

Romans 8:35-39: Love Has the Last Word



<https://craigmanderson.org/2014/11/09/love-conquers/>

"It'll all work out: God has a plan." Maybe someone has told you this at a difficult moment in your life. Perhaps those words felt reassuring, or perhaps they felt hollow. The Apostle Paul delivered a similar message to the early church in Rome, telling his fellow Christians that God called them for a divine purpose and was fulfilling a greater plan:

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28).

These are incredible words from a man who had already experienced persecution and would eventually be martyred for his faith. Despite these hardships, Paul is adamant that *nothing* can separate us from Christ's love.

LGBTQ+ Catholics and allies have experienced this truth firsthand. Hatred, exclusion, and shame are hurtful, but the love of God is even stronger.

Paul's reassurance that "all things work for good" is no guarantee of an easy life, or that everything will work out the way we want it. Instead, it's a statement of confidence that in the face of suffering, God is not powerless. God's love will continue to work, transforming our circumstances for God's glory. "God writes straight with crooked lines," says a proverb often attributed to St. Teresa of Avila.

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God will take our trials and tribulations, our weakness and failings, and make from them something beneficial – not because these circumstances are good, but because God is. God's love is the most powerful force in the world, and it will ultimately prevail. The love of Christ conquers all, because in Christ, Love has the last word.

ROMANS 8:28-39

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to divine purpose. For those God foreknew, God also predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, so that Christ might be the firstborn among many offspring. And those God predestined God also called; and those God called God also justified; and those God justified God also glorified.

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? If God did not spare their own Son but handed Jesus over for us all, how will God not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we are being slain all the day;
we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through God who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Describe a time when you felt distant from God. How does this scripture passage invite you to see that experience differently?
2. When have you experienced God “working all things together for good” through a painful situation?
3. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” How do you experience God being “for you” in the struggles of your life as an LGBTQ+ person or ally?

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4. Make a list of things that cannot separate you from the love of Christ. These could include personal struggles, experiences of homophobia or transphobia, doubts, or failings of the institutional church. Then, use these to rewrite verses 38 and 39 in your own words: "For I am convinced that neither _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____ will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Pray with this new "scripture passage" in the week ahead.
5. Think about at LGBTQ+ person in your life who may be struggling to feel beloved by God. How could you express God's love to them this week?

PRAYER



Image source: www.universal.org/en/bispo-macedo/story-eternal-love

God of Goodness, I come into your presence so aware of my human frailty and yet overwhelmed by your love for me.

I thank you that there is no human experience that I might walk through where your love cannot reach me.

If I climb the highest mountain you are there and yet if I find myself in the darkest valley of my life, you are there.

Teach me today to love you more.

Help me to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child.

—Author unknown

Prayer Source: www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/gods-love

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MEDITATION

Meditate on God's love as you listen to this song. The lyrics of the chorus are taken directly from Romans 8, interspersed with verses that explore what it means to be inseparable from God's love. Listen for the various experiences that the artist has seen God's love overcome, including shame, fear, despair and isolation.

[For I am convinced \(Romans 8:38–39 NASB\): Lyric Video](#)

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