

## **ROMANS 8: More Than Conquerors**

### **"Finding Victory Right Now"**

Scripture: Romans 8:35-39

Delivered during the COVID-19 crisis via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on June 21, 2020,  
by Pastor Steven Edelman

#### **(SLIDE 1) INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us online. We are so glad you are with us. My name is Steve, and I am one of the pastors here at Central. I just want to say Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there. Fathers and men, what you do matters! Thank you for all the seen and unseen things that you do. It was great to hear all the kids talking about their fathers in the Father's Day video that Tom put together. I recognize that this is a hard day for many for so many different reasons. God knows each situation and can help you overcome the difficulty.

#### **How do you find victory right now? Do you have the right tool for the job?**

**STORY:** I have this memory of my dad working on his tent trailer in our garage. He spent a lot of time taking each component apart so that he could fiberglass the cracked sides to refurbish it. One night, my dad was working late on the trailer, and I went to see how he was doing. When I walked into the garage, I noticed that he was exasperated and at the end of himself to the point of tears. With all his strength he was trying to loosen a bolt with a wrench and continued to use a method that wasn't working. In a defeated voice, he said, "I don't think I can do it son... everything depends on loosening this bolt!" Looking back, I realize that my dad became emotionally separated from the family because he was so focused on the problem. As a 12-year-old, I often worked with my dad on all kinds of projects. My twelve-year-old brain assessed the situation. The garage was a mess with a variety of tools and dust. He had tried to use WD-40 to release it, but it didn't work. (As a side note, my dad is very gifted at building and fixing things and isn't that guy who makes a bigger mess after using a tool.) After I looked around, I said, "Dad, you are using the wrong tool! Use the large socket set so you have more leverage!" He looked up at me and said, "Hmmmm.... That just might work!" You could see some assurance and hope come back into the situation. I handed him the socket set which was hidden in plain sight in the middle of all the other tools. He

locked the right tool in place which increased the leverage and strength needed defeat this challenge. On the first turn the stubborn bolt finally moved.

Just like in the story, we can get caught up in life's difficulty and forget to use the right tools to help us find victory. When we look outward, we may not know what to do with fatherless homes, broken relationships, abuse, racism, police brutality, and injustice. When we look inward, we may not know what to do with our own failure, unforgiveness, moments in which we are brutal to others, and our own brokenness. We start to ask questions like: **Does God really love me? How can he love me? I am a mess!**

Today, I want to talk about "**How to find victory right now.**" **What are the tools, formulas, or components that need to be lived out to give us the assurance we need?** I want to show you that God has given us the right resources to overcome the outer and inner struggles. The right means for us to find victory right now is in Romans 8. It's plain sight for us to grab a hold of.

Remember from last week. Here at the end of Romans 8, Paul throws down the gauntlet five times. He asks five questions that lead to victory and issues a challenge to anybody and everybody in heaven, on earth, or in hell. Paul dares anyone to pick up the gauntlet and challenge the truths that he will declare. **Today, I am talking about the fifth question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"**

**If we want to find victory, there is no resource stronger than Christ's love to make it through life's difficulties.** As you are going to see, when we face trouble, we can be confident in Christ's love for us.

**First, TOOL #1, in our struggle, apply Christ's love to overcome our outer struggle.**

#### **(SLIDE 2) TOOL #1 – APPLY CHRIST'S LOVE TO OUR OUTER STRUGGLE**

**Paul gives us several examples of outer problems or situations that feel like they get in the way of God's love.**

**(SLIDE 3)** Look with me at verse 35, which says, "<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?*"

Again, the question Paul asks is this “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ!*” **DISCLAIMER:** How you answer this question will determine how you find victory in life’s difficulties. **Because of our outer struggles, it can seem like God’s love is distant or detached.** Paul lists all the potential things that seem like they bring separation between Christ and the believer.

