

The Hymn Of Assurance

Romans 8:31-39

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Romans 8 opens with the famous, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are...,” key phrase, “...in Christ Jesus,” and it ends in verse 39 with no separation to those who are “in” Christ Jesus. Someone has called this section of Romans 8:31-39, Paul’s hymn of assurance, and so I’ve given it that title: A Hymn of Assurance. In essence, Paul is almost singing in these verses. He’s singing a song of assurance that we know what God has begun, God will complete. We’ve learned in Romans 8 that we have a new life in Christ, a new relationship with God in Christ, a new hope in Christ, a new help in Christ, and a new knowledge in Christ—we know all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Tonight, last but not least, we now have a new assurance.

I’m going to open up a can of worms and a hot potato before I even get into this text. I even thought about it today. I thought that I should maybe back off a little bit and be a little bit easier on this subject, but I’m going to say just flat out...we may even lose half the church tonight, I don’t know, but I only say this because from the bottom of my heart, in all the years that I’ve studied the Word and walked with the Lord over a prolonged period of time, study and investigation, I’ve come to the absolute conclusion that if you have truly been born again and regenerated by the Holy Spirit that it is impossible for you to ever be lost. That’s the conclusion that I’ve come to. I believe that if you honestly study not only Romans 8 but all of the New Testament, and especially these verses tonight, that there really isn’t any other conclusion that you come to. I would summarize it in these easy terms before I even get into this text. When God regenerates a person there’s nothing, and no one, that can un-regenerate that person. The regeneration is a work of God, and only God can undo the work that He does. I know all of the arguments because I’ve preached them myself. At one time I did not hold that view. In the early years of my ministry, I did not hold that view. I preached that if you backslid, you could be lost and could cross a line where God would kick you out of His family. After reading Romans, other epistles, and scripture, the idea that we’re sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption is the conclusion I’ve come to.

Before I even get into this study, I didn’t even plan on doing this. It’s not in my text, and I don’t even know why I’m saying what I’m saying right now, but I’m sharing from my heart. If you want to know what John Miller believes, I believe that if you are truly born again, if you’re truly saved...You say, “Well, you’re going to preach John 15 on Sunday night, if you don’t abide in Him like a branch you’re going to get burned.” You come out Sunday night and we’ll talk about that verse, okay? We’ll deal with that text. I know there are a lot of what people call “problem” texts. I believe that these “problem” texts are warnings to make sure you have it, not warnings to tell you that you can lose it—there’s a big difference. So, very simply stated, you’ve been sealed until the day of redemption, “...that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Now, is this a license to go out and sin? Absolutely not. If you think that, “Wow! I’m safe in the grace of God then I can go out and sin,” then I question

whether or not you have been truly regenerated or born again because if you've really been born again, you're not going to want to go out and sin and lose fellowship with God, lose the joy of the Lord, lose the peace of God, and be a bad witness for God. It certainly, I believe, is not going to produce that within your heart. I believe, as we read these verses tonight, they are going to humble you and put within you an appreciation for what God has done in your life and bring what God wants you to have, that is, an assurance. I don't want anyone to have a false assurance. If you're not truly born again, if you're not truly saved, then you need to get saved. You need to make sure that you're a child of God, and I wouldn't want to give anybody a false assurance. On the other hand, I wouldn't want anyone who is truly saved and going to heaven to struggle their whole Christian life through without knowing that they'll go to heaven, without the joy and peace of the Lord, and the assurance that I'm going to heaven. I believe that this assurance brings great freedom to love and serve the Lord and to seek to live for the Lord in a way that honors and glorifies Him.

What Paul does in this passage is asks questions. It's the classic way to promote your position—you ask questions. Then, he answers the questions with another question which is unanswerable. Have I lost you? You ask a question, and he answers his own question, but his questions are unanswerable. They are kind of irrefutable. It's kind of a lock-tight argument. Paul is going to give us five unanswerable questions. Paul's response to the answer of verses 28-30 is precipitated in verse 31. Let's start there. Paul says, "What shall we then say to these things?" There's the question. The question to that is what are these things? Well, some say, everything he's written about up to this point in the book of Romans; others say, what he's written about from this point in chapter 8, but I believe it goes back to verse 28. Go back to verse 28. He says, "And we know that all things..." notice that phrase, all these things, "...work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Those are the five links in the chain that are unbreakable. Once that foreknowledge starts of God setting His love upon you, these unbreakable chains end up in glory.

