

LOVE THAT WILL NOT GO AWAY

Romans 8:35-39

Intro: When we first moved into our present home, or shortly afterwards, there was a couple living in our neighborhood. The husband did a lot of traveling in his business, as I remember, much of it overseas. Quite suddenly his wife came down with cancer. I don't remember how long it was afterwards, but her husband left her, and she was left to die without the love of a husband. He could not face the future with a wife that had such a disease.

Many of you remember the story of the hymn writer, George Matheson. He was engaged to be married when it was discovered that he was going blind. The woman he was to marry broke the engagement because she did not want to be married to a blind man. It was then that he wrote that hymn which is #594 in our Hymnal,

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer fuller be.

On the other hand we often here of amazing stories of love – the love of a husband for his wife, or of a wife's love for her husband; the love of some parent for his child, or the love of some person who has stood by his friend in some special time of need. Military history gives us heroic instances where one soldier will risk his life, or actually give his life, in order to save a comrade.

But wherever we find outstanding illustrations of love, there is nothing that can begin to compare with the love that God has for His people, and this is the same love that our Lord manifested when He died for us. The Apostle Paul expressed this in Romans 5 as he was carefully explaining the great doctrine of justification by faith. I am referring to that wonderful passage beginning with verse 5 and going down through verse 11:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (or reconciliation) (Rom. 5:5-11).

This is without doubt the greatest truth that any man has ever heard. We were not “righteous,” and we certainly were not “good,” but we were “ungodly.” We were “sinners.” We were “enemies” of God and all that is holy and good and true in His sight. But in spite of everything that was against us, Christ died for us.

And one amazing fact about God’s love expressed in the coming and death of Christ, is that it was in God’s heart from eternity past. What the prophet Jeremiah was told to declare to the people of God in the Old Testament, applies just as much to those of us who are His people today:

The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee (Jer. 31:3).

The Lord in His omniscience chose the elect of Israel, and chose those of us who belong to Him today out of that everlasting love which He had in His heart for us. And if you think about that statement that the Lord made to Jeremiah about the love that He has for His people, if it is everlasting, and it is, then that means that it is like God, not having any starting point in time past, and not having any stopping point either in time or in eternity to come.

Now that is what the Apostle Paul reveled in as he wrote the book of Romans. It had to do with this question: The Lord has loved me in the past, and it was His love that brought me to salvation, *but will He always love me? Or is it possible that some time in the future He will stop loving you or me, because of something we have done, either by sin, or by some failure in a time of testing?* If there is, then I have a lot to worry about as far as my salvation is concerned – and so do you!

There are many ways that we could approach this subject to dispel any fears we might have of such a thing taking place, but I want to focus for the present on that marvelous declaration with which the Apostle Paul

concluded Romans 8.

Let me read the passage to you. (Read Rom. 8:35-39.)

Actually to get the full force of what he was saying we need to go back as far as the 24th verse where we see that our salvation, resting firmly on the love of God, involves the intercession of the Holy Spirit, the sovereign work of God in fulfilling His eternal purposes concerning us, and finally the intercession of Christ. Verse 31 seems to be a summary of what Paul was saying: *God, the Triune God, is for us, so who can successfully stand against us?*

We have in the five last verses of Romans 8,

- 1) A question in verses 35 and 36.
- 2) The answer in verse 37.
- 3) The resulting confidence of every believer in verses 38 and 39.

I. THE QUESTION (Rom. 8:35-36).

Paul was not speaking here about our love for Christ, but about Christ's love for us. Our love can fluctuate, and if we look at ourselves, we can find little ground for peace. It is Christ's love for us in which we find peace regarding our salvation.

The word "separate" is found in verse 35, and we will see it again in verse 39. It is the verb used by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:10, 11, and 15 in connection with divorce. So the implication here is: What can cause Christ to depart from us so that our relationship would be broken and He would love us no longer?

And then Paul mentioned several things which often perplex the people of God when they may have expected different experiences when they first were saved. I had a young lady who was a student of mine years ago at Multnomah tell me that she didn't think that she had had any real problems until she became a Christian.

"Tribulation" is really pressure, pressure that is caused by affliction of any kind. It may be in the circumstances of our lives, or some special trial that comes us.

"Distress" speaks of being in a narrow place where we don't know where to turn, and feel that we can't turn. It may be the result of some calamity.

“Persecution” can take on many forms, but it probably hurts the most when it comes from those who formerly have loved us – family problems.

— “Famine” is often the result of persecution when the Lord’s people go hungry because they have no food to eat.

“Nakedness” means not having proper clothing, but sometimes the Lord’s people have been disgraced by having their clothing taken away from them.

“Peril” points to dangers which often face the people of God – threats upon their lives, or just being in a position where all protection is removed.

The “sword” would speak of death itself.

And then Paul cited a verse from Psalm 44 – verse 22.

— Now fortunately our troubles do not always take on such extreme situations, but the Apostle Paul was citing the worst possible situations. Do these mean that we have grieved the Lord, and so He is punishing us. Or, to think of the worst possible meaning, are we to think that these are indications that the Lord does not love us anymore?

What is the answer? We have it in verse 37.

II. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION (Rom. 8:37).

What does it mean to be “more than conquerors”? It means that even though the opposition may be severe, yet God is using these trials and testings to cleanse us, to sanctify us, to make us stronger. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote Rom. 8:28.

Cf. also Heb. 12:1-13.

Look also at 1 Pet. 1:6-9; 4:12-14.

— And then 2 Tim. 3:10-4:5. Trouble often open doors of testimony that cannot be opened in any other way.

This let Paul to declare his strong confidence.

III. PAUL'S STRONG CONFIDENCE (Rom. 8:38-39).

“Persuaded” is a very powerful word. It meant that Paul was firmly and finally convinced concerning that which he was about to say.

With the words that Paul used in these two verses, he included everything that we could possibly encounter in the realm of angels, or of men. He included all the circumstances which could come upon us in this life.

The first is “death.” However it may come, and whenever it may come, it will not make a single difference as far as the love of God is concerned.

The second is “life” with all of its unknown. We don't know what a day may bring forth. We all receive blessings we did not expect, and likewise we have trials that we did not know that we were going to have.

People are talking a lot about “angels” today, but the only reliable source of information about them is what we have in the Word. There are elect angels, good angels, and there are fallen angels, demons, of who Satan is the greatest. We can't see them, but they cannot affect God's love for us.

“Principalities, nor powers” sometimes speak of demonic forces, but they can also apply to rulers upon the earth.

“Things present” – These are different for all of us.

“Things to come” – Here Paul was looking into the future which is veiled for all of us.

“Nor height, nor depth” is taken by most to survey the whole realm of the created universe. And Paul followed this with “any other creature.”

In all of these terms we see that he sought to be all-inclusive – all creatures, all of time, all of life and even death. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Concl: Paul's purpose here was to encourage the believers at Rome, and all other believers, that our salvation is secure, not because our love for the Lord will always be what it should be, but because God's love for us will always be the same. It cannot get any greater because it is already greater than our sins, greater than our needs, and greater than any future situation that can arise. His love secures our salvation. In this

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passage the Apostle Paul was soaring to the heights in his contemplation of God's love.

Of all of the wonders that we can ever see in this life, nothing surpasses the fact that God loves you and He loves me, loves us with an everlasting and unchanging love, a love which will not finally be satisfied until we are all home in heaven, conformed to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The love of God for us is the basis for our peace and for our joy.