

That We Might Bear Fruit For God

Lesson 10

Fruit bearing assured for the Christian who "walks in the Spirit"
(Romans 8:31-39)

By F. M. Perry

“(31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (33) Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; (34) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ (37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31-39 NASV).

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Fruit bearing assured for the Christian who “walks in the Spirit.”
(Romans 8:31-39).

Questions for study:

1. To what do the words "these things" refer in Romans 8:31? List God's provisions "for us" which Paul discussed in the Roman letter up to this point.
2. "Who is against" the Christian in his "walk in the Spirit?" Who has tried to "bring a charge against God's elect?" Who has tried to "condemn?" Are Paul's questions asking for information? Or, are they challenges to well known individuals and forces? (Romans 8:32-39).
3. What is the nature of the well known worldly afflictions listed by Paul in Romans 8:35 (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword)? Is there any respect-of-persons in these afflictions as to who they strike, Christians only, or everyone indiscriminately?
4. If a Christian dies in a famine from lack of food, or if a Christian is killed in an auto accident or in an act of warfare, does his death bring failure to his "walk in the Spirit?" How might the worldly afflictions of Romans 8:35 bring about a failure of a Christian to "bear fruit for God?"
5. Relate the thought of Psalm 44:22 (which Paul quoted in Romans 8:36) to the worldly afflictions and disasters which Paul mentioned in Romans 8:35. What does this quotation from the Psalms teach us concerning the desired Christian reaction to the kind of things mentioned in Romans 8:35? What is God's answer to the Christian who blames God when catastrophe strikes and cries out, "Why me?" or "Why my innocent child?"
6. How do the forces listed by Paul in Romans 8:38-39 (death, life,

angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing) differ from the afflictions listed in Romans 8:35? How might these forces work to separate us from the love of God?

7. Is God the Father "for" His own Son, Jesus? If so, why did God "not spare Him," but instead, "deliver Him up?" (Romans 8:31-32). If God is "for us," why does He not spare us from the afflictions, disasters, and temptations of the types mentioned in Romans 8:35, 38, 39?

8. How is it possible for Christians to "overwhelmingly conquer " in all these things and actually "bear fruit for God?"

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Lesson 10. Fruit bearing assured for the Christian who “walks in the Spirit.” (Romans 8:31-39 NASV).

Questions for study.

1. To what do the words “these things” refer in Romans 8:31? List God’s provisions “for us” which Paul discussed in the Roman letter up to this point.

The question Paul poses is, “What then shall we say to these things?” It was a question with an answer so obvious at this point in the Roman letter that the answer really served as a summary of much Paul has already said in the letter. “These things” are all the provisions God has supplied to Christians that they might be saved from the eternal consequences of their sins and that they might be enabled to “bear fruit for God” in their daily lives.

Among his answers to his own question are a series of rhetorical questions which serve to help summarize God’s provision for His people through the cross of Christ.

“If God is for us, who is against us?” God has arranged that no man is able to prevail against us in our serving God.

“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?” Satan is the great accuser in the spiritual realm. Satan dares not bring a charge against a Christian who is “walking according to the Spirit.” “Who is the one who condemns” when “God is the one who justifies?” A provision God has made for Christians is “justification” from sins through the blood of Christ.

"Who shall separate us from the love of God?" God has made every possible provision for the Christian, short of taking away his free will, to prevent his being separated from the love of God. God has done it all through the Cross of Christ; and all He has done through the Cross has

been outlined in the first 8 chapters of the Roman letter.

For eight chapters of the Roman letter Paul has been testifying of all the things God has done for us. Every problem that has ever hindered mankind's salvation God has solved. Everything that can prevent God's children on earth from bearing fruit for God, God has moved aside. Everyone who has been or who is against God or His children has been removed. God has carried out His purpose to "justify" us and then to "sanctify" us as holy in His service. It is now simply up to us to "walk" according to the guidance of His Spirit He has given to indwell us. God is definitely and eternally "for us!" Who, indeed, can be against us?"

2. "Who is against" the Christian in his "walk in the Spirit?" Who has tried to "bring a charge against God's elect?" Who has tried to "condemn?" Are Paul's questions asking for information? Or, are they challenges to well known individuals and forces? (Romans 8:32-39).

The principle one who is against the Christian, who tries to bring the charge of sin against the Christian, who tries to condemn the Christian to the wrath of God, and who tries to separate Christians from the love of God is Satan, the Devil.

Paul's questions are not asking for information. They are rhetorical questions which, at this point in the Roman letter, have already been answered. They now serve to remind Christians to praise God for what He has done and to warn them of the possible problems they will encounter should they allow Satan to entice them through their flesh, or through their old man of sin. In addition these questions may be challenges to Satan, his angels, and his forces of evil in the world to keep away from the presence of God's Holy Spirit. If Satan sees the Holy Spirit dwelling in a Christian, he will not try to invade that person's soul.

