

# “THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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## ROMANS 7:14-8:39

Lying in a hospital bed, on the eve of his open heart surgery, Bruce McIver asked his cardiologist... “Dr. Johnson, can you fix my heart?” Dudley Johnson is a skilled cardiologist, but he’s a man of few words. Known for getting right to the point, he answered, “*Sure*” - and walked away. After the 12 hour surgery, again McIver asked his doctor, “In light of the blocked arteries you bypassed, how much more blood supply will I have now?” Again Dr. Johnson gave a terse reply, “*All you’ll ever need.*”

As Bruce was being discharged, his wife questioned Dr. Johnson, “How will the surgery affect my husband’s future quality of life?” Finally, Dr. Johnson paused for a few seconds, and then he answered, “*Mrs. McIver, I fixed your husband’s heart. His quality of life is up to him...*” And this is where we’re at the end of Romans 6... Jesus has fixed our rebellious heart - but now our future quality of life depends on **three** choices.

First, do we **know** that in Christ we’re dead to sin and alive to God? Second, have we **reckoned** these truths as so – *have we really embraced* the identity that’s ours in Christ? Has it changed the way we see ourselves? Third, are we **presenting** our members – our mind, emotions, hands, feet, tongue – in ways that live out and reinforce our new identity in Christ? Jesus has replaced our heart of stone with a sensitive heart – one that loves God and loves others. Now it’s up to us to get the rest of us in tow.

**Romans 6** teaches us that we’re **free from sin!** In **Romans 7** Paul also shows us that we’re **free from the Law**. When we come to Jesus we *die to sin*, but we also *die to the Law* - and both realizations are *vital to victory*. A believer in Jesus is focused on God’s love, and pardon, and power. That is, until the Law gets interjected into his life. Now his emphasis shifts... Here’s an example... I’ll impose a new law... **Chocolate ice cream is prohibited...** Ice cream is full of fat and calories, so stay away from thick, creamy, delicious chocolate ice cream. Yet the more I think about it the more I want a bowl. The harder I try to resist... the stronger the temptation becomes.

Under the Law the issue is **the sin in my life**. Under grace the issue is **the Son in my life**. And you become far more victorious focusing on the Son. It’s the joy I find in Jesus that lessens sin’s appeal, and neutralizes temptation. I grow spiritually by believing my sin has been dealt with on the cross. Preoccupy yourself with *following the Son* – not just *fighting the sin*.

We’re going to pick up where we left off last time in 7:14. Paul writes, “**For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.**” Here’s a new word, but the same concept. Paul calls himself “**carnal**.” Whenever you hear the term think *chili*. There are two types: *plain chili* and *chili con carne*. What is “*chili con carne*?” It’s chili with meat – and it’s very, very good. “**Carne**” or “**carnal**” is the Latin term for “**meat**” or “**flesh**.” Recall all humans consist of two parts – **the inner man** that lives forever and **the outer man** who dies and returns to dust. The flesh is *the outer man*.

In 6:6 Paul used two more terms. He mentioned “the old man.” That was the old sin nature – the nature inherited from Adam. And it died with Christ. Whereas, the term, “body of sin” is the *flesh*. It’s the outer man. It’s been contaminated. It was programmed to sin by the old man that’s now dead. This is why the flesh is now an enemy. The old man is dead, but it’s the flesh that keeps his memory alive. Old habits die hard, and the flesh re-enacts those selfish habits. It reacts in sinful ways, and conjures up sinful desires.

