

Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God

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[0 : 00] A few weeks ago we looked at the seven things that cannot separate a true believer from the love of Christ.

! And those seven things we looked at were tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword. Well, in our lesson tonight we're going to continue with that list by adding an additional ten items that cannot separate us, the true believer, from the love of Christ.

And we find these in Romans chapter 8 verses 38 and 39. It reads as follows, For I am sure, yours may say persuaded, but 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. We'll be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. How certain is the Apostle Paul of this?

The ESV says that he is sure. That's not a bad word that we use often in our modern English language. Other translations of the Bible use the word, I am persuaded, I'm convinced.

[1 : 48] It is a Greek word, pytho, which means to be assured, to rely on by being inwardly convinced, to have confidence, and to trust.

We can trust this. In making this closing statement of the 8th chapter of Romans, Paul is offering his testimony to this central truth concerning eternal security of the true believer.

He leaves no wiggle room to those who would challenge the truthfulness of being eternally secure in Christ.

And he offers a glorious testimony. Paul's argument is based upon the truth that we've been studying now for many weeks on the perseverance of the saints. We're Baptist folks.

We like the words eternal security of the true believer. Down through the ages, many have considered these closing two verses to be the absolute climax of Romans chapter 8 and the high point of the entire book of Romans.

[3 : 03] And Paul closes out by listing these ten potential separators of Christians from the love of God that is found in Christ Jesus.

And then he methodically dismisses each one of them. And to my Arminian friends who hold to conditional security, if Paul was convinced in eternal security for the true believer, we should be as well.

And the first one he lists is the separator of death. The first possible separator is death. In every culture, in every age, death was the greatest of fears.

Death is the great unknown for the vast majority of people who will ever live. The only place we can truly learn about death accurately is the Scriptures.

And most people reject the truths therein. It is assumed that death ends our existence. And it is inescapable.

[4 : 25] The English philosopher Sir Francis Bacon said this concerning death, Men fear death as children fear the dark. And I have to tell you, when I was growing up, I feared the dark and death more than anything I could think of.

I think that is why when I became an adult, I went into lines of work that had no danger attached to them. I have no fear of the dark now, as long as I have my gun with me.

I have no fear of death. I believe, as Dr. Sproul taught, and I've said many times, if I could walk through that door and be in heaven, I'd go right now.

Mike, you could call Diane. He's not coming home tonight. I have no fear of death, but the dying part troubles me a little bit. Is there going to be some pain?

You know, whatever. I remember when A.C. Pitchford, several of us in here remember A.C., and A.C. was dying near death, and Mike McBride and Jim Byers and I went down to see him, and the

nurse said, he's been hoping someone would come by all day, and I told him, well, Jesus is with you.

[5 : 43] And Dr. McBride said, yeah, but he wants somebody with skin on. And A.C., he opened his eyes, he said, that's right. Death is viewed as the great separator.

It separates us from life, at least this life. It separates us from family. It separates us from friends. It separates us from our familiar surroundings.

It separates our soul and spirit from the body. If a person is not saved, it separates him or her from God. That's what spiritual death is.

It's separation from God. Life goes on. But it's separation. For the true believer, death takes on a whole new reality.

God takes that which humans fear the most, and He uses it as the vehicle to bring His children home to Him.

[6 : 50] It's like our limousine. He picks us up and takes us home to Him. In death. You know, when I was growing up, I lived just a few blocks over here, and we'd be out playing, and finally it was time to go in, and my mom or dad would get on the porch and yell for me, and they could see us.

We were out there. I never feared my mother or father calling me home. And I do not fear my heavenly Father calling me home.

Death is the great separator for the unsaved, but it does not separate believers from the love of God that is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So how do we know this? Well, ultimately we know it because Christ has conquered death. He conquered death at the cross and at the tomb.

I don't separate those. They're all part of one. He triumphed over death. Death. Quoting passages in the Old Testament, the Apostle Paul said this, When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

[8 : 20] O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is in the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This was also Paul's message to his son in the faith, Timothy, our Savior Christ Jesus.

Listen to this. Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For the believer, death's abolished.

Death's abolished. One thing that would be a great help with any true believer concerning death is the fact that death, far from separating us from the love of God in Christ, actually brings us into an even closer relationship with Him.

Now please don't misunderstand me. I don't wake up in the morning and say, Dear God, please make this be the day that I die.

