

Q. 1 What fear is addressed in v35?

Ans: That we should be separated from the love of God. After coming into the sweet enjoyment of new life in Christ, there will be the natural fear that it will end; that some division will occur to break the relationship. Unfortunately, this happens so frequently in human relations, even between husbands and wives it is natural to think that separation is a possibility. The apostle Paul, however, addresses this fear head-on by proving that a separation between the believer and the Saviour is impossible.

Q2. How many things are listed as potential causes of separation?

Ans: 17

7 earthly things are listed in v. 35.

10 spiritual things are listed in verses 37 & 38. The last one is a blanket statement – “nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us.” Try as they may they will find it to be impossible.

“Height” [nothing in heaven] may refer to good angels or saints already in heaven. They may precede us in glory but will not hinder us. Heaven will not be too full to hinder our entrance. (We need not worry about being among a literal 144,000 as Jehovah’s witnesses do).

“Depth” [nothing in hell] may refer to bad angels. These serve the devil in his schemes to bring down the children of God. However, these too, says the apostle, shall be overcome by the One who makes us “more than conquerors.”

Q. 3. Are these enemies of the Christian imaginary?

Ans: No. They are each in the realm of possibility and commonly try the people of God.

Q. 4 Where is the citation “we are counted as sheep for the slaughter” quoted in v 38 to be found in the Old Testament?

Ans: Psalm 44:22

Q.5. What is this quote intended to establish?

That in this world Christians are vulnerable and often prey to vicious enemies. The Christian is not immune to or preserved from trials, persecutions etc. They are subject to them. The point that the apostle makes is that even when these things happen no child of God is cut off from Christ’s love toward them.

Q. 6. Whose love is in focus in these verses?

Ans: It is Christ’s love to us. See v 37. Also see in v39 that it is God’s love channelled to us through Christ.

We must not fall into the trap of thinking that because man’s love is changeable, his moods given to such fluctuations etc. that he may not be stable in the faith in the hour of need. The apostle shows that what really counts is Christ’s love for us. His love for His people is as unchangeable as the Lord Himself, who changes not.

Q. 7. What persuaded the apostle Paul that nothing can separate believers from the love of Christ?

It was not that he simply wanted to believe it or that it was his opinion. No, this persuasion came as a result of carefully considering all the facts of Christ's death, resurrection, session in glory at God's right hand along with the powerful work of the Spirit in the believers' heart. This is the apostle's appeal at the end of the chapter after stating at the beginning there is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He is convinced all the way through of the unassailable fact that a Christian cannot be separated from the love of God's Son and therefore cannot be finally condemned.

Summary by Albert Barnes:

"Perhaps there is no chapter in the Bible on the whole so interesting and consoling to the Christian as this; and there certainly is not to be found anywhere a specimen of more elevated, animated, and lofty eloquence and argumentation. We may remark in view of it,

- (1) That it is the highest honour that can be conferred on mortal man to be a Christian.
- (2) Our trials in this life are scarcely worth regarding in comparison with our future glory.
- (3) Calamities should be borne without a complaint; nay, without a sigh.
- (4) The Christian has every possible security for his safety. The purposes of God, the work of Christ, the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the tendency of all events under the direction of his Father and Friend, conspire to secure his welfare and salvation.
- (5) With what thankfulness, then, should we approach the God of mercy.

In the gospel, we have a blessed and cheering hope which nothing else can produce, and which nothing can destroy. Safe in the hands of God our Redeemer, we may commit our way to him, whether it lead through persecutions, or trials, or sickness, or a martyr's grave: and triumphantly we may wait until the day of our complete adoption, the entire redemption of soul and body, shall fully come." Albert Barnes

Hymns we sing on the theme of the believer's security:

See our Hymn Book *Hymns of Grace and Glory* under Security in Topical Index

614 A Debtor to Mercy Alone

610 How Firm a Foundation

613 More Secure is no One Ever

269 The Lion of Judah

421 Will Your Anchor Hold?

"Mr. Hugh Kennedy, an eminent Christian of Ayr, in Scotland, when he was dying, called for a Bible; but, finding his sight gone, he said, "Turn me to the eighty of the Romans, and set my finger at these words, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life,*" etc. "Now," said he, "is my finger upon them?" And, when they told him it was, without speaking any more, he said, "Now, God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night;" and so departed." Matt. Henry

Some tender-hearted Christians almost deprecate personal assurance, and probably the reason is that they have seen some profess assurance whose hope was evident presumption. But no two things can be more distinct. Presumption is Satan's lie; assurance is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Presumption is hope without foundation; assurance is founded on the Word of God without, and the work of the Spirit within.

Presumption makes a man proud and hard-hearted, censorious and flippant, reckless and undevout. Assurance makes a man stoop in humility lower and lower, the more he is persuaded of his heavenly Father's love. And it gives him a panting after the living God. And it makes him tender-hearted—makes him like his Master, who does not despise the day of small things, who, when a bruised reed is put into His hand, does not snap it asunder and fling the fragments from Him; who, when a smoking flax is put upon His altar, does not sweep it off because it is flax, nor extinguish it because it is only smoking, but cherishes and fans that smouldering tow, till it burst in flames and fire the living sacrifice; and who shows His power and Divine compassion by taking the drooping shattered reed, and making it the rod of His might, a staff of strength in His hand. Even so real assurance is considerate and tender-hearted, does not scowl disdain on the smoky beginnings of grace in any heart, but finds a godlike pleasure in fostering it into a flame. Presumption is an intoxicating poison, and sends the self-deceiver reeling forward in a merry delusion, neglecting known duty and perpetrating known sin from day to day, and yet fancying that the Spirit of Christ is in him; assurance enlightens the eyes, and whether sedate or ecstatic, is always a cautious and circumspect thing, abhorring the garment spotted with the flesh. Presumption is impudent; assurance is filial and affectionate. Presumption talks about crosses; assurance carries them. Presumption is bustling and loquacious; assurance is full of zeal, but is often doing much when it says nothing. Presumption is heady and high-minded; assurance is sober, and vaunteth not itself. Presumption is self-indulgent; assurance is self-denied. Presumption, like an eastern nabob, would shut his eyes, and fold his hands, and nestle his cheek upon some balmy pillow, and then without any trouble to himself be walled to heaven in a silken palanquin; whilst assurance, like a primitive disciple, is content to strap on the pilgrim's sandals, and shoulder the weighty cross, and foot it all the way to glory in the steps of the great Forerunner. Presumption is a vile fleshly counterfeit; assurance is a holy and sanctifying grace, because the gift of the holy and sanctifying Spirit. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*)