Understand there’re two ways “to walk in the flesh...” One is to fail to renew your mind. Never reckon or present. Just cave in to sin... But there’s a more subtle way to walk in the flesh - you can try to obey God and do good, yet rely on your flesh... your own energy and ingenuity. Lots of church-folk try to serve God, but rather than rely on the Holy Spirit to work in them, they walk in the flesh. *Apparently this was Paul’s problem...*

He explains, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” Paul says his actions contradict his desires. He wants to obey God, but he lacks the follow through. Some people teach that Paul wrote this as unbeliever. *I don’t think so!* Paul says he wants to do good - he has godly desires... he couldn’t say that if he wasn’t a Christian. Its obvious, that Paul is *a bona fide believer*, but he’s also *a bewildered believer!* He has godly ambitions, but lacks the power and resolve to carry them out. *And we’ve all been there, haven’t we? What I want, I don’t. I say no, then here I go! I’m a mystery to me!*

He elaborates in verse 16, “If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*” This is an astonishing statement. How could Paul say, “*It is no longer I who do it...*” unless a real transformation had occurred in Paul’s spirit. **Paul believed in a fundamental change.** In the inner man – the eternal part of Paul - He was clean, and sinless, and perfect. The old bumper sticker, “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven,” is not true. We are perfect. In the inner, deepest part of my being I’m a new creation in Christ. It’s the outer man – the “*sin that dwells in me*” – in my members - this is what betrays my intentions. I still have remnants of my former life lodged in my flesh and they rise up at inappropriate moments to lead me astray. I’m still responsible for the flesh and it’s deeds, but it’s not fundamentally me.

Verse 18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...” Here’s where we need to remember Paul is thinking of himself as a dichotomy. He’s a *inner man* and an *outer man*. In the previous verse Paul said, “*it is no longer I who (sin).*” Here he says, “*in me nothing good dwells,*” In the **inner man** Paul is new in Christ... “*It is no longer I who (sin).*” It’s the **outer man** that still sins... “*in my flesh nothing good dwells...*”

If you read from the NIV here’s a place to beware. At times NIV translators overstep their bounds. They offer *interpretation* instead of just *translation*. The *New International Version* translates the word “flesh” in verse 18 as “*sinful nature.*” Not only is that an interpretation instead of a translation, it’s a bad interpretation. Apparently, the translators didn’t understand Romans 6. If I’m in Christ I no longer have a sin nature. The old man is dead. Sin lingers in my members, but the real me is a sinless, spotless child of God. Paul is *a redeemed spirit packaged in a corrupt flesh – and so are you!*

He restates his dilemma, “For to will is present with me, but *how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*” Notice how Paul frames his struggle. The inner man is perfect, but the flesh is totally corrupt.

He's not half-evil and half-good. He's all-evil and all-good. He has total confidence in the Spirit, but zero confidence in the flesh. His flesh is contaminated. The Adam bomb left behind radiation that had defiled our flesh.

And our problem is two-sided. *Most of us fail to see ourselves in Christ.* We don't recognize the extent of the work God has done in our heart. It hasn't hit us... *And most of us fail to see that nothing good dwells in our flesh.* So here we are... we don't *lean* totally on the Spirit because we refuse to be completely *weaned* off the flesh. This is why we keep falling on our face... The victory lies within us. The work is finished. *What was done on the cross is now done in our hearts.* But we have to commit to a walk of faith. We need to live a spiritual, supernatural life – not the carnal life we're prone to – even a carnal life that tries to obey God. Wean off the flesh, and lean on the Spirit – this is the life Paul instructs us to live in chapter 8!

Verse 20, *“Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”* The Philadelphia Phillies have a mascot, the *“Philly Fanatic.”* On the outside he's a green, furry monster, with an ugly snout - and he does crazy things. He rides a motorcycle - taunts opponents - incites the crowd. But when you see him on TV remember the exterior is just a costume. There's a live person on the inside - *making a six figure salary by the way* - and the person on the inside is the real person. The same is true with me... At times I get green with envy, and have a monster-like temper, and do crazy things... *but that's not the real me.* The true Sandy is underneath the fuzzy exterior. The spiritual part of me is pure and holy in God's sight. The guy inside the Fanatic is not the Monster, yet he's still responsible for his behavior. And this is Paul's frustration. *How do we tame the Monster?*

Paul sums it up, *“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.”* I love how Peterson paraphrases verse 21, *“I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight.”* I love God, but I lug around members who don't want to cooperate. *“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”* It's a constant struggle! I want to follow God, but my flesh sabotages my obedience.

