

POWERLIFTING
Romans 8:31-39
Questions of God's love

- This past week I checked in for jury duty.
- There are not many places in our modern world where someone has absolute authority. You feel that in a court room.
- The judge walks in and everyone must stand.
- And no one can sit until the judge sits.
- And even adults have to raise their hand if they have a question.
- If you break the rules in court the judge has the power to fine you or charge you or even have you arrested!
- Don't mess with the judge! Even knuckleheads know that!
- What if the allegedly guilty people decided that they were going to bring charges against the judge!
- Some big bailiff would probably cuff 'em and stuff 'em!
- Do guilty people have the right to bring charges against a judge?
- Accusing a judge is not small things! And yet...
- People act as though God is the accused and they are the judge.
- It seems that a week doesn't go by without me hearing someone say, "Well, if God is so loving then why do bad things happen?"
- It's amazing to me that people charge **HIM** with being unloving as if...**THEY** are the standard of what **REAL LOVE** looks like.
- As we look at the last section of Romans 8 this morning we are looking at "The Questions of God's Love."

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these?

If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself.

34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

36 (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

-I don’t know if you caught it, but there are 7 questions that are asked and then answered in this passage.

-And these questions center in on the subject of God’s love.

Question 1: What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? (vs 31)

-Which wonderful things is he talking about?

-All through Romans 8 Paul has been talking about the good things that God has done for us.

-And it’s quite a list; let me quickly run through the highlights.

- Vs 1: We are not condemned.
- Vs 2: The Holy Spirit has freed us from the power of sin.
- Vs 3: Jesus gave his life for us.
- Vs 4: The law’s requirements are satisfied through Jesus.
- Vs 5: Our thinking is now influenced by the Spirit.
- Vs 6: We have life and peace by the Holy Spirit.
- Vs 9: He set us free from our old nature.
- Vs 10: We’ve been made right with God.
- Vs 11: We have the promise of life after death.
- Vs 14: We are called God’s children!
- Vs 17: We’re heirs of our Heavenly Father!
- Vs 18: We are guaranteed Glory!
- Vs 23: We have the promise of new bodies!
- Vs 24: We have the hope for life after death!
- Vs 26: We have help with our weaknesses!
- Vs 27: We have the assurance that God knows our hearts!
- **AND vs 28: we have**
- The assurance that God is working everything together for the ultimate good of those who love him!

- If we were to take all these wonderful things listed in Roman 8 and make a conclusion about our God...we'd say "God loves us"
- How could anyone conclude God is **NOT** loving?
- It's easy. In our low moments we aren't reading Romans 8.
- We believe what the Bible says but what we see can really stink.
- We can get disappointed, defeated, hurt, or even cynical.
- Where is God? We can start doubting or pouting.
- When tragedy hits we can find ourselves questioning his love.
- At some point in the teen years many kids have a moment when they think that their parents don't love them.
- And usually, it's because mom or dad did something they don't like. Or denied them something they wanted.
- And those words come out, that everyone regrets later: "You don't love me! You don't care about me! You hate me!"
- And parents are always blown away by that!
- In the minds of parents, there's a million reasons that's not true:
- What do U mean we hate U? How could U say we don't love U?
- We cleaned you when you messed your pants for years. (4 years)
- We feed you. We do your laundry. We cook your meals.
- We sat through a thousand boring soccer games.
- We fixed your owies. We cleaned up your messes.
- We pay for your cellphone so you can sit there and ignore us.
- We buy you food, clothes, car insurance, birthday presents.
- We lay awake at night worried about your future.
- We've shed tears as we worried about you.
- In light of all the **wonderful things** parents do...how could our children ever say we don't love them? (Little brats)
- In low or frustrating moments, kids get hung up on things.
- They get critical, cynical, hurt, offended or a little rebellious.
- They can get proud, or arrogant, get to feeling pretty smart.
- And they childishly and selfishly act...**just like many people act toward God**. "You don't love me!"
- I want to say it's normal to feel that way.
- It's normal, in the midst of trials, to wonder if God loves us.
- I suspect all of us have felt that way at one time or another.
- But many people feel that way and then cut God out of their lives

-A better response, would be to go back and consider the evidence. Before you put God on trial, at least consider the evidence. Romans 8 would be a great place to turn.

