

## Sunday Update

20#6#21

### Romans 8:31-39

*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 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? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is the one who 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. 35 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. 38 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.*

Craig’s mum came to me one day. Craig has a question: “why did God make midges?” It is a brilliant question, just the kind of question that a child’s enquiring mind would come up with. It took me a couple of days to find an answer: “food for birds!” I felt quite pleased with myself until I was telling someone else the story; he came up with the answer immediately and I felt just a little deflated. Asking questions is a great way of learning; how can we find out information that we don’t know unless we ask someone else? Though sometimes those who ask questions can feel a little bit embarrassed for one of 2 reasons: either they feel embarrassed to ask a question because it shows their ignorance, or they feel embarrassed because they feel as if they are making a nuisance of themselves. No embarrassment is necessary - just ask the question! The chances are that at least half of the other members of the group are glad that you were brave enough to do ask the question they wanted to ask but were too scared!

Romans 8 is one of the most positive chapters in the whole Bible, with great themes all the way through it affirming some of the most profound results of the gospel. If it was a piece of music, then it would swell all the way through and then come to the most magnificent climax at the end, with every instrument giving everything it’s got to bring the piece to the highest and best ending one could dream up. The chapter begins with a great affirmation – “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (v.1) – and goes on to describe the Spirit living in us, the hope of glory that is ours in Christ, and then the climax when Paul declares that nothing can separate us from God’s love for us in Jesus. To arrive at that climax, the apostle asks what John Stott describes as “5 unanswerable questions”; I’m not quite sure why Stott calls them “unanswerable” because the answers are all there. These questions allow Paul to open up some big themes for our lives and for our faith.

*“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (v. 31) This is the first of these five questions. The whole of the gospel tells us that God is for us; everything God has done is for us and for our blessing, in one way or another. When God is for us, there is nothing or no-one that can stand against us. The second question takes that a stage further: God has given us the indescribable gift of His Son, so “*will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*” (v.32) God has done the greatest thing, “the unspeakably great and costly thing” (Cranfield), by giving us Jesus, so Paul is full of confidence that God cannot but do the lesser thing and give us everything else that we need. It may not feel it at times, but God has given us everything that we need for life, for faith and for salvation; our salvation is complete and there is nothing lacking simply because God has given us Jesus and God is for us. This is

what the whole of the gospel is about in the Bible; sometimes the words that it uses are complicated words, but the whole gist of the gospel is that God has done great things for us and we have everything we need because we have Jesus.

Questions 3 and 4 reinforce that by asking two questions about our experience of life. Both take us into the court of law, where we might find adversaries. *"Who will bring any charge...?"* (v.33) The court, in a sense, wants to bring a charge against you; what sins have you committed? What stands against you on the clipboard of life? In the Bible, the law brought these charges against the people because it kept a record of wrongs done, commands broken, of faults and failings. Equally there is part of us that continues to remember our faults and failings and tries to accuse us of wrongdoing and condemn us for falling short. Then we go a step further: *"Who is he that condemns?"* (v.34) Well, we know that we are sinners, with lots of faults, failings and mistakes, but remember where this chapter starts: *"there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (v.1) and that message is reinforced in answer to both of these questions: there is no charge against because God has justified us, God has declared us forgiven; the divine clipboard is wiped clean and because God forgives, no-one else can bring any charge against us or condemn us. The only One who could condemn us is Jesus; He is the Judge of everyone, but He is the One who died for us and who prays for us now.

Finally, we come to the last question! Can you hear the music swelling? *"Who can separate us from the love of Christ?"* (v.35) This is the ultimate question for many people; does God still love us? We often have a sense that something has got in the way of God's love for us. It might be a bad experience of life, or some difficult circumstances, or some fault or failing of our own. When life has been like that, we consider that God has gone away and that His love for us is at the very least diminished if not gone away altogether. On the other hand, this question gives Paul the opportunity to describe his "firm, unshakable conviction" (Stott) that nothing is able to separate us from the love that God has for us in Jesus. We may not sense the love, but the apostle is convinced that the love has not gone away; we may doubt the love, but from God's side the love is as strong as ever.

Here is a piece of Bible to make you walk 6 inches taller. Here is a piece of Bible to give us confidence and hope, to be assured that what God has done actually makes a difference to our lives. This is not self-confidence to make us complacent, but this is confidence in God: He gives us all of these good gifts because He loves us and not because we deserve them; these are gifts of His grace. We are who and what we are because of the grace of God. God is for us; God has done the greatest thing by giving us Jesus and so everything else comes along with Jesus; God has forgiven us and the slate is wiped clean; the only One who can condemn us is the One who died for us and saves us; His love conquers everything and we are loved for ever. This is us; this is God for us; this is who we are in Christ. We can walk tall and be confident; we can be glad; we can worship God with a full heart; we can believe and find hope, help and salvation.