[9 : 32] I've never prayed that prayer. I don't plan on praying that prayer. I enjoy life. I have things I need to do and want to do. My sons are not smart enough to raise my granddaughters and my great-granddaughter, so we need to stick around.

But if I should die before I wake, I will be fully awake in the presence of the Lord. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

And I've heard many a pastor say to someone on their deathbed, you know, are you ready to go see your Maker? And yes, I am.

Well, you're going to close your eyes here in a little bit and when you open them, you're going to be looking right into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, what a way to go, right?

The theologian and pastor, Alexander McLaren, lived from 1826 to 1910. Like all good theologians, he was Scottish, he was Baptist, and he was a member of the group of nonconformist ministers.

[10 : 45] Now, what does that mean? I've read about that a lot. That meant he refused to comply with England's requirements as to what preachers could and could not preach.

They were telling what they could preach on. He wrote a multi-volume work on the Holy Scriptures. And Dr. McLaren, in that work, called death the separator and put it this way.

The separator becomes the uniter. He rends us apart from the world that he may bring us to God. We know God now, but only in part.

In that day, we should know fully, even as we are known. There shall be no soul sleep and no purgatory for those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul said that to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. And that was Dr. McLaren, but also a quote from Paul in Philippians 1.23.

[11:57] William Borden was a missionary. He was in transit on his way to China from Britain. That's a long way.

I've done that trip. It's a very long way. Except I was flying. He was sailing. He got as far as Egypt and I've been there and he became deathly ill.

Deathly ill. He knew he was dying. So he wrote this note to his family and friends. No reserve, no retreat, and no regrets.

No regrets. What comforting words to a family that knew he was a follower of Christ. He wrote those comforting words because he knew that death did not separate him from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But there's more. There's the separator of life. The second possible separator is life.

[13:06] It's interesting that Paul chose life as a separator. We should remember that when Paul was on earth, life was tough for many people.

And it was tough for the apostle Paul, but may I say, after his conversion, before that, he had a pretty good life.

He was on the fast track, I think, to be the high priest. But after his conversion, it got tough. Even trying to kill him. We get an idea of just how difficult his life had become in his second letter to the church at Corinth.

In verse 11, five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one. For you math experts, that's thirty-nine, by the way.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea.

[14:13] On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, the Jews, danger from Gentiles, us, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure, and apart from any other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

I think that'd make a great invitation, Pastor. And people say, well, gosh, if you told people that, the unsaved, no one would ever get saved. Yeah, they would. Those who's been called by God would. Paul was. For many people, life is hard. And then you die. And for many people, most people on this earth, death has with it an uncertain future.

They're just getting launched. They don't know where. The majority of people on earth will face a life without Christ, without God, and without hope.

Remember when we studied few that find it? The path that leads to eternal life and few that find it? Many are on the broad way.

[15:52] And you know, I probably didn't teach that very well. Since then, I've learned more.

According to the theologians I trust, the broad way is people that are in churches that are not saved.

They're on the broad way. But the people in the church that are saved, the fewer in number, they're on the narrow way. It's just a very interesting concept. But a follower of Christ is not without hope.

Those who believe and embrace Christ have eternal life. And you know, it's easy to do this, and I did it for years. We tend to think of eternal life as something which comes much later.

It's somewhere out there. And one of these days, we're going to have it. We're going to enter into it. The truth is, when we were saved, we entered into eternal life.

That happened at our salvation. Every follower of Christ in my hearing tonight has entered into their eternal life. We're just going to change addresses someday.

[17:02] But the eternal life starts in this life. And there will come a day when our address will change. We'll no longer be residents of earth. We will be in our heavenly home.

But we go from eternal life on earth to eternal life in heaven. and then someday we're going to return to earth and live for a thousand years in the millennial reign of Christ.

You can read about that in Revelation. So we will experience eternal life in the millennial reign. And then one day we shall enter into what is called the eternity of eternities and enjoy eternal life with

Jesus forever.

There won't even be any time to measure it. Time will be no more. Well, we have a couple of other separators.

The separator of angels and demons. Angels and demons. These are the next potential separators. [18:12] Verse 38 in Romans describes this as angels or rulers in the ESV. Many other translations including the King James, the New King James and the New American Standard Bible use the word principalities.

But many theologians and I think correctly believe the rulers or principalities spoken of here are forces of darkness in contrast to heavenly angels.

Angels that did not throw in with Lucifer. Those theologians include Dr. Lloyd Jones, Dr. John Murray, Dr. James Montgomery Boyce, Dr. MacArthur, there's others.

