

## Romans 8:31-39

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[0:00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8, our text for this morning will be verse 31 through 39 of Romans chapter 8.

In addition to today being the first day of 2017, which is just shocking and strange to say, today also marks the eight-year anniversary of the formation of Christ's family church, Dahlongega. We typically don't talk about that on the first day of the month, but eight years ago, this day Christ's family church, Dahlongega began. So this morning we're going to take a quick look back at last year and a look forward into the new year. And I want to do that by briefly noting two things that we're doing well and that we should continue to do, press on in, and then spend the majority of our time together on a matter of improvement for our church. And Romans 8, 31 through 39 is going to serve that purpose. First, two things to commend. And there are more things that our church does well together, but two things I think that we did by grace particularly well this last year. First, there is amongst our church a great sense of community, a great unity amongst us. And I am extremely thankful for that. This is certainly a grace of God to us, but it also has taken work on our part. When we are in conflict with one another, when we rub each other the wrong way, it takes work to get in and sort those things out. It takes time. It takes an investment to be together and to be pressing on together in holiness as a community of believers. Psalm 133, 1 says, Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. And I'm extremely thankful this past year for that and for my experience of it. If you find yourself sitting there this morning as a regular part of our congregation not feeling the same, I would suggest to you that it takes work. And on your part, you've got to press in and lean in with us together on being a community of faith. There's much blessing that comes with it. Secondly, I want to commend our church for both efforts in and reality of multiplication, both personal and corporate. I hear more and more reports of people consistently, faithfully sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people that they know. And I am extremely encouraged by that. Often it's not you telling me, but it's someone who knows you telling me that you have been sharing your faith consistently. And that's a good thing. I believe we've already seen some fruit and I believe that we're going to see fruit in increasing order as God blesses the work that we'll be doing. So personal multiplication as well as corporate. We started a new church this past year, didn't we, in July. And I'm very pleased with the way that you all loved those people that we sent from Christ Family Church, now Christ Family Church, Dahlongega, to Christ Family Church, Oakwood. It is a pleasure to see them come back as we rejoin Christmas Eve, our Christmas Eve service. Much of the Oakwood crowd was here when we have weddings and that group comes back together. It's just good to see the community that we have even across the multiplying of distances. So these are things that we have done well by grace and things that we should continue to do well into this next year. Second, I want to address a most important matter of improvement. And before I get into it, I want to say to you that I recognize that I often see the challenges that face our church in disproportion to the victories that our church experiences. Often, on the scale of challenge and victory, the challenge side gets weighted disproportionately. And I think that's for two reasons. Number one, my position, complaints tend to climb a little faster to the top than victories do. I tend to be the complaint department in our church. And so I hear things and the things that aren't going so well more readily than the victories that are in our church. Also, in my position, I ought to be pushing forward and longing for more and better and pressing us to that. I think there would be something wrong with me as a leader in our church if I didn't see a gap between where we are and where we ought to be and want to encourage and press us to that place. So I think my position is part of it, but often my disposition can be part of it as well. I have to repent regularly that I am such a glass half empty type of guy that I don't take hold of

those things that are victorious, the great work that God is doing and relish it and rejoice in it, but rather can get too focused on those things that aren't going as they ought to go. So I'm saying that to you that I recognize that. But in this case, right, so generally speaking, that can be true of me. But in this case, in this matter of most importance, this has been emerging as a theme in the lives of many of you and in my life as well, a place that we need to be improving upon. And so here it is, a most important matter of improvement. And this may not make sense to you when I say it at first, but I promise to explain. We need to stop by God's grace forgetting who we are. We need to stop by God's grace forgetting who we are. Before we started studying the book of Acts together quite some time ago when we began, I preached a five-week sermon series on sanctification. Some of you may remember that and the specific ways that we would work together as a community of faith, right, to bring about holiness in one another, right? Some of you remember that, I hope, right? We began with a week on our gospel identity. Who are we in Christ? Our gospel identity. And when we did that, we unpacked the following statement. By grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, we are justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him. This gospel identity is our great motivation for worship, right? Because of who we are, we do the things we're meant to do, right? We don't do the things we're meant to do in order to become who we are. We don't work to be accepted by God. We are accepted by God, so we work. And I presented to you some ways in which we mess this up, right? If we are walking as we should, as followers of Jesus Christ, gospel-centered Christians, we're humble before God. We recognize that we can do no good thing to gain God's favor. We're motivated by our gospel identity, the fact that we are, in fact, accepted by God in Christ to obedience. That's the motivation of it, right? In our failures, we repent quickly. We recognize the failure. We confess it to the Lord. And we turn back to Christ. We boast only in the cross of Jesus Christ. We walk this spot as gospel-centered Christians. And it's a tightrope, to be sure.

