

## The Christian's Exultation – Part 2

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 8:31-39

**Preached on:** Sunday, March 4, 2012

Will you take the infallible record of the Word of God and turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans? We come now to Romans chapter eight verses 31 through 39. This is the second part of two expositions that I am doing on the Christian's exultation. Let me read this text to you. And be reminded, as you are turning there, that these final verses of Romans eight are really the grand finale of Paul's argument concerning the believer's assurance of salvation, the theme of this chapter.

Romans chapter eight beginning in verse 31.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Every honest person must acknowledge that we have a difficult time as human beings being able to love as we should. Human love tends to be conditional. It tends to be manipulative. It tends to be self serving and fickle, impatient, demanding, easily offended, easily abandoned when threatened, yea, even short lived. And unfortunately we tend to perceive the love of God in the same way. If that were true, we would all be doomed. But God's love for us is radically different. It is radically different than anything you can even imagine, certainly anything that we have ever experienced on a human level.

For this reason in 1 John 3:1 in utter astonishment John declared:

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:31-39.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:1.

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He is literally there giving an exhortation to pay close attention to this astonishing love that the Father has bestowed on us, one that is utterly impossible to even articulate in any human language. It is utterly foreign to anything that we could understand or experience.

This is the love that loved us while we were yet sinners. For this reason Paul said in Ephesians one beginning in verse three:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>3</sup>

So to be sure, my friends, we cannot fathom the love of God. And many times we foolishly imagine that his love for us is somehow like our love for other people and even our love for him. And so therefore we, at times, might fear that we might do something that would cause us to stop loving him or, perhaps, we might do something that will cause him to withdraw his love from us.

Well, in these passages before us, Paul, once again, seeks to dispel these myths. But there is yet another reason why many will feel threatened with respect to their eternal security, why many will say that you really can't have assurance of salvation. And that has to do not so much with the issue of the love of God, even though that is there, but more with the issue of the basis of God's choice for us.

The Arminian would insist that God elects men on the basis of divine foreknowledge, whereby he in eternity past looked down the corridors of time and saw who would exercise by his own free will his decision to choose Christ. So a man's faith is the condition for election and God is therefore obligated to elect him, to save him. Another way of thinking about is that God chose you because you first chose him.

But in this system, as we look at Scripture we see that election is neither of grace nor is it according to God's sovereign good pleasure, but it is of works and that God is somehow obligated to elect all those who by means of their purported free wills decide to follow Christ.

Now you may recall that this was refuted exegetically in my expositions on verses 29 and 30, so I won't expand upon it much more now. And certainly it will be repeated more when we come to Romans chapter nine. But in the Arminian system salvation is a joint or mutual effort of God and man. Salvation really depends partly on man, which would

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:3-6.

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leave him some room to boast. They would argue that salvation requires a synergism between God and man. Synergism implying basically that there are two or more forces or powers that just work together to accomplish something.

But given this synergy between God and man a potential problem arises and that is what if man fails to live up to his end of the bargain? What if he stops loving Christ and no longer maintains the level of faith necessary to obligate God to save them. He might forfeit his salvation because of his sin. The rebellion in his unredeemed heart might somehow exceed the limits of God's love. That is the danger that many in this system will struggle with. Perhaps their rebellion might surpass God's power to protect their salvation. It might go beyond the realms of grace. It might transcend the abilities of the Spirit and the ascended Christ it intercede on their behalf.

Now the Calvinist, on the other hand, would insist that salvation is not synergistic, but monergistic, meaning there is one force or one power, that a man is saved solely on the basis of God's power, God's power alone. It is God's power from beginning to end. For this reason Paul said in Philippians 1:6:

“I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>

He would argue that election has nothing to do whatsoever with anything that man does. He will tell us in Romans 9:16 that it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. He will argue that it has nothing to do with works. 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul said that he:

“... saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”<sup>5</sup>

And Paul will say in Romans chapter nine verse 11 that election is all about, quote:

“God's purpose according to his choice... not because of works, but because of Him who calls.”<sup>6</sup>

The Calvinist would insist that God set his love upon his elect solely on the basis of his uninfluenced sovereign grace, solely because of his good pleasure. Therefore, it is God, not man, that maintains salvation. Man has no power to maintain his salvation than he did to gain it in the first place.

