



Sermon Transcript  
Pentecost Sunday  
May 23, 2021

50 Days of Spiritual Growth  
An Unbreakable Love  
Romans 8:29-39

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on May 23, 2021 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com)

**Sermon Text**  
**Romans 8:29-39**

**29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

**31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written,

For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

**37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** 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.

## Introduction

I am fascinated by the contrast between the end of Romans 7 and the end of Romans 8. At the end of Romans 7, we find a very frustrated Paul. In his flesh, he finds that he does what he doesn't want to do and he doesn't do what he knows he should do. Rather frustrated with himself and feeling somewhat defeated, he throws up his arms and confesses "*Wretched man that I am!*" But then at the end of Romans 8, we find Paul singing a completely different tune. At the end of Romans 8, we find Paul exuding an unconquerable spirit and an unwavering confidence when it comes to living out his faith. At the end of Romans 8, Paul affirms that "*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*" Because of this unconquerable spirit, Paul expresses an unwavering confidence in the love of God. It is here where Paul says that he is sure . . . he is persuaded that there is nothing that "*will be able to separate us from the love of God.*"

I wonder, which of these two chapters best describes the tone of your spiritual life? When it comes to your spiritual life—your sanctification—are you frustrated or are you confident? Do you feel defeated in your Christian life or do you feel victorious? Do you most resonate with the cry "*what a wretched man I am*" or "*we are more than conquerors through him*"? Another way to ask the question is like this. Do you see yourself as a "saved sinner" or a "saint who sins?" Are you primarily a sinner or a saint? What is your fundamental identity in Christ? Do you identify more with Romans 7 or do you most identify with Romans 8?

This morning we come to the end of our series on Romans 6-8 and our **50 Days of Spiritual Growth**. We end our series this morning on a high note because at the end of Romans 8 we are reminded that our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Christ. If you want to turn the page of your Christian life from a Romans 7 outlook to a Romans 8 outlook, from feeling frustrated to feeling confident, then you need to turn the page in your understanding of God and his grace. You need a greater understanding of God's unbreakable love for you. Quite frankly, you need a greater vision of God. I like the way J. I. Packer put it in his introduction to his book *Knowing God*. He said that those who know God had great energy for God . . . had great thoughts of God . . . had great boldness for God . . . had great contentment in God.<sup>1</sup>

I can't think of a better way to end this series than to focus on the unbreakable love of God for us. It is a love that turns the sinner into a saint. It is God's unbreakable love that moves us from Romans 7 to Romans 8; from feeling defeated to being victorious.

It is God's unbreakable love that produces within us an unconquerable spirit and that leads to an unwavering confidence as we live out our Christian faith.

## Unbreakable Love

I want to start this morning by looking at what some have called the "unbreakable chain." What makes this chain unbreakable is that it is anchored in God. There is nothing or no one stronger than God. This unbreakable chain is described for us in verses 29-30 and each link of this chain describes something God has done. *"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*

Were you able to identify the five links of this unbreakable chain? God *foreknew*. God *predestined*. God *called*. God *justified*. God *glorified*. God is the subject of each of these actions, the one who acts on our behalf. And furthermore, these actions are directed to the same group of people. The word *those* is repeated several times, indicating that he is speaking of the same group of people. *"Those he foreknew he also predestined . . . Those he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*

I understand that anytime you see a claim that *God predestined* it raises a tension in your mind between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. I am quite confident that I will not resolve that tension for you this morning. Personally speaking, I am fine sitting with that tension because on one hand I can affirm in my own heart that God chose us before the foundation of the world and at the same time we are accountable with how we respond to the gospel. On this side of eternity, I can't fully put those two thoughts together. But I firmly believe both to be true. Paul talks a lot about this in Romans 9-11. I like what Douglas Moo says about this. He says that no matter what your view is with regards to God choosing those who belong to him, we can all agree that "God has done all that is needed to secure our eternal glory. He has already made the decision: *those whom he justified he also glorified.*"<sup>2</sup>

Isn't it interesting how Paul uses the word *glorified*. This word speaks to something yet future. Paul refers to our future glory in Romans 8:18 when he says that our present sufferings do not compare to *the glory that is to be revealed to us*. "The glory" is something that is yet to come. We know that the glory that awaits us is far greater

than anything we can imagine. And yet, in our verse this morning the word *glorified* is in the past tense, as though it has already happened. Do you know what Paul is saying here? Even though this is something in the future, it is as good as done. He says, *those whom he justified he also glorified*. Douglas Moo said of this word, “That means no genuine believer need ever wonder whether he or she ‘has what it takes’ to get to heaven. None of us does. But that doesn’t matter in the end. God himself has supplied all we need.”<sup>3</sup> You can’t break this chain of God’s love for you.