[7:54] And there are two ways to fall off of it. And you fail. All of us do. At some point, as we forget who we are, in one of two ways. The first, I think this would be the minority in the room, would be the self-loving Christian. And I'm not suggesting that we can't have some sense of personal value, right? But self-loving, not recognizing that it's God Himself that loves us, but we're only getting that from ourselves.

Self-loving Christians find themselves justified by their obedience. They think that what they do is, in fact, good enough. Usually deluded, right? Looking at everybody else's sin, but not seeing theirs quite so much, right? Making false comparisons. Well, at least I'm not this, or at least I'm not that. I'm doing pretty good before God. And I'm accepted because of that good activity. These people in their minds are good enough. They view God as loving them just as they are. No need for improvement on their part. They view God as properly loving them because why wouldn't He? I'm such a lovable individual. This is a way that people can fail at times to be gospel-centered, to remember who they are in Christ. The more common, and here's where we're at today, the more common is the self-hating Christian, self-loathing Christian. This person knows that they will never be justified by their obedience. This is a good thing, right? So they try to be justified by their penance. Not their repentance, but by their penance. When these people fail, and this is the category I fall into when I'm not gospel-centered, when we fail to be obedient as we should, we then begin to stack up things to do to make up for the thing that we failed to do to be accepted by God. We're never good enough. We view God as unable to love someone as wretched as me. And this is the beginning of the gospel message, right? That we have no lovable thing within us, right? Sin is utterly spoiled us, but because God, right? The beautiful conjunction, but God, because of who He is, He extends His love to us. Begins with our wretchedness, but having placed faith in Christ, we are delivered from that, right? We are redeemed, right? We are accepted in Him because of the perfection of Jesus. So we need to stop by God's grace forgetting who we are.

At the very core of every sin that we commit is an identity crisis. We forget. We forget who we are. I'm trying to teach my boys in the hope that they'll translate this to their relationship with the Lord one day, that they are my sons and therefore they act a certain way, right? So I ask them questions all the time. Do my sons disobey? And they say no. And of course they do, right? But because they're my sons, there's a certain standard that I've set out for them, not because I'm an ogre, but because it's good for them, because I love them. I want them to walk in a way that is pleasing to me and ultimately because it's pleasing to the Lord. So they forget who they are, right? They forget that

they're Nathan's sons because Nathan's sons don't act that way. This is exactly the way we are with God. Anytime we sin, we have forgotten who He is to us in Christ. We forgot that He set us free from sin. We forgot that He paid the penalty for sin. We forgot that He has given us His righteousness. And then we act in discord with that great truth. And what happens so often is that when we do that, we then also fail to believe who we are. Rather than repenting and running back to that reality, we go off on a path of continued sin, not remembering that we have been delivered by Christ. Now, sanctification, that whole series was about sanctification, right? About the process of being perfected in Christ, right? Not yet perfect, but being perfected. Someday perfect, glorified, not there yet, not in this life, right? We don't become perfect all in a moment, which we did, but God has a plan for us and a way that He's bringing us about. Our sanctification is progressive. It's going to move across the spans of our life. We're going to get, by grace, a bit more and a bit more and a bit more like Jesus as we live in this world, as we exercise disciplines of grace to us. But our sanctification is also synergistic. We have a part to play in this as well. There's something we are meant to do in the process of being made perfect. Let me read you,

I promise we're getting to Romans chapter 8 momentarily. Let me read you from Philippians chapter 3. So this is Paul, verse 12 through 14. He's talking about obtaining the resurrection from the dead, and what he's talking about is glorification. He's talking about the perfect state, right? Tired of his flesh, ready to move on, to be glorified, to be perfect. Verse 12, he says, not that I have already obtained this, this resurrection from the dead, or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.

Why? Because Jesus Christ has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. So longing to be perfect, right? I set aside the sin of my past, and I press on toward holiness. And it is a work, it's a thing that has to be done on our part. There's a straining forward, an activity that takes place on our part.

