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ROMANS 8:29-39

Romans Series: How God Changes People

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that you've given to us as a gift. I thank you for the love that you demonstrated to us that we can appreciate and enjoy. Lord, at Christmastime we can get distracted by all kinds of things. It increases our workload. We have things we have to do – activities, parties, presents, relationship kinds of things, meetings. All kinds of things happen at this time of year that increase our activity load. But Lord, we ask that in the midst of all that activity we might come into contact with the wonder of who you are and the wonder of what you've done in each one of our lives. Lord, this morning as we open your word I ask that you would touch hearts, speak to people this morning in the deepest parts of who we are. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

This week I came into contact with several people and ministered to them in different ways. There is a woman who is just tired in her parenting journey. A couple kids under the age of ten and she's just worn out with that.

A six year old boy then in another situation who is just struggling with fear inside of his heart and trying to deal with that in his own heart. For example, when his mom took the trash out –

“Mom! Mom! Where are you?”

“I just went out to take out the trash.”

“You've got to tell me when you're going to leave!” So just that kind of anxiety that comes over this little six year old young man.

I spoke with a young man in his twenties who is despairing about life, just doesn't want to go on.

I spoke to another man who is wrestling with salvation and whether he's saved or not.

I spoke to a number of people and I would say they all have something in common, that they're weary in their souls. Their souls are just weary. I know what that feeling is. Sometimes my soul is just weary. It comes out in different ways in different people. Some people feel weary in one way and some people feel weary in a different way, but there's that weariness that weighs on us sometimes.

Last week if you were here we talked about how we need to have our hearts aligned. If you didn't get to hear the sermon last week, I'd encourage you to download the app if you don't have it already. It's easy. You can just listen to the sermons from the last several weeks there. Because

we're really talking about how people change. And as we do, we're looking at the book of Romans verse by verse. We're going by some of this word for word, just trying to understand what the verses say so we can grasp this because we are all changing and many of us are helping other people change as well. Some of those are children, some of those are your friends, some of those are your parents, some of those are mates. We're helping people change. There's a time, I think, in our hearts when we just need this passage from today that helps us or this whole study.

Let me just take you back a couple of weeks. You think about this weariness. "I just don't have what it takes to go forward." In Romans 8:26-27 from two weeks ago it says, *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.* I need the supernatural strength of God to help me in my weariness and the challenges I face. I need that supernatural strength that comes from the Spirit to help me in my weakness.

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. Man, that is powerful.

And then last week we looked at this verse. Notice in Romans 8:28 this emphasis is God is good. Catch that because I'm going to use those words (God is good). That's why I put them here. I'm going to use them later on in our teaching today. God is good. *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 this people group, these people who love God and are called *according to his purpose*, that *God works all things out for good*, for the good. So God is good. A very important truth that we must embrace and understand.

And then another very important truth comes from the verses just following that. It talks about how God is in control. Notice the words that describe God's control here. *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

So we have significant verses here that talk about the control that God has over his world. So we know that God is good and we know that God is in control. I put the words up there (God is in control) because I'm going to use them later in our teaching here. So I just want you to be able to remember them.

Now we're going to talk more about the sovereignty or the control of God as we get into Romans 9-10 because it's talked a lot about there. But let's continue on in verse 31 because we have five questions asked. You can look at that passage starting in verse 31. The five questions come one right after the other.

Let's look at the first question in verse 31, which asks this: *What, then, shall we say in response to these things* that God foreknew, all these things that He did, all these things work together for good to those who love God, and so on. All these things that He's talked about since the beginning of Romans 8 down to here, or maybe even before that, or at least in the current context of our passage he asks the question, *What, then, shall we say in response to these things?*

I really like that question a lot. That's the question we need to ask ourselves every time we look into the scriptures. How can I apply these things that we talked about to my life?

My dad was a pastor and he would preach a sermon and at the end of his sermon he would say, "So what? How does this apply to me?" I love those words and, in fact, as I trained with my father for eight years I learned more from him about teaching the Bible than I learned in my seminary career. My dad forced us – not forced, it was our habit – at the end of our sermon preparation to create a piece of paper that we handed out to everyone for every sermon called a "so what" sheet. It forced us to ask the question, as we dug into our theology and everything, how is this relevant? Which made such an impact on my life so that every time I get up and teach the word I want to ask the question, "How is this relevant?"

I've changed the words. It's no longer "So what? How does this apply to me?" The words are now "take Jesus home." Let's take Jesus home into our lives. How are we going to apply the scriptures practically in our lives. In our church we want to take Jesus home, whether that's what we're studying in a small group or we're studying on Sunday morning or that the children are studying. We want them to be able to take Jesus home and apply the truths practically. *What shall we say, then, in response to these things?* Great question.

