

Blessed Assurance

Romans 8:31-39

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We now come to the close of our series in Romans 8. The chapter opened in verse 1 with “no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” and it ends in verse 39 with no separation to those who are “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So we love Romans 8—no condemnation, no separation. And in between, “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Let me remind you what we have covered as we wrap up this series. First of all, we saw that in Christ we have new life, verses 2-13; secondly, we saw that we have a new relationship, verses 14-17; thirdly, we saw that we have a new hope—the hope of glory, verses 18-25; fourthly, we saw that we have a new help—the Holy Spirit, our helper, our paraclete, who comes along side of us to help us to live this new life in Christ, verses 26-27; then fifthly, we saw that we have a new knowledge—that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose,” that who God foreknew He predestined, called, justified and glorify, that God is working His perfect plan out for our lives, verses 28-30.

Now we come to the sixth section of Romans 8, which is called a new assurance. So we have new life, new relationship, new hope, new help, new knowledge and a new assurance, verses 31-39. This is the section that can rightfully be called Blessed Assurance. It actually has been given the title Paul’s Hymn of Assurance. It is a song of assurance. It is the crescendo; it actually builds to the end of the chapter. “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So Paul is singing this song of assurance. He wants us to be assured of our salvation. It is perhaps the most majestic passage that has come to us from the apostle Paul.

The passage opens in verse 31 with the question, “What then shall we say to these things?” Notice the question mark. There are going to be six question marks. There are five questions that Paul will use to answer this first question. He actually has first the question, then five answers in the form of questions. So he asks this opening question in verse 31: “What then shall we say to these things?”

Now we ask, “What things does Paul want us to respond to? What are the ‘these things’ that Paul wants us to say something about?” The answer is in verses 28-30. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” That is a description of the Christian. You are called by God, you love Him and you are “called according to His purpose.” Verse 29, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

We spent last time on these verses. I broke it all down for you. Basically, this is God’s eternal

purpose for salvation from eternity past to eternity future. In eternity past, God foreknew you, which means that God set His love upon you. Then God predetermined what He would do with you; that is, that you would be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that one day you would be in heaven, perfectly like Him physically and spiritually. Also, Jesus Christ would be the firstborn or the exalted one or the honored one among the brethren. So Jesus becomes our big brother, and He is the exalted one. God also called us in time, He justified us and He glorified us. They are all in the past tense; they are things that God has already done. Whom God has called, He glorifies.

So when we come to verse 31 where Paul asks, "What then shall we say to these things?" he is referring back to verses 28-30. God has called us, justified us and declared us righteous.

In answering Paul's question, "What then shall we say to these things?" Paul answers his own question by asking five more questions. I'll point them out. They are all intended to bring the true believer blessed assurance. This last section of Romans 8 is intended for one thing, and one thing only: for the true believer to be absolutely sure that one day they will arrive safely in heaven.

I want to point out from this text three reasons that are the bases for our assurance. First of all, "What then shall we say to these things?" What we say is God is for us, verses 31-33. That's the first response; that's the first thing we say. Verse 31 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Notice the question mark. Paul answers his question with a question. Verse 32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The "all things" here kind of reminds you of Romans 8:28—"...all things work together for good to those who love God." Verse 33, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."

As I said, Paul starts with a question and answers it with five more questions. These all are important questions you should memorize and take to heart. The first question is in verse 31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" The answer is "No one." There is no one greater than God.

Notice the word "if" in "If God is for us..." This "if" is not questioning whether or not God is for us. In the Greek, it is actually an affirmation that translates "since" or "because." It would read, "Since God is for us..." or "Because God is for us..." Paul's not saying, "Oh, I hope God is for us." He's actually affirming that "Since God is for us, who can be against us?"

By this question, Paul is actually saying that our salvation is secure. He's saying, "You wonder if this salvation is real? If it can last? If you're going to arrive safely in heaven? You wonder if God is actually going to finish what He began in you?" His answer is, "God is for you. He's on your side. So the reality is that no one can be against you."

