

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 8: 35-36
PREACHED ON JULY 12, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- The Christians at Rome faced one of the greatest persecutions against Christianity in the history of the church. Paul wrote this letter to Christians who were persecuted by the fifth emperor, Caesar Nero. He blamed Christians for the Great Fire of Rome, which destroyed a significant portion of the city, and subjected them to brutal persecutions, including torture and execution. Many were torn apart by animals like lions, crucified, or used as human torches during public spectacles. Fears arose among the Roman Christians. Even in our modern world, there are times when Christians harbor fears in their spirits, and, as is typical of the apostle, he leads Christians through some of these fears and provides Biblical solutions.
- In the past, we have looked at the fear of opposition; opposition from the world, the flesh, the Devil, and other people. We also looked at the fear of deprivation or loss; the fear that committing myself totally to God means I will be deprived of everything in life. The apostle deals with those fears in verses 31 and 32 by saying, "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?"
- Last week, we looked at the fear of condemnation or judgment, and the apostle responded with these words in verses 33 and 34, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. 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." Today and for the next sermons on chapter 8, we will consider another fear, the fear of being separated from the love of God, the fear of being separated from Christ and His love, and the fear of losing your salvation.
- When Paul wrote this letter, he knew he was going to Jerusalem, where his enemies were waiting for him. He had been assured by the prophet Agabus (as recorded in Acts 21:10–14) that he was going to suffer in Jerusalem, including imprisonment. He knew that he was facing death in Jerusalem, but he was determined to go there in order to take the offering from the Gentile Christians to provide for the poor in Jerusalem. Being an apostle was a very high-risk responsibility. He said in 2 Corinthians 6 that his whole career has been characterized by hardships, distress, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. He certainly understood what it meant to suffer,

unsure of what tomorrow might bring, but he writes to the Romans in hope and assurance.

- He was not seeking their sympathy, but he writes in triumph and joy because he knew that God is for him and also for every true Christian. In our passage for today, Paul lists some of the things that seem to be against us and separate us from the love of God in verse 35, namely, the common sufferings we face as Christians. He lists trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword. He has a second list beginning in verse 38, which we will look at in two weeks. In the second list, he describes all the powers that might move against us, such as death, life, elect angels, fallen angels, or demons; the present situations; the future situations; any powers; height or depth. The apostle looks in triumph at these 2 lists of potential separators, and he concluded that none of them, no suffering, no powers can separate the true believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

➤ LIST OF POSSIBLE SEPARATORS

- Paul began by listing several possible sufferings that seemed capable of separating Christians from the love of God in Christ. He wrote in verse 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” These are the common sufferings Christians endure. He then questions each of these potential separators to convince Christians that none of them can change God’s love for His people. They have no authority to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
- Paul himself, at the time he wrote this letter, had personally experienced each of these sufferings he listed, except the sword. The word “sword” implies execution, and he had yet to experience it. He wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:11 saying, “To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.” Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:30, saying, “Why are we in danger every hour?”
- More extensively, the apostle listed the sufferings that have come his way in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, “24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”
- Paul recorded these accounts of suffering about midway through his ministry, and nowhere near the end of his years of service, so we must conclude that

much more difficulty followed this compilation! He knew all about trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and later the sword, and he says none of them had the ability to separate him from the love of God for him in Christ Jesus, and it is the same for every true Christian. What is the trouble and hardship you are facing now? What danger are you in now? What forms of persecution are you going through now? Paul says none of them can separate you from God's love in Christ.

➤ **JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN SUFFERING**

- Paul has told us that none of the sufferings he listed can separate us from God's love for us in Christ. He tells us this not because he has so much experience in suffering that he thinks it is okay to suffer. In fact, he had so much experience of suffering, but his confidence in writing to the Roman Christians and to Christians of all time is that they are to be prepared to go through suffering in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at how carefully he wrote it when he said, "nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is not self-confidence, but Christ's confidence that is the assurance of the apostle Paul.
- He knows that none of the sufferings that can possibly come the way of the Christian can dissolve Christ's love for that Christian. How did Paul know this? He knows that not because of what he had suffered for Christ, but what Christ has suffered for him. Paul saw suffering in a different light because of his understanding of the meaning of Christ's suffering on the Cross. Jesus suffered on the Cross for us in His life. Let's look at each of the sufferings the apostle listed and think about Jesus' sufferings, and you will immediately draw a direct line between them and Christ.
- Jesus knew all about trouble and hardship. Matthew 26:38 records that, "Then He said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.'" He was described in Isaiah 53:3 as the "man of sorrows acquainted with grief." He knew all about persecution even from the onset of His earthly ministry. He faced opposition from religious leaders, political authorities, and even His own people. This persecution ultimately culminated in His crucifixion.
- Didn't Jesus know all about famine? The socio-economic conditions of the period of His incarnation suggest that scarcity and hunger were prevalent challenges faced by the people. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He fasted for forty days and forty nights and was hungry. What about nakedness? He knew what it was to be naked. John 19:23 records that, "When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining." Part of the suffering of crucifixion was humiliation, and that humiliation was enhanced by public nakedness. Jesus was crucified naked in order to maximize His humiliation.