I always love it when someone says "I've got a question for you!" I never know what's coming. Sometimes it is a simple question with a straightforward answer; sometimes it is one of today's 5 big questions. It doesn't matter. It means you've been reading the Bible, or there is something that you've been thinking about. Small question or large, keep asking them and I'll keep trying to find the answers. By doing that, we will uncover some wonderful things from the gospel, or some great truths about God, or find a deeper understanding of Jesus. It's all good!

*Prayer: Thank You that You are for us and that nothing or no-one can stand against us; thank You that there is forgiveness for us and there is no condemnation; thank You that Your love is endless, and*

*nothing can separate us from Your love. Lord, open our eyes to see these great truths from Your word and open our hearts to enjoy them; make our faith stronger and our love for Jesus deeper today.*

*Day by day, dear Lord of you*

*Three things I pray:*

*To see you more clearly,*

*To love you more dearly,*

*To follow you more nearly,*

*Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people weighed down with a sense of failure, their guilty conscience condemning them for their faults and mistakes; Lord, help them to know that there is forgiveness with You; Jesus died that we might be forgiven.
- For people who consider that God has gone away from their lives and that God has stopped loving them; restore their souls and ease the struggle.
- For people who have contracted Covid and are in hospital, that they make a good recovery; those NHS staff who are caring for them.
- For people who mourn because a loved one has died; help them to find comfort and peace; for the process of grief that goes on and for those who feel the effects of lockdown on their deepest emotions and feelings of loss, even if that lasts for years.
- For the continued roll-out of the vaccine to be efficient and effective, reaching the people who need it most; for the vaccine to make people safe, as promised.
- For communities to flourish! For the opening-up of things after lockdown; more businesses looking to open, but some are struggling because of a shortage of staff, especially in the hospitality industry and for those whose business is their livelihood; continue to pray for safety and for good health for the population; let any spikes and variants be brought under control and that people will behave responsibly so that communities can flourish in so many different ways. For those who work and are still on furlough; for those who work and have been back to work in an office for at least some of the time;
- For people who are still isolating, still spending time on their own again and feeling afraid; for people in care homes, beginning to meet family again, and the staff who care for them. For the anxiety created by any kind of social contact; for the gaps left in the social interaction of many people, adding to their sense of isolation.
- For schools: for school holidays at the end of this week, families spending time together again; teachers looking for rest and refreshment; Lord, keep families safe and let everyone enjoy the summer.
- For the Church of Scotland, wrestling with the aftermath of the General Assembly, to have in our hearts a sense of mission, looking to bring the good news of Jesus to the people of Scotland!
- For Churches, some buildings open and some still closed; help them to care for all of their people; may the technology be a lifeline for lots of people; help churches across Scotland to be a light in their community and share the light of Jesus with others.
- For our Holiday Club, July 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> in the grounds of Heriot-Watt University; for children to be involved; for Heather leading and for the team she has put together; for *Jungle Adventure* to be done outdoors and lead people to discover new things about Jesus.
- For people we know...
- This week, take time to think about these words and pray them into your own heart: *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures for ever.” (Psalm 107:1)*

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love:

O worship the King [O Worship the King all glorious above. - YouTube](#)  
Shine Jesus shine [SHINE, JESUS SHINE BIG SING at ROYAL ALBERT HALL,LONDON 30 12 2012 - YouTube](#)  
The Saviour died but rose again [Paraphrase 48 - The Saviour died, but rose again - YouTube](#)  
Jesus lover of my soul [Jesu, Lover of My Soul \(Tune: Aberystwyth\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)  
Christ be in my waking [Christ be in my waking - YouTube](#)

Remember the prayer e-mail line at [prayerigpc@gmail.com](mailto:prayerigpc@gmail.com)

#### Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- For this Sunday there will be an in-person service in our church building alongside the Zoom services; over the next few weeks, we'd be glad of feedback as to how these services have gone as far as you've been concerned, wherever you have been, either on-line or in the building.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the "sermons" tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – [www.jgpc.org.uk](http://www.jgpc.org.uk)
- If you have a smartphone, a tablet or an i-pad, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

**DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS** - New issues of "Our Daily Bread" Booklets for June, July and August are now available. Please contact Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange copies. Other Bible Study materials are also available with Ian Aitken. **Let the Bible feed you.**

