

# Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

*"The Fog of Spiritual War"*

Romans 8:35-39

It's been called 'the fog of war.'

The phrase encompasses all of the confusions and miscalculations that can occur during an actual combat situation.

Friendly fire, for example, is often the result of unavoidable confusion once the battle has begun.

**Since we are involved in actual spiritual combat situations, we can - and we do - experience the fog of *spiritual warfare*.**

What forms does that fog take? I think a passage at the end of Romans chapter eight does a good job identifying the fog of our spiritual warfare. In it we learn that God's love for us is the light that guides us in the densest of fogs.

[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.

His love is illustrated in many romantic metaphors. Thus it is not just a duty that Jesus took upon Himself. It is His delight.

The question that opens verse thirty-five assumes that there are things which can cloud our appreciation of the Savior's love. Some of those things are listed:

Rom 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.

Each of these is a kind of fog, obscuring our vision of God's love. Several together form a dense fog around our walk with The Lord.

We think it strange when they occur:

- We lose our bearings, as if we just entered a dust cloud on a clear day.
- We might lose our way completely and become deserters from the battlefield.

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 precious as ever. He is just as present as ever; even more so.

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,

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.

Another author put it this way:

[We must] define life in terms of giving rather than taking, self-sacrifice rather than self-protection, dying rather than killing... we win by losing, we triumph through defeat, and we become rich by giving ourselves away.

“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, and it cannot lessen over time.

Do you realize that, because God is love, His love cannot lessen for you? We **don't** realize this, because so often our love for someone (or their love for us) *does* lessen. People seem to fall into and out of love pretty easily.

God cannot fall out of love for you. You can leave your first love for Him, but He will never, not ever, no never, leave you, or forsake you.

“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.

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'm reading a recent book on the topic of suffering. In it the author says,

Our hope is not "Jesus plus an explanation as to why suffering happens," or "Jesus plus an explanation as to why you have this job, that spouse, or these circumstances or pain." God is especially present in suffering... this is the foundation of what is known as the "theology of the cross," as opposed to a "theology of glory," which sees God as present in victory rather than defeat.

We do not produce tough Christians anymore. The slightest trial throws them. We need a theology of the cross. We need to be often talking about the patient endurance of suffering.

[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 as a law

enforcement Chaplain for the past seventeen 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. He must mean those times when life is so hard, so difficult, you could actually despair of it. Times when you hate life or living.

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.

We know fog, right? Tule fog is famous. Now, when you're in the fog, you want to see light ahead, and focus on it - you head for it. It doesn't dissipate the fog; you're still in the fog. But the fog becomes secondary because you can see your way through it.

Jesus is your light, and therefore your guide, in the fog of spiritual war. The fog may remain; it may press in upon you all the more. Ah, but there is always the light of Jesus' love for you. Fix your gaze upon it - upon Him - as you journey homeward.

