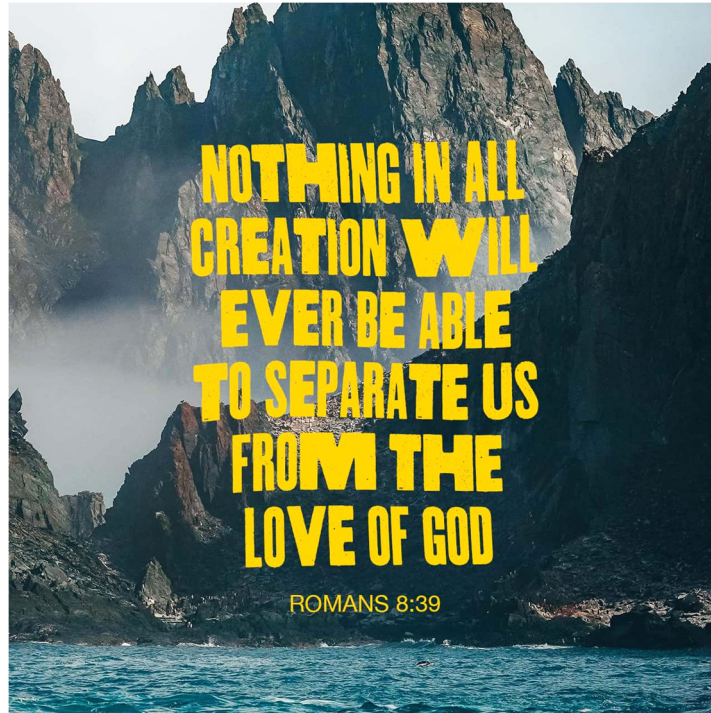


# Nothing Can Separate Us

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle



## Prayer of Illumination

Living God, help us so to hear your Word  
that we may truly understand;  
that, understanding, we may believe;  
and believing, we may follow your way in all faithfulness,  
seeking your honor and glory in all that we do.  
Amen.

## Scripture: Romans 8:31-39 (NRSVue)

<sup>31</sup> What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? It is Christ<sup>1</sup> who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;  
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,  
but the Word of God endures forever.*

## SERMON – “Nothing Can Separate Us”

Remember the 1977 power ballad “*We Are the Champions*”? It was the traditional encore at the end of performances by the British band *Queen*. Surprisingly, it never hit number one on the charts. But in a landmark study, a team of scientific researchers dubbed it the “catchiest song in the history of pop music.” Personally, I think it’s “*Hey Jude*” by the Beatles, but that’s beside the point for this morning.

Could it be the unique combination of jazz chords—major and minor 6th, 7th, 11th, and 13th harmonies in “*We Are the Champions*”? Maybe Clay could help us with that one!

Possibly it was the male high C, in falsetto, belted out by lead singer Freddie Mercury. Either way, once it gets in your head you can’t get it out. Three decades after the original recording, “*We Are the Champions*” was voted the world’s favorite song in a worldwide music poll.



If Romans 8 was an album, *More than Conquerors* would be the title track. The whole chapter is a power ballad. The melody starts with “no condemnation” and ends with “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.” The bass line is “all things work together for good.” The high falsetto is “more than conquerors.”

*“We are the champions, my friend.  
And we’ll keep on fighting to the end.”*

Well, *Queen* got it right, except for the part about “no time for losers.” That’s who Jesus came for—the losers and leftovers and left outs, people like you and me—really all of us.



The gospel is boiled down to these words in our passage: "**God is for us.**" In fact can you say these three beautiful words with me?

**"God is for us."**

Say it to your neighbor: "**God is for us.**"

God gave up his Son for us, he did not withhold him from us. Just as Abraham did not withhold his promised Son Isaac, God does not hold back his Son Jesus from us. In fact, he will give everything *to us*. What is "everything" Paul talks about? Salvation, inheritance, hope, abundant life, eternal life, all of the new creation, the very kingdom of God. This is what we, the meek, inherit. All is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. Everything that is good, pleasing, and perfect. The good, the true, and the beautiful.

But there are still voices out there that say otherwise.

**Who will charge us or condemn us, God's elect? NOBODY.**

God the Maker and Creator of all justifies us, he doesn't condemn us. All other voices are silenced. They mean nothing. When God sees us, he sees Jesus. Remember the beginning of Romans:

"There is therefore now no condemnation in Christ Jesus."

Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. NOT condemning us. Right now, this very moment, Jesus is: interceding, advocating, rooting for, loving us. You, me, all his people. And so we're elected and empowered to encourage others. Selected to serve. Chosen for charity. Blessed to be a blessing. Not to condemn or harm...but to sow God's seeds of love.

**God is for us.** Many things come against us—but not God. God is for us. And if God is for us, who can be **against us**. Listen to this beautiful truth: God is not against you. God is **for us**. Can I get an amen Immanuel?

The cross is God's way of saying, "I'm in your corner." "I've got your back." "I'm behind you." "I'm for you." "I've got this." "I've got you in my firm grip of grace." "I believe in you and I'm not letting you go." No ifs, ands or buts about it. God isn't 99 percent for us. Not even 100% for us. He's 200% for us. That, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, is GOOD NEWS. God is for us Immanuel.

