

Lent 1
February 26, 2012

Inseparable Love

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Romans 8:31-39

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Cheating on a math quiz in Mr. Yeager's classroom. The shame. Knowing you let him down and disappointed him. I disappointed me. I let God down. I felt separated from his love.

When I was in high school I got in two accidents within a 2 month period of time. In one accident, a car full of drunk, partying kids ran a stop sign right in front of me. The other, a car heading in the opposite direction suddenly jumped across a whole lane of traffic and sideswiped the car I was driving. In both cases, there was nothing I could have done to avoid the accidents. I literally felt like I had a target on my back... that cars were out there looking for me and homing in to intentionally crash in to me. I almost decided to stop driving. Thought crossed my mind why God would keep on letting these crazy people hit me!

In both of these cases, I felt like I was being separated from the love of God. In the cheating case, it was my stupidity and sin that made me feel that way. In the second case, it was the stupidity and sin of others... or just living in a sinful world... that made me start to feel like I was being separated from the love of God.

How about you? Can you think of a past shameful sin you committed when you felt like you separated yourself from the love of God? When you felt you were under his condemnation? Maybe you had your cheating moment... at school or college. Or a cheating moment with your spouse. Both are devastating. Have you done something wrong or dishonest at work? Have you been less than loving with your kids... overly harsh with them? Maybe your work schedule is keeping you from spending enough time with them... or with your spouse. When was the last time you felt you disappointed someone? Yourself? God? Would I be wrong if I suggested it probably wasn't that long ago? Did you feel like your actions were separating you from the love of God?

Or how about a time when circumstances in your life made you feel like you had a big target painted on your back? Serious illness and pain can certainly make us feel like God is taking his love from us. Or you empty nesters... if your grown children rarely call you and don't communicate much, does this also make you feel like maybe God's love is growing more distant too? Or how about when the bills really begin to mount? A major and unexpected car or house repair. Medical bills. Or if you're just getting started as a college graduate or newlywed... the mountain of student loan debt. Or you students who are taking a class (or classes) in which you feel it's just beyond your ability to grasp. In class you feel you like your drowning a bit. Your inability to "get it" maybe is even throwing your future career into question. Where is the love of God?

Whatever it is that's making you feel like God's separated from you and his love is distant, I've got a portion of Scripture for you today that you have got to listen to. In fact, this is one of those places you need to keep coming back to over and over again throughout your life. Print these verses out, and tape them up somewhere prominent. This is one of the most comforting, most reassuring passages in all of Scriptures. So these are verses you have to have in your head, or they won't be there for you when you need them! Romans 8:31-39:

Romans 8:31-39 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not

also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” At the grade school basketball tournament I was at the last couple days, there were teams that were mediocre, but they had one star player that raised the whole team into a formidable opponent. Or you know when picking teams, the same person always got picked first... and whichever team he was on, that team always won? Well what if God is on your side? What if God stands behind you 100%? Whatever opponent you must face or difficulty that may come into your life, think about: if it's you alone, chances aren't so good. But suppose God stands by your side, and he is pleased with you... he is *for* you! This tips the scales every time. When God is for you, it doesn't matter who is against you... you come out on top *every* time.

Then get this. Here's how you *know* that God is always on your side: **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”** When someone helps you when the need or danger is very great, you know they'll be there for you when the need or danger is small. On the other hand, if someone has only helped you in a small way, you wouldn't know if you could count on them when you need really big help. Here's what God did: He looked at you and asked, “What is your greatest need?” His answer: “You need to be right with the relationship with universe.” Is that the case? No. Why? Sin / disobedience / rebellion. What can be done about this situation? God decided he had to do something about it. He had to fix it. How to fix it? I'll give up my Son for them. They are lacking perfect obedience. My son will therefore need to become man and be perfectly obedient. They *need* the guilt of their sins punished. I'll send my Son to take their punishment. With Jesus life, and Jesus death as the punishment for all sin, we need the most, we have! Forgiveness, life and salvation. The greatest gift imaginable! And God paid the greatest price imaginable to give it! His one and only Son.

Now, follow the logic here. If God did not spare his Son, his only son, the one that he loved... if he gave him up to die on a cross in order to set things straight between us and him... isn't it just blindly obvious that of course he'll give us all other things as well?

