

Intro. What do you say to fellow followers of Christ when they are going through hard times? Is it possible to find and give comfort regarding God's love when pressed under life's circumstances? The Psalmist says (31:21) that God showed his wonderful love to him when he was in a 'besieged city.' Sounds like a place you would rather not be. What odd places have you found god's love? How do you talk about God's love being there regardless of the circumstances, pain or stress?

Romans 8:28-39 is a 'must read' for any child of God who ever has questioned or hesitated about God's love for them in tough times. God's words assure us that nothing can separate us from his love in Christ Jesus and provides detailed explanation of why that is true. Whether the confusion or doubt comes from thinking God may be too busy, you are too insignificant or your sin has finally pushed him over the edge to regret he even saved you . . . the answer is the same, God's steadfast love is actively moving all things together for our good and his glory.

Read Romans 8:28-39

What do you know? 28-30

What do you say? 31-39

The major point of the passage is to increase our awareness and confidence that God's love is actively pursuing our eternal and everlasting good. Nothing can stop him from completing the work that his love began in us in eternity past and is now being carried forth in and through the faithful ministry of Jesus Christ his Son and his Holy Spirit. Our objective is to both know and be convinced that we are in fact inseparable from the great love of God in Christ. Our confidence and trust in his love that is concerned with our benefit and good.

Our focus this morning is on verse 31 – shaping and changing our response to fit with God's truth in this passage. What does it sound like for us to believe and encourage each other that God's love guarantees that all things do work together for good in the lives of people who love him?

The setting for the response – what we are responding to appears in various ways throughout our passage. Some, like the lists in 35 and 38-39, we will look at in a few moments. Consider, however, the meaning of 'all things' in verse 28. It is intended to include anything that comes into our lives that may cause us to question or minimize God's love in any way. We can easily relate to the 'all things' as we begin to think in terms of trouble, hardship, confining circumstances, danger, pain and disappointment.

The larger setting for our discussion this morning is that of 8:1-27 which teaches that the greatest source of confidence and security for the child of God is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. In other words, your confidence that God's love is active in your life is not related to quality of life (in our usual usage of that term) issues at all. A stress- free, prosperous, healthy, easy life is not evidence of God's love. A life that is led by and produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit generates the confidence that we long for and mistakenly look for in often misleading quality of life measurements.

Since it is true that God's love is active but often most hard to find in 'all things' type circumstances, what we think and say to ourselves and each other is important to the God glorifying satisfaction that we desire to experience.

Five things to say about God's love all the time . . .

1. God is for you, not against you. V.31; 28-20

Note the first question draws our attention and confidence to the undeniable truth that God is clearly on record as being for us. 'Since God is for us' is explained in the five actions God takes in the life of every believer to work out his love for them. With God's action on our behalf being so comprehensive and extensive, it is impossible for anyone to be against us.

God's purpose in your life is securely described in these terms:

- God set his heart on you in eternity past – foreknew you. 29
- God marked out your destiny, conformity to Christ, beforehand – he predestined you. 29
- God internally and specifically brought you to faith – he called you. 30
- God declared you righteous, giving you the righteousness of Jesus – he justified you. 30
- God will make you perfect like Jesus – he will glorify you. 30

While the world, flesh and devil are against us, their power over us has been defeated by God's eternal purpose and love.

2. God does not withhold anything from you that you need. 32

Note the second question addresses the doubt that is expressed by our concern that if God loved us completely he would give us the things we think we need. Does God have limits to his grace and generosity? Is that how I am to interpret these hard times . . . God has reached his limit of goodness just like anyone would and does.

The undeniable truth is that God is generous and gives us everything we need.

The unshakeable truth that reminds us of God's incredible generosity is the giving of his own Son as the sacrifice for our sins.

Cmp Gen.22:16

3. You are not being punished by God. 33

Note the third question casts God in the role of a judge at an impeachment trial. Who can bring a charge against you successfully seeing that the judge is the one who already declared you righteous and gave you a new righteousness – that of Jesus.

- Consider the completeness of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ.
- Consider the differences between/purposes of consequences, discipline and punishment.

4. You have excellent representation in God's presence.

34

Note the fourth question deals with the probability and potential of something or someone coming up with a charge against us in the future that would cause God to change his mind toward us. What if someone or something appeared before God told the story of your greatest sin, with pictures? What if an entire team of celestial lawyers appeared with hard evidence that you were not worth loving?

Your attorney/advocate – Jesus Christ.

1John 2:1

His credentials . . . sacrificial death, powerful resurrection, ascension to Father's side and currently standing as our representative.

Who or what can condemn you with Jesus as your lawyer?

5. God is currently, actively loving you through and over your circumstances. 35-39

Note the fifth question brings up the possibility of any of a list of adversaries possibly separating you from God's love in Christ. The undeniable truth is that God's love, rather than going away in trouble, actually causes you to be more than conquerors in and through these circumstances.

God is currently loving and accomplishing his plan in your life through . . .

- Harsh and severe pressures – trouble.
- Confining and oppressive limitations – hardship.
- Relentless and fearful harm – persecution, danger and sword.
- Poor and destitute times – famine and nakedness.
- Seasons of grief and separation – death or life.
- Unseen and unknown spiritual warfare – angels or demons.
- Unplanned and unprepared for events – present or future.
- Anything imagined or real – powers, height/depth, anything else in creation

Live confident in God's love in and through all things. Nothing separates, nothing condemns.

1. **God is for you, not against you.** V.31; 28-20
2. **God does not withhold anything from you that you need.** 32
3. **You are not being punished by God.** 33
4. **You have excellent representation in God's presence.** 34
5. **God is currently, actively loving you through and over your circumstances.** 35-39

Conclusion

God's love in Christ is such that we are drawn to the presentation of our lives and bodies completely to God as living sacrifices (12:1-1). Perhaps cautiously, clumsily but certainly a warm and submissive response.

No response is indicative of not having the Holy Spirit which means you are yet actively under the wrath of God, outside of Christ and his righteousness and facing certain condemnation.

Responding . . .

1. Turn from your sins and trust Christ today.
2. Repent of your 'this world' size faith and embrace God's love with thankful obedience.
3. Celebrate God's love by speaking and singing of it to someone this week.