

“What Can Separate Us from God’s Love?”  
Romans 8:26-39

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The last thing we want when we are walking our new puppy down a busy road is for her to slip her leash. Such a separation between human and pet could spell disaster.

How much more we don’t want to become separated from our daughter or grandchild in a jostled crowd at the Chicago Institute of Art, or at a concert at Krannert. We hold their buttery-slick hands and they walk wide-eyed as all the tall people stream by. I have a friend who, as a little girl, became separated from her dad once at a state fair. She ended up grabbing a stranger’s hand. It took a moment for her to realize she was holding a stranger’s hand, as it took him a moment to realize it, too. Both were startled. The little girl and her dad found each other, but the separation was frightening.

(We hope to have the opportunity to get lost in the crowd after Covid-19).

To say that separation can cause anxiety is an understatement. In the mental health world, this anxiety even has a name. Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is a psychological condition in which an individual experiences excessive anxiety when separated from home or from people to whom the individual has a strong emotional attachment.

Separation can mean danger, sadness, even terror. Spiderman got weak in the knees when he thought about life without Mary Jane. Could Shrek be happy without Fiona? Alexander Hamilton couldn’t imagine being separated from Eliza. I know pastors right now who are struggling with separation from their beloved congregations. In *It’s A Wonderful Life*, standing on that bridge in the snow, the river raging below, George Bailey weeps bitterly; could he stand another moment feeling *separated from God*?

*From God?* Can you imagine being separated from God?

Paul has imagined it. He has tried to imagine what could separate us from God’s love. He’s looked at it from every angle. Look at his list: Will hardship

separate us from God's love? No. Distress? No. Persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No. No. No. No. No.

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Sure, God's hand can feel slippery like butter. Our grip on God can fail. Or, we can simply let go, wander off, dart across the dangerous road by ourselves. But God's hold on us is certain. God's is a love of the most powerful, unbreakable kind. And what matters most is not how tightly we hold onto God's hand; what matters most is that God holds onto us, and won't let go.

Paul's point is, and he couldn't have made it clearer: nothing, nothing, nothing can separate us from God's love. God loves us no matter what.

Can we ever *feel* separated from God's love? Yes, of course we can. But are we, in fact, ever separated from God's love? No, we are not. Does God ever stop loving us, encouraging us, holding us? No, God does not.

What can separate us from God's love?

Nothing.

God is with us on the road. Alleluia!

Matt: Friends, we are on a journey!

Rachel: It's the pandemic parade.

Mindy: The way is long.

Judi: The way is uncertain.

All: Pandemic has changed our plans.

Pandemic has changed the rules.

Matt: Our journey is masked.

Judi: For some, the journey is more solitary.

Mindy: We walk six feet apart, not hand-in-hand.

Rachel: We sing only in the shower; our congregational voice—singing with our brothers and sisters—has grown silent.

Matt: We are on a journey.  
All: The road sometimes feels long and filled with strife.  
Rachel: We don't know the way.  
Judi: Our road maps don't help; our GPS can't find a signal.  
Mindy: The way is uncharted.  
Matt: We seek God in the dark, dark night,  
Rachel: and in the hot, bright day.  
Mindy: We see the glaring injustice of the world.  
Rachel: We see bipartisanship and division caused  
by race, by class, and by ideology—even *by religion*.  
Matt: But what we want to see is God.  
Judi: We want to see God . . .  
Mindy: We strain to see God . . .  
Judi: O LORD, reveal your divine self!  
Rachel: O LORD, give us strength!  
Matt: O LORD, guide our steps!

Judi: We are on a journey.  
Matt: We are on a journey, and we don't know the way.  
Rachel: We don't know where the journey leads.  
Mindy: We don't know how long the journey will take.  
Matt: We don't know where "where" is.  
All: O LORD, comfort us!

Matt: CHURCH, listen to the words of the Apostle Paul:  
Mindy: *What shall separate us from the love of God?*  
All: NOTHING!

Rachel: We are on a journey.  
Judi: God walks with us.  
Mindy: And we know where the roads leads:  
Matt: The road leads from the OLD LIFE to the NEW LIFE.  
Rachel: And we are certain:  
Mindy: *GOD walks with us. God's love guides us.*  
Judi: *GOD walks with us. God's love redeems us.*  
Matt: *GOD walks with us. God's love sustains us.*

All: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! AMEN.  
Rachel: Let us walk in the light of God's love.

**Romans 8:26-39**

<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup>What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.