

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

The last part of Romans 8 today speaks of God's love relationship with us. The apostle Paul declares that nothing can separate us from this love of God. Why is this? Please look again at Romans 8:28-30, which we studied last month.

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

We are here because we believe in Jesus, not by our will and plan, but by God's plan and his purpose. God's strong will is at work in our salvation.

Verse 29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

We may have come to church to solve our own problems, but God has planned in advance that we would grow up into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We are now living in the process of sanctification.

Verse 30: And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Those of us who are in the process of sanctification will be resurrected to glory at the coming of Jesus Christ. This is glorification. At this time, we will be changed from imperfection to perfection, just as Jesus Christ is. These verse 3 says that our salvation, sanctification, and glorification are all under God's sovereignty. Jesus taught His disciples about this.

John 6:65, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them." So, our belief in Jesus Christ was not of our own volition, but because of God's permission. Therefore, there should be no pride or haughty in even being saved by believing. This truth is a hope for those who have not yet believed. For we believe that one day they will be saved under God's plan, just as we believed by God's unlimited forgiving grace.

Verse 31: "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" From what we have seen so far, we know that we are predestined, called, and loved by God. Since God is on our side, no one can be against us. Why is this?

Verse 32, "He who did not spare even his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

John 3:16, 17, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (16). For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that to save the world through him (17)." God gave His life, the life of His Son Jesus Christ, for us. God, who has shown the most exalted love, must give us everything. We who have already received the wonderful Jesus Christ can trust that our daily needs will be met by God.

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

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go out and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you (16)." In this Word, Jesus repeatedly teaches that God is the subject who has chosen us. He also teaches us that justification is not just the concept of going to heaven when we die, but that He enables us to live a rich and fruitful life in the life we are living. This is the overall meaning of justification.

Romans 8:1, 2: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (1), because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." Forgiven, our lives will not be judged by anyone. We have been forgiven and set free from sin because God has forgiven us and made us righteous, even though we have made mistakes in our lives in the past.

Around the time the book of Romans was written in AD 60, the number of Christians who converted from Judaism increased rapidly. At this time, Christians of Jewish origin were dissatisfied and questioning the fact that they could be saved 'just by believing'. To these early Christians who were confused between grace and law, the apostle Paul repeatedly explained to them that they could not be saved by keeping the law. The apostle Paul knew from the bottom of his heart that God had forgiven him of his sins and that he was now living in the grace. Here I would like to think with you about the Apostle Paul's being chosen and called by God.

It was truly a mysterious leading for the Apostle Paul to meet Jesus and to evangelize the Gentiles. He was Saul before he was named Paul. He was a traditional Pharisee scribe and religious leader. If you look at Acts 7, Saul at that time was at the scene of Stephen's martyrdom. He allowed the people to stone Stephen to death. Later, Saul received a letter of permission from the high priest to officially recognize the persecution of Christians. Saul then arrested Christians, both men and women, on his way to Damascus (Acta9). Saul, who had

been raised in Judaism, could not understand that a cult was spreading in violation of Jewish law. He thought, 'What? They have abandoned God's law and believe in Jesus! Do you think you can be saved just by believing in Jesus? That's outrageous!'

But then Saul had a dramatic encounter with Jesus. As Saul approached Damascus, suddenly a light shone on him (Acts 9:3) and Saul was blinded by the light and fell down. Then he heard a voice. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? I am Jesus, whom you persecuting." (Acts 9:4) At that moment, Saul knew then that the Jesus he was persecuting was the true God. Jesus then teaches Saul about his calling. "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

Saul met Jesus, repented of his sins, and later changed his name to "Paul," the name of the least one. God chose Saul, a sinner, and used him greatly in the work of preaching the gospel. Paul really confessed from his heart, "Now I have been saved by believing in Jesus even though I persecuted Jesus and many Christians before. I am the head among sinners. I am beyond saving." In the world of the Law, which he believed in, Paul would never be saved. Because he was not only guilty of murder, which killed many innocent Christians. He was hostile to the true God (Acts 9).

But the Son of God Jesus Christ called Saul, a sinner, and used him so that he could truly love God and eventually be glorified. More than anyone else, Paul would have realized the love of Jesus. Paul spent a lifetime teaching that salvation is not by our deeds, but by grace. Paul experienced more clearly than anyone else that he was saved not by his own righteousness, but by God's plan and His will.

It is important to note here that God had predestined Paul to be used as an apostle of the Lord. I had often wondered why Jesus did not call Paul, who had become such a great servant of the Lord, to be one of the 12 disciples. If He was going to use Paul for the Kingdom of God, He should have trained him to be a gifted apostle, but why go to the trouble of persecuting Christians before calling him?

I suppose this is how one of us became a Christian. I'm sure there must have been some mysterious way like this. We've had deep God's purpose through the peaks and valleys of our life so far. Thinking of this gives us hope for our family, brothers and sisters who still do not believe. Even those who persecute us now have a great chance of being saved. God surely has a plan for their lives.

Verse 34: "Who 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."

Jesus Christ who gave his life for us is sitting now at the right hand of God the Father and praying for us. He intercedes for our weaknesses. We knew the Holy Spirit intercede for

us in verse 26 with groans that He could not express Himself. In addition to that, Jesus Christ is also interceding for us. Jesus Christ is on our side. He always protects us as righteous, even though we sin and fail in our long journey.

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

Verse 36: "As it is written: For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

The Roman Christians of that time lived in fear of death all day long. Especially due to the tyranny of the Roman Emperor Nero, many Christians were actually being executed like sheep being slaughtered. But nothing could separate them from God's love.

John 10:28-30 "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand (28). My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (29). I and the Father are one (30)." Jesus told His disciples that we have been given to Him by God, and we are in the hands of Jesus Christ, who is also in the hands of God the Father. The first Christians in Roman would have firmly believed these powerful words.

In Japan and Canada, we do not have persecution like the first Christians, but we face our own hardships in our daily lives. But the hardships we are experiencing now cannot separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Even if we give up, God will not.

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

1 John 5:4-5 "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith (4). Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (5)."

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

Verse 39: "neither 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."

Thus, the daily hardships we face cannot separate us from the love we have with God and from the love we have from Jesus Christ. Through sufferings make us wonderful relationship with God like become parents and children of love. Sufferings do not separate us from God's love, but benefits us in all our lives to become His children. God's purpose in choosing us in advance was to make us His children. God's children have the ultimate purpose of glorifying His glorious grace. For this purpose, God uses all our suffering to raise us.

Philippians 1:6, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Let's pray together.