The great Jonathan Edwards said, "What begins with grace ends in glory." That phrase just keeps going over and over in my mind, "What begins with grace ends in glory. What begins with grace ends in glory." When God saves us by His grace, we end up in glory. That's a marvelous truth that he really disclosed for us there. Then he immediately says, "What shall we then say to these things?" In verse 28, we know that "all things" work together for good, and then he tells us what the things are: God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and has (past tense) glorified us. Then he asks the question, "What shall we then say to these things?" I don't know about you, but when I think about that God has called me, predestined me, justified me, and glorified me, and someone says, "What do you say to these things?" I say, "Awesome!" Back in my hippie days it would've been, "Groovy!" I mean, what do you say to these things? Well, Paul tells us in verse 31. This is his second question following his first. He doesn't just say, "What do we say to these things," but he says, "If God be for us, who can be

against us?”

For the last two weeks we've been reading that God is for us, who can be against us? Isn't that amazing? He doesn't just say, "God is for us." He says, "If God is for us, then who can be against us?" The answer to that question is obviously no one. If God, who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise, all-benevolent, all-loving. If God is for us, who can be against us? What an amazing, amazing question that is. This is question number 1. Now if Paul had simply asked, "Who is against us," we could easily answer that question. We could say, "The world is against us. The flesh is against us. The devil is against us." Did you know that you have enemies as a Christian? The world is trying to conform you and press you into its mold—the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We, as Christians, are at war with the world. The flesh is an ever-present enemy. We have found the enemy, and the enemy is us. Amen? Do you know what my biggest enemy is? Me. That's my biggest enemy, my flesh, and I war against that too. Then, there's the devil, 1 Peter 5:8, "... because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Don't you wish there were no devil? Someday there will be no devil, and what a glorious day that will be, but right now we have these enemies that war against our soul.

Paul doesn't ask this naive question, "Whose against us?" Paul says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Now that little word "if" would be better translated "since." Since God is for us, who can be against us? Paul is trying to make us realize that God is for us. He's not against us. He's on our side, and if God is working for us, then no one can be against us. You know, I always laugh at sporting events, like the Super Bowl, where you have two teams with Christians praying for each of their teams on two different sides. I almost picture God scratching His head thinking, "I don't know what to do here." Two Christian quarterbacks or two NBA basketball teams with Christian players on both teams, and they're praying, "Oh, God, please help us win this game." You wonder, "Well, what team is God on? What side is God on?" How does God deal with that? It's not so much that I'm for God, it's that God is for me. When it comes to your salvation, God is actually on your team. Isn't that good? I mean, what team could lose if God was on their side, if God was their quarterback, right? God is on your team. God is on your side. God is actually going to bat for you. God is not against you. You have to let this sink deep into your heart tonight. God actually is for you. God is for you.

I want you to look at the second question that he asks, verse 32. He says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not..." here's the question, "...with him also freely give us all things?" So, if God is for us, who can be against us? Well, we can have an enemy of our soul, but he can't win. He can't be victorious; he can't conquer in the end. If your heart is ever overwhelmed and you think the devil is going to get the best of you, or if your heart gets overwhelmed and you think the trials, troubles, tribulations, and temptations are going to drown your soul in perdition, think again. God is for you. Jesus turned to Peter and said (this is a free paraphrase), "Peter, you know what? Satan called me last night and said, 'I want Peter.'" Can you imagine if Jesus turned to you and said, "Hey, the devil called me last night and said he wants you." That's like freak out time, right? "What'd you tell him, Lord? You told him no, right?" "I don't know, Peter. You're kind of flaky. I thought that maybe I could..."

I'm going to lose Judas, but I could afford to lose another one, so maybe I thought, you know, go ahead and take him." Jesus said, "I'm praying for you, Peter, and when you fail you're going to be restored. Don't be overwhelmed. Don't be discouraged. I'm praying for you." It's like Jesus saying, "I'm for you. I'm on your side. I'm on your team. Don't worry about it. I got this. I can take care of it." So, learn to rest in the fact that God is for us.

