

No Separation

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Can I just add my welcome? I'm JT. If you don't know me, I'm one of the elders here, and I have the privilege of taking us through this amazing passage this morning. And yeah, thank you for reading, Kate, and for your prayer. And we do just ask that God will add a blessing to his word that is read this morning.

So to get us thinking, we're in Romans 8. I was watching Blue Planet not that long ago. I'm not sure if you're into documentaries. I love seeing God's creation and the way that they can film things nowadays. And this is one of David Attenborough's ones, all about the sea. And if you know anything about me, you'll know that the sea's got a special place in my heart. If you don't know what that's about, you can ask me later on. But in this particular episode, you had these two grey whales. That's what they are. And you've got the mum and the pup. Now, the pup is relatively small, but still absolutely massive. And they are serenely swimming along side by side. The pup is just tucked right into the mother. And they're swimming along. But then in the way that these shows do, the music changes. And you think, uh-oh, something's coming. What is it? Well, these orcas come flying in and they smash right into the pup. And it was quite a horrifying thing to watch. But what they do is that they disorientate the pup. They hit it. They separate from the mother. And then this pup, what the orcas do is they surround it and they swim with it. And the pup just goes with them, thinking that it is now safe. So the pup is separated from the mother. And I'll not tell you how it ends, but you could probably guess. But you know, this was what I was thinking about, because, and we're starting at the end of our passage, but this is the main point, as Graham has said already this morning. The main point this morning that we will see is that nothing, verse 39, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Nothing can separate us from Christ Jesus, our Lord. So where are we? I'm aware that you might not have, you might not have been in the last few weeks. We've been going through this over four weeks. Graham took us through the first three, and this is the finale, so to speak, of our Romans chapter eight. Paul, the apostle Paul, the one who is converted dramatically, he is writing to the church in Rome, Rome, that great city that we know of from history of the empire. But in this church, they were having problems and he is writing to them to try and solve some of these problems. Paul, he wants unity in the church, that they can work together for the gospel, for the good of the gospel. And Paul's opening question here, in verse 31, the first verse that we read, it says, what then shall we say in response to these things?

And you quite rightly might ask, what things? So let's have a look at what we've been thinking about so far. Well, in chapter eight, verse one, we saw that we can have life in Jesus's name. It says it up there, no condemnation. Verse one says, therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We can have life in his name.

[3 : 2 6] Week two, we thought about the fact that because of this, we can be family. We can be made a part of God's family, the church, the global church. We can be heirs with Christ. And this allows us in verse 15 to cry, Abba, Father, that personal relationship that we can have with God. And last week, we saw that because of these things, we have the hope of future glory. We can look ahead to a time coming where suffering will be no more. Verse 18, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So we've seen that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We have become part of God's family if we trust in the Lord Jesus. And we have been given that hope for the future on which we can look to.

So with that hope of the future laid out, Paul goes on here to tell his readers, that church in Rome, to withstand the world, to stand what's going on around about them, because we are safe in Christ.

There is no separation from the love of God. So verse 1, no condemnation. And verse 39, today we will see no separation.

We're going to look at what that looks like, what Paul writes to these readers in Rome at the time, but what we can apply to our lives in Edinburgh on this tree Sunday morning.

[5 : 01] But as we do so, let's really sense the triumph of these things. This is Paul's triumphant words as he finishes this little section. Try to take on the encouragement.

Try to leave here encouraged about who our Savior is. We're going to look at it in three sections. I don't think this is playing ball too much.

There we go. We're going to look at it in verse 31 to 32, that God is for us. We're going to see in the next two verses that God is in us. And finally, we will see that God is with us.

So let's start with God is for us. I don't know if you've ever seen Question Time. It's a game show where the people on the panel try to avoid answering the question at all times.

No, not really. If you've not seen it, it tends to be politicians and the public. They ask questions. And then the person tends to just say whatever they were planning on saying anyway. It's a not particularly helpful show, I don't find.

[6 : 06] But here we have Paul and we have a lot of questions here in our passage. But Paul, very helpfully, he answers those questions, which is very useful.

So we see, verse 31, that God is for us. Who can be against us?

Contrary to what the world would think. You know, some people would say, what do you think of God? Oh, well, God's a rulemaker. God wants to oppress us. God is no fun. But that is not what we see here.

God is actually for us. God wants us to do well. He wants us to be good. He wants us to thrive. Who can be against us?

Well, the answer to that isn't written, but it is no one. No one can be against us. And, you know, we might think, well, people are against us.

[7 : 08] People are not nice to us. People are, in fact, sometimes downright horrible to us. How can this be? Well, it is talking about in our position before him. In our position before God, no one can stand against.

If God is for us, then no one can be against us. How can we know that God is for us? It's an easy thing to say. Well, verse 32, it answers this, doesn't it?