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<sup>4</sup> Philippians 1:6.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 1:9.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 9:11.

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So, as we approach Romans eight, because of our warped understanding many times of the love of God and his power to preserve our salvation and because of errant views concerning his sovereign election, his sovereign grace, the Holy Spirit now through his inspired apostle is going to go to great lengths to try to dispel these things and give us real assurance of our salvation. And in chapter nine he will go on to further dispute the Arminian notion of conditional election and prove the doctrine of unconditional election.

Now any believe that struggles with issues of security will find great comfort as pastor Paul comes to this section of Scripture and tells us more about what I am calling the Christian's exultation, the triumphant joy that is ours knowing that because we are in Christ we are no longer under condemnation, verse one of chapter eight. Verse two, we are united by Christ by the Holy Spirit. He tells us in verse five that the whole bent of our life is not dominated by the Holy Spirit, not our flesh. In verse 15 he describes how we have been adopted as his children. In verse 16 he tells us how the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. In verse 17 he assures us that we are joint heirs with Christ. In verse 23 he says we have the first fruits of the Spirit, the one who indwells us and therefore that is our guarantee of the redemption of our bodies. And in verse 26 he says that the Spirit even helps us to pray as we should. He intercedes for us before God. Verse 8:28 he tells us that God is working all things together for our good and his glory. Talk about assurance. And then, finally, verses 29 and 30 we are told that we have been foreknown, predestined, justified, glorified, all described in the past tense to demonstrate that what God decreed in eternity past is so utterly certain to come to fruition that he could describe it as if it has already happened. Then what follows in verses 35 through 37 is a series of challenges against the doctrine of eternal security that some might foolishly entertain in their mind.

And in each case it is fascinating that the apostle Paul not only answers each challenge, but he actually derides them. He ridicules them. He exposes their utter impossibility to have any effect on separating us from the love of God.

I believe a brief review is in order here from last week. He starts with the question in verse 31 at the end:

“If God is for us, who is against us?”<sup>7</sup>

This is a challenge against the power of God. He is saying, “What foe could possibly foil the purposes of God and prevail over those whom God... for whom God has done all of these things?” The answer is there is no foe that can disannul what God has determined.

At the end of verse 31 he says: If or since, because...

“...God is for us, who is against us?”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:31.

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So he reminds us that our confidence is in the very character of our omnipotent God. And Peter forcefully affirms this very thing in 1 Peter one verses five and six. He says that we:

“...are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed.”<sup>9</sup> in the last time.

He goes on to say that:

“In this you greatly rejoice.”<sup>10</sup>

And, again, in 2 Peter one and verse two he says:

“... that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”<sup>11</sup>

And then he poses a second challenge in verse 32, a challenge against the love of God. He says:

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”<sup>12</sup>

This, of course, is an argument from the greater to prove the lesser. God has already done for us the greatest thing he could possibly do. He did not spare his own son, but deliver him over to death for us all. So, along with this gracious gift of the sacrifice of his Son, why would he not also lavish upon us that which by comparison is so trivial? If he loved us while we were yet sinners, why wouldn't he continue to love us after he has cleansed us from that sin by the blood of the Lamb?

Then in verse 33 he poses yet another perceived challenge, a challenge against our justification whereby God has declared us righteous. And here the perceived accuser is trying to prove that somehow we still remain in a state of condemnation. This challenge is set forth in two questions, both of which the inspired apostle answers. Verse 33. He says:

“Who will bring a charge against God's elect?”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 1:5.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 1:6.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Peter 1:3.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8:32.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 8:33.

