

Romans #18 - Life in the Spirit New Fortitude

- Alrighty, locked and loaded, Romans chapter eight. Find your place in your Bible. If you are new, this is gonna be the greatest seven hours of your life. Welcome to The Trinity Church. All right, as we jump into the book of Romans, let me tell you this; there are two kinds of leaders. There are thought leaders, and there are people leaders. Thought leaders are really big on ideas, and people leaders understand how to architect organizations and to lead movements of people. Part of the problem with the book of Romans, which is one of the most amazing, impressive, supernatural unleashed resources in the history of the world is that it has been largely studied by thought leaders and not as carefully investigated by people leaders. So what tends to happen is all of the big ideas and concepts are fully explored and some things that should be more obvious are oftentimes overlooked. Let me give you one example. The book of Romans is largely about relationships. Chapters one through 11 are about your relationship with God. How God sent Jesus Christ to live the life you have not lived; the perfect life without sin. To die the death you should have died; the death for sin, and to rise from death, to conquer Satan, sin, death, hell, the wrath of God and adopt us as the children of God, amen? So Romans one through 11 is about your relationship with God. 12 through 16 is about our relationships with one another. And the reason that this is oftentimes overlooked is sometimes the people who are the most theological are the least relational. Everything in Romans is driving toward healthy, loving relationships, starting with God, then one another. Because once your relationship with God is established, now you have a pattern and precedent for a healthy relationship. When you know where love comes from, now, you can love someone. When you know what forgiveness is, now, you can forgive someone. And when the Spirit of God drops on you, He flows through you to bring the love and the forgiveness of God to others. So where we find ourselves in Romans eight is the culmination of the first half of the book. It's a 16-chapter book, and this is the end of chapter eight that we're gonna hit today. And really what He's addressing for us is the issue of relationship, and what he's done thus far, the Apostle Paul has, or I should say the Holy Spirit has through the Apostle Paul. He said, "God loves you, God forgives you. God adopts you, God adores you, God justifies you. God declares you righteous in His side. God is fully committed to you. God is completely devoted to you." And then the question is, is there anything that could change that relationship? If it's that great, is it vulnerable? How many of you have had a relationship that was great, but then you realized it was vulnerable? The person you cared about, they died, and the relationship was over, or maybe they betrayed you. You married them, but they committed adultery and divorced you. Or maybe you were dating them, and then they dumped you. There was betrayal. How many of you you've had a relationship where someone literally just abandoned you. They walked out on you. This may have been your dad when you were little. We've all had these relational pains and strains. And the question becomes, when we're rejected, when we're abandoned, when we're hurt, when we're isolated, when we're alone, what tends to happen is relationally, we find in our relationships the best and the worst part of life. Our greatest joys and our deepest pains are found in our relationships. And if you've had any relational trauma or failure, it could cause you to be a little jaded, maybe a little guarded, maybe a little withdrawn, and may keep you from giving your whole heart in relationship. And

what Paul anticipates and expects is when we hear about this relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. Because of some of the pain, some of the problems, some of the peril that we've all been through, relationally, the question is that sounds like an amazing relationship, but am I gonna get my heart broken? Is God gonna change His mind? Is He gonna reject me? Is He going to abandon me? Is he going to betray me? Is He gonna change His mind about me? Is He gonna change His heart toward me? That's the question. And I wanna read for you what I used to read to our kids every night. There's a great kid's Bible called "The Jesus Storybook Bible". When our kids were little, I'd read it to them every night. And one of the great themes in the book is this. God loves us with a never-stopping, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always and forever love. So we're gonna talk about his relationship with God that is secured by love from God. One scholar of the section that will be in Romans 8:31 through 39, says that it is quote, "One of the most stunning pieces of rhetorical art in the New Testament." And what he's done up until this point, he's taught us about this relationship. And then he anticipates four questions or objections that we will examine in succession. And there's a great idea here. There's a good learning lesson for those of us who are teachers. And if you're a parent or a coach, a mom or a dad, a grandma or grandpa, you teach at a school, or maybe you serve in a Bible study ministry at our church or somewhere else, there's a great lesson here for those of us who teach. In addition to teaching, we need to answer the objections and/or questions of the hearers. You can't just tell them, you need to ask, "Okay, what questions or objections do you have to answer them, answer them." And that's exactly Paul's gonna do. The Puritans were some Christians years ago in America and their sermons were very, very long. And so I love them, I've accepted them in my heart. And the reason that their sermons were long, they wouldn't just teach, they would take time to answer the objections and the questions of the hearers. And that's what teaching does. It doesn't just tell you, it also removes those obstacles or barriers that might keep you from unbelief. Some of you have a relationship with God. Some of you are considering a relationship with God. Some of you have a relationship with God that is very strong. Some of you have a relationship with God that is rather timid, because you're wondering, if you give your whole heart to Him, will He give His whole heart to you? And will He keep His whole heart inclined toward you? So he's gonna answer these four questions. Here's the first one. If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31 through 32. And again, down at the bottom there, realfaith.com/notes all the sermon notes. So if you can't keep up, I've got it all there for you. "What then, shall we say to these things?" If God is for who? Us. Us. That's really good news, amen?

- Amen.

- God is for us. Everyone else is in it for themselves. God is in it for us. That's really good news. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also give him graciously, give all things to us," okay? Couple of things, number one, it doesn't matter who's against you if the Almighty is for you.

