

## Nothing will be able to separate us from the Love of God! 《Ro 8:31-39》

*Prelude:* The Cross represents the extreme love of God towards the people He knows, and that is not something we can fully comprehend with our humanity. But God wants to show this love to us through our life, and in ways beyond our imagination at times. This love is clearest in paradoxical situations, and revealed most clearly when we go through danger or when in extreme helplessness. Perhaps, up till now, we could be attempting to understand God's love in certain aspect - in way that is compatible with our desire. We dislike the sense of helplessness, the accused feeling, being placed in uncertainty, or we are most afraid to be suppressed by forces that are beyond our strength, to the extent of unable to control our own hearts, minds and conditions. Therefore, when we are in those circumstances, we easily feel "abandoned", our "pain" will stop us from resonating correctly with our relationship with God. Generally, our main response is blaming ourselves for the mistakes committed, and enter into a cycle of helpless questioning of "why", or resigned to fate in helplessness. But, the love of Cross does not reduce because of our ugliness or weak response, in contrary, it's precisely at moment like this that the infinite love of God is revealing to us even more earnestly. We may allow ourselves to sink in the sense of giving up, but it is at this moment that the overwhelming love of God is shown perfectly. Firstly, we ought to ask ourselves genuinely: do we believe in this paradoxical love? It is love not only when we can sense it, instead, it is when we are totally unable to feel it that this love is revealed perfectly. Besides, are we willing to experience and seek this love? Actually, how can we merely be satisfied with love that is in sync with our own desire throughout our lives? Thus, the ending of <Ro 8> is to bring us to the definition of the most sacred love. When we are in the **most depraved state** <Ro 1-3>, and having experienced **grace** that transcends human's imagination <4-6>, entered into the glorious faith in **Christ led by the Holy Spirit** <Ro 7-8>, our faith should have gone through strict introspection and have experienced much. We cannot remain at "love is when we sense it, love is when it is in sync with what I want". Certainly, God desires us to feel it, but it doesn't mean that He will not reveal the deeper love. How then can we experience the great love that surpasses what our humanity can feel? In suffering, we can have a lot of questions or even doubt God much, but God also counter-questions us simultaneously. God's love question us through the foundation of Cross. In the ending of <Ro 8>, there're 5 questions: "Is the love of Cross not worth more than these? Is the Cross insufficient in making us more than conquerors in all things? What we cannot see or feel now, does it mean that we will never see the better ending? Is next second not in the sovereign hand of God? Our faith needs to go through such questioning repeatedly, so that we are led into the state of faith that "deeply believes in the truth". A faith that builds temple is one that deeply believes in the truth, and our spirit is rooted strongly on the foundation of God's promise. From then on, Holy Spirit will anoint us infinitely so that through the love of God, we can be more than conquerors in all hardships.

### 1. The Cross reveals the extent and completeness of God's love for us

#### 1) When we are in weakness and limitation, we unknowingly create a lot of false images of faith

① **When we cannot, we assume that God cannot and is unwilling.** Actually, our inability lies within our boundary, how can we limit the extent of God's power in our own boundary? In return, the truth of God is always telling us that the reason we cannot is because we are always relying on our own strength, while the consistent promise of the bible is God's great power is revealed when we are unable.

② **We always think perfect faith is required before we can be more than conqueror.** Actually, it's God's love and Christ' victory that enable us to have perfect faith. When we are in depravation and unable to save ourselves, it's God who executes the salvational grace. When we are in weakness and do not know how to pray, it's Christ who died, resurrected, ascended to the heaven and intercedes for us at the right hand of the throne, only then can we have the faith to rely on Lord.

