



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

“My Savior He Wrote Me a Letter”

Romans 8:31-39

More than one writer or screenwriter has used the the device of a person’s letters to their loved one being intercepted by an evil third party and thus never delivered. It always causes the person who receives no communication to conclude that they are no longer loved. They then look elsewhere for love but are never quite fulfilled.

In our case we have the love letter of Jesus to us in the form of the Bible. Reading and re-reading it ought to assure us that He loves us with an everlasting and unconditional love.

Still there are things that try to intercept our appreciation of His love for us. Some of them are listed for us as we end Romans eight.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things?...

In other words, *What conclusions can we draw?*

Romans 8:31 ... If God is for us...

The gift of God’s Son in saving us and the gift of God the Holy Spirit indwelling us are enough to conclude God is “**for** us.”

Romans 8:31 ... who can be against us?

Well, lots of people and creatures are against us! The devil and his demons are against us. Sinners are against us. Things are also against us – like the world and the flesh. They want to intercept the understanding that Jesus loves us.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up...

It is the highest and greatest proof of the Father's love for us that He sent Jesus to die. "Delivered Him up" is a summary of all that the cruelty of man did to Jesus especially in His final hours.

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

It was the plan from before the foundation of the earth. It thus greatly amplifies God's love for us. He knew ahead of time what it would cost Him and He came for us anyway.

Romans 8:32 ...for us all...

The "us all" is the whole human race but especially those who believe. If you are a Christian you are assured that God *loved* and *loves* you personally and demonstrated it by delivering Jesus to die in your place as your substitute.

Romans 8:32 ... how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Since God gave us freely and by grace the greatest thing then we can believe He will freely give us "all things." These "all things," though, are determined by Him according to what is best in conforming us to the image of Jesus. They are *anything* and *everything* needed for our spiritual welfare. In other words, His love, while unconditional, is purposeful.

Romans 8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?

The verse isn't saying no one will attack us. It's saying that their attack does not lessen God's love. I cannot help but think of Job because his situation perfectly illustrates someone bringing a charge against God's elect. In fact, looking at Job, it was precisely on account of His love for Job that God permitted the devil to test him so severely.

Romans 8:33 ... It is God who justifies.

The language scholars say that this phrase can be read as a question. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Shall God who justifies?” Read that way you are reminded that God no longer looks upon you with any charges. If you are justified by Him any charges brought against you by anyone or any thing else should not intercept His love.

Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns?...

Again, plenty of people condemn us, but their condemnation should not be perceived as a lack of love by God.

Romans 8:34 ... It is Christ who died...

Again this can be read as a question: “Shall Christ who has died, condemn them?” The argument here is, that as Christ died to save you, and not to destroy you, He will not condemn you. His death for you is a security that He will not condemn you.

Romans 8:34 ... and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God...

Back to Job. Satan was in Heaven, before God’s throne, accusing and condemning. Here we see that Jesus is “at the right hand of God,” loving on us.

Romans 8:34 ... who also makes intercession for us.

Jesus isn’t condemning us through these accusations He allows. If anything, He is proving His love, showing how He intercedes on our behalf, limiting what can happen to us.

The movies portray people who say they love a person but when difficulties come they abandon them. The person who truly loves steps up and takes the hit. Jesus stepped up for us and now He intercedes for us.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...

The love of Christ is the love He has **for you**. It’s not just that it is His nature to love and, so, He *has* to love you. His love was proven on the

Cross when He took your place. It is illustrated in many romantic metaphors. Thus it is not just a duty that Jesus took upon Himself. It is His delight.

The question assumes that there are forces which will make every effort to intercept the love of Christ. Since Jesus cannot change, and His love cannot falter, these forces are directed against **us** to make us doubt our Savior's love.

Romans 8:35 ... Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

- "Tribulation." The word properly refers to *pressure from without; affliction arising from external causes*. It means, however, not infrequently, *trial of any kind*.
- "Distress." This word means *narrowness of place*. These are situations where you cannot see a way out.
- "Persecution." This is the specific trial or trials that come simply because you are a believer and take a stand for Jesus.
- "Famine." We haven't really experienced shortages because we have lost everything for the sake of the Gospel.
- "Peril." It is a general word referring to dangers of any kind. If there is intended to be a progression in these words you can see that once you've lost everything and are literally homeless you are in great peril.
- "Sword." As if the preceding weren't bad enough, you could be martyred.

The point is that these could **all** occur and yet they cannot in any way alter Jesus Christ's love for you. You may not 'feel' the love, but it is just as powerful as ever.

Romans 8:36 As it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER."

It's written in Psalm 44:22. God's saints in the past were thus mistreated. Do we conclude that God did not love them? Do we conclude some failure or fault in them was a reason for the Lord to turn away from loving them, thus separating His love from them?

