

ROMANS Part 79

Chapter 8:38-39

The creation vs. the love of God



For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

NEITHER MESSENGERS NOR SOVEREIGNTIES

In this context, messengers and sovereignties are celestial beings. “Messenger” is the Greek word *angellos*, translated 181 times by the King James Version as “angels.” These are spiritual beings who have never been human and cannot die. They run errands for God. Not all of them are good; some of them run errands for Satan. Angels are the celestial versions of run-of-the-mill human beings: gofers, coffee-getters, grunts. “Sovereignties” are another matter altogether. These are powerful spiritual beings who rule and reign in heavenly realms—the equivalent of governors, presidents, popes, and Internet providers down here.

Jesus once told Peter, “Simon, Simon, lo! Satan claims you men, to sift you as grain” (Luke 22:31). This is one of the scariest verses in the Bible, to me. We have no conception of how weak we are compared to Satan, and what Satan could do to us apart from the protection of Christ. We are to Satan what a piece of grain is to a farmer. We can be tossed, blown, winnowed, crushed, baked and burned. The wicked sovereignties could do the same to us as Satan, for they operate under his direction. If Satan wants to sift any poor soul down here, he sends a loyal and equally evil minion. But Jesus Christ stands for us and protects.

In Ephesians 1:19-21, Paul speaks of—

“... the operation of the might of [God’s] strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending ...”

Following the death and resurrection of Christ, God sat His Son at His right hand. This was familiar terri-

tory to Him, but now He assumed greater power and glory by virtue of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. The verse following the above passage is stunning—

“... and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all.”

After God roused Christ and glorified Him above every celestial sovereignty and authority, He subjected those sovereignties and authorities under Christ’s feet. This would seem self-evident, but it’s important in light of the next statement, that “He gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body.” I have been telling you since Romans chapter six that Christ’s past is our past, and Christ’s future is our future. This is how closely we are allied with Christ. Since Christ is above all sovereignties and authorities among the celestials, and since we have been given to Christ by God as His body, then we, also, will be above all sovereignties and authorities. These beings, both good and evil, will one day bow in subjection to our decrees.

THEY WANT US

The subjection mentioned above puts some of these grouchier authorities in foul moods. The most cantankerous among them want to winnow and bake us. They know we’re coming to replace them. They want to bake us into bread, but can’t. They can’t separate us from the love of God. They want to, but God turns them away. They would turn God against us if they could, but God is too stubborn in our favor. Paul’s message here is that these beings haven’t the power to fulfill their beastly desires. Why do they want to sift us? Again, we are destined to rule them. If anyone wishes to prevent a caterpillar from becoming a butterfly, one crushes the transitioning being in the cocoon. If the messengers and the sovereignties and the authorities want us, they must get us now, before we flit away with our multifaceted hues. Once we become butterflies, so to speak, it is too late. But it’s already too late. God designated us beforehand, called us, justified us, and now strengthens us with Scripture as we struggle beneath the promise of our future transition. We know what we are to become, even as we suffer beneath what we are. Satan thinks that God’s elect can be deceived. They cannot. It seems, to us, like a life-and-death struggle to believe. In a sense,



it is. But we’re already sealed so nothing can fatally touch us. We can be tried and vexed as God desires, but not catastrophically sifted.

The beings now wishing us harm will one day attend our every word. They know this, I think. We are the Josephs of our era. We do not have dreams of glory, but facts of glory, even guarantees. Our future is as sure as Christ’s. Those who now vex us—in my example, the brothers of Joseph—will one day tremble before us. All works together for the good of those who are called according to God’s purpose. We are called according to God’s purpose.

Neither messengers nor sovereignties can separate us from the love of God. If we know how much they wanted to, and what they could do, and how they would do it, we would thank God even more for every single minute that we live and breathe in relative peace.

NEITHER THE PRESENT NOR WHAT IS IMPENDING

We can’t change the past. It is the present that vexes us and the future that heaps worry. Think of everything that the phrase “the present” entails. It entails everything. In verse 35, Paul listed specifics that could potentially but never will separate us from the love of God. Here, he encompasses in one tight phrase not only “things” such as affliction, distress and persecution, but the very time-frame in which we live and in which these things happen to us: the present. As you have been reading this sentence, the present has shifted to the present. *There—it happened*

again. The present is a continual bombardment of everything. There is a minutely new set of circumstances and a new reality continually overtaking us like waves overtaking the shore. But no matter how many times the present renews itself, even within a single second, it can never gather the strength or muster the troops to outwit God's plans for us. While it constantly changes, the present can never change God's purpose to love us.

