

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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July 5th, 2026

Sermon Title: More Than Conquerors

Sermon Text: Romans 8:38-39

Rom. 8:38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

Rom. 8:39 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.

Main Point: Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's unchanging love.

Outline:

1. Imminent Threats (8:38-39a)
2. Transcendent Love (8:39b)

Introduction

Today is the last sermon I plan to preach from Romans chapter 8. And you may have noticed I gave way more attention to this chapter than any other so far in Romans. And that might lead you to conclude that this is it: we've reached the summit in our climb to the top of Mount Romans.

But actually, Sinclair Ferguson pointed out when he was preaching Romans that today's passage is really just base camp, because Paul going to ascend even higher in Romans 11. So there is more glorious material for worship ahead of us. We have so much more ahead of us as we enter Romans 9.

But even as we conclude Romans 8 today, I want to begin by reminding of where Paul himself is at this point.

You know, it is possible for a minister to give you solid theology, to explain the Bible well, and to even give you Jesus Christ in the gospel, even though he himself is not believing... not convinced... Is Paul like that? Well he's not. Because when Paul talks about himself here he says that he is "sure" of these things. Some translations say that he is "persuaded" of this.

And we saw this last week: Paul has faced tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and danger. How did he do that? He was persuaded he tells us in today's passage of these things: that those things could not separate him from the love of Christ.

Paul not only knows these things, but he is *sure* of these things. This is precious and important for us to see: it is one thing to apprehend the things of the gospel and the content of it, but it is entirely something else for us to take hold of it and say not only is this true for those who believe in Jesus Christ, it is true for *me*. Many Christians have good theology, they have their doctrine down, but they still need to be persuaded, to be sure, to be convinced like Paul is here. Paul wants for us what he enjoys: that deep, convincing inward persuasion.

How do we get that persuasion, too? Before I start, I want to mention two things that the Bible tells us will help us have the kind of persuasion Paul has. First, we see modeled for us that we ask God directly for more faith. In Luke 17:5, Jesus is teaching on the subject of forgiveness, and the apostles do the right thing: they go to Jesus and say to him, "Increase our faith!" And there we see that our faith isn't static, is it? It rises and falls. We want it to increase, so we go to Christ and ask him to give us greater faith. A desperate father came to Jesus in Mark 9:24 and said, "I believe. Help my unbelief!" So first, we ask God directly.

The second way that Scripture mentions to see our faith increase so that we can be persuaded of these things is to immerse ourselves in God's word. We'll see this later when we get to the middle of Romans 10, but Paul tells us this: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Paul is saying, to trust in someone, you have to know that someone. You have to hear him speak. The Scriptures are Christ's words, and so when we dwell on them, we will see our faith grow.

Today, I want us to hear what Paul is persuaded of so that we can chase that same persuasion for ourselves. And in the process we'll be doing both of these things I just mentioned this morning. We've already cried out to God in prayer that he would grow our faith and give us the kind of inward persuasion Paul had. But we're also going to listen to God's words here.

Paul mentions imminent threats, but he answers those threats with God's transcendent love. If you want to know where that persuasion the Paul has comes from, we need to start here.

1. Imminent Threats (8:38-39a)

First, I want us to meditate upon the imminent threats that Paul considers as theoretical separators between us and the love of God. This is in verses 38 and 39. And maybe this will be familiar as you think of last week's passage.

"I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us..."

We'll finish the rest of this verse in a moment. But just pause here and think a second. Interrogate the text with me a moment, "Didn't Paul literally just give us a list of possible separators *last week?*" Verse 35:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?"

And now we have a similar list in verse 38-39. Why does he do this twice?

Any time you see something in the Bible that *seems* redundant or repetitive, ask, "Why did God *breathe* this out?" What is it about this text that God wanted it here rather than not?

Peter tells us that in Scripture "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Jesus says that not the smallest iota or dot will pass from the Law. Nothing is here that's not supposed to be here, in other words.

So with that conviction in place, God is inviting us not to dismiss anything, but to instead ask this question: why is this here rather than not? Why didn't Paul save the scroll space and the ink and just keep the first list?

Part of the answer I want us to notice is, Paul *isn't* repeating the same things in these lists. These are quite different lists. Because that first list: "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword..." that was a list of physical and historical experiences. The sort of things we go through... or at least things we might be *afraid* to go through. The sort of things that Paul went through. That list in verse 35 is the sort of things that when we experience them ourselves we are tempted to feel abandoned by God.

But here in today's passage, Paul is going widescreen. He's pulling back the camera off of each of us and he's going to the cosmic scale. He's not talking about nakedness and hunger. He's going to a list of possible things that might be behind those things: to supernatural things: the big ideas: death and life. Angels and rulers. Things present and things to come. Powers. Height and depth. ANYTHING.

