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Nor Anything Else

Romans 8.38-39

Series: The Pure Gospel

Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.

The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.”
 - 1. That quote has been attributed to Mark Twain
 - a. As it turns out, it just ain’t so
 - b. Mark Twain never said it
- B. It makes you wonder, if a quote that you know for sure is from Mark Twain turns out to be “just ain’t so,” what other things are we sure of that “just ain’t so?”
- C. Being sure of something – of anything – can be fraught with danger
 - 1. Even in the realm of science we’re told to “trust the science”, or that we should rely on the “assured results of scientific investigation”
 - 2. But anybody that says that really doesn’t understand what science is all about
 - 3. I speak as a scientist in this matter; I was trained as a behavioral scientist in the academic tradition of empirical, data-driven, inductive inquiry
 - 4. And the fly in the ointment of the so-called “assured results of science” is the little principle of falsifiability
 - a. No matter how much data are collected, and no matter how many experiments one might conduct, in any area of inquiry
 - b. There is always the possibility that additional data or other experiments will falsify previous “assured” results
 - 5. And the history of science is littered with examples of things that we “know for sure” that turn out to be “just ain’t so”
 - a. Science is necessarily always a tentative enterprise
- D. So when we encounter a text that begins with “For I am sure...”
 - 1. It raises some eyebrows
- E. Of course scripture has a different status than scientific conclusions
 - 1. **2 Timothy 3:16** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God ...
 - 2. God is the source of scripture
 - 3. And the scripture is authoritative
 - a. Jesus Himself said, “Scripture cannot be broken” (**John 10.35**)
 - 4. And the scripture is powerful and effective in its design
 - 5. **Hebrews 4:12** (ESV) —

- a. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - 6. **Isaiah 55:10–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
 - b. 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
 - F. So this morning we have this scripture
 - 1. Paul is the human author
 - a. But he is speaking as God would have him speak
 - 2. And he says... “For I am sure...”
 - G. What is he so sure about?
 - 1. And can we also be sure?
 - H. **Romans 8:38–39** (ESV) —
 - 1. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life,
 - 2. nor angels nor rulers,
 - 3. nor things present nor things to come,
 - 4. nor powers,
 - 5. 39 nor height nor depth,
 - 6. nor anything else in all creation,
 - 7. will be able to separate us
 - 8. from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - I. This is the concluding text in our study of Romans 8
 - 1. Romans 8 – that great chapter, the diamond in this glorious setting of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 2. A chapter which is devoted to being sure
 - a. Being sure of our salvation in Jesus Christ
 - J. And it is a fitting text to lead us into our encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper
 - 1. As we remember His death on our behalf
 - 2. And as we receive Him through receiving the emblems of His death, His body and blood
 - K. Can we be sure that His body and His blood has indeed accomplished for us the eternal salvation that God has promised?
- II. **The Assurance Argument**
- A. Paul has been engaged in an assurance argument for this entire chapter
 - 1. He has been piling up evidence upon evidence, truth upon truth
 - a. That God has in fact accomplished salvation for all those who will ever believe in His Son, Jesus Christ

- B. He began by saying that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8.1**)
1. How can he be sure?
 2. Because God sent His own Son in the likeness of human flesh, and condemned sin in the flesh
 - a. So that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us
 - b. As we walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh (**Romans 8.3-4**)
- C. He affirms that if the Spirit of God dwells in you, the Spirit of God will also give life to your mortal bodies (**Romans 8.11**)
- D. And he tells us that we who have the Spirit dwelling in us have been adopted into the family of God
1. For the Spirit who dwells within us enables us to speak intimately with God, and cry, “Abba, Father”
 2. And the Spirit testifies with our spirits that we belong to Him (**Romans 8.15-16**)
- E. He further tells us that the sufferings of our present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (**Romans 8.18**)
1. That we, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, along with the rest of the creation
 2. As we wait for the redemption of our bodies (**Romans 8.23**)
- F. And he tells us that the Spirit helps us in our weakness
1. He prays for us when we cannot even pray for ourselves
 2. Interceding for the saints according to the will of God (**Romans 8.26-27**)
- G. And then the argument for assurance crescendos even further with a series of incontrovertible truths
- H. **Romans 8:28** (ESV) —
1. 28 And we know that for those who love God
 2. all things work together for good,
 3. for those who are called according to his purpose.
- I. No matter what happens to us – whether good things or bad, pleasant or painful
1. God will accomplish His purpose in us
 2. And it will all be for our ultimate and eternal welfare
- J. And then comes the Golden chain which drives that great truth
- K. **Romans 8:29–30** (ESV) —
1. 29 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 among many brothers.
 2. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called,
 3. and those whom he called he also justified,
 4. and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- L. Every single one whom God knew lovingly in eternity past, He predestined
1. Not predestined to have a happy life in this corrupt and troubled world
 - a. But predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son
- M. And every single one whom God predestined, He called

