

ROMANS SERIES EIGHTEEN
LOCKED INTO LOVE
Dr. Roger Barrier
Romans 8:31-39

SLIDE: Dear John letter: Dear John, By the time you read this I'll be _____. I am sorry for doing this, but _____. I know this might come as a bit of a _____, because I think you are a bit of a _____, and I don't think we are right for each other. Anyway, I want to date _____. But I still want to be _____. We can totally _____. But please don't _____ like last time. I won't even make an issue of the _____ you owe me, or the fact that you _____. So take care of yourself and _____. (Insert your name here)

In your wildest dreams could you believe that you could do something that would cause God to send you a Dear John letter?

SLIDE: A Marine in Afghanistan recently received a letter from his girlfriend back home:

Dear Ricky,

I can no longer continue our relationship. The distance between us is just too great. I must admit that since you've been gone I have cheated on you twice, and it's not fair to either of us. I'm sorry. Please return the picture of me that I sent to you. Love, Becky

The Marine asked his fellow Marines for any snapshots they could spare of their girlfriends, sisters, ex-girlfriends, aunts, cousins etc. In addition to the picture of Becky, Ricky included all the other pictures of the pretty gals he had collected. There were 57 photos in that envelope....along with this note:

Dear Becky,

I'm so sorry, but I can't quite remember who you are. Please take your picture from the pile, and send the rest back to me. Take Care, Ricky

Broken relationships are painful.

Is there any chance God might change His mind and break up with you?

Is there any chance you might do something that would cause God to want to break up with you?

SLIDE: KEY VERSE: *Romans 8:35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

The answer revealed in this passage is Nothing! and No one!

We are locked into God's love—securely—forever.

READ ROMANS 8:31: What, then, shall we say in response to this?

What is "This"?

The previous eight chapters of Romans?

Review Romans

God's plan for us that spans all eternity?

How does He love me?

SLIDE: Foreknowledge: What Does It Do To Your Heart To Know That God knew you intimately long before you were born.

SLIDE: Predestination: God predestined from the very foundation of the cosmos that everyone would one day be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

SLIDE: Calling: God calls us to enter into His eternal plan for our lives.

SLIDE: Justification: Justification is the gift of worth.

SLIDE: Glorification: The “good work” of salvation that God began in us before the foundation of the cosmos will one day culminate in our Christlikeness.

SLIDE: ROMANS 8:31: *What, then, shall we say in response to this?* Answer:

SLIDE: Paul’s response: “If God is for me, who can be against me?!”

SLIDE: BLACKBOARD: Will I make it?

What about all the years between the believer’s conversion and his consummation? Is there not a possibility that during all trials and tribulations that something will go wrong which will cause him or her to forfeit his salvation?

Of course we’ll make it!

BLACKBOARD: Agape, philo, eros, storge. Agape recovered to describe God’s divine love for us.

Agape is sacrificial and unconditional. Agape never quits. Agape loves the unlovable.

Mary Ann Bird writes: I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.

When schoolmates asked, “What happened to your lip?” I’d tell them I’d fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

That was until my second-grade teacher—Mrs. Leonard.

Annually we had a hearing test.... We stood against the door and covered one ear. Mrs. Leonard sitting at her desk would whisper, and we would repeat it back if we could hear it—things like “The sky is blue” or “Do you have new shoes?” Finally it was my turn. The next seven words changed my life. Mrs. Leonard whispered, “I wish you were my little girl.”

God says to every person deformed by sin, “I wish you were my little girl.”

When we receive Christ and we are.

If you have yet to receive Christ, today is the day. He will love you forever; you will never receive a Dear John letter from Him.

Paul spends the rest of this chapter assuring us.

SLIDE: WHO OR WHAT CAN SEPARATE ME FROM GOD’S LOVE?

●SLIDE: NOT GOD: He already has too much invested in me!

READ ROMANS 8:31-32: *If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?*

Let’s say that tomorrow you get a phone call from Nordstrom’s. Your wife entered a contest and she is the winner of a full-length mink coat.

She doesn’t know it so you decide to drive down and surprise her. You walk into the fur department. Okay? And there it is. Wow. It’s got her name on it.

You get ready to take it out to the car. But you don't want to just take the coat out over your shoulder – so you say, “Say, could you slip a bag over it?”

Can you imagine Nordstrom's saying, “No bag. We gave you the coat. That's all you get, baby.”

God has given us the very best that He has, why would he withhold the plastic bag?

Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?

●SLIDE: NOT OTHERS: God has already sealed His decision in “concrete”.

READ ROMANS 8:33: *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

Once we are justified, who is going to bring up some information that God did not have that will cause Him to change His mind about us?

Nothing we might do in the future will catch Him by surprise and cause Him to withdraw our relationship.

STORY: Dad and Harding Lawrence

Lawrence cleaned house. My dad and one other were left. In surgery and newspaper article announcing Dad's replacement. What a way to find out about it. Replaced by a man from S.A. who was not quite fluent in Spanish. Discovered later that he organized a slush fund for President Nixon. Since Dad oversaw all finances, needed to be removed.

Dad was bitter. Yet, said often that best day was day he left. Got out of stress and saved his life.