Then he asks this question. He says, *If God is for us, who can be against us?* Paul's response in this passage provides the grandest passage that describes the assurance, the security that we have in our own personal lives as believers.

This is a rhetorical question. It's the question, what do you think you're doing? That's a rhetorical question. You don't answer that kind of a question when someone asks you that. The answer is embedded in the question. So when he asks that question and that question is, *What shall we say, then, in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* If we take that question, the answer is there. No one. Nothing. God is the controller of the universe. Nothing can be against us. God is for us.

I just want to meditate on that for a moment. When you think about God being for you, is that the picture you have of God in your life? That He's for you? Because I don't think that's the picture that most people have of God, even if they're believers. If you're a Christian and you trust God, I have this sense that some people believe that God is not for me. He's trying to either punish me with life problems, or He's trying to grow me somehow and I don't want to be grown. So there's this kind of wrestling between me and God.

I think it kind of looks like this, this picture that we have that I'm here, my life problems are in the middle, and God's on the other side, and the life problems are somehow in between me and God. So I see God through my life problems. I know He's supposed to be working in all of those.

But I think that is a misnomer. I don't think this picture is a good picture of who God is and the way He wants to live in our lives and what He wants to do with us.

I like this picture better. This picture has me enveloped by God with life's problems out there because it's not like we're both on opposite sides of the tennis court fighting back and forth to see who's going to win. That's not my picture of God. Rather God has enveloped me, and my life problems are out there, and God is saying, "Come on. I will give you the strength to be able to deal with that."

The end of the passage is the passage that says *we are more than conquerors*. Some of us need to have some conquering done in our lives. And so he's saying *we are more than conquerors*. We'll read more about that in a moment.

I love this picture because it puts me enveloped by God so that God is doing this work around me. It's not even me who's doing it. It's God's strength working through me and life's problems are out there so that God is for me. *If God is for me, who can be against me?* No one. That's the implication. No one can be against us.

I just sit there and I meditate on those words. And I meditate on the picture. Because that's the picture I want to have of God. God has me within this fold of His care.

But does He care about the little things in my life? The small things. The things that seem so trivial. The next verse helps us understand that yes, He cares about everything. Look at that verse in verse 32. *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?*

I think we're not afraid that God can't handle our life and our problems. The question is will He? Will He take care of the small things in my life? The answer is yes. He's for us, not against us. If God sent His own Son to die for us, He didn't spare even His own Son. What a huge sacrifice. Wouldn't He take care of the small things in our lives? And the answer is yes.

It's this picture. If someone were to give you a billion dollars, wouldn't that person also be willing to pay a couple thousand more to teach you how to manage that money? If someone were to give you this beautiful diamond, wouldn't they give you the little cloth and box that go along with it to keep it in? That's what's being said here. God is so concerned and caring about every little piece of our lives that when we look at the down payment that He made by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, He didn't even spare this ultimate sacrifice of Christ. And then He'll take care of all the small things too.

It's just a beautiful picture of the care of God and what He wants to do in our lives, how much He cares for us, how much He loves us. He's got too much invested in us to forget about us. He's intricately caring for us, and loving us, and all of these things. I just think that is such a beautiful picture of who God is and what He wants to do. He cares about the small things in our lives. That's evident in this passage. That's what He's trying to say here as he's building a case for where we're going. Just keep in mind He's concerned about the small things, not just the big things.

Let's go to verse 33. Another question. *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns?* Do you see the answer is right there. *No one.* No one.

It's as if this picture is so real because the protection that we have around us exceeds our ability. We are not exposed to the outside. So who's going to condemn us and attack us from the outside? No one. Because God has protected us. I just think that's so important for us to understand.

It brings up verse 1. This was several weeks ago. We just spent the whole Sunday on verse 1, Romans 8:1. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Now he's saying that again in verses 33-34 when he's saying *who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one.* No one.

So there's an accusation from Satan that starts to attack you and riddle you with guilt. That is a lie and you are protected by the love of God. That love that just wants to envelop you and care for you. It's just an amazing thing to ponder. I spent quite a bit of time pondering it this week and trying to understand what does that actually mean, especially as I'm trying to help other people change, help them understand what that looks like.

Let's continue on in verse 34. Notice it says, *Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life* (in other words, it's one thing to die; it's another thing for Him to be raised to life. That's amazing)—*is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

He's doing it all. It's not about me trying to earn something. It's about God doing this. So that's why verse 35 says, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Now this is the first time in verse 35 where he's introducing the word *love*. A very important word. An important word in the picture that we're trying to understand here. It's introduced because love is going to be the basis for several things.