So that first list was Paul asking, "Will my pain cause God to leave me? Or did my pain happen because he's left me?" That was last week.

Now Paul is pulling the camera way way back and saying, "Is there any force in all the universe strong enough to pry me from the grip of my loving and sovereign and unchanging God?" He's surveying the whole universe.

He says, "Can death and life?" These are more abstract ideas, but they connect to all our lives. We lose loved ones. We eventually die. Paul mentions and meditates upon his own death in a few places in his letters. One is Philippians where he tells us that it is *better* to die and go be with Christ. Why? "To live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21-23). So death is most certainly not an obstacle to God's love.

When we pray in the midst of sickness and death, we should pray for healing. James tells us to. But I've done the research, and the current death rate except for two people in the Bible (Enoch and Elijah) is 100%. And yet Paul also tells us that when we do die, it doesn't separate us from God's love. Paul tells believers, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). We ought to pray for faith in the face of death, not merely for physical healing.

So death and life can't separate us from his love.

What about cosmic powers? Paul mentions angels and rulers. I take him to be referring to fallen and unfallen angels here. Is there some spiritual power out there that has the ability to separate us from God's love? Is there any demonic power, or perhaps a false and fallen angel that might deceive God's people or destroy our faith?

At the beginning of Job, we see Satan wants to attempt this very thing: to bring hardships upon Job so that Job is separated from the love of God. We see in Paul's letters and in the gospels that there are indeed fallen angels who desire to destroy the faith of God's people.

Yet the Scriptures also show us that this can't overthrow God's love. Why? Paul tells us in Colossians 2:14,

“[Christ cancelled] the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col. 2:14-15).

1 John 3:8 tells us that

“the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that

“through death [Christ destroyed] the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver[ed] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

As a young Christian, was very fearful and concerned about the demonic, about fallen angels. I had seen enough scary movies that I knew how bad demons were. And yet, when Hollywood thinks of the demonic, they think of something fantastical. They think of ghosts and things like that. But also, they don't really think of these things in light of the victory and power of Jesus.

So Paul says, angels and demons cannot separate us from his love. In Christ, we don't have to fear the demonic. Christ has destroyed those works, and he's stripped evil spirits of their power. Hollywood might tell you to fear the demonic,

but Scripture tells us that our God is sovereign even over *those* things that we might be tempted to fear.

Paul mention things past and present as possible separators. Things that happened before, and things that are happening now. Is there something in our *past* that can separate us from God's love? Maybe you torture yourself with something you've done. When believers experience these thoughts, God is using them to turn us back to him to rely on him and believe his promises. What are these promises?

"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

"As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

"You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

There is nothing in our past that can separate us from God's love.

There's also nothing present or future that can separate us from God's love. You know, believers aren't immune from anxiety about what's happening in the world, or about what will happen in the world around us. We tend to look back with rose colored glasses, and we tend to look forward with a great deal of trepidation.

Generally, we tend to love the *past* Providence of God. We look back at his past dealings with us and we feel like we're able to look back and smile, knowing that he was doing a good thing. But often our love of the Providence of God sometimes disappears when we talk about the present. Things look too scary, things intimidate us. We're taking in way too much news... more than the average person was ever meant to know. We pretend at being omniscient and try to read all the news that's fit to print, and a lot of news that isn't fit to print, but they printed it anyway.

And even when that *isn't* our diet, our imaginations still run wild, and these things present cause us to tremble. We struggle to believe in the present and future the very thing that we usually believe when looking back at the past. This is a little cheesy for me to say this way, but what if instead of rose colored glasses, we put on God's Sovereignty colored glasses and viewed the past and the future through those lenses?

Paul goes further. It's almost like he's running out of cosmic grand ideas and he moves almost into the realms of physics and mathematics: "nor height nor depth." He's just reaching out now for anything. It's like he's saying, "You can't imagine the thing that is powerful enough to separate you from God and his love. There's just no created thing that can do that. And the only thing that is not in creation is God himself, and he won't separate you either."

Paul has swept the cosmos from one end to the other. He has swept the heavenly beings and found none powerful enough. He has considered spiritual reality. He's considered physical reality. He's considered everything and he has concluded, "There. Is. Nothing." All that's left is the love of God.

2. Transcendent Love (8:39b)

Now, as we move to our second point today, I want us to consider another reason that Paul circles back around to the idea of what might separate us from God's love.