Question 2: If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

-Lots of people!

-When people are doubting God's love they frequently bring up the people who are "against us" as witnesses against God.

-They ask "If God is loving, what about Hitler? What about Stalin?"

-What about 9/11 and the terrorists? What about the Crusades?

-What about murderers, pedophiles, rapists and racists?

-What about cruel dictators and oppressive regimes?

-How can a loving God allow that kind of stuff to happen?

-Those are tough questions. There is no easy answer.

-Because God loves us he gives us freedom.

-And some people make evil choices with that freedom.

-The only way that God could prevent people from doing evil things, is to either control their minds or to simply zap people who are evil.

-And some say, "Yeah, why doesn't God just zap the bad guys?"

-If God zapped the people who did evil...he would end up zapping some of our friends, some of our kids, some of family members.

-If God started mind-controlling people or indiscriminately zapping people who did evil...that would include "you" and "me".

-You say, but I'm not as evil Hitler or Saddam!

-How much how evil do you have to commit to be zapped?

-And, what would people say about a God that mind-controlled and zapped people? They would say, "He's not...loving"

-One of the ultimate proofs of God's great love for us is the freedom he gives us.

-My parents are unloving. The kids at school teased me. My spouse just left me. My kids hate me! My boss is a jerk@

-My neighbors are driving me crazy. The IRS audited me!

-My friends abandoned me. The terrorists are out to get us...

How can God say he loves me, when everyone is against me?

-And so Paul asks, "If God is for so who can ever be against us?"

-Whatever kind of mean, oppressive, and dangerous people come against us...they can never take God from us.

-They can take our body, but they'll never take our soul.

-The worst thing that could happen to us in life...is to be killed!

-But we'd die and go straight to the arms of our Father.

-“If God is for so who can ever be against us?”

Question 3: Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? (vs 32)

-I swear Paul must have been a modern American.

-He found another question that people today are asking.

-If God loves me...why won't he give me what I want?

- I want to be married. I want to have kids.
- I want a better job. I want to be pain free.
- I want more money. I want less debt.
- I want to wear duct tape ties on Father's Day! Done.

-If God loves me, why doesn't he give me what I want?

-I think this is a fair question. And there are things in this life we want to happen.

-Things we want to have and experience.

-And everyone, will ask God for things and not get them.

-That will happen in your life.

-There are false teachers who say, “Name it and claim it!” God will give you whatever you want if you have enough faith!

-I knew a woman with cancer. She went to her elders asking for prayer. They prayed for her and she was not healed.

-And they told her she didn't have enough faith. Nonsense.

-Church, sometimes God says “no” to the things we ask for.

-The variables are more complicated than that, but in the big picture sense...sometimes God says “no”.

-And then some people say, “He doesn't love me!”

-But our passage reminds us of something profound.

-God has already given us the most valuable gift that can be given.

-He sent his Son Jesus to lay down his life for us.

-Why did he do that? Because he loves us.

-Paul says, “God has already given us the best thing he can give!

-So why do you worry about the rest of it?

-He has given you his One and Only Son!

-What MORE could he do to prove that he loves you?

-Questions 4 and 5 are similar.

Question 4: Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own?

-He's saying who can **REALLY** bring a charge against us?

-People say accusing things to us:

- Christians are deluded, old-fashioned and out of touch
- Christians are ignorant, uneducated and bigoted.
- Christians are hypocrites
- Christians are weak people who need a crutch.
- Christians are no better than anyone else.
- Even Satan is called the Accuser of the believers

-Who dares accuse us? Lots of people And...

Question 5: Who then will condemn us? (vs 34)

-At first glance you might think...lots of people!

-When this letter was written Christians were being condemned and killed for their faith.

-Christians were easy scapegoats for societal problems.

-In fact, Christians have been convicted and condemned to die ever since Jesus returned to heaven.

-What is Paul talking about here? How can we believe God love us when we are accused and condemned?

-Who can accuse us?

33 No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself.

34 Who then will condemn us?

-NO ONE -for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

-When people say we're guilty, we say no I'm forgiven!

