

The Revd Dr Juan Cruz, is minister of Lymm, Macclesfield & Bollington, and Wilmslow URC

Call to Worship

Come, people of God, and worship the Lord whose love endures forever.

**We gather with grateful hearts
to praise the God who has loved us
with an everlasting love.**

Though we were separated from God by sin,
Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile us to the Father.

**Through His death and resurrection,
we have peace with God
and the sure hope of eternal life.**

In Christ, the fear of separation from God has been overcome.
No power in heaven or on earth can take us from His gracious hand.

**We belong to the Lord,
and nothing in all creation
can separate us from His love.**

Neither death nor life,
neither things present nor things to come,
nor any power can separate us from the love of Christ.
**We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us,
and His love will hold us beyond the grave.**

Come, let us worship the God who is for us
and whose love will never fail.

**With joy and confidence, we worship the Father,
through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Great is your love for us, O Lord,
that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us and saved us from our sins.

It is your great love that has brought us
from the darkness of sin into the light of salvation.
It is your love that enables us to overcome the challenges we face in life
and gives us strength to remain faithful to you.
We gather in your presence this morning with grateful hearts.
As we come together before you,
we ask that you open our minds to your truth
and prepare us to receive your Word with faith and humility.
Search our hearts and know our anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in us and lead us in the way everlasting.

Today, remind us once again of who we are before you —
that we are your people, redeemed by Christ and made co-heirs with him.
You did not reject us or drive us away,
but welcomed us with your unfailing love,
adopted us into your family,
and made us your own.
You have given us the right to become your children,
and you have freely given us the gift of salvation.
Remind us again that in Christ we have been made new,
that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
and that your Spirit dwells within us.

Above all, assure us once again today that we who are in Christ
can never be separated from your love.
Nothing in all creation is able to sever our relationship with you.
Help us today to embrace and affirm these glorious realities
made possible through the saving work of Christ,
so that our faith may remain unshaken in every circumstance.

Be glorified in our midst, O Lord.
We give you all glory, honour, and praise,
for in Christ we have redemption,
a new identity, renewed minds, transformed lives,
and the sure hope of a glorious inheritance with you.
Hear us now, O God,
as we join together in the prayer our Saviour taught us, saying: Our Father...

Readings

Romans 8:31-39

All Age Activity

The Runaway Bunny

(This is a picture book from 1949 by Margaret Wise Brown. The story concerns a young bunny seeking independence and a mother rabbit's love for the bunny. It can be downloaded on Amazon)

This morning, I'd like to read a story that illustrates the truth the Apostle Paul proclaims in Romans 8: that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The story is *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown. (Read the story)

Challenge

The Runaway Bunny gives us a wonderful picture of the truth we find in Romans 8. Just as the mother bunny never lets her little bunny be separated from her love, so God's love for us is unrelenting. The Bible tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Whether life is happy or hard, God's love for us never changes. Even when we walk through suffering or face death itself, God's love will never let us go. We belong to God, and nothing can take us away from his love.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God,
thank you for your great and unchanging love for us in your Son, Jesus Christ.
Thank you that your love will never let us go.
When we are joyful, help us to remember your goodness.
When we are afraid, remind us that you are holding us securely in your loving hands.
When we face difficulties, strengthen our faith
and assure us that your love is stronger than every trial, every sorrow,
and even death itself.
Help us today to rest in the assurance that nothing can separate us from your love,
for you hold us secure in Christ Jesus our Lord.
In your name, we pray, amen.

Sermon Notes

Historical Background

Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans to both Jewish and Gentile Christians living in Rome between AD 50 and 58 during a time of uncertainty and hardship. Many believers faced opposition and suffering. In this closing section of Romans 8, Paul offers one of the Bible's greatest assurances: God's love for his people is secure and everlasting because it is grounded in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

The Text

The text contains five rhetorical questions that develop the concept of Christian assurance in the believers' lives.

Question 1: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Throughout his epistle to the Romans, Paul consistently argues that God is for the believers. God demonstrated his love to them by the giving of his Son for their sake.

Question 2: "Who will accuse God's chosen people?" The probable answer is Satan, referred to in the Bible as the accuser. However, it is also probable that the sins the believers had committed when they were still alive might stand and testify against them in the last judgement. However, Paul reassures the believers that they have been justified in Christ, who paid for the wages of their sins. Therefore, any future accusations against the people of God are bound to fail.

Question 3: "Who is he that condemns?" The implied answer is no one. No one will condemn because Jesus died to wash away the believers' sins and secure their salvation.

Questions 4 & 5: "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" The answer is nothing—nothing in all creation can separate the believers from God's love.

Points for Reflection

- What can separate believers from the love of God?
- How does the saving work of Christ give us confidence?
- In what ways does the assurance of God's inseparable love strengthen us in times of suffering and uncertainty?

Conclusion

Romans 8 assures us that nothing can separate those who are in Christ from the love of God. Neither trouble nor hardship, neither failure nor fear, neither the present nor the future, neither life nor death—indeed, nothing in all creation—will be able to separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Offertory

Gracious God, we bring these gifts and offerings before you.
We dedicate them to your service
and pray that you will use them for the work of your kingdom,
for the upkeep of this church,
and for your ministry and mission in our community and beyond.
We entrust all our needs to your loving care,
confident that you are our faithful God,
who knows our needs and will graciously provide
according to your riches in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayers of Thanks & Intercessions

Let us come before our gracious God as we bring our prayers for others.

Loving and merciful God,
your love is constant, unbreakable, and eternal.
It is this love that has sustained us from the day we were born.
It is this love that carries us through the trials and uncertainties of life.
It is this love that will bring us safely into the glorious future you have prepared for us.
Great is your love, O Lord!
From the dawn of creation to the end of the age,
your steadfast love remains unchanged,
holding us secure in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We now come before your throne of grace to bring our prayers for others.
We pray for all those leaving primary and secondary school,
and for those graduating from university.
Thank you, Lord, for all they have achieved.
As they begin a new chapter and embrace new opportunities,
we pray for your blessing upon them.
Be their guide and companion as they step into the future.

We also thank you for their parents, grandparents, carers, teachers,
and all who have supported them along the way.
Thank you for their love, patience, and dedication
in helping these young people reach this important milestone in their lives.

We remember those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
Lord, in their sorrow, draw near to them and bring comfort to their grieving hearts.
Assure them that they are never alone,
for your presence is with them and your love will never let them go.

Strengthen them day by day and surround them
with the love and support of family, friends, and neighbours
who genuinely care for them and stand by their side through this time of loss.

We pray for all those affected by the devastating wildfires in France, Spain, Italy,
and here in the UK.

We remember those who have lost their homes,
those who have been forced to flee to safety,
and those who are grieving the loss of loved ones,
treasured possessions, and livelihoods.
Lord, have mercy upon them and hold them in your love.

We also ask that you would protect all who remain in danger
and help the firefighters and emergency services
as they work tirelessly to contain the fires.
We also pray for the healing of the land
and for the restoration of communities affected by these disasters.

We continue to pray for the people of Venezuela,
particularly those devastated by the recent earthquakes.
Lord, draw near to all who are grieving or injured.
Comfort the families who have lost loved ones and give them courage and hope.
Provide what they need: shelter, food, clean water, and medical care.
Support the aid workers who are responding with compassion
and strengthen all who are working tirelessly to rescue, heal, and rebuild.

Loving God, remind us once again that we are more than conquerors
in the face of life's adversities.
Through Christ, who has overcome the world and conquered death,
give us the strength to endure whatever trials and sufferings we face,
trusting that your love will never fail us.

Above all, assure us that nothing in all creation can separate us and our loved ones —
both departed and living—from your love that is in Christ Jesus.
Assure us that your love for us is unbreakable,
and that it is stronger than the grave.
Assure us that you have redeemed us
and called us to an eternal, unbreakable relationship with you.
May your unshakable love become our source of strength,
our driving force, and the grace that sustains us
as we press on in our journey of faith.
For we pray all of this in Jesus' name, amen.

Blessing

Beloved in Christ,
go forth in the assurance that God's love for you is unbreakable and eternal.
Walk in faith, continue to serve faithfully,
and rest in the unshakable promise
that nothing in all creation can separate you from his love.
May the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you, now and forevermore.

<i>Hymn Suggestions</i>				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
All My Hope on God is Founded	586	192	455	16
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	663	519	503	449
In Christ Alone			351	1072
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	511	557	636	515
How Great Thou Art	117	154	82	506
Thine be the Glory	247	419	313	689
There's a Wideness in God's mercy	353	187	416	683
Jesus Lives! Thy terrors now (esp v4)	239			373
How Firm A Foundation	589			243
And Can It Be	366	396	345	33
Before the Throne of God Above		466		975
Blessed Assurance		561	548	59
God is love, let heaven adore Him	95	123	103	187
There's a Spirit in the Air	329	616	398	
You Lord Are Both Lamb and Shepherd		355		

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*