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Verse 34.

...who is the one who condemns?"<sup>14</sup>

And obviously these charges are meaningless because he says in verse 33 that:

“God is the one who justifies.”<sup>15</sup>

So, verse 34.

“...who is the one who condemns?”<sup>16</sup>

In other words, god alone is the judge. And he has already declared us to be without guilt. He has already declared us righteous. He said that there is no condemnation. We are in Christ. We have been cleared of all charges. All of our sins, past, present and future have been covered by the blood of Christ. We are no longer under the law. We now live in the realm of grace, Romans 6:14.

So Paul's argument is *reductio ad absurdum*, in the Latin. It simply means that the proposition is disproven by following its implications logically to an absurd conclusion. In other words, what he is saying is, “Is there anything more powerful than God?” Of course not. Can you argue that something... that there is something that we could do that could exceed the limits of God's love for us even after he gave his Son as a sacrifice to purchase our redemption.

And, finally, could anybody possibly say that the lawgiver might condemn us after he has already declared us to be righteous? That is utterly absurd.

For this reason Paul went on to say in verse 34:

“Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”<sup>17</sup>

Then he gives four reasons why our salvation is secure in Christ and presented in ascending order of importance. First of all, because he died in our stead. In other words, Christ at the cross voluntarily satisfied all of the demands of the broken law and he fully propitiated the offended holiness of God and at salvation the sinner then appropriates that payment for himself by faith in the finished work of Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:34.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 8:33.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 8:34.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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Secondly, Christ was raised from the dead. In other words, his resurrection is proof that the full satisfaction for sin that the law demands was paid in full. And, thirdly, that Christ is now at the right hand of God which tells us that his work is finished. All of our sin, past, present and future is completely and forever removed for all who trust in the one who now sits at the most highly exalted position of honor.

And, finally, the reason our... the final reason our salvation is secure is because Christ also intercedes for us. And this is the most profound of all of the arguments. Because Christ lives and has ascended, he is able to intercede, to plead on our behalf. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 1 John 2:1.

So to deny the security of the believer is to claim that Christ's work of intercession is somehow deficient, that it is somehow ineffective.

So what else is there to say? It is as if he is saying in light of such overwhelming evidence, how could anyone possibly conclude that we cannot have assurance of salvation? And yet some still do.

And for them Paul offers yet one final assault on the only conceivable challenges against the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints that couple possibly exist in the mind of some. And at the same time he will now summarize the argument that he began in verse 31.

“What then shall we say to these things?”<sup>18</sup>

No notice verse 35. He says:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”<sup>19</sup>

Who? The Greek term can also be translated what? The translators probably used who rather than what to continue the theme of verse 33 and 34 where Paul is speaking about any possible challenger that might arise. In this case the challenger is the believer himself who might succumb to some circumstance. So the fourth challenge that he deals with is the challenge against our weakness in responding to difficult circumstances which he is now going to go on to list.

Now we must be very careful. Grammatically the phrase, “the love of Christ,” in verse 35 speaks of the love of Christ for us and not the love we have for Christ. Very important distinction. Paul is saying, “Is there any circumstance that might cause a genuine believer to turn away from Christ and, thus exceed the limits of Christ's love for him?”

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 8:31.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 8:35.

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You see, salvation must always be Christ centered, not man centered. Of course, our love for Christ will, at times, wax and wane. Sometimes it will grow lukewarm. Sometimes we will be indifferent towards him. Our love for him is imperfect. It is incomplete. At times it is manipulative, demanding. But, you see, it is not our love for him that maintains our salvation. It is his love for us. And as soon as you add man in the equation of salvation, you are going to have problems, because suddenly you are mixing sin with holiness. You are blending poison with purity. You are merging the finite with the infinite and forever, therefore, you will weaken that which was once absolutely invincible.

God's love for his elect is perfect. It is eternal. It is unlike his love for the world, his love of the unsaved. That is temporal.

