

## **“The Rubber and the Glue”**

### **Romans 8:28-39**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

There’s an old saying that I’m quite certain you have all heard or probably even used sometime in your life, most likely when you were children. It goes something like this, “I’m rubber and you’re glue. Whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you.” This was a quick and witty way to turn the tables on an adversary as a child, and it was almost always intended with retribution in mind. “You can’t hurt me, because whatever you say will just come back around and get you too.” Children and adults alike find solace in the idea that the potential sting of someone’s harsh words would find its way back to the one who said them. Thank goodness Jesus didn’t have that mentality as He suffered at the hands of man on the cross. In fact, He begged the opposite saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34a).” When you look at the text for this morning, the Apostle Paul lists numerous different ways that we could potentially be separated from the love of Christ, all of them of course falling short of the task, as he says that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This isn’t because you employ “the rubber and the glue” method to sling these attacks back on the one who sent them, but because in your lives as Christians, Jesus is both the rubber and the glue.

This text in Romans is closing out the first half of Paul’s Epistle with an assurance for all Christians that the love of God is theirs for all eternity. It has been secured by Jesus in His substitutionary atonement for you on the cross and ratified forever in the joy of His resurrection. For the past week we have spent time with all the kids discussing the truth that His love was given and appropriated to each of you in the waters of your baptisms, where Jesus placed the impenetrable barrier of His love upon you, and will be fully realized when you stand in His presence on the last day. What a glorious gift and blessing to live in the love of God every day! Especially in this evil world of sin, it is easy to lose sight of how blessed you truly are as faithful believers in Christ. Everywhere you turn there is “tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword,” as you heard in our text this morning. You are constantly attacked, the evil one trying with all of his might to wear you down and bring you to a point of questioning or even abandoning the love of God.

Paul is quick to remind you, though, as he closes out this passage that none of these things have the ability to pull you away from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Because your faith, strengthened in the gift of forgiveness in the sacraments, holds you in

that love. That impenetrable barrier placed upon you in your baptisms is the “rubber” shield of Jesus Christ. Everything the world throws at you, and everything that your sinful flesh brings out of you is repelled and cast away by the protection and love of Christ. Your faith that you received in those regenerative waters made it impossible to be separated from the love of God, and it is He who protects you, by the blood of Christ, from those that would seek to cause that separation, even if that is your own sinful flesh.

The sacrifice of Jesus to redeem the world was once for all. As we read in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 12, “He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” This “once for all” moment, the sacrifice of Christ for all sin on the cross, is where He became the “glue” for all those things mentioned in our text to stick once they bounce off of you. The flaming darts of the evil one cannot stick to you because you are protected by the love of Christ, a love of which there is none greater. For as He says Himself in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” Despite the evil, malice, and grievous sins our sinful flesh commits in this world, He willingly bounces it off of you and onto Himself for Him to hold, bearing the burden, and becoming those sins as He destroys them by defying the greatest of all enemies—death itself. And for this you have no greater love than the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It is important here to understand that this does not mean that you can’t fall away from faith or lose the love of God, and that you have “carte blanche” to carelessly run around this life and neglect the Lord. The barrier placed on you by Christ, and the deflection of sin onto Him on the cross, does not mean that you just keep piling it on because it doesn’t matter. The protection of Jesus is not a free pass that allows sin to reign in your mortal body. Paul says in Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” It is within your power as sinful human beings to reject the promise of God’s grace and forgiveness, and you must not willingly live in sin as if it somehow doesn’t matter. Sin weakens faith, and willful and abounding sin will ultimately destroy it altogether giving the devil the victory he seeks to gain over you.

Faith must continue to be strengthened in the reception of God’s gifts in the Sacraments and by hearing His Word of redemption. Our text this morning is meant to be an assurance that the victory has been won. It is not a battle that is still to come or one that you are continually fighting every day to reach the end. The Greek verb used in verse 37 that we see translated as “we are more than conquerors,” is more appropriately

translated as “we are overwhelmingly victorious,” which is noted by Michael Middendorf in his Concordia commentary. He goes on to say that, “The victory is not accomplished by us, but instead, by ‘the One who loved us, whose awesome deeds were just rehearsed in 8:34...The present tense of (the verb) also means we are not waiting for the decisive battle to be fought or left wondering about the final outcome.” Or, as is sung in the final lines of the great Martin Luther hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, “...our vict’ry has been won; the Kingdom ours remaineth.” It belongs to you already in this life. As one who has been baptized into the death of Christ—washed to death in those blessed waters—you take hold of that which is yours by the grace of God for the sake of His only begotten Son.

The battle was won on your behalf when the Son of God gave Himself up to be the atoning sacrifice for your sin. Every sin that was bounced off of you and stuck to Him in your place was rendered null and void before the Father in heaven. Because in your baptisms you received “adoption as sons,” becoming the true children of God and “fellow heirs with Christ,” as we read in the earlier parts of Romans 8. This adoption has granted you assurance that you rest secure in the future glory that is to come when you meet the Lord face to face. Christ has covered all for you—done all for you. He has conquered all things, and there is no work left to do because the work of atonement for the sins of the world is complete. Paul E. Kretzmann writes this in his New Testament Commentary, “Accusation has no effect, condemnation cannot harm us, and even every attempt at violence must fail from the very start...Our enemies are not only not able to do us real harm, but they are actually conquered before they have had an opportunity for working evil.” And because you have this protection, this “rubber” shield of Christ which is a free gift of His grace, all people must hear this wonderful good news of Christ’s Gospel.

This gift of salvation, your eternal protection in Christ, is not yours to mistreat, neglect, or hoard as the servant who buried his talent in Jesus’ parable of the talents. The joy of Christ’s love is for all people—every person around you—and it is the mission of the Church to spread that to all who would hear. Through faith, it must be cared for, guarding it by continually receiving the free gift of grace offered to you in the Sacraments and the Word, and then sharing the good news of that free gift with those who are still lost and living in sin. You strengthen your faith through these things so that when the world attacks and your sinful flesh rises up against you, you can take the bumps and bruises in stride, knowing that Christ has delivered you from all that can be thrown your way. You have become one with Him, and being one with Him makes it impossible for the evil one to destroy you, because you hold fast to Jesus in faith.

You all know the passage of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is Paul’s point in our text this morning. You believe in the salvation offered to you in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and because of that, you have eternal life in Him. Nothing in this world, “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” You have been eternally bound to Christ, forever chosen to live in the light of His love for all eternity. He is the “rubber and the glue” that protects you in this life, and the assurance of your salvation for all eternity. So, while you don’t abide by the “rubber and the glue” approach to destroy your enemies as the childish saying implies, through Christ and His love, your greatest enemy—death—has been destroyed and the evil one along with it. Jesus’ victory is yours, and for that reason, dear friends in Christ, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing can deny you the inheritance of heavenly joy that awaits you in the presence of His glory forevermore. Amen.