Paul’s list gives us a number of outward circumstances that will not separate us from the love of Christ. Let’s take a look:

**(SLIDE 4)**

- **Tribulation or trouble** means to undergo struggle, trials, temptation, suffering, or affliction. The word used for tribulation means “threshing sledge.” The force of your circumstances feels like a threshing sledgehammer at times, pressing you down! When you go through trouble will that separate you from God’s love?
- **Distress:** to suffer anguish, trouble, strain, agony; not knowing which way to turn or what to do. It’s more of being confined by your circumstances and you can’t breathe. When you go through distress will that separate you from God’s love?
- **Persecution:** to be abused, mocked, ridiculed, shamed, mistreated, ignored, neglected, harassed, attacked, or injured. When you go through persecution will that separate you from God’s love?
- **Famine:** to have no food, to be starving and have no way to secure food.
- **Nakedness:** to be stripped of all clothes and earthly comforts; to be bare, having all earthly possessions taken away.
- **Danger:** to be exposed to the most severe risks; to be confronted with the most terrible dangers to one’s body, mind, soul, property, family, and loved ones.
- **Sword:** to be killed; to suffer martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

**The question on the table is can any of these things separate us from the love of Christ?** Paul is saying a resounding no. Why? Because Christ’s love is not

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<sup>1</sup> Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (1996). *Romans* (pp. 170–171). Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

distant, detached, or dependant on circumstance. It's indefinite. It's finite. It's secure. It's in plain sight for us to access as we are going through difficulty.

**(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 5)**

**FACT. No circumstance will ever separate us from the love of God.** He is assuring us that we will be delivered if we know and access God's love. He is focused on the what. He is saying, no difficulty or trial "can separate us from the love of God!" Therefore, Christ gives the believer the tools to find victory no matter what we are going through.

When something difficult happens to us what do we say? **Why is this happening?** **Where is God in all of this? Why does he allow us to go through painful circumstances?**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

Personally, I have the tendency to focus on the pain rather than accessing the right tool to bring me to a better place. I have had days in which everything has gone wrong which has left me defeated and grumpy. For example, the outer problems could be: the insurance company is not paying for what they committed to, you find out someone is saying things that are not true behind your back, someone in your family is struggling with mental health, and your kid accidentally drops a massive tub of yogurt on the floor. And then you add COVID and injustice on top of it all... it seems like a tipping point at times!

**Do these circumstances separate us from the love of God? No.**

Rather than applying that truth to the situation, I continue to us the wrong tool. I can become furious and irritated with the situation and treat my kids and my wife negatively, even if they don't deserve it. It presents my wife with a decision to match my grumpy nature or to meet me with love. I have experienced both responses. However, when she counters with love, and I receive her love, it disarms me. Her love draws me out of a loop that clouds my perspective in which I am focused on the tribulations. To a place in which I know that I am loved and in turn, I can love others well too. God's love disarms us when we realize what He has done for us.

**(SLIDE 6) Pain is a great teacher that tells us something is wrong. God's love is the cast that we need to wrap our pain in so we can heal.**

**(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 7)**

## **APPLICATION:**

Okay, so what about all the upheaval and difficult going on in the world? We all know that the George Floyd incident sparked a raging fire of injustice. We see some really difficult things like racism, brutality, instability, and injustice. The Bible tells us, as long as there is sin in the world there is going to be things like racism and pain. **Why? Because this is a human heart problem.** Sin is always going to be assaulting what is good. The enemy wants to cause confusion and chaos, so we don't focus on the God-given tools to find victory. We need to wrap these situations in God's love. Deep down, we all want to be loved in, but we struggle to love others in difficulty. Thankfully, God gives us the resources beyond our self to love others in difficulty. It's through God's love that we can draw others out of their painful circumstances to Himself.

**This is why we need to remember that the problems of this world will not take away or dilute Christ's love for us.** Not governments. Not racism. Not abuse of power. Not a virus or a downfall in the economy will separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing. **That is what you and I need. It's not virtue signaling or more clever social media posts. It's a genuine love that draws us out of our problems to Christ himself. It's a love that enters into the brokenness so others can find this love as well.** Once realized, we can unlock this truth and apply it to the external circumstances that for the most part, make us miserable. It's the key to contentment, joy, and loving others well.

**This is what Paul is showing us, while Christ's love is certain, so are our troubles!**<sup>2</sup> However, the love of Christ draws us out of the problems and to the security found only in him. **In our struggle, Christ's inseparable love draws us out of our outer problems to himself.**

Secondly, Christ's inseparable love draws us out of our inner problems to himself. TOOL #2, apply Christ's love to our inner struggle.

