

Romans Chapter 8 v 32 - 39

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 August 2017

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Turn me down. Okay, is that better? Lovely to see you, lovely to welcome all of you this morning, particularly those who are on holiday with us here, those who are various families who are back visiting relatives, and if you're here for the very first time, we especially want to welcome you and trust that together we might be able to know God's nearness and his blessing.

And that we might be able to worship him and praise him. Now, the verse on the screen behind me is taken from John chapter 20, after Jesus had risen from the dead, and he appeared to his disciples, and one disciple particularly wasn't there the first time Jesus appeared, that was Thomas.

And Thomas said, I won't believe, I won't believe unless I can see where Jesus was crucified, in his hands, in his feet, in his side. And Jesus appeared another time, and Thomas was there.

And Jesus went directly to Thomas and spoke to him, and this is the response that Thomas had, my Lord and my God. All disbelief, all disbelief, all doubt, was gone. He knew that Jesus was not just, wasn't dead, but more than that, that he was the Lord and God.

And he was my Lord, my God. And as Christians, that's exactly what it means to be a Christian. It means to say, Jesus, you are my Lord and my God, and you died for me, and you rose again for me, and thank you for giving me life.

[1 : 4 1] So we're going to stand and sing together our first hymn, Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through creation. It's going to come up on the screen behind me, so please stand as the music begins.

Pray, let us all pray. Jesus is Lord. It's an amazing and wonderful truth that we, as your children, O Lord our God, gladly declare and proclaim.

And we say with Thomas of old, Jesus is my Lord and my God. You are not just a God, or even the God, but you are my God, our God.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, you taught us to pray. Our Father is something very, very personal. When we draw near to you this morning, O Lord our God, we are coming to one who is known to us, one who is not a stranger to us.

To many people, O Lord our God, you are a stranger. You are distant to them and far from them, but that's only because, O Lord, that's what they choose. That's what they want.

[2 : 5 9] They do not want to draw near to you. For as we've been singing and reminding ourselves, that the Lord Jesus, your Son, has made the way for us to run into your arms. Jesus has come to take away the barrier of our sin.

To remove those fears and doubts. To remove those blockages, as it were, in our minds and hearts. That we can run and come to you because you came to us.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are Lord of heaven and earth. You are the Son of God and yet you came to us when you were born as our baby in Bethlehem. You came to us when we were still in our sin and still ignorant and in darkness.

You came to us and you lived amongst us and you endured and felt what it is to really live our human life. And, Lord, we thank you that you came to us because you came to die on a cross.

You came to deal with that terrifying and awful judgment that hangs over us. The judgment that our sins deserve. The judgment that our sins cry out for.

[4 : 03] The justice, Lord, that would mean that we are punished eternally and separated eternally from God. You came and bore all that pain and all that punishment and all that judgment upon yourself at the cross.

For us, you who did no sin, you who did no wrong. You did it out of love for us that we might be forgiven and pardoned and cleansed. That we might be able to know that we are right with God.

That we have peace with God. That we are loved of God. We thank you that indeed you did rise again, proving that you are the Son of God. Proving that you have paid the price.

Proving that you are the Lord in whom we must put our faith and trust. We thank you that, Lord Jesus, you are the one who rules and reigns. And the one who is coming again.

What a wonderful day it will be for those who put their faith and trust in you. What a homecoming. What a delight to see you and to be welcomed into your presence for eternity.

[5 : 06] But, oh, Lord, we can't begin to imagine the grief and the sorrow and the heartache and the frustration for those who have rejected you. On that day when you come, when they realize what fools they've been.

When they realize just how stupid and arrogant and proud they've been. Oh, Lord, we were once like that too, but you softened our hearts. And you opened our blind eyes.

Do that again, we pray. Even this morning we ask that each of us may truly be able to say, by the end of our time together, Jesus, my Lord and my God.

For we ask these things, our God, in his name. Amen. Well, again, a welcome to all of you here and particularly those who are visiting us.

Now, last month we had one of our quarterly members meetings. Now, as a church we meet four times a year as church members. And in that meeting we seek together to know God's will and mind for the church.

[6 : 08] We have those who serve the church as elders and those who serve as church officers. But ultimately as a church it is together that we seek God's will and together that we work together for his purposes.

