

Are You Convinced?

Romans 8:31-39

**“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. 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. 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.”**

How many of you have ever struggled with superstition? We’ve got my Life Group; thank you for your confession. Last week, when JP mentioned that we don’t believe in luck, I agreed. I listened to that and thought, “Yeah, we don’t believe in luck. God’s sovereign.” Then, I started to think, “Man, sometimes I kind of act like I believe in luck or in superstition.” It all starts when we’re young. You could be like me where, when you were in middle school and you were not prepared for a test, you had this lucky pencil. This pencil would lead you on the Scantron between A, B, C, D, or E—if it was a really hard test, E—and you would just pray: “Lucky pencil, lead me.” It starts simple and silly. We have those socks that we wear when we’re trying to make a sale or present something in a class. It starts with “Look good, play good” in sports or in band. You start to wear the same thing each and every time. Then, it goes from just building confidence to superstition in really unhealthy ways so that when you do something different, it messes with you.

I’ll just confess. I’m embarrassed by this, but a few years ago I was teaching at Vertical (*a Baylor student ministry*) and I found myself becoming superstitious with some silly things. First, I would wear these Lululemon slim fit pants every time that I taught. Any Lululemon fans out there? That’s more men than I expected. That’s good. You get it. These pants are amazing. I started to wear them every time I taught. I had to wear the same black pair of pants. I also started to drink the same drink every time before I got up on the stage. I would drink this coffee from Common Grounds. It was hot No Bull half-sauce half-sweet every time. I would drink that every time. One week, I showed up in khaki pants during the 2018 dating series. I’ll never forget it. I showed up in khaki pants and something was just off. I’m like, “Man, my mojo is gone; my swag is out the window.” Something was just off. I let it impact my confidence, and it really messed me up. I gave the worst sermon that there has ever been given in the history of dating sermons. I deleted it; you can’t find it. It’s off the internet. Those khaki pants are gone, absolutely gone. I don’t know where they are.

I tell you all that because that’s a silly way—that I’m even embarrassed to say—that we become superstitious. But really what it is: I was finding confidence in the wrong thing. I actually would

venture to say that many of us tend to find confidence in the wrong things. Again, it starts small, but some of us are confident in ways that we don't even realize. We're confident in ourselves because of our wealth. We think, "Yeah, God loves me. I'm good. I'm confident because of all the possessions I have, because of the car that I drive." Or maybe it's that you have beauty. I'm bald; I don't have that. But maybe you have that gift, so you just have confidence in yourself because of your beauty. Maybe you're smart; you have a high GPA. You're a student—maybe a high school or college student—and you're like, "Man, I have confidence in my abilities and my GPA." You find confidence in yourself because of what you have. Maybe you're a parent of a kid with a good GPA, and you have confidence in yourself because of their GPA; you have confidence for them because of their smarts.

In all these ways, we are looking for confidence in all the wrong places. I want you to know—just from a logical perspective—those aren't good places to find confidence because those things can change. All of those things, especially beauty, especially our possessions—all of these things that we tend to find confidence in, change. As we finish our series, "More than Conquerors," and this passage in Romans 8, we are going to see today how we can have confidence in God. We're going to see that the reason we can have confidence in God is because no one can oppose us, no one can condemn us, and no one can separate us.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Romans 8. Starting in Verse 31 is where we're going to be. Paul shows us that he's wrapping up what he's been talking about, especially in Chapters 5 through 8. As we even have been walking through 8, he's putting a bow on Chapter 8 for us. This is the conclusion. In fact, Chapter 9 takes a turn; he's going to address different things. This is a huge, important moment in the book of Romans. What he first says is, in light of what he's said thus far in the book of Romans, he's saying, **"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"** What's our response to Romans 8? Paul is asking a question. He's actually going to ask a bunch of questions and I'm going to add on. I'm going to ask questions as well today; he inspired me.

He's saying, "What's our response, as we learn from JP and Nate through the weeks? What's our response to the fact that there's no condemnation for those in Christ? What's our response—that if we put the Spirit of God in the driver's seat, it's going to bring life and peace? What's our response that He who raised Jesus from the dead is also who's going to give life to us? What's our response that we're adopted by God? What's our response that the sufferings now aren't worth comparing to the glory that one day will be? What's our response that for those who love God, all things work together for good?" Paul is going to help us see how we're meant to respond. I would venture to say it's confidence; confidence is how we can respond and what it is that we get from this call. Paul is going to conclude, and I'm telling you that our biggest takeaway is that we're meant to be confident. Let me pray that we would as we jump into the text.