### **(SLIDE 8) TOOL #2 – APPLY CHRIST'S LOVE TO OUR INNER STRUGGLE**

**Next, Paul looks at how we respond inwardly to the problems we face.**

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<sup>2</sup> Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 339). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

**(SLIDE 9)** Look with me at verse 36, which says, “*As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

In verse 36, Paul is reflecting upon the words of the psalmist (in Ps 44:22), which talks about how we are like sheep who are facing troubles and eventually death. Okay, it's a sober, morbid reflection. To be faced with difficulty is nothing new for the Christian. In fact, God's people have always experienced trials. Paul is saying that throughout all the ages, not just in the New Testament age, but the Old Testament age, Christians have faced terrible things. In other words, if you become a follower of Christ it doesn't mean you are exempt from experiencing difficulty. But it's more of how we view ourselves and respond to the difficulty.

**(SLIDE 10)** In verse 37 he says, “<sup>37</sup>*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”

These are the key words that I want to focus on. Sheep that conquer? Most of us think of lions, wolves or bears that conquer, not sheep. This is metaphoric language of course. But the image is not pointless or absurd. A flock of sheep are helpless! But they are conquerors, because they have been loved by the Lord Jesus Christ and have been made victorious “through him.”

“Yet, that is not the most startling thing about this verse, for the victory of Christian is described as being more than an ordinary victory. **(SLIDE 11)** Notice the words, “we are more than conquerors!” The words “more than” means “*in place of,*” or *over and above,*” “*more than!*” It's where we get our word *super* from. In this verse, **Paul is literally saying, “We are super conquerors!” Not just victors, but super victors! “More than conquerors.” That is what we are now and how we will regard ourselves through all eternity.** In other words, “we are super conquerors” only through the one who loved us. That is who we are! This is the tool that we need to pry away the doubt when we are going through difficulty. Based upon this doctrinal certainty, verse 37 says **we are not people who just survive, we are people who thrive when we live out our identity in Christ's love.**

**(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 12)** When you are going through inner struggle that causes you to doubt, and believe that you are unlovable, reach for the right tool. Paul is saying, that we have access to Christ's inseparable love. The fact that you are loved by

God will never change. We are victors! It is a wonderful assurance that Christ's love for us will always be there.

**ILLUSTRATION:** "G. K. Chesterton once said that the really great lesson of the story of "Beauty and the Beast" is that a thing must be loved before it is loveable. A person must be loved before that person can be loveable. Some of the most unlovely people I have known got that way because they thought that nobody loved them. **The fact of the matter is that until we feel loved, we cannot love.** That's not only a principle of theology but of psychology and sociology as well. Just as abused children grow up to abuse their children, loved children grow up to love their children. Loved persons are able to love. Unloved persons are not. Christianity says something startling. **It says that God loves and accepts us "just as we are."**" Therefore, when this truth sinks down into our heart and mind, we can love and accept ourselves. In so doing, we can love and accept others.

**A skeptic would say that the Christian is being unrealistic.** Notice that Paul is not closing his eyes or oblivious to the destructive forces around him. He is in the middle of the struggle, his life is on the line, and he is holding on to the love of Christ. Someone may say, the whole thing is foolishness. **To the skeptic, I would say,** what assurances are you holding on to? Human ones? I don't know if you have noticed, but humanity is really making a mess of the world right now. I would rather cling to the love of God than what the world is offering!

**APPLICATION:** Many people feel that God does not love them, that He just could not love them. They feel unworthy of His love, for they come too short, are too disobedient, and fail too often. Fathers, I know that you many of you feel like a failure because you see all the mistakes that you have made. In this moment you are finding it difficult to love your kids because you don't believe you are loveable. Because you don't feel you are loveable, you are struggling to love your family well. How could God possibly love them when they go against His will so much? The results of such feelings are a sense of unworthiness, self-condemnation, discouragement, a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and defeated living. **The problem is that your assurance of His love will be destroyed by your sin. This is what happens when we continue to use the wrong tool to deal with our inner struggle.**

Paul is saying access the right tool to find victory in your inner struggle. Yes, you are guilty. However, Jesus made it right by demonstrating His love for you on the cross. When you start to live out this assurance, it changes you. When you start to use God's love to clean up the internal part of your life, it helps us to live out the assurance of this text. When we get glimpses of our own sin, we start to ask questions like, "How can God love me?" "Why would he love me?"

