

## Nothing Shall Separate Us

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Unshakeable: Romans / Romans 8:31-39

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10 Years. That's how long it took me to get my M. Div degree from Heritage.

And that's because I didn't take the traditional route through seminary. I wasn't a full-time student with nothing to do but study. I was working full time. Then pastoring full time. All while Ally and I were raising a family. And trying to squeeze in coursework somewhere in between all of that.

And there were moments — more than I'd like to admit — where I genuinely wondered if I was ever going to finish.

I remember one particular day sitting down and doing the math. Looking at how far I'd come. Looking at how far I still had to go. And I discovered something that in the moment felt like a lifeline.

I didn't have enough credits for my M.Div. But I had enough for the degree just below it.

And something in me said — you know what? That's enough. That's still something. Nobody needs to know it's not the full degree. I've sacrificed enough. I've given enough. I'm close enough.

I had talked myself into settling.

So I went to Ally. And I laid it all out for her, hoping she would see what I was seeing, I was looking for sympathy, looking for permission for her to say *Dave, you're right. You've done enough. It's okay to stop.*

That is not what happened.

She looked at me and said — *are you kidding me? We have sacrificed too much for this. We have come too far for you to give up now when you are this close to the end.*

No sympathy. Just love. And she was right.

I needed someone who wouldn't let me quit. She gave me that push I needed to keep going.

Here's why I tell you that story. Because we've all been there at some point, wondering if we're going to make it to the end.

I wonder if some of you are in a similar place this morning. Not with a degree — but with your faith. You've been walking with Jesus for years. And there are seasons where you look at how far you still have to go and something in you whispers — *is this sustainable? Will I actually make it to the end?*

Maybe you've watched someone else walk away. Someone you never thought would. And it shook something in you.

Maybe your own grip feels shaky right now. And you wondering how can I be sure that I'll make it to the end?

That's exactly the question Paul is answering in [Romans 8:31-39](#). And here's what he wants us to know this morning.

We will make it to the end. Not because of how tightly we're holding onto God — but because of how tightly He holds onto us.

We've been in [Romans 8](#) for the past several weeks now and for good reason. There is just too much richness and truth in these verses for us to not spend some time reflecting on what it means for our life and walk with Christ.

Last week we started to round to the close of [Romans 8](#) and we said the theme of the final verses of [Romans 8](#) were all about our assurance of salvation. How can I be sure that I'm saved.

Last week we answered that question, we can be sure because none of salvation is dependant upon our work, but from start to finish salvation is completely a work of God, it is He who has foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified us.

But we started to wrestle with this thought last week about persevering till the end. And that's where Paul turns his attention in these final verses of chapter 8. The focus is still assurance, still security, but the question isn't how I can be sure that I am saved, the question is how can I be sure I'll make it to the end?

The focus is still the same, notice how he starts out, What then shall we say to these things?

What things? Well, everything that we've been talking about in chapter 8, and really over the last couple of weeks. But maybe its going back all the way to Romans chapter 1, what do we say to all of this, of salvation, of walking in the newness of life, of the Spirit's work in our lives, of suffering in hope, of the golden chain, what does this all lead us to?

What are the implications of the truth of the gospel, of the work of the Spirit, of our assurance of salvation? How do we respond?

Notice the tone clearly changes here from doctrine to worship, from teaching to proclamation. Paul has been building a case, laying out an argument brick by brick.

But here the case is done. The argument is over. What we get in verses 31–39 is not more theology — it's a verdict read aloud. It's declaration. It's almost like Paul can't help himself but break forth in praise.

And the answer he arrives at is that we can be sure we will make it to the end.

Not because of how tightly we hold onto God — but because of how tightly He holds onto us.

And Paul gives us three reasons to be confident of that. God is for us. God defends us. And God keeps us. Let's look at the first one.

We will make to the end because God is for us...

## **GOD IS FOR US**

Look at verse 31 with me.

