

(39) THE NEVERENDING AWAITS: ROMANS 8:31-39

- Focus Idea:** Life as we know it is filled with suffering, heartache, and pain. Both human souls and the created world beyond yearn for renewal and redemption. All will be healed, and all joys will ultimately be realized when the love of God breaks every barrier, restores all brokenness, and unites all things forever.
- The Context:** Romans 8 concludes an extended teaching on human fallenness and divine rescue. After explaining how all people – Jews and Gentiles – have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 1-4), the Apostle Paul pivots to explain how God’s grace and righteousness are the hope of the world. 8:31-39 offers a soaring climax to his vision of redemption.
- The Characters:** The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul, introduced in detail in previous Core40 materials.
- The Core:** What’s wrong with the world? The Christian author GK Chesterton once responded to that question with the two word answer *I am*. He’s not wrong; humankind has brought great grief upon the planet.
- As the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans, he was almost surely thinking back to Genesis chapter 3. When Adam and Eve committed the first sin, *everyone* suffered. A cascade of anguish and affliction raced across the planet. Relationships frayed, trust melted, essential tasks like raising food and giving birth became arduous and painful. All of creation paid the price for their transgression.
- As Paul concludes his long theological reflection on sin and separation, he considers how creation itself still aches from sin’s effects. It has been frustrated (vs. 20) and groans as if experiencing labor pains (vs. 22). Likewise, humankind writhes uneasily, hoping that a restored relationship with God might still be possible (vs. 23). Such hope must be grounded in something new, something that is yet to come, something more than what we now have (vs. 24).
- That hope will be realized*, Paul promises. We begin to see it in the way that the Holy Spirit helps us, even when we don’t know what to pray for. That Spirit senses the needs of all of God’s people and goes to the Father to speak on their behalf (vs. 26-27).
- More than this, Paul proclaims, our sufferings and agonies are not random or purposeless. In all things, he says, God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes (vs. 28-30). Christian called brothers and sisters have an incredible destiny: in the end, they will actually be glorified as a result of their groans and agonies.
- Ultimately, Paul says, triumph awaits those whose hope remains in Jesus Christ. God is unstoppable when he is at work for those he loves (vs. 31-34)! God’s people cannot be defeated, charged, or condemned! The only one in a position to accuse or judge them is Jesus Christ – and he is the one who died to forgive them!
- In conclusion, the Apostle considers the afflictions of human experience: exposure, hunger, enemies, and persecution (vs. 35). His conclusion: None of them can ever separate the people of God from the love of God. Jesus’ love has made his people more than conquerors.
- Christians fear nothing now and tremble at nothing that is to come. In the end, the love of God that is in Christ reverses and eliminates all of the evil and sin that have afflicted the world.