

# Who Shall Separate Us from the Love of Christ

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Intro Lesson: Part 3 – Question 1, The answer is “NOTHING”!

In Romans 1—8 Paul lays out God’s plan for how people can become righteous. Paul’s explanation culminates in Romans 8:35 with the question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” In Romans 1:1—3:20 Paul makes the case for the universal need for God’s righteousness as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of humanity is unrighteous and in need of salvation. No matter one’s ethnicity or heritage, all are in sin and have fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23), and the wages of that sin is death (Romans 6:23) or separation from God.

Before Paul asks the question of who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35), Paul explains that the universal human problem is that all are already separated from God. He explains elsewhere that we are by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). But Paul announces that the good news about Jesus Christ—the gospel—is God’s way to save all those who believe in Jesus (Romans 1:17). Paul explains how all have become unrighteous through Adam (Romans 5:12–21), and he provides hope in Romans 3:21—4:25, recounting how God made a way for all to be righteous in His sight by believing in Jesus. By faith and not by works God provides justification (or the declaration of righteousness) for all who believe in Him (Romans 3:28). God’s grace has always been applied to human need by faith in Him, and Paul illustrates this by referring to Abraham, who was also justified by faith in the Lord (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4).

Paul explains further in Romans 5—8 that this provision of grace through faith has tremendous implications for those who believe in Jesus, and that God’s grace is an expression of God’s love. God demonstrated His love for us even while we were in sin—Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Now that we have believed in Christ, we are connected to His love in a way we never were before.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? In Romans 5 Paul discusses how we came to be separated from God in the first place—because of Adam’s sin, all who are descended from Adam are under the curse of sin. Adam was created in the image of God, but when Adam sinned, something was added to his nature. When Adam had children, they were now in Adam’s likeness, not just God’s (Genesis

5:3). Even though humanity would still have the image of God (Genesis 9:6), people would also have a sinful nature and be separated from God. Through Adam sin entered the world and made us all sinners (Romans 5:12), but through Christ we have the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17).

If God loves us this much, and we receive His expression of love in grace through faith, then who shall separate us from the love of Christ? This is exactly the question that Paul asks and answers at the end of Romans 8. In Romans 6 Paul shows that we are no longer in bondage to sin—we have new natures, and we are dead to sin but alive in Christ (Romans 6:11). Because we have new life, we should behave like we have new life (Romans 6:12). Despite the new expectation, Paul understands that we still also have the old nature—the flesh (Romans 7:18). There is an ongoing conflict in the believer between the new nature, which is pursuing the good, and the old nature, which is pursuing sin (Romans 7:19–25).

Ultimately, Christ sets us free from the old nature (Romans 7:24–25), yet we can still set our minds on this old way of life and fail in our walk. Paul urges believers not to live this way—we have been set free and should not again allow ourselves to be in bondage. But because we do sometimes, we may lose our confidence that God has delivered us. Because of this tendency to doubt, Paul affirms that we can know we are in Christ because His Spirit is in us (Romans 8:9–11). This assurance of our salvation is not from our works but from the Holy Spirit testifying that we are His (Romans 8:16). God’s purpose in our lives is guaranteed (Romans 8:28–31). What God has promised, He will fulfill.

It is in this context that Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”—the answer is that nothing at all can separate us from His love. After an extensive list of things that cannot separate us from His love (Romans 8:35–39), Paul adds that “no other created thing” can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:39). It is important to realize that we are created things and that even we cannot separate ourselves from the love of Christ. We didn’t deserve to receive the love of Christ in the first place, and we don’t deserve to keep it. He gave us His love by grace through faith, and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.