

**AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH**  
**ROMANS 8:28-39**

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

**M.I. UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PURPOSES FOR OUR LIVES, BELIEVING HIS PROMISES, AND HAVING CONFIDENCE IN HIS LOVE WILL ENABLE US TO FACE EVERY SITUATION WE WILL EVER ENCOUNTER IN LIFE.**

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## **AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH ROMANS 8:28-39**

**By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn**

This morning we find ourselves at the end of the second major section of Romans. In chapters 1-4, the Apostle Paul hammered home the point that we are saved by grace through faith; salvation is initiated, accomplished, and finalized by God Himself. There is nothing we can do to earn it or achieve it. It is merely a gift that we must receive in faith.

Chapters 5-8 have given us a realistic description of what life should look for us once we place our faith in Jesus. We said that we would oftentimes find ourselves groaning with frustration because we can't seem to live as holy as we would like; that every time we want to do something good, sin is right there to oppose us and often keeps us from accomplishing the good we hope to.

So in our earthly existence, our fleshly nature has the upper hand over our spiritual nature. However, the good news is that when we became Christians, when we gave our lives to Christ, He gave us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit now lives in us and consistently reminds us that we are God's children, God is our Father, and that we can now live in hope because God Himself will complete the good work He has started in us.

To summarize what we have learned about life as believers, we could say that we are to live with hope and we are to live confidently because we know that our destinies are secure in God's hands. This morning's passage is going to describe what Christian hope looks like in everyday life.

Part of our hope rests on the fact that God loves us, but sometimes we get a little fuzzy on this because we try and understand God's love by comparing it to human love. Let me give you an example of how that can muddy the waters.

One night, Luing and I were sitting in the kitchen having some tea. I said, “You know Luing, we have been married for 30 years and I love you as much now as when we were first married. She said nothing. Now everybody knows what the protocol is, right?”

She is supposed to say, “I love you too.” But there was silence. So I asked, “How about you? Do you love me?” She thought for a long time and finally said, “I had a boyfriend that I respected for his intelligence. He went on to become a doctor. I dated a guy that I admired for his remarkable courage. He went to West Point and is now a general. I had a boyfriend that was really hot. I was captivated by his good looks and charm. But with you ... how else could you explain it, it must be love?”

You see, I’m thinking that’s why we sometimes get confused when thinking about God’s love.

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I like the Bible because it always paints a realistic view of life. I think we tend to skip over the parts we don’t want to hear, but the Bible gives a complete view. The Apostle Paul has informed us that just because we are Christians, life will not be a cakewalk. In fact, he warns us that the Christian life is a struggle that involves pain, suffering, loneliness, and all kinds of troubles. We don’t like to hear that, nevertheless, it is true. Still, he encourages us to live, not with fear, but with hope.

How do we do that? **UNDERSTANDING GOD’S PURPOSES FOR OUR LIVES, BELIEVING HIS PROMISES, AND HAVING CONFIDENCE IN HIS LOVE WILL ENABLE US TO FACE EVERY SITUATION WE WILL EVER ENCOUNTER IN LIFE.** The simple fact is this: Because we are human, we will face all sorts of suffering. We will experience failure, betrayal, loneliness, loss, sickness, and ultimately death. It is all part of the human experience. And for the Christian, we also face the torments of our enemies, Satan, sin, the world, the flesh, and fear. Yet Jesus

promises us abundance, peace, and joy through the entire journey of life. Let's see how this can be possible.

I. GOD'S PREPARATIONS (Vs. 28-30)

**EVEN THOUGH HUMAN BEINGS HAVE FREEDOM TO ACT, AND EVEN THOUGH THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE EVIL ONE, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN AND HE WILL MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO US ... GOOD OR BAD ... WILL BE USED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE IN OUR LIVES.**

In verses 28-30, Paul describes God's preparations for our journey: **EVEN THOUGH HUMAN BEINGS HAVE FREEDOM TO ACT ... AND EVEN THOUGH THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE EVIL ONE, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN AND HE WILL MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO US ... GOOD OR BAD ... WILL BE USED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES IN OUR LIVES.** We will experience suffering and tragedy, yet the thing that is to give us hope and joy is that God will use it all for our ultimate good.

A. GOD'S PROMISE (V. 28)

God's promise is spelled out clearly in verse 28. Up until now, it seems as if Paul has been writing and arguing philosophically and theologically; but in this section he is preaching. This is really nice, rhythmic, rhetoric. It is emotive. It is rapid fire. It is powerful.