But that alone is a powerful lineup of godly men. Since Paul has been contrasting these things in this portion of Scripture, it makes sense to mention good angels.

These are the angels who did not throw in with Lucifer and bad angels, rulers or principalities, who did fall from heaven with Lucifer and are now demons.

[19:25] And there's a bunch of them. We don't know how many. Millions, billion, we don't know. angels. I don't think we should assume that Paul believed that good angels, those that were obedient to the Lord, would ever try and separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

If they ever did, they wouldn't be good anymore, would they? I believe Paul is speaking hypothetically and he's saying that neither good nor bad angels can separate us.

he actually does comment on this in the book of Galatians and he says this in chapter 1, I'm astonished, and I'm told that's a strong word in the Greek language, I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ, but even if we or an angel from heaven should ever preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

Anathema. That word accursed means eternally condemned or in plain English, let him be eternally damned. Paul is sweeping over all of creation, pointing out that there is nothing that can separate the true believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

[21:09] In the first two separators, we saw nothing in life and nothing in death. And now Paul uses angels regardless of their status, good or bad. There are good angels that did not fall, there are evil angels, now demons who fell.

None of these can separate us from the Lord. Of course, we don't fear godly angels. This is how the author of the book of Hebrews describes them. Are they, good angels, not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

That's us. Angels don't inherit salvation. And they're going to look at us and just be amazed. They're going to say, what's it like? Christ died for you guys.

What's that like? Because he didn't die for them. Paul also issues a warning in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Does the devil have schemes? You bet. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[22:37] And then the apostle Paul gives us a warning in his first epistle, chapter 4, verse 1, beloved, do not believe in every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

For many false prophets have gone out into the world. I haven't done it very much, but I've actually done that. When I had some people just say things were so outlandish that I tested them and they didn't measure up.

So we see that demons may try and separate us from the love of God, but they will fail. Interesting, the name devil means separator.

That's what the name means. How do we know that Satan and demons will fail at this? We can be assured of this because the Lord Jesus defeated the forces of evil at the cross.

And I remember that question that Paul asked in Romans, what do the scriptures say? Well, in Colossians 2, verse 13 and following, he says this, And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our

trespasses.

[24 : 03] How many trespasses did you forgive? all of them. By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this he set aside, nailing it to the cross, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

Well, there's another couple of separators, potential separators. The present, and the future. So thus far, Paul's addressed the potential separators of life and death, of angelic forces, good and bad, and now he lists two more.

Those things that are present and those things that are come, meaning the future. What's out there in the future? It's going to separate us, the true believer, from the Lord.

In other words, he talks about the potential separator of time. We hear often about space and time. Well, this is time.

Dr. Leon Morris said in his commentary on Romans, time is powerless against believers, has no impact on believers. Note that Paul does not list the past in this list on time.

[25 : 27] Why not? Well, nothing in the past has separated us from Christ, so he doesn't even bother to list it. But what about the present?

What about the hard things we face in life? Can things we do in the present separate us? We're in Christ now, if indeed we've been saved, so can we send away our Savior and our salvation based upon present conduct?

Used to have an elderly man in our church, great man, he's with the Lord, but he struggled with that. He said, I'm not worried about the sins I committed up to the point I was saved, but what about my future sins?

I said, when Jesus died for you, all your sins were future. You didn't come along for almost 2,000 years. Now, we have to be cautious here.

We live in unredeemed flesh, and we battle sin daily. sometimes we experience victory, other times we experience defeat.

[26 : 33] Are those defeats equal to losing our salvation? Paul says no. Paul says no. Nothing in the present can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But again, we're striving for balance on this point. we cannot enter into a life of sin. I call that camping out in sin, thinking that our conduct does not matter because we've once been saved. Don't ever think that, guys. And we've looked at this before, and I'm not going to belabor the point, but that is called anti-nomianism, anti-against, nomian, the moral law of God.

Against the moral law of God. I'm not under the moral law because I've been saved by grace. The Ten Commandments were never canceled out.

One of them was, and that's Sabbath worship, Saturday, and that's been replaced with the first day of the week, Resurrection Sunday. And actually, we're supposed to worship every day, seven days a week, right?

[27 : 45] But this attitude, I can sin all I want because I'm saved. Anyone who truly believes that, says I can murder, I can rape, I can do anything I want to, and I'm going to heaven because I was saved when I was nine years old in 1909.