1. By His Spirit, regenerating us, making us alive from being spiritually dead, born again
- N. And every single one whom God called, He justified
 1. He declared us not guilty, imputing to us the righteousness of Christ, even as Christ carried our sin to the cross
- O. And every single one whom God justified, He glorified
 1. Speaking of the end as if already completed
 - a. Our transformation from sinner to glorified saint, remade in the image of Jesus Christ, complete
- P. Which, then leads him to raise the crescendo even further
 1. **Romans 8:31** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 ... If God is for us, who can be against us?
 2. And the argument at this point is unassailable
 3. **Romans 8:32** (ESV) —
 - a. 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,
 - b. how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 4. Does God really love us?
 - a. How can you ever doubt again that God loves you, once you realize that God gave His Son up for us all?
 - b. And how can you ever doubt again that God will fail to take us the distance if He has already given us the greatest gift of all?
- Q. And then Paul takes us into the courtroom and presses the case for assurance even further
 1. **Romans 8:33–34** (ESV) —
 - a. 33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?
 - b. It is God who justifies.
 - c. 34 Who is to condemn?
 - d. Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
- R. And finally, he argues that of all the things that might assault us, try to tear us apart from our Savior
 1. Tribulation, distress, persecution
 2. Famine, nakedness
 3. Danger, or sword
 4. None of those things can separate us from the love of Christ
- S. In fact, they all fade into insignificance as in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (**Romans 8.35-37**)
 1. More than conquerors – **hypernikao (Gk) – super victors!**
- T. That’s Paul’s assurance argument
 1. And as arguments go, it is unassailable

III. **The Assurance Testimony**

- A. Which then leads Paul from argument to testimony
 1. As he says, **“For I am sure...” (Romans 8.38)**

2. As Paul contemplates all the glorious arguments in Romans 8, he is driven to conclude that there is no room for doubt
 - a. No reason to delay deliberations
 - b. No reason wait for additional data
 - c. It's time to pull the trigger
3. He transitions from mounting evidence upon evidence
 - a. To owning it all for himself
4. He stakes his life on these truths
 - a. And as you know, he was willing to go through anything
 - b. Any kind of suffering and persecution and beating and imprisonment
 - c. Even death
 - d. Because he was sure of what Jesus Christ had done for him
 - e. Personally!
- B. Are you ready to make it personal?
 1. Are you ready to own it?
 2. Are you ready take it from argument to testimony?
- C. You know, all the argument in the world
 1. No matter how incontrovertible it is
 - a. Is worthless unless it becomes your testimony
 - b. Unless you own it
 - c. Unless you make it your own
- D. The church – indeed, seminaries! – are filled with people who know all the arguments
 1. But who have never owned it
 - a. Never staked their lives on it
- E. It's like straddling the continental divide in the United States
 1. Where on one side, a drop of water eventually finds its way into the Atlantic Ocean
 - a. And on the other side, a drop of water ends up in the Pacific Ocean
 2. They start out inches from each other
 - a. And end up worlds apart
- F. If you don't make the arguments your testimony, you could end up far from your intended destination
- G. But let's see what Paul is so assured of
 1. Why he is so willing to stake his life on the truths of this chapter

IV. **Ten Universal Negatives**

- A. Paul identifies ten universal negatives
 1. Most of them expressed in matched pairs
 - a. Each of which identify opposing aspects of particular domains of human experience
 2. But taken together, they are meant to communicate a comprehensive universality of dimensions of reality that are unable to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus

- B. Here's the text:
1. **Romans 8:38–39** (ESV) —
 - a. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life,
 - b. nor angels nor rulers,
 - c. nor things present nor things to come,
 - d. nor powers,
 - e. 39 nor height nor depth,
 - f. nor anything else in all creation,
 - g. will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- C. **Death nor life**
1. This pair addresses the **domain of human existence**
 - a. All humans live; all humans die
 - b. That's the testimony of all humans
 2. And Paul says not anything in life, nor even in death, are we who trust in Jesus able to be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus
 3. Paul has already listed a host of things that we experience in life which threaten our existence and doubt the love of God
 - a. Tribulation, distress, persecution
 - b. Famine, nakedness
 - c. Danger, sword
 4. All of those things and more he considers collectively in the term "life"
 - a. Not any of those things, nor anything else in what we call "life" is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ
 5. And then the opposite of life is death
 - a. And not even dying is able to separate us
 6. **Philippians 1:21–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
 - b. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.
 - c. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.
 7. **Romans 14:7–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.
 - b. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.
 8. Nothing in the domain of human existence can separate us from the love of God in Christ
- D. **Angels nor rulers**
1. Angels, we would presume, would be good angels
 - a. Rulers, which are called principalities in other translations, would be evil angels
 2. These represent the **domain of spiritual beings**