This is where we need to go back to the toolbox and pull out this wonderful text "nothing can separate me from the love of God!" Every time we struggle with doubt, depression, and despair, we can apply this truth. We can grab hold of God's love no matter what we are feeling or experiencing. This is how we can keep applying Christ's love to our inner problems. What Christ did for us needs to sink in! God's love has **been demonstrated by what Jesus did on the cross. He went to hell and back for you. He suffered for you. He is interceding for you. Why because you are loved!**

When the truth, "nothing can separate us from the love of God" sinks in we are drawn out of our inner struggle to Christ. We can live in victory now that we are more than conquerors because we are loved.

As you can see, Christ's inseparable love draws us out of our inner problems to himself.

Lastly, **TOOL #3 – turn up the volume of Christ's love in our life**

### **(SLIDE 13) 3. TOOL #3 – TURN UP THE VOLUME OF CHRIST'S LOVE**

Finally, Paul turns up the volume of Christ's love. He lets it all out. If we were sitting at a keyboard of a great instrument, we would turn up the volume and play completely out. Fortissimo. In his emotion, he even switches to the first person.

**(SLIDE 14)** Look with me at verse 38-39 which says, "<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.*"

\*I will only talk about the first three listed for time take.

#### **a) Death or Life (SLIDE 15)**

First, Paul begins with death. That makes sense because death is the great divider. It separates us from our loved ones, our friends, our family members. Death ends

everything we have known in this life. Death stops your career, your hobbies, your home life and your friendships. Death pulls the e-brake and it all comes to a screeching halt.

But what about life? Many things in life create separation. Fighting separates families. Poverty separates whole classes of people. Sickness separates us from our loved ones. Age. Geography. Politics. **Our sin can cause us to do stupid things that separate us from those around us.** So many experiences of life pull us apart from each other. Can life itself—with all its ups and downs—pull us away from God?"

But here is the truth, death won't pull you away from God's love. Neither will life.

### b) **Angels or Demons (SLIDE 16)**

Next, Paul lists angels or demons. The “angels” refer to the God’s good helpers who worship God day and night. The “principalities” are the evil spirits who followed Satan when he fell from heaven. They are commonly referred to as demons.

But immediately, we ask, “How could the good angels separate us from the love of God? The answer is, that is out of character and they wouldn’t. Paul is being hyperbolic, to prove his point. However, not even the angels of God could interfere with the love of God.

However, demons are a different matter. Their purpose is to cause destruction and harass God’s people. They are malicious beings who prey on human weakness, tempting us to sin. Let us be clear on this point. Demons do exist and they have great power. They discourage us, divide us, attack us, provoke us, and oppress us in every way possible. Friends, Satan and demons are very real. We are foolish if we deny their existence.

But can the demons separate us from the love of God? No, but they can make us feel as if God doesn't love us. They can confuse and distract us into thinking we have been rejected. However, Satan is a liar and has been defeated!

### c) **Present or Future (SLIDE 17)**

Next, here Paul moves into the realm of time, the events from present to future. Is there any recorded historic event or any future possibility—that can or could ever separate us from the love of God? The answer once again is no.

But what about the present? Perhaps there is something happening right now in your life that you believe could sever your relationship with God. No, Jesus is greater than our present circumstances. His love is not bound to time!

Maybe you believe there is something looming beyond the horizon, like a horrible event, maybe the big earthquake hits, or an unforeseen emergency, some yet-unknown failing, that could break the tie that binds us to God's love? Again, the answer is no.

Yes, terrible things sometimes happen to believers, including some things for which we might be personally responsible for. **However, if we know Christ, none of those things can separate us from the love of God!**

Divorce? No separation.

Racism? No separation.

Addictions? No separation.

Failures? No separation.

**(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 18)** The final two verses of Romans 8 call more for reflection rather than they do interpretation. In many ways our reaction should be complete silence and awe. In some ways it should be a loud celebration with everything that we have! Why? **The apostle shouts with confidence that there is nothing that could separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is what he is doing: He is turning up the volume of the winning anthem. The crowd is cheering!** He is giving the final punch in a winning match has been delivered! He is throwing down the gauntlet! It's like the climax of your favorite movie! The message is clear, there is absolutely nothing that can ever drive a wedge between the children of God and their Heavenly Father.

