

The Heart of Romans: “Nothing Can Separate” Weekly Recap

This is the final lesson in our series. Jared began with reading this passage from the end of Romans 8:

Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? 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 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. 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. 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.

This sounds like it would be a wonderful “halftime speech” for the disciples. Jesus could have delivered this speech in the upper room with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. If he would have, then Peter’s actions in the garden would have made perfect sense. Peter was ready to conquer the Romans with his warrior messiah. He drew his sword to be more than a conqueror. If God was for him, who could be against him? **But Jesus stopped Peter.** He healed the Roman servant’s ear, and told his disciples to stand down. Peter was confused, disillusioned, and speechless. His next words would be spoken in fear to a girl at a fire as he denied his master. He was not “more than a conqueror” yet.

How can we relate to Peter’s confusion when we encounter the chaos and confusion of this world?

Jared took us back to the message of Paul in Romans. ***He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.*** Jesus didn’t use this passage from Romans as a “halftime speech” to rally his troops before his crucifixion. This was a VICTORY speech given after the crucifixion and resurrection because of what Jesus conquered at the Cross. The disciples on the “after” side of the Cross could reflect on all that Jesus did before his death, and see how those actions were amplified by the ultimate triumph of Jesus over powers that were infinitely greater than Rome. They would be able to have confidence that, through the power that Jesus demonstrated at the Cross, there was now nothing that could stand between them and the love of God.

Jared told of a security check in a foreign airport that threatened to separate Gavin from him. Despite the direction of the officers, Jared refused to let Gavin out of his sight. Jared prevailed

in this case; but it was obvious that the officers could have separated him from his son. We are limited. But God is not like this. God is limitless. Paul goes to great lengths to list all kinds of things that seem like they could get in between us and the love of God. None of them can prevail. God's love is more powerful. We don't have to doubt it. But sometimes we do.

Jared told a story of a young minister that believed that God had punished him to get his attention. **Have you ever felt like this? Like God was out to get you?** Paul tells a different story. God can use anything bad that happens to us to bring us closer to him, but God doesn't need to make bad things happen. Sometimes "the rain falls on the just and unjust." Paul's message is that no matter what happens, it can't keep us away from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Even our movies like "Home Alone" often reflect that we can seek God in the middle of every crisis. Hospital chapels exist for just this reason. When we see a crucifix with Jesus on it, we can remember that Jesus entered into our suffering to draw close to us. When we see an empty crucifix, we remember that Jesus conquered it all to help us be "more than conquerors". N.T. Wright says that "God's suffering people are part of the means by which the victorious death of Jesus is applied to the world." As we groan along with all creation, it is not an aimless groaning; it is a groaning in hopeful effort with an expectation of the victory achieved already by Jesus. In 8:36, Paul quotes Psalm 44:22-24. This is an outcry to God from oppressed people to wake up and help them:

Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. 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?

In response to this, Paul says "***No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***" Jared closed with a story of Kristi about to go into a nerve-wracking surgery a few years ago. The assistant asked if she wanted to listen to a song before she went under the anesthetic. Kristi asked for "[Reckless Love](#)". Here some of the lyrics:

Before I spoke a word, you were singing over me. Before I took a breath, you breathed your life in me.

You have been so, so good to me.

When I was your foe, still your love fought for me. When I felt no worth, you paid it all for me.

You have been so, so kind to me

There's no shadow you won't light up, Mountain you won't climb up, Coming after me.

There's no wall you won't kick down, Lie you won't tear down, Coming after me.

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine. I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, you give yourself away. Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.

Amén. How will you respond to the reckless love of God this week?