Then, he asks this question, the second one in verse 32 that we just read. He said, if God "...spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" What an awesome thought! What Paul is doing here is arguing from the greater to the lesser—not the lesser to the greater but the greater to the lesser. He's saying, "Look, God has already demonstrated that He is for you by giving you His Son. Not only did He give His Son, but in giving you His Son He did the best and the greatest thing He could ever do for you. Everything is less from that point. That's the greatest God could do, and everything else would be less for God to do. God will take care of that. For the sake of illustration, say that you went to a Rolls-Royce dealership, (I don't even know if they have such a thing). You go to this dealership and enter a lottery where you might win a car. You sign up for this drawing and lo and behold, you win a Rolls-Royce. Wouldn't that be awesome? Nobody wants to win a Rolls-Royce? You say, "Pastor John, this is just an illustration. Don't get me excited." Try to imagine that you win this Rolls-Royce automobile or maybe a Ferrari or whatever it is you're into. You win this beautiful car and they refuse to give you the key. Why would they do that? Why would they give you this beautiful car and not give you the key? If they're going to give you a car, they are going to give you the key, right? If God is going to give you His Son, He's going to give you all things. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser. Why would God say, "Here, I'm going to give you My Son, even though you're in rebellion to Me and you're a sinner. He's going to die for you and then you'll be saved, but then don't ask Me for anything else. Don't ask Me to keep you. Don't ask Me to protect you. Don't ask Me to provide for you." If God is going to give you the car, He is going to give you the key. He is going to take care of all of our needs.

Notice that Paul says, verse 32, "He that spared not his own Son." What an amazing demonstration of God's love in giving His only Son to die for our sins. Then it says, "...but delivered him up for us..." God gave Him to die for us, and He's pointing to the cross which is forever a demonstration of God's great love. Then it says, He delivered him up for us to die. What an amazing thing that God would give His only Son for us to die on the cross. Jesus was not delivered by Judas for money, nor Pilate for fear, or the Jews for envy, but the Father because of love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In giving us His Son, God gave us everything. The cross is the guarantee of the continuing, unfailing love and generosity of God. So, God is for you, who can be against you. God displayed that by giving you His Son, and the rationale is greater to the lesser. If God would give you His Son, shall He not with Him, by Him, and through Him give you all things?

I want you to notice the third question that he uses in verse 33. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." In this question and the next question, the third

and fourth questions, we are brought into an imaginary courtroom. It's a scary thing to be in a courtroom and be on trial. I've never been in a courtroom and been on trial. The only time I had to stand before a judge was years ago for a parking ticket on a car that I sold and didn't change the ownership paperwork on. I was foolish and didn't know how to do that. A year after I sold the car, I got a parking ticket on the car I hadn't seen in a year. It was my responsibility to make sure that I changed the ownership. So, I was brought before this judge, and I thought I was going to go to prison for ten years. I had to sit at the back of the courtroom for about an hour and watch all these other people really get it laid on them and the book thrown at them. I was back there sweating and I said, "Oh, God! I'm going to go to prison. What's my church going to think?" I was a pastor, you know, and if they had to get up on Sunday morning and say, "Pastor John is in jail right now..." I'm serious. This is scary. "Lord, please help me never to do anything to fall into the hands of the living judge, anymore," you know. This is scary. Well, he gave me a little lecture and sent me on my way. I wasn't punished by that. I took care of the situation, but that was a frightening thing.

Can you imagine standing before the judgment bar of God with your eternal destiny at stake? If you're going to stand before God, or even stand in a courtroom, what do you want? A good attorney, right? Ask OJ Simpson. You want a good attorney. Sorry, I shouldn't use that illustration. Can you imagine being in the courtroom, God is on the throne and your lawyer walks in. You say, "It's Jesus! Hoho, sweet!" Jesus says, "Hey, I got this one. My Dad's the judge. I'll just go up and talk to Him and let Him know that I died for you and that you've been forgiven—you're my child. It's all a done deal." "Wow! Awesome! Thank you, Lord!" It's all taken care of. That's the picture that Paul is painting here. In verse 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Satan will hurl his accusations, others will hurl their accusations, your own heart will accuse you, but God is actually your defender. He's not accusing you. Paul's argument is that no prosecution can succeed since God, our judge, has already justified us. Notice verse 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." God is the One who has declared you righteous, and we've learned about justification by faith, that it is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is God who justifies you. So, God is for us, God gave His Son, He will give you all things, and He is not condemning you, He is the One who has actually justified you.