- He knew danger even from infancy. Herod the Great, upon hearing of Jesus' birth, perceived him as a threat to his throne. This led to his infamous decree to kill all male infants in Bethlehem, an act that was driven by fear of losing power, as the Magi had informed him of a newborn "King of the Jews." In Luke 4:29-30, after He preached in the synagogue, His message was met with disbelief and hostility from His own townspeople, His own villagers. They took Him to the edge of a hill with the intention of throwing Him down, but miraculously, He passed through the crowd unharmed. Danger characterized every aspect of His life to the point of sweating blood in Gethsemane.
- He also knew the sword. Those who came to arrest Him came with swords. So all the sufferings Paul listed that Christians might experience and that might seem to separate us from the love of God were first experienced by Jesus Christ. He endured trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword for our sake. What bound Jesus to the cross was not the nails penetrating His feet and hands, but the love God has for us in Christ that held Him there. He endured that agony for us. How much does God love us? Enough to give His own son for us, and this is the measure of His love for us.
- While Jesus hung on the Cross and while He went through trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword on earth, He was not separated from the love of His Father. After Jesus' baptism, Father God confirmed His great love for Him as recorded in the gospel account, "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" After His death, He resurrected Him with a glorified body, and this will be our experience. If suffering could not separate Christ from the love of His Father, we too will not be separated from the love of our Father God in Christ because of trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and the sword that comes our way as Christians.

➤ **JESUS BLESSES OUR SUFFERINGS**

- Paul is not telling us that suffering is a good thing. Suffering in itself is evil; it is the curse God has brought upon mankind because of sin, but Christ blesses our sufferings. Suffering has now become a form of fellowship with Jesus Christ. He suffered for us, and therefore our sufferings are now for Him. The apostle Peter tells all Christians that suffering is our calling. He writes in 1 Peter 2:20-21, "But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." So, our Christian calling is a calling to suffer. Our profession of Christ's name will bring us some amount of suffering. It could be greater or lesser suffering depending upon the situation in which we profess the name of Christ. We will suffer greatly when we are bolder in our profession of the name of Christ.

- Now that we are God's adopted sons and daughters, any sufferings that come our way, we go through them with Christ and for His sake because we belong to Him, we are His people, and we are united to Christ. In suffering, we glorify His name. Suffering opens up an opportunity; suffering enables you to praise the Lord in the midst of all the sadness in this world.
- In verse 36, you will notice that Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22. This is one of the Psalms of lamentations, where the Psalmist cries out as a righteous sufferer, saying, "Why, Lord, why Lord am I suffering? Why are these things coming upon me, a righteous person?" Paul left out the very next verses that followed verse 22, which are verses 23 and 24, which say, "Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?" The Psalmist cries out as one who doesn't understand why a righteous person should suffer. He doesn't understand why those who are seeking to serve the Lord should suffer so much.
- Should a Christian hold a view like the Psalmist, who questions why a righteous person should suffer? The New Testament gives us good reasons why righteous people suffer. Even though Paul quotes the Psalmist lamenting over why a righteous person should suffer so much, he didn't dwell so much on the lamentation. He only quoted the Psalmist to put emphasis on the first part, verse 22 of Psalm 44, that righteous people also suffer. A Christian going through suffering is not necessarily due to a sin they have committed, but as part of God's purpose to transform Christians to become more like Christ.
- Let's look at the details of the quote in verse 36. As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." The Psalmist says righteous people, that is, Christians in the New Testament, are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. This is exactly how the world sees Christians and has seen God's people throughout the centuries. We are like sheep to be slaughtered in their eyes. Last month, I drove Jedidiah and Josiah to a bank in Knoxville to open a kids' account for them. On our way and just before we left Pella's city limit, we saw a truck loaded with pigs, possibly heading to the slaughterhouse. Josiah remarked that one of the pigs might end up on his plate the next morning.
- We see cows, chickens, pigs, and goats, and immediately know they are raised to be slaughtered for our food. The workers at the slaughterhouse show no pity and no tears as they slaughter the animals one by one, simply because they are reared by farmers to be slaughtered. The Christian is also seen like that by the unbelieving world. We are objects to be persecuted, hated, terminated from employment, despised, insulted, etc. Christians have been put to death in many parts of the world because of the gospel, as if they were mere pigs, cows, chickens, and sheep who were emptied out of the farmer's truck for slaughter.
- Paul quotes the Psalmist, "we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered", but he tells us not to cry like the Psalmist; we should find in our sufferings an opportunity to share in the suffering of Christ, and an opportunity to have

