

Romans 8:35-39. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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.

The Book of Romans:

The Basics of the Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: Inseparable

One night, a four-year-old girl named Sarah didn't want to go to bed because she was afraid of the dark. Her mother tried to soothe her, but Sarah wouldn't go to bed unless her mother was right there with her. When her mother finally turned off the lights, Sarah saw the moon shining outside her window. Gazing at the moonlight, Sarah asked her mom, "Will God put out his light and go to sleep now too?" Her mother replied, "No, God never goes to sleep." Upon hearing this Sarah responded, "Well, if God isn't going to go to sleep, there's no sense in both of us staying awake, is there?" ¹

I suppose that on Monday, when the moon blocks the sun for a few hours, some curious children might conclude that God has turned off his light, some might even reason that he has gone to bed, or is at least resting his eyes for a while as he takes a midday nap. However, we know that even then, God is still watching over us. God never sleeps. He watches over you constantly. He cares about you always. As his child, you are loved. At your baptism you are assured of this truth. God will watch over your comings and goings both now and forevermore. He will watch over and care for us, his children, each and every day, right up through the day when he takes us home to the eternal light of heaven. There we will be with him forever. In this gospel promise you are given peace that sustains you through every day and every night.

Last week we considered how we have been chosen by God, predestined for glory. As God's child, you are promised heaven and that brings wonderful assurances. We are children of God, sons and daughters of the king. Your room in God's mansion has been prepared and it is waiting and so is mine. What joyous perspective this gives to us! What tremendous hope and confidence we have as we look ahead, as we look forward, as we look up to the glories of heaven.

But what about when we look down and around at the life and the world around us? What about the daily troubles that we face? Sure, everything will be great when we get to heaven, but we are here now. There are certainly times in our lives when the problems of life come together in such a way that they seem to block out the sunshine of God's presence, to

¹ Lenz, Mark J. "God's Providence" Northwestern Publishing House: 1997.

the point, where we wonder what is going on? We cry out in disbelief that the events of the last few weeks could transpire under his watchful eye. In our weakness, we try to make sense of it all, and so we wonder, “Is God sleeping? Is he not watching?” When terrorists carry out attacks and cut short innocent lives in the name of a false god, we are puzzled and we wonder, “Where is the true God and why does he seem so far away?” When hatred and bigotry divide, when violence and the threat of violence brings with it fear and uncertainty; we may ask, “Where is God, where is his love?” When accidents and tragedies happen closer to home. When illness and disease cause so much trouble and disorder and discomfort, even citizens of heaven like you and me might mouth the question; “Where is God?”

As sinners living in a sinful world, this kind of inquiry is, unfortunately, not a unique phenomenon. The apostle Paul recognizes that this is the case; and upon God’s guidance we are provided with these words of much needed encouragement. Yes, the Lord, tells us that he will be with us. He tells us that we are his children, that he will bring safely through the troubles and trials of this life to our heavenly home. But this is something that needs to be gone over and revisited time and again, because of the nature of life. Troubles are going to come, and sometimes they are going to be intense, and sometimes troubles are going to come in a dark and massive heap that makes it hard to see or feel God’s love, and it’s in our human nature to interpret this as some sort of gap in God’s protection and care. But this is not the case. No matter what happens, God is always there. He has always been there. He will always be there to watch over and care for his people. As surely as the sun shines and the moon rotates around the earth, so constant and reliable, is God’s love for us, and nothing can change that, nothing can separate us from God’s love. As we consider this great and constant love of God we do it with the one-word description that is our theme for today: Inseparable. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Let’s back up and recall the progression of thought that is laid out for us in the book of Romans. Just a few verses ago Paul brought forth this wonderful gospel assurance: we are children of God. We share in his glory now and we will enjoy that glory in full when the Lord calls us home. But that doesn’t mean that we won’t face any trouble. Paul doesn’t give the Romans, or us, and assurance that things like trouble, hardship, persecution, or famine won’t happen. On the contrary, he assures us that they will happen, and he gives us that incredible reminder that all things will work out for the good of those who love him. But again, this is an assurance for the future, and so there is still a part of us that screams out with sinful impatience and selfish panic. What about now! Yes, it will eventually work out for good, but what about right now! What about the pain that I am feeling now! What about the frustration, the trouble that I’m wading in and drowning in now! Where are you Lord? Why are you so far off in helping me?