An editor at a newspaper where I was a columnist once complained to me, "Martin, how many businesses have to put out a new product every day?" His product was the changing news, which could very well be summed up as, "the present." How does one chronicle the pres-



ent? One simply keeps doing it, day and night. I get tired just thinking about it. We can barely keep up with it, and this is only *our* present. What about the present of every other being? When thought of in these terms, "the present" is intimidating. Anything can happen at any given moment—or so we think. But no. The present, as well as the past, has been set by God (Isaiah 46:10). We are safe in whatever time-frame we sit, no matter how insistent or malevolent. But what about the future? What about "that which is impending"? (Romans 8:38).

I almost wish Paul had not said "that which is impending." It sounds so much more daunting than simply, "the future." I am not likely to worry about the future, but "that which is impending" casts deep shadows.

It has been said that worry kills more humans than war. What do humans worry about? We worry about that

which is impending. That which is impending becomes the present at every moment, so here is a compound fracture, really, splintering our minds and peace as seconds tick audibly by. Our problem is that we look deeply into the abyss of the unknown, imaging days, weeks, months, even years into a haze of what we cannot now know, and what God has wisely hid from us. It is a killing prospect.

I remember Dutch concentration camp survivor Corrie Ten Boom sharing in *The Hiding Place* of how her father kept her from worrying about the future of the family in their Nazi-occupied homeland of Holland. Her father said, "Corrie, when we take the train to Amsterdam, when do I hand you the ticket?" Young Corrie answered, "Right before we get on the train, Papa." "Just so," said her wise father, "will God provide for us in the hour of need—and not before."

People can read the book of Revelation and be driven to drink. Why? Pause to consider that none of it has happened yet. When it does happen, God sews in mercies. He always does. There is no such thing as unadulterated evil; good always lurks in the wings. Good and evil keep close company; they need one another; no one can sell them separately. As for the days of Israel's trial, we know that we ourselves

will have been removed from Earth by then, being snatched away to be manifest to God with Christ before the coming indignation (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-17).

Worrying about the future is senseless. Our religious upbringing, however, relied on senseless things, teaching us that such atrocities as eternal torment belonged to "that which is impending." With a potential future like that, who needs a present? Many people chuck the present by hanging themselves and throwing themselves from bridges. The future is bleak and scary until we realize that God already created it eons ago and that it will *always* work for our good. Certainly many things in the future, apart from the love of God, *could* separate us from that love. But they can't. Again, they've already been planned to the smallest detail, and every single one of them is shaped and catered to us and for us by God,

to prepare us for our future work. Paul says, and I am paraphrasing him now, “Wasted worry, friends, about the future. You are secure. For not only can the present not separate you from the love of God, but neither can that which is impending.”

YES, BUT WHAT ABOUT...

In anyone says, “Yes, but what about ..” at this juncture, I might have to stop writing and jump through this electronically-produced paragraph. Paul would jump through the papyrus. Paul goes to much bother here and rousing repetition to prevent such a redundant query.

“*Nothing* can separate us from the love of God.”

“Yes, but what about ...”

Please.

