

Lent 1  
February 22, 2015

*"God's Love in Jesus Never Fails Us"*

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### ROMANS 8:31-38

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*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> 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? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? 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. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> 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.*

It is good to have someone stop by when you need help. This past week a teenager in Virginia told his mother to stop the car. He noticed an elderly man with a walker trying to shovel the snow that had been pushed up onto his driveway by a passing snowplow. Tommy Adams went over to the man, took his shovel and cleared out the snow blocking his driveway. The man told Tommy, "God bless you! The world needs more people like you." It is sure good to have someone there for you when you need help.

Jesus is always there for you. His love will never fail you whatever hardships and troubles may come your way. These words we read from Romans 8 assure us that nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let's take a closer look at these well known words from Romans 8 to appreciate even more that God's love in Jesus will never fail us. First we will look at the reason for this unfailing love and second we will see the reality of this unfailing love as it profoundly affects our lives.

#### **The reason for this unfailing love**

The reason for this unfailing love can be seen in these words, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? 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?" God's love for you in Christ is not anchored in the ups and downs of life or your ever changing feelings and emotions. It is anchored in the fact that your God did not spare his Son but gave him up for us all.

I have known people who have given up on God because of tragedies that have come into their lives. When people were dying in the bombing of London during WW2 someone said, "Either God doesn't care about us or if he does care he does not have the power to help us." When the space shuttle Challenger exploded, *Time* magazine showed a picture of the

tragic explosion with the caption underneath that read, "Where was God?" Where was God when twenty one Coptic Christians from Egypt were executed by Muslim terrorists?

No tragedy personal or national can ever overthrow the love that God has for you in Jesus his Son. God did not spare his Son. God gave him up for us all. The Greek word used here for giving him up has the thought of handing him over. I know it says that Jesus handed over Jesus to Jewish leaders, and the Jewish leaders handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, and Pontius Pilate handed Jesus over to his soldier to take Jesus to the cross. Ultimately it was our heavenly Father who handed Jesus over to be punished in our place. How powerful are the words of Isaiah 53 which tell us, "Yet, it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer."

In the book and the movie the *Hiding Place*, there is the scene where the Christians in the prison camp in Germany during WW2 were in a corner reading the Bible and praying. Cori and her sister Betsy had been imprisoned for protecting Jews in Holland. One of the woman prisoners, an agnostic, heckled them for reading the Bible with the words, "How can God love us if he allows such a terrible place as this to exist?" Betsy answered, "I don't know why such a place as this exists, but I do know that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." When you grasp the reality that God gave his Son to be punished for you, you know that even the worst tragedies of this life cannot alter that love.

In Isaiah 41 the Lord speaks to the nation of Israel and says, "Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you." Yes, God even loves worms, worms like you and me. In the Lenten hymn "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed" the original version of that hymn by Isaac Watts had the words, "Alas and did my Savior bleed and did my Sovereign die? Would he devote that sacred head, For such a worm as I?" Our God was willing to have his Son die for people who are like worms that feed on the rot and filth of sin.

This amazing love of God that rescues me when I am lost in sin also freely gives us all things. Think of how often you have gone to your heavenly Father in prayer this past week. Your God loves you so much he hears your prayers that are brought through Jesus and he answers them according to his will. He gives us everything we need not everything we want. Jesus said, "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" Such is the unfailing love that we have in our heavenly Father through Jesus.

So powerful is this unfailing love that no one can bring charges against you. "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? 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." Satan loves to bring charges against us. Can't you hear him say, "You are such a worm, such a rotten, stinking worm, that God could never love you." But then we can challenge him by saying, "You are not my judge. You cannot condemn me. Jesus is my judge. He is the one who will judge all people on the last day. He died for me. He became a worm on the cross for me, just for me so I can be judged sinless and pure and holy in his sight. Through Jesus I am justified and that means "declared not guilty."

Not only is Jesus your judge but he is also your defense attorney. "He is at the right

hand of God interceding for us." When Jesus was being nailed to the cross he prayed for his enemies with the words, "Father forgive them.." Satan screams and yells, "Throw the book at him. Throw the book at him. Condemn him to join me in hell for his sins." The dear Christian who knows Jesus' unfailing love says, quietly but confidently, "Yes, throw the book at me, throw the books at me, bring them all out, open them and see what has happened to all the things that were written in the books that could be held against me." The books are opened and every sin of my past life has been expunged from the record, and into the books has now been placed the record of Jesus' life lived for me. The books are now empty of my sin and full of Jesus' righteousness. Jesus pleads my case. He intercedes for me. Let me assure you if your judge and defense attorney are the same person and his name is Jesus, you have a good case going for you.

The reason for God's unfailing love in your life is not what you do, but what Jesus has done for you. Now let's use these words from Romans 8 to see how the reality of this unfailing love profoundly affects your everyday life.

### **The reality of this unfailing love**

"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 is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." The Christians who read this letter from the Apostle Paul were in very real danger of persecution from the Roman Empire. It would not be long before Emperor Nero unleashed his persecution of Christians and consider them to be like sheep for the slaughter. Even now some of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being put to death for their faith in Nigeria, Libya, Iraq and Syria.

Trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword cannot separate us from the love of Christ. When Paul and Silas were badly beaten for speaking about Jesus and thrown into prison, they sang hymns at midnight. When Christians were put to death under the Castro regime in Cuba they faced the firing squad with the words "Vive, Christo Rey!" Long live Christ the King. When Stephen was being stoned to death, he prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my Spirit." In the book *The Hiding Place* Cori Ten Boom writes, "There is no pit so deep that Christ is not deeper." We are more than conquerors through whom who loved us. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's." The Revelation says that we live and reign with Christ for a thousand years not in some future millennial kingdom as some would falsely teach, but here and now.

"For I am 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." People we love can be taken from us. Things we love can be taken from us. Even pets do not live forever. But God's love for us in Jesus never fails us.

Paul says, "I am convinced." We can say this because of what we have seen our God do in giving us his Son. We are convinced that nothing will separate us from his love. If I die I go to be with Jesus. If I live Jesus is with me. No devil in hell can take me away from my

God, my eternal God, the Alpha and Omega, who won the victory over temptation just for me. There is nothing facing me today or tomorrow or in the future that can separate me from the love of my Shepherd who said of his sheep, "No one will snatch them from my hand." Earthly powers may separate me from people I love or even sever my head from my body but they cannot sever me from Christ. There is nothing in the heights of heaven or the depths of the earth, or anything else in all creation that will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You never know when someone will come into your life to help you when you are in trouble as Tommy Adam helped the elderly man shovel his snow. People can be there for you and they can fail you. You always know that God's love will be there for you, because the reality of this love is based on God's Son giving his life for us. Nothing, nothing, nothing will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.