In John 13 verse one we read:

“Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”<sup>20</sup>

To the end, εις τελος (ice tel'-os) in the original language. It means to the fullest extent. It means perfectly. It means eternally, to the uttermost, to perfection, a love that has no limits towards those whom the Father has given him.

Now, yes, indeed, God loves the world.

“For God so loved the world...”<sup>21</sup>

He loves sinners. He shows them compassion. We see this in his common grace. But, dear friends, that is not a saving love. He does not love them to the end. That kind of love is reserved, as we see here in that text, for his own. Jesus loves all that the Father has given him to the end, with an eternal, perfect love that has no limits.

So regardless of any perceived challenge to the security of salvation, nothing can separate us from the love of God. That is Paul's whole point in this whole section.

So for this reason he will go on to say in verse 37:

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”<sup>22</sup>

Now will you notice? Paul states his assertion here in the past tense.

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<sup>20</sup> John 13:1.

<sup>21</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>22</sup> Romans 8:37.



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“...Him who loved us.”<sup>23</sup>

He does not say we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loves us, although that is certainly true. But he says:

“...through Him who loved us.”<sup>24</sup>

And he did this deliberately. There is a very good reason. The reason is that he wants to remind us of the fact that Christ loved us in the past when we were yet sinners, when we were his blasphemous enemies living unto ourselves, when we were idolatrous rebels of the worst sort, ungodly, haters of God, spiritually dead, utterly helpless in being able to do anything to contribute to our salvation. He loved us in that state, that past condition.

Paul has already made this clear in Romans five verses five through eight. He said:

...because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.<sup>25</sup>

To be sure, Christ has proven his love for us in our past state of rebellion. So the argument is: Will he not continue to love us in our transformed state of righteousness? Of course. This is why in every trial we are ... we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.

Paul summarizes this very thing in verse 10 of chapter five. He says:

“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”<sup>26</sup>

So surely the living Savior will keep us reconciled.

Now, let's go back to the challenge against our own weakness in responding to difficult circumstances that might cause a genuine believer to turn away from Christ and, thus, exceed the limits of the love of Christ for him. He is going to offer a list here now of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 5:5-8.

<sup>26</sup> Romans 5:10.

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distressing circumstances, all of which, by the way, Paul experienced except the last one, the sword, speaking of death. But later one he experienced that as well.

So he begins, verse 35 with the issue of tribulation. He says, "Shall tribulation?" In other words, is something in that particular scenario worthy of us being afraid of? Tribulation is a word denoting strong pressure. It has the sense of being squeezed from all sides into a place where you don't want to be. So the question is: Could this cause me to react in some way as to cause me to reject Christ and exceed the limits of his love and therefore forfeit my salvation? The answer is no.

Well, what about distress, the next one? This is a term that denotes being unable to escape, perhaps some difficult situation, maybe even some temptation from which you can't seem to find relief. Could a sinful reaction to this situation separate me from the love of Christ?

No. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13 we are told that:

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."<sup>27</sup>

Well, ok, but what about persecution? What about suffering for the sake of Christ? What if I break under pressure? What if I am unable to endure? No, take yourself out of the equation. It is God that is at work in you. The Lord gives special strength in severe trials. He has already told us that he is going to work all things together for our good and his glory. So the attitude of the saint would be, my for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

2 Corinthians four verse 16 we read:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.<sup>28</sup>

That is the attitude of the saint by the power of the Spirit that dwells within him.

Well, what about famine? Of course, this is common place for persecuted Christians, those who have been displaced from their homes, those who have been in prison. There are literally hundreds of thousands of believers experiencing that right now.

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:16-17.

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Well, what about nakedness? This is the inability to clothe yourself. It is the idea of being utterly destitute.

You may recall that the two brothers that we support from southern Sudan, Elijah and William tell the story of when the Muslims came in and killed their families and destroyed their villages that they stripped them naked, took away all of their clothes, burned all of their fruit trees, burned all of their houses and then banished them into the wilderness. And most of the people died a very slow and painful death of exposure, specially by the insects and the thorns, swarms of mosquitoes.