He starts off verse 28, "And we know." This is how Paul defines Christian hope. Hope for believers is not wishful thinking. Hope is certainty that God will accomplish all He has to accomplish in our lives to make us all that He intends us to be. Last week we said that the three stages we pass through as believers are justification, a past event for us. That was the day we received Christ as Lord and Savior and God declared us to be Not Guilty. Jesus is the reason for our justification. In the future, we will some day be

glorified; that is God the Father will give us new resurrection bodies to go along with our new, redeemed spirits. We will be absolutely perfect. Our journey through life is now described as sanctification. It is God the Holy Spirit Who guides us through life and makes us better and better each day. Our certainty, our hope is based on seeing the reality of each stage. The fact that one day we will be glorified guarantees that we have been justified and are now being sanctified. The fact that we have been justified guarantees that we are being sanctified and one day will be glorified. Because we are being sanctified guarantees that we are justified and one day will be glorified. That is what Christian hope is all about. We are certain and we know that God will complete the good work He started in us.

Now here is where the text gets tricky. Let me read the verse to you as literally as I can from the Greek; Keep your eyes on your text while I read. The Greek says, “And we know that – to those who love God – all things together work into good – to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Did you catch that? The text seems to say that all things together work into good. Interpreters have taken three major approaches to this: The NIV, NASB, and the NLT have all inserted God as the subject, or in other words, “God works all things for good.” Other translators assume the Holy Spirit is the subject here since chapter 8 has been focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit. They would translate it; “The Holy Spirit works all things for good,” and there are those who simply leave the text alone and say, “All things work together for good.”

Before we tackle this, let me remind us that all things means all things, suffering and tragedy are included as well as success and comfort. Secondly, we must keep in mind two truths that seem to be contradictory nevertheless both are true; God is sovereign. There is nothing that catches God by surprise and nothing happens without

His permission. He is in total control. On the other hand, we human beings are free to act. There is evil in this world that humans are free to embrace and participate in.

The principle we are about to discuss applies only to believers. Look at the two phrases. From the earthly side, we are described as those who love God. We don't love religion, we don't love self, and we don't love the world; we love God. Jesus said that as God's children we are to love Him with all our heart, with all our minds, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

We are described from the heavenly side as those called according to God's purposes. God has destinies for us to fulfill. We are to continue on in life with purpose. We just finished studying through the book of Genesis. Joseph was sold as a slave twice, ended up in jail twice, all in order to fulfill God's purpose of saving the world and Israel from starvation. If you are a believer, then God has a plan and purpose for you. We need to wake up each morning and live with the attitude of looking for God's purpose in our lives.

Here is one implied in these verses: Every human being will face suffering and tragedy in life. The promise that God will work all things for good applies only to believers. Think about how tragic life is for those who don't know Jesus. There is no hope in their suffering, life becomes burdensome and depressing. Jesus spent His life offering people freedom from this type of oppression. This is our motive for evangelism. One of our main purposes in life is to tell people about salvation and freedom in Jesus Christ.

Now back to the main point: The Greek word for work is a compound word. It is literally "together-work." I would ask, "To what does together refer?" Whichever choice we make as the subject, I think God is still the One who orchestrates all the events. I

would paraphrase it something like this, “And we know that God orchestrates all things so that they work out for good in our lives as believers.”

#### B. GOD’S PURPOSE (V. 29)

Having said that, we still need to define good; verse 29 defines good as God’s purpose for us. Somehow we take this to mean that we will experience good the way we define it. It does not mean that if we lose a job, we will find a better one, it does not mean if we lose a boy friend or girl friend that we will find another and it does not mean if we get cancer, we will be healed.

There has been a great deal of ink spilled over this section arguing about predestination and other theological/philosophical issues. However, I think that is to miss Paul’s point here where Paul’s purpose is to define God’s idea of good, and to spell out what it means to be called according to His purpose. God foreknew us. This certainly means that He knew all about us before we even existed, but it also must include the Bible’s definition of what it means to know someone. In marriage it means to have intimate contact, including sexual contact with a spouse. So, here I think it means that God had an intimate relationship set up with us beforehand. God is the One who initiated the relationship, somewhat like He did with the nation of Israel. It is humbling for us to keep in mind what He told them; he did not choose to be in a relationship with them because they were so powerful, holy, or good, this is where the word predestination comes in being, predestination has to do with setting out limits, boundaries, or here, purposes ahead of time; He chose Israel to manifest His glory on earth through them. He chose them to be a blessing to the whole earth.