Have you ever seen those infomercials for “Flex Glue.” They claim that this adhesive can do it all. You can glue bricks and cinder blocks with it. You can glue things under water with it. It can hold up to a 1000 pounds . . . so they claim. After gluing a brick to the top of a metal door frame, Phil, the guy doing the infomercial says, “even this brick is going to stick.” I do not mean to trivialize what Paul is saying here by comparing it to an infomercial. But I do believe, like an infomercial, Paul is giving us reason why we should have confidence in this unbreakable chain of God’s love for us.

Why? God *foreknew* us. This doesn’t mean that God looked down the corridor of time and knew who would respond to his call in Christ. Rather, it means that before we were ever born, before the beginning of time, God set his affection on you. In doing so, God *predestined* us. He predetermined our destination . . . that we would be with him and we would be conformed to the image of Jesus. Like Zacchaeus, sitting in the sycamore tree, out of the crowd Jesus came to you and called you and said, “*I must stay at your house today.*” Go ahead. Pull on this chain. See for yourself how unbreakable it is.

“*And those whom he predestined he also called.*” You heard the call of the gospel and you responded. Sure, you had to respond to the gospel. You had to repent of your sin. You had to turn in faith to Jesus. But even that is a work of the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus said to Nicodemus when he was explaining what it means to be born again. Speaking of the Holy Spirit he said, “*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” We can’t even boast in our faith. God’s grace in our lives is 100% grace. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, Paul said this to the church in Thessalonica, “*For we know brothers loved of God, that he has chosen you.*” How does Paul know that God has chosen them? He adds, “*because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.*” In other words, their response to God’s calling gave demonstration to God’s electing love. Can you recall the time when your heart was being warmed to the calling of Christ in your life? That is the effectual calling of God and the working of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Paul then says, *those whom he called he also justified*. The word *justified* is a major word throughout Romans and it means that God declares us to be righteous before him. He makes us right with him by grace through faith in his Son, Jesus. It is not by any works that we do. This is why this chain is so unbreakable. This is God's work, not my work. And so with great confidence he assures us that he will never let us go by saying *and those whom he justified he also glorified*. God will bring his people to glory. It is as good as done. This is what Jesus says in John 10:28-29. He says here that he gives eternal life to those who follow him and then he says no one can snatch you out of his hands and no one can snatch you out of the Father's hands. You are doubly secure.

So go ahead. Pull on this chain. Give it a good yank. See how strong and unbreakable it is. Your sin can't even break this chain. In fact, this is the chain that pulls you out of the ditch you so often find yourself jumping in on a regular basis. As you cry *What a wretched man I am!* - God comes to you with this unbreakable chain and says . . . "I got you! I will not let you go." His love for you is unbreakable.

## Unconquerable Spirit

From this unbreakable chain of God's love comes Paul's unconquerable spirit that culminates in verse 37 where Paul says *we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*. Paul begins this section by saying, "*What then shall we say to these things?*" What things? Some think Paul is asking, "What should we make of all that I have said from Romans 5-8?" "*What then should we say to these things?*" But this is also a question that you could ask based on just what we have seen from Romans 8. What have we seen in this chapter as we have sought to *mind the Spirit?*

- There is no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus
- We are not alone, we have the Holy Spirit living in us
- We are sons of God, children of God and co-heirs with Jesus
- All things work together for our good
- The unbreakable chain of God's love will bring us home to glory

And so Paul asks, "*What then should we make of these things?*" What conclusions should we draw from all that Paul has said in Romans 8 and especially in light of what we just saw in Romans 8:29-30? Paul makes five conclusions from *these things* and each conclusion is stated as a question. Each question reflects Paul's trust in the power of God's unbreakable chain of love for us. It is as if Paul is tugging on this chain and testing it out and with each pull and with each tug on that chain he is brimming with more and more confidence in God's love. "*What then should we make of these things?*"

God is for us: Paul begins in verse 31 by asking, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” Clearly we have just seen through this unbreakable chain that God is for us. He will never leave us and he will see us all the way home. So, *who can be against us?*

This does not mean that there is no one or nothing against us. There are people who oppose faith and who stand against God and his people. The history of the church is filled with stories of persecution and down through the years untold numbers of Christ followers have been martyred for their faith in Jesus. Trials and hardships and difficulties often stand against us. And furthermore, we know that we are in a spiritual battle and Satan himself is likened to a roaring lion seeking to devour us. But we have God on our side. “*God is for us.*” In Psalm 118, the psalmist is crying out to God in his time of distress. And he says in verse 6, “*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*” Or, “*who can stand against us?*”

This does not mean that you are always right and God will always “take your side” on an issue. In fact, I think we are often quick to project our views onto God. It is like that saying I heard not too long ago: “We are created in the image of God, but we like to return the favor.” We like to form God into our image. We are often not right on things and we often contribute to the messiness of problems and relationships. These are some of the Romans 7 ditches we find ourselves jumping into on a regular basis. We need to be careful and discerning about that. If the chain depended on us, then it would be easily breakable. But it is not. *God is for us!* His commitment to us is so strong . . . we can’t even stand against ourselves!