Anyone who believes that is not saved. I don't know how else to put it. Nothing in our Christian walk gives us the license to sin.

doesn't mean we won't sin, and even frequently sometimes. But it's not a license. We have liberty not to. So we do sin, perhaps frequently, but the true believer cannot sin, one, without conviction. It's going to grab you. And without the eventual overpowering desire to go to the Lord in confession and genuine repentance, turning from that sin.

That's like a ship coming into harbor for the believer. It has also been described like this, a sinner leaps into sin and loves it, the true believer lapses into sin and loathes it.

[29 : 01] Well, the same applies to the future. Both our future in this life and in the life to come. In the life to come, there will be a judgment in fact several.

I won't develop it here, but the judgment that unbelievers will experience is different from the judgment that believers will experience. But even the future judgment of believers cannot separate us from Christ.

That is all part of the power and efficiency of the atonement. The Lord's salvation is efficacious, meaning it is successful in producing the desired or intended result.

And that result is eternal life with God. Well, number seven is the separator of powers. Paul lists powers.

What does Paul mean by the term powers? I have no idea. And here's anyone else and I'm going to comment on it. we're not sure.

[30 : 12] It is a Greek word often associated with miraculous powers or miracles, but that doesn't seem to clear things up. Dr.

MacArthur thinks Paul might be referring to persons in position of authority over us, but he's certainly not dogmatic about that interpretation. Perhaps this is a reference to the powerful things already listed.

We cannot be separated by the powers of death or life or angels or demons or the present or the future. And this being true, neither is there any other power out there that can separate us.

And I think we have to leave it at that. Because nobody knows for sure. Well, God knows. And then we come to the separator of height and depth.

And this is actually the last of the matched pairs where we had two at a time. Paul has already dealt with human experience, spiritual powers, and time.

[31 : 23] Now he considers two things that exist in space. Remember space-time? These things are in space. Height, depth. Does it mean that nothing above us and nothing below us can separate us from God?

Dr. McLaren expresses it beautifully this way, the love of God is everywhere. Wow, I like that. If that is the meaning, it is well supported by one of the Psalms, Psalm 139.

Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, that's a name for one of the compartments in hell, not the bad part, where believers go before the resurrection, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your right hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

And I just love that Psalm. I love the way it starts. Where shall I go from your spirit? Jonah thought he could go to the bottoms of the ocean.

[32 : 42] And he went down there and he said two things. He said, there's mountains under there. And that's significant because we didn't discover mountains in the ocean until about 350 years ago.

They should have read the Bible. But he also said this, I went down to the roots of the mountain, that's the seabed, and he said, you know what?

God was there. Of course, he was in a great fish to be protected, but he said God was there, even there. Paul puts it this way, not anything else, and by the way, this is the last separator.

The separator of creation. And he put it this way, not anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul adds a final item that cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. as it pertains to being separated, Paul adds this phrase in verse 39, not anything else in all creation.

[34 : 05] Well, what does that encompass? What does that encompass? Everything that exists in the universe.

The only exception is God himself. as the creator, God is apart from his creation. So, do we have to worry about that?

If God is for us and if God controls everything, he has made them absolutely nothing anywhere that will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. If he's for us, who can be against us?

Now, remember, Paul wrote these inspired words by the Holy Spirit. These are God's words that we're receiving here.

The Holy Spirit told him to say this. He was persuaded, convinced of these things. Those are God's words. So, we've ended up with an exhaustive list of the things that will not and cannot separate us from God in Christ.

[35 : 11] I want to give it to you one more time. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, death, life, angels, demons, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, anything in creation.

Suppose, though, we can't memorize very well, and I can't. I can't. So, can we come up with a short list of these things? And if we can, how can we express it?

We can do it this way. Nothing in life can separate us from God. Nothing in death can separate us from God.

Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing in life, nothing in death, nothing in all creation.

I have many friends, and they're good friends, and many of them are brothers in Christ, that cannot bring themselves to believe this truth.

[36 : 32] and I ask them why. And they say, well, I'm afraid it's a license to sin for many. And maybe it is, and they're going to have to deal with the Lord with that.

But I tell them this, if you find something left off of this list that can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and I'm talking to those who believe in Christ, committed your life to Him, if you can find something that can separate you, build an altar to it, and bow down and worship it.

Why? Because you will have found something greater and more powerful than God Himself. But don't waste your time. Don't waste your time.

That something does not exist. It's not out there. And aren't we glad that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God to love that love! a love that a love