

GOD WON'T LET GO

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Text: Romans 8:28-39

A man once said, "I can face anything but the future—and certain parts of the past and present!" None of us can face the past unless we know we are forgiven by the grace of God. None of us can face the present unless we know we are strengthened by the presence of God. None of us can face the future unless we are certain of the love of God.

-- Robert C. Shannon, 1000 Windows, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1997).

Looking back over our lives it is likely that there have been through times of great adversity. But for those who have served Christ we can also remember seeing the evidence of God's incredible keeping power.

It is not that we could not have turned our backs on God and walked away. It is not that we were predestined to be saved no matter what or that we could not have been lost. It is that we have seen God intervene on our behalf! We have experienced, known and felt the power of God in our lives as He sustained us through extremely difficult times.

Many of us have come through times like these with some scars, but we have made it through. And it is those "battle scars" that truly testify of the keeping power of God in our lives. Like King David said in Psalms 124,

*If the LORD had not been on our side--
let Israel say--
if the LORD had not been on our side
when men attacked us,
when their anger flared against us,
they would have swallowed us alive;
the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,
the raging waters
would have swept us away.
Praise be to the LORD,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
We have escaped like a bird
out of the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.
Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

As look at this familiar passage of scripture in Romans 8, I want to remind you of the incredible lengths to which God will go in order to keep us. I cannot promise you that you will never have “battle scars”, however I can promise you that if you want to be kept—God is able to keep you!

Note the *promises* of God in this passage.

I. GOD IS AT WORK IN OUR LIVES AT ALL TIMES (vv.28-30).

Romans 8:28 “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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” NIV

A. All circumstances are not good, but He is still at work for our good (v.28).

Some preach that if one has real faith, life will be a “bowl of cherries without the pits.”

B. God has an eternal plan for our lives (vv.29-30).

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:17-19, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” NIV

II. GOD IS ON OUR SIDE AT ALL TIMES (vv. 31-36).

Romans 8:31-36 “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." NIV

A. God is for us because of His love for us.

Too often, when things do not turn out as we think that they should we question God's love for us or His keeping power. But the fact is that sometimes—even for Christians—life does not turn out like we thought that it would.

Homes, children, marriages, jobs, careers, family, parents, circumstances, and situations are not always what we thought that they would be.

It is at this point that we must decide whether we are going to get bitter or get the victory!

In spite of all that Paul did and suffered in his ministry, some still criticized him and questioned his calling. He had to decide—*do I get bitter or do I get the victory?*

We find his decision in 2 Corinthians 11:23

“I have worked...been in prison...been flogged...exposed to death...Five times I received...forty lashes minus one...Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times...shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move...in danger from rivers...from bandits...from my own countrymen...from Gentiles; in danger in the city...in the country...at sea; and...from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”

Skipping to 12:7 he continues...

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, **for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**” (vv.7-10) NIV *bold added*

If you will allow me to paraphrase, he says in essence, “All things considered I keep the wounds and the scars that come with them because the harder the battle the stronger I get!”

B. The only One qualified to condemn us refuses to do so.

Condemnation is not His purpose. He gave His only Son for us so that we could escape condemnation. Will He not therefore give us whatever we need to make it?

III. GOD IS HOLDING ON TO US AT ALL TIMES (vv.37-39).

Paul responds to these questions in Romans 8:37-39. “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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.” NIV

A. Circumstances cannot separate us from God.

In Galatians 6:17 Paul said, “I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”

To what was Paul referring when he spoke of the “marks” on his body? It was the literal scars that he bore. These were the scars he had suffered because of circumstances involving serving God.

In 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 he writes, “Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” NIV

Note: The "marks of Jesus" refer to the scars Paul bore on his body as the result of the persecutions he had endured for the sake of his Lord. These marks revealed his relationship to Christ, just as the "marks" (stigmata) of a slave revealed his ownership. A list of the experiences that might have caused such scars occurs in [2 Corinthians 6:4-6](#) and [11:23-30](#). These genuine and honorable marks in the body contrast strikingly with the ritualistic and now meaningless mark (circumcision) the legalizers wished to impose on the Galatians. EBC

B. Adversaries cannot separate us from God.

Too often we are preoccupied with adversaries separating us from God.

People say things like, “I don’t know if I can serve God if that person does this or that.” Or “I would live for God if it were not for that person.” Or “That person’s going to make me lose my salvation!”

How foolish. The truth is that we can stay saved if we want to stay saved!

CONCLUSION

Some years ago on a hot summer day in south Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He few into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore.

His mother in the house was looking out the window saw the two as they got closer and closer together. In utter fear, she ran toward the water yelling to her son as loudly as she could.

Hearing he voice, the little boy became alarmed and made a U-turn to swim to his mother. It was too late. Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began an incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the mother, but the mother was much too passionate to let go.

A farmer happened to drive by, heard her screams, raced from his truck, took aim and shot the alligator. Remarkably, after weeks and weeks in the hospital, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal, and on his arms, were deep scratches where his mother's fingernails dug into his flesh in her effort to hang on to the son she loved. The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy after the trauma, asked in he could show him his scars. The boy lifted his pant legs. And then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, "But look as my arms. I have great scars on my arms too. I have them because my Mom wouldn't let go."

You and I can identify with that little boy. We have scars, too. Not from an alligator, or anything quite so dramatic. But the scars of a painful past. Some of those scars are unsightly and have caused us deep regret. But some wounds, my friend, are because God has refused to let go. In the midst of your struggle, He's been there holding on to you.

Received as an email – Author Unknown

In the final analysis we cannot finish this life without some receiving scars. Yet, when we look back on those scars, it what we chose to dwell on that will determine whether or not we get bitter or get the victory.

Remember our text. Paul said, "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."

There is rejoicing—even in the scars—because they remind us that God will not let go."