Because God is for us, no one can rob us of our salvation. They would have to be greater than God Himself, and no one is greater than God. Remember that God is the giver, the sustainer

and the completer of our salvation. We sometimes lose sight of that. Salvation is of the Lord, and God sustains us by His grace, so we'll arrive safely one day in glory. We're saved by grace, we're kept by grace and by God's grace, we will all arrive safely in heaven. We don't have to doubt that, we don't have to worry about that or fret about that. What God starts, God will complete.

No one is stronger than God. David cried in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Isn't that great? The Lord is my salvation and the strength of my life. I don't need to be afraid of anyone, because God is for me. There is no one greater than God.

Notice the second question is in verse 32: "He..."—that is, "God the Father"—"...who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all..."—notice that God is "for us"—"...how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

In the Old Testament there is a picture of this when God came to Abraham in Genesis 22. God said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." In this Scripture is the first time the word "love" appears in the Bible. It is a father's love for his son, offering him as a sacrifice.

So Abraham got up early in the morning with Isaac and put the wood on a donkey and journeyed to the land of Moriah, which is where Jesus was crucified and died on Calvary. They went up the hill and Isaac asked, "My father! Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Then Abraham said to Isaac, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." There are two ways to interpret that, and they are both Biblical. It could be either, "God will provide a sacrifice"—He gave His Son—and "God Himself is the sacrifice"—for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. So God not only provided the sacrifice, but God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

You know the story: Isaac voluntarily, willingly laid on the altar, and his dad lifted the knife and was ready to plunge it into the heart of his own son. What happened? God stopped Abraham and said to him, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham saw a ram caught in the bushes by his horns. Abraham then took the ram and put it in the place of Isaac, and the ram was sacrificed.

So first we have God's love giving His Son. Isaac did not die, but God's Son did die. This is a picture of substitution. The ram was the substitute for Isaac, even as Jesus was the substitute for us. Jesus took our sin, He bore our griefs and sorrows and He died in our place. So Jesus was a substitute on that Cross. The content there is that God gave His Son so that Abraham was spared sacrificing Isaac. But God didn't spare giving up His only begotten Son.

The argument there is from the greater to the lesser. Notice it is Romans 8:32: "How shall

He..."—that is, "God the Father"—"...not with Him..."—that is, "the Son, Jesus Christ"—"...also freely give us..."—"His people"—"...all things?" If God is going to go all the way to give His Son to die on the Cross—if you ever wonder, "Does God love me? Is God going to take care of me?" just look at the Cross. God is saying, "If I would give My Son to die on the Cross, don't you think I'm going to keep you, provide for you, protect you and bring you safely home?" It's an argument from the greater to the lesser.

Say you went to a car dealership and they had a raffle for a new car. You throw your name into the bucket, and you get a call a few weeks later. "You just won a brand-new Maserati!"

"Great! Be right down!" You go down to pick up your car, they give you the car, but they won't give you the keys.

"Are you kidding me?! You're going to give me the car, but you won't give me the keys?!" That doesn't make sense.

That's really the argument here. If God would give you His only Son, to sacrifice Him on the Cross for your sins, why wouldn't God now freely give you all things? This is kind of a *carte blanche* for the child of God, a blank check. Whatever you need, God will meet your need. So the Cross is God's guarantee of His unfailing love.

There is a third question in verse 33. It is, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?" Then Paul answers his question: "It is God who justifies." Now Paul takes us into a courtroom. He could have said, "Who will charge us?" We could have answered, "The world; others will come against us. The flesh; my heart will condemn me." Have you ever had your heart condemn you? You get ready to go to church and you hear, "Who do you think you are going to church? You're not really a good Christian; you've been sinning so much that you're not worthy. Everyone else at that church is holier than you. You don't deserve to go to church! Who do you think you are?" Your heart and your flesh condemn you.

Then the devil is good at condemning you. He is "the accuser of the brethren." Remember that he appeared before God and pointed his finger at Job? When God was bragging about Job, Satan said that Job only served God because He had blessed Job. Take away God's blessings, "and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

So the world, the flesh and the devil will come against us, but it is God who has declared us righteous. God is not against us; He is for us. God gave His Son, and He is the one who justifies us. Remember what the word "justified" means? It means that God declares you righteous.

