

Nothing ...
Romans 8:35-39

Valentine's Day is a day that is supposed to be centered around love, but it can bring up a lot of different emotions in us because of the failed "loves" we have had in our lives. It can make us very apprehensive and fearful when it comes to other relationships, but what if we carry those same feelings and apply them to our relationship with God? What if we experience fears and anxieties when it comes to His love for us? What if we are missing out on things God wants for us in life because of our confusion about the love of God? Paul addresses this in the last part of Romans when he asked in Verse 35 of Chapter 8.

I. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? – Romans 8:35-36

³⁵ *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?* ³⁶ *(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")*

Before we really look at what Paul is saying here, we need to understand 2 things.

1. Paul is only addressing those who have made Jesus the Lord of their lives. If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then the answer to this question is easy. You are already separated from God's love by your sin. No matter how many "good" things you try to do it will not help the situation, but there is good news for you that we will get back to soon.

2. You need to understand that Paul is asking what will stop God from loving us, not what will stop us from loving God. I would guess we could come up with a list a mile long of things that could stop us from loving God and most of them could simply be summed up by the word "SIN", but that is not Paul's intention here.

Paul goes on to ask if it means that God no longer loves us if we experience **TROUBLES**. The word trouble here denotes consequences of other people's sin. When thinking about troubles, I always think of Joseph and what he suffered due to the sins of others. I think of his brothers and Potiphar's wife and how their sins of jealousy and lying did not just impact them, but Joseph in a huge way. There is no such thing as sin that just effects one person. Every sin affects the individual, the

family, the community, and friends who care for them. Most importantly we know that every sin cost Jesus His life. But still the question remains, does experiencing the consequences of other people's sin mean that God no longer loves us?

Paul leaves us hanging with that question and moves on to the next when he shifts the focus from the consequences of other people's sins to the consequences of our own sin. That is what he means when he asks if **CALAMITIES** mean God no longer loves us. When we accept Jesus as Lord of our lives we are forgiven of our sins. God does not see our righteousness, but rather Jesus', the one who took our place. When we experience the consequences of our sin, does that mean that God no longer loves us? Or are we trying to say that forgiveness of sin and the consequences of sin are the same thing? Again, Paul does not answer this, but he rather moves on to another point.

He then asks if **PERSECUTION** can separate us from Christ's love. Surely if we start to experience suffering because of the gospel of Jesus Christ that would mean God no longer loves us. If we are obedient but still experience persecution does that mean that God's love is gone?

He again moves on and asks about **HUNGER**. We get a picture here of being removed from our comfort zone. This can include, not only food, but health, jobs, housing, and conveniences. When we lose any of those things does it mean that God's love has run out? Still Paul has more to add to the question.

How about when we are **DESTITUTE** or shamed. When we as believers in Christ start to feel conviction for our actions, does that mean God's love is gone?

Then Paul asks if **DANGER** can separate us. The idea here is anything you have experienced, anything you might be experiencing, and anything you could even imagine experiencing causing God to no longer love us.

Romans 8:35 ...or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") Paul then adds in death as something that might separate us from the love of God while he quotes from Psalm 44:22. If you are unfamiliar with this Psalm it is a Psalm where the Psalmist is crying out to God asking the very question that Paul is asking here.

Before we read Paul's answer we need to understand where he is coming from with his answer. Paul is not just giving us a sympathetic answer here, but rather he is giving us a more in-depth empathetic one. Of the seven things Paul just listed we know from his letter to the Corinthians that he had experienced them personally. I can only imagine that Paul was struggling with this same question as he struggled against these circumstances. It's no wonder that he is emphatic when he gives us the answer.

II. NO! – Romans 8:37

³⁷ *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

No, none of these things can separate us from Christ's love.

Troubles? – Jesus said in John 16:33 that we will have troubles, so of course that doesn't mean He doesn't love us.

Calamities? – No, because Romans 5:8 says that "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

Persecution? – No, because Jesus said in John 15:20, "Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you."

Hunger, destitution, any danger we can imagine, or even death? – Never, remember Jesus said in John 16:33 "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world."

Paul then tells us that overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us. Some interpretations say that we are more than conquerors and there is great comfort in that. A conqueror is someone who has won a victory in the past and has confidence that they will win again. The fact remains, and we see throughout history, that every conqueror has been defeated at some point. When Paul says "More" than conquerors, we remove all doubt about future victories. It is not the fact that Jesus will win; He's already won - the war is over. When He came and lived a perfect life, died a criminal's death on the cross, was buried for 3 days, then was raised to life, the war against Satan and Death was over. We do not have to hope that we win the war, we don't have to have great confidence that He will win, No, HE WON! It's over and done for, and it's

this fact that gets Paul very excited and changes the tone of the letter when he switches to the first person to finish off his answer to the question.

III. NOTHING ... - Romans 8: 38-39

³⁸ *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.* ³⁹ *No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If Paul were a musician, he would be turning up his amp to 11 when he says that NOTHING can ever separate us from God's love.

Death? – No way, that is victory for a Christian. It is just the doorway to eternal life with Christ. We will have a new body, a new mind, no sin, and perfection. Therefore, death cannot separate us from God's love, in fact it brings us into more of His love.

Life? – There's the problem, that's where we experience all the pains and anguish that Paul referred to. In Romans 8:18 Paul says that what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later.

Angels or Demons? – Nah, even though we don't know a lot about things that happen in the supernatural spiritual realm other than what's revealed to us in scripture, despite the unknown, it can't separate us either.

Fears or Worries? – Praise God that our feelings cannot separate us from God's love, or we would all be in trouble.

The Powers of Hell? – Our greatest enemy is Satan and not even he can separate us from the love of God. He tried, he is still trying, and has never once been successful. Remember Satan was defeated on the cross. His day of judgment is coming, and we are more than victorious over Satan.

Nothing in creation – Paul says that nothing that has been created can separate us from the Love of God. That is everything you can imagine that exists except for one thing and that's God. God is uncreated, so what about Him? Well, He's told us page after page after page about His love for us so that we never have to worry.

So, what shall we do with this answer? As a believer I believe there are 3 ways you can respond today. Maybe today you see God's love for you does not change, it's always there, but you feel like there is something that has gotten in the way of your relationship and your growth as a Christian. If you feel this way you need to **REPENT**. In 1 John we are told if we confess our sins to Him, He will forgive us and cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. We just need to go to Him. We can also choose to be **RENEWED**. Remembering His great love for us so that we can go out into our worlds and lavish this same love, that we were so freely given, upon all we come upon in our attitude, our actions, and our words. I pray that no matter how you respond you will be **RECHARGED**, ready to live out your Christian life again for another week. There is one group I said I would come back to.

Remember when I said that everything Paul is talking about here was just for Christians? Well, if you have never made Jesus the Lord of your life, I have some good news for you. Maybe you have heard of this amazing love, this unfailing love, this love that will never leave you nor forsake you, and you want to experience that yourself. You can and you can do it right now. You need to know your sin (the things you have done wrong in life) has separated you from God's love and broken a perfect relationship that He wants you to have with Him. Nothing you can do, no matter how good you are, can fix this problem you created for yourself. In God's incredible love for us, He sent his Son Jesus to take the penalty for your sins that separated you from Him in the first place. Jesus lived a perfect life, died a criminal's death, laid in the grave for three days, but was raised again so that we would have a way to be made right with God. The Bible says if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. You will experience His love that will never fail nor give up on you, no matter what comes your way. The choice is yours. God will never force you into this relationship with Him. He will never make you accept His gift of forgiveness. He loves you more than you will ever know and died, so that you could experience a love and a life you could never imagine.