Here's our struggle set to rhyme, *“Within my earthly temple there's a fight. Part of me is love, and part is spite. There's a part that's broken-hearted for my sin. There's a part of me that's stubborn - sits and grins. Deep inside I love my neighbor as myself, at other times I prefer to sit alone upon the shelf.* And listen closely to the conclusion. Here's the big point... *“From much care I should be free. If I could once determine which of these is me?”* Do you see yourself as *part* of Christ? A new person! Do you *know*, and *reckon*, and *present*?.. Or do you see yourself *apart* from Christ? Still trying to earn your way to God by obeying the Law? I believe when Paul wrote chapter 7 he was still under the Law. That's why he concludes...

Verse 24, *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* Here Paul draws on some vivid imagery. Rome had a harsh sentence reserved for ruthless murderers. The corpse he'd killed was strapped to the criminal. He was made to carry the rotting flesh of his victim. Wherever he went, the corpse was attached. He was never free. And this is how Paul sees His dilemma. *“O wretched man that I am!”* He's attached to a rotting corpse – the body of sin. Until he dies he'll carry around his flesh.

But here's the hope! *“I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”* Notice verse 25 is Paul's response to a question... *“Who will deliver me?”* And his answer is not a 12-Step *Program*, or a

Psychological *Principle*, or a *Pill*, or a *Procedure*. The answer is a **Person**. His name is Jesus. I love how Phillips puts it, “I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The answer is not *self-discipline and the Law*, but *self-abandonment and the Spirit*. It’s not keeping **laws**, it’s walking by faith in the **love** of Jesus. And Chapter 8 teaches us how to walk by faith in the Spirit of Christ.

Before we delve into Romans 8 let me steer your thoughts in a helpful direction... It amazing how the meanings of certain words change over time. Thirty years ago, “**Hardware**” meant nuts and bolts. “**Hard drive**” involved maneuvering your car up a mountainside. “**Boot**” you wore on your foot. “**Virus**” made you sick - “**Mouse**” carried the virus – “**Dump**” is where the mouse lived... “**Menu**” helped you order your food - “**Byte**” was what you did to your food - “**Spam**” was the type of meat you hoped was not on the menu... Before computers “**Desktop**” was the top of a desk... “**Laptop**” was the top of your lap... And “**Load**” was when a heavy person sat on your laptop.

Of course, today we recognize all these terms as computer jargon. And this is how I want you to think in terms of as we move through Romans 8. Like a computer we all consist of hardware and software. Your spirit, the inner man, is the hardware, but hardware is controlled by software... by mind-sets, and beliefs, and assumptions, and perspectives. And imagine two types of software – two operating systems - loaded onto your hard drive - **The law of the Spirit of life** and **The law of sin and death**. Each morning when I wake up I have a choice. Which operating system will I boot up today? What approach to life will I take? Will I orientate my life around the Spirit, or will I gravitate toward the things of the flesh?

With that in mind let’s jump in, Romans 8, “**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**” If I live in the Spirit. If I keep God’s Son the issue in my life, then even when I stumble there’s “**no condemnation.**” I’m condemned only if I live under the Law, for Law makes sin the issue. Law keeps a black cloud over me. It disappears with faith in Jesus.

“**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**” When an airplane takes off different laws are at work. The law of gravity tries to hold a plane down, but the laws of thrust and lift supersede gravity, and forces it airborne. Likewise, *life in the Spirit overrides the pull of sin*, and causes us to soar. *Law keeps us down. Faith lets us rise.* But here’s the question... what’s running on my hard drive... *law or faith?*

“**For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**” God’s *Law* had no *flaw*. The problem was me – my flesh could not conform. Remember Paul’s conclusion, “**in my flesh nothing good dwells...**” It’s up to the flesh to keep the Law, and the flesh fails. I love the truth in this jingle: “**To run and work the law commands, yet gives me neither feet or hands. But better news the Gospel brings. It bids me fly, and gives me wings.**” The law sets the bar, but only the Spirit gives me spring enough to jump over the bar. We fulfill the Law not by keeping it, but by walking in the Spirit.

“**For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**” How do we walk in the Spirit? Go back to our computer illustration. When Paul came to Jesus God installed a new hard drive. He took out the old equipment, and put His nature within us. We have top of line gear. But the issue is the software. If old software is still running on new equipment it won’t perform well. It’ll end up

malfunctioning— *chapter 7!* That's why you've got to reboot. Stop playing that CD entitled, "*things of the flesh.*" Eject it from the drive. Install new software. Reboot and log on.

I don't know much about computers, but I've learned one truth over the years – when all else fails, **reboot!** This also applies to my spiritual life. When I begin to struggle – when I start to do what I hate and not do what I want – *I reboot!* I check my mind-set – am I laboring under the law or trusting in the Spirit? Do I see myself in Christ, or have I logged on to an old identity? **Reboot** - refocus on "*the things of the Spirit.*" Shift from flesh to faith – from pride to trust – from grunt to grace – from "*carnally minded*" to "*spiritually minded.*" **Outlook determines outcome.** Is your mindset spiritual or fleshly? A carnal operating system is death. Spiritual software creates life and peace.

Verse 7, "**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**" The flesh and Spirit are like the Hatfields and McCoys, Coke and Pepsi, Bulldogs and Jackets – they're bitter rivals. The goal of the flesh is to make myself *look good or feel good.* The Spirit wants to glorify God. You can't run two operating systems, or you'll end up frustrated. And the same is true with *the flesh* and *the Spirit.* Try to run both at the same time and you'll have constant problems. You'll stay stuck in chapter 7.

Verse 9, "**But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**" Every true believer has God's Spirit inside them. A person who doesn't know Jesus is dead spiritually. He's not the person he was meant to be. **And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**" Our flesh is contaminated by sin. It's as good as dead. That's why we need a work-around. We need to live in the Spirit.

Verse 11, "**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**" Since the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead - and the same Spirit now lives in me - that means incredible power - resurrection power - is available to me and every Christian. Its been said, "**We depend on Jesus for our eternal life, but we depend on the Holy Spirit for our internal life.**" The next few verses are about the Spirit. **We live by the Spirit... We're led by the Spirit... We're loved by the Spirit.**

Jeannette lived in NY City. Because of the crime in her neighborhood she took Judo, and later Karate. She learned all the kicks, punches, and pressure holds. She eventually became a black belt - an expert in the martial arts. Finally the day came when all her training was put to the test. She was attacked by a purse snatcher, and Jeannette defended herself admirably, but not with her martial arts. She beat the guy with an umbrella. Here's the point, just because I know something doesn't mean I'll draw on it in the heat of battle. This is our problem. We're new creatures, but we have to live like at the point of attack. We need to respond "**spiritually minded.**"

"**Therefore, brethren, we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**" Paul is saying we owe nothing to the flesh. Some of us can't shake our *do-it-yourself attitude.* The Holy Spirit has means and methods we know nothing about. You can invest great amounts of time, money, and effort trying to make you a better you – *but it's a waste.* Leaning on the flesh to make changes is like deer hunting with a pop gun. Galatians 5:17 is a far more successful strategy, "**Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**"

Verse 14, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” The Greek word translated “*led*” means “to be carried or driven.” To be “*led*” doesn’t mean to be dragged around. The Law led from the outside in. The Holy Spirit leads us from the inside out. He stirs us up. In basketball a great player can go on a hot-streak and start winning games single-handedly. When this happens we like to say, “he’s carrying his team.” The whole team is riding on his accomplishments. He’s the difference maker. *And this is the difference the Holy Spirit will make in our lives.*

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” If you’re playing partners in a card game sometimes you’ll both throw down a trump card and double win a trick. Well, in Christ we’ve been double won! We were **born again** by the Spirit, and in addition He’s **adopted** us. An adopted child has an advantage. He should always know he’s wanted. That’s what God is saying to us by giving us “*the Spirit of adoption.*” He loves us. The Holy Spirit enables us to cry out, “*Abba,*” or “*Daddy.*” The term implies a closeness. It’s the Holy Spirit Who puts us on intimate terms with God.