No, quite the opposite! When we see Job or Joseph or Abraham or David in some tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or peril we understand it was precisely on account of God's love they were mistreated! When we see an Old Testament prophet killed by the sword we rejoice he was so loved by God.

Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

On the phrase "more than conquerors" Dr. J. Vernon McGee writes,

How can a sheep for the slaughter be more than a conqueror? This is another wonderful paradox of the Christian faith. What does it mean to be more than a conqueror? It means to have assistance from another who gets the victory for us, who never lets us be defeated.

Jesus loves you so much that He fights your battles for you; He conquers your enemies for you. He does it, however, with spiritual weapons, like humility, patience, forgiveness, etc. In other words, it may seem like you are being conquered, but only because you won't accept His kind of help.

"Through Him who loved us." Notice the past tense – "loved." Jesus loves us still and we know He does because He loved us at Calvary and died for us. There He proved His love most unconditionally.

"Through Him" is a reminder that we can do nothing without Him but all things through Him. The very trials themselves draw forth His presence, His sustaining grace. Again Paul's point was and is that these things which on the surface seem separators are really connectors. They connect us to the deepest understanding and experience of the love of Christ.

I think that we do not produce tough Christians anymore. The slightest trial throws them. They immediately feel insecure in the love of Christ. Rather than settling in with their love letter for a long wait they begin to seek love elsewhere:

- Some seek it in the material realm by turning or returning to old habits. They seek to fill the perceived void with the very things that left them empty in the first place.

- Others seek love in a more ‘spiritual realm, but one in which the Word of God is not always the final authority. They are looking for the love of Christ through methods not authorized or soundly condemned by the Bible.

These folks act as though they are not receiving any love letters. They are letting all these things, in a spiritual sense, intercept the plain Words of the Bible.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded...

One version translates it, “I am certain.” There is not the slightest doubt in his mind regarding the strength and sufficiency of Jesus Christ’s love.

As the chapter closes the apostle Paul is still searching for something that might separate us from the love Jesus has for us. Let’s go through his interesting list one-by-one.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life...

“Death” is the most terrible and terrifying of enemies. He strikes all ages and at any time. Making death notifications for the past fifteen years has given me a new appreciation for death’s nondiscrimination.

Death cannot “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” For a believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. *Death has no sting!* It is even to be preferred because it ushers us into glory.

“Life” seems an odd choice. Upon reflection you see it is an insightful choice. Daily living can distract us in such a way that we fail to reflect upon the Lord’s love. Then, when trouble comes, we’re caught off-guard.

Then there is the other aspect to life – having it all. But what does it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul?

Romans 8:38 ...nor angels nor principalities nor powers...

These terms seem to refer to angelic beings that are arranged in various hierarchies.

If evil (fallen) angels are meant then we say that greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. Jesus defeated Satan on the Cross. Sure the devil fights on; but he has already lost.

Romans 8:38 ...nor things present nor things to come,

“Things present” would include calamities and catastrophes we are subject to. Many terrible things happen; just watch the news. Do they “separate” me from the love of Christ? Only if I let them. He loves me no less. In fact, it is His loving presence that reassures me in them.

“Things to come” are worries about tomorrow. Worrying cannot change them. And, besides, God is working all things together for the good.

Romans 8:39 nor height nor depth...

“Height” has been variously understood. It seems most likely Paul was referring to prosperity, honor, and elevation in this life. Jesus loves you no less if you have this world’s goods. If they have you, then you may not be experiencing His love, but He loves you still.

“Depth,” therefore, would be the lowest circumstances of depression, poverty, contempt, and want; the very lowest rank of life. I think of the saints in Hebrews chapter eleven who were in dire circumstances. God loved them just as greatly.

Romans 8:39 ...nor any other created thing...

This encompasses **everything else** in God’s creation.

Romans 8:39 ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Spurgeon spoke of the confidence great men and women of God had in God’s love in ages past:

They did not speak of Christ’s love as though it were a myth to be respected, a tradition to be revered; they viewed it as a blessed reality, and they cast their whole confidence upon it, being persuaded that it would bear them up as upon eagles’ wings, and carry them all their days; resting assured that it would be to them a foundation of

rock, against which the waves might beat, and the winds blow, but their soul's habitation would stand securely if founded upon it.

I came across this quote:

The Bible is God's love letter to us. Not a love letter conveyed in one systematic context but one that comes through a diversity of times, places, people, experiences and stories that make it so rich.

Billy Graham once said,

The Bible is God's "love letter" to us, telling us not only that He loves us, but showing us what He has done to demonstrate His love.

Is there something, or someone, intercepting your receiving the love letter Jesus has written you? It ought to be dispelled after the reading of this final section of Romans eight.