- [Congregation] Amen. So all of the various mighties can stack up. And if the Almighty is on

your side, you will be fine, my friend, that's the good news. That all of the mighties cannot stand against the Almighty. Number two, God the Father adopted God... Excuse me, He rejected God the Son to adopt you. What he's saying here is this. If God is for us, who can be against us? And what he's saying is, if the Father gave his Son, then what could we possibly think? He would be unwilling or unable to give to secure the relationship with us. See, you and I, we hear about, and we just learned this previously in Romans, that God is a father. You are His son or daughter, you're His child. He's adopted you into his family, which is amazing. It's amazing, but for you to be adopted, the Son of God had to be rejected. See, Jesus just took your place and puts you in His place. So you get to be a son of God. And the Son of God became an enemy of God. That's what happened at the cross of Jesus Christ. God took your place and He puts you in His place. So on the cross, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He was rejected, so you could be adopted. He was rejected, so you could be adopted. What he's saying is this God is so for you that at the cross of Jesus, He was against His Son so that he could be for you. This is the great mystery of our Christian faith. Number three, if the Father gave the Son to save you, there's nothing he won't give to keep you. There can be no higher price that is paid than God The Father sending Jesus Christ, the Son of God to die on the cross in our place for our sins. And what this means is God the Father is for you. Here's really good news. He's always for you. And he's talking here about will he not graciously or generously give us all things? What that means is that God is not just for you today. He's for you every day. See, my kids, I love my kids with my whole heart. I got five kids, five amazing kids, and I want to bless them right now. And at some point, when I depart from this earth, guess what I have for them? An inheritance, because I am for them always. God the Father is for you, not just now, but he has an inheritance that awaits you forever. What that means is He has already decided and decreed and determined that He is for you forever. Your inheritance will include a resurrected body. You're gonna rule as Kings and Queens over the new earth and all of creation, that demons will be subjected to your judgment. And that angels will serve as your staff. That the place where you live will make Paradise Valley look like a dump. It'll have streets lined with gold, streets lined with gold, that ultimately the Father has a full inheritance for the children of God. And if He's willing to give you the Lord Jesus Christ, His son, there is nothing that he will withhold from you. And He is for you forever. When he's trying to do, he's trying to elongate our view of history through history into eternity. Now, what he's talking here is about the Father giving us His son, and he's intimating here at an Old Testament story with a man named Abraham and a son named Isaac. In fact, many of the Bible commentators believe that this is picking up on that theme. It goes on to say, "He did not spare His son, but gave him up for us all." There's an Old Testament story. There's a guy named Abraham. He was a pagan from a godless family. God just looked down and said, "Everybody's bad. I'll start with that guy." Okay? If you're a Christian, congratulations. That's how this works. God, doesn't look down to pick the good people, because there are none. So He picks a bad person and makes him good. That's how it works. We're gonna deal with predestination in the next few weeks. And if you get offended, it's 'cause you were predestined to be offended, so it's gonna be great. So Abraham is just a pagan guy with a pagan dad. God says, "I'm gonna start with that guy." And He saves him, He loves them, He chooses him, He forgives him, He has a relationship with him. And then he tells him, "Through you, I'm gonna do something amazing. Your wife is gonna have a baby."

His wife is very old, he's very old and she's barren. They've never had children. God says, "Through you is gonna come a son. And through that, son is gonna come a blessing to the nations of the earth." Who's that? It's Jesus Christ. So your son will bring forth the nation that will bring forth the Son of God. And then he waits for decades. How many of you, God gave you a promise and it's been decades? See, God's slow, but He's always on time.

- [Congregation Member] Amen. Abraham and his wife think maybe God isn't going to fulfill His promise. So Sarah of all people, the wife, I can't even believe this. She comes up with a crazy idea. "We need a girlfriend, that's what we need," okay? How many of you women know this story is not going to end well? All right, two women is too many. That's the moral of the story. So he goes and gets an Abraham. You know, he's like, "Honey, whatever you need me to do for the family." You know, I'll do whatever that family needs. So he goes and gets a younger girlfriend, gets her pregnant, and now, oh, lo and behold, there's jealousy, lo and behold, oh, who could have seen this coming? Who could have seen this coming? And as our country heads toward polygamy, which it is, because the e-brake has been pulled on anything regarding sex and marriage. Just write this down, one, man, one woman. Other than that, it just multiplies problems. So what happens is they get rid of the woman and the baby and then God says, "No, I told you the promised son is coming through your wife, not your girlfriend." Then eventually, the son is born. His name is Isaac, which means laughter. Because when God said, "You're gonna have a baby," Sarah laughed at God. She's like, "Changing diapers. We're in them, alright? We're very old." And then God names him Isaac 'cause God always gets the last laugh. God's got a sense of humor. So then, this is a son who is a son of a promise that they waited a long time for, and he is the firstborn son. Do you think they love him?

- [Congregation Member] Oh, yeah.

- This kid is spoiled. He's a spoiled, loved kid. Somewhere between his teens and thirties, we're not sure of his age, God comes to Abraham and says, "I got to ask you to do something." "What's that?" "I need you to sacrifice, to slaughter your son." "The son that you promised? The son that came through a miracle? The son that we waited for? The son that is the firstborn? The son that is not just our air and family line? But it's gonna bring forth the nation of Israel? Who's gonna bring forth Jesus, the Son of God? You want me to kill him?" Yes. Okay, I mean, now when we hear this, emotionally, how does this sound to you? Horrifying, like, how could someone kill their own child? Well, we actually use our taxes to do that. I mean the most dangerous place to be is still a mother's womb. I mean, it was crazy this last year. I don't know when we all became pro-life. "Hey, social distance, mass vaccine, stay home, kill the economy, shut down your church, why? We believe in the sanctity of human life?" When did you all join my team? I've been here for a long time. How about the pre-born people? Did we get to include them in our great commitment to the sanctity of human life? The leading cause of death last year was still abortion, not COVID. The Canaanites used to murder their own kids. The sixth commandment says, thou shall not murder. We can look at Abraham and say, "God, God's a real mean God. And Abraham's a very vile man." Or we could say, "You know what? We're all Canaanites." At least God told him to do this, and God told us not to do this. So Abraham

