sinner repents and calls on Jesus to save him. Jesus comes before you as the Lamb of God. All you have to do is place your hands on his head and confess your sins to God. Admit you are a sinner. Admit you deserve to have every accusation brought against you - that you deserve to be judged guilty. And ask Jesus to take your place.

Hear these words in Romans 8:33 - "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." If you have committed your heart and life to Jesus then you are one of God's elect - one of His chosen ones. And only by grace, only according to the riches of His mercy does God pronounce you JUSTIFIED by faith.

If you have placed your hands on Jesus, then ***He is your lamb - your substitute***. All of your sins have been transferred to Him - they were nailed to the cross with him. So there is nothing left to accuse you for! ***You have been FORGIVEN***. Your debts have been paid. You have been released from any fear of accusation now or ever. Praise the Lord for His infinite Grace!

But forgiveness is only half of the good news - that only removes your sins from your account. Justification goes further and transfers all of Jesus' righteousness to your account as well! The sinner who trusts in Jesus is not only forgiven and pronounced "Not Guilty," she is actually **pronounced RIGHTEOUS**.

Listen to how Paul says it in Romans 3:

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:21-24

The Gospel is about how the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God has been provided as a free gift in Jesus Christ. Not only does Jesus offer to forgive your sin as your sacrificial substitute, he offers to give you his perfection as your glorious high priest. So here is our second protection in Christ - He not only protects us from accusation as our Lamb who takes away our sin but he protects us from condemnation as our high priest who gives us his righteousness.

How is God for us?

1. He Protects us in Christ our Savior

- **From Accusation - the Lamb is our Substitute**
- **From Condemnation - the Priest is our Righteousness**

"It is God who justifies. 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." Romans 8:33-34

There is “**no condemnation for those who are IN CHRIST JESUS**” (8:1). God has provided a shelter from His just wrath and condemnation for sin. Jesus is that protective shelter. If you are IN CHRIST, then He is covering you, protecting you. And what He is covering you with is His righteousness.

The High Priest in Israel wore special, ornate robes with a special breast piece that had twelve precious stones on it, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The High Priest was a most holy person - set apart for the task of representing the whole nation before God - offering prayers, leading worship, presenting sacrifices.

Jesus Christ is not only the Lamb who pays for sin, He is also ***the High Priest who covers us with His righteousness***. Imagine Jesus, the Great High Priest, taking off His beautifully ornamented robe, walking over to you and dressing you in that beautiful, holy garment? As you stand before God, that is exactly what God sees. He does not see your sins and failures, He sees the perfection, holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

If you belong to Jesus by faith then you are not only protected from any accusation for sin but also from the ultimate danger of condemnation for your sin. Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice and He rose as the One who has conquered sin and death forever. Because He lives, He can offer His righteousness as a free gift. As the old hymn says, *“Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”*

That is how God protects us in Christ our Savior. And if God is for us in that way, covering us with the protective love of Jesus, who can be against us? No accusation against us will stand. No condemnation is in the future of the believer in Jesus.

But there is more good news in the truth that God is for us. He not only protects us, He also provides for us. “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?” (v. 32)

God not only gives us salvation in Christ - forgiveness and justification - He gives us every spiritual blessing **in** Christ. **He gives us HIMSELF**. Look at two ways God has provided for us in Christ our Lord.

How is God for us?

2. He Provides for us in Christ our Lord

○ Unconditional, Eternal Acceptance

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:35,37

For the one who belongs to Jesus, ***you are ONE WITH HIM***. You are not just WITH CHRIST but you are so close to Jesus that Paul describes your relationship as being IN CHRIST. Outside of Christ there is accusation for sin and condemnation under God's just wrath. **In Christ** there is no grounds for accusation and so there is no condemnation.

Since we are one with Christ, nothing can separate us from Him - we are forever bound to Jesus and covered by His love. This not only protects us from judgment, ***it provides unconditional, eternal acceptance.***

Think about **what your heart most longs for**. Isn't it the permanent acceptance of a loving relationship? We experience this in good families. If you had ***good, loving parents*** who protected you and provided for you then you know what it feels like to have unconditional, permanent acceptance. You didn't have to earn mom and dad's approval and love - you had it. They loved you. Nothing could change that. They were there for you. All they asked was that you enjoy and appreciate their protection and provision. Express gratitude and share your love in return.

That is what we experience in a ***good, loving marriage***. Unconditional, lifelong acceptance. I've officiated a number of weddings and it's always striking to me the vows young couples make to each other and how little they understand what they are binding themselves to. "For richer or poorer, for better or worse, in sickness and health as long as we both shall live." That is serious stuff.

It's an UNCONDITIONAL commitment - even if we are broke, even if you get mean and crotchety, even if you get sick and I have to care for you every second of every day. That is my vow. Whoa.

Hear what God is vowing in Romans 8

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:35,37

Nothing can separate us from God's love. Nothing. No one. No trial. No hardship. No persecution. No enemy. No loss. No pain. No danger. No threat. Nothing. Even in the worst things in life we are more than conquerors ***through Him*** who loved us. Through HIM.

How is God for us?

2. He Provides for us in Christ our Lord

o Unconditional, Eternal Acceptance - the Judge is our Attorney

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:35,37

Who might try to separate us from God and His love? The devil, for sure - he is the great accuser. His human agents will rage against believers and take whatever they can from us. But in the end, who makes the final judgment?