Now, in that members meeting we had a great joy of welcoming or accepting three people into membership. I was going to say three new people into membership, but they're not new. Some of them have been around a long time.

And it was a great joy to have, and in a moment or two, not just yet, in a moment or two, I'm going to ask those three people to come to the front and they're going to receive the right hand of fellowship, which means basically I'm going to say welcome and we're going to pray for them as well.

But perhaps some of us are thinking, well, what is membership about? I'm a Christian. Should I be a member of this church? And I just want to draw your attention just to a few verses in the Bible and just very briefly talk about who is membership for.

Okay, who is membership for? And it's taken from Ephesians chapter 4. Just listen to the, this is Paul, he's been teaching about the church and about how Jesus has given gifts to the church, people to serve the church in particular ways, and the purpose of the church is to be built up.

[7 : 24] And then he says this, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head that is Christ.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

And he's using that picture of the church as being like a human body. Jesus is the head, but the body, the hands, the feet, and the arms, the legs, the eyes, and all those sort of things are part of the church, members of the church, people in the church.

So the first thing that's absolutely essential, and the one thing that as a church and all evangelical churches hold to, is that a church member must be somebody who is joined to Jesus, somebody who's put their faith and trust in him, and acknowledges him as the head of their lives, the ruler of their lives, and they've come to become one with him, united with him by faith.

But also to be a member of the church, it means recognizing that I am joined to all other believers in my local church, that they are one with me as well. Notice that, he says, the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament.

[8 : 40] So a Christian is not an individualist, not somebody who says it's me, it's ours. So I was praying before, Jesus taught us to pray our Father, not just my Father.

We belong together as Christians, that's why God has created churches and put us together in churches, and membership is expressing our unity and oneness together. Also, to be a member means that I want to grow as a Christian.

Notice up there, each supporting ligament grows. We are to be those who come to church, and we are part of a local church, because I want to grow as a Christian, I want to grow in my faith, I want to grow in my understanding of the things of God, I want to grow in my service.

I want to grow, and I want to know what it is that God wants me to do, and what is part of his purpose for my life. Being part of a church is that. And really, that's so important.

In fact, if we are not part of our local church as Christians, often we will not grow. And we know, sadly, that when we aren't part of a church, even if we have faith in Jesus, having faith in Christ is what makes us a Christian, not going to church, but going to church makes us grow as a Christian, strengthens and helps us.

[9 : 50] It's for our blessing and good that we are to be in membership together. And then the last thing here, which is important and essential, becoming a member is saying, I want to grow Christ's church.

I want the church to be built up in love. And notice that's what Jesus says. I don't necessarily want to be built up with lots more money, because that's not about it. It's not about being a member is, you must give this amount of money, and you must do that.

But rather, it's growing and building itself up in love, as each part does its work. So becoming a member is saying, I want to be part of this church, to be built up myself, and to build up others and cause them to grow.

Now, if those things are true of you, then I would encourage you to be a church member, to speak to me, or to Barry, or to Frederick, or to somebody else about being a church member. If that's what your heart is, if that's where you are with this local church, then we'd really encourage you to really seriously think and pray about what God wants.

Now, so I'm going to invite Elaine, Elaine Kemp, and Helen Leach. You better start walking, Elaine. That's why I gave set to you first. And Moira Suggott, to come to the front.

[11 : 03] They're all people who just love being at the front of the church. They like to be looked at. And all I'm going to do is, I'm going to, as I said before, give them the right-handed fellowship, which is just to say, welcome, inter-membership.

No, you're fine there. You stay there, and I can turn there. So, Elaine, lovely. Welcome. Thank you. In the name of the Lord. Thank you so much. Inter-membership. It's real joy. Helen, welcome. In the name of the Lord, inter-church membership.

Welcome, Moira, inter-church membership. It's lovely to have you with us. It really is. Okay. Now I'm going to pray for them. I'm going to pray for them. So let's all pray for these dear ladies together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your church. We thank you that you, Lord Jesus, are the head of your church. Not just this local church, but, Lord, your church, universal around the world.

Lord, we thank you that we are united with Christians through you in every part of this globe, in every part of this world. Whatever their race, whatever their color, whatever their language, we thank you, Lord, for that.