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

Satan is the great accuser. He wants nothing more than the bring up charges against you before God. And apart from Christ, he would have a rock solid case against you. He would demand the eternal death penalty. And our just God would have to hand down exactly that judgment. But now Satan can no longer accuse. He can no longer condemn!

He stands before God and tries to. “God, I hereby charge the defendant with breaking the law. I hardly know where to begin! Worry and fretting. Hopelessness. Lack of concern for others. Discontentment. Lack of faith. Etc.” But God shoots down every accusation... every attempt to condemn. *“Not guilty... I gave my Son for that. Not guilty... I gave my Son for that. Not guilty... I gave my Son for that.”*

So listen! That guilt you continue to carry... those feeling of unworthiness and inadequacy... what you continue to beat yourself up over... God already beat up his Son over it so you would be not guilty. God has justified you! Jesus, the one who paid your sin, continues to

intercede at the right hand of the Father. *Therefore* his love for you is unquestionable... his love for you is inseparable.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Anticipating the next main area where you might doubt God’s love, God assures you that there is no possible circumstance that you could experience which would indicate God has indeed withdrawn his love from you. **“Trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.”** Those are some huge problems. Can you imagine being persecuted for your faith? Can you imagine living during a time of true famine? Can you imagine the shame of not have clothes to wear? Being in danger? Living during a time of war... where the war front is your neighborhood? And if somehow you could come up with a worse scenario, it’s included already in “trouble or hardship.” NONE of these things shall separate you from the love of Christ. His love for you is inseparable!!! In all these you are **more than conquerors**. You already stand victorious about anything this sinful world dishes out, because at the end of the day, you get eternal paradise with your God who adores you and sacrificed everything for you!

And Paul sums it all up like this: **“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

You just can’t come back to Paul and say, “Well, my situation is the exception that proves God has withdrawn his love from me.” Paul says, “No, covered it! I mentioned the spirit realm. Time... both things happening now or that could happen in the future. Anything at all that has power and authority... I included that. Space... got that covered. And then I included anything in all creation. So whatever your about to mention, I don’t need to hear it. Whatever you want to bring up, I can already tell you: It is not evidence that God has withdrawn his love, because NOTHING can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Do you get the comforting point, friends? God loves you. His love is inseparable. Inseparable love. This is the only way to define God’s love for you. You cannot be condemned by him. Circumstances cannot drive him away from you. Inseparable love.

Would you imagine with me now... how would our lives look different if we could just grasp and believe that God’s love for us in Christ Jesus truly is inseparable and constant?

- 1) Guilt would be gone. Study shows that carrying guilt actually weakens your immune system. There’s a physical consequence for your spiritual anguish. Better physical health... and more important good spiritual health... are yours when you believe and live trusting God’s inseparable love for you.
- 2) Worry would vanish. What could you possibly worry about with God on your team?!
- 3) Stress would dissolve. Knowing God’s love, if you placed your difficult circumstances into God’s loving arms, wouldn’t your stress be gone?
- 4) You would never complain... you’d always be content. Feelings that God or others “owe you” or that you deserve more, or that you don’t have enough... gone when you trust God’s inseparable love.

- 5) We would have new confidence. Not in self but a new confident in God, in the abilities he gave, and the circumstances I'm in. Fear and doubt would disappear and you move forward with confidence! You are the beloved of almighty God. What could give more confidence?
- 6) We would have a reckless abandon for serving God and others. If you perfectly trusted God's inseparable love, wouldn't that empower you to go "all in" for service and work for God? Wouldn't this impact your offerings? Your volunteering? Wouldn't you

The word "separate" is a marriage term. The Bible says: "What God has joined together, let man not separate." The same word is used when it says, "Nothing shall separate you from the love of God." God has made an eternal covenant of love with us. He will never decide break his covenant. His love for us is not based on our performance, our works. He chose us. We didn't choose him. It's not based on who WE are, but who we are in... Christ Jesus.

Because you are in Christ Jesus, God's love for you is forever. Unconditional. Certain. Solid. Inseparable. I don't know that I've ever done this, but I'd like to ask you to repeat something after me. "God truly loves me, and he always will." God's inseparable love for you is real. Believe it, and watch how that faith changes your life! Amen.