So the idea here is if such a terror came upon me, would I react in some way as to somehow exceed the bounds of God's grace? No.

Well, what about peril? This just speaks of danger in general, the inevitable threats of living out a Christian life in a fallen world where the world hates Christ and all that belong to him. No.

But what about the sword? It speaks of a large dagger, probably, which was often carried by assassins who concealed them in their garments. It is the treat of being murdered, a sword even being a symbol for execution, something that Paul later experienced. What about that? Might I react in such a ay as to be separated from God's love?

No. Verse 36 Paul quotes Psalm 44:22. There he reminds believers that suffering for Christ is going to be the inevitable lot of every believer. He says:

“Just as it is written, ‘FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.’”<sup>29</sup>

I might add that were it not for the laws in our country our fellow citizens would slaughter us because they hate Christ and all who belong to him with a hatred that you cannot imagine.

So Paul's point is: Even in the face inevitable and inexplicable suffering at the hands of the ungodly, God is still at work in us. Just read the testimony of those who have been martyred for the cause of Christ. I think of the reverent Julius Palmer from Oxford who embraced the doctrines of the Reformation against Roman Catholics. This was during the persecutions in England during the reign of Queen Mary. After refusing to recant, according to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, quote, “He was tried on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 1556 together with one Thomas Askin, fellow prisoner, Askin and one other, John Huen had been sentenced the day before and Mr. Palmer on the 15<sup>th</sup> was brought up for final judgment. Execution was ordered to follow the sentence and at five o'clock in the same afternoon at a place called the sand pits these three martyrs were fastened to a stake.

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<sup>29</sup> Romans 8:36.

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After devoutly praying together they sung the 31<sup>st</sup> Psalm. When the fire was kindled and it had seized their bodies, without even an appearance of enduring pain, they continued to cry, 'Lord Jesus, strengthen us. Lord Jesus, receive our souls,' until animation was suspended and human suffering was past.

"It is remarkable that when their heads had fallen together in a mass, as it were, by the force of the flames and the spectators though Palmer as lifeless, his tongue and lips again moved and were heard to pronounce the name of Jesus to whom be glory and honor forever," end quote.

Beloved, this is the work of the Spirit of God, not the work of man. Not even in the prospect of death can anything shake the faith of a genuine saint nor cause him to forfeit his salvation. In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:55:

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"<sup>30</sup>

And in verse 57 he says:

"...but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>31</sup>

So regardless of the adverse circumstances that might come our way, nothing can cause a true believer to stop trusting in Christ and somehow be separated from his love. In fact, what is amazing is every trial actually works together for our good. He has already stated that. So naturally Paul is going to conclude in verse 37:

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer..."<sup>32</sup>

υπερνικαω (hoop-er-nik-ah'-o) in the original language. It is a compound verb. νικαω (nik-ah'-o) means to defeat or to conquer. You have heard of Nike tennis shoes. That is what they are referring to there. And hyper is just really strengthens the verb and it means over and above and overwhelmingly. So he is saying here that we are completely, we are overwhelmingly victorious. We win the supreme victory. We are super conquerors if you will.

But you must understand. Our ability to triumph does not originate within ourselves. It is through him who loved us, the one who loved us while we were yet sinners. All of the glory goes to him. So, once again, please understand that the perseverance of the saint is not something that maintains salvation, it proves it. That is the point. This is so encouraging, isn't it? And if I can put it a little bit differently we are not told that we just persevere, the idea that somehow we just barely hang in there, that somehow we just eek

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:57.

<sup>32</sup> Romans 8:37.