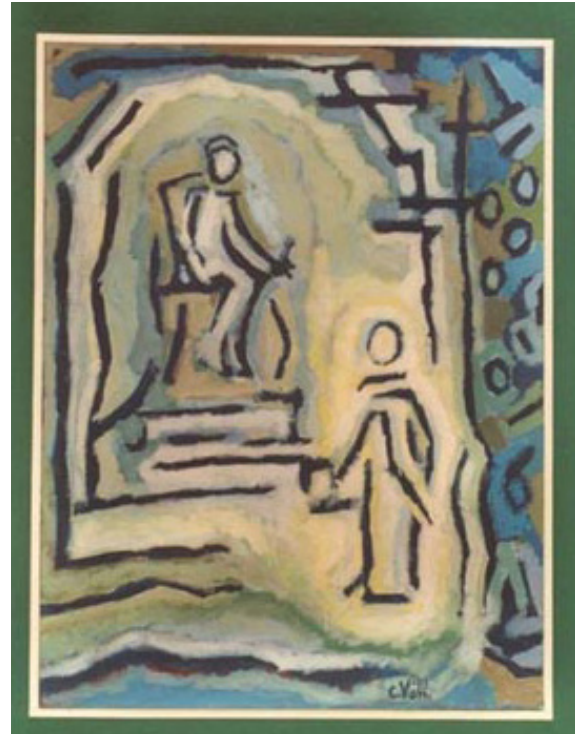
NOR POWERS

You would think that “powers” would be included under “sovereignities,” but the sovereignties we’ve been considering are those of the celestial ilk. What about earthly powers? Good question. There are millions of these. Think of every negative dynamic potential poised to kill you. At Jesus’ trial, Pontius Pilate said to our Lord, “To me you are not speaking! Are you not aware that I have the power to release you and the power to crucify you?” (John 19:10). Jesus answered him, “No power have you against Me in anything, except it were given to you from above. Therefore he who is giving Me up to you has the greater sin.’ At this, Pilate sought to release Him” (John 19:11-12).

Every power on earth seeks to lord it over us, whether these be earthly authorities or natural powers such as fire, electricity, water or wind. This passage from John is such a great test case for earthly power, embodied by the scary Roman procurator. Can such power destroy us? Let’s see.

The difference between being crucified and not being crucified is considerable. It would make a huge difference in your day whether, during that day, you would either be crucified or not crucified. Pilate claimed the power to decide this for Christ. Christ denied that this power belonged to the procurator, pointing rather to God as the source of all power. This took the wind out of Pilate’s little sailboat and actually so relieved the man that he wanted to release Jesus.

Treat all threatening power in your life as Jesus treaded Pilate. You will instantly neuter the power, as Jesus neutered Pilate. You will suck the wind out from under



it, arresting its development. This is what you want, and I think that it’s what the power wants too—if it could talk.

NEITHER HEIGHT NOR DEPTH

The highest height known in Scripture is heaven and the lowest low is the submerged chaos, also known as the abyss. Paul has eliminated from contention everything *in* the universe that could separate us from the love of God, but what about the universe itself? There are only two parts of the universe: heaven and earth—“In a beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). This can be stated as “height and depth.” As for breadth, forget about it. Paul is saving his breath over breadth. Technically, breadth is included under height and depth. Height and depth is everything. God created heaven and earth, height and depth. Of course stuff is going to be wide. If it makes you feel better, then neither can wide stuff separate us from the love of God. Apart from height and depth, there is nothing else.

Are you getting the idea that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and that any worry along this line is misplaced worry?

“NOR ANY OTHER CREATION” (Romans 8:39)

“Yes, but what about ...”

Please. —MZ

THE ROMANS SERIES

This ends Part 2 of the Romans Series: chapters 5-8. Next week begins Part 3, chapters 9-12. Part 2 began on September 28, 2014. The entire series began on October 5, 2013. I am not yet sure, but this series may be the signature accomplishment of my life. This is not for me to decide. I marvel at the grace and love of God that has enabled me to continue this series ever since I said to Clyde Pilkington in his office on that day in late September, 2013, “I think I’m going to do a series on the book of Romans.” This series has taken on a life of its own and has blessed many. I do thank you for your comments and encouragement. In spite of all trauma and trial, I have kept this thing going. I have kept it going even when keeping it going was the last thing I wanted to do. But you have come through for me, and the love of God has come through for me. The series—the information in the series—has been a source of life for me. It blesses me as much as it has blessed you; I have learned much. For one thing, nothing can separate me from the love of God. God has kept me through this trial, in spite of everything.

The goal is to eventually publish the Romans Series in four volumes. I’m talking about physical books. I want to publish as I go, meaning that Volume 1 should have been out by now, because I completed the writing of Part 1 on September 14, 2014. Yet where is Volume 1? Exactly. I have been too busy writing Volume 2, which has finished today. I breathe a tiny, satisfied sigh of relief on the heels of this accom-

plishment, but that’s all I can afford because Volume 3 begins next Sunday. I will writing Volume 3 on Wednesday. There is probably another 2 1/2 years of labor ahead before the series is finished. I cannot be distracted from accomplishing this labor. I do feel a sense of urgency as well as a sense of destiny.

If there is anyone among my audience wanting to help accomplish what I consider to be extremely noble and important work, I need all of Volume 1 collected into one Adobe InDesign file, to be typeset. I have the native files (most of them, I think) that I can send you. It would help if you already own Adobe InDesign and are familiar with it. You may have to convert some of the pdf files to InDesign text. I don’t know how to do this. It is all I can handle to do what I do. I am a writer. I really need a secretary who has a passion for this kind of literary work, and who is willing to work, as am I, for the

sake of the truth and the Lord. We will receive our fullest wage then, not now.