[12 : 10] But we thank you for the local church. We thank you for your goodness to this local church here in Whitby. Thank you for blessing us and encouraging us and helping us and keeping us going all these years.

And we thank you, too, Lord, that we are able to join together in membership. Not because we're better than anybody else, but because, Lord, you've put in our hearts a desire to be united and to serve and to work.

We do pray, Lord, for these dear friends of ours, because that's what they've become and that's who they are. These dear friends of ours and these dear sisters to us in Christ. We pray that you would help them to grow and be strengthened and built up in their faith.

And we pray that, Lord, as a church, we may support them and love them and help them and be there for them. And we pray, too, for them, for the gifts that you've given them. We pray, Lord, that they would have opportunity to use those gifts to encourage and to serve and to build up your church here, too.

Richly bless them, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you very much. We're going to read together now from our Bibles.

[13 : 17] And if you'd like to turn with me to Romans and chapter 8. Romans and chapter 8. And if you have one of the church Bibles, one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1135.

Page 1135. And we're going to start at verse 14 and read to the end of the chapter. We've been looking at parts of this chapter for the last couple of weeks.

And we're going to do that again, particularly verse 31 following today. But we're going to pick up from verse 14. So Romans chapter 8, verse 14.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again.

Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

[14 : 24] Now if we are children, then we are heirs. Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. If indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope. That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

[15 : 37] In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say in response 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, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

[16 : 57] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it's written, for your sake we face death all day long.

We're considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Please would you turn back to Romans in chapter 8, that passage that we read earlier on, particularly we're going to look at verses 31 and following.

I wonder when was the last time you actually read through all the documents that were given to you when you renewed your car insurance or your house insurance. You do it maybe online or you do it on the phone and then you get this great bundle of information with this book which is full of pages of writing.

A lot of it are very small as well. And you're expected to read it all and I can pretty much guarantee none of us ever do because we just take it for granted that we are pretty much aware of what's going on.

[18 : 31] And of course, the reason that we have all these reams of paper is that there is all the exemptions to the insurance. So in case something happens, if there's exemptions which will cover the insurer so that they won't have to pay you anything, it's sort of strange and macabre things that may possibly happen, but probably won't happen, that will nullify your insurance policy and mean you don't get any money paid out for your loss.

When we read Romans in chapter 8, particularly these verses 31 and following, we find that God is doing exactly the opposite to the insurance companies.

He is laying out not a list of exemptions to his promises, but he's listing all the things that cannot prevent him from loving us.

He's listing all the things that can never stop him from being for us. And in very large print, because God makes plain so that all of us can read it for ourselves, all of us can see his covenant.

That's his personal agreement to do us good, his binding promise to all those who put their faith and trust in him. Here we have set before us God's wonderful assurance.

[19 : 51] Now the last two Sundays, as I said before, we've been spending our time thinking particularly about verse 31 of Romans 8, where Paul in response, or rather questions and asks these questions, what then shall we say in response to these things?

The things he's been talking about, about God's salvation towards us in choosing and saving us and sending his spirit into our hearts and so on. And his response is, if God is for us, in other words, since God is for us, therefore because God is for us, who can be against us?

It's a rhetorical question. In other words, no one can be against us. If God is for us, no one's greater than God, stronger than God, mighty than God, bigger than God, wiser than God.

And we've been unpacking that phrase, encouraging ourselves in our faith, that when we trust in God, he is for us, come, if I can use the phrase, hell or high water. Nothing can ever remove his love from us.

And that's what he wants us to know. He wants us as believers in him to have that confidence and assurance. God is for us means he's rooting for us. He's on our side.

[21 : 06] He's constantly planning and working only to do us good. And we have that plainly in verse 28. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, being called according to his purpose.

We saw last week about how the evidence, the proof, the solid historical evidence that God is for us is seen, of course, in the life of Jesus Christ.

Verse 32 here, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. And we looked at episodes in the life of the Lord Jesus and the sort of people that Jesus was for and loved and worked in their lives.

And we saw that whatever our view of ourselves may be, we cannot be disqualified from Jesus' love for us. The promise of God does not change however we may feel or think, no matter what we have done or who we are.

So this morning I want to conclude this sort of mini-series, this three-week mini-series, by moving on as to how Paul expands verse 31, how he enlarges it for us, especially in verses 35 and following, where he brings another question.

