

**I AM PERSUADED**  
**December 31, 2017 Morning Service**  
**Romans 8:37-39**

For the last several weeks we've been marching through the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans and as we conclude the year we'll conclude the chapter. We did take off for Christmas but we've been for several weeks now in Romans chapter 8. Certainly we have not gleaned everything out of this chapter and there'll be more preaching come from it but I come to conclusion today in this last message from Romans chapter 8. I invite you to read with me verses 37, 38, and 39 of Romans chapter 8. Read out loud with me now.

*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>1</sup>*

The chapter begins that there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ. It ends that there is no separation for those that are in Christ. You see, the key to the whole of Romans and especially Romans 8 is this. It is that Christ is in you and that you are in Christ. Like Noah entered the ark, the ark of safety, Peter said that we are to enter Christ, the ark of our salvation, that when the floods come we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

Are you in Christ today? You'll never know the power of Romans 8 until you settle that and on this last day of the year what a great day to do it. When I give the invitation in just a few minutes I want you to rise out of your seat and walk here to the front, take me by the hand, say, "Pastor, today I'm ready for Christ to come into me and I'm ready to put my life into Christ, the ark of safety." Christ in me and me in Christ. It's the key to the whole of the chapter. Now you've got a pencil, a score sheet, and I want you to write down a few things this morning. God love you as you are seated.

In II Corinthians 5:11, Paul said: "Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." Part of my task as a pastor, as a preacher is to persuade you, to convince you, to move you. I know it's not mine to do because I can't but it is the God in me that would speak through me and would speak through you to others that He might persuade us not with human persuasion but with heaven's divine persuasion to move us to be convinced of the truth of the gospel.

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Paul says in this text in verse 38 that he is convinced. The King James says that he is persuaded and that is the word that I have chosen to use today in this message where Paul says, "I am persuaded. I am convinced. I am sure of certain truths from this text." So this morning I want to lay out three of those where I find myself certain, convinced on divine revelatory bedrock that God has convinced me and I pray He would persuade you.

Number one. I am persuaded that God's love is real. You say, "Pastor, how sophomoric is that?" Well look at it. It's right here in the text. If you back up to verse 35 it says, "Who will separate us from what?" The love of Christ. Look in verse 37. We just read it. *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who [did what?] loved us.* Verse 39. Neither height, depth, created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God. It is the agape, the God love. It is the love of Christ. It is, he says, the love of God. It is the one who loved us.

I'm persuaded. Listen to me in this room, all over this room. God loves you. Watching by Internet, Facebook, radio listener, God loves you. You say, "Pastor, I understand." I don't think you do. God really loves you. Now I understand we hear that a lot but when Paul wrote Romans in this Greco-Roman culture and worldview this was a bombshell. You see, they had gods all around. Zeus, Mars, Aphrodite. There were gods everywhere but those gods were not benevolent. They were jealous of one another. They were petty and vengeful. The teaching of these gods were mostly lustful and very mean-spirited, one god to another, and rarely would you ever find that the gods were loving to mankind.

Mankind tried to appease the pagan gods but the worst of the pagan gods were the Roman Caesars. There were twelve of them in line beginning with Julius and then Augustus. When we come to Paul's writing of course Nero has become the Caesar. You talk about a pagan, perverted infidel. Nero who we often say fiddled while Rome burned and he did and he laid it on the Christians that this new cult had burned down the city when indeed Nero himself had done it.

Later would come Titus. If you've ever been to the great city of Rome you'll walk down and you'll see that colossal – I've been there. That arch. The Roman arch, the arch of Titus, that victorious arch that was built when Titus came marching back and after his death the senate voted as they did for five of the twelve Roman emperors, they deified Titus, made a god out of Titus. So the emperors were gods voted by the senate. And you know if the senate says it, it has to be true. I often wonder what would happen in America if we had a vote for deification, who would be deified? I'm sure the senate would pick from among their own some gods.

