

# Who Shall Separate Us from the Love of Christ?

## The Sufficiency of the Word

Christ Love Assembly (RCCG), Barton, Oxford

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**Ref. Passages:** Romans 8: 35a; 38-39

*v.35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...*

*38 I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### 1. Introduction

The passage from Romans 8 comes at the end of a long exposition by Paul on various aspects of the life children of God, saved by grace. The chapter opened with a tremendous word of encouragement and assurance; proclaiming that 'there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [people] **who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**' If in the previous chapter, Paul had focused on the theme of the futility of efforts to seek justification before God through the observance of the law, in this chapter, Paul declared an eternal truth of justification by grace: 'what the law could not do [i.e., justification]... God did by sending His own Son... [so] that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled,' in the life of the Believer, 'who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Rom 8:3-4).

Among many dimensions of the treasure trove of a Believer's inheritance in Christ include:

- Assurance of our place in the Lord (v.14: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons [children] of God*).
- Assurance that the Holy Spirit is always interceding for us (v.26: *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.*" Intercession which are made '*according to the will of God*' (v.27).
- The re-assurance regarding the dependable nature of our God (v.31 'If God is for us, who can be against us?')
- God's dependable provision: v.32; *God who did not spare His Son how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'*

Knowing all these, Paul asks the profound question, **who**, given all these inheritance we have in the Lord, **shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who or what?** (Rom 8:35)

### 2. Separation from the love of Christ:

How are we to understand 'separation from the love of Christ'? In this chapter, Paul would seem to be focusing more on difficulties that a child of God may experience, we can look at three possible aspects:

1. Sin
2. Broken relationship with Christ arising from deep disappointments in life
3. Separation arising from false teaching

The first part may suggest that this relates to only tribulation, but v.38 makes it clear that it can be both triumph and failure: 'death' or 'life'; 'heights' or 'depth', things present or things to come, temporal or spiritual powers.

Last week, in an edition of Hollyoak, the hospital TV soap on Channel 4, a woman whose only son was gravely ill in hospital. She prayed, using the hospital chapel/prayer room. Still the son died. The last picture of her we saw was that of a devastated, thoroughly distraught mother pulling off the crucifix she had on a chain around her neck, dropping it on the floor. Many of us might be familiar with similar situation either in our personal experiences or those of others; a situation of a sense of loss so overwhelming and the grief so deep that it seems God does not care.

The other side is the story in Luke 12: 16-21; the story of the rich man, who in his period of huge success and prosperity turned his back on God. The Bible relates it that after a great harvest, he had this to say in v.19: 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

Two distinctly different cases, different dimensions of the same thing: separation from the love of Christ: one by tribulation and a sense that God does not care; the other by sin of having no regard for God; displacing God from the 'throne of our heart.'

A third type of separation is a matter of being led astray by false teaching and false doctrine—teachings that seem to suggest that something else is needed beyond the work of grace already wrought for us on Calvary. Often, they are into the business of subtraction and addition which diminishes the completeness of our salvation in Christ:

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 "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. // For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" (2 Cor 11:3-4)  
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I marvel ***that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ***, to a different gospel." Gal 1:6.

So serious did Paul consider this that he took extremely serious language in v.8: "... even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Gal 1:8)  
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### 3. The Antidote:

The antidote to any of these types of separation from the love of Christ is a life lived under the control of the Holy Spirit: diligent in prayer, firmly rooted in the Word of God; which is where we reconnect with our ministration theme for this segment.

David in Psalm 119:9 asks: "How shall a young man (anyone) make his way clean?" He answered by saying "By taking heed according to Your word" and rounds it off by saying

“Your word have I hidden (kept) in my heart that I might not sin against You.” How can one hide the Word of God in one’s heart (in constant reminder) if one does not attend to the study of the Word?

***Diligence in studying:***

- Personal study of the Word
- Corporate Study of the Word

Paul admonished Timothy to be diligent in presenting himself 'rightly dividing the word of truth.' (2 Tim 2:15)

The Weymouth New Testament translation reads: “Earnestly seek to commend yourself to God as a servant who, because of his straightforward dealing with the word of truth, has no reason to feel any shame” (2Tim 2:15).

KJV 2000 NT Translation puts it thus: “And he is before all things, and *by him all things are held together*” (Col 1: 17). In Him all things hold together; in Him we are held together, made whole, made complete. So that He may have pre-eminence: in our victories and setbacks; in our success and challenges; that He should be preeminent.

- In our desire for success, we will learn to say like Moses "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here" (Exodus 33:16).
- In successes and triumphs, we would remember as Paul admonished us in Ephesians 2:8-9: it is by grace not work, let’s anyone should boast.
- When we are confronted with the difficulties of life, we will recollect Job’s words: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” And that in all his travails, it was said of Job: “And in all these, Job did not sin against God” (See also Job 19:25).
- Only in a spirit-led diligent study of the Word (individual and corporate) are we able to withstand erroneous teaching (the preaching of ‘Other Gospels’. Here we should learn to behave like the Christians at Berea (Acts 17:11):

*“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* (Acts 17:11) KJV 2000.

Error in teaching is not always dramatic and outlandish; they are often subtle. Only a spirit-led deciphering of the word (individual and corporate) and collectively walking diligently with Him can serve as an antidote.

**4. The centrality of the Holy Spirit:**

But simply trying to read the Bible will not bring it to life or enhance our spiritual growth or our walk in holiness with the Lord. Study the Bible from now till eternity; memorize every word, without the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit it will be 'theology.' It is the grace and mercy of God, through the in-dwelling power of the Holy Spirit that can shed His light into our heart; to open the secret things (the hidden treasures)—as we study the Bible (individually and collectively).

Diligence in studying equips us for every, and it could be in small or big things, in periods when we feel enormously buoyed; it could be when we feel down. It could be when we

have to witness to His grace and mercy. Sometimes, when we have no idea what to pray for or how to pray, the difference may be a passage we had read. In a case that I was involved in relating to Pastor Adeboye admonishing us at the University of Ibadan that being vessels for the healing and deliverance power of Christ is for all believers and within a week I was caught up in a situation like this one and all that I could remember, and said in prayer over and over was: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). And the Lord honoured His own name!

As Paul reminded Timothy, (2 Tim 3:16-17): “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, // **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”

The scripture is uncomplicated; read in context—understand the overall purpose of the chapter. It is sometimes allegorical, sometimes literal. There are many resources available to us in studying the Word—fellow believers, corporate study, online Bible resources, using established writings of mature believers who are biblical teachers, etc.

We can then say like Paul, in all and every situation, under the arm of the Lord, that “...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. // For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, // Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 37-39).

## **5. A Parting Message:**

After several months of having been so richly blessed by serving the Lord with you, I leave you this parting statement, from what you would know by now to be one of my favourite passages: **Phil 2: 12-13**

*12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

*13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

—Jimí O. Adéşínà