#### Holiday Club 2021

I am delighted that the restrictions are lightening in such a way that an in-person holiday club can take place this summer. Last year we ran holiday club online over Zoom, and while fun and enjoyable, we can't wait to be face to face with children again and be in one place together. We are partnering with SU Scotland again this year and using material called *Jungle Adventure*, a resource that is brand new for 2021 and one that is taking us outdoors to explore the Bible, learn more about who God is and wonder at Him through creation. The club will run for 5 mornings from 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> July in the grounds of Heriot Watt University. I wanted to let you all know our plans and to ask for you to pray. Pray for restrictions to continue to change in our favour, pray for ongoing conversations with HWU as we finalise details on using space there, pray for the children and team who will be there (we already have 9 children signed up to come!), pray for God's protection and safety over every aspect, pray for God's creativity and guidance to be with us as we plan. However, we also need some equipment to help us embrace the outdoors whatever the Scottish weather may be! We are on the lookout for a couple of gazebos or event shelters, some windbreaks and groundsheets or tarpaulins. If you happen to have any of those things and would be willing to lend them to us for use that week, please get in touch with me. And if you know of any children aged P4-7 who may be interested in

joining in our Jungle Adventure, then let me know and I can pass on details of how they can book.  
Thanks, Heather.

## God's unchanging love

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

### Prepare yourself...

Loving God,  
We join together today and look to you.  
Thank you for being with us throughout  
this last week,  
For being with us now,  
For being with us always.  
Remind us today of who you are and  
how much you love us.  
We give you praise and glory.  
**Amen.**

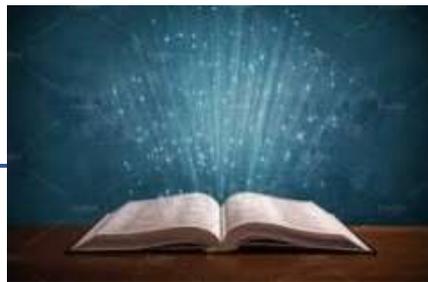


### Question...

Who or what do you love?



### Read the Bible...



Today's verses are found in **Romans 8:31-39**. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

It's hard for us to imagine what 'forever' is like. We use the word 'forever' to describe something that last a long time according to our own opinions and feelings. Some things might feel like they last forever, but really, they don't. One day they will end or run out or expire. Except God's love. God's unchanging and eternal love truly does last forever. It never ends, and we can trust that God loves us no matter what we face. Here's another message you might want to read: [The Father's love letter](#)

## Talk together...



- How do you know someone loves you?
- How do you know God loves you?
- What can we learn about God and His love from this passage in Romans?
- Why do you think Paul felt he had to write about God's love to the Romans? What might have been happening in their lives at that time?
- In what situation do you need to remember and trust that God loves you?
- Do you think it's important people know about God's unchanging love? Why/why not?
- How can we tell others about or show others God's love?

## Play together...

### Love charades

On individual slips of paper, write out some actions that demonstrate love. For example: hug someone, hold the door open, sweep the floor, pray for a friend, write thank you letters, donating to a food bank etc.

Put all the papers into a bowl and mix them up. Take turns to pick one out and mime the action for everyone else to guess.



## Pray together...

Dear God,

**Thank you that you love me.  
Thank you for knowing me.  
Thank you for being with me.  
Thank you for never changing.  
Amen.**

Cut out a paper heart for each person. Write 'God loves me' and your name on the heart. Colour or decorate the shape and display it somewhere as a reminder.

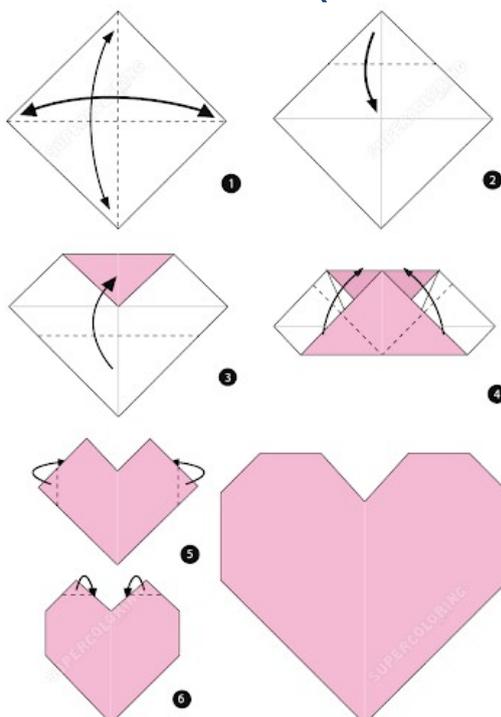
## Make something...

### Origami hearts

Using a square of paper follow the instructions opposite to fold some origami hearts.

Perhaps you could attach string to them as a hanging decoration, or give them out to people you love. You could even write a message on the front for someone.

Be creative in how you could use them as a reminder of God's love as well as to show love to others.



## Praise together...



[Nothing can separate us](#)  
– Noel Richards

[The love of the father](#) –  
CityAlight

[Whom shall I fear](#) –  
Chris Tomlin

[How broad, how long](#)