### **Romans 8:31 ESV**

<sup>31</sup> ***What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?***

Think about that for a moment, the point that Paul wants to make from all of this, the thing that we should take home first is that God is for us.

God is for you, God is on your side, God's heart, God's desire is for you to grow, to succeed, to thrive in this Christian life. God is for you.

I know that's difficult for some to hear, because maybe for most of our lives we pictured a much different scenario.

You know maybe what you have in mind, the image that you've grown up with is one of an angry God. A God who is just constantly angry and disappointed in you. The God who is always watching, always waiting, anticipating your screw up just so that He can punish you.

Maybe you picked that up because of a harsh upbringing or an overly legalistic teaching of Christianity, maybe it's just a lopsided view of the Old Testament.

As we read the Old Testament, we often hear of God being provoked to anger, you know what God never has to be provoked to. We never hear of God being provoked to love or provoked to mercy.

Maybe that's because God's love doesn't need to be provoked, maybe God's default stance towards is one of love and mercy, maybe that's because God is ready to spring forth on our side with love and mercy.

A couple summers ago I read a book Dane Ortlund titled, Gentle and Lowly. And Dane in his book want to do away with this image of an angry God in your mind and he makes exactly this point, he says:

***“This is why the Old Testament speaks of God being 'provoked to anger' by his people dozens of times... But not once are we told that God is 'provoked to love' or 'provoked to mercy.' His anger requires provocation; his mercy is pent up, ready to gush forth. We tend to think: divine anger is pent up, spring-loaded; divine mercy is slow to build. It's just the opposite. Divine mercy is ready to burst forth at the slightest prick.”***

I found that so helpful. Maybe that's the image you need to replace this morning. Not a God who is waiting for you to fail — but a God whose mercy is already pent up, already ready to gush forth toward you.

God is for you this morning, God is on your side.

And the point that Paul wants us to wrestle with is if God is for you, then who can be against you? What can stand against you?

And if we just take that question all by itself, who can be against us, we might start to say, well I can think of a lot of people and a lot of things that stand against me.

How often it can seem to some of us that we have people in our life that stand against us, or maybe even family. Maybe you have a boss that seems to be out to get you and in the world that we live in today that is so divisive, it seems that as a Christian at times the whole culture is against us, that we are constantly moving against the current.

Have you ever felt that way?

But the statement isn't saying that we will never have anyone against us, we will, but the question isn't about who is against you, but who is for you, who is on your side and if you have the God who created the world, the universe and all

that is in it, if the God who hold all of life and existence is on your side then who can successfully stand against you?

You know when Michael Jordan retired for the first time in 1993, he retired right off the back of three consecutive championships. The Bulls were the team in the league. And then he left. And almost overnight — the Bulls went from world champions to a losing season. Same city. Same franchise. Same organization. But without Michael Jordan, something was missing.

And then he came back. And almost immediately the Bulls went on another run — three more championships in a row. Six titles in eight years.

And it became clear to everyone in the league — if you have the greatest basketball player of all time on your team, the question of who can stand against you almost answers itself.

Now listen — Michael Jordan is just a man. He had bad nights. He lost games. He eventually retired for good.

But the one Paul is talking about here — the one who is for you — is not a man. This is the God who spoke the universe into existence. The God who holds all of life and all of history in His hands. And if that God is on your side — who can successfully stand against you?

But how can I be sure that He is for me? Paul says, just think of how far He was willing to go to demonstrate that He is for you, to show how much He loves you.

Look at verse 32.

**Romans 8:32 ESV**

***<sup>32</sup> 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?***

Think about that for a moment... is God for me? Paul says are you kidding me? He didn't spare His own Son. He was willing to give over the most precious thing in all of creation. He did not withhold His only Son.

The argument Paul is giving is from the greater to the lesser, because everything else pales in comparison to that. Anything else that you are going to come to Him for, anything else that you and I could ever require of Him, however great the cost it could never amount to the cost of His Son.

If God did not withhold His only Son, but freely gave Him up so that you and I could know Him and have a relationship with Him, is there anything, any good thing that He would not give?