They were fearful of that emperor and they would say yes. When that emperor would die and then his son would come to the throne then he was often called a son of god. So when Titus came out of the line of the Caesars, he was a child, a son of god and Titus at his death in his succession came the son of god. What a bombshell it was when the first gospel was written that came on the scene in Rome. It was not Matthew. It was Mark. Matthew is first in our listing. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John but Mark is first chronologically. It's the earliest gospel written. Listen to the first line of the gospel of Mark that says: *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

The Romans went, "This peasant? A carpenter's kid from what little town? Nazareth? He can't be a Son of God." And yet the Christians said, "Jesus Christ, not only a Son of God, the only begotten Son of God." As if to say, "Nero, you're not God unless you can rise from the dead." That God loves you. All these other gods, mean, lustful, vengeful, jealous. This God loves you. You can read this in the word of God from Genesis to the *apocalupsis*. From beginning to Revelation. I could stand up here all day and read scriptures about it but you wouldn't stay that long. I'll give you several. Listen to the word of God.

Hosea 11 and verse number 1. *When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.* Jeremiah 31:3: *The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with [what?] lovingkindness."* The verse that most of us know best, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* Ephesians 2:4: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.* Ephesians 5:2: *and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.* Walk in that love. Christ loved us. Then I John 4:10, no one says it better than I John 4:10: *In this is love, not that we loved God [not that we loved Him], but that He loved us and sent His Son [the Son of God] to be the propitiation for our sins.*

That's a good preacher word. You spit all over the third row when you say propitiation. It's a triple-hinged word, to propitiate, that He pays the price for us. That He does away, atones, He gets your sin out of the way. He propitiates it. He casts it away. That's because God loves you. God loves us. In your arrogance, God loves you. Some of you think you're something when you're really nothing but in that God still loves you.

In your depression, God loves you. When you think you're a zero, less than a zero. Oh my, the depression we're seeing in our culture. God loves you. The suicide and mental incapacity, God loves you. In your health – in the next 24 hours all across America people are going to make resolutions they don't intend to keep. I'm going to eat right, work out more, walk more, push away more, drink less. Lying dogs. If you've

got a healthy body, you ought to thank God today but even in your health God loves you.

Even in your sickness. Some of you are racked with pain today. I've heard of more cancer, especially breast cancer in the last 30 days across our congregation I believe as ever I've heard. Just on and on and on it goes. I get a call every week. In that sickness, God loves you.

Hear me, dear friend, in your sin. Some of you are racked with pornography. You can't turn off that silly computer from going to sites that you know you do not belong on. Even in that, God loves you. Some of you, in your self-righteousness saying, "Oh I don't do those things." You think you're something. In your own self-righteousness, I'm telling you, God loves you. He'll crawl over your self-righteousness to die for you.

I am convinced. I am persuaded that God's love is real. He loves you. Love is this, not that we first loved Him but that He loved us and gave His only Son to die for us. Dear friend, if you would ask Jesus to save you, He would because He loves you. God loves you. Everybody in this room won't love you. They don't have the capacity. God has the capacity. He loves you. Don't miss it this morning. Don't glance over it. I'm persuaded that God's love is real.

Number two. In this text I'm persuaded, secondly, that spiritual warfare is real. Spiritual warfare. Look at it in verse 37. *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer.* The King James says we're more than conquerors. All of what things? What are the things he's talking about in verse 37? Well the seven things in verse 35. That's what he's talking about. He names them. In tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. In all of these things we're overwhelmingly conquerors.

Dear friend, listen to me. If you get in Christ and Christ is in you, you're going to heaven when you die but listen to me. There will be tribulation in this world. Spiritual warfare is a reality. I'm convinced of it because I fight it and I walk in it. I view it. I see it. I'm a part of it. I'm a warrior in it. If you're a Christ follower, you're in it as well.

There are seven fears that he names there. Six of them I just glance over but the seventh one I want you to see. Tribulation. That's the word *thlipsis*. It's a great word. One of these days there's coming the great tribulation. If you're lost, you're going to go through the great tribulation. That's the *he megale thlipsis*. This is not the *he megale thlipsis*. *Megale* means mega. Big. *He megale thlipsis*, the great tribulation. Lost people are going through that. Not me. You. Not me. This is not the *he megale thlipsis*. This is just the *he thlipsis*. We all walk through tribulation.