believes God. He's like, "Okay, whatever you say." This is obedience, this was not a test for Isaac's life. This was a test for Abraham's heart. So he goes to his son. "Son, God said We need to take a journey." This journey is about 50 miles. This is in the book of Genesis. I might start Genesis in the fall, praying about it. About a 50-mile walk. How many of you, somewhere along the 50-mile walk, you might reconsider, while you're done. Or how many of you, if your dad's really old and you're not, you're just gonna run, you know? 'Cause let me tell you a grown men don't run. Even if there's a fire, they're like, "It's just not worth it, you know, I'm not running. I'm at the point as a grown man, if I drop something, I order another one on Amazon. I'm not even picking it up, not even picking it up. It's just not worth it. He could have easily outrun his dad or they would have had time to change their mind. They get to the place of the sacrifice, father and son. The son carries the wood for the sacrifice on his own back, sound like anyone else you know? They get to the place of sacrifice. Isaac, the son, willingly laid himself down, offered his life in submission to his father. How do we know that? Abraham's really old, Isaac is really young. If you're 100 and your son is 20, and he does anything, it was by his own free will choice, I'm just telling you that, you didn't make him. Abraham holds up the knife. He's going to sacrifice his son. Here we are. Father, son, son of a promise, son of a miracle, long-awaited son, firstborn son, beloved son, carries the wood on his own back, lays down his life willingly in a place called Mount Moriah. And as the knife is held up and he is about ready to slaughter his own son, Hebrews says he trusted God so much that he believed that even if his son died, that God would raise him from the dead, that's faith. Faith says, "I will do what God says and I will trust God to do what only God can do." And then the angel of the Lord shows up. Now in the Old Testament, when you hear an angel of the Lord, angel means messenger. It usually is just a rank-and-file angel. When you'll hear the angel of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord, it's usually Jesus Christ pre-incarnate, it's Jesus. So Jesus comes down and says, "Hold everything no need to sacrifice, this was just a test. You pass the test." This is the last time the God speaks to Abraham. And what he tells him is the Lord will provide the sacrifice. So he names that place, The Lord Will Provide. I think it's Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. And then they have a substitute that is sacrificed until Jesus comes as our substitute, who has sacrificed. Today, we know this exact area as Mount Calvary. This is where many years later, not just the Son of God but also the son of the promise through Abraham and Isaac, the Lord Jesus Christ came. He was the beloved son, the son of the promise, the firstborn son. And he literally walked to the same place and he carried the wood on his back and he laid his life down willingly to be sacrificed as a substitute in our place for our sins about 1,000 years later. Because God knows exactly what He's doing. And all of human history and all of prophecy is driving toward the person and work, the life, death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what he's saying is this. If God is for us, who can be against us? If he was willing to send Jesus and sin Jesus to die in our place for our sins, then there is nothing that God is unwilling to do to keep us. Well, let me tell you this. God loves you more than I do. Do I love you? Say yes. Even if you don't believe it, just say yes. Okay? I totally do, I love you with all my heart. You're the greatest people, we adore you, but I would not. I would not kill my son for you. I've got five kids, three boys. We are not gonna talk about the girls. There's no way I would even consider sacrificing the girls. You've got sons and daughters. You know what I'm talking about, so... I've got three sons. Gideon is 15, Calvin is 19, Zach is 21. These are my sons. My firstborn son, His name is Zach, Zachariah

Blaise Driscoll. Yesterday I officiated his wedding at the age of 21. My son got married, okay? The first time I held him. I just thought, "Okay, I'm a father, I have a son. This is my firstborn son." I literally spoke over him. "This is my son in whom I am well-pleased." I spoke destiny over my son, the same destiny that the Father spoke over Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I start with being pleased with him. When he was growing up, I saw destiny and greatness in him, as I do all my sons. And what happens with the son, well, let me just say this. If you're raising sons and daughters, it takes more faith to raise a son, okay? You can look at a little girl. You're like, "Oh, she's pretending to cook and feed her baby." She's gonna make it. You know, and then you look at your son, he's got his shirt off and he's taken a dump in the sink, and- And he can't speak until he's 11. And you're like, "This probably isn't gonna end well. It takes more faith to raise a son. But how amazing is it when you watch your son grow up to be an incredible man?"

- [Congregation Member] Amen.

- My sons are incredible men. When my son was 14, he came home from middle school. It was like we were in the People's Republic of Seattle. We used to live. And he came home, he's like, "Dad, I need to talk to you." I was like, "Okay, let's talk, son." He's like, "I like a girl." I said, "Yes!" He's like, "What, dad? What?" I was like, "It's a girl." "It's a girl, I know target, and California don't know the difference, but I do," okay? Okay, so... It's a girl. So I said, "Okay, what are you thinking about this girl?" He's like, "I like this girl." So we went and met with her dad. She was 13. Was it awkward?

- Yes.

