

Words to Live By

Romans 8:1, 18-19, 24-26, 28, 31-35, 37-39

Sunday's Scripture Reading

Romans 8:1, 18-19, 24-26, 28, 31-35, 37-39

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³²He 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?

³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

³⁴Who 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.

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

³⁹neither 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.

This Week's Message
July 31, 2022

Words to Live By

*...in all these things we
are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.*

Romans 8:37
(New International Version)

On Sunday my message is *Words to Live By*. This message is not a part of any series, and it will be the last message I offer before beginning my sabbatical, which starts on Monday.

Years ago, when I was serving as a part-time youth minister, I heard a message that has remained in my mind. The message was titled *Our Personal Bible*. The idea of the message was that everyone puts together, so to speak, their own personal Bible. They do this by reading the passages they like, and are drawn to, while tending to overlook others. The message not only asked, *what is in your personal Bible*, but also *what are you leaving out of your personal Bible*. I found those to be very intriguing, and important, questions.

Though I would be hard pressed to name a favorite passage of the Bible, Romans 8 is my most common reply when asked. To me, there is such a power in that passage, and it is a power I feel every time I read those words. It is a power that has encouraged me, strengthened me, given me hope, and so much more. It is poetic, inspiring, and uplifting. I believe that Paul was inspired not only by the Spirit to write those words, but that he also was moved by the difficulties he had

Questions to Consider –

- * If you were to put together your personal Bible, what passages would be included? Why those passages? What is it about those passages that make them so meaningful to you?
- * If you were asked to name your favorite passage of Scripture, what would it be? Would you have to think about it for very long?
- * Have you found it difficult to maintain hope in the past few years? What has helped you to get hope back, or to keep it?
- * In the final verses of the Scripture passage for Sunday, Paul asks, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* A lot could be added to that list. What would you add to the list of what cannot separate us from the love of Christ? Why would you name those items?
- * Paul offers such powerful words in this passage, and they are words that are born out of his own difficulties. There is some irony, I think, in the reality that some of life's greatest lessons come from our most difficult experiences. What lessons have you learned from your times of difficulty?

experienced in his own life and ministry. Paul wrote those words not from the safety and security of an ivory tower, but from the very difficult experiences of prison, persecution, and many other hardships. Perhaps that is why the passage resonates so powerfully, as it comes from someone who has

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been through so much. In fact, when I think about the passages of Scripture that mean so much to me, that is a common thread in all of them. There was a time in my life, for instance, when I was struggling through some overwhelming challenges, and each day I read four passages of Scripture as a way of finding strength. Romans 8 was one of those passages (the others, if you are curious, were Psalm 23; the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5:1-12; and Philippians 2:1-11).

These are words to live by. They are words to live by because of the great promises they provide, promises such as hope, strength, grace, and unbroken love. In today's world, who doesn't need hope? Even before the pandemic came to us, there were plenty of reasons to struggle to maintain hope. Adding a pandemic to the mix caused many people to become so overwhelmed that hope was more of a dream than a reality. When hope is hard to come by, strength is needed more than ever. Who couldn't use a bit more strength to get through the day? That's one of my most common prayers – *Lord, please give me some more strength.* And grace! Wow, our world could sure use some more grace, couldn't it? *Who then is the one who condemns,* Paul asks in verse 34. Well, there are plenty of religious people who seem more than happy to condemn, some of them in our own community, shouting at people through bullhorns. And then there are the final verses of the passages, beginning with that great question, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Paul goes through a list of what cannot separate us from Christ's love, but it is only a partial list. He could have added so many more items to that list, but he makes his point, and makes it well.

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday, and remember – nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!