[22 : 22] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Again, it's another rhetorical question. The answer is no one. No one can separate us from the love of Christ. But who can?

And he uses that phrase to mean exactly the same as God is for us. Because God is for us is proven in the love of Christ for us, in the life of Christ.

God is for us because he loves us. And God's love for us means that he's for us. It motivates him. There is nothing else to motivate God to be for you and me than his love for us in Christ.

There's nothing that we can do to make him for us, nothing that we can give to make him for us. It is all because of his love for us, his unconditional, wonderful, endless love.

Only if we can be separated from God's love, then will God stop being for us. Now, as Christians, these things we know. We put our faith in.

[23 : 28] We believe. The trouble is that for some of us as Christians and for all of us at some time or some moment, there are times when we are afraid of being separated from the love of God or we feel as if perhaps God has removed his love from us.

There's nothing more terrifying, there's nothing more awful for the believer than the thought of being separated from the love of God. Even King David in the Old Testament, when he sinned against God and he knew that it was wrong, he prayed this sort of prayer in Psalm 51.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. He was so anxious, in that sense, fearful. The fear of losing God's love or the fear of forfeiting that salvation, of not reaching heaven, is a very real fear for many Christians, many real believers.

God is for me now, but what about the years ahead as I get older, as my change and my mind and my body change?

Perhaps I'll lose my faith. Maybe I'll fall into a terrible sin that I may never get to heaven. These are real fears, real concerns.

[24 : 50] Perhaps I echo something of your own heart as well. The confidence that some Christians have that they will get to heaven, that they will not be lost, that they shall enter into the joy of Christ, is not a comfort that every believer enjoys and not all the time.

But I would say to you, dear friends, that's God's desire, that we have such assurance. God wants us to be assured that he is for us. He wants us to be absolutely convinced that his love for us will never be taken away.

It's certainly what Paul had in his heart. For there in verse 38, he says, for I am convinced. Or as some of the older translations, I am persuaded.

I'm certain. I'm confident. But notice how he uses that phrase. I am convinced. In other words, I've been convinced. I've been persuaded. It's not how I always thought.

Somebody or something convinced me. Something or somebody persuaded me of this truth, of this reality. He needed convincing that nothing could separate him from God's love.

[25 : 57] He needed something to assure him, to give him that confidence. And therefore, dear friends, this morning, if you're sitting here and you haven't got that assurance and confidence that you are on the road to heaven and that nothing will keep you from reaching that place, if you're sitting here this morning and you lack that assurance that you are loved of God and that love can never deviate or lessen or change, or you're somebody here this morning and say, I don't know whether God is really for me because of what I'm going through or experiencing.

It seems as if, well, to me that God may even be against me. Let me encourage you, dear friends, to take the same mind as Paul. Be willing to be convinced. Be willing to be persuaded.

Be open, and in one sense, prayerfully in your heart, be able to say to God, Lord, I really want to know that I know that I know that you are for me and that you love me.

And so I want to look at the argument that Paul puts here to the readers. The argument, which comes, I believe, in two parts for us to be certain that we shall never be separated from the love of Christ.

First of all, in verses 35 to 37, then later on 38 and 39. So 35 begins with that question, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[27 : 25] And he lists, shall trouble, or hardship, persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword. And when we began to look at this verse and we began to realize these Christians were in Rome, I know that sounds pretty obvious because it's a letter to the Romans, the Christians in Rome.

Rome it was, of course, this is around about AD 60 or so, the center of the Roman Empire, which counted Caesar as a god, a living god.

it was determined to wipe out and get rid of Christians and it did that for nearly 300 years, attempted to destroy Christianity until at last it decided if you can't beat them, join them and it made Christianity the Roman religion.

But at that time, these Christians were up against it. There was a real possibility that they would have hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword.

You see, it was essential if you were in the Roman Empire that every citizen regularly made a public profession before others saying, Caesar is lord.

[28 : 41] In other words, Caesar is my lord, my god, the ruler of all my life and also to offer some incense to Caesar as an act of worship to him. If you refused to do that, then that was counted as treason, as a treacherous act and it was punishable by law which could result in your execution.