In fact if we go back in the passage you'll remember earlier in verse 14 it talks about how we're adopted into God's family. It's based on love. In verse 15 it talks about how we call God "Abba" or "Daddy". Why do we do that? Because we have this love relationship with Him.

No condemnation, verse 1, and also in verse 33 and 34. Verse 33 says he chose us. It's based on His love. Verse 32 – He sent Jesus. It's based on His love. All of this has a foundation to it of love that becomes so important.

Now I think that we take the things that we've talked about today and we can put them into this triangle that's going to do something in our hearts. The first thing we have to realize is in Romans 8:28 it talks about God is good. We need to know that God is good. That's important. He's a benevolent God. Not arbitrary. He's good.

The second thing we need to know is that God is in control. This is important for trust. If you're going to trust, you need to know that God is good. Why would you want to trust a God who's in control, but He isn't good? You wouldn't want to trust Him. Or why would you want to trust a God that's good, but He's not in control? He's both good and He's in control and so we can trust Him.

But there's another component that we must understand and that is God loves us.

So this triangle becomes very important for a foundation inside of our hearts that addresses the weariness of soul that people experience. Whether it's a child who's six years old or eight years old or fifteen years old, or it's an adult who's married or single, or it's a person. No matter what they're experiencing if you understand this triangle and you know this triangle and you've got it, then I think amazing things happen inside of us in this weariness of soul problem that we have. We have security inside. "I know where I'm going." We have this confidence that we need to drive us forward in life and we have this peace that enables us to deal with the emotions like anxiety or anger or disappointment or whatever it might be that throws us off track. So this love becomes a very important key in this triangle that we need in order for us to feel the fullness of God or to feel complete in our lives.

Why love? Have you ever looked at someone and (let's talk about human love for a minute) your love wells up inside. Maybe if you have your first girlfriend or boyfriend maybe that's the feeling you experience. But I'm really talking about something much more deep than that that all of us can experience. There's this love that we experience and it swells up inside and you almost don't know how to communicate it to someone.

If you're a parent you know what this is. Let's say your son is over there playing and you just look at him and you love him so much you want to call him over and you want to give him a big hug.

"Son, come on over here."

"What, Dad? I'm busy."

"No, come on over here. I want to give you a hug."

"Dad, come on."

"No, come on. I want to give you a hug."

And finally "okay." And so he comes over there and he gives you a hug.

Now when my dad used to hug me he used to rub his whiskers on my face, rub them on there and "I love you. I love you." I'm this kid and I feel like saying, "Alright Dad. Are you done now? Can I get back to playing with my toys?" Because many times the kid in us doesn't get it. Can we understand the capacity of a parent's love for their child? No. We can't understand what that is. It's so hard. Does that mean as parents we don't explain that and share that with our kids? No, we still do it. Even though they don't understand it.

A young child has a hard time understanding the difference between a love for family and a love for an iPad. It's hard. They're still growing in that. We still love them. And because we want them to understand this amazing thing that's inside of us that we experience toward them, how

do you communicate the depth of parental love? And that's what God wants us to understand in each of our hearts.

I think we're like the kid who wants to play with the toys and we don't know how big this love is that God has for us. It's huge. It's really huge.

He illustrates it in the next verse. Verse 35 continues. *Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Shall they separate us from love? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*

Just imagine through the tears of an eight year old boy who says, "Dad, what are we going to do?" when some uncertainty comes along. "Where are we going to sleep? Where are we going to get clothes? Where are we going to get food?" As a parent you say, "Son, I got this. I'll take care of you." That's what God does for us. In the midst of all of that He says, "I'll take care of you. Son, I'll do this. I'm your Father. I'm your heavenly Father. I love you. I want to envelop you in my love."

I want you to understand this. This love is so big that you can rest in it. When you rest in God's love it means that you're able to relinquish some of these things that we sometimes can try to control so much that they cause us to be weary in our souls.

I want to take you to another verse where Paul, the same writer to Romans, is explaining the same thing to the Ephesians. I want you to see what he says to them in Ephesians 3:17-19. He says, *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.*

You just have to stop there. Does it say rooted and established in theology? See, that's what I would tend to say. That's what I teach. Let's get rooted and established in theology. Or is it rooted and established in a church. Is that what it says there? I pray that you, being rooted and established in a church. I think both of those are good. Theology is good. Being rooted and established in a church is good. I think both of those things are good, but that's not what it says here.