John 5 says,

“For the Father judges no one, but has given **all judgment to the Son.**” John 5:22

“God commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness **by a man** whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all **by raising him from the dead.**” Acts 17:30-31

Jesus is the ultimate judge. There is no higher court. There is no one else to appeal to. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given” to him (Matt. 28:18). All of it. Jesus, the judge of mankind, is the One protecting you from wrath and providing you with His love. Who can bring any charge against you? Who can condemn you? Who can separate you from Him - the Single Supreme Court Justice?

How is God for us?

2. He Provides for us in Christ our Lord

○ **Unconditional, Eternal Acceptance - the Judge is our Attorney**

“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.*” Romans 8:34

Here is another dimension of the glorious Gospel - ***the Judge of all mankind is our defense attorney!*** For all who believe in Jesus, on that great day of judgment, the Judge Himself will step down from his platform and walk over beside you to pronounce the truth of what has already happened. You are guilty, but he has borne your guilt. Then in that moment He will purge all remaining sin from your heart and mind and life and you will suddenly be like Him, perfectly reflecting His glory for all of eternity.

Since his resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus has taken His seat at the right hand of the Father as the Exalted One, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who upholds the Universe with the Word of His power. ***He not only reigns in heaven but he intercedes for us.*** That means he is **our advocate** - our attorney. He presents our defense. And trust me, it has nothing to do with us or our efforts. He pleads solely on the basis of His performance. And that settles the matter.

“This one is mine,” Jesus says. Case closed. Nothing can separate you from His perfect love.

One more note on how God provides for us in Christ. Verse 32.

How is God for us?

2. *He Provides for us in Christ our Lord*

- Unconditional, Eternal Acceptance - the Judge is our Attorney
- **Unconditional, Eternal Blessing - the King is our Advocate**

“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 with him *graciously give us all things?*” Romans 8:32

What are these “all things”? Mainly this means salvation - it means heaven instead of hell, it means acceptance instead of rejection by God. But **once you have Jesus** - or rather, once He has you - **you HAVE every spiritual blessing** (Eph. 1:3-4). Because Jesus Himself IS the fountain of every blessing. If you have Jesus, you have everything. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have anything.

This is how Paul can scoff at “tribulation and distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword” and say “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” **When you have Jesus you can lose everything in this world and still know you are rich** - that you are royalty, in fact. When you have Jesus you can lose your health, your family, your house, your position and REJOICE because you have JESUS - so you have everything.

You can say, with Paul - who experienced all kinds of suffering, hardship, persecution, rejection, danger and sword - “for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” You can say with missionaries like

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Jim Elliot

“I never made a sacrifice.” David Livingstone

Jim Elliot - “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

You can say with David Livingstone who devoted his life to missions in Africa, “I never made a sacrifice.” And you can say with Paul in Romans 8:37

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.” Romans 8:37-39

Robertson McQuilken was the President of Columbia Bible College for 20 years, reaching the pinnacle of his career as a missionary, Christian leader, author and speaker. But then his wife of 40 years was diagnosed with Alzheimers and he had a difficult choice to make. Many people

advised him to put her in a home and continue with his “more important” work at the school and with his speaking and writing engagements. But Robertson said this:

“When the time came, the decision was firm. It took no great calculation. It was a matter of integrity. Had I not promised, 42 years before, ‘in sickness and in health . . . till death do us part’? This was no grim duty to which I stoically resigned, however. It was only fair. She had, after all, cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion; now it was my turn. And such a partner she was! If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt.” Robertson McQuilkin, 2011

And as he served his wife faithfully year after year he found it to be as much a joy as it was a challenge.

“Seventeen summers ago, Muriel and I began our journey into the twilight. It's midnight now, at least for her, and sometimes I wonder when dawn will break. Even the dread Alzheimer's disease isn't supposed to attack so early and torment so long. Yet, in her silent world, Muriel is so content, so lovable. If Jesus took her home, how I would miss her gentle, sweet presence.” Robertson McQuilkin, 2004

Arguably **the most important sermon McQuilkin ever wrote was his service to his wife** as her mind faded to gray. He loved her in the fullest sense of that word. He continued to protect her and provide for her with UNCONDITIONAL, permanent, sacrificial love.

That gives us a little window into *how God loves us in Christ*. He protects us from accusation and condemnation in Christ our Savior. And He provides for us with eternal acceptance and blessing in Christ our Lord.

Let's pray together and give thanks for our Great Savior!

What then shall we say to these things? [Predestined → Called → Justified → Glorified]

If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 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?**

33 ***Who shall bring any charge*** against **God's elect?**

It is **God who justifies.**

34 ***Who is to condemn?***

Christ Jesus is the one who died—

[sacrifice]

more than that, who was raised—

[victory]

who is at the right hand of God,

[ascended, reigning]

who indeed is interceding for us.

[mediator/ priest]

35 ***Who shall separate us*** from **the love of Christ?**

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,

or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

36 As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long; [Psalm 44 - cry for salvation]

we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ["Awake... redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!"]

37 **No**, in all these things ***we are more than conquerors***

through **him who loved us.**

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.