

“Bringing It Home!”

An atheist asked his Christian friend, “What’s so great about heaven?” “Well,” he said, “I don’t know where to start, since everything’s great about heaven. It’s beautiful, to begin with. Streets of gold and pearly gates. Takes your breath away. And there won’t be any hospitals or morgues there because we’ll be done getting sick and dying. You also get to be reunited with folks who’ve died, like your parents and grandparents and old friends. I can’t wait for that. And of course, there’s the angels, and what’s there not to like about angels? There’s simply nothing but beauty and goodness and happiness in heaven.”

The atheist mulled this over for a few seconds and said, “You know, that does all sound great. In fact, for one important reason, it’s just the place I’d like to be.”

The Christian, surprised, asked, “Really? Why’s that?”

The atheist said, “You didn’t mention Jesus Christ. Now that’s my kind of heaven.”

If the Apostle Paul were alive, I think he would totally be offended by that joke. And I think he would also be offended if we weren’t offended by it. Any mention of what Jesus actually brings to God’s people a part from his actual presence, in this life and the next, is dangerous theology. Jesus isn’t some kind of divine tool people can manipulate in order to get them to a better version of where they are now. He’s the Christ—the promised Savior of the world. And he has placed himself front and center in each of our lives. Paul knew this and he desperately wanted all who heard his letter to the Romans to know it too.

So as we wrap up our Sermon Series today on Romans Chapter 8, we conclude with the final verses of this great chapter. And these verses are really something. Because they assure and announce one of the finest and most profound expressions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just the good news of a promise of a better life. But the good news that Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection, and exaltation at God’s right hand guarantees

our victory over **anything** and **everything** that would separate us from his love. So get ready for some front and center Jesus. Because in these last few verses, we hear Paul “bringing it home.” And he starts with a question.

“What then shall we say to these things?” (these things are **all** the wonderful promises he has shared so far). **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** In other words, what should our reaction be to all these wonderful proclamations? Fear? Dread? Uncertainty? No! **“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?”** It’s as if Paul is saying, “Are you kidding my fellow brother or sister in Christ?” “This is how “for you” God is that he would turn his back on his own son to have you.” Be comforted! Rejoice! Live in this certainty!

Paul continues. **“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?”** As we heard last week, you’re the elect. God adopted you as his child at the font. Who has the power to bring any charge against you? Who can say, “well, I know your secrets. I know the stuff you’ve done and you better watch out.” **Who can say that?** No one! Why? **“It is God who justifies.”** And if God has justified you, then it’s impossible for anyone to make you guilty before his throne. **Of course all of have reason to stand accused and condemned, right?** I mean, raise your hand if your life is free from condemnation ? I don’t see any hands. But it all comes up short before the throne of God, because through faith, we are in Christ. Paul goes on. **“Who is to condemn?”** Answer: **“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.”** I mean, Paul just keeps on with layer after layer of good news here. **Do you think there’s any chance that you can be condemned when Christ is the one who died—more than that who was raised—who is at the right hand of God and who is actually interceding for you at this very moment?** Do you think that there’s any possibility, that if you are in him, through faith, that you can be condemned? No way!

Paul goes on. **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”** Paul basically brings out every possible category of problem that the world can

throw out at us. Even more, when these things actually happen in our lives, it might make us feel like the love of God is pretty distant. Think about this! I mean, what would make us feel like God doesn't love us—that he checked out of our lives? **Tribulation—like real suffering and misery. Distress—like pain, heartache and agony. Persecution—like abuse or discrimination.** Famine. Being stripped down naked. Danger. The sword—like being literally killed. You might think, “Man, God’s really bailed out.” “That I feel really far from his love.” Paul is saying that none of that separates us. It might hurt. It might be tremendously challenging. It might be seem like everything is **not** OK. But none of this means that God has stopped loving us, or somehow separates us from his love. It’s simply not true.

And this is Paul’s answer in verse 37 and it’s assertive. **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** How can this be? How can people who go through the mess of this life be conquerors? In Paul’s context you had Christians who were being ripped apart by lions in the Colosseum. **There were people being tortured and burned alive.** How is this a conqueror? Even in our present day, we have people of faith who have terrible lives filled with tribulation, distress, persecution, and even more terrible deaths. **Even you and me look like less than winners in everyday life don’t we?** But whatever our lives look like on the outside, we are more than conquerors, my friends. Not because of our own actions, but only through Christ who loved us. You see, the ultimate enemy is death. And Jesus conquered death by dying. And when we die, this is where death is defeated for us. Because Christ’s death wasn’t permanent. He was raised to new life, which will be the same for all with faith in him.

And just when the news seems good enough—like we can be done here because we’ve heard so much about the constant and eternal love God has for us in Jesus, Paul wraps this whole thing up with this amazing, almost euphoric praise. **“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, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Neither death nor life. You’re death can’t separate you from the love of God. In fact, that’s where you’re going to fully find the eternal love of God.

That's good news. But there's also good news in the fact that you're life can't separate you from the love of God. **I really cherish this, because if you're like me, then there seems to be plenty in my life that feels like it should separate me from God. And apart from my faith in Christ and the life that faith leads me to lead, it would.** But by God's grace, nothing can. No demons. No things present. No things to come. Nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So there you have it. This great chapter that begins with the declaration that there is now no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus ends with the assurance that nothing in creation will be able to separate us from his love. **The next time you feel like this isn't true. The next time you catch yourself fighting the very God who claimed you as his own or getting ticked at him because things aren't so great in your life.** The next time you start to distance yourself from the very God who created and redeemed you, I encourage you to open your Bibles and read Romans chapter 8. Read these 39 verses. **Hear again the great promises that we are freed from sin and death through the work of Christ. That the Holy Spirit dwells within us and pleads to God the Father on our behalf. That the promise of a resurrected body, in the new creation, under Christ the King's rule, ultimately points to the fact that all things work together for good.** That God has predestined us to be his own. That because God is for us, no one can be against us. Highlight these verses. Memorize them. Talk about them with your family and friends. Because in this great chapter—an anchor of our faith— Christ puts himself front and center where he belongs. Because he is Lord. **Amen.**