Now, these Christians could not say Caesar is lord because as we've been thinking all the way through this morning, their declaration and confession was Jesus is lord. And so for them, these believers here as they knew that this was what they faced, no doubt, in their own hearts and minds, things were going on.

Will I cave in under the pressure and will I deny Jesus as my lord to save my skin? And if I do that, will I forfeit my salvation and lose my hope of heaven?

In response to these fears, these fears of apostasy, which means to deny the faith and to give up the faith, Paul says two things. First of all, he reminds them in verse 36 that suffering for Jesus has always been part of a believer's life.

That all through history, all through time, those who believed and trusted in God have been persecuted, have suffered for his name's sake. So he quotes from Psalm 44.

[30 : 05] For your sake, we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. For your sake, God. In every age, trusting God means opposition from the people of the world.

Trusting God means going against the flow, going against the populace, going against the majority. Trusting God has always been to say, I'm going to go in the opposite direction to the rest of humanity, or at least the majority of them.

Suffering persecution is not evidence that we are separated from God's love, nor that he is no longer for us. Jesus made it very plain to his disciples that if they followed him and trusted in him that they would be treated as he was treated.

John chapter 15. Remember the words I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. What they did to Jesus, they'll do to the Christian because being a Christian means to be like Jesus, to be like him, to live his life.

Did they persecute him because he beat people up, because he robbed them, because he told lies about them, because, no, they turned against him and they killed him because he loved people, because he forgave, because he was gracious, because he was good, because he was righteous, because he stood against what was wrong.

[31 : 36] A Christian is someone whose life is to be lived in that same way. And if we do that, then those who hate will hate. That's why it's so important.

Let me say this to you, those of you who are not Christians here this morning, it's so very important that you weigh up the cost of following Jesus. Following Jesus is not some simple decision that says, I want to go to heaven and therefore, yes, I'm going to say, Jesus, come into my life.

Following Jesus means I'm willing to suffer for his name's sake. I'm willing to pay the price it's going to cost me with my family, my relationships and my friends.

I'm going to make him number one, whatever the cost is. Weigh up the price. I urge you to come to faith in Christ, I urge you to trust him, but there's a price to be paid.

Unless you're willing to pay that price, then you shall never be able to follow him. But he'll give you the grace, as we shall see. For the next thing that Paul says, which after that gloomy in one sense introduction, shall with trouble or nakedness, or as it says, we face death all day long, oh, it's a gloomy picture.

[32 : 53] What is his response? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. The believer who is despised, the believer who is oppressed and crushed and persecuted doesn't go under.

The believer who trusts in God isn't destroyed in his faith by these things. But neither, says Paul, do you just about manage to scrape through by the skin of your teeth.

Being a Christian is not simply hanging on with your fingertips, hoping that you'll manage to make it just about getting through each day. No, he says you're more than conquerors. In these troubles, in these persecutions, in these difficulties, which seem to be so great and fearful at a distance, actually the Christian in the midst of them is a conqueror, is a victor, is triumphant.

Is that because Christians are tougher than other people? Is it because they're more resilient? Is it because they're more stubborn and hard-headed? Some are. No, it's because he loves us.

Notice that. We are more than conquerors, not full stop. We are more than conquerors through him who loves us, who loved us. It is the love of Christ within us. It is the love of Christ that we know is certain, is what enables us to be conquerors and victors.

[34 : 18] Just listen to this. This is taken from the biography of a man called Richard Wurmbrand. Richard Wurmbrand was a pastor in Romania during the time of the communist rule there, and he was in prison for a very, very long time.

And in prison, he was tortured, and lots of other horrible things happened to him, eventually released. This is part of what he says. This is what he wrote. It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners, in other words, to tell them about Jesus.

It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. So what was his response? A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching.

So he accepted their terms. It was a deal. We preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching, they were happy beating us, so everyone was happy.

Isn't that incredible? Isn't that incredible? How on earth could he do that? How on earth could he still preach Jesus and have that attitude, everybody's happy?

[35 : 25] God's love for God? If the love of God was not real, if the love of God that filled his heart and his life and the assurance that God was for him, he couldn't do that.

It would be impossible. There's no other explanation except that the love of Christ in the heart of the believer is powerful. The second part of Paul's argument for convincing us that God is for us and that we cannot be separated from the love of Christ is verses 38 and 39.

