

Romans 8:31-39 (1984 NIV)
***Love That Never Gives Up*¹**

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 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?

33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

34 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.

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.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 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.

Introduction

Good morning to one and all. It is my joy to be up here and share from the Word of God on this blessed occasion. S and C have asked me to share some thoughts from the Bible passage Rom. 8:31-39. This is an encouraging passage about the love of God—the love that never gives up.

The writer of our Bible passage today (the Apostle Paul) says in v. 31, “What, then, shall we say in response to this? IF God is for us, who can be against us?” The word “if” should be better translated as “since”, meaning it’s not an “if” of doubt, but an “if” of certainty—i.e. SINCE God is for us, who can be against us? Now, the “us” here is referring to those who belong to God in Jesus Christ—i.e. God’s people.

Since God is for and not against His people, what does this actually imply? Two thoughts.

I. Since God is for His people, they are not condemned.

In v. 34, Paul was asking God’s people, “Since God is on your side, who is to condemn you?” The Bible tells that God’s people have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and thus, declared righteous before God. Yes, God does correct

¹ This is a wedding sermon.

and discipline them time to time because He cannot condone disobedience. BUT He will not condemn them because they are His people.

God's people are still imperfect as they live—they disobey or displease God time to time. However, they will not stand condemned. Why? Because when God looks at His people who have disobeyed or displeased Him, He sees the wrongs they've done—yes! But more importantly, He sees Jesus in them and them in Jesus. God does not condemn them to separation from Himself. This is because they have been justified by faith, thereby pronounced righteous in Jesus Christ by God Himself. There is no other court higher than God. And so none can overturn this God-pronounced verdict—vv. 35-39 essentially sums that up.

Now, there are God's people today who live much in guilt—"I did this. God is going to hate me. God is going to punish me." Yes, the disobedient one grieves God with his/her sin—that's for sure. But it never ends the love of God towards that person even if God corrects and disciplines. And so that person will never be brought back to the place of condemnation even if there are consequences—that's just as true. Thus, even if one who belongs to God in Jesus Christ sins in a moment of weakness, God will still receive and embrace that person in His love when he/she comes to his/her senses.

S and C, both of you are believers of Jesus Christ and you belong to God. What does this imply to you both today as you begin your journey as man and wife? It implies God wants you both to seek Him to help you love each other with the same never give-up love that He has showered on you. By His grace and enabling, how then do you work towards this?

Just one loving advice: **Seek God for humility as you live with each other.** When a man marries a woman, he wants her to be his "Mrs. Right". When a woman marries a man, she wants him to be her "Mr. Right". But very often, they get more than what they want. The man gets more than "Mrs. Right"; he gets "Mrs. Always Right". And the woman gets more than "Mr. Right"; she gets "Mr. Always Right". And when you are always right, you don't have much room for humility. Humility implies that you recognize you are not always right; that you can be wrong time to time. Humility also implies that even if you are right, you can never be so right that there's no more room for you to be gracious. Even if you have to apologize, you do so not necessarily because you are wrong, but you value your partner as more important than your pride. Humility recognizes the need to demonstrate gentleness, forbearance, and forgiveness.

S and C, both of you are highly trained and well skilled in your respective professions, giving your best in what you are called to do. This is a good "can do" spirit. But I pray that you will not carry this "can do" spirit into your marital relationship and turn it into an "outdo" spirit, trying to outdo each other to prove that you are better than the other. This is potentially detrimental to the relationship because it can lead you to condemn the other judgmentally whenever he/she does not meet up to your expectation.

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Remember for better or worse, you fight together for your marriage, and not fight each other in your marriage. In a little while you will say your vow to each other, pledging to stand with each other for better or worse, and not condemning each other for this or that shortcoming.

Because God is for His people, they are not condemned. More than that, God does not separate from His people. I come now to my second thought.

II. Since God does not separate from His people, they can be more than conquerors.

Paul asks in v. 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” The implied answer is an emphatic “No one can! Nothing can!” And Paul adds in v. 37 that in times of adversities and trials, God’s people can be “more than conquerors”, or better translated as “super conquerors”. But what’s wonderful here is not that the one who belongs to God in Jesus Christ will experience no troubles in life. Rather, it is as that person goes through these troubles, he/she can be a super conqueror. It’s not so much about a comfortable life, but very much about a conquering life (victorious life) in Jesus Christ.