Lord, would you bless this time? I can't convince my friends that we should be confident in you because of your love for us. That's the work of the Spirit. Lord, would you do that in this time? Would the Spirit of the living God work in our hearts and our minds that we might have confidence in you and not in ourselves? Would it all come from the place of the Gospel, from your love for us through Jesus? In His name we pray, amen.

Back to the text in the second half of Verse 31: **“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?”** Our first point today is that

*1. No one can oppose us.*

If we jump to that point first, we miss this phrase that I don’t really know if we believe. It’s this: **“If God is for us.”** I just want you to pause before you write down “no one can oppose us.” I want you to just pause for a second. I want you to think to yourself, “Do you believe that God is for you? Do you believe that He loves you? Do you believe that he likes you? Do you believe that God is for you?” We so often just jump past amazing phrases like this: **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** This brings us to our first point, that we can have confidence in God, because ...

*1. No one can oppose us.*

If you’re like me, you read the text and, immediately, you ask good questions. You’re thinking, “If no one can oppose us, I can think of plenty of opposition to Christians.” As JP mentioned, my wife works with international work to get the Gospel to places where you will be persecuted for talking about Jesus. You will be kicked out of the country; you will be imprisoned; you will be beaten; you will be mocked—not to mention all the opposition here. We face people who don’t want to invite us to things; we could get canceled; people can hate us for our views. There are all sorts of ways that we experience opposition. How can we say that no one can oppose us? Especially Paul? The person writing this was beaten, mocked, and, I would say, opposed.

What Paul is saying is that nothing is really against Paul because God is *for* Paul. Nothing is really against Paul because God is *for* Paul. One way to think about this is as though there is opposition, but it’s no competition. There is opposition, but it’s no competition. Jesus says it this way: “In this world, you’re going to have trouble and tribulation, but take heart—I’ve overcome the world. There’s victory.”

It reminds me of when I was in college and played intramurals. Yes, I’m one of those annoying people that still talks about intramurals from college, so forgive me. I remember playing ultimate frisbee. We were in the playoffs and this other team showed up late, so we automatically got the dub—the win. We won automatically; they forfeit. Then, 10 minutes later, we’re still there and they all show up. The whole ultimate frisbee team from Baylor decides to show up 10 minutes late; I think they had something else, so they show up 10 minutes late. They’re like, “Hey, let’s play.” We ended up playing ultimate frisbee, but the entire time, it was so much better. Why? Because we knew, the whole time, we had already won. Every time we dropped a pass or made a mistake, we weren’t fighting for playing time. Why? Because we had already won. The burden and pressure of fighting and trying to win had been lifted. There was an opposition, but it was no competition.

In the same way, that’s the way it is with God. We know from the book of Ephesians that we’re at war daily. We talked about it in “Unseen Battles” (*previous sermon series*). We spent an entire series talking about the war that we’re in and how we fight, but we fight from a place of victory—the victory that we have in Christ. Therefore, we have no opposition, which gives us confidence.

That's how we have confidence in God. What I love about this passage is that Paul says, "If God's for us, who can be against us?" Then, he proves it—that **"He who did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him not graciously give us all things?"**

There's a phrase used that's repeated in Verses 31 and 32. It's the phrase **"for us."** This is why it's important to really look at the text. If God is for us and then—Verse 32: He gave His Son up for us. He's proving that no one can be against us because He's for us. How do we know He's for us? Because He gave His one and only Son. That is how we know He is for us. I think, if we grew up in church, we're sitting here like, "Okay, yeah, God's for us. God loves us." We're kind of like, "Next. What's the next point?" Every point this morning is that God loves us. Sometimes we want more; we want more; we want more. But I want us to really think about this: God the Father gave His one and only Son. That's what it's saying here. He gave His Son knowing that He would be perfect, yet He would be opposed, knowing He would be sinless, yet He would take condemnation. He gave up His Son knowing that it was going to give Jesus suffering and, ultimately, that He would make it good through the resurrection.