Of all the things he could choose, he says, *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is (what?) the love of Christ.*

You've been rooted in it, but you don't get it yet. To grasp it. To catch this idea. And then the next verse – *and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.*

Remember last week I told you there's two kinds of love. There's *oida* love, which is the love that connects you to the truth, a fact that is true. Whether you believe it or not. It's like a math fact. It is true. Or there's the *ginsoko* kind of love, which is the experiential kind of love where you need to get to know it.

Which do you think is in this passage? I was eager to go find out which one is it. Is it the fact one or is it the experiential one? It's the experiential one. He says *and to know (experience) this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

This is what the person with the weary soul needs. This is the person that needs to be measured with the fullness of God. And how are they going to get it? They're going to get it by being rooted in this love and then grasping the depth of this love.

It's just an amazing thing. It's powerful. It's big. I don't want you to miss how big it is because we use the word 'love' too often maybe. It is big and it affects all of our lives. I think God just wants us to be enveloped by that love that He's allowed for us.

I think it has biological ramifications. Just think in your own self. How do you feel when you feel loved, and how do you feel when you feel angry? When you feel angry, you've got that extra energy, you start turning red, heat starts coming in your body. Is that what you feel when you feel loved? No. You feel something else. You feel that satisfaction, that inner something that's going on. That's what God wants us to enjoy, He wants us to experience. And I think that's why He did create the church so that we could have friends, we could experience God through other people and understand them and we can grow together in the midst of that. God's love is deep.

It has nothing to do with performance. Other people may love you because you're cute and cuddly and adorable. Other people may love you because you're rich. Other people may love you because you're fun to be around. Other people may love you because you're family and they have to. But God's love is bigger.

There is never a minute or a second in which God doesn't love you. Even if you've hidden in shame like Adam did in the garden after he sinned, God still loves you. Even if you've deserted Him like the disciples did after the crucifixion, they ran away, God still loves you. Even if you've doubted Him like Thomas did, He still loves you. Even if you've denied Him like Peter did, He still loves you. You can't get away from this love. It's an amazing love. It's there in the good times, it's there in the bad times, it's there in the thick and the thin. God sees the best in you and He loves you. He sees the worst in you and He loves you.

And this is, I think, when we take the theology and we start applying it to our lives. It helps the six year old who's afraid, or the parent who's overwhelmed, or the person who is just despairing about life, or the person wrestling with salvation. I just think God does this work inside of a person that makes theology practical. Now certainly those situations are more complicated than to just say God loves you. But there's something very valuable in understanding that component of theology and how it applies in our lives. Because God wants to do something very important in our hearts.

See I think, though, we think, "God will love me more if I cuss less, drink less, sin less, or I read the Bible more, pray more, attend church more, live a better life." That's not how it works. God loves us. Those things might be our indicators of our love for God, but really God's love for us is infinite and it's not defined by our performance.

I think we want to let God's love permeate our lives. And when we do, I think we wake up in the morning, we bask in the love of God. We go to bed at night, we rest in the love of God. This is big! It's really big this love that he's talking about here. And it leads to other things.

In this one verse it says, *I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power.* Just similar to where we're going now in verse 37. Go back to our passage in Romans 8 where it says in verse 37, *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* That's the power. His love leads to power. *In all these things we are more than conquerors through our attendance at church.* No. Through *him who loved us.* There's something that God has done in us that makes us more than conquerors.

Now the base word there in the word conqueror is *nikao*. But it's not just there. That translates conquer, overcome, prevail, be victorious. But it has a word right before it that makes it a two-part word – *hyper* – where we get our word hyper. Some of you know exactly what that is. It means you've got more of it than you wish or you wish your kids have. They're hyper. It means you have a lot of hyper going on.

This is the word hyper before this word *nikao* and that's why in the New American Standard Version of the Bible it says we *overwhelmingly conquer*. Most of the other translations say we *are more than conquerors*. We don't just conquer; we are more than conquerors.

Ask yourself, what have you been able to conquer because you are close to the Lord and because God's love and power has been working in your life. For some of you that's pretty significant what God has done in your life so far. With God's love strengthening your inner being, you are more than a conqueror. How do we do that? I think we rest in God's love.

I mean let's imagine a basketball game and you hear the final score. The final score was 142 to 6. You would say, "Wow. They put up a little bit of a fight, but they were no match for the victors." Right?

That's what this is. Overwhelming conquering that God wants to do through us. It means that when it gets down to it, there's this kind of ball of energy in God's love that propels us forward to overcome temptations that we experience, overcome emotions that drag us down, to deal with addictions that we might have. There's something that's going on inside of us that's pretty powerful that God wants to do. It leads us forward when we understand that. So we are more than conquerors. We are out there ready to fight the battle.