When you come into the courtroom and God is sitting on the bench, He's your heavenly Father and He's already declared you righteous. You also have a good defense attorney—Jesus. It just so happens that the judge is His Father. Jesus goes up to the judge and says, "Dad, everything's cool with this John Miller guy. I know he's kind of flakey, but he trusted Me, he's one of ours so justify him." The hammer comes down and the judge says, "I declare John Miller

to be righteous.” That’s my position or standing before God. Remember that we saw earlier, “Whom He called, these He also justified”? So if you are a Christian, you have been declared perfectly, totally righteous before God. God sees you as though you had never sinned. That’s an awesome thing. He’s not condemning us; He’s the one who has justified us.

So rest assured that God is for us, rest in God’s purpose and in God’s power.

Now there is a second response we have to the question, “What then shall we say to these things?” It is in verse 34: Jesus died for us. “What then shall we say to these things?” Number one, God is for us, so who can be against us? Number two, Jesus died for us. Verse 34 says, “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us.” So God the Father is for us, God the Son died for us.

The fourth question appears in verse 34: “Who is he who condemns?” It is certainly not Jesus; He is the one who died for you. It’s certainly not God the Father; He’s the one who is for us.

There are three realities that assure our salvation in verse 34. I want you to see them; they are so very important. The first is that Jesus died for you, the second one is that Jesus rose for you and the third one is that Jesus intercedes for you. It says, “It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Where it says, “Christ who died,” that’s Jesus’ Crucifixion on the Cross. He took our sin. He didn’t just die on the Cross to say, “I love you”; He died there to pay the penalty for our sins. Then you have His Resurrection; He “is also risen.” Jesus died for you, and Jesus rose for you.

What is the Resurrection? It’s proof that the price on the Cross was paid. It’s proof of God the Father’s acceptance of the sacrificial work of God the Son. When Jesus hung on the Cross, He cried, “It is finished. Tatelestai.” It means “finished” or “complete.” Then He dismissed His spirit and died. He was buried, and three days later, God the Father said, “Amen” to Jesus’ statement, “Tatelestai” and rose Jesus from the dead. That is God the Father’s stamp of approval on the work that Jesus did on the Cross.

How would we know that what Jesus did on the Cross actually paid for our sins? The way we know is that God the Father raised Him from the dead. It was validation and proof. Notice Jesus’ Ascension, in verse 34: He was “at the right hand of God.” We have His Ascension and exaltation. He rose from the dead and then ascended into heaven. Also in verse 34, we have His intercession. He “makes intercession for us.” So Jesus died for you, Jesus rose for you, Jesus ascended for you, Jesus is exalted for you and Jesus is interceding for you.

This is a work of Christ that we often miss. We are so good at looking back at the Cross and remembering the price Jesus paid on the Cross. He died, was buried, arose and went back to heaven, but what is Jesus doing now? Jesus is praying for you. He is interceding for you. He is right there by the Father, and Jesus is your advocate. He is interceding for you.

Remember when Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat." Can you imagine Jesus turning to you and saying, "Hey, Satan called Me last night. He said that he wants you."

"What did you tell him? You didn't tell him 'Yes,' did you? What's the deal, Lord?"

Do you know that Satan wants you? That Satan wants to sift you? That he wants to ruin your marriage? He wants to ruin your witness. He wants to ruin your joy and your love and make you of no effect for Christ. He wants to rob you of the blessings of your Christian life. He can't steal your salvation—that's what this whole passage is about. But he can certainly take your joy and your peace. He can certainly nullify your witness.

So Satan desires to "sift you as wheat." But Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for you...and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Peter did that by writing First and Second Peter.

The same is true of us. Satan wants you, and he wants to "sift you as wheat." But Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, praying and interceding for us. He keeps busy praying for me every day. And He's praying for you. What a blessing.

In the book of Hebrews it talks about Jesus being the High Priest who lives to make intercession for us. He can be touched with feelings of our infirmities and weaknesses. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet He was without sin. God is empathizing and sympathizing and compassionate; He understands. We have a big brother in heaven, so to speak, who is at the right hand of God the Father, and He is interceding for us.

How can we be sure of our salvation? Let me give you a formula I learned years ago that I have never forgotten and love so much. You can use it as a foundation for assurance. Number one, Jesus paid the price. Number two, Jesus prayed a prayer. And number three, Jesus made a promise. He paid the price by dying for our sins on the Cross. Never doubt your salvation; it was paid in full by Jesus on the Cross.