How much more proof do you need that God is for you, then what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross?

So what does it mean that He will graciously give me all things? Because I want a new house or a new car, or you know what those shoes, that outfit is that what God has in mind?

No, salvation is in mind here, making it to the end. Paul is saying if He sacrificed His Son to accomplish your salvation, is there any good thing that you would need to persevere to the end, to grow, to mature, to walk in righteousness, is there anything that He wouldn't give to make that happen?

God has given us everything we need, everything.

Because God is for us, God is for you.

Maybe you're thinking, well what about my sin? What about my guilt that I live with? You know, maybe some of you have a hard time wrestling with the guilt of your past or the guilt of your present and you wonder, will it catch up to me some day?

But Paul answers that questions as well.

## **GOD DEFENDS US**

Here's the second reason we can be sure we'll make it to the end, because not only is God for us, but God defends us.

Look at what verses 33-34 says.

**Romans 8:33–34 ESV**

***33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? 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.***

Paul asks two other questions here, both are very similar, who shall bring a charge against God's elect, who is to condemn?

If we just take those questions on their own, we might say well I can think of a lot of people who would want to bring a charge and condemn me.

They are people we've wrong or hurt, relationships we've damaged a past we're not proud of.

But if we're honest a lot of the time the greatest accuser, the one who condemns us the most is ourselves. It's that inner voice inside that constantly tells us what a horrible person we are, that is constantly reminding us of all the mistakes we made, all the wrongs we've done.

Some of us cannot get out of living in the shame and the guilt of our past, we struggle to walk in the forgiveness, and grace God has given us in Christ. Sometimes the hardest thing isn't believing that God has forgiven us. It's forgiving ourselves.

We can replay the failures, the sin, the moments we're most ashamed of and something in us wants to stand up and say *you don't deserve to be here*.

We don't need anyone to condemn us; we do a pretty good job of it ourselves. But child of God, I think it's so important for you and me to recognize where that accusing voice is coming from.

You know who is called the accuser of the saints? Satan. [Revelation 12](#) tells us that Satan is the accuser of believers and he accuses them day and night before God. It is so important to recognize where that accusing voice is coming from. We have an enemy that wants us to live in the bondage of guilt and shame and

so he is constantly reminding us, constantly accusing us, constantly condemning us for the sin of our past and holding us down when we fall in sin today.

There is a difference between conviction and condemnation. That's important. See, the Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, His voice tells us something is wrong, but He calls us back to Jesus, He calls us to repentance and restoration, but the voice of enemy is to condemn, it leads to defeat. The voice of the Spirit says come back to Jesus, the voice of the enemy casts you down and out.

I love the imagery of [Zechariah 3](#) because I think it depicts so well the imagery that Paul is giving us in these verses.

### **Zechariah 3:1-5 ESV**

***<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. <sup>4</sup> And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." <sup>5</sup> And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.***

I mean, picture this in your mind, Joshua is the high priest, not Joshua who followed after Moses this is another Joshua centuries later who served as the High Priest, but the High Priest is supposed to represent Israel.

And in this vision Joshua is standing before the presence of God, before the angel of the Lord, but at his right hand is Satan accusing him. You can imagine what that might look like, the voice of Satan to Joshua.

What are you doing standing before the Lord, you don't deserve to be here, remember what you did last week, remember what you did last night, remember

how you treated your wife, remember where your thoughts ran off just the other day? You call yourself a Priest, what a hypocrite. It wouldn't be hard for us to imagine, would it?

Satan is standing there accusing Joshua of all the sin that he has done and what is amazing is the Lord's response. The first thing that I notice is that the Lord doesn't deny what Satan is saying, He's not saying you're wrong about Joshua, do you notice that?

In fact, Joshua is standing there in filthy garments, the filthy garments represents the sin he stands in. The Lord doesn't deny the sin in Joshua's life, but He doesn't condemn him either.