③ **We assume that in the good that God is giving us, there should be no pain in humanity.** Firstly, we cannot think that the sadness, pain, anger, dilemma, and disheartenment in our sufferings are unnecessary and uncalled for. Even prophets entered into such state in serving painstakingly. People who love the Lord will have pain in fighting with sin, and we'll surely be affected by our weaknesses and failures. However, this should absolutely not bring us to harbor disbelief towards God or think that God has abandoned us, because the persevering love of God will never leave! He is fulfilling greater things through our sufferings, hence we need to turn our cries into prayers, seek His deeper will; in submission, experience His deeper and more complete love: our vessels have to be expanded as we're refined through sufferings, so that we are brought to desire the good of spirituality.

④ **We think that as long as we've passed the current difficulty, it's victory.** Actually, we're already victorious in Christ. Hence, the true victory Christians need to pursue is to be able to see God's love in all things in his spirit, and let this love be the power and joy of doing all things. Although we're still imperfect in this, this has to be our lifetime pursuit; we should never be satisfied with a faith that seeks only smooth-sailing life.

#### 2) The Cross has destroyed these falsehood, and brings the absolute intercessions of Holy Spirit for us

\* Actually, falsehood (Satan's lies) cause us to experience God's love wrongly. In the false images of faith created by ourselves, we only accept love that matches our heart. We do not allow God's love to deal with us, neither do we let His love transforms our beliefs, and thus we are unable to be strengthened in love. Hence, when the reality is incompatible with our ideals, we doubt God's love quickly. But, the great love of God for us will not allow us to remain in such faith; instead, He wants us to receive genuine experience through the love in truth. Hence, Christ descended from His glorious throne and was born as man, so that He can be at a level where we could relate. However, He also ensured we go through the glory of suffering in the same platform as him. We can be in powerlessness and weakness, but He will support us in this state; He will also resolve the false sense we have towards His love through the truth, and cleanse us with His love so that we can be completely convinced eventually, until we can acknowledge that all realities in heaven, earth, or even hell will be able to hurt us who are foreknown, predestined, called, justified by God, and we're destined to receive glory.

### 2. When the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in accordance with God's will, it surely causes us to ask ourselves 《8:29-31》

#### 1) If God is for us, who can be against us? 《8:31》

\* We Christians are facing the enemy that is far greater than our humanity all of our days. Satan, flesh, the world are all greater than us. When they attack us collectively, which power in our humanity can oppose them? We can simply think about it: When the messenger of Satan brings a thorn to our body, how greatly tortured we are! When the reality of poverty surrounds us, how anxious we are! The desires produced from our flesh daily are controlling us causing us to have fear and powerlessness! Therefore, before such apparent realities, not only did Paul say, "who can be against us". If so, our hearts will produce many reasons that cause us to feel helpless. Paul revealed one truth here, which is "If God is for us". Actually, the scariest thing God say to men is "I am your enemy". When God proclaimed this to the Gentiles through prophets, this was a proof that they would surely be destroyed. When God said this to the rebellious Israel, this represents the reason of their definite downfall. There is no exception in this human history. Hence, if bible says "If God is for us", that is a proof of definite victory. Therefore, when enemy (internal or external) grows stronger, we should not consider their power all the more, or try to find a way out with our wit, instead, we should strengthen our spirituality with this truth.

#### 2) God gave up His only Son for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? 《8:32》

\* There is a very genuine characteristics in our humanity, ie "need". For eg: need basic necessities, need love, need to be happy, need to be affirmed, need to be protected, need to have worth etc. From the standpoint of a creation, there's nothing wrong with these needs, but our depraved nature will cause us to depart from the source (God) of provision, entering into endless needs. Therefore, a lot of people commit grave sins because of the needs produced from selfish desires. Actually, theft, robbery, lies, adultery, drug trafficking, murdering are all from the needs that have changed in the nature. To us who are greatly loved children of God, one of our pains is the torture we experience from the needs that cannot be satisfied. Because of our current need and demands, we will have a kind of doubt in our spirit - "Will God provide for all of our needs?" The bible gives us a very precise answer here - instead of listening to our needs and seek satisfaction endlessly, Lord would want us to consider a truth first, ie the death of Christ. Who sent Him to death? It wasn't Judah who loved money, Pilate who was afraid to lose the status in the people's hearts, not the Jew who were filled with jealousy, and also not the brutal Roman soldiers. Instead, it was the Father God who loves us who sent Him to death. Why did He do this? From the perspective of eternity, this is because He loves us completely; from the perspective of current life, this is because there're far too many situations in our earthly living that can bring disbeliefs into our lives; hence He uses the greatest price to exchange for our trust, so then we're not only convinced, but we also understand that in order to enjoy the blessings in all things, we need to enjoy them with the death and resurrection of Christ (the great love of God).

