

# A Word from Pastor Chuck



## SIX VITAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE—PART 5

***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life ... nor things present, nor things to come ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Romans 8:35, 38-39

“**Persuaded**” is a very strong word. It expresses unwavering certainty. There is no question on this; Paul was convinced. In 2 Timothy, Paul wrote, “**I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded**” (2 Timothy 1:12b). Again, Paul was absolutely certain.

Have you committed your life to the Lord? Then you can have absolute assurance that the Lord is going to keep you. Have you committed your future to Him? If so, then be sure the Lord is going to work out any problems you might face.

“**Neither death**”—far from separating me from the love of God, death actually brings me into His very presence.

To the Corinthians, Paul said, “**We are ... well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord**” (2 Corinthians 5:8, NKJV).

To the Philippians, he said, “I find myself with mixed emotions, I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Yet, I know that you still need me” (paraphrase, Philippians 1:23-24). He did

not say, “I would desire to depart and be asleep,” as though we sleep blissfully until the day we will see Christ. For a believer, departing means that we are instantly “with Christ.”

Paul realized that God had a plan for his life, as the Lord does for each of us. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them**” (2:10).

Looking back, I can see how the hand of God was working, preparing me for the good work that He had before ordained that I should accomplish for His glory. This didn’t happen overnight. The experience has taken a lifetime. Even before I was born, God was preparing me.

There were many times when I questioned whether God had called me to ministry. The life of a pastor was not so glorious as it is now. There were distresses and tribulations. My family and I faced problems in the early years that caused me to question God’s calling.

But in retrospect, I can see those difficult times were all part of God’s training. Likewise, God is working in you because you are His workmanship.

Paul told the Philippians that he believed he had not yet finished his ministry: “**I follow after ... that I may apprehend that for which also I [was] apprehended [by] Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 3:12b). The apostle’s future had already been mapped out when the Lord blinded Paul on the Damascus Road. When the Lord told Ananias to go to where Paul was, Ananias, in a way, backed away and said, “Wait a minute, Lord, don’t You know this Saul has come to imprison and kill the Christians who call upon Your Name?” The Lord reassured Ananias, “Saul is a chosen vessel unto Me and I will show him the things that he must suffer for My sake” (paraphrase, Acts 9).

The Lord revealed to Paul many of the sufferings that he would have to go through—the slanderings, imprisonments, and near-death beatings. The Lord had designed Paul’s ministry in advance, even before Paul persecuted Christians. So too, the Lord has a plan and a purpose for each of our lives. That doesn’t mean we are going to automatically accomplish those purposes. When the distresses come,

we can either be faithful like Paul or walk away. Our reluctance to continue walking by faith can thwart the purposes of God.

At the end of his life, death did not separate Paul from the love of God. And death

will not separate us from the love of God, but will usher us into His presence. In the early church, there were many times when a believer, facing martyrdom, would turn to the executioner and say, “You are only ushering me into the presence of my Lord.” Likewise, death will bring us right before the throne of Jesus.

In Romans, 8, Paul also wrote, “**nor life.**” It is often harder to live for Christ than it is to die for Him. Many people have a difficult time living for Jesus. But if we have the proper outlook, we will recognize that all of the trials and hardships we face are designed to bring us closer to Him and to strengthen our reliance on Him.

L. E. Maxwell, in his book titled *Crowded to Christ*, said that God often puts us in a corner and closes every avenue of escape except for Himself so that we are “crowded to Christ.” In other words, when we’re under pressure, we are pushed into Christ because we have no other place to go. What a blessing that even when we come unwillingly, we still experience the help and victory of the Lord and gain a greater awareness of His love. ➡