But I think some of us being ready to fight the battle are all involved in the activity of fighting. Maybe we need to do something else that ties into this love that's on the inside.

I love the story in the Old Testament when Moses had led the people out of Egypt and they had run all the way to the Red Sea. They're stuck. And the Egyptians are following behind and now they're trapped in the middle and all the Israelites are complaining. "Why did you bring us out here? This is so terrible. We're going to die out here in the wilderness."

Moses answered them and he said, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.”

Sometimes we need to go back to that love of God that He’s placed into our hearts and we need to be still and let the Lord fight the battle. Maybe it’s the weariness that we’re experiencing because we’re out there fighting a battle that God wants to fight instead and we need to pull back.

You know the passage in Psalm 23 that talks about what God does to our soul. *He leads us beside the quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.* Sometimes we need to be led by that quiet place where we just don’t have all the activity so that God can do something in that weary soul to restore it or refresh the soul.

Here’s another verse that describes the same thing in Isaiah 40:31 – *those whose hope (we’re back to the word hope again) in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.*

The weary soul needs this passage. But notice it isn’t in doing more activity. It’s somehow connecting to God and the hope in God and what He wants to do deeply in our lives.

So let’s end the passage as Paul is ending it in Romans 8:38-39. He doesn’t want us to miss this idea of the love and how important it is and foundational to everything that we do. So he says in verse 38, *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.*

He’s saying I’m convinced of this. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, none of these circumstances mentioned here and any others (if there’s any that he missed) can separate you from God’s love. It’s there. He’s always loving us.

I’m quickly brought to the story of the son (we call him the prodigal son) who is living in a loving home with a father who loved him, but he chose to say, “I’m going to do this myself. Give me the money. I want to find the happiness myself. I’m going to go out and do this.” So he goes out there, he spends the money, he works at it as hard as he can. And what does he find? He finds that he can’t do it on his own. He finds himself eating out of a pigpen and he remembers, “I have a father. Maybe he won’t accept me back as a son, but maybe I can go back as a servant because he treats the slaves better than I’m being treated right now. I’m going to go back and find out.”

So he’s heading back to his father and the Bible tells us that his father sees him from far off because his father’s undying love is present there, just like our heavenly Father’s love is always present there. He envelops him into his fold again. Puts on a new coat. Did it instantly change his heart? “Oh I’m so glad to be his son.” Or did it take some time for him to grow into that coat again and say, “Ah, I’m a son.” I don’t know. It would take me a little while coming from a bad experience to forgive myself and deal with other issues.

But where am I going to find that? I'm going to realize my Father loves me, and that's what happens here. This love that God places in this passage is powerful, so significant, it deals with the weariness that we sometimes experience in our souls.

I trust that God will use this in your life, maybe now if you're experiencing that. Maybe this is one of those passages you need to bless someone else with and share with them. Because God has something for them too. Or maybe this is something you want to tuck aside and save for another day. Because you know we all come to those places where we have weariness in our souls and we need God to do something deeper, and this may guide you in the process.

If you're here today and you've not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to know God loves you. He has an awesome plan for your life. But we have a responsibility and that responsibility is to come before Him and ask Him to come into our lives. *All who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.*

Romans 10:9-10 says, *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, that's it! I'm in! I'm saved.* It changes our whole life, of course, because we learn to love God and trust Him. We live in that life that He wants us to live. But it starts with that decision to say, "I am going to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." When you do, you embrace that love that God provides for you and for each one of us. Man, it's a beautiful thing.

I invite you to do that today. If you're at that place where God is speaking to you and you want to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you never made that personal... Oh you know that there's a God. You may even have been religious in the past, but you never accepted Him as your Lord and Savior. I want to encourage you to make that decision today.

We're going to have prayer counselors on the side. You don't have to go to a prayer counselor. You can make that decision in your seat right where you are. But I encourage you to go over to a prayer counselor and say, "Hey, I made that decision," and let them encourage you with their prayers as well.

Let's stand together. I want to pray for all of us.

[PRAYER] Lord, I thank you for speaking to me through this passage this week. Thank you for teaching me a little bit more about who you are and what you want in my own personal life. Lord, I want that for many of the people that I'm working with and have the opportunity to touch. I know you want that for every person here, Lord, and I ask that you would speak to each of our hearts. Use your Holy Spirit to convict us, that we would each give up the things, the strongholds that are preventing us from experiencing you in the fullness, embrace you fully and enjoy you. Lord, we ask that you would do that deeper work inside of our hearts that you want to do. In Jesus' name, amen.