That’s why Paul can declare in v. 37, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him WHO LOVED US.” The key here is this—it is not primarily about a person’s love for God, but God’s love for that person who belongs to Him in Jesus Christ. A person’s love for God can be fickle, capricious, and half-hearted. But God loves His people with a love that will not give up on them; that will not let them go.

The greatest evidence of God’s love has been demonstrated some two thousand years ago on the Cross—God gave up Jesus Christ to die for sinful humanity on the Cross because He has refused to give up on imperfect people like you and me. Indeed, those who are God’s people can be more than conquerors not because of their often faltering love for God, but because of God’s ever faithful love for them.

Pauls goes on to say in vv. 38-39, “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.” The love we humans are familiar with is the love of condition—“I love you if you deserve it. I love you when I feel like it.” But God’s love is surpassingly different. It is strong, it is rich, it is everlasting, it is constant, and it is complete. God loves His people with a love that never gives up on them. In other words, God does not separate from His people and so they can be more than conquerors in Him.

S and C, what does this imply to you both today as you begin your journey as man and wife? It implies God wants you both to seek Him to love each other

with the same love that He has showered on you. By His grace and enabling, how then do you work towards this?

Just one loving advice: **Seek God to help respect and talk through your differences.** Habits and things that have become normalized in your single life can be challenging to address in your marital relationship. It's tough to know when to let it go and when to speak up. Learn to respect and talk through your differences so that you can both gain something you want. Instead of having one person sacrifice everything, each person gives a little to create unity in your diversity. If you ask your partner to make a change, be ready and willing to change yourself too. Both need to be ready and willing to make changes to strengthen the relationship.

It's nearly impossible to make two distinct individuals to do everything exactly the same way all the time. But being somewhat different from your partner can make your relationship more exciting and complementing. You might get the chance to look at things in a new way, or experience things you wouldn't have tried on your own. Respecting and talking through your differences is learning to live together as one in the Lord yet as two distinct individuals. It can be a celebration of your marital unity and individual uniqueness in the Lord.

S and C, as long as you both are willing to make adjustments or give things up for the sake of a better relationship, the process will only make you stronger as an individual and as a couple. You don't have to give up who you are to be in this relationship, but you can work with your partner to bring out the best in each other.

Story is told of a man who received a wedding invitation. There was a post-script at the bottom of the card. It read—"No need to send any gift for our wedding. Your presence itself is already a gift for us."

The man became confused by the message—"No need for any gift; my presence is a gift." He then concluded that it was the couple's indirect way of telling him that there's no need for him to be present at their wedding.

When two distinct and different individuals learn to live together, there are two tendencies that can cause confusion and complication. One is the tendency to over-read the other's intention and come to the wrong conclusion. The other is the tendency to avoid being direct and speak in a way that makes the other second-guess what your real intention is. Both tendencies can lead to divergence and difficulty in the process of being and living together. You need the mutual openness and honesty to speak, to clarify and to verify in the process—i.e. learning to respect and talk through your differences.

Conclusion

S and C, God has called you both today to love each other with more than just human love. You are called to love each other with the same love God has shown and showered upon you. Your wedding ceremony is not an end in itself. In fact, marriage is not an end in itself. Marriage is a means of serving and glorifying God. Put in another way, your marriage becomes the means with which you serve and glorify God by allowing Him to use it to provide the world with a picture of His love for all humanity.

The world today is filled with so much rivalry, condemnation, and separation in various expressions. But the Bible declares that God loves those who belong to Him in Jesus Christ with a love that will not condemn them or be separated from them. Today, God offers this same love to ANYONE who would accept and receive it by believing in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.

God in Heaven, we thank you that you love your people. You stand on their side and they shall not be condemned. They shall not be separated from you, and thus, they can be more than conquerors in life's adversities and trials.

We now commend to you S and C as they begin their life together as man and wife. We pray that they will daily seek you to love each other as you have loved them individually and as a couple. Guide and enable them to live in your love with humble cherish and not haughty condemnation; to experience a conquering life in you because you stand and stick with them even as they stand and stick with each other for better or worse. Remind them daily that you are always for them and with them in their life together from this day onwards.

In Jesus' name. Amen!