- a. No spiritual beings – either good or evil – are able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- 3. Now it's easy to see how evil angels, or demons – rulers in this verse – would be out to get us, out to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus
 - a. But Paul says, no!
 - b. No evil angel can wrest control of believers so as to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- 4. **1 John 4:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 ... he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
- 5. But what about good angels?
 - a. That doesn't make much sense, does it?
 - b. How would good angels separate us from the love of God in Christ?
- 6. Well, there is much to attract us to good angels
 - a. Remember, John in Revelation was tempted to worship good angels
 - b. He had to be restrained!
- 7. And even in today's substitute religions – like new age religions – there is often a preoccupation with angels!
 - a. But no!
 - b. Paul says, no good angel will be able to distract you as a genuine believer, separating you from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- 8. So, in the domain of human existence
 - a. And in the domain of spiritual beings
 - b. Nothing can separate you, believer, from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- E. **Things present nor things to come**
 - 1. This has to do with the **domain of time**
 - 2. You are a believer now
 - a. Which means nothing in the past has separated you from the love of God in Christ
 - 3. But there is nothing present that can separate you
 - a. And there is nothing in the future – whatever unknowns the future entails
 - b. Nothing in the future can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus
 - 4. The great anxiety producer is worry about the future
 - a. We don't know what the future brings
 - b. But let me tell you what the future doesn't bring
 - c. It doesn't bring anything that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus!
 - 5. So, believer, stop worrying about the future!
 - a. That doesn't mean you don't make plans about the future

- b. But it doesn't mean you fret over what the future has in store for you
- 6. Which, truth be told, may throw all of our plans into the ash heap!
 - a. Whatever time has for us – it cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ!
- 7. For many of us, time is not our friend
 - a. We have already been here long enough, we think!
 - b. But if you're still here, know that however long God leaves you here, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ

F. **Powers**

- 1. This is one of elements not paired with an opposite
 - a. But in scripture this term, used by itself, tends to mean the miraculous
 - b. So Paul addresses the **domain of the extraordinary**
 - c. The domain of that which astonishes and provokes our amazement
- 2. Perhaps it may represent the activity of the spiritual beings
 - a. Or perhaps it speaks of natural phenomena like earthquakes and hurricanes
- 3. But whatever it is, nothing in the domain of the extraordinary can separate you, believer, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus

G. **Height nor depth**

- 1. Here Paul addresses the **domain of space**
- 2. He's already addressed the domain of human existence, the domain of spiritual beings, the domain of time, and the domain of the extraordinary
 - a. Now he addresses the domain of space
 - b. There is no space – height nor depth – that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- 3. **Psalm 139:7–10 (ESV)** —
 - a. 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
 - b. Or where shall I flee from your presence?
 - c. 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
 - d. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
 - e. 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
 - f. 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.
- 4. There is no place on this planet
 - a. Or on any planet
 - b. Where God's love may not embrace you
- 5. We've been to the moon
 - a. Even on the moon, you cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- 6. There is talk about going to Mars
 - a. Even on Mars, if you were to go there, you cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus

- H. **Anything else**
1. And if that isn't comprehensive enough, Paul adds **"and anything else in all creation"**
 2. There is no loophole in assurance
 - a. No escape clause
 - b. No hidden trap door
 - c. No exception
 - d. No "catch 22"
 3. The domain of human existence
 - a. The domain of spiritual beings
 - b. The domain of time
 - c. The domain of the extraordinary powers
 - d. The domain of space
 4. And now, anything else
 - a. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus!
- I. Do you believe that?
1. Is there any reason to be anxious about anything?
 2. That's why Paul could say
 3. **Philippians 4:6** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 do not be anxious about anything...
 4. Why?
 - a. Because nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus
 - b. Not existence
 - c. Not angels
 - d. Not time
 - e. Not the miraculous
 - f. Not space
 5. No – nothing
 - a. Just what part of "nor anything else" don't you understand?

- V. **The Beginning and End of Assurance**
- A. This has been a glorious chapter
 1. I hate to leave it behind
 - a. Maybe we should start over and do it again!
 - B. This chapter on assurance began with **"There is no condemnation"**
 1. And now the chapter ends with **"There is no separation"**
 - C. Because there is no condemnation, there can be no separation!
 1. They are bookends that embrace the entire spectrum of assurance
 - D. If you trust Jesus alone for your salvation
 1. Not trusting in your self, your own righteousness – for you have none
 2. Not trusting in your church membership – for unless you belong to Christ, church membership is meaningless
 3. Not trusting in your parent's faith – for you must have your own
 4. Not presuming on God's grace, but casting yourself on His mercy

- E. But trusting Jesus alone – His life, death and resurrection – for your salvation
 - 1. If you trust Jesus alone for your salvation, there is no condemnation and no separation
 - 2. Separation from the love of God in Christ Jesus
- F. Paul has talked about the love of God
 - 1. God foreknew
 - 2. God predestined
 - 3. God called
 - 4. God justified
 - 5. God glorified
 - 6. God have His Son
- G. And Paul has talked about the love of Christ
 - 1. Christ died
 - 2. Christ was raised
 - 3. Christ is at the right hand of God
 - 4. Christ is interceding for us
 - 5. And we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us
- H. And so now Paul brings it all together in this final verse
 - 1. “... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 - 2. The love of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord
 - a. The inseparable Father and Son
 - b. Who along with the Spirit giving us Christ in us – the hope of glory
 - c. Who pours into our hearts the love of God
 - 3. They all conspire to bring us a salvation which is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (**1 Peter 1.4**)

VI. Conclusion

- A. Is that your testimony?
 - 1. When you receive the emblems of our Savior’s death in this communion, is that your assurance?