- Oh yeah, for sure. I was like, "In a few years, he's gonna have a license." He's not ready. What we decided was, here's what we believe. Friendship, friendship, intentional dating, not casual dating, intentional dating, engagement, marriage. I told him, I said, "Son, I don't know if this is gonna be your wife, but here's what I do know. You're gonna need to be patient, you're 14." Yesterday, they got married, seven years later. Serving Jesus pure until their wedding night, okay? Now, if you came to me right now and said, "Pastor Mark, you know, your enemies are all gonna go to hell unless you sacrifice your son." Here's what I would say, "Sucks to be them." Right, like, I mean, I'll light the match. I mean, I'm not- I'm not sparing anything. I mean like it's, right? Is anyone else with me emotionally here? If you're like, "No, I'd kill my son." Okay, you're a terrible parent. The Father His son, Jesus Christ, become a grown man. He went from in the womb to in his thirties. He loved him, He was proud of him. They were devoted to one another. And then the Father decided, "You know what? I love you so much that he and I have decided, and they chose together. We have decided that he's gonna die, so that we can have you," okay? Now, let me say this. This does not show how amazing you are. It shows how amazing God is.

- Amen.

- Okay? One of the horrible things that happens when we talk about God offering up His son, we turned it into we must be priceless. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, He is gracious. I don't

really have notes, but I'm kinda off them. But let me just tell you this. How many of you have a cat? How many of you have a dog?

- I got dogs.

- Dogs.

- Okay, dogs, dogs, cats. Okay, let's start with the cats. 'Cause we got to talk about demonic and then we'll talk about holy. Okay, so... The difference between a dog and a cat is this. If you do something amazing for the cat, what does the cat think? "I must be amazing. It's amazing, they go to work and they give me this big house." They think that the servant providing for the master, okay? If you do, trust me in this, just go home and look at your cat. If you look deeply, you'll see Satan. No, Satan is the Greek word for cat. Trust me, I'm a professional. So if you do something really nice for your dog, what does your dog think? I have a great master.

- [Congregation] Yeah.

- Okay? All theology is dog and cat theology, okay? When God does something amazing, don't think, "I must be priceless and amazing." He must be gracious and amazing.

- Amen.

- Okay? Second question. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? We talked about predestination, choosing election. There's a free ebook, duck duck doom. We'll jump into it next week. Romans nine and 10, on election, God choosing you. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? For those that God has chosen to put in Jesus' place, and Jesus chose to be in their place. It is God who justifies, who declares you righteous in his sight. So what he's saying is this. Ultimately God alone is the judge. In the Psalms, he says this. "Against You, only Lord God have I sinned." In John five, Jesus says that the Father judges no one, that he entrusts all judgment to the son. So sitting in the judgment seat is one person, Jesus Christ. So he's the only one who could bring a charge against you, and we have all sinned against Him. And it doesn't matter what charges are brought against you. The question is what will the judge determine? So the first thing he's saying is, if the only person who can charge you is Jesus, the judge, he was already judged for you on the cross. There's this picture in Colossians 2:13 through 15, where it says that when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross for your sins in your place, that the full record of all of your sin in the unseen realm was nailed to the cross along with him. Therefore, the judge took your place and he died for all of your transgression. Therefore the only one who condemn you is the one who died for you. The only one who could destroy you is the one who chose to love you. And what he's saying is this. That once God justifies you, once he declares you Holy and righteous in His sight, and again, hear me in this friend, your biggest problem is in relationship with God, and the problem under all your problems is something called sin. And Jesus came to live without sin, and he died in your place for your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says it this way. "God made him who knew no sin to become sin. So

that in him, we might become the righteousness of God." Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer called this the great exchange. Jesus took your place and he puts you in his place. What that means is death for life, condemnation for salvation. That ultimately, he was the one who was declared sinful and he died in your place for your sins. And he took your place and he gave you His righteousness, and he declares you righteous in His sight. And what this means is once God justifies you, He can't unjustify you. We have something in our legal category. It goes all the way back to the Roman empire. It's called double jeopardy. What is double jeopardy? You're charged, you're tried, you're acquitted. They can't try you again. God doesn't do double jeopardy. At the cross of Jesus, he died for you. He's not going to retry the case. It was tried at the cross of Christ.

- [Congregation Member] Amen.

- It can't be retried again. Let me say this as well. When you are hurting, when you are suffering, when you are struggling, it may be the consequence of a cursed and fallen world. It may be a demonic attack. And baby, you reap what you sow, but God is not punishing you, because he already punished Jesus. And it would be double jeopardy to punish Jesus and to punish you. That's where two people can be going through the same thing but two different things are happening. If you don't know Jesus, it may be punishment. If you do know Jesus, it may be something else, but it's not punishment. It would be double jeopardy, if Jesus died for you to be tried. God doesn't do that. Instead, he who alone could condemn you, he justifies you. What comes to mind is a story. There was a story in the New Testament of a woman caught in adultery, woman caught in adultery, okay? And let me just say the whole story is spurious and curious. Because the religious leaders, these men, they run to Jesus openly and publicly. This is trying to catch him in a trap. They say, "We caught a woman in adultery, right in the act," immediately. If this was my staff, I would have a bunch of questions. "First of all, what are you guys doing looking in the window? You're nasty." Second question is here's the woman caught in adultery. My other question would be where's the guy? I've been faithful to my girls since I met her March 12th, 1988. But as far as I know, adultery is not a solo sport. Usually, someone else's involved, amen?

- [Woman] Amen.