3. What is the nature of the well known worldly afflictions listed by Paul in Romans 8:35 (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword)? Is there any respect-of-persons in these afflictions as to who they strike, Christians only, or everyone indiscriminately?

These things mentioned in Romans 8:35 were things which were in the ordinary daily experience of the Christians to whom Paul wrote. Satan either brought about these things or tried to take advantage of them to interrupt the lives of Christians from serving God. God may allow Satan to try to influence human beings when such things happen. Through such things God may bring death and judgment upon people of the earth as the Bible testifies He has done throughout the history of mankind on earth.

When such things occur, whether they are brought about by Satan's influence (as are the "swords" of war and "perils" of terrorism) or by force of nature (as are earthquakes and floods), they bring their problems upon Christians as well as worldly people. In fact, Romans 8:36 reminds us that God has allowed His people to be "put to death all day long" and to be slaughtered as sheep. God's provisions do not prevent Christians from being persecuted and from suffering from these things during their fleshly lives. But God does guarantee that they can not "separate us from the love of Christ." In Christ's love we "exult in hope of the glory of God" in a transformed spiritual state in the spiritual realm with God. Christians have "peace with God" no matter what "tribulations" they must undergo in the flesh. (Romans 5:1-5).

4. If a Christian dies in a famine from lack of food, or if a Christian is killed in an auto accident or in an act of warfare, does his death bring failure to his "walk in the Spirit?" How might the worldly afflictions of Romans 8:35 bring about a failure of a Christian to "bear fruit for God?"

The Christian's earthly "walk" is ended, of course, when the Christian dies a fleshly death. But the Christian has eternal spiritual life as does the Spirit who has been directing the Christian's "walk." Therefore, we reason that the Christian's "walk in the Spirit" might still be carried on in the spiritual realm while the fleshly body lies in the grave. And, of course, the Christian's relationship with the Holy Spirit of God is only in early stages when the resurrection brings the complete spiritual Christian, spirit and soul and body, into the full fellowship of God in heaven.

Of course, after fleshly death and before the resurrection, there is a period of time when the Christian's body "sleeps" in the grave until Jesus comes to bring about the resurrection of the body (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The soul and the spirit of the Christian do not "sleep" as does the body during this time. There is Biblical evidence that the Christian's soul may even be employed during this time after fleshly death and before the resurrection. During this time souls of Christians rest under the altar in the heavenly realm as pictured in Revelation 6:9-11. And the souls of Christians "reign with Christ" as pictured in Revelation 20:4. After the resurrection of the fleshly bodies of Christians and their transformation into spiritual bodies, Christians will become whole again, spirit and soul and body, in heaven with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Worldly afflictions like those listed in Romans 8:35 can bring about failure of a Christian to "bear fruit for God" only if the Christian allows the affliction to interrupt his "walk in the Spirit."

5. Relate the thought of Psalm 44:22 (which Paul quoted in Romans 8:36) to the worldly afflictions and disasters which Paul mentioned in Romans 8:35. What does this quotation from the Psalms teach us concerning the desired Christian reaction to the kind of things mentioned in Romans 8:35? What is God's answer to the Christian who blames God when catastrophe strikes and cries out, "Why me?" or, "Why my innocent child?"

Psalm 44, from which Paul quoted verse 22, was a cry to God by the Israelites concerning the fact that some had to suffer who were still faithful to God and had not forgotten God or turned to idols. Even the faithful ones were often killed in the warfare that God brought upon all Israel because of the sins of the unfaithful. Even the faithful ones were taken into captivity with the rest of unfaithful Israel. Although the Psalmist did not actually verbalize the question, "Why does this have to be?" the question almost cries out from the page. The Psalmist did not try to answer the question except to say in verse 22, "But for Thy sake we are killed all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

In verses 23 through 26 of the Psalm, which Paul did not quote in Romans, the Psalmist made it clear that he expected the faithful who had "been slaughtered as sheep" to be redeemed. The message of Psalm 44 was that the faithful Israelites were willing to accept whatever tribulation that came to them for the sake of God's purpose for they knew God to be full of loving kindness.

It was the same for Christians in Paul's age as it was for Israelites in their age. The faithful suffer with the unfaithful on earth "just as it is written." Christians must be willing to accept whatever tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword which comes upon them for the sake of God's purpose. The Christian reaction to tribulations, of which Paul endured many, should be as Paul reacted. He said, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Also, the Christian must remember that he will never be called upon to suffer as Jesus Christ suffered.

To the Christian who cries in his tribulation, "Why me?" or "Why my innocent child?" the only answers that can be given are some that the Holy Spirit has revealed right here in the Roman letter through Paul. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18). "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28). "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us ." (Romans 8:31).

6. How do the forces listed by Paul in Romans 8:38-39 (death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing) differ from the afflictions listed in Romans 8:35? How might these forces work to separate us from the love of God?