God provides all we need: The second conclusion Paul makes is that God will give us everything we need to conform us to the image of Jesus. The reason Paul says this is because God has already given us the most precious thing he could ever give us. He gave us *his own Son*. There is no greater love than this. We know what Paul is referring to here when he says of God, “*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.*” If you ever want to know how great God’s commitment of love is for you, all you have to do is look at the cross. When Abraham was called to sacrifice his son on the altar and when God stopped him, he said to Abraham, “*now I know that you fear [worship, love] God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.*” We can say the same thing, only no one stopped God the Father from sacrificing *his own Son*—Jesus on our behalf. Now we know that God loves us.

And so Paul says here that if God is already given to us that which is most precious to him—*his own Son*—*how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* He will

give us everything we need to accomplish his purpose in us. What else has God given to us in addition to *his own Son*? He has given us the Holy Spirit, mentioned nineteen times in Romans 8. On this Pentecost Sunday, we acknowledge that without the Holy Spirit we would have no ability to comprehend the things of God nor would we have the power to live for Christ and to serve Christ. He has given us his Word which is sufficient to *make us wise for salvation*. He has given us his church—with elders and deacons and the body of believers who *spur one another on to love and good deeds*. He has given us the ordinances of baptism and communion which assure us of God's promises and nourishes our hearts with the assurance of forgiveness when we are prone to doubt because of our constant "ditch-dwelling." He has given us those who have gone before us and have endured to the end—examples of those who lived and walked by faith—and he has given us brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage us along the way. Clearly, God has provided all that we need to form us into the image of Jesus and bring us home to glory.

God assures us: I am going to combine the third and fourth question together because they hit on the same theme of the assurance of having our sins forgiven. The two questions are found in verses 33 and 34. "*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?*" And then in the next verse he asks, "*Who is to condemn?*" These two questions get to the heart of something we all struggle with from time to time. Knowing our own shortcomings and failings and sins —our ditch-diving tendencies in Romans 7—we may question how God feels about us or whether or not we are truly forgiven and made right with God. And so as Paul reflects on the "unbreakable chain" of Romans 8 and the other truths he mentioned in that chapter, he can't help but conclude that he has indeed been assured that he has been forgiven of his sin.

"*Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*" If God has declared you to be right, who can overturn what God has judged to be right? It is like taking your case to the Supreme Court. Once the Supreme Court has ruled on an issue, there is no other place to make an appeal and to challenge the court's ruling. So it is with God and his declaring you to be righteous. And then he asks on the heels of this, "*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died.*" In other words, the reason *there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* is because Jesus already faced the condemnation for our sin in his death. The penalty and judgment for your sin has been fully paid. And if you have any doubt about that, Paul goes on to say about Jesus, *more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us*. The resurrection of Jesus declares to us that Jesus indeed has atoned for our sin and so now no one can condemn you! Hallelujah!



Now we do have an enemy who is also called “the accuser.” He does accuse us of our guilt and quite frankly, we give him plenty of ammunition to present his case before the Father. There is that wonderful heavenly scene in Zechariah 3 where Joshua the priest is standing before the throne of God, giving account for himself and the text says that he was dressed in *filthy garments*—implying that he was guilty. And to one side of him stood Satan and he was accusing God’s servant of his many sins and failings. I can just seem Joshua’s countenance shrink with each piercing accusation against him. But on the other side of Joshua stood the *angel of the LORD*—which in the Old Testament was often a reference to Jesus himself. And when the accusations of the enemy came against Joshua, the LORD stood up and said to Satan, “*The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!*” The angel of the LORD—Jesus turned to Joshua and those standing around him and said, “*Remove the filthy garments from him . . . I have taken you iniquity away from you.*” That is the same thing, Jesus our advocate—*who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us*—does for us. No one can bring a charge against the one God justifies. No one can point a boney finger of condemnation against the one for whom Jesus has already died. No one! And so what does Paul *say to these things?* “One thing I know, in Christ I am forgiven! I am free!”