- Where's that dude? This smells like a set-up. This smells like some dude was said to sleep with some girl. Some religious people bust in the door, get her not fully clothed and drag her away. And he gets away scot-free. To me, the whole thing seems like injustice and a trap to entrap Jesus. So Jesus looks at this woman, true or false? She's guilty, she's guilty. The charge against her, is it an accurate charge? It's an accurate charge. Now, there's a lot of other injustice here. I'm fully aware of that, but on just her behavior, the charge is guilty. The men are all watching and then the onlookers are observing and they're wondering what's Jesus gonna do? Is he gonna bring the charge? And it says that Jesus knelt down and he wrote something on the ground. He never wrote a book. This is one of the only things that we know that he wrote. We don't know exactly what he wrote. Some commentators think that maybe he took the man's

name, the name of the men who were bringing the charge, and the next to it put the name of their girlfriend that they were committing adultery with. Tom and Sally, Tom's like, "Oh, I gotta go, I gotta go," right? And then what happens is, it says they leave from the old guys to the young guys. And then Jesus has this amazing statement. He says, "Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone." 'Cause they've all got rocks in their hand. And the penalty for adultery was death. Can you imagine that in America? We'd have so less traffic. Like, "I'm going 150 miles an hour. There's no one here." It would really rightsize our current housing market. There'd be so much inventory, that'd be crazy. Anyways, I'll say things I shouldn't. And then I'll say more and then I'll close in prayer. So Jesus says, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." Who's the only person that meets that criteria?

- Jesus.

- Jesus.

- He could have picked up a stone and killed her, legal right. What does he do? He forgives her, he gives her grace. He justifies her, he justifies her. He said, "I don't condemn you, I forgive you. Go and sin no more." Because we're saved from sin, we're not saved to sin. We're saved from sin, we're not saved to sin. We're saved sin to Jesus. And what he does is he doesn't bring the charge. Now, what Jesus knows is that he is going to go to the cross and he is going to die for her adultery, that he is going to pay her price, and he is not going to make her pay the price. Let me say, if you are a Christian, that is your story. That is your story. We can't stand before God and say, "There's nothing you can charge me with," all right? Now we say, "You know what? All the charges were paid in full by the Lord, Jesus Christ, through his death, in my place. And there's only one who could bring a charge and he's chosen to love and forgive me, not to charge, and not to punish me." Amen?

- Amen.

- We love Jesus, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- And it's not that we're good. It's that he's great. And it's not that we're without sin, but that he is the one who paid the price for our sins. The third question, who is there to condemn? Who is to condemn? Romans 8:34, "Christ Jesus is the one who died." Let me say our problems are so big and so bad. God had to die. "Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, he was raised. He's alive and well right now, who is at the right hand of God," That's a quote from Psalm 110, "Who is indeed interceding for us." The question is, "Okay, God, I know you love me. I know you forgive me, but are you gonna change your mind, and then condemn me?" How many of you been in a relationship where you were not able to continue in the state that you enjoyed? They loved me, then they hated me. They accepted me, then they rejected me. They forgave me and then they condemned me. The question is, "Okay, God, if we're gonna have a

relationship, are you gonna change Your mind? Are you gonna turn Your heart? Are You gonna condemn me?" People do this all the time. In your life, you are always gonna have some condemners. Sometimes they'll just be critics, enemies, bitter, unforgiving people. Satan and demons are certainly gonna come and condemn you all the time. Revelation 12:10, "Satan is the accuser of the children of God that he accuses them day and night." Sometimes you're gonna condemn yourself. You're just gonna beat yourself up over something that Jesus was already beaten for. And what you're doing is double jeopardy. Why would you beat yourself up if Jesus was already beaten for you? And ultimately, he's picking up on the theme of Romans 8:1 that kicked off this whole chapter. There is therefore now, right now, no zero condemnation for those who are in Christ. And the good news is once you're in Christ, you're never out. Once you're accepted, you're never rejected. Once you're adopted, you're never disowned. That God doesn't change, and once He has received you, He will never change his mind toward you or change His relationship with you. That's the great news.

- [Congregation Member] Yeah.

- Now that being said, we live in a day that is filled with condemnation. We do cancel culture, not like Christlike culture. Nobody gets a second chance. You say or do something, we're going to murder your reputation, your business, your platform, your life. Our God, doesn't condemn. And I'll tell you in an age of social media, we need to be very careful that we're not condemning. People say things to one another on social media that they would never say to their face, never. Some years ago, long time ago, right when social media started, somebody had people saying horrible things about them online, and they did a documentary where they went to all those people's houses and knocked on the door. Total strangers, "Who are you? "I'm fluffy bunny three, four, five." And you know, on Myspace and you can google it. It's what the dinosaurs used to use when they were on social media "You said X, Y, and Z about me. And it really hurt my feelings, so I wanna talk about that." Every single person apologized. Like, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I was just flame-throwing you online. I forgot you're a human being." See what happens in technology is we're no longer dealing with people, but we are shooting people. We need to be very careful, we don't condemn. Condemnation is not a ministry, it's a misery. And let me say this. When you are sinned against, you have two options; you can condemn, or you can have a relationship. You cannot have condemnation and a relationship. How do I know? Our relationship with God is the pattern and precedent for all of our relationships. And what he says is God doesn't condemn us. Therefore, we can have a relationship with Him. What that means in our relationships, if we condemn, we cannot have a relationship. If you're married and you condemn your spouse, you cannot have a relationship. If you have children and you condemn your children, you cannot have a relationship. If you condemn your parents, you cannot have a relationship, because there is either forgiveness and grace and mercy and love or condemnation. God gives us grace and mercy and forgiveness and love, so we can have a relationship. But if he gave us condemnation, we would have no relationship. Some of you are lonely because you're condemners. Some of you are hurting because you are condemners. Some of you wonder why life is so hard and you're so alone. It's because you're a condemner. That we need to treat others as God and Christ has treated us. That's a quote from the New

Testament. And when we fail, He doesn't condemn. Therefore, when they fail, we should not condemn. We should leave it between Him and them and not get ourselves in the middle. And what he does for us here. He says that he is interceding for us. So he says that Jesus died. He rose, he conquered Satan, sin, death, hell and the wrath of God. Let me tell you this, you're saved by God. You're saved from God. And you were saved to God. Let me tell you this, hell's bad. The wrath of God, that's really what makes hell, hell.