Then Paul says in verse 16, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” The Spirit is like a dial tone. He confirms our connection to God. He provides us the inner witness of God’s presence. I could tell my kids over and over I loved them, but if I never hugged my daughter, or gave my son a high-five it would be hollow. Think of the Holy Spirit as “the hug of the Godhead.” We feel God’s love through His Spirit.

“And if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” Here’s the ultimate test of our son-ship. *Has God written us into the will?* To me it would be more than enough - if God adopted me, and let me eat at His table, let me live in His house - but then at the end of the road left his vast treasure to his own blood relative. That would be understandable... If He gave me a 5% cut, or 10% of the inheritance it would blow my mind. But who could’ve dreamed that God would make us “joint heirs with Christ?” That means we get the same share as God’s only begotten Son.

*What a shocker!* God only asks one favor in return. If you want a share of the glory, then it’s only fair to share in the sufferings. We’re “joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. *What is glory?* Think of a combination of beauty, pleasure, and privilege. I don’t know what your future holds. I’m sure it contains some *losses and crosses*, but if you’re in Christ you can be certain – there’s glory in your future. Paul speaks of it, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” *Hardships on earth pale in comparison to the glories of heaven.* Think of a marathon – all 26 miles. The contestants toe the starting line, when one of the runners jumps the gun. A false start – but in light of 26 miles no big deal – when the race is over his false start will barely be recalled. That’s the sufferings of this life compared to the glories of heaven. Heaven is so heavy it makes all our earthly hardships seem lite as a feather.

When we get to heaven the Christian will be something to see. We’ll share in the glory of Jesus. Next to the Savior Himself, we’ll be the highlight of heaven. This is the amazing truth revealed in verse 19, “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. The Phillips translation renders it, “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.” Amazing!

Verse 20 is an important verse, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope...” In the

beginning all of creation was in harmony with its Creator - but sin threw a wrench in the gears. God's perfectly ordered universe became subject to randomness. Nature went berserk. Mother Nature came down with a bad case of PMS. Every time a tree creaks or a dog howls at the moon it's sign all is not right. Because of sin, the gentle rain that waters your lawn is also the source of flood damage. The wind that lifts a kite, will also knock over your house. Today Nature is a mix of *beauty and brutality – majesty and monstrosity*. Mother Nature is the number one perpetrator of random acts of violence.

Paul continues, “Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Notice, Jesus didn't just die on the cross to save us. He died to redeem the universe. His death on the cross will restore everything that sin has touched.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” Actress Julie Andrews sang, “The hills are alive with the sound of music.” But today the hills and all creation sings in a minor key. All creation longs to be free. Today the singing is a dirge. Creation groans waiting for its redemption, when God restores it to its original state.

“Not only *that*, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” And the older my body gets the more I groan. My spirit is like a hot air balloon. I'm inflated - ready for heaven. But my flesh is a sandbag holding me down. I groan not to be free – suicide would do that – my hope is to be transformed. I groan for “*the redemption of our body.*”

Verse 24, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” God has a purpose for our groaning – *groaning causes growing*. You've heard of “growing pains.” When we grapple with a “*yet-to-be-realized hope*” it creates endurance. The first half of Romans 8 teaches how God has *adopted us into His family*. Now the last half describes how He's *adapted us into His family*. God uses our trials and waiting to build character in our lives.

There are actually three groanings in Romans 8: *Groaning around us... Groaning within ourselves... And the Spirit's groaning on behalf of us...* Paul mentions it next, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” When our minds are so befuddled we don't know how to pray – when our hearts are so heavy we're overwhelmed – the Holy Spirit will groan for us. *Here's how this works in my life...* In times of desperation I'll just groan. I release sighs and vocalize my raw emotion. Then I trust the Spirit to translate my feelings into the Father's will. The Spirit is the perfect prayer partner.

Verse 27, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” The Spirit can take our groans and turn them into effective prayers.