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

In the movie "The Bear," we see a story that traces a bear cub who lost its mom and is cared for by a grown male bear. In one scene, they get, and a mountain lion sees his chance to attack the cub. As the lion gets closer, the young bear scampers away, falls into a fast-moving river, and eventually climbs onto a large rock.

As the mountain lion prepares to pounce, the baby bear stands up and begins to roar. The sound is deafening, causing the lion to freeze in fear and run away. Then, the camera pans to the right to show the resounding roar actually came from the huge male bear standing upright in full attack mode. When the cub realizes what is happening, he runs to his protector for assurance and comfort.

## CONCLUSION:

So, the key question of our Christian life when we face doubts, worries and tensions—is this: ***Is there anyone or anything that can separate me (or us) from Christ's love?***

Consider how practical Paul is being. He is saying: *Friend, have you been called? Have you understood the gospel? Have you asked God to transform with his love so that you can love?*

The purpose of the questions is to turn up the volume so you can hear and tell others about the good news. Turn up the volume so you can wake up from our disbelief because we are saved totally by grace and are therefore completely safe to face life without fear.

Paul is saying: *Use the tools he has given you. Are you afraid (8:31)? Apply his love to your life! Are you worried (v 32)? Let his love work in your heart! Are you feeling guilty (v 33)? Be confident in his love! These are not dry truths; they are your lifeline! And if you are not living with overwhelming assurance and power, you haven't really fully understood them. The remedy is to read, re-read, deeply ponder and learn to live out of the truths of verses 18–30!*<sup>3</sup>

As we close this series in Romans 8, Paul puts many assurances in our toolbox to combat the questions. The tools are:

### (SLIDE 19)

**Assurance 1: God works things out for those who love Him (v. 28).**

### (SLIDE 20)

**Assurance 2: God has determined to fulfill His purpose for the believer (v. 29).**

### (SLIDE 21)

**Assurance 3: God has set the glorification of the believer—once for all (v. 30)**

### (SLIDE 22)

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<sup>3</sup> Keller, T. (2015). *Romans 8–16 for You*. (C. Laferton, Ed.) (pp. 53–55). The Good Book Company.

**Assurance 4: God has acted for the believer, not against him (vv. 31–33)**

**(SLIDE 23)**

**Assurance 5: Christ does not condemn the believer (v. 34).**

**(SLIDE 24)**

**Assurance 6: Christ delivers the believer from the severest circumstances because nothing can separate us from the love of God (vv.35-39).<sup>4</sup>**

**(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 25)**

Look what God has done. Look what the Messiah has done and is still doing even as we speak. Look around and see the many things that threaten to separate you from the powerful love that reaches out through the cross and resurrection and learn that they are all beaten foes. The end of Romans 8 deserves to be written in letters of fire on the living tablets of our hearts. **It is that love.** Finally, that love comes back again and again, not as an afterthought but as the underlying theme of the entire section. **It rules victoriously. This is how we find victory in life's circumstances. It gives you assurance! It gives you an affirmation! You find this love by running to Jesus!** Embrace Him, enfold Him in your arms, and say with Paul, “Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

**Have you found God's love and applied it to your outer and inner struggles? Are you using the right tool?**

\*Announce Communion

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<sup>4</sup> Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (1996). *Romans* (pp. 162–163). Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

## (SHOW LORD'S SUPPER SLIDE 26)

### COMMUNION:

**Bread:** The bread represents Christ's His body for us. He did this because he loved us. He gives Himself to us, and desires that we should take Him. The fellowship of the Lord's Supper is a fellowship of giving and taking. Blessed giving: blessed taking. We only participate in the table if we realize his love demonstrated and love Jesus back.

#### ***Pray for the bread.***

Luke 22:19 says,<sup>19</sup> **And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”**

**Cup:** Our remembering stirs the memory of Christ-followers, reminding them of the truths they once heard and fanning the flames of faith. We live in an age of forgetfulness, so when knowledge fades and conviction cools, the church needs to be reminded of the great truths of the faith. Jesus was the only true sheep fit enough to take our place and die on the cross for our sin.

#### ***Pray for the cup.***

Luke 22:20 says, <sup>20</sup>**In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.**