- [Congregation Member] Yeah.

- So ultimately, Jesus is alive right now. He saved you through his death, burial, resurrection. He quotes Psalm 110, verse one. The Lord says, "To my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool." The Lord is the Father and the Lord sitting at the right hand of the Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's ruling and reigning. And what he's saying right now is that he is interceding. Jesus' ministry to you did not stop on the cross. Jesus' ministry to you did not stop at the empty tomb. Jesus' ministry to you never stops. He's ministering to you, for you right now. He's interceding. Right now, he is in the father's ear. He's talking about you 'cause he loves you. And he's praying for you, because he cares about you. And he's bringing your burdens and your needs and your fears and your hopes and your dreams and your past and your present and your future, and he is interceding for you. And if you remember, just prior to this in Romans 8:27, it says that the Spirit intercedes for God's people. So here's what happens. We fail, we sin, and God loves, and God intercedes. He puts the Holy Spirit in the child of God. And it says in Romans eight, we just looked at it last week, that He interprets the groanings and longings of our soul in our heart. Even when we don't even know what to say or pray, He interprets. I was thinking about it this week. How many of you are moms? You got a little kid, okay. Do you know the differences in the different cries that your child has? You can tell the difference, right? You're like, this is where moms are, amazing. Dads don't have this superpower. It's like, "What's wrong? He's yelling." Mom's like, "Oh, that's a I-put-my-pants yell. That's a I-want-some-food yell. That's a I-got-a-tummy-ache yell. That's a I'm-a-sinner-by-nature, just-throwing-a-fit yell," okay.? How many of you moms, you could tell the difference in the cry of the baby?

- Yeah.

- I mean, it's... I've got five kids, I never knew what was happening. I was like, "Grace, what is happening? Do I spank them or feed them or change them? I don't know what to do with them," right? Some moms have the gift of interpretation. They always know what the cry means. The spirit of God knows what the groanings and longings and the cries and the tears, what the unspoken fears are. He interprets, He's present. He's empathetic, He's understanding. It says that in Romans 8:27, again, that He interprets and He intercedes. What he says is, "Okay, here's what they're feeling. Here's what they're thinking. Even when they can't say it, I can interpret it." And then the spirit of God who lives in you, He takes that, that longing, that burden and that groaning, and then he brings it to Jesus. And then Jesus responds, my friend is this. He says, "I'm the high priest to sympathize us. I've been down on that planet, I know what that's like. Yeah, they're physically hurting. I know exactly what that's like. They've been relationally

abandoned or betrayed. I know exactly what that's like. They're absolutely impoverished and can't make ends meet. I've been there. They're really lonely, I understand that. Their family has rejected or doesn't understand them. Oh, I know exactly what that feels like." That the high priest who sympathizes with you and empathizes for you. He then takes that request and he brings it to who? The father, the Father. That the spirit is in you and he intercedes for you. He then brings that need or request to Jesus who mediates between you and God. 1 Timothy two, "There's one mediator between you and God. The man Christ Jesus, who is fully God, fully man, can fully mediate between God and man." And then he brings that request to the Father, the highest authority in all Cree and in all of eternity, above and beyond all of creation, the Creatour. And they have a conversation about you. "Here's what they need. We're gonna send an angel. We're gonna ask the Holy Spirit to do something. We're gonna send someone to encourage them. We're gonna provide a resource to them." They intercede for you. Here's the big idea. When someone sends against you, you can either condemn them or intercede for them. And if you wanna have a relationship, you cannot condemn them, but you must intercede for them. You must try and figure out what they're feeling and sensing and needing, and then try and bring resources to bear that bless and benefit, them because you love them. You know, when our kids were little, it is a flawed analogy, but it's the best of God. And John Calvin an old Bible commentary. He says that sometimes God speaks baby talk. You know, that when you're trying to teach something to a kid, you kinda break it down into simple terms. That's how God speaks to us. This analogy is a bit of baby talk, but when I would get home from work, sometimes, let's say one of the kids had hard a day. Maybe it was a hard day. Maybe something really bad happened. Or maybe it was a really naughty day. And they were not a good kid. I would walk in the door. And what I would need Grace to do is I would need Grace to intercede, my wife, Grace. I'd look at the kid. Sometimes you could just see it on the kid's face. Like they're not doing well, but I need to know what happened. And some days you walk in and you could just tell like the kid was stubborn, just they'd had a defiant day, and you could tell, mom looked whooped. I'm just like, "Oh." She's got the white towel. And she's in the corner, I'm just like, "I surrender all", that's my new life song, you know? And I would walk in and I would look at Grace, and what I would need her to do is interpret and intercede. Okay, their friend is leaving the school and they're devastated. Okay, good to know. They're just super naughty today, okay? Physically, today they really got hurt. Okay, or they got embarrassed, okay. Here's what you need to know. The Holy Spirit in you and Jesus mediating for you. They're constantly interpreting and interceding and bringing to the Father all that needs to be known about you, so that all the resources of the kingdom can be available to you. Some of you had a parent where they would walk in and they would just completely misdiagnose the situation and rush to the wrong conclusion. The Father never does that. Because the Spirit and the Son makes sure that the interpreting and the interceding are perfect, because that's how their ministry works. Here's what I'm telling you. When Jesus went to heaven, he didn't abandon you. He still intercedes for you. That the Father has not ignored you, that He sent the spirit in the Son to intercede for you. That you're not orphans, that you're sons and daughters, that you've not been forsaken, that you've been forgiven. And that the ministry that they have for you, it continues into all eternity. And I want that to be a comfort for you, especially in your great time of need and pain. The fourth thing that he says is, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And here it is, this is

God. Romans 8:35 through 36. This is the culmination of the first half of Romans. And it's like, he just breaks into worship. There's a point where you just can't talk about it anymore. You just need to sing about it, and celebrate it. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Great question, shall tribulation?

