

MESSAGE OUTLINE

True Self / False Self – Living from God's Love

Belovedness – Anchored in God's Love

Romans 8:31-39 (NIV)

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NOTES:

No Condemnation

John 8:10-11

¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

“If we would really help those close to us and dear, and if we would learn to live together with our family and “neighbors” in the power of the kingdom, we must abandon the deeply rooted human practice of condemning and blaming. This is what Jesus means when he says, “Judge not.” He is telling us that we should and that we can become the kind of person who does not condemn or blame others. As we do so, the power of God's kingdom will be more freely available to bless and guide those around us into his ways. But what is it, exactly, that we do when we condemn someone? When we condemn one another, we really communicate that he or she is, in some deep and just possibly irredeemable way, bad. Bad as a whole, and to be rejected. In our eyes, the condemned is among the discards of human life. He or she is not acceptable. We sentence that person to exclusion. Surely we can learn to live well and happily without doing that.” - Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

The Story We Tell Ourselves About Ourselves

Condemnation doesn't come only from what others say about us; it often comes from the stories we tell ourselves. Sometimes it begins with a voice that once had power over us, a parent, a teacher, a leader, who named us in a way that wounded us. Over time, we no longer need that voice present, because we've internalized it. We rehearse the story as if it were true. A condemning spirit usually takes root not in what is happening now, but in the story we are telling ourselves about who we are. And until that story is named and challenged, it shapes how we see God, how we see ourselves, and then how we treat others.

1 John 3:20

For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

January 25, 2026

Belovedness – Anchored in God’s Love: Romans 8:31-39

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at solanabeach.church for sermon video, message outline, resources and small group questions print version.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Before beginning your time in the passage this week, share with one another, using this prompt: Is there a story about yourself that you cherish that reminds you of who you are?

CONNECT WITH GOD (Use the below practice or select one from a previous week.)

A Practice of Stillness: Read the words in this blessing and receive them as truth for you today. Give yourself silent space to listen to God’s word for you, through the blessing below.

A Blessing for Imperfection (an excerpt from [Liturgies for Wholeness](#))

*If you fear that you are not enough
Or that you do not have what it takes,
If you fear that all you have built will be lost
Or that what you have is worthless,
If you find yourself rehearsing
All of the ways you could fail—
May you see yourself as God sees you:
Secure and accepted,
Resting on the foundation of His protection.*

*Oh child, may you fall swiftly
Into the freedom of knowing
That you are not the sum of the things you got right.*

*May all your imperfection pieces
Come together in Christ
And make you whole.*

May you cling to your Creator’s grace...

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- **Together and Alone:** Read Romans 8:31-39 once together and then once alone. Reflect/journal on one or both of the following prompts:
 - What are the stories in your life that remind you who you are?
 - Are there any stories you tell yourself that don’t reflect the truth of who God says you are?
 - What does it mean for you that God is “for you”?
- **Together** as a whole group: Share your own reflections from the prompts. Explore any other personal reactions or reflections that come up for you as you read the passage and journaled.

CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

If needed, read the passage again. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the sermon outline.
- Discuss questions/curiosities that came up for you in the message this week.
- What images, ideas, or stories come up for you when you consider the “True Self/False Self” concept?
- Which verse in the passage stands out to you the most? Why?
- What do you know about the background/context in the letter to the Romans?
- What comes before Romans 8:31-39?
- What are “these things” that Paul is referring to in v. 31?
- Are there any themes in Romans 8:31-39 that you see elsewhere in scripture?
- In what ways might our faith community help shape the stories we tell ourselves?
- Paul is very specific about what cannot separate us from God’s love. What would you add to that list from your own fears or experiences?

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore this quote, in connection with the passage this week and the topic of *True Self/False Self*.

“The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God.... I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in Him.” –Thomas Merton, [New Seeds of Contemplation](#)

PRAYER

Share prayers of joy and concern with one another. Close your time together with prayer and say the Lord’s Prayer together as you end.