Jesus said, "Be sure of this. In this world you will have tribulation. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." That word *thlipsis* means to press together. Pressure. What goes on in our world mostly is that this world brings pressure. It tries to push the believer in a certain direction. Tribulation, distress. That word distress means narrow anguish, that it pushes us into its mold.

Persecution I'll come back to. Famine. You walk through the time of hurt and fear that you'd have nothing to eat. Nakedness. I know that we live in a world where scantily clad people are all around us but this word means the embarrassment in your life that you'd have nothing to put on and be cast out. You know when they crucified Jesus he didn't have a stitch on. Thank God for your painters and artists that have at least put a loin cloth on Him but let me tell you, when they hung him on the cross, He hung naked. He died for you. What embarrassment would be on your life if you have to live like that. It's a real fear.

Peril is the word danger. Just things that bring danger and the word sword. That word sword is for a large knife that they would butcher animals with. Of course it speaks of people dying for the faith. Tribulation.

Then that word persecution. It's the third in verse 35. To persecute means literally to run after or pursue. Listen to me. This world is running after Christians today. It is pursuing Christ followers and bringing tribulation of pressing and pushing us inside the church house. Do not take your faith outside. Bring it only inside.

There are five men who rule America from the grave because it's our mindset. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. We must become thinking believers and let me tell you, if you graduate from high school and walk onto a secular campus and often any campus of any institution of higher education, these five men will try to push you into their mold. They're all dead but they are oh my God, they are alive because they have disciples on every faculty from West Florida to Miami, from Washington to New Hampshire to southern California to the heartland of America. These five men rule.

The first one you've never heard of. Feuerbach. You ought to go look him up. I don't have time to talk about him today. The second one is Darwin. It's the evolutionary process. The third one is Marx, the socialist agenda that America is running headlong toward. We're headed to socialism. It's the agenda where the elites would have us go.

Number four is Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche rules on every college campus. Nietzsche is alive and well though he lived in 1882 when he wrote his classic book called *The Gay Science*. *The Gay Science* has nothing to do with homosexuality but Nietzsche, a pastor's kid, his daddy died. He had studied for the Lutheran ministry

himself and then became an atheist. He hated Christianity and in his book *The Gay Science* you'll hear this phrase on every college campus coming from the lips of Nietzsche and all of his disciples everywhere. It's three simple words: God is dead.

That's Nietzsche's line. Nietzsche believed in a superman. Not Clark Kent. Not jumping a building in a single bound. That's not the superman I'm talking about. He wrote in his *Gay Science* book about this superman. He paved the way for Hitler's agenda because in it he says there's no morality. There is the law of the jungle. Only the strong survive. He was a racist. He hated the Jew. He rules on our campuses today. Mustache and all, he rules on our campus. You'll be made to read Nietzsche. You'll have to decide, is God alive or is God dead?

Let me tell you, friend, if God is dead, there is no morality, there are no absolutes. Nothing's right. Nothing's wrong because there is not a plumb line. Nietzsche puts that on us and we must live in this world and I am convinced that spiritual warfare is real and Nietzsche is a big part of it in our culture today.

Richard Dawkins has taken up his mantle. Dawkins is alive today. He wrote *The God Delusion*. Listening to an atheist on CNN not long ago, I heard the commentator that if I called his name many would know. He said, "You'd have to be crazy to believe." He was running down orthodox Christianity. "You believe a man would rise from the dead? You've got to be crazy to believe that." That's what we face today.

The fifth man who rules America from the grave – these are not even Americans. It's just their books and their mindset, their philosophy and their worldview – is Sigmund Freud. He was a medical doctor, sexual pervert, atheist who said there is no God and the world is ruled by science and reason. Science and reason. So if you can own philosophy you can rule the culture. Freud was that man. It is Freud's teaching that destroys the soul of the individual. It is Nietzsche's teaching that destroys the soul of a nation and together we're marching right down the road to hell in America destroying the soul of men and the soul of country.

Tribulation on every side. It's what leads to the thought process that a young couple of Oregon with their bake shop that would not do a cake for a lesbian couple is sued and put out of business and last week was fined \$130,000.