- No.

- No. Or distress?

- No.

- No. Or persecution?

- No.

- No. Or famine?

- No.

- No. Or nakedness.

- No.

- No. Or danger, no, our sword, no. As it is written, quote Psalm 44, "For your sake, we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." And he's going through the categories. Tribulation, how many of you right now, you've got tribulation that is trouble that brings an anxiety? It's just general, any category. Tribulation, that is a problem and a pressure and a pain. And it causes me anxiety. When anxiety, when tribulation, when trauma and trouble and trial come, the question is, "God, do you still love me?" Answer, yes, life is hard, God is good. Home is awesome, we're not there yet. What about distress? This distressful circumstances, true or false? We're living under some stressful circumstances. All of 2020, stressful, distressful. What about persecution? This is religious harassment. Sometimes this happens personally, your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, they attack you, malign you. You're a college student, you walk onto a university, you quote a verse, and you realize that the intolerance is not that tolerant. And sometimes this works organizationally and legally and politically. A buddy of mine, he's a pastor, he had somebody he knows. Nine-year-old daughter came home from a state school with a health class curriculum that included, and I will not get into the explicit, how to sexually pleasure a boy, age nine. That's grooming for pedophilia.

- [Congregation Member] Yes.

- That is preparing children to be abused. So the dad got mad, because he's alive. Amen.

- The only dad who would not get mad would be a dad who was not alive. Went into the school, so they arrested him.

- Oh my God.

- What!

- My question is when did the state override the parent? When does sexuality get to be taught by someone other than a mother and father who had sex to bring the child into planet Earth? When did God knock at the last word? When did we lose the right to raise our own children? Persecution, sometimes it looks like curriculum. Famine, this is where you're physically weak and needy. Some of you were there. You're like, "I don't have the energy to go anymore." Nakedness, this is total poverty and disgrace. This is when literally you got nothing and you're totally ashamed. Our Lord Jesus understands this. Danger, this is credible threat of harm. Someone's trying to attack you, physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, financially, legally, it's war and sword. This is an attempt to kill. I've had this multiple times while preaching, people try to stab me, it's a real thing. And when these things happen, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword, the question is, God, you say you love me but I don't feel it. Faith is by the spirit, not by the sight. Faith is saying that whatever is happening is not from my Father, but it is from the father of lies. That this is part of an attack on me, and it's in spite of my Father, it's not from my Father. Let me say these circumstances contempt our heart to turn from God. But these circumstances, they never do turn God from us. And what he's saying is this, God's love for you, it is ultimately unchanging no matter what you were experiencing. So then, here's what I wanna tell you. We're marching forward in faith. Romans 8:37 through 39, No, no, see, they're struggling. See, they're suffering, saint, they're hurting, saint, they're weary, saint. No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors. I love that. We are more than conquerors through him, Jesus Christ who what? Loved us, loved us. For I am sure, I am certain bedrock that neither death nor life, angels nor rulers, that's demons, 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's saying that the most secure, the most secure, the most secure thing you have is the love of God. That ultimately God's love cannot be understood apart from the person of work of Jesus Christ. God is loving, there is no understanding of love apart from Jesus Christ. In addition, God's love is the most powerful and precious resource. It's the one thing that can never be taken. God's love is active, not reactive. God's love is for you, before you are for him. God does not wait for you to initiate. He initiates in love. God's love is one way, it doesn't matter what you say. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. When God decides that he is going to love you, nothing can stop Him from loving you and nothing will stop Him from ever loving you. And God's is given to us, and it is given through us, so that we get to share God's love with others. He told us this in Romans 5:1, that God's love has been poured out into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. What this means is God's love is for you. God's love is in you. God's love is through you. So what the Bible says, you can love your enemies with a supernatural love. That you can love strangers with a supernatural love. And the point simply is this. This is the great

problem in our world. Things were made to be used and people were made to be loved, and we use people and we love things. And God wants us to use things and to love people. Ultimately, what he's talking about here is a completely counter-cultural way of life. God loves me, will anything separate me from God's love? He's like, "Well, is there anything in my life?" "Nope." "What about when I die?" "Oh, it's gonna get better." What about if an angel comes or a demon? Either way, you're fine, God's love is unchanging.

- Amen.

- What about something I do really bad today? He still loves you. What about in the future, tomorrow, I do something really bad? He's still gonna love you. What if something comes down from heaven or comes up from hell, height or depth? Either way, His love is consistent and firm and dependable. Well, is there anything else? Let me just double-check, double-check. And He says he loves me. Is there anything else that could separate me from the love? Answer?

- No.

- What about you? Can you separate you from His love?

- [Congregation] No.