fellowship with Christ. This is what changes everything about our suffering as Christians. The Psalmist cried over his sufferings as if there was no hope, but we endure our sufferings as an opportunity to fellowship with Christ.

- Now that the Lord Himself, the righteous one, has come down to earth to suffer for us, there are no more questions about the righteous suffering like the Psalmist asked. Here is Jesus, who is perfectly righteous, and He suffered beyond anyone. Suffering for His sake has now become a privilege; it has now become an opportunity to have fellowship with Christ, who suffered all these for us.

➤ **JESUS' SUFFERING WAS LIMITED, SO OUR SUFFERING IS ALSO LIMITED**

- Our suffering is limited because we have the hope of eternal blessings, where we will be given a new body when we are with Christ. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-11, Paul talks a great deal about suffering, but he added in verse 14, "because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself." This is Paul's assurance, the assurance of the resurrection. That our suffering is limited and that God will bring an end to it in the great joy of the resurrection.
- Paul then added in verses 16 through 18, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Paul says when I am weak, then I am strong. In times of our helplessness, whether in physical or in certain situations, that is when we often cry to the Lord, and Christ is more glorified when we focus on Him, when we take up His Cross and follow Him.
- Suffering has a purpose in our lives; it is not an accident that we suffer as Christians. God has a purpose for your good in your sufferings. Listen to what the apostle Peter says about our sufferings in 1 Peter 1:6-7, "In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

➤ **CONCLUSION**

- Paul is presenting to us the security, the blessedness, and the joys that every Christian knows. The joy that we are the children of God, loved by Him, and can call Him Abba Father to show how intimate our relationship with Him is. His love for us made Him adopt us as His sons and daughters. His love is working all things for our good, and His love has foreordained that every true Christian,

everyone will be conformed, transformed into the image and likeness of Christ, His son. The end goal of our journey in this world as God's people is that when we finally see Jesus, we will be like Him. God's purpose in salvation is not just the forgiveness of sins but also the conformity of believers to the image of His Son. We will go back to being like the original creation, but better, where God made man in His own image.

- We will receive a new nature from God, better than what Adam lost, because we cannot sin in our new body as Adam did. This is the ultimate purpose and end goal of salvation. This process of being conformed to Christ's image is happening now through the work of the Holy Spirit as we behold the Lord's glory. At the second coming of Christ, we will be presented as people who are fully conformed to Christ's image and are like Him in body and spirit. We will share in His glory and reign with Him. Christ became man so that we could become like God.
- Everything that comes our way in this life as Christians, including all the trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword, is to serve this purpose, which is to transform us into the image and likeness of Christ because of God's love for us. How can the same sufferings that are transforming us into the likeness of Christ separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Paul says nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.
- Paul is not talking about our love for Christ, but His love for us. Who shall separate us from this love of Christ to us? What's going to pull us away from that love of Christ that acts like a magnet that has taken hold of us? He's not saying, can our love for Christ stand these tests of suffering? What he's saying is this: can the love of Christ to us stand when trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword come our way? His answer is, no amount of suffering can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. It isn't our love for Christ or for God the Father. It is the love of Christ to us. It is the love of Father God to us that holds on to us till the end.
- There is only one way to be an object of God's love, and it is by becoming one of His adopted children. How do you become one of God's children? "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12. You have to know who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for sinners to give them access to God's love. You have to believe in what He has done to remove our sins, believe in all His promises for Christians, and believe that He will judge the world in the future. You then have to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord or master of your life. You do so by repenting of your sins, living according to His standards as written in the Bible, persistently waging a radical war against your sins, and being persistent in obeying Him all the days of your life. You will then have the assurance and security that nothing can separate you from His love.