God loves us: Finally, as Paul is considering the implications of Romans 8 and the unbreakable chain of God’s love for us, he makes one final—simple—profound conclusion. There is nothing out there that can break that chain! He basically throws everything but the kitchen sink at that chain and there is nothing out there that can break it. The final question he asks is, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* That list is pretty formidable . . . but it can’t break the chain.

The list Paul lays out for us here pretty much describes the suffering and the trials we experience in life. But Paul concludes that even in these things—*”in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* He is not just saying here that we endure and triumph over suffering and trials. He is saying what we said last week when we saw that *for those who love God all things work together for the good.* So what he is saying here is that God’s love is so sure that “even adversity in God’s good hand, it even leads to our good.”<sup>4</sup> Nothing can dampen his unconquerable spirit.

*“What then should we say to these things?”* What conclusions should this unbreakable chain of God’s love for us form within us? God is with us. God has given us all we need. God assures us of his forgiveness. God deeply loves us. This unconquerable spirit leads to an unwavering confidence.

## Unwavering Confidence

Paul concludes this amazing chapter with a personal testimony. It is a testimony that is brimming with hope and joy and confidence. He says in verses 38-39, *“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.”* He thought of every major category you could think of: life and death, the confusing present and the uncertain future, the spiritual realm and the physical realm . . . nothing is able to separate us from the love of Christ. Truly, this chain is unbreakable.

We have been talking about **50 Days of Spiritual Growth** and this is a wonderful place to conclude—the assurance of God’s love. It is the fountain from which we grow and are sanctified. That is the whole point of Romans 8. It is God’s grace. It is God’s grace that causes us to want to grow.

There is a Christian music group by the name of *We The Kingdom*. They have a song called “Holy Water” and the chorus goes like this.

I don’t wanna abuse your grace  
God, I need it every day  
It’s the only that ever really makes me wanna change<sup>5</sup>

How does God’s grace change us? It turns us from Romans 7 to Romans 8, from sinners to saints. Take a practical example like being patient. If you approach this from a Romans 7 perspective, depending on yourself to become more patient, it will look like this. “I know I’m an impatient person. I always have been, but I want to become more patient. So today, by golly, I will try to be more patient.” We’ll white-knuckle it and try really hard, until something finally tips the scale and we snap at the bus boy.”

How does resting in God’s grace give you confidence to approach this issue? How would a Romans 8 perspective approach the issue of patience? “I know I sometimes don’t act very patient. But Jesus says that all of His patience now dwells inside of me, and that my truest self *is* patient, just like Jesus. So today, I’m going to try to live like I believe Him. I’m going to try to live like I believe I am, at my core, a patient person.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, ground yourself first in what Jesus says about you.

I am accepted in Jesus  
I am free from the power of sin  
I am not alone, I have the indwelling Holy Spirit  
I have authority over the kingdom of darkness

## Conclusion

May God use these past eight weeks to enable us to walk in the newness of life that is our in Christ. May his love so fill our hearts that it spills out from our hearts to one another. May you rest in the unbreakable love of God for you and may it lead to an unconquerable spirit and an unwavering confidence as you live out a Romans 8 way of life, as you *mind the Spirit*.

To God be the glory!

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<sup>1</sup>J. I. Packer *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993) 27-32

<sup>2</sup>Douglas Moo *Romans: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 280

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 280

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 284

<sup>5</sup>"Holy Water" Song by We The Kingdom <https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/holy-water-we-the-kingdom/>

<sup>6</sup>Am I a Saved Sinner or a Saint Who Still Sins <https://www.trueface.org/blog/2020/1/31/am-i-a-saved-sinner-or-a-saint-who-still-sins>

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COMMUNITY  
**GROUPS**

## Getting To Know Me Questions

1. As you reflect on the habit of Sabbath rest, talk about this fact: “Americans used to demonstrate their status by showing off their leisure time, now we show off our status by showing how busy we are.” What do you think about that?
2. What does your ideal Sabbath look like? How does it involve worship? How does it involve rest?

## Diving Into The Word

3. Read Romans 8:29-30. How does looking at the unbreakable chain of God’s love thrill you? Why?
4. Read Romans 8:31-37. Which of the five questions of Paul resonate with you the most and why?
  - If God is for us, who can be against us? (v. 31)
  - If God didn’t spare his own Son, how will he not give us what we need? (v. 32)
  - Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? (v. 33)
  - Who is to condemn? (v. 34)
  - Who can separate us from the love of God? (v. 35-37)
5. Read Romans 8:38-39. How does God’s love for you motivate you to holiness and Christ-likeness?
6. Using the example of patience at the end of the sermon as a guide, can you identify an area where you need to grow and how God’s grace empowers you to obedience?

## Taking It Home

7. What is one thing you are taking from your study?