I want you to notice the fourth question in verse 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." In the Greek this could be better translated, "Who is he who will condemn you?" When you stand before God as a Christian, there's no condemnation. Don't forget verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You can actually, right now as a Christian, have full assurance that you can stand before God, look into the face of God, and there will be no condemnation. I don't know about you, but that just thrills my heart! If you were to die tonight, you could go to the presence of God and there would be no condemnation because of what Christ has done for you and the fact that you're in Christ. In 1 John 3:20, even if you feel guilty, "God is greater than our hearts," and He is not condemning us. He knows all things. I want you to notice how Paul breaks this down in verse 34. It is Jesus

who died for you, it is Jesus who rose for you, which is proof of your acceptance, and it is Jesus who is sitting at the Father's right hand interceding for you. Remember Jesus said, "Peter, I prayed for you and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." So, "Peter, I'm interceding for you." Jesus, right now, is in heaven interceding for us.

We sometimes get the idea that the devil is attacking us. The devil is in town running around, and he spends a lot of time in San Francisco—that's where he hangs out a lot, you know, big cities and wicked places. That's where the devil is. You know, I have a theory that the devil probably spends a lot of his time talking to God. Do you know what he talks to God about? You. He's always telling God what a flake you are, how unworthy you are, that He ought to give up on you and forget you, and that He should not let you in heaven. The devil is always accusing us; he's the accuser of the brethren. He rests not day or night. He's constantly accusing you before God. Aren't you glad you have a good defense attorney? Aren't you glad that your Father in heaven is the judge? Aren't you glad that you've already been justified and there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus? Jesus is our paraclete or our advocate. He is literally our defense attorney.

Now we come to the fifth and last question. Paul just kind of crescendos—which is why this is often called a hymn of assurance. He's almost singing this. He throws out these concepts into the universe and says that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Look at it with me beginning in verse 35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul is absolutely exploding here. "...shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written..." Paul says, quoting Psalm 44:22, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded..." fully convinced, that's what Paul is saying, "...that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen! I'm so glad you clapped to that. You talk about a text that is music to your ears. That's why we just want to shut our Bibles right there and say, "Let's just praise God!" Amen? Paul searches heaven and hell, the entire universe, life and death, things present and things future, and says, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As you come to this last question, Paul himself tries to answer it. I want you to notice the things he speaks of. By the way, this first set of things that could separate us that Paul raises, which obviously cannot separate us from God's love, Paul experienced. Paul actually experienced the things he's listing. Tribulation, which means pressures or affliction. Don't raise your hand, but have you ever been going through pressure? Have you ever said, "I'm just under so much pressure right now." Have you ever been through affliction? Sure we have. That can't separate you from God's love. How about distress, verse 35? That means a tight place. The word distress carries the idea of being hemmed in a tight place. Have you ever been in a situation in life where you say, "There's nothing I can do. There is nowhere to turn. There is nothing I can do." You are just hemmed in in this tight place. That's what he's speaking of, distress. Then,

persecutions, which is any form of harassment from the world for the sake of following Christ. We all get harassed for being Christians. Famine, which speaks of any lack, especially food. It speaks of hunger. Nakedness, which actually means no clothes. Peril, which is any kind of danger. Have you ever been in danger. I've been in danger.

I've shared with you about the time that I was kidnapped at gunpoint. Every once in a while that comes back to me and I realize, "I can't believe that actually happened to me." I was kidnapped, forced into my car, held at gunpoint for about three hours with a gun held to my head threatening to kill me, driving around—just the whole big episode that was so traumatic. I remember when I experienced that I thought, "I'm going to see Jesus face-to-face." Really, that's what I was thinking. I was thinking, "I'm gonna see Jesus! I'm gonna see Jesus! I'm gonna see Jesus face-to-face!" Now, don't go out and try to get kidnapped tonight, okay? God just met me in that situation, and I had this incredible peace. I knew that confidently I would see Jesus face-to-face.