As I was thinking about this, I was thinking about Bo and Ellie. As JP mentioned, my wife and I just had twins. I was thinking, "Man, I can't imagine giving up my son for y'all or anything." It's inconceivable to me. Then, I think about how God the Father did this for us. You couldn't give me a billion dollars to give up Bo. There's nothing valuable enough for me, but for God the Father, He was willing to do it for us. That's how much He loves us—that He would give His one and only Son. I hope and pray that it doesn't get lost on us. No one can oppose us.

At the very end of this text, we see: if He gives His Son, won't He graciously give us all things? What does that mean? We know from 2 Peter 1:3 that He gives us everything that we need for life and godliness, which is such a gift. He will take care of those that know Him and love Him. He graciously gives all things that we need for life and godliness. The first reason we can have confidence in God is knowing that God is for us; therefore, no one can oppose us.

Verse 33-34: **"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."** I want you to notice, before we get to the second point, this imagery of judicial language. Who's going to charge us? God justifies. Who's going to condemn? We have confidence in God. We can have security in God because ...

## 2. *No one can condemn us.*

That's what we're seeing. Paul is saying, in Verse 34, "Who's the one who can condemn?" "No one can condemn us" is our second point this morning. Again, questions come: "But Dale, isn't the enemy called the Accuser? Doesn't he give us lies and accusations that condemn us? Even some of us have consciences that are constantly reminding us and condemning us for all the things that we've done wrong. We can't get them out of our minds." It feels weird to say that no one can condemn us. What the text is showing us is that the only one who can condemn us is the Judge. In Verse 34, we see that Jesus *could* condemn us. **"Christ Jesus who died—more than that: who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God."** He has the authority to judge,

because He has the authority of God. But instead of judging, He's interceding. It is He who is raised to life, who is at the right hand of God, and who is also interceding for us.

This whole text just kind of puts you in this place of a courtroom. Anybody ever been to court? Totally wrong question to ask in church. I remember the first time I went to court. I was so guilty from a speeding ticket. I was speeding home one night. I was in sin; the Spirit was not in the driver's seat. I was angry and frustrated and humiliated. I'm driving, and I speed down this hill, and I think, "Man, I know better than that." Then I blast by a cop, and I think, "This is terrible; I'm just going to put my blinker on." I pulled myself over. I was so guilty. "I'm just gonna go ahead and do the work for him." His lights didn't even turn on, and I was already pulling over. Finally, he came along and met me there. Again, I'm guilty as can be. He says, "Son, have you ever been to jail?" "No sir. No sir." He says, "Are you intoxicated?" "No sir." He says, "Are you in an emergency?" "No sir." And he says, "Then why are you going 112 in a 65?"

This brings a lot of questions to mind. I know. Here's the deal: I was so guilty. I just said I was going home, and he said, "You're never going to get home going that fast," which I know. He was right; I was so in the wrong, so guilty, so condemned. I go to court, and I see the judge and all of this is going on. They pronounce this sentence that it's going to cost a certain amount of stuff. All these things that have to happen in order for this to happen. Why? Because I was guilty; I was condemned, and it was going to cost a lot. It wasn't one of those cops that is like, "Hey, you were going 12 over but I'm going to bump that down to 7 over so it's going to cost you less." No, that ticket said 112 in a 65. I was going to pay the whole thing; the judge was going to make me pay. Why? I was guilty. I was condemned. I drive home, and I get to my dorm in Waco. I show up, and there was the money. To this day, I don't know who paid for it. I think it was my friends. It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair that this big cost that I deserve—that guilt and condemnation that I deserve—had been paid for.

What this text is showing us is something even better than that. That Jesus could be the Judge, but instead, He takes off the robe. He comes to our side and becomes our defense attorney. He's like, "Hey, Judge, any of the guilt and condemnation? I took it. I paid for it on the cross." All those things that condemn you, all the things that come to mind that make you think, "God can never love me because of those things—that abortion, that adultery, that pornography, that comparison, that selfishness, that thing you swore you'd never do again and then you did it again, that made you feel guilty and condemned"—Jesus is standing there. He's saying, "Hey, I took that. I paid for that." He's not judging you; He's interceding for you; He's looking to the Judge, which He has the power to do, and He's saying, "Hey, no, I've got it. I'm going to take care of this. There's no condemnation for my children." There's no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.