Paul's list of things which cannot "separate us from the love of God" are all "created things." We know this because of the phrase Paul used at the end of the list, "nor any other created thing." These "things" are all things God created directly or things which resulted from God's ejection

of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden into the world as we know it. The things listed in Romans 8:35 were afflictions which were within the daily experiences of the Christians of Paul's age.

Human beings born (created) into the world have brief fleshly life but also are subject to fleshly death. From a worldly, fleshly viewpoint it may appear that such brief lives ending in death have separated mankind from the love of God, the great spiritual Creator. But the world does not "see" the true life of the spiritual soul and spirit of mankind, nor does it "see" the invisible Spirit of God. God's love is for the "complete" human being, "spirit and soul and body." (1 Thessalonians 5:23). And God's love transcends mere flesh. Paul was convinced that neither death, nor life could separate us from the love of God.

Paul mentioned "angels" as "created things" which cannot separate us from the love of God. And we have read in our Bibles of myriads of angels who act as messengers and emissaries to carry out the will of God. For instance, the writer of the Hebrew letter wrote of some angels as "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who inherit salvation." (Hebrews 1:14). In other words, some angels are sent to render invisible service for the sake of Christians who are undergoing tribulations and trials in the world. We can scarcely think of these angels as attempting to separate us from the love of God for they are helping us to stay in His love. But there are other angels, perhaps more aptly called demons, who are attempting to separate us from God. The Spirit of God prompted John to write in Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was thrown down (from heaven), the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." The disciples of Jesus once spoke of the "demons" who were subject to them in the name of Jesus. Jesus then said, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." (Luke 10:17-18). From these and other scriptures we know that there are spiritual beings, angels, who do attempt to separate us from the love of God. But Paul was convinced that they cannot, if we remain "in Christ Jesus out Lord."

Paul listed "principalities" as being worldly forces which cannot

separate us from the love of God. The word "principality" is from the Greek word ARCHE meaning "beginning." Since this word is included in the list of "created things," it seems to mean things which have had their "beginning" in Satan's world such as the governmental powers of the world which, of course, will perish when the world comes to judgment. Although Paul said in Romans 13:1 that there is no governing authority except from God, we know that God has allowed governing powers upon the earth which strive against His purposes. For instance, in Old Testament times many of the governing powers around God's chosen nation of Israel, strove to wipe out the nation of Israel. Today, some atheistic governing powers strive against God's purposes, especially the freedom of choice which God has purposed that all humans should have. But Paul was convinced that such "principalities" cannot separate us from the love of God if we will remain in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul continued his list of things which cannot separate us from the love of God with: "things present" (any created thing already existing in the world), "things to come" (anything which mankind or Satan may create in the world in the future), "powers" (anything of worldly ability or power), "height" (perhaps meaning height of prosperity), "depth" (perhaps meaning depth of misery), and finally "any other created thing." In short, there is nothing in this world that can separate one from the love of God who is in Christ Jesus. "We can overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

7. Is God the Father "for" His own Son, Jesus? If so, why did God "not spare Him," but instead, "deliver Him up?" (Romans 8:31-32). If God is "for us," why does He not spare us from the afflictions, disasters, and temptations of the types mentioned in Romans 8:35, 38, 39?

The events subsequent to the death of Jesus on the cross have shown us that God was, and is, "for" Jesus, His own Son. Although God the Father withdrew Himself from Jesus for a short instance of time ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark 15: 34). He quickly took the soul of Jesus into Paradise and three days later resurrected His body. Shortly thereafter, God raised Jesus back into His spiritual realm

giving Him glory to sit at His right hand in heaven. God is "for" Jesus but He sacrificed Him to show that He also is "for us."

God did not spare His own Son when He lived in the flesh on the earth but sacrificed Him on the cross in order to spare us the guilt of sin in eternity. But God does not spare us from persecution when we represent His Son on earth in our Christian lives. For the evil world still exists. The world that persecuted Jesus in person also persecutes us when Jesus is seen in us. On the other hand, as God raised Jesus back to the heavenly realm, "Will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8: 32). Because Jesus accepted the withdrawal of God from Himself for a brief time, God will not withdraw from us.

8. How is it possible for Christians to "overwhelmingly conquer" in all these things and actually "bear fruit for God."

If a Christian can "overwhelmingly conquer" in his earthly life, he certainly can "bear fruit for God" while he lives on earth. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us and gives us victory so that we "overwhelmingly conquer" will also lead us to "bear fruit for God." But the Roman letter has taught us that Christians cannot "overwhelmingly conquer" and "bear fruit for God" through the effort of their own souls (own will and intellect). However, through the Christian's exercise of obedience (of his will and intellect) to the precepts of faith, the Holy Spirit of Christ which indwells the Christian will "conquer" whatever is necessary to be conquered and produce whatever "fruit" God desires in his life. Christians can "overwhelmingly conquer" and "bear fruit for God," but only as they "walk according to the Spirit."