Secondly, He prayed a prayer in John 17. This is not the Lord's Prayer. It is Jesus' prayer of intercession. He said, "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me..."—referring to you and I, His people—"...be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." Isn't that a great prayer? Jesus actually asked His Father, when He was on earth, that all those the Father had given Him in salvation would be with Him, because Jesus wanted us to see His glory. I believe that God the Father will answer that prayer of God the Son, and we'll be with Him in heaven.

The third basis for our salvation is that Jesus made a promise, in John 14. This is awesome. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be also." Jesus made us a promise. He said He would go to heaven and prepare a place for us.

Heaven is a real place. Heaven is a prepared place. Heaven is the Father's house. And one day Jesus is going to come back and take us, either by death or by the rapture—one way or another—we're going to go to heaven and be with Him.

So He paid the price, He prayed the prayer and He made a promise. Those are the things that are the foundation for my assurance. How marvelous that is! So rest in the Son of God's perfect sacrifice and in the sufficiency of His finished work and in His continual advocacy as He intercedes at the right hand of the Father, praying for us.

There is a third answer to the question, "What then shall we say to these things?" It is found in verses 35-39. The answer is that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" This is question number five. Now Paul comes to his last answer, and the question he asks is, "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen. You should clap for that one right there. Nothing can separate us from His love.

So number one, God is for you; number two, Jesus died for you; and number three, nothing can separate you from the love of God. Nothing. Paul scans heaven and earth and makes it very clear that nothing can separate us from God's love. The Father is for us, the Son died for us and God the Holy Spirit regenerates us, indwells us, baptizes us and He seals us unto the day of redemption. He will never, ever leave us.

I want you to understand something: When you became a Christian, something actually happened to you. It started with regeneration. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. You were made alive, you were made new in Christ. We use the term "born again," but the technical term is "regenerated." A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. You're not a Christian because you go to church, because you believe in God, because you read the Bible; it's because God's life has come into your soul. That's what makes you a Christian. It's called being born again. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

Then the Holy Spirit indwells every believer. Every Christian has been regenerated and indwelt. Being "indwelt" means that the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you. Your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. Once He moves in, He will never leave.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit baptizes us by taking us out of Adam the 1st and placing us in Jesus Christ, who is called "the last Adam." He takes us out of darkness and translates us into light. He takes us from bondage and sets us free. Every Christian has been baptized by the Holy Spirit; it's the work of your identification with Christ.

In Romans 8:1, we are “in Christ Jesus”; in Romans 8:39, we are “in Christ Jesus.” How did you get in Christ? By the Holy Spirit. The moment you were regenerated, the moment you were indwelt, you were taken out of Adam and placed into Christ.

This is my firm conviction—it is John Miller, but I believe it’s Biblical John Miller—once in Christ, always in Christ. You did not put yourself in Christ, and you cannot take yourself out of Christ. You didn’t save yourself; you can’t lose your salvation. You can’t keep your own salvation; it’s kept by the power of God. So once you are in Christ, once you are indwelt, once you have been regenerated, you can never be lost; you can’t be unregenerated, you can’t unregenerate yourself. You can’t take yourself out of Christ and go back into Adam. You can’t get the Holy Spirit to leave; He will “never leave you nor forsake you.” Then the Holy Spirit seals us, Ephesians 4:30. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Now listen very carefully. The number one image and concept in the sealing of the Holy Spirit is security. Some say ownership—I disagree. It does convey ownership, but it also conveys that you are secure; you are sealed. In the ancient world, they sealed letters. We do that today, too. We have a wax seal, or we have secure post. In the ancient world, there were only two people who could break that seal: the sender and the receiver. If you sealed a letter and you sent it, then the person receiving it could break the seal, or you could break the seal. God is both the sender and the receiver. In your salvation, God is both the sender and the receiver, so only He can break the seal. Every Christian has been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. That means until you get safely in heaven. So “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Paul asks this fifth question in verse 35. He asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Good question, Paul. Then he seeks to answer it. “Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “Tribulation” means to be pressed by affliction or hardship. The word “distress” means a difficult, tight place. You feel hemmed in and can’t get out. “Persecution” is for Christ’s sake. People are opposing you because of your faith. “Famine” means lack of supplies or food. “Nakedness” does not mean literal nakedness, but it means lacking clothing or provision. The word “peril” means any kind of danger. Have you ever been in danger? It can’t separate you. The Greek word translated “sword” was not a long sword but a short dagger. It was the same sort of sword that Peter pulled out in the Garden of Gethsemane and tried to take off Malchus’ ear with it. It’s a word picture for death. “Sword” here is implying death. Death cannot separate us from God’s love. Even when you die, you are going to be more than a conqueror. So Paul lists all of these trials.