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. Jesus, God the Son, was given by God the Father for us.

We'll look at this a bit more in the next section, if that is something that is unfamiliar to you. But salvation, which is a gift, is available to everyone.

But it requires action, and that action is faith. We will sing afterwards a hymn, and it's got great words.

[8 : 10] It says this, What gift of grace is Jesus, my Redeemer? There is no more for heaven now to give. He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom, my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

The Lord Jesus is the greatest gift that has ever been given. So if we've been given that gift, verse 32, it says, How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

If the best gift's already been given, why would you withhold anything else? You know, a silly example, but it might be that someone gave you a car, and they said, Oh, but you can't have the air fresheners.

You can't have the car mats. You know, it would make no sense. The best gift's already been given. There's nothing left to withhold. You know, last week we looked at the fact that all things, verse 28, all things work together for good.

And Graham talked about the fact that all things work together for good, but this is not so that we can be comfortable, so that we can live life and an easy life, and that we have no issues, no problems.

[9 : 21] All things work together for good in terms of our character, in terms of who we are and our relationship with God. And it is the same here.

We are not promised the things of the world. We are not promised comfort. You know, I don't have to tell you, I don't know the weeks you've been having. I don't know your life particularly.

You know, life is tough. Life can be heartbreaking. Life can just be rubbish sometimes. And we're not trying to hide the fact of these things.

These things are true. But God gives us all things for our good. God gives us the things that we need, not necessarily the things that we want.

Once again, a thing to illustrate this is that I've got two daughters. The oldest one is Sana. She's four. You know, she would just live a life of ice cream and pasta. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

[10:26] Pasta and ice cream, please. But you know, I, as the father, and Corey as the mother, we've got to say to her, you know, you need other things in life. You need some vegetables. You need things that are good for you. But she just wants what she wants.

But sometimes she needs to have what she needs. God is for us. And he wants things that are for our good.

Secondly, we see that God is in us. So there's questions. They continue. But we move from the game show of question time into the courtroom.

We get in the legal jargon now. We're in this courtroom drama. No charge is admissible. And the judge has thrown out the case.

The accused is free to go. That's what we have in this little section here. And you know, when the judge, he throws out a charge, it cannot just be brought back up again.

[11:29] You can't just go again and again and again until you get the verdict that you want. If a judge has cleared someday, then they are clear. End of story. Verse 33, Paul asks, Once again, we get that answer.

It is God who justifies. There's no condemnation because God has justified. Justification.

One of those big words we sometimes hear in the Bible. And it's good to know what these things mean. A simple way of doing it is just as if we have done nothing wrong.

But what it is, is it's God declaring us righteous by faith. We have a new status. We are right with God. We have been forgiven. We have that new family.

We have been welcomed into the church. God's people. And we also have a new future. Our transformed life now, but also in that life to come. So if justified, Paul's next question, Who then is the one who condemns?

[12:40] No one is the answer. No one. If God is not condemning, then no one can. If God is not passing sentence, punishing, then no one can.

How can this be? We're not standing here. I'm not standing here trying to admit that I've got nothing to get punished for. That I am totally sinless. I've never done anything wrong in our life.

You know, we mess up, don't we? We lose patience at our children. We don't love our wives as we should. We are horrible to those whom we love, never mind those that we don't.

And God is holy. God is just. We read that in the Bible. So how can God let this go? How can we get off scot-free? Thankfully, again, we see in the next sentence, and we almost want to add a because there.

Because Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God. Christ died, paying that penalty for sin.

[13:46] He showed victory over death by not just dying, everyone dies, but being raised again to life. Victory over death and sin.

And he was glorified to God's right hand in that marvelous position. That's the only way that we can be found not guilty. You know, it's as if we're in the courtroom.

We've heard all the evidence. Our head is hanging. We know we're guilty. But someone walks in and goes, I'll take it. Put me away.

I'll take that prison sentence or whatever it may be. That's essentially what Jesus has done. Marvel at these things. And when we accept these things, that means that God is in us and we are in him.

God is in us. We have been justified. Don't worry, I'm not going to miss out that bit at the end of verse 34 where it says, and is also interceding for us.

[14:55] Christ intercedes for us on our behalf before God. He gives us access to God. He does so on the basis of his shed blood, the fact that he died for us.

Interceding, it means that he makes forgiveness. He makes access to God possible, a reality. You know, when sin came in, there was a separation between man and God, and sin just caused this divide in the middle.

But Jesus, he came and he bridges that gap. He allows access to God and God to us. And how can Jesus intercede for us?

Well, he lived a life on this earth. He walked as we walked. He talked as we talked. And yet, importantly, he didn't sin like we did. He faced temptation. His friends died.

His family were afflicted. He suffered pain and shame and sorrow. But Jesus can intercede for us. Hebrews 4, bear with me, it says this, Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

[16:11] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Verse 26, last week, the Spirit intercedes in us and helps us and groans for us. Verse 34, this week, Christ on high intercedes to the Father on our behalf.

God is in us and we are in him if we trust in Christ. Therefore, we are forgiven. No charge can be brought. What a privileged position we find ourselves in.

So God is for us and God is in us and finally God is with us. There's been a bit of debate this week about this phrase in our household.

[17:12] I'm sure I've heard it somewhere, but it's, Are you thriving or just surviving? You may have heard of that or maybe in different forms, but I've gone with, Are you thriving or just surviving?

You know, answer that honestly. We've already thought about life and it can be rubbish at times.

But you know, God, he wants us and he allows us to thrive.

God is with us. There's no condemnation and now we're getting on to no separation. Verse 35, we have our question, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ that we've talked about already? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

What a list. Distress, pain, suffering, hunger, shame, peril, death itself.

[18:20] You know, I'm sure these things are familiar in one way or another. I'm sure these things hurt when we think about them. I'm sure we can relate. It says, For your sake we face death all day long.

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. This is a quote from Psalm 44 verse 22, and it's the people of Israel and they're crying out to God, saying, This is how the nations view us.

They view us as being afflicted, as being a sorry affair. Look at that, poor people. Everything is going wrong. We experience the things of verse 35 daily, don't we?

And it might be this point, and quite rightly you could be saying, Hold on, JT. You said this was an encouraging passage. You said leave encouraged. Well, thankfully, this isn't the end. It carries on.

Verse 37, No, Paul says, no. In all these things. Paul isn't saying that these things don't happen, but he's saying in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

[19:30] Don't know how I can talk about it in any better way than the kids' song did earlier that was brilliant, wasn't it? And Sana, she's been singing that all week. So I've had no excuse not to be aware of that verse this week.

And you know that word conqueror, Graham, he told me this one, that Nike, the brand, is actually named after the goddess of victory. And it's the same root word. That Nike, I'll not pronounce the Greek, but it is goddess of victory.

And it is that sense that we have here. Conquerors, victorious. We defeat these things. Yes, they happen, but we defeat them in Christ.

And not only that, but we bring glory to God in our trials. We actually become better because of them. We are brought closer to God in these things.

Earlier on in Romans, Paul writes to the people, he says, not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance, character, and character, hope.

[20:40] And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. You know, finally, Paul drives these things home in his last couple of verses here.

He drives home his point that we have security in Christ. Nothing at all can separate us from the love of God. Verse 38, For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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. Again, what a list. The terror of death, temptation of life, supernatural powers, life's woes, fear of the future, human authority, everything, anything.

Paul lists them. He searched it out. How did the song go? Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

You've heard a wee bit about the persecuted church. We heard about Kate's experience in Poland and we have that day coming up that we can come and listen to these things. But you know, the persecuted church is people out there who are living their lives for Jesus, but on a daily basis they face suffering for doing so.

[22 : 20] Their families disown them because of it. The authorities, those who are meant to look after us, put people in jail for believing in Jesus. That is the realities of the persecuted church.

But you know, despite these things, these churches are thriving. They're not just surviving, they are thriving. How?

Well, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You know, we look for security in life, don't we? In a sense, that's maybe what life is all about in a worldly terms. We want security in relationships. We want a husband or a wife. We want family members. We want friends that will stick by us, that will be with us through thick and thin. We want long-term lets on our flats so we don't have to think about where we're going next.

We want mortgages that will be five-year fixed terms so we don't have to think about it. We want job security, don't we? We want a guaranteed paycheck at the end of the month.

[23 : 19] We look for security. But I don't have to tell you that these things aren't guaranteed in life. Jobs can go, family and friends, relationships can break down.

We know these things aren't guaranteed. But we can have and we do have security because our hope is set in Jesus Christ. Our security is in God himself, therefore it can't fail.

We thought right at the start about those gray whales and the orcas causing separation and the difficulties that that cause, that pup.

You know, there is no separation between us and God. God is for us. God is in us. And God is with us. God knows what is best for us.

There is no condemnation. There is no separation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Let's respond to these things by leaving here and living out these truths.

[24 : 28] Yes, we will face difficult times. Yes, we will at points struggle. Life can be rubbish. Let's live a life of praise knowing that there is no separation.

But God is for us. He is in us and he is with us. I'm going to pray as Simon and the band come up and then we'll sing our final two hymns. So let's pray.

God and Father, just thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the lessons that we can learn from it, that we can apply to our lives here in Edinburgh in 2024.

And the truths of these things written so long ago can apply directly and can be as if they were just written yesterday. We thank you for your word. We thank you that you are with us.

No matter what we go through in life, that we can be encouraged that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We thank you for the security that gives us and we pray that we will heavily rely on you no matter what goes on.

[25 : 39] So we trust these things to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.