-When people say we're nobodies, nope I'm a child of the king!

-When people point out our flaws, point them to the cross. (paid)

-When they curse us, and cuss us, and cross us and blame us...

-When they revile us, and rebuke us and treat us like fools, just remember they treated Jesus the same way.

-When people hurt us, harm us, and treat us like we're worthless, just remember that the God who loves us...paid the highest price and because he believes you're worth it.

-And when the devil come around to remind us of our past, we just remind him of his future!

-No one can **ACCUSE the people God has absolved.**

-No one can **CONDEMN the people God has EXONERATED.**

-What we have in Jesus is the proof of God's great love for us.
-People can say whatever they want, but they are powerless to take away God's fierce love for us.

Question 6: Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?

-No. Give me a harder one! Next question.

Question 7: Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (vs 35)

-People say these kinds of things all the time.

-These are exhibits A, B, C in the case against God' love!

-What about the trouble in the world?

-What about world hunger

-What about the poor and destitute?

-What about all the death and dying in the world?

-Aren't these things the proof that God is not a god of love?

-Jesus told a story in Luke 15 about a young man who had a very loving father.

-And the young man said, "Dad, even though you aren't dead yet, I'm asking for my inheritance.

-The son didn't have any money. His father had the worked, and succeeded and acquired wealth.

-The son hadn't which is why he asked his dad for cash.

-A pretty bold request. The father had to know what would happen; but he said yes.

-You know what happened. That young man took all the money and wasted it on whiskey, women and wild living!

-And then...he was broke. He had no job. No money.

-Nowhere to turn. No one to turn to. He got a job slopping the hogs and was so hungry he thought about eating hog slop.

-And in the pit of despair, he came to his senses.

-He said, "Things weren't like this when I lived at home."

-My father loved me. Provided for me. But I ruined that, I'm a disgrace, I'm a failure, I'm a disappointment.

-But he hatched a plan! I'll go see if my father will take me in as a servant. He couldn't possible accept me as his son...but maybe he'll give me some table scraps.

-And when the son was still a long way out...the father saw him.

-I think that father always had an eye on the horizon, looking for that wayward son.

-And when he saw him...he ran to that Son.

-He kissed him and hugged him. And the son started his little speech about becoming a servant.

-And the father said, nonsense. Get some clean clothes and new shoes for my son! Put a ring on his finger, and fire up the BBQ!
Luke 15:24 "for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found."

-How did the Father always feel about the son? He loved him.

-Why did the Father let the son leave? He loved him.

-How did he feel about his son when he was rebelling? Loved him.

-How did he feel about his son when was suffering? Loved him.

-Why did he take him back after all the stupid things he'd done?

-He loved him.

-What drove the son back to the father? Suffering.

35 Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")

-Switch to NIV

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

-The trouble God allows isn't intended to drive us away from God.

-It's meant to drive us into his arms.

-But how can God say he loves us when there's so much trouble in this world?

-If the prodigal son had thought that way he'd still be sitting in the hog pen. And many people are.

-God created people...because of his great love.

-He put people in paradise... because he loved them.

-He gave us freedom...because of his love.

-He had to know what would happen.

-When people sinned...he still loved us.

-In fact, he made a way for anyone to come back.

-And...he always has his eye on the horizon...looking for lost son and daughters.

- Not so he can zap them! But so he can welcome them back with loving arms. Why? Because he loves them.
 - If God was really put on trial...for being unloving, he'd be found not guilty.
 - People don't usually question God's love because they find him unloving...they usually question God's love because they find themselves rebellious.
 - Like the prodigal in Luke 15, they want our Father to give them everything...so they can take it and run.
 - Those who question God's love, have no love for him.
 - They really have no interest in him or what he says.
 - People who question God's love are usually looking for a reason, an excuse not to believe in him.
 - And because he loves those people...he lets them.
 - But for those who know the God of the Bible.
 - For those who know his Son Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - We have experienced the love of God first hand.
 - And in light of all we know from life, experience, Romans 8 and the whole Bible...we find that the evidence overwhelmingly points to God as a God love.
- 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- God's great love is an unstoppable force.