Paul is trying to show us this. That's the first verse in Romans 8, and that's what he's showing us at the end too. He must really want us to know this; he's doubling down. We find confidence in God because we know that no one can condemn us. He took the condemnation for us. I think sometimes we forget what He's done. I think it usually sneaks into our lives. Some of us are trying to repay God for the bad that we've done. Have you ever found yourself trying to be good so that God will finally forgive you for what you've done? All that stuff in the past? "I've got to be good before God can love me, before God can wipe me clean, before God can take that condemnation. I'm gonna have to do a few things myself so that I can earn that." That's not it.

There's nothing we can do. It's all because of what He's done on the cross that we can have confidence in God because God is for us. No one can oppose us, and no one can condemn us.

I think this is the crescendo of Romans 8. This is it as we get to Verse 35. I just picture Paul getting so excited. **“Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”** Paul is saying, “Is there any circumstance that can separate us from the love of Christ?” Is getting laid off, cancer, trials, unwanted singleness, pandemic—can any of those things separate us from the love of Christ? Verse 36, Paul starts to answer the question by utilizing some Old Testament. He said, “Hey, this isn't new.” Verse 36: **“As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’”** He's saying, “There's no new thing that the faithful suffer.” It's not new to the Bible that the righteous and faithful will experience suffering in tribulation. This is coming from the Psalms; the faithful suffer. Can anything separate us?

In Verse 3, **“No, in all these things—just to cover all the bases: in everything—we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”** That's us. In all suffering, trials, everything you can think of that we might think separates us from the love of Christ; he's saying none of it. In all of those things, we are more than conquerors. This is where we get our series title: “More than Conquerors.” I want us to just sit here for a moment.

How can you be more than a winner? We don't have words for this. “More than conquerors.” There's nothing. In fact, in the Greek here, it's “hypernicōmen.” it's “hyper,” which means “intensive.” “Nicōmen”: it's “conqueror.” It's like “intense conqueror,” “hyper-conqueror,” or, in Latin, it's “super-conqueror.” That's the literal translation. The best we can do is “more than a conqueror.” It's like you're a winner's winner or something. It sounds cheesy, but there's nothing that we can put on this, because there's nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. We have the victory that's already been won through Him who loved us. That's why we're more than conquerors. That's why we have confidence in God.

Verse 38, I feel like he's still hot: **“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.”** I want you to think about this: What is it that you think can separate you from the love of God? I'm going to give you 10 seconds to think about this question. What is it that you think can separate you from the love of God? Mentally, you're like, “Nothing.” Think about your week or your year or all of your life. What are the times when you felt separated from the love of God? Take a moment. Is it when you fail at something? When you get something wrong as a mom and you feel this guilt? You feel like God doesn't love you? Is it when you sin and there's a really big earthly consequence to that sin? Is it when you return to that thing you swore you would never return to?

I'll just tell you that, for me—it's going to kind of sound weird—but I struggle with performance and approval. When I think God doesn't love me, it's usually because of something like this: I'm teaching the Bible and I feel like I mess up. I make a mistake. “Man, I said that wrong. I would change that word; I would do something different.” I can really think that God doesn't love me if I mess up. That's mine. I'm so performance-based; God only loves me when Dale crushes it in life. That's mine: I think I'm separated from God's love when I don't do what I wish I had done.

What is it for you? This third point, we have confidence in God because ...

3. *No one can separate us from His love.*

Paul is making it clear that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God. I heard a friend say it this way: the love of God is like our shadow. It's more like the shadow of me on the stage right now. There are lights in front of me and lights behind me, so in front of me, I see multiple shadows of me. God's love is right in front of me and God's love is behind me in all these different places. It's everywhere. I can't get away from it. If I come over here and try to get away, there's still two right here. That's God's love all around us. You cannot be separated from God's love. There is nothing on this earth that you can do to be separated from God's love for those that know and love Jesus and have a relationship with him. You can't be separated from it. Nothing can separate us.