No, He turns and He rebukes Satan for condemning Joshua. He rebukes Satan because God has set apart Joshua, He has plucked him out of the fire, in essence He has saved him from the judgment, and He has set him a part for His purposes.

God doesn't allow Joshua to stay in his filth, but He removes his filthy garments, and He replaces them with clean garments. He removes his iniquity from him; He removes his sin.

Do you see this imagery? This, in essence, is the work that Christ does in your life and mine. There is no doubt that Satan and many others could stand and accuse us, and bring charges of the things that we have done in our past, but there is only one righteous judge, there is only one who is fit to judge and if He is not willing to bring charges, if the God of the universe is not willing to condemn us, then who can?

Not Satan, not even ourselves!

But it's not as though God simply ignored our sin, we see that word again, look again at verse 33 ***Who shall bring a charge against God's elect, it is God who justifies, who is to condemn? Jesus Christ is the one who died and who was raised...***

It's not that God just simply overlooked the fact that there is sin in our past, sin in our present no. It's that Jesus Christ satisfied justice on our behalf, He satisfied the justice of God when He went to the cross bearing my sin, my shame, my guilt and laying His life down for my forgiveness and He was raised from the dead so that I no longer have to live and be defined by my sin, but by the new life I have in Christ.

But maybe you're wondering what about my sin today, what about my present sin? Okay I get that Jesus died for my sin of the past, but man it feels like sin is a struggle everyday. How can I be sure that even my present sin is forgiven?

Well, notice the last part of verse 34, it says Jesus Christ 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.***

Notice the present tense, like right now, Jesus Christ is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God, and right now He is interceding for us, what does that mean? Well, to intercede for someone means, to intervene on behalf of another person, typically by pleading, mediating, or using your influence to help them.

To intercede means to go between — to stand in the gap between two parties and plead on behalf of one to the other. It means that right now in heaven Jesus is still interceding, standing in the gap between me and God representing us before the Father, not because our sin needs to be forgiven all over again, but when you and I sin, it's Jesus saying once again, that's charged to my account, I paid for that at the cross.

Now, don't picture Jesus in heaven desperately holding back an angry Father every time you sin — the Father and the Son are not at odds with each other. This isn't a divided courtroom. This is the Son, standing before the Father, saying — that's already covered. I paid for that.

Right now — at this very moment — that is exactly what Jesus is doing. He is at the right hand of the Father, and He is pleading your case. Not on the basis of your record — but on the basis of His own.

We'll make it to the end, we can be sure because God is for us, God is the one who defends, but finally, we need to be assured is that God is the one who will keep us.

## **GOD KEEPS US**

Look at verse 35 with me.

### **Romans 8:35–36 ESV**

***<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,***

***“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”***

Paul asks another rhetorical question, who shall separate us from Christ and again, we can think of a lot of things in this life that try, can't we?

I mean, look at the list he gives us there, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword?

Why do you think he list those things? Let's be clear, those aren't imaginary situations, or things that he thinks about at random, but he is mentioning real life situations, things that believers deal with.

In this life you will have tribulation, troubles will come, you will have situations that cause you distress. Brother and sister, you will face persecution for your faith, and some will face situations of financial and livelihood struggle.

Each of those situations have a real temptation towards doubt and questions, trials of faith. And Paul isn't writing from a place of hypothetical; these are situations that he faced regularly in his life and ministry.

He knows what it's to face struggle. He lists his struggles in [1 Corinthians 11](#) saying he has faced imprisonment, countless beatings, that he had been stoned

and robbed and shipwrecked and lost at sea, he faced danger on many fronts and by many hands he faced nights of cold and days of hunger, Paul had faced each of these things he mentions.

He's clearly telling us that the promise of the Christian life is not that we will be exempt from trials in this life, the promise is greater.

Do you see it?

Verse 37. ***No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***

More than conquerors, the promise is that while we face trials in this life, they will not break us, we may bend, but we won't break. We will overcome. More than conquerors, it means that we will do more than just bear it, more than survive, more than conqueror, we will overcome.