#### 3) Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? 《8:33》

\* It is a reality in Christian living that even after believing in the Lord, we will still fall into weaknesses and transgressions. Hence, the charges that Satan brings appear to be reasonable in our conscience. <Rev 12:10> says he is the one who accuses the brothers before God day and night, and he is a spiritual accuser with proofs. But here, the bible clearly says that his charge is ineffective because our Mediator Jesus Christ had already paid for our sins. He died and resurrected for us, and through Him, our union is proclaimed as righteous. This shows that we're already proclaimed innocent in the spiritual court. Here, we need to know that the accusations come from Satan who has been judged, but he is always accusing fiercely day and night and thus the world is filled with voices of accusations (rebuke, blame, condemn of sin). Hence, in enjoying Christ' victory, we need to safeguard our hearts through relying on the love of God and not to entertain any accusations. Our transgressions need to bring us to repentance, not remaining in accusations. Accusations cause us to be more self-centered, wanting to protect self, proving self through good deeds. But true repentance is dying with Lord, not accepting accusations, only to follow Lord by carrying a heart of renewal and gratitude.

#### 4) Who then is the one who condemns? No one. 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. 《8:34》

\* Here, the bible once again emphasizes the matters concerning condemnation, because this is a very realistic problem our weak humanity always faces. Actually, our hearts condemn us easily, because we live in front of our conscience. Hence, we feel hurt easily by people's comments, objections or oppositions. When a problem appears, we may easily start from a mentality of being cautious of self; if we have not done wrongly directly, we are unwilling to take up any consequences. Such heart is indeed a great distance away from our Lord's. But this also reveals that the heart of condemnation is hidden within us, although we're no longer condemned in Christ, we're still retaining this condemned mentality in some ways. Here, Lord wants us to have complete freedom. The bible has specifically emphasized that Christ has died, resurrected, ascended to the heaven and interceding at the right hand of God for our sins. This reveals that Father God accepted the sacrifice of His son for us, and gave Him the highest authority to intercede for us so that we can wage war against devil, rebukes of men and the rough patches in all things, and that we can ask God boldly for strength to conquer all these.

#### 5) When the love of God has been revealed sufficiently, who (what) shall separate us from the love of Christ? 《8:35》

\* God mentioned 7 possibilities in the last question to proclaim even these cannot separate us from the love of God. The first 3 things: trouble, hardship, or persecution show the pressure and suffering created by the world that opposes God and men; the other 2 things: famine and nakedness, reveal the insufficiency of basic needs; the final 2 things: danger or sword, reveals the danger of life and death, or the coming of death. All these are truths which are often avoided in the teachings of prosperity theology, only seeking for victory in reality, thinking it strengthens the faith by avoiding these trials. Indeed, will such tragedies happen on us who are loved? Certainly possible! Today, a lot of blessed people in the church are facing such trials. But here, it mentions that the reasons why they face all these are not due to their transgressions or disobedience, instead, it comes because they yield themselves to the gospel, just like what were experienced by the believers in <Heb 11:35-39>. Actually, for Lord's sake, do we face death all day long? Do we lead a life that delights in the Lord as we set apart from the world? Do we suffer trouble or pressure in evangelizing and saving sinners? When we suffer all these in submitting to God, the help, support and anointing of Holy Spirit will increase tremendously in our hearts, so that we can confirm that we are truly people who receive the great love of God. At that moment, our hearts will turn into Lord's heart, our glory is Lord's glory and we reflect His glory; grace is added upon grace, as glory is added upon glory. This is the peak of life that <Ro 8> wants to bring us towards - in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!

