

# INVERTED PARALLELISM OF ROMANS 8:35–39

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with Rachel Tavera

A Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (8:35a)

**FAILURE OF SPIRITUAL ATTACKS**

B Shall

tribulation,  
or (ἢ) distress,  
or (ἢ) persecution,  
or (ἢ) famine,  
or (ἢ) nakedness,  
or (ἢ) peril,  
or (ἢ) sword?

*Just as it is written,  
“For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long;  
We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (8:36b).*

**(Quote of Old Testament Added for Emphasis)**

*(Introduces Second Question)*

**LIST OF SPIRITUAL ENEMIES**

Q  
U  
E  
S  
T  
I  
O  
N  
S

C But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer  
through Him who loved us (8:37).

**OVERWHELMING SPIRITUAL VICTORY**

B' For I am convinced that

neither (οὐτε) death, nor (οὐτε) life,  
nor (οὐτε) angels, nor (οὐτε) principalities,  
nor (οὐτε) things present, nor (οὐτε) things to come,  
nor (οὐτε) powers (8:38),  
nor (οὐτε) height, nor (οὐτε) depth,  
*nor (οὐτε) any other created thing (8:39a)*

*(Introduces Answer)*

**LIST OF SPIRITUAL ENEMIES**

**(Comprehensive Statement Added for Emphasis)**

Point of  
Turning

A  
N  
S  
W  
E  
R

A' shall be able to separate us from the love of God,  
*which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:39b).*

**FAILURE OF SPIRITUAL ATTACKS**

**(Reason for Failure Added for Emphasis)**

## NOTES:

1. The *subject* of the entire section in which this inverted parallelism occurs is spiritual warfare (Romans 8:31–39).
2. In verse 36 we find *metonymy of the adjunct* in which the possession is put for the possessor; that is, offensive spiritual weapons are put for the persons or fallen angels who cause tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, and slaughter.
3. The *center* emphasizes the possibility and divine expectation of a complete rout of all spiritual enemies. *E.g.*, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7b).
4. The *point of turning* just past the center moves from posing questions in A and B to answering those questions in B' and A'.
5. The correlative conjunctions οὐτε...οὐτε (“neither...nor”) in B' introduce *couplets* and *merisms* (a totality expressed by two contrasting parts, such as life and death).
6. Expansions are added to the ends of B (quote about death by the sword from Psalm 44:22), B' (comprehensive statement), and C' (positional truth) for emphasis.
7. *Main point:* All spiritual attacks that try to separate us from the love of Christ and the love of God will fail. The reason for their failure is appended to the end of the inverted parallelism for emphasis: God's love for us is based on our position in Christ and not on our success or failure in spiritual warfare. Paul's answer (B' and A') to the two questions (A and B) is strong support for the doctrine of eternal security.