Not through our strength, not because we are strong enough, not because we hold on tightly, but through Him who loved us.

Christ will keep us. That's the promise. We are more than conquerors, not in my own strength, because there are so many times I want to give up, so many times I run out of strength, out of wisdom, out of resources, out answers. It's not my strength that keeps me holding on, it is the strength of Him who loved us.

I think of saints down through the generations, who faced much harder times than I, and I'm always amazed at how their faith kept them, even in the worst this life had to offer.

I think of a pastor named Dietrich Bonhoeffer, maybe you've heard of him.

Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian in the 1930s and 40s. And when Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany, Bonhoeffer was one of the first voices to publicly stand against him. While many in the church went silent — while many went along — Bonhoeffer spoke up. He called the Nazi regime what it was. And it cost him everything.

He was eventually arrested in 1943 and imprisoned. For two years he sat in Nazi prisons and concentration camps — watching the world he knew collapse around him. He remained in prison until just 2 weeks before the war had ended, so close that he could hear the American gunfire in the distance.

But Hitler had ordered his execution personally.

On the morning of April 9th the camp doctor recorded what he saw. He wrote — I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. So devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution he said a short prayer, climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed.

His last words — this is the end. For me, the beginning of life.

Tribulation. Distress. Persecution. Danger. Sword. Bonhoeffer faced every single thing on Paul's list. And yet — brave and composed. Not in his own strength. Held by a grip that none of those things could loosen.

That's what more than conquerors looks like.

He leads us to that final promise of this passage, the promise that nothing shall separate from the love of God...

**Romans 8:38–39 ESV**

***<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

There is nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing that is able to separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus... that's a promise. God will keep us. And Paul so wants us to get this through our heads he get's specific, he names anything that you could ever think of, if you can think of it, it cannot separate us.

Nothing, nothing in life or death, nothing not even death, right that's what Pastor Bonhoeffer knew and believed as he went to the gallows that day, that's

why he could go so bravely, the Nazi's could take his life, but they could not separate him from his God, they would only bring him closer.

It's the promise of the gospel, of the Christian life, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, Jesus said, will never die, but live forever!

Nothing, angels or rulers... that means nothing in this life and nothing in the Spiritual realm. Listen to what Paul is saying, there is no angelic or demonic presence that can separate you from the Love of God in Christ Jesus. That's what angels and rulers is pointing us towards. There are forces not of this world at work, seeking to separate us from our God, but they will not succeed. God will keep us.

Nothing present or things to come... do you see what he is saying, that is nothing that exists nor anything that will come into existence, that's pretty extensive isn't? As advanced as something like AI is becoming and all that our technology can create, there is nothing that exists presently and nothing that will ever come into existence that will ever separate us from our God.

There are no powers, that means worldly powers. Government powers, this would have been encouraging to a church under the oppression of the Roman emperor out to eradicate the church from existence, and yet the more they tried the more the church multiplied, it's an encouragement to us. it doesn't matter who the Prime Minister is, who the president is, it doesn't matter what party is in power, nothing shall separate us from Christ.

There is no height nor depth... There is nowhere you can go, no mountain you can climb, no dark crevice that you could crawl no hole so deep and dark that your heavenly Father could not get to you.

Nothing, nothing else in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Brother and sister can I ask you, what more assurance do you need this morning?

The promise isn't that life is going to be easy, that the path is going to be straight and always filled with light. The promise is that you and I will make to the end, not because of how tightly we hold to God, but because of how tightly He holds onto us.

It is God who is for us, God who defends us and God who will keep us.

As we close, just consider the image that Jesus gives us in [John 10:28-29](#).

**John 10:28-29 ESV**

***<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.***

You and I are kept in Christ's hand, covered by the Father's hand... and no one and nothing is able to snatch us out, nothing. *Not tribulation, not distress, not rulers, not powers, not death itself.*

God holds you in His hand. And His grip does not loosen.