- You're a created thing, no. People are always like, "I lost my salvation." It wasn't yours. "I turned my back on God." Good thing, He didn't turn his back on you. Otherwise, you should be really freaked out. "Well, I ran away," well, He's fast. Turn around, they're like, "Oh, you're here." "Yeah, been here the whole time." Some of you have been lied to that you can do something that God won't love you. You can't, if you are in Christ, you can never be out. And if God has decided to love you, there's nothing you can do to make Him love you anymore. Let me say it this way. If God has decided to love you, there's nothing you can do to make Him love you anymore, or cause Him to love you any less. He loves you with the fullness of love that He has for His son, Jesus Christ. And what He's talking about here is a new way of life. He says, we are more, more, love that. More than what? Conquerors, I like that. I'm not hearing a lot of that in the news or from politicians or in the world. Hey, we're losing, we're losers. No, we're conquering, we're conquerors.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Some translations will call this super conqueror. I like that. Overwhelmingly conqueror like that too. Complete victory, oh, that's better than victory. That's complete victory, I like that a lot. Completely victorious, I'm in, put me on that team. Give me a jersey, coach, put me on the field. Overwhelming victory, love that. More than winners, love that. Always tastes victory, that's my favorite. More than victorious and triumphantly victorious.

- [Congregation Member] Amen.

- We are more than conquerors, are God in love. He conquered sin, He conquered death, He conquered hell. He conquered wrath, He conquered Satan, He conquered demons. He's coming again to raise the dead, to judge the living and the dead. He is going to conquer everyone and everything. And if he loves us, we are for sure, guaranteed. No doubt about it, more than conquerors.

- Amen.

- This is not the conclusion, but let me give you an analogy. How many of you have watched the news and watched the "History Channel"? Do you notice that your emotional state shifts? You're watching the news, you're like, "Oh my gosh, oh my gosh," when you watch "History Channel", you're like, "Whatever. I know that's Hitler invaded Poland, but I know how to sense, I'm not freaked out." The difference between the "History Channel" and the news is the news still seems like it is an open possibility and an uncertain future. The "History Channel", it's over, so we're more calm. God tells us the end so that our life is the "History Channel" and not the nightly news. For God, human history is the "History Channel". It's not the nightly news. God's not have it going, "This could go either way." So you and I need to trust that he who conquered will always conquer. And because of His love, we are more than conquerors.

- [Congregation Member] Amen.

- Well, let me just let me bring the band up. We're gonna throw a party and we're gonna be more than conquerors to throw a party. 'Cause what used to happen to is when your military would defeat their military, your band would come out and you would throw a party. We do this every week, we call it church. So let me just tell you, you got this on the way in. Let me make this real practical. We are more than conquerors. In this house, we do faith, we not do do fear. We do forward, we do not do backward. We do advance, we do not do retreat. We do not do cancel, we do Christ, that's what we do. Let me tell you how great God's love has been. Can I boast on Him a bit? Five years ago around Easter, we had our first informational meeting at the church. It was the 50th anniversary of the grand opening of the church to the day. And God just started pouring out love. And He was very gracious. He brought us wonderful people, tons of provision. One year ago, about this time, we closed. The church of Jesus Christ closed on planet Earth for the resurrection of Jesus. We were not able to throw the party for the conqueror. At that time, God was gracious. We did a lot of work on the building. A prophecy had been given that a veil was over the church, and that it would be lifted in the fall. So we trusted that. We opened last June. We added a Saturday night service, it's full. Sunday morning services full. 11 o'clock sitting in the lobby because we can't get people in the building. In a world filled with bad news, apparently, people have a strong appetite for good news. In a world that is totally hopeless, people are looking for some hope. And in a world where it seems like we're being led by super losers, everyone likes the idea of following the super conqueror. So since we opened in June, let me tell you what God has done. We're running 237%. We have baptized hundreds of new Christians, hundreds of new Christians. Since we opened in June, we added 1500 little kids

under the age of 10 to the roster, 1500 kids. So here's what we're doing. An opportunity is opened up. We should make the deal this week to get 7,000 more square feet of office, classroom space, and also parking. Pray that that happens. Then we will add a six o'clock service on Saturday, 'cause we're over capacity. At that time as well, we hope to do that around Easter. We're gonna throw Good Friday, Crucifixion Easter Sunday, Resurrection, biggest party, biggest weekend we've ever had. We want you to join us for that. In addition to finish this property, park-out front, waterslides in the back for kids 'cause we believe in Jesus. Waterslides, finish the parking lot, finish our work, we need \$2 million to preach myself . But that's okay, I'm more than a conqueror, I'm gonna make it. So earlier this year, we needed \$2 million above and beyond tithes and offerings to finish everything so that we could finish this campus and then start to go multi-site. That's what we're on the break of, because we are growing so fast, we can't even keep up. And so some people stepped forward and said, "Looks like you got needs." They gave money. Last week on Wednesday, we did a para-meeting and I said, "We need 2 million," somebody said, "I'll give a matching fund of 300,000." Somebody else called yesterday, said, "Oh, I'll add 100,000." So everything you give between now and Easter up to \$400,000 is doubled. Three, four weeks ago, we needed 2 million. This is the first time I'm telling you. We're already halfway there. We're already halfway there. So I would encourage you take this and give your pledge, and let's have a special offering for Easter to celebrate the Resurrection. And in the meantime, why don't you guys come on out? We're gonna throw a little party and celebrate the victory of Jesus as we get ready for the big party. Last year, we were closed. This year, I promise you, we will be open. All right, okay, give me a low some, not like that. That's not a super conqueror. Come on, give me some little, some, all right. For I am convinced that neither pandemic nor no pandemic, that neither death from COVID or life with COVID, nor republican or democratic presidency, nor stimulus check or no stimulus check, nor mask nor no mask, nor opened or closed by governor decree, nor bull or bear stock market, nor closed or opened church shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ.