

## **Paul and the Assurance of Salvation (18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)**

### **Romans 8:35, 37-39—Nothing Will Separate Us from Christ**

<sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* [<sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”] <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,* <sup>39</sup> *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.* (Romans 8:35, 37-39)

#### 1. Separation from Christ: Paul lists *sufferings*, NOT *sins*! (cf. 10 Commandments)

<i>Sufferings</i>	<i>Sins</i>
Tribulation	Fornication
Distress	Adultery
Persecution	Theft
Famine	Murder
Nakedness	Blasphemy
Peril	Idolatry
Sword	

#### 2. Works of the Flesh = *will* exclude you from the kingdom of God:

Now the *works of the flesh* are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. *I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* (Galatians 5:19-21)

#### 3. Created Realities: cannot separate use from Christ:

- a. Death nor Life
- b. Angels nor Principalities (cf. 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10)
- c. Things Present (= in this world) or Things to Come (= in the future age)
- d. Powers (cf. 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21)
- e. Creatures: “Anything else *in all creation*”

#### 3. More than Conquerors: “super-victors” (Greek *hyper-nikaō*) (8:37)

### **The Living Tradition**

Augustine: No one can separate the believer from God; not someone who threatens death,

because he who believes in Christ shall live even if he dies... An angel cannot separate us... Nor can a principality, i.e., an opposing power, because Christ... has vanquished them in himself. (Augustine, *On Romans* 58; trans. G. Bray)

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Have you ever heard the view that Paul is saying that “sin” cannot separate us from the love of Christ? What is the problem with that interpretation?

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2. What does Paul say about the consequences of engaging in “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:20-21? What light does this shed on Romans 8?

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## For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).