It's what gets the fire chief of Atlanta, Georgia fired, a black gentleman from Shreveport, Louisiana, raised in poverty eating mayonnaise sandwiches with his mother and three siblings. In any other culture, Kelvin Cochran would have been the Ben Carson of the fire department. He rose. He couldn't even get a job as a fireman because of racial discrimination but kept on at it and he was hired and finally rose to the chief of the fire department in Shreveport. President Obama picked him up out of there and put him in charge of the fire agency of the federal government coming out of there

because the Atlanta fire system was in such poverty and disarray, the mayor hired him and he became the chief of police, the chief of the fire department, the fire chief in Atlanta, Georgia.

If you've read his story you know that Kelvin Cochran was fired from his job for writing a book, a 163-page book entitled *Who Told You You Were Naked?* It's a man's Bible study. He was given permission to do it. He started passing the books out from time to time using it as a witness opportunity and because there are six, six pages in that book, half of which tell men that are having extramarital affairs that they're adulterers and those that are living in the gay lifestyle that they are sinners, he was fired from his job.

That's the *thlipsis*. That's the pressure. That's the push. If you dare stand up against the philosophy, the reasoning, and the so-called science – I'm a biology minor. I'm a biology minor because the biggest basketball fan at Northeast State Junior College was the biology professor. I loved his classes and he loved me and I love the sciences. I love to break glass in a chemistry lab. I like to blow stuff up. I like to skin chinchillas when they're pregnant. We did that one year. I'm here to tell you, every science book I've ever read in my life tells me every species I ever look at in zoology, anywhere I go in botany, that there was a male and there was a female and if you didn't have a male and a female to put them together you couldn't get something else. That's called science.

Today it's not science. I'm telling you, they just hammer and hammer and hammer and hammer and hammer and finally you'll tuck your tail and walk off and they want to drive everybody that believes the word of God back. Just keep it in the church and you'll be alright until they walk in that door and shoot you. I'm telling you, I am persuaded that there is a spiritual warfare that is real and we must be more than conquerors willing to die for the faith if called upon. Why the very man that wrote Romans 8, they took his life. He was more than a conqueror. His book sold more than anybody. We're still reading him. He's more than a conqueror.

I'm here to tell you, it'll stand the fires of hell, the fires of the time. I am persuaded. I'm persuaded that tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. I'll be through all these things more than a conqueror. I'm persuaded that God loves you. I'm persuaded that spiritual warfare is real.

Number three. I am persuaded that eternal security is real. Look at it right here in verse 38 and 39. I'm going to grab this real quick. Watch this. For I am convinced that neither – and then he lists ten things – death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, or any other created thing, none of those ten things will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord. There are ten foes, he says, ten foes that come after us to try to get us to lose our salvation, to separate us from God.

Death can't do it. Why can't death do it? Because Jesus has already been to death and He overcame that. Death's dead. Hallelujah. He's risen from the dead. Death can't. Life can't get you because Jesus is the great life giver. He's come to give life and give it more abundantly. Angels can't steal it from you because angels serve God and they are ministers of the gospel.

Principalities, those are the leaders of governmental authority. They can't steal it from you because the government rests on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus. Things present, everything around. It doesn't matter what's around you, I'm telling you, it cannot steal it. Things to come. Whatever comes in 2018. We don't know what's coming in 2018 but nothing coming in 2018 can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Powers. That word is the word *dunamis*. It's the word dynamite. No matter how strong they say they are, I'm here to tell you, it cannot separate you. No matter how high. Height can't do it because God is higher than the heights. He's above all. He's above everything. Nor depth. You cannot get so low and grind into the gutter. I'm telling you, Jesus is still beneath that as the Chief Cornerstone and the foundation of all the world. It cannot – and then he just throws in number ten. He said anything else you can imagine. Anything you can think of, it's coming. That cannot separate you from what the love of God.

There was a weather vane in Spurgeon's town in London. It was a rooster called a weather cock and whichever way the wind would blow, that thing would point. I used to have one at my house. That rooster would point north, south, east, west, and Spurgeon says, "That seems to be odd and not wise that the weather cock would point different directions." One man said, "Oh, pastor, what that means is no matter which way the wind blows, God's love overcomes it all." Spurgeon said, "I can buy that." He said, "No matter where the wind blows this next year, it will not separate you." That word separate is an interesting word in verse 39. It is the same word used in the divorce passages.