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out a victory, as it were, and one final act of desperation as if we are on the verge of exhaustion and death like you see in the movies. The guy is just about to die. He just can't hardly make it and then suddenly he turns his sword just the right way and kills the bad guy. That is not what he is talking about here. He is talking about a total utter rout. He is talking about something that would surpass, I don't know, the full strength of the United States military attacking Somalia. I mean, this is beyond shock and awe. We overwhelmingly conquer. But we don't do this because of some innate power within ourselves. We do this because of the power of the Holy Spirit that works within us through him who loved us.

So, once again, you must understand that our perseverance, our eternal security has nothing to do with you. Take yourself out of the equation. It has everything to do with him who loved us, who called us according to his purpose, verse 28. It has everything with the one who foreknew us, literally who fore loved us, fore ordained us and then predestined us to become conformed to the image of his Son, verse 29. God gets all the glory.

But how can he say that we overwhelmingly conquer in every tragic circumstance? Well, the answer, my friend, is that the Lord uses the fires of adversity to temper the steel of our faith. In the midst of our sufferings he proves himself powerful even the example that I just gave you of reverend Palmer. His grace is always sufficient. His power is always perfect. He causes all of those things to work together for good. Has he not promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you?" Has he not said that by his divine power he has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness? Beloved, it is the universal testimony of the saints down through redemptive history that in the hour of greatest peril, the experience the presence of God more greatly than any other time in their life. Perhaps you have been there. He even causes us to rejoice in our tribulations.

Well, not me. I experience these... I don't find myself rejoicing. I don't find myself rejoicing in those kinds of trials.

My friend, if you say that, either God is not at work in you because your faith is not a saving faith or you have a terribly distorted understanding of the character and purposes of God, because you must understand that it is the present possession of every child of God to enjoy the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of God that helps exult in our tribulations. Paul has said this in Romans five verse three.

...we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Romans 5:3-5.

## The Christian's Exultation – Part 2

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 8:31-39

**Preached on:** Sunday, March 4, 2012

So, indeed, in all of these things we overwhelmingly conquer, no matter how painful, because of the power and love of God that works in us. There is no circumstance that can arise within our life that would cause us to react in such a way as to exceed the bounds or the limits of God's love for us.

So with all of this Paul concludes with a profound summary whereby he takes into consideration some enormous spectrums of challenges against our eternal security.

So he says in verse 38:

“For I am convinced...”<sup>34</sup>

I love that. Don't you like to be convinced. I hate it when I am just not sure and I am going to study the word until I am sure, because God wants us to be sure, especially about this.

“I am convinced...”<sup>35</sup>

By the way, grammatically it is the passive voice. He is not saying, “I have convinced myself.” That is not what he is saying. He is saying, “Something has convinced me.” Obviously this is a reference to not only his own experience, but also the revelation of God. And those of us who have walked with Christ, we can all say amen. We have seen him over and over and over again prove himself powerful on our behalf. He has never left us, never forsaken us. We have never stopped loving him.

“I am convinced...”<sup>36</sup>

I love the way Lloyd-Jones put it. He says, quote, “I have come through a process of persuasion to a settled conclusion.”

Don't you love that? Let me say it again.

“I have come through a process of persuasion to a settled conclusion.”

That is what Paul was saying. And then he is going to present these colossal spectrums of perceived threat to our security that might possibly creep into the mind of the consciousness of some distrusting soul.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life...”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Romans 8:38.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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Let's look at that one for a moment. What about death, life? Christ has already conquered death. That is no threat, right? We are also hidden in Christ who is our life. So nothing in life can possibly separate us from the love of God. So that is no threat.'

Well, what about angels or principalities? No. He is saying that no supernatural being, whether it is a holy angel or a demon can ever separate us from Christ, the love of Christ. So that is no threat. He says:

“...nor things present, nor things to come.”<sup>38</sup>

This speaks of our present and future tribulations. Some of you are going through some now. Hang on for a while and you will go on with more. You will experience more. What about them, the inevitable sufferings that arise in this fallen world? No, that is no threat. Jesus encouraged us in John 16:33. He says:

“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”<sup>39</sup>

“That is because you are hidden in me. No threat, no problem.”