Now, most of us, if not all of us, will never have to suffer as Richard Vermeer did. And as many other Christians do around the world today, let me assure you that, that there are Christians today in prison, there are Christians today who will be put to death, there are Christians today who are being tortured only because they trust in Jesus.

No other reason. And they are hated because of that. Please pray for them. We must do. We must seek to support them whenever we can. But there are probably none of us here who need to fear that, that persecution and that level.

But there are other things that we may fear that will rob us of the love of God or prevent us from knowing the love of God or keep us from carrying on in the Christian life to the very end.

[36 : 48] And so Paul gives us another list. He says, I'm convinced we looked at that, persuaded, that. And then he gives us these couplets, these pairs, four pairs which go together and a couple of extra things as well.

So let's look at them briefly together. First of all, he says, I'm convinced that neither death nor life. That's a strange order, isn't it? When we speak, we say life and death. He says, death nor life.

Death is the greatest enemy. He puts it at the very top, at the very beginning. It's the one big thing that we all face and we all fear. Death.

Not just our death, maybe the death of those that we love, experiencing mourning. We feel very much death.

Surely death can cut us, can destroy us and creep us from God's love. But you see, death has been dealt with by Jesus in the cross. Death has been destroyed.

[37 : 53] Death has been conquered. Here's what Paul writes to Timothy, our Saviour Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death. That doesn't mean to say that death doesn't exist or death's just a figment of our imagination.

It means that he's destroyed the power of death. The power of death to take away life. The power of death to separate from God. The power of death to be feared.

Later on in 1 Corinthians, he writes about the wonderful victory that Christ has won through his resurrection. And he speaks about how death has lost its sting, its bite for the believer.

Because the believer, death is that entrance into life, everlasting life in the very presence of God. Death cannot sever us from God's love because God is stronger and mighty than death.

And if he's stronger than death, then he's stronger than life as well. Whatever life throws up at us, whatever life we've lived and whatever life comes against us, that cannot separate us from the love of God either.

[38 : 53] Because Jesus conquered death and lives forevermore. As we thought just the other week, he is at the Father's right hand. He ever lives to intercede for us, ever lives to bless us and do us good.

Are you afraid of death? Then, dear Christian, you need not be afraid of death. Christ has conquered death. He's destroyed death for the believer. And then he says, neither angels nor demons.

Now, we may feel that's quite strange, but he's talking about the very real forces in the world. They're not just the forces of the nuclear arms and the powerful governments.

There are spiritual forces. There is a spiritual battle in this world. We don't see it with our eyes per se, but we know it goes on around about us. We see evil and wickedness.

Spiritual forces, angels and demons, and these spiritual forces cannot separate us from Christ's love. Angels, particularly because angels were created by God to do his people good.

[40 : 00] He's part of a psalm, Psalm 91. For God will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. We don't see them all around about us. Sometimes they pop up in the Old Testament particularly and the New, special times.

God's angels work for the good of God's people. What about demons? They were those angels who sided with the devil when he turned away and rebelled against God.

And they are, no doubt, in this world. No doubt, behind some of the evil atrocities that we see going on in the world today, the devil is at work. It's a spiritual work.

People's hearts are turned to terrible evil. How can they be turned to such terrible evil? There's a spiritual work. In your heart and mind, dear friends, there's a spiritual work.

Either our hearts are being led and controlled and guided by God, the Holy Spirit, as Paul speaks about earlier here, or as our hearts are open to the influence and the direction of Satan, the devil.

[41 : 06] He will be the one who tells us, don't believe these things. He'll be the one who tells us, live for yourself. He'll be the one that tells us that getting more and more money is good and satisfying and pleasing.

He's a liar. Jesus tells us. But neither the devil nor his forces can separate us from the love of Christ, because when Christ went to the cross, he not only destroyed death, but he actually dealt a fatal blow against Satan and all of his forces.

Here's what Colossians 2 says. Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

When we look at the cross, we often see a pitiful figure. That's why I have to say crucifixes are not good. They show a pitiful figure upon the cross. A man's imagination of what Jesus died on the cross is like.

But actually the Bible tells us that on the cross, Jesus was victorious and triumphant. Christ cries out with power, it's finished, it's done, it's accomplished. We're in a spiritual battle as Christians, but dear friends, we're on the winning side, or rather we're on the winner's side.

