

We're Alive, No Matter What!

A sermon based on Romans 8:18-25, 31-38 – ***“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.***

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? 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 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. 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.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The fun and exciting vacation she hoped for wasn't turning out to be quite what Lex expected. Her grandpa invited her and her brother, Tim, to spend a week on his private island exploring, and adventuring, and especially seeing the dinosaurs grandpa's company had made. But now, the dinosaurs were running wild in Jurassic Park and at the first sign of the T-Rex the lawyer—who was supposed to be their protector—took off running scared only to be eaten. "He left us!" Lex cried in shock and dismay! "He left us!"

I imagine that's how Jesus' disciples must have felt after they saw his feet disappear behind the cloud. With shock and dismay they must have cried, "He left us! He left us!" Now what? Now that their mentor, their protector, their Savior left them, who would take care of them now?

But even though Jesus left this world physically, he didn't abandon his disciples. You remember his parting words before his ascension: **"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).**

Today, we look at some familiar passages in the great comfort chapter of Romans 8. And we're reminded how though Jesus left earth, he didn't leave us. Though times here will be tough, Jesus is still with us always. And no matter what happens, we will live *through* him and *with* him. Nothing will ever be able to separate us from him and his inseparable love.

Joe and Cindy were given quite the scare. Distracted by their annual garage sale, they suddenly noticed their 5-year-old son, Chase, wasn't in the garage anymore. They searched the house calling his name. Not there. They looked around the yard, checked the playground and the soccer fields across the street. Not there. Joe ran over to neighbors. He wasn't in their garage or front yard either. Both parents started to get frantic. They started to fear the worst: that one of the garage sale shoppers picked up some bargains *and* a little boy.

Moms, Dads have you ever been there? Ever had that moment of panic when you thought there would be no future Mothers' Day or Fathers' Day celebration with this particular child because they were gone? They were there at your side holding on to the cart one minute and the next they just vanished?

That's got to be what God feels every time we run away from him. Like the toddler seeking independence, we wander away from our loving Father at great risk to ourselves. We try to separate ourselves from him by running away so we can do our own thing, live life on our terms, by our rules without him telling us what to do. We can never cry, "He left us! He left us!" because if we ever feel distant from God, we can be sure that it wasn't *God* who moved away, it was us.

And it should be no surprise that such independence never ends well. It was Adam's independence from God that brought about sin and its harmful effect from the beginning. That's why there's suffering. That's why there are problems. That's why there's pain. **"For the creation was subjected to frustration..."** It's in, **"bondage to decay..."** and **"has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."**

And sin doesn't just make a mess of the earth, it causes problems and pain for its inhabitants too: **"trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword..."** And what's worse, our trying to separate ourselves from God to do our own thing doesn't just make a mess of *this* life. For running away from God, we deserve a fate far worse than being hit by a car, or getting kidnapped, or even getting eaten by a dinosaur. We deserve death. And we deserve death to be the final separation that removes us from God and his love for eternity. We justly deserve God's condemnation.

But... God loves us too much to let us go. Even when we run away from him, he runs after us. Like a mother leaving the cart full of groceries (or a garage sale with a bag of cash sitting on the table) to go frantically searching for her wandering toddler before he gets abducted or hit by a car, so great is God's love for us he chases after us before we become separated from him forever in hell.

And consider again what great lengths God's love led him to go to in order to rescue us! **"He... did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all!"**

Friends, listen; if the **"trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword..."** ever cause you to start doubting God's love for you, you only need to look at the cross again. He already rescued you from the most terrible trouble; from the hardship of hell! And he did so at the expense of **his own Son!** What love! How can you ever doubt his love for you!

Now you have the confidence your every sin is forgiven! Every time you've wandered away from God or deliberately ran from him is erased. **"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies."** God has declared you not guilty! Who's going to argue with him? **"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."** The judge of your soul is the very one who died to pay for your sin, who rose from the dead to guarantee it, who ascended into heaven to plead your case before the Father based on his work and merits. Who's going to argue with him against your case? Never doubt his love for you! It will never cease. It will never fail. It will never waver!

Mom was tired of losing her toddler every time she went out. So one day, she went online and bought a "child safety harness" (because "child safety harness" sounds much more dignified than "toddler leash"). And the next time she went shopping, she made sure her little one was safely tethered to her. She wouldn't lose her child this time.

And that, in a sense, is what God does for us, friends. His love for you is an even greater love than the most devoted mother could ever give her child. It's never selfish, it never needs a break and a glass of wine, it always does what's in your best interest, and it tethers you to God with an inseparable love.

"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."

You see, the reason nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ, is that it in no way depends on you. God doesn't love you because of how good you are, because of what you do, because you're so good looking, or charming, or adorable, or talented. He doesn't love you because you're loveable in any way. He loves you because that's who he is. He loves you for the sake of Jesus who lived for you, and died for you, and took your sin away, who lives for you still, interceding for you before his Father's throne.

So as you endure **"trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword..."** (and you will; that is to be assumed), even if you should, **"face death all day long; [and be] considered as sheep to be slaughtered,"** remember you are **"more than conquerors through him who loved us."** Nothing will ever, **"be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Rejoice in that truth. Even though Jesus left us physically when he ascended into heaven, though he isn't visible to our eyes, he is still with us, just as he promised. And though life may be hard, his love will never leave us. It will never cease. It will never fail. It will never waver!

God will always love us with an inseparable love until that day when we are untethered from this world and living with him in paradise. And he will continue love us for eternity there.

So wait patiently and hopefully, "***for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.***" Stay tethered to him. Stop running away looking for your independence. And live for him in thanks. For nothing will ever separate us from God's inseparable love. We are alive in Christ, no matter what. Amen.

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