But what about powers? He is speaking of anyone in a position of power and authority. No, no threat.

Verse 39. He says:

“...nor height, nor depth...”<sup>40</sup>

These were astrological terms of that day, perhaps negating the immensity or the totality of the physical universe as being able to pose any kind of a threat whatsoever. No, that is not a threat.

Then I love this. It is like he is just coming up with things here. Ok, no other created thing. Well, that pretty well covers it, right? I mean, this is just a sweeping generalization and I am sure Paul is smiling at this point. We all are. I mean this is just so overwhelmingly compelling. I mean, think about it. Since everything that exists has been created by God and he is the only uncreated being in existence, this means that nothing in creation should be considered a potential threat to our security.

So he says none of these things:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> John 16:33.

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“...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>41</sup>

You know, that last phrase is so important, my friends. Most people believe in the love of God. Oh, they preach that. They love that. That is why every funeral you go to everybody goes to heaven, right? Everybody goes to heaven because God is a God of love. But, oh, my, if you quote to them the words of Jesus in John three where he says that the wrath of God abides on the man who does not believe in the Son, then you will find those same people becoming absolutely apoplectic with rage. They reject the gospel. They do not understand that God sent his own Son to die on a cross to appease his holy and just wrath so that all who believe in him could be reconciled to God and experience his love.

Dear friends, please hear me. Unless you place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the wrath of God abides upon you and you will never experience his saving love. So, indeed, the love of God is in Christ Jesus.

So concludes Paul's great treatise on the assurance of the believer. And, my friend, I pray that you are convinced as he was that there is nothing that separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. There are only two reasons why you could possibly remain unconvinced. Number one, because you are ignorant of the Word of God and I say that with kindness. Or, number two, because of unbelief. You see it, you just don't want to believe it. And it is sad. I have talked with even a number of pastors, some even of late who have heard these series and they said, “Brother, I believe these things with all my heart. These things are overwhelmingly compelling, but if I were to preach them in my church, I would be run out before the service was over.”

Oh, how I pray that each of us will relax in the power and the love of God, to be able to echo the words of the write of Hebrews who said in Hebrews 6:19:

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast.”<sup>42</sup>

I wish to close with a brief story. As is often the case, as I am meditating upon the Word of God there are different hymns that come to my mind. And there was one that kept echoing in my heart over and over again and it was one that was written by a great preacher of Scotland, George Matheson who was born in Glasgow, the law 1800s and eventually pastored a large church in Edinburgh. And as a young boy he had an eye disease and eventually by the age of 18 he lost his sight. But even with that he became a great preacher of the Word. But he experienced something that was even more painful in his life. He was engaged to the love of his life and she decided that she could not be married to a blind man and so she broke off the engagement. And for any of us who have

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<sup>41</sup> Romans 8:39.

<sup>42</sup> Hebrews 6:19.



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experienced the loss of that kind of love, you know hat a heartbreak it is. And many believe that in the midst of that great trial in his life the Spirit of God motivated him to pen the words of a great hymn, one of my favorites that perfectly summarizes Romans chapter eight.

I will give you but the first stanza.

Oh 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.

Dear Christian, rejoice in what Christ has done for you. Meditate on these truths. Talk about them with your family members, your friends. Preach these truths and, certainly, live consistently with them. And never allow anyone or anything make you feel that somehow your salvation is in jeopardy because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to become such a part of our life that it motivates all that we do. And, Lord, again, I pray that you would be pleased by your grace to bring conviction to some poor sinner within the sound of my voice. Oh, God, cause them to see that they are under your wrath and unless they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, they will perish in their sins and never experience the love of God. So, Lord, we commit them to you. Use us as instruments of righteousness to preach the gospel that all those that you have chosen in eternity past might, indeed, hear and believe. We pray these things in Jesus' name and of his sake. Amen.*

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