### 3. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us 《8:37-39》

#### 1) How to have victory through relying on the Lord who loves us?

\* Although there is distance between Lord and our love, the love of God can enable us to love Him infinitely. As we continue to train ourselves to live by relying on the Lord who loves us, the love towards Lord within us grows, and that love will greatly strengthen our weak spirituality. Firstly, we need to know that to rely on the Lord who loves us is not seeking refuge proactively, it comes from: ① discover that through our own helplessness and powerlessness, God wants to reveal His love there; ② Fight against the heart and mind that doubts God's love. Practically speaking: ask ourselves repeatedly until we can stand in the truths of <Ro 8:31-35>; ③ Do not act by listening to the heart that doubts God's love. Instead, through testing and approving, act through an affirmed heart; ④ Do not run away from experiencing God's present love, for the bible says "in all these things", hence do not wait until the hardships come to an end. We ought to know, the experience of having conquered all things can be subjective, and is at the current moment; ⑤ Continue to participate in the suffering and glory of the Lord, and experience the supernatural great love of the Holy Spirit.

#### 2) Finally, our experiences in faith need to be "subjective" and receive "affirmation"

\* The conclusion of <Ro 8> is "I'm convinced", this includes "I'm affirmed", and bears the intent of "continue to be convicted". Why Paul had such conviction? Before this conviction, he went through the journey of <Ro 1-8> - depravation, coming of grace, life led by the Spirit, the victory he realized through the struggle and dilemma brought by Satan, sin, flesh and the world. We can know a lot of theological truth through <Romans>, but eventually, our Christian faith living is driven by what we are convinced of. Some people seem to believe, or somewhat believe yet not deep enough, hence he always has reservation in following Lord and unable to take the stride of faith boldly. But some people are convinced, and thus they cannot waste time or walk other road. His direction is firm, pressing in his prayer and focused in his living, hence he preaches the gospel in and out of seasons. In all that he's doing, he does for the Lord who loves and always convicts him. This is the outcome brought by <Ro 8>.

\*What are the contents of Paul's conviction? ① **Neither death, nor life - the danger of life and death and all tragedies in life** (Paul had not died, but the grace of the Holy Spirit experienced by him through the Cross had enabled him to be convicted); ② **Neither angels nor demons, nor powers - the one that is spiritual and surpasses human's power** (although Paul had never seen the state of the spiritual world, he knew and confirmed it through the countless spiritual battles he went through); ③ **Neither the present nor the future - time** (Paul had not been to tomorrow, but in prayers, he had transcended the pessimism and fear in all situations); ④ **Neither height nor death - space** (Paul went through various trying situations eg broken ship, deep sea, prison, robbery, dangerous rivers etc. The height here could also refer to the astrology that control man's destiny believed by the Greeks); ⑤ **Nor anything else in all creation - all creation and power of universe, regardless of our awareness of them** (through repeated self-questioning, Paul deeply knew that if God could spare His most precious (only Son) for us, nothing could separate us from the love of God).

#### 3) The love of God is to be known objectively and experienced subjectively

\*We cannot assume that we've believed, neither can we deceive ourselves saying we've known. The love of God is infinite and true, and thus it surely stands the test of our various experiences. If we cannot find God's love in the weaknesses, situations or difficulties that naturally will become the reason why we cannot rejoice and give thanks. We may say, the greatest work of the Spirit on saints is to sustain our faith with great perseverance. Secondly, He helps us in experiencing the power of this love in all things, revealing the evidences of being loved. May the ending of <Ro 8> becomes another starting point of our faith experience, and causes us to start seeking, relying and testifying the living that is centering on the love of God, giving all glory to the God who loves us completely.