

NOTHING WILL SEPARATE US

Romans 8:26-39

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July 26, 2020

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One of my favorite “Peanuts” comic strip pieces pictures a sad, brokenhearted Charlie Brown after his baseball team has lost 184-0. “I don’t understand it,” moans Charlie, “how can we lose when we’re so sincere?” That’s a really good question you’ve probably asked yourself, right? There is a great deal of sincerity going around, but there are many, many losses, too.

If you are one of those people who mark the margin of your Bible when the pastor preaches on a particular text, you probably have lots of chicken scratches beside Romans 8:26-39. I’ve preached from this a lot in my 23 years as your pastor. Because it’s so important—and so good! To me, Romans 8 is like the Psalm 23 of the New Testament. It is lyrical, poetic; it touches both head and heart and addresses universal concerns.

Verses 26-27 perfectly describe our sense of weakness, vulnerability, isolation and spiritual longing. We don’t know what to pray. We don’t know how to pray. Good news: the Spirit helps us and prays for us. In fact, the Triune God holds us up in prayer. The Holy Spirit prays for us and through us (vv. 26-27) and the Risen Christ, at God’s right hand, pleads our case (v. 34). How can we lose?

And that leads us right into v. 28, one of the most famous verses in all the Bible. But sometimes, when verses are well known, we are careless in their use. The RSV Bible has what I consider the best translation: “In everything God works for good with those who love him...” Please note two things. *First*, it is God who works, NOT “things.”

Second, note our role is not passive. We are to cooperate with God’s providence, working with God for good. In the current COVID-19 crisis, we don’t stand idly by. We work for good with God. In our witness to the world, we don’t lock ourselves in the church building. We work for good with God.

I’ll be honest with you. During this pandemic, I’m concerned about the mental health struggles many are having. Some of us are ashamed to seek professional help or take medication if we are dealing with depression, anxiety or other issues. But what does v. 28 say? God is working and we are to work with God. There is no shame in seeing a therapist or taking medication. It is not a sign of weak faith. God can use all the means possible. He uses “all things.” You cannot be in a place beyond God’s reach or care. “Nothing will separate us.”

In vv. 38-39, the Apostle Paul lists ten threats to our existence. They are real, they are superhuman and they are invisible. These are our enemies, too. Yet even in the midst of

these struggles, we are “super-conquerors.” Our text begins with weakness (v. 26) and ends with super victory. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Good question, Charlie Brown: “How can we lose when we’re so sincere?” But we don’t lose. We are more than conquerors. Nothing will separate us from God.