Listen to me, friend. If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great bridegroom will never, ever serve you divorce papers. He's with you forever. No separation. I have people in the church from time to time say, "Pastor, you know, we're just going to live separate for a little while." They say, "Well I'm separating from..." Oh my goodness, the divorce and difficulty and the breakup that comes and it breaks my heart. I know it breaks yours. Nobody gets married to get out.

Let me tell you, when you are in Christ and Christ is in you there is absolutely zero, nada, none, no separation. You are His forever and ever and ever and ever and ever world without end. Amen and Amen. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. Nothing. Death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing, nothing. Nothing you can think of will separate you from the love of God.

There are some people that say, "You know, preacher, if you get saved and you commit suicide." No. A saved man that has a mental institution problem that commits suicide is still a saved man. Suicide does not separate you. There are so many mental disorders in our world today. So much mental difficulty. The next thing we're going to do. We're going to have some kind of counseling center to try to help some of these folks. It's difficult. The PTSD that we deal with. Not only with our military. Other people have that posttraumatic stress with deep scars. Some of the great preachers, when you read their biographies, you'll find that the old black dog of depression laid on their back.

As a matter of fact, I read just this week from our Lifeway publication, a high percentage, double digits of pastors suffer depression in an ongoing manner. It's the difficulty of life and carrying a burden. Sometimes you just want to quit. Let me tell you, friend, even if you quit, God doesn't quit on you. I'm persuaded He's in it until the end. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. God calls us to never separate from the hurting. It's our job.

I found a picture this week. This kind of came to me late and I asked Sharon to pop it up on the screen. I want you to see this picture. I'd never seen this before. This is from London. This young man was going to jump off the bridge and kill himself. He was trying to commit suicide and he was up on the rail and a man came by. He began to talk to him and then other people came by and he began to talk to them.

I want you to see what's going on there. Look down at the bottom. Somebody's got their arms around him. One guy took his belt off and put it around him. If you don't believe in the sovereignty of God, somebody passed by there and had a rope. They put a rope around his waist. For two hours people came and held onto that young man and said, "Don't do it. We're not going to let you do it." They held his feet and his knees, his waist, his arms. Notice that one person up top got him around the neck. He's holding him. They will not let him kill himself.

Church, that's who we are. People that are trying to jump off and quit, the end of themselves, that's who we are. That's why Teen Challenge does what they do. They put their arms around them. That's why we do what we do at the Charis House. That's why Waterfront does what they do. It's why the church – it's what we do in our small

groups. We put our arms around one another even when we want to jump. If you jump, you're going to go out of my arms.

Nothing, nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. It's who we are. It's who we're supposed to be. Are we every time? Goodness no. We don't do it right every time but God does it right every time.

I am convinced. I am persuaded that God loves you. Whatever you've done, God loves you. Anybody you can think of, God loves them. You can put any name in there. I'm telling you, God loves them. If they get saved there'll be spiritual warfare. It's for real. Once you come to Christ, I'm here to tell you, there is therefore now no separation. God never, ever serves divorce papers. He doesn't do it.

This last week I was going to burn some stuff but it was still green and I tried on my own. I thought, well, I was by myself. Nobody was at the house. I said, "I'm going to take like this much gasoline and pour on there." So I went out and I didn't have a receptacle. I thought, well if I pour it in here I can run real fast. So I poured just a little bit of gas in a Styrofoam cup. You know what it did to it. I thought I might could – I don't know. I was just being stupid. That cup just disintegrated. It melted and it got on me. I couldn't get it off of me. You ever get something on you, you can't get off? You know, like stepping in something with your – and you do all you want. You just can't – that cup just melted to my hand.

I sat there and finally I sat down and I just looked. I laughed at myself. I was thinking about this message. It's a stupid, silly kind of parable but it made me think of that last verse. I said, "Lord, I just can't get this off of me. It's down in the crevices of my skin and under my fingernails and it's just melted to me." I think I heard the Spirit of God sweetly whisper in my ear, "That's the way I am. I stick to you and you can't get rid of Me."