And God responds to our weakness with this kind of beautiful assurance that we are given again and again in His Holy Word. The LORD is near. The apostle Paul is very aware of the trials and troubles that life may bring. He faced his fair share of difficulties. He was also aware and sensitive to the persecution and daily hardship that the Christians in Roman may

have faced simply for being Christian. Thus, he encourages these Christians with the message of eternal glory, as well as the reassurance of God's loving providence. No matter what happens, God is always with his people. He does not forget about us. Day after day, night after night, his eye is on us. He, who is filled with loving kindness and compassion will care for us. Troubles will come, at times they will be many, at times they will even seem to be overwhelming, but with God at our side who can be against us. He will hold us up under trouble. He will strengthen us and bring us closer to him. He will care for us.

Paul makes several key statements to support this biblical teaching of God's providence and care. In the verses prior to this section he makes perhaps one of the clearest and most significant statement of them all: **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? (Romans 8:32)**. God will help us in all things. The God who loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son to save us, will help us endure and overcome all the of life obstacles. He will provide for our physical needs. He will provide for our spiritual needs. In death and in life, he will be there to help us. Through all the struggles and all the pains God will help his people. In fact, what does Paul say here. He assures us that we will not just make it through, we will not just overcome, we will be more than conquerors. In Christ, we are victorious. ³⁷ ***No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***

We look to Paul's words of absolute conviction and still we might harbor a shadow of doubt. We might wonder what made Paul so sure, so *convinced*. That's what he says, isn't it? I am convinced! ³⁸ ***For I am convinced...*** and then he rattles off a comprehensive list of anything that others might list as threats to the connection between a believer and the love of Christ. ³⁸ ***For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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.***

What made Paul so convinced? Paul knew this from experience. God in his love cares for us. God in his love takes care of us. Paul also knew this from the word of God. The God who miraculously took care of the Israelites as they wandered the desert is the God who cares for you. The God who kept Noah and his family safe, who sent the ravens to feed Elijah during a famine, who kept Jonah safe in the belly of the great fish, who preserved Job's life and preserved Job's faith and blessed him with more than he had before; this is the same God who loves you and cares for you. The God who rescued Paul from condemnation and brought him to faith and gave him the gift of eternal life is the same God who has given you the gift of eternal salvation in Christ Jesus.

When things in our personal lives go bad, we may not immediately wonder if God is sleeping or gone, but perhaps we may wonder if he is just too busy with more important things. Maybe we don't even call out to him in prayer. With our flawed human reasons, we think, He is just too busy. With all the things going on in the world, why would he care for me? He has too many other things to deal with. He has too many other things on his mind.

In our Gospel lesson for today we are shown the nature of our God; that in his compassion and great love for us, God is never too busy to care for those who need him. We know the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 - we probably know it well. But do you remember the context in which it happened. Jesus was grieving heavily. He was very distressed over the death of John the Baptist. In fact, we are told that Jesus plan was to go to a solitary place to mourn. But what happened instead, the crowds found him and followed him. Instead of recessing to a solitary place Jesus was surrounded by a large crowd, made up of roughly 5,000 men and additional women and children. And so, what did he do? Did he shoo them away or find a way to disappear from their sight? Was he too busy with other things, too overcome with his own problems that he had no time or energy left to spare these people? The Bible tells us, instead, that he looked upon them and had compassion on them. He went to them he healed their sick, he taught them about the message of salvation, and he even made sure that they were fed. Jesus was dealing with this great and heavy weight, he had plenty of other things on his schedule, he had other things on his mind, and yet he still took the time to care for these people. This is the nature of our God beautifully displayed in Christ Jesus. He cares for us. No matter what is going on in the world. No matter what is going on in your life, as a child of God his love for you is inseparable. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Dear, Christian, God is with you. He watches over you. He cares for you. Remember this at all times; and especially in times of hardship and trial, in times of sickness, and affliction, in times of difficulty, remember that your God is near. Cry out to him, be earnest, and honest as you present your requests to God. And yet always, always, remember that God is there. In our sinfulness, in our inability to understand the ways of God, we may have our fair share of questions and doubts but remember who your God is and call on him. Call on him with confidence as you recall that your God is mighty and powerful. That he is just and righteous and he is also love. Time after time we hear in the word that our God is abounding in love and faithfulness. He is just and righteous and holy, and he is also filled with lovingkindness. And although we do not deserve this type of relationship, by his grace in Christ Jesus, the Almighty God is our Father. In times of trouble and tragedy, as you struggle with the troubling reality of the world around us, as you deal with your own personal problems and issues, as you struggle to hold onto God in your weakness, know that the LORD holds you in his mighty hands. He is always near and he cares for you. Know that nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Nothing can pluck you from his hand. No matter how bad things get in your life, you have victory in Christ. Those who are in Christ are more than conquerors. And nothing, absolutely nothing can change or alter that eternal truth. No matter how the problems of this world try to block out the sunshine of God's love, know that nothing can separate the believer, the child of God, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is what it means that you and God's love are inseparable. Amen.