I'll bet verse 28 is familiar ground. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” In the lives of His children God takes our circumstances – both pleasant and painful – and works them for good... Notice, each word in verse 28 is strategic... “God works... not a few things, or some things, or even most things... but “all things” for good!”

And notice, He works “all things together” – on their own – any one event may be disgusting. Nothing good results. Like the ingredients of a cake – on their own you couldn’t stomach them – *the flour and eggs and butter* - but when the baker puts all the components together they turn out delicious. The same is true with how God puts all things together in our lives.

And notice God’s overarching purpose in all He does. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” We were chosen before we existed to be like Jesus. And God is not afraid to use whatever means necessary – even some suffering or pressure – to accomplish His goal in us. “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” For 8 chapters now Paul has expounded on the wonders of God’s grace. It’s taken his breath away. He asks, “What then shall we say to these things?” Romans 8 closes with a flurry of questions, designed not necessarily to be answered, but to stir up our amazement of God’s mercy and love...

He begins in verse 31, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” God trumps all rivals. He’s our MVP. With God on our team we’re sure to win. Max Lucado writes, “God is for you. If there's a tree in heaven, He's carved your name in the bark. We know God has a tattoo. Isaiah 49:16 tells us, 'I have written your name on My hand.'” Imagine, God has a *Sandy tattoo*. Don’t ever think God holds a grudge, or He’s angry at you, or He’s washed His hands of you, or written you off His books... Not so! God is for you!

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” If God gave you His most precious possession – His Son – do you really think He’s going to get stingy with the rent, or withhold a Christian spouse, or a good job? He’s generous. And “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is God who justifies.*” There are people in your life who might be inclined to throw a rock at you. Good thing they’re not the Judge. God is judge, and Paul assures us that God isn’t condemning us, or judging us. Jesus died to *save us*, why would He *stone us*? Even now He’s in heaven interceding and pleading for our welfare.

Verse 34, “Who is he who condemns? *It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*” Jesus traveled a long road – from *Calvary’s cross* to *heaven’s throne* – to insure our salvation. Why would He condemn us now?

Verse 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*” In the fourth century a godly man, *John Chrysostom*, preached so strongly against sin that he offended the Roman Emperor and Empress. He was called to the palace and told to stop preaching, or he’d be banished. Chrysostom replied: “Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father’s house.” The Emperor snapped back, “Then I will slay you.” “No, you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God.” “Then your treasures will be confiscated.” “Sire, my treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal.” “Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left.” “That you cannot do, either, for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'” Chrysostom was eventually banished, and died in route. But the Emperor never forgot the lesson. You can take nothing from a child of God that’s truly important! Nothing can separate us from God’s love.

In verse 36 Paul quotes Psalm 44:22, “As it is written: *“For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” Paul’s life was Exhibit A for this truth. Name the



trial and he overcame. Paul was *“more than a conqueror.”* Two truths surface from Paul’s life. The evil world around us will *put you down*, but God will never *let you down*.

“For I am persuaded (Paul was convinced) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers (not even the goriest demon), nor things present nor things to come (nothing in your present or your future), nor height nor depth... A literal translation would be neither the “zenith” or the “horizon.” These are provocative terms. The *“zenith”* is the point in the sky directly overhead. The *“horizon”* is the point where the circle of the earth meets the sky. When astrologers cast their horoscopes they do so by studying the position of the planets in relationship to the earth’s “zenith” and “horizon.” Paul is thinking of the occult, and astrology, and mythology. It’s amazing that even in modern times folks still live in bondage to stars and superstition. Paul is telling us that no superstition can separate us from God’s love.

I like Donald Grey Barnhouse’s comment on verse 39, “A true Christian can sit down at a table with 13 people present, can spill salt, break a mirror, put an umbrella up inside a room, walk under a ladder, have a black cat walk across his path, and all this can happen to him on Friday, the thirteenth. Yet none of it, nor all of it together, can separate him from God’s love.” Trust *your Lord*, not *your luck*. Chance, or fate, superstition has no influence over your life if you’re in Christ. *“Nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* In Christ not even our own sin can separate us from His love!