It's important, in this text, to understand the context we don't always think about. What's happening in Rome around the time? This was written, in around 57 A.D., to the church in Rome. By 67 A.D., a leader named Nero entered into the picture. He would essentially be one of the worst persecutors of Christians ever. He would wrap Christians in animal skin and then feed Christians to other animals. He would wrap Christians in wax and light them on fire to light the night in his garden. It is historically known that more than half of the city burned down, and he blamed Christians so that he could persecute them more. It's historical. Paul is saying this to the church that really needs to understand: "Hey, it's going to be hard, but it's okay. God really loves you. Nothing can change that love." For us, whatever it is that you think can separate you from God's love—nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.

It reminds me of my children. I get it. Everything that I think about right now is Bo and Ellie. Our whole life revolves around it. Here's why: my wife was pregnant, and we get to this day where they come into this world, and your whole world just kind of shifts. It's so hard and so beautiful, and then you hold them in your arms and you're like, "Man, this is crazy." All they do is like poop and eat and poop and eat and sometimes sleep and I wish they slept more. All they do is take from us constantly. We're constantly cleaning them or constantly feeding them. They should be a burden to me. It's just not. Some of you parents are like, "Yeah, I get it." I love them even though they constantly need stuff from us. I love them. I think that's just a glimpse of the way God looks at us. We constantly need His grace. We constantly need His forgiveness. We constantly need Him and fall short of His glory. He's constantly in love with us. Nothing can separate us from that love.

What I like about this passage is that Paul's emphasizing that suffering can't separate us. I think that's really true of life. Sometimes we think, secretly, that if we follow Jesus and become a Christian that, "God, you're supposed to work things out and protect us from suffering." I think, deep down, that's a secret thought of many of us. We wonder how this could be happening. "God loves me. How could I be suffering?" I just think that we have to have to understand: suffering isn't what separates us from God's love. God's love is what helps us through suffering. This is such a good reminder of this.

In summary, how do we have confidence in God? We know that no one can oppose us, no one can condemn us, and no one can separate us from the love of God. My question, as we close, is

simple. I actually have a lot of questions as we close. Do you really believe this? Do you really believe that no one can oppose you, condemn you, or separate you? I think that there are people here that are like, "I don't know. God could really never love me because of all these different things." I have an application for you today. My application for you today is that you would hit your knees and pray to God. "God, if you really love me, would you show me?" Then, would you give Him time in the Scriptures to show you? To reveal His love for you? That's your application. I'm talking about both knowing it in your head and knowing it in your heart that God really loves you, no matter what you've done.

There's some of us here who, I think, rightly understand the love of God, both intellectually and in our heart, but I don't think that it has changed us in the way that I think Paul has been changed. Verse 38, "**I am convinced.**" It seems as though Paul understands. He is sure. Your version might say he is "convinced." He has a confidence in God and it changes the way that he lives. I think that's the application for the rest of us. If we rightly understand that we can be confident in God because no one can oppose us, no one can condemn us, and no one can separate us, then it would change our lives. Are you convinced? I think if we were convinced, we would share our faith at lunch today. I think if we were convinced, we would prayerfully consider going somewhere hard to tell people about Jesus that maybe have never heard about Jesus. I think if we were convinced, we wouldn't be so scared of those family members that we are scared to share the Gospel with, or those co-workers that we're scared to share the gospel with. If we were convinced, we would live differently. If we're truly confident in God, we would leave here more than conquerors, knowing that we have victory, so when we share our faith, if somebody makes fun of us, we just know God's going to work that out. God's going to use it. God's going to flip that painting upside down. Whatever's going to happen, I've got more than victory. I'm a super-victor. I'm more than a conqueror. It's all good. That's what we have in God through Christ Jesus. Let me pray that we would have it and that it would change the world.

God, help us. We need you. We need you to help us understand that no one opposes us because you're *for* us. We know that you're for us because of your Son Jesus, who died for us. No one can condemn us because you took condemnation on the cross. Nothing can separate us from the love of God because the work of the cross has already been done. I think these simple truths of you loving us, if we could rightly understand these things, it would change us. Lord, would you give us confidence in you because of who you are and what you've done for us? Would this change the way that we live and share our faith and live in obedience? Would it reach our co-workers and our neighbors and would it reach the nations? Would you do that work? Lord, would you change the world by your grace? We pray all this in your Son Jesus' name, amen.