[14:09] And this morning, that straining forward that needs to be done is belief. It's belief, that's an activity, right? No doctrine, I think it's C.S. Lewis that said this, no doctrine stays alive in the mind. It must be fed, right? We have to be continually reminded of who we are in Christ. And so it's my hope this morning, as we look at Romans 8, 31 through 39, that we will be reminded of that, that you will take it with you this afternoon and into this week, and meditate on the great truths found herein.

Believe this morning, believe this morning that you are who God says you are. Believe that you are secure because of His gracious work on your behalf, right? Beloved, our security in Christ is the great reason for obedience, right? And when we sin for repentance and a return to obedience, right, we are His, God says, and nothing will change that. On the front of your bulletin, there's a quote from Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards at a very young age wrote his resolutions. If you've never read these, you should. You should read all of them. They're fantastic. These commitments that he made as a young man, and this one I thought was particularly beneficial to us this morning. He wrote, resolved to examine carefully and constantly what that one thing in me is which causes me in the least to doubt of the love of God and to direct all my forces against it. Isn't that good? To find that thing carefully and constantly that causes me to doubt God's love to me and then to strain forward.

As Paul said, right, direct all my forces against it. Now, all that being said, that brings us to the text. Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 31. Paul writes, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?

[16:48] Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised? Who's at the right hand of God? Who indeed is interceding for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Have you ever considered just in that statement why I begin it, beloved? I say it almost every Sunday that I preach. Beloved, this is something that's true of you. If you're in Christ, you are loved by God.

[18:07] This was the title that God gave to Jesus when he was baptized. This is my beloved son. 1 John, this is John Wright and calls the Christians he's writing to beloved again and again and again.

What I'm saying to you is that you are loved by God. God's word was written for us that we would believe its promises and obey its commands. So verse 31, Paul says, What then shall we say to these things?

What things is Paul referring to? What things is Paul referring to? I believe he is referring directly to chapter 8 verses 28 through 30, where Paul speaks of the unstoppable plan of God to pursue his people to the end.

To pursue his people in their salvation, in their sanctification, and in their glorification. The unstoppable plan of God to pursue his people to the end.

In this text is contained a briefed ordo salutis, order of salvation. The main point of which is that God acts, God accomplishes, God maintains.

[19:26] Verse 28, And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, to be made perfect.

In order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Or preeminent, that Christ would be supreme among those who are made Christ-like. Verse 30, And those whom he predestined, he also called.

And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. This is God's doing. God acts. God accomplishes.

God maintains. I also believe that the, What then shall we say to these things? Is referring to the broader context of his letter to the Roman believers.

believers. We're so apt as we study the Bible to make it so disjointed. And you consider that this letter when it was delivered would have been read from the beginning to the end.

[20:31] Right? Not march through as we did in the book of Romans. I think over a little over two years. Bit by bit. Verse by verse. Right? And in our minds sometimes that really breaks it apart. Right?

But just a few minutes prior. Right? Beginning in chapter 1. Paul has started his address to these Roman believers. And so we ought to think a little bit.

We ought to go back a little bit. And so let me just invite you to turn back, flip back a few pages. That's why they make this ribbon. I think it comes with your Bible. Stick it right there. Romans chapter 8.

Chapters 1 through 5. This is going to be a sweeping summary of the book of Romans. I fear not to do it justice. But in chapters 1 through 5, Paul speaks of the wrath of God owed to unrepentant sinners.

Look at Romans chapter 2. Verses 6, 7, and 8. Right? God will render to each one according to his works. To those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

[21:35] But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. Right? Proper and right judgment.

Right? Punishment for disobedience. And this is a great problem that all people have. Apart from Christ, this is a great problem that all people have.

The judge will judge. And he will judge based on principles of perfect righteousness. Right? We must be found perfect before God to escape his wrath and his fury.

Right? We all have the problem apart from Christ. Romans chapter 3, verses 10 through 12. None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God.

All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. It's problematic, isn't it?

[22:39] It creates a big problem. Praise God, he's created a big solution in Christ. If we have repented and believed in Christ, this is true of you.

You've repented of your sin and you've placed your faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. We've had a status change. We don't vary in degree.