God’s definition of good is that He is preparing us to live in eternity and along the way, we will complete all the good works He has prepared for us in advance and being called according to God’s purpose means that we become more like Jesus day by day.

God's ultimate purpose for us is that we will rule together with Him in eternity. Good is defined as anything that moves us towards that goal. You may find God's good in never getting married, because God may have great works for you to do as a single person. We may find God's good purpose in a wheel chair, a hospital room, or even the morgue. Keep in mind, we as Christians are no longer mortal; we are eternal. Let's also keep in mind that as God's children, we must inherit glory the same way Jesus did. Jesus entered His glory through the cross. We identify with Jesus through suffering as well.

We also share in the mission of Christ. He came to redeem people through evangelism and ministries of compassion. God does not define good and evil in utilitarian terms. In God's plan pleasure is not always good and pain is not always evil. Good is what makes us more like Jesus. Evil is what takes us away from that purpose.

#### C. GOD'S PROVISION (V. 30)

But verse 30 again reassures us that it is all in God's hands as we are reminded of God's provision. God has chosen to be in an intimate relationship with us. He has a purpose for us, and as we said He will bring us to our final destination of perfection in heaven. We have discussed this cycle so I just want to make one point about verse 30: those of you who have been following closely over the past few weeks will notice that Paul left out one important stage, where he says that God predestined us, He called us, He justified us and He has glorified us. Why did He leave out sanctification? Two things, first, chapters 5-8 have been describing the sanctification process and the verses that follow will also describe the sanctification process.

Second, if you look carefully at the last phrase in verse 30, you will notice that glorified, a future event is written in the past tense, as if it has already happened. In God's mind, we have already made it. It is a done deal. Therefore, we can go through

this sanctifying, often painful process with confidence, hope, and a sense of purpose. Suffering is never meaningless for children of God.

Paul's point about the nature of reality in this world is this: **EVEN THOUGH HUMAN BEINGS HAVE FREEDOM TO ACT, AND EVEN THOUGH THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE EVIL ONE, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN AND HE WILL MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO US ... GOOD OR BAD ... WILL BE USED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES IN OUR LIVES.**

II. GOD'S GUARANTEE (Vs. 31-34)  
**OUR SALVATION IS SAFE. WE CAN LIVE BOLDLY ON THE PROMISE THAT GOD WILL COMPLETE THE GOOD WORK HE HAS STARTED IN EACH ONE OF US.**

Let me reiterate this point one more time; if we equate pleasure with good and pain with evil, then we will oftentimes find ourselves confused. Life is filled with ups and downs and in verses 31-34 Paul wants us to grasp God's guarantee of love: **OUR SALVATION IS SAFE. WE CAN LIVE BOLDLY ON THE PROMISE THAT GOD WILL COMPLETE THE GOOD WORK HE HAS STARTED IN EACH ONE OF US.**

A. GOD'S POWER (V. 31)

Verse 31 describes God's power where Paul starts the verse with, "What shall we say in response to this?" We were hopelessly alienated from God. God chose to focus His gaze, His attention, and His love on us. Jesus took on human flesh and died for us so that we could be saved. We became children of God and with that came all the rights and privileges.

We find ourselves in a struggle and our flesh is at constant war with our spirit. Yet as God's children, He will ensure that we get to where we have to go. We will

accomplish all we have to accomplish. We will become all we have to become, because God has justified us, He will someday glorify us, and right now, He is sanctifying us.

What shall we say in response to all of that? Paul answers, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Keep in mind that Paul is preaching here. If we were in a theology or philosophy class we would say, “Satan is against us, sin is against us, the world is against us, and our own flesh is against us.” But let me give you the flavor of what Paul is after here.

If God is for us, If God is on our side, and He is ... then who or what could possibly prevent us from fulfilling our destinies? The answer is obvious and it is meant to give us an adrenaline rush. I’ll ask the question. You give me the enthusiastic answer.

If God is for us ... who can stand against us? “NO ONE!”

If God is for us ... What can prevent us from fulfilling our destinies in Christ Jesus? “NOTHING!”

God is all powerful and He is willing to use all that power so that you and I can fulfill our purpose and destinies in Christ. That is one powerful ally. You and God are always a majority. God and I against any number of enemies is an unfair fight. God is all-powerful, and nothing and no one can successfully stand up against Him.

#### B. GOD’S GENEROSITY (V. 32)

God’s generosity is described in verse 32. Actually, His generosity is an outward demonstration of His passionate love. When we suffer, when things don’t seem to be going the way we think they ought to go, or when we don’t seem to be getting what we want, Satan will come along and try to convince us that God is withholding good from us. Don’t be fooled by that argument. Remember that God is working all things together that we might become more like Jesus. Look at Paul’s argument and remember it the next time you are tempted to think God is holding back from giving you something.

There was a time when God the Father had to make a choice; He looked at you, a filthy creature that had rebelled against Him, had no interest in Him, and deserved to die; then He looked at His One and Only Son, Jesus Whom He loved passionately; Jesus was holy and perfect, pleasing to look at, and pleasing to be with. Who would live? Who would die? God chose you to live, and His Son to die. That thought should cause us to shiver. God tested Abraham's love by asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. Abraham obeyed but then God stopped him from letting the knife fall on Isaac. God said; "Now I know how much you love me; you did not withhold your only son." But in the case of Jesus, God had to let the knife fall on him so that we could be forgiven of our sins. How much does God love you? How much does God love me? He did not withhold His most precious Son. He gave us Jesus. If God gave us what was most precious to Him, what is it that He would possibly withhold from us?

What are you thinking this morning that God is withholding from you? Paul wants us to restructure our question. We must assume that God will not withhold anything good from us. So if we don't have something we want, then perhaps we need to ask, "How is God using this perceived lack to make me more like Jesus? How is God using this to move me towards fulfilling my purpose and destiny in life?"

Let's get Paul's flavor here again. I'll ask the question, you give me the enthusiastic answer. Seeing that God gave Jesus to die for our salvation, "what good thing would He possibly withhold from us?" "NOTHING!"

#### C. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (Vs. 33-34)

Verses 33-34 describe God's faithfulness. God has got us covered from start to finish. Again if we ask these questions theologically or philosophically, we would have an answer. Satan constantly accuses us; and we get bogged down if we pay attention to

him. Satan cannot bring any legitimate charge against us. So we must hear Paul loud and clear in these two verses.

The first question and answer is found in verse 33, “Who will bring any charge against God’s elect?” Here is Paul’s answer: God is the ultimate judge of the universe. If we are Christians, then as we have said before, God has already declared us to be “Not Guilty.” The verdict has already been given. So this is the real question, “If God has already declared us to be ‘Not Guilty,’ then who can bring a charge against us?” The answer of course is, “NO ONE!”

The second question is found in verse 34, who could possibly condemn us?” After Jesus died and rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven and took His place at the right hand of God and He was handed all power and authority. Now if Jesus died for us, if He is our eternal High Priest Who constantly intercedes for us, then why would He condemn us? The answer is, “He wouldn’t.” And no one else is able to stand up to Him and condemn us. So the answer to the question, “Who can stand up and condemn us?” the answer is again, “NO ONE!”

As a review, I will ask the question and you give me the enthusiastic answer:

If God is for us, who can stand against us? NO ONE!

Since God gave us that which was most precious to Him, what good thing would He withhold from us? NOTHING!

Who could possibly bring a charge against God’s elect? NO ONE!

Who could possibly condemn Jesus people? NO ONE!

Do you get it yet? **OUR SALVATION IS SAFE. WE CAN LIVE BOLDLY ON THE PROMISE THAT GOD WILL COMPLETE THE GOOD WORK HE HAS STARTED IN EACH ONE OF US.**

III. GOD’S LOVE (Vs. 35-39)

**GOD AND HIS LOVE ARE SO POWERFUL, THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THIS WORLD OR THE NEXT THAT CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM THEM.**

These next five verses have to be one of the most powerful and moving passages in Scripture. Verses 35-39 describe God's wonderful love: **GOD AND HIS LOVE ARE SO POWERFUL, THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THIS WORLD OR THE NEXT THAT CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM THEM.** I don't know about you, but this is really starting to sink in for me. Life is not about me, life is not about you; life is all about God and the fact that God has chosen to focus His gaze upon us is too wonderful to be true... yet it is.

A. LIFE'S BATTLES (Vs. 35-36)

Life's battles are described in verses 35-36. Pay attention here because when suffering comes, and it will, we won't ask why God is punishing us; instead we will focus on the fact that no amount of suffering will ever be able to separate us from God. Paul asks the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then he goes on to mention seven things that cover just about all the suffering we face in life. (These are meant to be read in rapid fire.) Let me give you an example of how I think Paul wants us to hear it. (*Read slowly*) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (*Read quickly*) Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No! No! No! Look even me, the Apostle Paul, shipwrecked, beaten, left for dead. Nothing can separate us from God's love."

Again, all of us experience the sufferings that come with living in a fallen, sinful world. People will disappoint us. People will harm us, abandon us, and betray us. Loved ones will get sick and die and children will grow up and leave. We will experience all kinds of losses, loss of jobs, we will all get sick and die and we will face the effects of evil and terrorism. The challenge Paul gives us is this; pick the worst

tragedy you can imagine in life; then ask yourself this question, “Can even this separate me from God’s love?”

#### B. LIFE’S WINNERS (V. 37)

He answers it emphatically in verse 37 as he describes life’s winners. Do you remember how this passage started out in verse 28? Here is Paul’s full answer here in verse 37. Can any pain, suffering, or tragedy ever separate me from the love of Jesus?” “No, even in the midst of all these horrible things, God is busy orchestrating all these things so that they work out for good in our lives.”

Paul says that we are ‘more than conquerors’ through Christ who loved us. I don’t want you to miss the beauty of this; the word for ‘more than conquerors’ is one word in Greek. The word is victor, winner, champion, or achiever, combined with the word hyper. As God works all these things for good, we become over-achievers. Not only are we not separated from God’s love through suffering, we actually become over-achievers through suffering, we actually get closer to God and become more like Jesus.

We do all this through Him who loved us. Paul has made it clear that God; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the One who loves us. God is busy working out good in our lives. Not only is suffering not able to separate us from God, it actually brings us closer to God and becomes a useful tool in the hands of a loving God.

#### C. LIFE IN CHRIST (Vs. 38-39)

Verses 38-39 sum up this section of Romans chapters 5-8, in describing life in Christ. Paul started out this sermon in verse 28 with “We know,” and ends it here with “I am convinced.” Paul went through all sorts of suffering; Paul was beaten and almost killed several times and Paul described his spiritual struggle in chapter 7. Paul has a firsthand knowledge of the sufferings we encounter in life. Yet he is convinced. What is it that he is convinced of? That neither death nor life can separate us from the love of

God. That is, nothing in this earthly existence like sickness, rejection, failure, loneliness or even death itself can threaten our relationship with God.

Angels or Demons are also no threat. No demonic powers or oppressions can separate us from God's love.

The present or future cannot threaten us either. Since God is eternal, there is no time that God will not be present with us.

There is no power, human or spiritual that can break the bond between Jesus and us.

We also cannot be separated by height or depth, since God is omnipresent there is no place we can be where Jesus will not be there also.

Paul made it clear that no suffering, no power, earthly or heavenly could ever break the bond of love between God and us. That is some powerful love. Most people search their whole life looking for and chasing after love. I want to encourage you to quit looking because it's right here. There is no love more intimate, more passionate, more intense, more lasting, more satisfying, and more true than the love God has for you and desires to give to you: **GOD AND HIS LOVE ARE SO POWERFUL, THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THIS WORLD OR THE NEXT THAT CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM THEM.**

I know there are many of us who have suffered much. I know there are many who are suffering much. And I also know that we will all suffer much in the future. Suffering is part of the human experience. But I also know this: **UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PURPOSES FOR OUR LIVES, BELIEVING HIS PROMISES, AND HAVING CONFIDENCE IN HIS LOVE WILL ENABLE US TO FACE EVERY SITUATION WE WILL EVER ENCOUNTER IN LIFE.**

I want to read Warren Wiersbe's closing thoughts on this section of Romans.

**“A review of this wonderful chapter shows that the Christian is completely victorious. We are free from judgment because Christ died for us and we have His righteousness. We are free from defeat because Christ lives in us by His Spirit and we share His life. We are free from discouragement because Christ is coming for us and we shall share His glory.**

**We are free from fear because Christ intercedes for us and we cannot be separated from His love.**

**No Condemnation! No obligation! No frustration! No separation!**

**If God is for us, who can be against us!”**

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Lord, 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 Your love, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whose Name we pray, Amen. (Altar Call)