On golf course: When Lawrence is burning in Hell and God tells me to dip my finger in the water and bring him a drop, I am not going to do it.”

“Not even a drop.”

Well, my dad is a Christian: “Well, maybe a tiny drop.”

God will not listen nor respond one way or another to anything my dad has to say about Harding Lawrence.

Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?

●SLIDE: NOT GOD: He's not condemning me; He's praying for me.

READ ROMANS 8:34: *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

Jesus is the only one can condemn us eternally.

John 3:16-18: “condemned already”

But His children are no longer condemned.

Write On Slide: The earliest Christian creed: “He was crucified dead and buried; the third day He rose again from the dead; and now sits at the right hand of God; from where He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Notice that the first three agree with Paul but the fourth is radically different. In Paul the fourth is different:

Jesus is at God's right hand to intercede for us and to plead our case before God.

Tremendous leap: Paul sees Christ, not as the Judge of the creed but as the lover of the souls of men.

Jesus is praying for us.

Luke 22:31-32: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?

●SLIDE: NOT THE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE: Compared to Almighty God, their power is inconsequential.

READ ROMANS 8:35-37: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:*

"For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

This is Paul's life and through Christ he over came them all.

READ ROMANS 8:38-39: *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.*

Mike Everett's team: We can't lose!

Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?

●SLIDE: NOT EVEN I: God has no intention of spiritually murdering one of His children—no matter what I do!

"But, I can jump out of his hand!"

Jesus Christ indwells every believer. No one can jump away from that.

If you could, God would have to kill your spirit.

Write On Slide: Justified—Repent and forgiven

New birth of John 3

Regenerating work of Holy Spirit

"Well, I can sin and lose my salvation!"

Then the question is, "how much sin?" People are at a loss to answer that question.

It wasn't little sin that got me saved and it is not a lot of sin that can get me lost!

It was grace gift given to me as I received and was born into God's personal family.

●SLIDE: BUT: Some who seem to fall away from God's grace were never really Christians.

●SLIDE: CONFUSION: The Parable Of The Wheat And Tares: Matthew 13:24-30:

●Write On Slide: Farmer planted wheat and during the night an enemy sowed tares among the wheat:

"... because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them."

●SLIDE: PRESUMPTION: The Parable Of The Sheep And The Goats: Matthew 25:31-26:

●Write On Slide: Son of Man comes in glory to separate sheep and goats. Goats on left and sheep on right.

Sheep: “Come enjoy the kingdom because I was hungry and naked, etc and you clothed and fed me.” When did we see you naked, hungry, etc.” “In as much as you did it to the least of my brothers you did it to me.”

Goats: “Depart into eternal fire prepared for devil and angels because I was hungry and naked, etc and you failed to clothe and feed me.” When did we see you naked, hungry, etc.” “In as much as you did not do it to the least of my brothers you did not do it to me.”

“Depart from me I never knew you.”

●SLIDE: ABORTION: The Parable Of The Soils: Matthew 13:1-23:

●Write On Slide: Hard pathway eater by the birds:

Rocky: no soil, sprang up quickly, hot sun, withered because of no roots

Thorns: choked the plant

Good soil: produced a crop, 100, 60, 30 fold.

Matthew 7:16: “By their fruit you will recognize them.”

●SLIDE: GOD WOULD NEVER SEND US A “DEAR JOHN LETTER.

“Backsliders” may look like they have fallen away, but they have not. Backsliders eventually return.

Jeremiah 3:22: *“Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.” “Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.”*

He is committed because of His love to draw wandering sheep back into His fold.

Even if we commit spiritual adultery against Him, His love will not allow Him to divorce us.

●SLIDE: ●MEDITATION: I want to lead us through a meditation picturing the heart of the real God.

Romans 8:33-34: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

“Who can bring charge against God’s elect?” The answer to most of us is “anyone who wants to—and we have their names!” God answers the question with “God.” The only person who can bring charge against us is God! And He has already settled our case.

“Who can condemn you?” For most of us the answer is “anyone can—stand in line.” Paul says, “No, only Christ can. He is the only one. And look the only one who can is the one Who died for you and rose again for you now lives to intercede for you. He is praying for you.

Imagine entering the court room.

Room is filled with your accusers—those who condemn you, judge you, criticize you, disappointed with you—folks you have never been able to please.

Bailiff: “All rise!”

The Judge walks in, it is Jesus Christ. Imagine him the way you imagine him. He has long flowing robes, bearded face, sandaled feet.

Rather than going to the bench, picture Him coming to you and kneeling down on the floor beside you. Picture Him putting His arm around you—He is not inspecting you, He is accepting you—He is not disappointed in you, He is affirming you, supporting you and inviting you to pray. Picture His nail-pierced hands and feet as his arms are around you.

“Who shall bring charge against God’s elect?” Only Jesus Christ and he has died, raised and is living now, praying for you—interceding for you. He is not distant from you, He is kneeling right beside you.

He whispers, “Where are your accusers? You look up. The room is empty. He whispers, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

May God seal this picture of the interceding Jesus, arms around me, praying for me. May he seal this deeply into my heart.

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

PRAY