EMAILS

Please keep writing emails. I am buried, but keep writing. Last week, I went back to June of last year and tried to catch up on my correspondence. I have told you how serious I am about answering every letter, and thanking every single person who has contributed to this work. I know that I have fallen behind. I have fallen behind as my life has, again, dramatically changed. The most important thing to me is to keep the work going—not only the Romans Series, but the daily

Volume 2, Issue 18

ZWTF

Saturday, October 5, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 1
INTRODUCTION

Hello, everyone. This edition of the ZWTF begins a series on the book of Romans, based on A.E. Knoch's *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*.

Are there any sinners out there? Ah ha. I thought so. Do you want to know how God can look you straight in the eye and think well of you? *Read Romans*. Or maybe you want it to work the other way. That is, you want to be at peace with God, even though He comes across at times like a raving lunatic. The prescription is the same. *Read Romans*.

Not only is God not a raving lunatic, but He likes you. It's all in Romans. I swear it is.

A lot of famous people became acquainted with God by reading the book of Romans. (Kim Kardashian is not one of them. She became acquainted with Prada by reading *Elle*.) Martin Luther was one of these famous people. He studied Romans while spending large amounts of time on the toilet. This is a true story. The man had digestive and theological problems simultaneously. (Some believe these maladies were related; I am one of them.) Martin Luther's mind tortured him about whether or not God liked him, or whether God deep down thought he was fat and ugly. (With Luther, there was no middle ground; he was a man of extremes.) *Romans* settled the issue for Martin Luther forever, and it can do the same for you *and* for Kim Kardashian, should the ever choose to read it. The book of Romans allowed Martin Luther to enjoy beer for the rest of his life without feeling guilty.

Tastes great. Less Filling. No guilt. It did make him fat, however. Being pronounced non-guilty by God doesn't alter what sin does to our bodies. Luther's tub o' land proportions failed to frighten the Luther-loving Deity. If Jesus were on earth today, He would definitely drink beer. Unlike Luther, He would know to stop before becoming fat and sassy. Jesus would drink enough to make Him happy and sand the edge off life's horrors. This is the grand, beneficent design of alcohol.

Romans is different than the rest of Scripture. All other Scripture falls short of the grace unveiled by Paul in this letter. All other Scriptures—besides Paul's letters—were penned to Israel and pertain to law. The best thing

audio/video series on Revelation. (I am also contemplating a new video show in the spirit of “The Crack O’ Dawn Report.”) But the very next thing in importance to me, even before publishing books, is maintaining my relationships with all of you. I would be dead without you, probably literally. Your prayers and encouragement have sustained me ever since this work began. I literally lose sleep when I think that I have possibly forgotten to answer someone, or neglected to thank someone. Please be patient with me as I work my way back, and then forward, to catch any mail that I may have missed. This will take months. Correspondence accounts for at least 1/3 of my time and energy, but this fellowship I have with you is vital to both my life and, I hope, to yours. God has put us together, some of us for many years. Because I want to be a friend to all, I put a lot of pressure on myself. Some of you say, “No need to answer, Martin,” but I always answer anyway.

Please know that, if you have not heard from me, it is not because I am too good to answer, or too important to be bothered. Far from it! I am the servant of all of you; this is where I want to be. I would wash the feet of all of you. I am nothing. It may take me months to catch up. Again, please don’t stop writing. Just because I don’t answer right away does not mean I do not read. I read everything. If I can’t get at something right away, I mark it “unread.” Unfortunately, these emails build up. Whatever it takes, you will hear from me. To anyone I have missed, please consider this my greeting to you for now, and my thanks to you for continuing to support this work, which can *only* continue through the generosity of you, the people of God. This work has been organic and freelance since its inception on October 1, 1993. I have never required anything of anyone. Everything you give has been given

freely, from the heart. God loves this kind of giving. The apostle Paul recommends it. We have all been the beneficiaries of it. Many people who we do not even know have been the beneficiaries of it through all the free material on my site, and me giving away hundreds of free books.

I thank God for all of you. Please continue to pray for me, as I pray for you. We have a bond that is closer than blood relation. We are members, in fact, of one Body.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Zender
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Saturday, January 30, 2016