Here it is: Paul is worshiping. This is worship. It's doxology. Doesn't this almost read like a song as we wrap up Romans 8? Paul is hovering around this amazing theme. And this theme is our second point this morning. That theme is the transcendent love of God in Christ. And as he circles around this theme over and over again, he finds more and more reasons to worship. And in some ways Paul is modeling the biblical practice of meditation for us here. We live in a cultural melting pot which has sort of adopted this eastern idea of meditation, thinking that it means to empty your mind or forget or to get into a blank headspace.

We need to reclaim that word, "meditation," because it's a good and wonderful word, and something we should be practicing.

In biblical meditation we don't empty our minds, but we fill our minds with some element of God's word or Scriptural truth and we circle it, we repeat it, we consider it in different ways, and we pray about it. And here Paul is, and he's meditating on the love of God that is bigger and grander and more faithful than anything we can muster up for ourselves. Paul is saying,

“The only way I can *experience* nakedness and suffering and danger and hunger and tribulation without being crushed or folding or giving up, or deciding that he’s forgotten me... the only way I can experience these things and stand firm is if I’m anchored into the one who *doesn’t* change. Whose *knowledge* doesn’t change, whose *love* doesn’t change, whose *being* doesn’t change, whose *determination* to act does not change or vary.”

If it’s all about me and what I can do, I’m in big trouble. And I won’t be able to avoid doubt and trouble and struggle. Why is that? Well, it’s because I’m *always* changing. Every moment of my life I’m changing. I’m growing. I’m shrinking. I’m learning new things. I’m remembering old things. I’m getting more holy. Sometimes I’m not... I sin. I go through all this stuff, and in the process I waver and wobble, and I need someone, something that isn’t like *that*. And so do you. This is why I get such a bee in my bonnet about that modern saying, “I am enough.” Because even if you feel like it now, you won’t be enough. You are going to fail you.

And Paul says to us, “Christian, worship your God. Because he is not like you. His love does not change.” God doesn’t do any of these things. He can’t learn new things, he can’t grow or shrink in his immensity. He can’t even remember because all of time is present to him. There is no remembering for God, there is only knowing. He will never be more or less holy. All the ways that we change, God doesn’t.

How do we know these things? Well he gave us the reason in verse 29:

“Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...and those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Do you see where I’m putting the emphasis here? Who is the one acting? Who is the one saving? Who is the one predestining? Who is the one calling and justifying? “He! He! He!” Where are we in the passage? We are just “those.” We are the objects, he is the subject. He does... and we benefit.

And I used the word “transcendent” in this second point because his love is above us, prior to us, his love goes before us, and doesn’t depend on us. God’s people are simply following in the wake of the grace of God, enjoying his abundant kindness.

Everything we enjoy came from his initiative. He loved us before. He loves us now. He loves us forever. How do you know?

I know this is so simplistic. I’m going to get really simplistic, so get yourself ready:

“Jesus loves me this I know/
For the Bible tells me so/
Little ones to him belong/
They are weak, but he is strong.”

If you are too grown up for that, I don’t know what to tell you. It’s a pity that we can think of ourselves as too sophisticated for something as precious as this. Maybe Jesus knew that we think of ourselves as fancy; sometimes too fancy to just benefit from simple truth, and so Jesus prayed,

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.”

“God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”

Do not be too old to appreciate simple truths and lean on them. How do I know Jesus loves me? The Bible tells me so.

1 John 4:19: “We love God because he first loved us.”

Jeremiah 31:3: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”

How do you know he loves you? Listen to the promises.

Will you let the transcendent love of Jesus calm your fears, and set your heart at ease? Will you join Paul today so that you can also say, “Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Conclusion

Imagine if we were to really believe these things.

How might our prayers be different? Might we be more willing to take what we perceive to be risks? How might we suffer differently? How might we lead our families or participate in the church differently? Is it possible we'd put our priorities in different places?

I mentioned this before: that our faith wavers and is not static. It ebbs and flows from time to time. Sometimes our faith is weak, sometimes it's strong. But my hope for us is that we can say, "I am sure. I am convinced. I — like Paul — am persuaded of these things."

But let me suggest this: there will be a noticeable effect in our lives as that happens. As we become more and more convinced that no earthly trial or cosmic power will be able to sever us from Christ, we will notice our prayers shift from desperate survival to bold, kingdom-advancing confidence. We will become more willing to risk our comforts, our reputations, and our resources, knowing our eternal security is entirely untouchable. We will stop panicking over the shifting culture and start living with the peace of those who know the war has already been won. When the worst the world can do only speeds up our journey into the presence of God, fear will begin to lose its grip on us.

Rest in this simple, biblical truth today: you are weak, but He is strong.

Let's pray.