[42 : 21] Christ's side, God is for us, who can be against us? All the devil and all spiritual forces and all of those things. Now we're not to be foolish as Christians, and we're not to be foolish and think that the devil is somehow impotent or unimportant.

We're in a spiritual battle, Ephesians 6 tells us that. But the devil cannot take from you, dear Christian, your salvation, cannot rob you of the love of God, cannot cause God to be against you.

Then his next pair is neither, sorry, present or the future. In other words, whatever is going on around you in your life today, the present, none of that can separate you from God's love.

Neither can what's around the corner which you cannot see. None of that can separate you from Christ's love. Why? How can I be so certain? How can the Bible be so certain? Because the person that we have put our faith in does not change with time.

In Hebrews, the writer speaks about Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. Yes, our lives change, our circumstances change and we change, but our faith is in a changeless, permanent, dependable Savior, Jesus.

[43 : 37] When you entrust yourself into his hands, when you entrust your life to him which is becoming a Christian, then you are placed in the hands of one who is not moved or rocked or shaken by anything in this world or anything in your life, but one who holds you and is for you and who loves you.

And that includes any powers there. Notice this is one of the extra little bits. Nor any powers. What does he mean by that? I think he means all authorities, all governments.

They were in the midst, as I say, of the Roman government, the Roman empire, the Roman power. But Jesus assured his disciples, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

So we need not fear South Korea. And we need not fear the USA. We need not fear Russia. We need not fear the government of the UK. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Nothing can stop him being for us. They can do all that they want. They cannot cease, remove that salvation that is ours in Christ.

[44 : 50] Next pair. Neither height nor depth. I'm going to apply that one more personally, perhaps, than the others. Individually.

No matter how high I get, that is, no matter how happy, how joyful, how excited I am about something, nor no matter how low, no matter how depressed I may get at any time, neither of these things can separate me from the love of Christ.

If you suffer with depression, if you suffer with those terrible black clouds of life, no matter how deep you may feel that you have sunk, the love of Christ is there.

And no matter how high, or how joyful, or how excited, or how good you may feel at any one time, the love of God for you is just the same as you were in the basement, as you are in the attic.

Height nor depth. Can't change him. He's there. Psalmist says in Psalm 139, if I go to the very ends of the earth, you are there. If I go to the very heights of the heaven, you are there. If I go to the very depths of the sea, you are there.

[46 : 09] I can't escape you. I can't get away from you. Because you've always got your hand upon me. Where are you, dear friends, in that scale?

And then finally, finally, dear friends, nor anything else in all crazy. Just to, as a caveat, just to make sure, if there's anything that you, that's not included in all these things, if you've got one of those really wild and vivid imaginations, that can think of something extraordinary happening, beyond the pale, then even that cannot separate you from the love of Christ.

There is absolutely nothing. Does he have to make it any plainer? Does he have to make it any clearer to you, dear Christian, that the love of Christ for you cannot, will not cease, cannot, will not be taken away, that you are his and his forever?

Paul was convinced persuaded, not because he was an apostle, not because he was a great Christian, not because of anything in himself, but because of the promises, the faithfulness, the character, and the goodness of God.

And he wasn't only convinced for himself, but he was convinced for all believers. And so I'll just close with these verses from Philippians 1, verse 6.

[47 : 34] Just listen to these verses. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And then he says this, being confident of this, that he, God, who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

let's pray together. it truly is amazing, O Lord, that you should love us with such a love that we don't deserve, we can't earn, and yet such a love that once given can never be taken, once poured into our hearts, can never be removed.

I thank you that you are not, like us, a fickle God, a flittering God, who goes from one thing to another, who can never make up his mind, who keeps one minute being loving and then another being hating certain and doubting.

Lord, we thank you that in this world of change and us changeless people, you are the same, constant. O Lord, we ask that again, as we've heard from your word, that you would grant to us that assurance, that you would convince us and persuade us, not only to put our faith and trust in you, but to know that when we have put our faith and trust in you, then nothing can remove us from your love, that you are God who is for us and who can be against us.

[49 : 33] Help us to walk in the light, the truth, and the power of your word in the week ahead, we ask, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all of time, today, tomorrow, forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.