Then notice Paul mentions sword, which is a large knife or dagger. As you move to verse 36, quoting from Psalm 44:22, he says, "...we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." I would just make note of the fact that even though you're God's child, going to heaven and God will complete what He began, there's going to be bumps along the way. No one is promised that life will be easy or smooth. Paul suffered these things, and Christians are not exempt from sorrows and suffering. In verse 37 he says, "Nay, in all these things..." all the things that he just mentioned, which is interesting. Again, he uses that phrase from verse 28, "And we know that all things," now in verse 37 he says, "...all these things we are..." and here it is, "...more than conquerors." How are you more than a conqueror? I don't even know how to phrase it. I'm getting tongue-tied here. How do we become more than conquerors? It's like winning a sporting event, "We're more than winners!" It's like, "More than conquerors?" Yes! Paul uses this crazy expression, which literally could be translated, super conquerors. That's how that phrase could be rendered, super conquerors. We don't just get into heaven by the skin of our teeth. We don't just barely make it. "I just hope He let's me in, that's all I hope. I don't care if I live in a shack at the end of Glory Avenue. I just want to get into heaven." No. We're super conquerors! We're more than conquerors. How is it that we are more than conquerors? "...through him..." not of ourselves, not on our own strength, not on our own resources, "...through him that..." what? "...loved us." How amazing is the love of God! And then Paul, reaching this climax in verses 38-39, says, "For I am persuaded..." that in many ways is one of my favorite statements that Paul makes in this section because it means that he is fully convinced. Maybe that's why I opened my study tonight the way I did because I, along with Paul, am fully convinced. Not because I think I'm spiritual, not because I think I'm special, not because I think I deserve heaven, but because I think that God is for me, and I think Jesus died for me and made me His child. I don't think He's going to lose me. I think He's going to complete what He began in Me. I have full assurance that what God has begun, God will complete. I'm resting in His grace. I'm resting and trusting in His salvation. I'm not trusting in my righteousness. If I got to heaven because of who I am, forget it! Ain't gonna happen! If you got to heaven because of who you are, you won't make it, but if we get to heaven because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, it's a sure thing! Right? How wonderful to trust in His

grace!

Paul says, "I'm fully convinced," and then he goes off, "that neither death, nor life..." Death cannot separate you from God's love. Life and experiences cannot separate us from God's love. Angels will not separate you from God's love. Principalities nor powers, demons cannot separate you from God's love. I meet Christians all the time that are worried about demons. I'm not worried about demons. I don't worry about demons. Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. I'm a child of God.

Do you know the night that we got kidnapped I actually...I didn't turn around because he said if I turned around he'd shoot me, but if I moved I felt this gun in my back. I thought to myself, "If he's gonna kill me, I'm gonna preach to him before he kills me." I've thought it through a million times in my mind. I thought, "Man, I wish I could've grabbed the gun and shot the dude." Anyway, I thought, "If he's gonna kill me, I'm gonna preach to him before he shoots me." I actually said, "Do you know who you've kidnapped?" He said, "No." I said, "You kidnapped children of God." I was with two other pastors and said, "We belong to God. We belong to God, and it's no accident that you kidnapped us tonight." I said, "It's no accident. The reason you kidnapped us is because God wants you to know that He loves you and He can forgive you and He can change your life." Do you know what the dude told me? He said, "My mom's a Christian, and she's been telling me that for years." He actually said that. I said, "See there, I told you so. God answered her prayers, put us in the car that you carjacked tonight, and were robbing us. God did it because He wants you to know that you can accept Christ." Obviously, he didn't repent and get saved. I don't know, maybe he's going to be heaven. Maybe this dude will walk up to me in heaven and say, "Hey! I'm the guy who kidnapped you. I could never get away from what you told me that night." I actually shared the whole gospel. I preached a little sermon, and he listened to me—until the other guy in the car with a gun told me to, "Shut up or he'd blow my brains out," so I came to the end of my sermon then.

But, "... death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come," and notice he says, "...things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height..." so he's going into space, "... nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us..." then he comes back to, "...the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What a marvelous, marvelous truth! God is for us—Christ died for us. God has justified us—Christ intercedes for us. Christ loves us, and no power can separate us from His love. Our assurance is anchored in the loving, unchanging, purpose and promise, and power of God.

I don't know if you can see it, or maybe you've wondered for the many weeks about this image on the front of my pulpit. You see this picture of a father holding his son's arm there? When Elizabeth put that artwork together, I specifically asked her that in this artwork it show the father holding the arm of the son, as opposed to the son holding the hand of the father. Do you remember when you had your little children and were going to cross a busy street? You don't trust them to hold you, right? You don't sit your finger out and let a little toddler grab onto your finger and say, "Don't let go. Don't let go." No. You grab their entire arm, you lift them up off their feet, and you walk them across the street, right? Or, you pick them up in your arms and

you hold them, and you walk them across the busy street, right? Guess what God is doing for you right now. You're not holding Him, He's holding you, and He won't let you go. Amen?