We vary in kind. We were once sinners, but now we are saints. We still sin, but we are saints.

Our status has changed. We are different in position before God. This is the doctrine of regeneration. It's the doctrine that John Piper believes, and I agree with him, is the most lost and the most needs to be recaptured in our churches.

That we are changed. We have been set free from sin. We are accepted by God in Christ. Paul teaches us that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

[23:50] Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All that wrath and fury has been set aside. It was poured out on Jesus so that we can have peace with God. Verse 2, Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

This certainly is not based on any merit of our own. Further in Romans chapter 5, verse 8. But God shows His love for us that in that while we were still sinners, status sinners, Christ died for us to make our status change to that of saints.

These first five chapters is a beautiful, systematic presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then Paul, as the gifted teacher that he is, in chapters 6 through 11, we're not going to get into 11, I promise, anticipates all of the objections of this gospel message of grace, and he addresses them in ordered fashion.

If you want to think about Romans in a layout that way, first five chapters, systematic presentation of the gospel of Christ. Chapter 6 through 11 is meeting objections. Much of the sanctification process, particularly in Romans chapter 8, is found in those chapters.

[25:27] How is it that we now live in response to this gospel truth in a spiritual sense? And then the end of the book is about the practicality. The little simple practicality is how the gospel plays out in our lives.

So, chapter 6 through 11, he addresses these objections. Chapter 6. The question is, is sin okay then?

Wait a minute, Paul. You're saying that we're delivered by grace alone? That there's no thing we can do to earn God's grace? And then isn't it just okay to just sin?

We often call this cheap grace. There's a lot of this going around in our churches. You're saved by a walking of the aisle and a signing of a card. There's not necessarily repentance and faith on your part.

And then you go on and live your life the way you would go on and live it. Is it okay? Paul says no. Romans chapter 6, verse 15 and 16. What then?

[26:27] Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means. And I won't tell you what that Greek phrase really means. But it's dirty language.

Paul seemed to be a cursor. By no means. Really, is the strongest way he could say no. Verse 16. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

What Paul is saying is that if you have been bought by Christ, because you are his, you'll now be obedient to him. This is the proper and thankful response.

If you consider what I was saying about the way we are believing the gospel, believing who we are, this is really an address to the self-loving Christian. The one that just wants to take grace for granted.

Think that they measure up enough. That they don't need God's outpouring of grace on their behalf. Go on sinning because we're not under the law any longer.

[27:36] In chapter 7, he addresses the self-hating Christian from his very own experience. Having been set free from sin, but still struggling with it.

Boy, I hope, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, that you're familiar with Paul's recorded experience here in Romans 7, 15-25. Now, there are some people that disagree with my understanding of this text.

So you should know that some people think that Paul is talking about his pre-conversion experience and then post. I can see some evidence for that in the text. But if you look at the larger context of where he's moving, I believe that he steps into the present and talks about the way in which he wrestles with sin all the same.

It's this battle between his spirit and his flesh that takes place. Let me read it to you, beginning in verse 15. Paul says, For I do not understand my own actions.

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

[28:47] For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what's right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. Do any of you feel this way sometimes? I know that I do. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?

Verse 25. Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So that I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

And then we have the precious proclamation of chapter 8, verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[29:51] I think that Paul is expressing his inner lament for the way that he still lives in light of the grace of God to him and the personal work of Jesus Christ.

Even though he's now been delivered from sin, he still wrestles with it. And then he praises God, Romans 8, verse 1, that there's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

He's able to go back again to his identity. So that brings us to verse 31. Sweeping summation of the first eight chapters of Romans.

What then shall we say to these things? Everything that we just have said. What shall we say to these things? And I think this is his answer. I think this is his answer. And then everything beyond that is a further development of this answer.

If God is for us, who can be against us? That's what we should say to these things. If we are his, we belong to him, who can be against us?

[30:54] He asks and he answers four follow-up questions. As I just said, I believe that they're meant to help us consider the reality that God is for us and that no one can be against us.

I think these questions are meant to help us pull that out. I spent a lot of time this week, way more than I care to admit, looking at Greek diagrams, particularly from a contemporary Greek scholar named William Ramey.

If this kind of stuff interests you, William Ramey does some phenomenal work with Greek diagramming. I almost brought out the paperwork of it. I'm pretty confident that these four follow-up questions are modifying this truth.

It's this one-sentence truth. And I'm telling you all this simply because if you can't grasp hold of a lot this morning, I know that often Sunday mornings are like drinking from a fire hose. You scribble notes.

You may not even be able to comprehend everything that's flying out of my mouth. If God is for you, who can be against you? Pick that up.

[31:54] And hang on to it. And take it home with you. If God is for you, who can be against you? It's reality.

God is for us. Who can be against us? It means that you're safe, even from yourself, because you're saved by God. God is for you.

So the first follow-up question, helping us to understand God being for us, verse 32. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God's commitment to us, his commitment to us, to pursuing, right, this path that he set on, this elective path, right, he's going to one day perfect us.

His commitment to us is seen at the cross of Jesus Christ. God did not even spare his own son, but he gave him up for us.

[33:00] John 3.16 is a beautiful verse. I think sometimes in our Reformed communities, we neglect it. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Even his own son was given on our behalf. And if God would give us his own son, the rhetorical question that Paul is asking, how will he with him not also give us all things?

Like, give us his son. Well, of course, that he'll give us all things. What is he referring to? All things. He's certainly not referring to temporal blessing.

Don't think that all things here includes a house and a car. What he's referring to is these things of verse 31. What shall we say then to these things?

The direct reference to the verses before. Those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. He gave us his son.

[34:04] He'll finish the work that he began. So that's the first modifying question. The second, verse 33, who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

And the answer, it is God who justifies. God is the judge and the justifier. We are given before God in Christ by God, the dismissal of our offense against him.

We have been declared righteous in his court. I've always liked saying this this way. We have been saved by God, from God, from God's wrath, for God, that we would live for him.

You were loved by God. If you're in Christ, you were loved by God long before you did anything. Anything good or anything bad.

Anything. Long before you drew breath, you were loved by God in Christ. Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 through 6.

[35:15] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There's your all things. Even as he chose us in him, when?

Before the foundation of the world. That we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us.

In the beloved. In the beloved. Beloved, this doctrine, the doctrine of election, is for us. It's for us to pick up and to hang on to. If you do not like the doctrine of election, and I recognize that there's a possibility of that this morning.

If you don't like it, the problems that it can create in your mind are just too much for you. And it does create some challenges in our thinking. But if you don't like it, then you cannot love the doctrine of eternal security.

Paul never teaches eternal security apart from the elective purposes of God. You hear me say this before, I'll say it again, and I'll say it forever.

[36:28] The doctrine of election is given to us so that it's a pillow for us to rest our heads on. That's why it's taught to us, right? God is working. He acts. He's sustaining. He'll bring us to the end.

Because we're his. We've changed in status. We're no longer earning his favor. We have it. We act because we have his favor.

They're cause and effect. Election and security. Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies. Third question and answer.

Christ Jesus is the one who... Oh, excuse me. Who is to condemn? Verse 34. Who is to condemn? And the answer to that, Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who was at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who is to condemn us? And this is on the heels of chapter 8, verse 1. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So, God is for us. Who can be against us?

[37:35] Who can condemn us? Jesus Christ was condemned in our stead. Christ Jesus is the one who died. That's the way Paul's saying it.

Who's to condemn? Christ. Christ Jesus is the one who died. He was condemned in our place. But it didn't end there. Right? He is risen.

And he is interceding for us. Hebrews 8.1 states that we have a high priest. One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven.

He paid the penalty for our sin. And he is now seated, which is significant, at the right hand of God. Having completed the work. Having made the final atoning sacrifice.

He is sat down at the right hand of God. And when God looks at us, and this is not from the scripture, this is me, Jesus says, I've got him.

[38:35] I've got her. Clothed in my righteousness. They're mine. I died for them. That's this intercession that's going on on our behalf. Because of Jesus' perfect sacrifice, we have no need of new sacrifice.

The misnomer that any of our church buildings have an altar is utterly false. You will never hear me say, come to the altar. What does that imply?

It implies that we need to make a new sacrifice. Right? That I'm going to break out doves and cut their heads off on your behalf. That any of that blood would be of any value to you.

Only the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Perfect sacrifice forever. And I sometimes, and often you sometimes, act as if Jesus Christ needs to get back up on the cross.

That when he died, his sacrifice wasn't perfect. That he didn't know every sin that you would ever commit. That he didn't bear God's wrath already for you.

[39:48] That he needs to crawl back up on that cross and die once again. We forget who we are. It's a finished work, even as it's being worked out in our living.

The fourth question. Verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

This gets so good. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And his answer also implies, or what? Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ?

And his emphatic answer is nothing. Nothing. And beloved, as you hear this list, the thing you also need to hear is even not you.

Even not your failure. Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

[40:48] As it is written, verse 36, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. Paul is citing here from Psalm 44, verse 22.

I want you to go there. Again, you've got your little magic ribbon. Mark it in Romans 8. Turn with me to Psalm 44. I want you to see the significance of why Paul cites Romans, or excuse me, Psalm 44, verse 22.

Psalm 44, verse 22. Psalm 44, verse 22.

I'm preaching secret for you. I put the text in my notes, so when I say turn with me, I get to drink water while you turn. All right, Psalm 44.

In verses 1 through 8, the psalmist recounts the past glories of Israel's history. It's this recollection of the things that God has done for Israel. Psalm 44, verse 1.

[41:53] O God, we have heard with our ears. Our fathers have told us what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old. So it's this historic accounting of God's favor to them.

But beginning in verse 9, he laments Israel's present state in this day, not today, in his day. Israel's present state, and he declares that they have not forgotten God or turned from him.

This is in that latter part leading up to verse 22. He declares that they have not forgotten God, they have not forsaken him, they have not turned away from his commands, but yet he has turned from them.

And this is where we find verse 22. Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. Now Paul cites this verse to explain the present state of followers of Jesus Christ.

Paul's not saying that we're getting away from the trouble of the world. Many troubles in this world. And as faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we will experience them.

[42:58] Tribulation, distress, persecution, possibly famine, nakedness, danger, sword, right? That's what he's saying to us, right? As we walk in this world, as Christians, things aren't going to be fantastic, right?

This is anti-prosperity gospel, Romans chapter 8, right? A lie from hell that your life will look perfect if you believe in Jesus Christ, right? Things might get harder.

In fact, they probably will. Storing up for us glory to come. So Paul's saying, right? We're like sheep to be slaughtered.

Listen to the rest of Psalm 44, verses 23 to 26. So this is right after verse 22. The psalmist says, Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?

Rouse yourself. Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust.

[43:56] Our belly clings to the ground. Rise up. Come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love. So here's the context.

And this would have been understood by Paul's readers. So Paul, as he quotes from Psalm 44, verse 22, is stating that God has come to our help.

He has redeemed us. And He has done so because of His steadfast love. Our circumstances may not be temporarily pleasant, but we are eternally blessed in Christ.

None of these things, none of these circumstances, right? Whether somebody is imposing it upon you or whether you created it yourself, can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Verse 37, Romans chapter 8. He says, No, none of these things. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

[45:07] For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I think Paul exhausts the list with this list. We are His and secure forever despite the circumstance in our life.

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, God's children are God's children anywhere and everywhere and shall be even unto the end.

Nothing can sever that sacred tie or divide us from His heart. So beloved, we need to stop by God's grace forgetting who we are.

And I'd like to close with three questions for your consideration. If you are taking notes, please just jot these down. Three questions for your consideration in closing.

[46:11] Number one, I would just like to ask, who are you? I'm talking a lot about status change, position, who we are before God, being in Christ. And it's very possible this morning that you're not in Christ.

That you don't have a security before Him because you've never placed believing faith in Him.

There's a lot of trouble in our day with the way we go about presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I think mostly it's well-intentioned. We want to know that people have placed faith in Christ. And so we do things that at best are well-motivated and can be misleading.

At worst are manipulative. To draw people to. Every head bowed. Every eye closed. No one looking around.

Things like this. You've been there. I see that hand, brother. I saw that hand. Slipped up. I think there usually wasn't a hand when that happened. These little things.

[47:13] We want you to respond. I think it's well-motivated. Most of the time, I think it's really well-motivated. Respond to the Gospel message. Place your faith in Jesus Christ. And then growing up, I went to, particularly in high school, a very large church.

And if you were doubting your salvation, what the pastor there told you was, what you needed to do was you needed to turn to the front of your Bible to that date you had written down when you had walked that aisle in that church and you needed to place your faith in that.

It never brought me assurance. That never actually helped me believe that I was in Christ. What does the Bible say? It says, hold your life up to the law.

See if your faith in Christ is producing obedience. Not that our obedience makes us accepted, but our acceptance produces obedience. Take a hard look at your life.

Make your calling and election sure by paying attention to the way that you live now in response to the Gospel of Christ. The doctrine of regeneration, God changes us.

[48:26] It's not in a moment, but our affections begin to shift away from the world and towards the things of God. I hate my sin and I find that I hate it in greater degree as the days go on.

And I love righteousness. I love walking with the Lord. Again, Charles Spurgeon, because you know I love him. If you can sin and not weep over it, you are an heir of hell.

If you can go into sin and afterwards feel satisfied to have done so, you are on the road to destruction. If there are no prickings of conscience, no inward torments, no bleeding wounds, don't hurt yourself.

That's not what he's saying. If you have no throbs and heavings of a bosom that cannot rest, if your soul never feels filled with wormwood and gall, when you know you have done evil, you are no child of God.

And the Spirit of God brings great and deep conviction when we sin. You may feel that this morning. I don't want to give you false assurance. I don't want you to hear me talking about who we are in Christ, clinging to this reality, if you've not been delivered.

[49:42] And beloved, even as we've talked about election, often the question is, well, how do I know? How do I know if I'm elect? Repentant belief. That's how you know. Secondly, when you sin, do you persist in forgetting who you are?

As followers of Jesus Christ, we will sin. And I hate that that's a reality, but we will. We're going to mess up. We're going to forget who we are. We're going to sin. Do you persist to forget who you are?

Godly sorrow leads to repentance. You need to make a measure of that. Is this the case with you? When you're broken over your sin, do you run back to the cross or do you run away from it?

Do you then begin to function out of who you are? I'm going to tell you a quick story. I know I'm going long this morning. Last Sunday morning, we met Christmas Day, and I think my sermon bombed.

When I finished preaching, I just felt horrible about it. I was really, really tired. I couldn't get words out of my mouth or just some things. I couldn't even form sentences at times.

[50:59] I should have prepared more. I should have slept more. I should have prayed more fervently. And when I got done preaching, I felt dumb. I felt embarrassed.

It was crushing to me. Why? Why was it affecting me so deeply? Was there some repentance necessary? I think so. You may not, if you were here, you don't have to come up and tell me that you thought it was great.

Praise God. He used it some way. I needed to repent. There were some things that I needed to confess to God. But why was it crushing to me? Why? It's because I worship myself too much sometimes.

Right? Because in some measure in my mind, if I preach well, I'm accepted by God. That's never why I'm accepted by God. It's never. Laboring and preaching is an obedient response to what He's already done for me.

So the meditation of my heart last Sunday afternoon as we went on to other Christmas activities had to be who am I? And who made me who I am?

[52:06] It's never my activity. That's the motivation for confession. Godly sorrow to go and repent. I failed in some ways, Lord. Thank you for loving me in Christ in spite of me.

So when you sin, do you persist in sin? Do you persist in forgetting who you are? And the last question, what do you love more than being loved by God and Jesus Christ?

There's nothing higher. The very end of Romans chapter 8 ought to warm your heart to boiling. You ought to see the way in which God has loved you and be impassioned by that.

So what do you love more than being loved by God and Jesus Christ? Beloved, if you can pick up this truth, if we can work together by grace to stop forgetting who we are, I promise you will see a great progression in your sanctification.

Believing the gospel of Jesus Christ and moving through each and every day. Remember, these doctrines don't just stay alive in our mind. They have to be fed. You've got to read your Bible. The Bible is rich with the gospel of Jesus Christ, reminding us who we are.

[53:23] I need it every day. Who am I? Helps produce the obedience required of me in that day. We need to be preaching it to one another. That's why community faith is so important.

And even this morning as our crowd was forming and it was smaller than it often is, I'm thinking about people that might need to hear this but are missing it. The wonderful thing about the truth of God is that it doesn't have to come from me.

But you can speak the truth of God to your friends. And I promise you as your friends are walking through trial, as they're considering tough things, as they're sinning and not repenting well, they need to hear this.

But who are you? Don't forget who you are. You've been accepted by God in Christ. Repent and turn back to Him. And so I would encourage you to consider this truth for yourself and then to propagate it widely.

Let's pray together. Amen.