NO THING or NO ONE can separate us from this amazing love—The love of God and the love of Christ. NOTHING!

I have some questions for you this morning, Immanuel. I want you to answer me out loud. It's a YES or NO question.



- Will **affliction** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!
- Will **distress** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!
- Will **persecution** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!
- **Famine** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!
- **Nakedness** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!
- **Peril** or **sword** or even **death** or **anything else in all creation** separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?...NO!

NO, in ALL these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. More than conquerors. All because of the love of God and the love of Christ. Jesus is the world's greatest lover!



Now, will we experience some or all of these bad things in this life? YES. I wish we could yell out NO, but we can't. Unfortunately suffering is baked into our faith for the people of God, in both the First Testament and the Second Testament—the Old Testament and the New Testament. We will undergo hardship, suffering, and sacrifice. Don't be surprised when this happens. But God can use even the bad to better us. Paul is on fire here. As a preacher, I'm on fire, too. This is no time for us to be the FROZEN CHOSEN. Along with Paul, I'm convinced, I'm certain. It's indubitable. I know that I know that I know. I've experienced it. I bet you've experienced it, too.

Come hell or high water, Jesus is standing by our side, through it all, in it all. In the water, in the fire, in the muck and mire. He's in it knee deep with us. In fact, Jesus is ALL IN with us. God doesn't promise that we will escape, avoid, or not undergo all these things. Paul personally experienced many of these things in his ministry. But it's **IN** all these things we're more than victorious—even in defeat. Not by our own strength, but **THROUGH HIM who LOVED us**. On our own, we don't have a snowball's chance in H-E-double toothpicks.

But IN CHRIST we are VICTORS, not VICTIMS. We are those who struggle with humans and God... and OVERCOME. We prevail. We endure, even when we're feeling:

- overwhelmed,
- down on our luck,
- under the weather,
- up to our eyeballs,
- sideways,
- or like an underdog or under-achiever.

In Christ, we're over-comers. If we fall six times, we get back up *how many times?*... Seven.

The Greek word for this is "*hupernikao*." **Hupernikao**. Say it with me: *hupernikao*.

The three-word phrase "more than conquerors" comes from that one Greek word. It's an unusual compound that means to: *hyper-conquer, over-conquer, or conquer*... with a doggy bag full of success to take home with us.

But take note: we don't abuse this gift. We can't ever be bullies in the name of God. This in no way condones or advocates misbehavior, obnoxiousness, cruelty, violence, or vengeance. Either as individuals or as a group. That's not who we are because God isn't that way. Jesus isn't that way.

Is there an English word in there you recognize in *hupernikao*? I'll give you a hint: it's a famous shoe brand.



That's where the word *Nike* comes from. I got this and a lot of other good stuff this morning from Mark Batterson's book "*If*." In Greek mythology, Nike was the goddess of victory. Both in battle and in sport, Nike embodied and epitomized victory.

Paul borrows and redeems that word and uses it to describe US. So lace up your heavenly Nikes Immanuel. Let your feet be shod with the good news of peace. Jesus SWOOPS in to help and to heal.

There's no addiction so powerful that God's power can't conquer. There's no failure so final that God's grace can't forgive. There's no wound so deep that God's love cannot heal.

In the face of these challenges, we can boldly say in faith, along with the Black Knight in Monty Python's Holy Grail: "*Tis' but a flesh wound.*"

Seven times in the book of Revelation this refrain is repeated: "*To the one who overcomes.*" It's the same word Paul uses here, *hupernikao*. In Revelation a promise is attached to each and every one of the seven *hupernikaos*. We're promised that we'll eat from the tree of life.

We're promised a white stone with a new name on it. We're promised the right to sit on the Father's throne. These seven refrains call the question, "*How do we overcome?*"

The answer is simple: **in Christ**.

It's the only way: **THROUGH, IN, and BY** Jesus who is the **WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.**

No ifs, ands, or buts about it. This is true not only in life, but in death. Especially in death.

John Bruce was a federal judge appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant. On his deathbed, Bruce instructed his daughter to "Fetch the book." He told her to turn to the eighth chapter of Romans and said, "Put my finger on these words. Hold my finger on them," and he had her read it for him:

***"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other thing in all creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

John Bruce passed away with his finger on that promise.

What a way to enter heaven! What a way to live our earthly lives! Immanuel, not only on your last day, but every day, "fetch that Book." Put and keep your finger on Romans 8. Rest your very life on Romans 8. Anchor your soul to the promises of God found therein. Anchor your soul to Jesus, who is our living hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that endures.

And in time, your "if only" regrets, recriminations, discouragements, and frustrations will fade to black. Your "what if" dreams will come to light. Partially in this life, and fully in the next. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

And all God's children, all of God's creation said a resounding and victorious, "AMEN!"

Sermon Art: "Nothing Can Separate Us: Romans 8:38-39," Bible.com

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