



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Indomitable Love

February 9, 2020

Romans 8:35-39

Clint Pressley

*<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.”*

*<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <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.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Anna Bartlett Warner was born into a prosperous family in 1827 and she grew up across the river from the United States Military Academy at West Point. In fact, she’s buried there. At first her life was ideal; she and her sister were privately educated at home and had the finest things in life until she was 20 years old. That’s when her father lost the family fortune and they were all but destitute. She never married and never moved from her childhood home. She matured in a time of national strife when 600,000 Americans butchered one another in the Civil War. Many of those young men she had taught in Bible classes at West Point and yet this hard-bitten woman who had seen so much pain gave us one of the most enduring phrases in all of hymnody, “Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so.”

And in many ways, that’s what the Apostle Paul is saying to us in this beautiful passage at the end of Romans 8. It is God’s indomitable love for us in Jesus, a love that should be rehearsed, celebrated, believed and should put strength into your soul. That’s what I want to happen today. For Christians, I want you to be fully convinced of God’s love for you in Christ so that you live stronger, sleep sounder and endure greater. And for those not in Christ, I want you to hear

the Gospel that God so loved the world that He gave His only son through life, death and resurrection; and that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. I want you to quit running from God and instead see and believe and be forgiven by His love for you in Jesus. There is a promise for you in the passage.

### **God's Love For You Will Never Die**

Let's just talk about God's love and look at some things to consider.

#### **God's love is by grace**

What that means is that we don't do anything to get God to love us. In fact, all we have ever done is to give Him reason *not* to love us. We ignore His blessings, forget His provision - we break His commandments and presume on His affection and, yet, He loves us.

Just look how it started three times in this passage. There's the fifth rhetorical question in verse 35, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" And the obvious answer is – no one and no thing! Then in verse 37 we are told we are "more than conquerors through him who loved us." And then look at the strength of God's love at the end of verse 39. Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God. Look where that love is found, In Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Can you call Him Lord? Does He rule your thoughts and dominate your desires? Have you surrendered your life in joyful submission to Jesus as your all? Have your sins been taken to the cross of Jesus and lifted off your back onto His? Here is love! Here is grace! Here is Christianity, when you've heard that God loves you specifically and sent Jesus to die for you in particular! And did so while you were still in sin. That's when Christ died for us. And I'm asking you today to stop running from that love but instead turn and run to the love of God in Christ.

Jesus said, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and you will find rest for your souls." And for you who are brothers and sisters in Jesus, be strengthened by the promise that nothing—no sin, no mistake, no transgression— can separate us from the love of Christ.

Because, God's love is by grace.

#### **God's love sustains us in trouble**

Let's read all of verse 35 and, as we do, notice the list of pain there. Paul gives us seven items that Martin Lloyd Jones called a grand staircase of pain. <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?* Paul has extended the question and says, “Do you think any of these things can separate us from the love of Christ?” And the knee-jerk answer is, “It can sure feel like it.” Let’s look at a few of the items.

Tribulation – It’s a general term. It’s pressing like the threshing floor of wheat or the mashing of grapes. It’s to have something stand on you until it hurts. January has been an awfully long month for many of you carrying pressure – unexpected pressure. That’s this word and it becomes a weapon against us in the hand of our enemy. Akin to that is the word “distress.” It’s hardship. This is an internal pressure on your heart and soul. *Stenochora*. Steno = narrow. Chora = space. A narrowing space. This is being confined or oppressed. It’s being emotionally claustrophobic and to start feeling like a prisoner in a relationship or job or even marriage. And you feel like you will hyperventilate. It is to be absolutely stuck.

Those two are internal but the last five are ascending physical pain that starts with persecution and ends in death, and Paul just walks us up this staircase asking at every point, “Do you think this will separate you from God’s love for us in Christ?” And the obvious answer is “Of course not!” These seven enemies in verse 35 have been the common enemy of Christians from the earliest days of the church. And the question Paul is asking is: can circumstances cause a believer to sin himself *out* of salvation? At issue are the power and performance of the love of Christ.

Here is a good place to remember what Jesus said to His disciples in John 16:33 *“<sup>33</sup> I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* Because God’s love is given to us by grace and God’s love sustains us in trouble.

There is a third consideration about God’s love.

### **God’s love is victorious in hardship**

Let’s take verses 36 and 37 together. See what Paul does here in verse 36. <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.”*

He quotes Psalm 44:22, reminding us that God’s people have always faced inexplicable suffering. Now to get to the punch of verse 37, you have to read it with verses 35-36. Let’s go

back and get it. <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.”*

<sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Those things listed in verse 35 don't separate us from the love of Christ. In fact, it's those things that become the playing field for our victories. There are three things about our victories in trouble.

Look at the extent of our victory. <sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”* In all these things - the seven things listed in verse 35 and the ten things listed down in verses 38-39. All these things. – every human condition, every possible contingency, every imaginable situation. He's not saying a conqueror in most things BUT in all these things.

Look at the degree of our victory. Even the English translation hasn't changed since before the King James Version. Hyper – Nike. Hyper victory. In Latin is *Supervincimus*. It's one thing to be a conqueror. It's hard work, pride, strength, motivation, determination and skill. All these things can make you a conqueror. It takes the love of God to make you *more* than a conqueror.

We aren't conquerors over trouble and pain. But through the struggle there's a difference. Isn't it what Paul meant in Romans 5:3-5, <sup>3</sup> *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* In Christ, we are *Supervincimus*, more than conquerors.

And notice something else. Notice the **source** of our victory. <sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* You see it, right? The means by which we conquer is not our own strength! It's Christ who gives the capacity to overcome and move pointedly, it is the cross of Christ where God's love is on full and final display. That's how we walk through the valley; because Christ is with us. I want you to know that and believe it. I want you to be strengthened in your heart and soul by the Gospel. I want you to live with joy

because you are loved by God in Christ. God's love is by grace. God's love sustains us in trouble. God's love is victorious in hardship.

### **God's love is indestructible in Christ**

Let me show you what I mean in verses 38-39. Here Paul lists 10 items in pairs, and you'll notice that, in verse 38, Paul makes it personal. I am *convinced* – *presumed* – I am *sure*! This is not a matter of opinion but of settled fact. And if none of these items listed can separate us from God, then what do we have to be afraid of? Look at the pairs, four of them and then two items that are not in pairs. This is a rhetorical device to say, "whatever you can think of or go through."

Life or death

Angels nor rulers (Demons)

Present – temptations or sufferings. Future – uncertainties, worry and anxiety.

Powers – beyond us.

Height nor depth.

Then he just abandons specifics and gives a sweeping generalization – or anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It's a sweeping tidal wave of God's love given to us at the cross of Jesus. You cannot know the love of God apart from the cross of Jesus. We find out that because Jesus died, God's love for us will *never* die.

God's love is given by grace. It will sustain you in trouble; it's victorious in hardship and indestructible in Christ.

Come and receive the redeeming love of God found only in Christ.

*(Pastor prays)*