Paul suffered all of these things. Paul went through tribulation and distress and persecution and famine and nakedness and peril, and he would soon be executed for his faith. I also think it’s interesting that Paul is writing to the Christians in Rome. Soon in Rome Nero would begin to kill Christians. The very people who were the recipients of this letter, these words, would soon be thrown into the arena and devoured by wild beasts. They would be covered with pitch, put up on a pole and used as human torches. They would be executed and destroyed. Paul went

through this suffering.

There is nowhere in the Bible where we are promised that we would be exempt from suffering and sorrow. Hebrews 11, beginning in verse 36, says “others” suffered problems and persecution, and they “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted.” So not everyone will be delivered; God will allow us many times to go through these trials.

But Romans 8:36 is a quote from Psalm 44:22: “As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’” Paul is quoting the Septuagint, the Old Testament Greek translation. This is David writing this psalm. This is the Christian life, by the way. An interesting text. I don’t hear too many preachers preaching on this. We’re killed all the day long and as sheep for the slaughter. We go through adversity and difficulty but it will not affect our relationship with God or separate us from God’s love.

Notice verse 37: “Yet in all these things...”—again, Romans 8:28; “all things work together for good”—“...we are more than conquerors.” First we’re as sheep headed for the slaughter, but we are more than conquerors. That statement “more than conquerors” is fascinating. How are you more than a conqueror? Isn’t conquering enough? The word actually means “super conqueror.” It’s like winning a sports event. We “super won.”

“We super won the game.”

“Didn’t you just win the game?”

“Yeah, we won the game, but we killed ‘em! We slaughtered ‘em!”

So when Paul looks at the believer, he says that you’re not just a conqueror, you’re a super conqueror. You over conquered. You’re super conquerors “through Him who loved us.” The word “love” is in the aorist tense. It refers to the Cross. Jesus, in the past, loved us by dying for us, and it carries on into the present and into the future. It’s by, in and through Jesus Christ that we are more than conquerors.

Paul’s conclusion reaches a crescendo in verses 38-39. He says, “For I am persuaded.” That word “persuaded” means that I have “absolute assurance” or “confidence.” It’s interesting that, again, in verse 28, he says, “And we know.” So he had assurance. Now in verse 38, he says, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life...”—if I die or if I live—“...nor angels...”—these would be good angels; there’s no reason for them to separate us from God’s love—“...nor principalities nor powers...”—these are evil angels; these are fallen angels or demons—“...nor things present...”—nothing happening in my life right now—“...nor things to come...”—even the future is secure—“...nor height nor depth...”—even space itself—“...nor any other created thing...”—he scans the entire universe; if there are little, green men on a planet out there somewhere—“...shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Amen. How marvelous is that!

Now you know why I called this series Blessed Assurance. It opens with no condemnation, and

it ends with no separation. And in the middle, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." No separation from God's love, because we are in Christ.

There are a couple more verses I want to give you. In John 10:27-29, Jesus is speaking, and He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." This is so powerful. He says, "I give them eternal life."

How long is eternal life? Eternal. So if God gives you eternal life, how long are you going to live? Eternally. Why is it we argue about this? Why is it that we debate this in the church? "I give them eternal life." Guess what eternal life is. It's eternal. If you don't live eternally, you never had eternal life. If you don't have eternal life, you won't live eternally. It's quality and quantity. It's new life and it lasts forever.

Then He says, "They shall never perish." Did He need to say that? Couldn't He just say, "I give them eternal life"? Wouldn't that be enough? No; He adds to it. Then He adds a third: "Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all..."—"If God is for us, who can be against us?"—"...and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

Jude closes with this doxology in verses 24-25: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

God is for us, Jesus died for us and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray.