

When God is For You: The Assurance of Every Believer

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Romans 8:31-39

Romans 8:31-39 is Paul's closing argument to this glorious chapter in the book of Romans. Paul's emphasis in these final verses is to nail home the immovable security that the justified believer has before God. I'm sure that some of you, just like the believers in Rome, are struggling or have at some time struggled with assurance of your salvation. Satan desires nothing less than to dismantle the assurance that the gospel provides. Paul wants us to know that those who have been justified by the free grace of God in the gospel can be certain that God is for them and that He will undoubtedly complete the work of grace that He has begun. Let's turn our attention to our text this morning. Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31–39

There are four main points on your outline this morning:

1. You have the assurance that nothing can stand against you. (v. 31)
2. You have the assurance that God, having given you His greatest treasure, will provide every necessary spiritual blessing for you. (v. 32)
3. You have the assurance that your accuser has been forever defeated and that God overrules any condemnation. (v. 33-34)
4. You have the assurance that nothing can cut you loose from Christ's love. (vs. 35-39)

1. YOU HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT NOTHING CAN STAND AGAINST YOU. (v. 31)

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

What does Paul mean when he says, "What shall we say to these things?" Another way to say that might be, "What conclusion do we arrive at in light of the preceding truths"? Remember back in verses 28-30 we learned that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. He foreknew or "foreloved" us, He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, He effectually called us to Himself, He justified us – declaring us righteous in His sight, and He has promised to glorify these weak, frail, frames of ours on the Day that we stand before Him in glory.

And so Paul opens verse 31 by asking the question, "What conclusion do we arrive at in light of these wonderful truths"? Paul's conclusion is, "If God is for us, who can be against us"? If God has justified us and united us to his Son, then who is there or what is there can unsettle us in the least? The obvious answer to Paul's question is that no one and nothing can be against us. Sin and death are our two greatest enemies and Praise be to God - Christ has conquered them both! We'll see Paul flesh out the logic of this truth in the verses 32-39, but before we get there, I want us to notice a few things regarding Paul's conclusion here in verse 31.

First, It is important to note that when Paul says, "if" God is for us, he is in no way doubtful of the reality of his statement. You see "if" doesn't convey uncertainty, rather it conveys an unshakable truth. As a matter of fact, it might even better be translated "since" or "because" God is for us, who can be against us? All throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see that God is for His people – He is their Protector, He is their Guardian, He is their Refuge, and He is their Salvation. In Psalm 27:1 David says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident." Likewise in Psalm 118:5-7,14 the psalmist says, "Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." Paul isn't asking a question here so much as he is making a declaration – Since God is for us, who can be against us.

Secondly, Paul isn't trying to paint an easy picture of the Christian life. As we will see in the following verses, Christians today and throughout history have undergone incredibly difficult circumstances. What Paul is saying is that all the forces of hell, as evil as they are. cannot sever us from the saving work of grace that God has begun in those who have been called according to His purpose. Nothing can rob us of our future glorification. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident in this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of

Christ Jesus. The lyrics to the modern hymn “In Christ Alone” give us such blessed assurance! If God has justified you, there is:

*No guilt in life, no fear in death, This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*

Third, it is important that we answer the question - who are the “us” in verse 31? Paul says, “If God is for *us*, who can be against *us*.” We know that God isn’t for all people. Many times in the Old Testament God says of wicked nations like Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt – I am against you. In Ephesians 2:3 Paul says that we were all at one time, and those who don’t now Christ still are, “children of wrath”. In Philippians 3:18 Paul speaks of those who are “enemies of the cross of Christ”. Who, then, are the “us” in verse 31 that God is for? They are those spoken of in the preceding verses as the foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. They are those whom Paul refers to in verse 33 as the “elect”. God is only for us if we have been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Several chapters back in Romans 5:1 Paul says, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If God were not for us, we would still be dead in our sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1-4). Let me give you five applications that follow from verse 31:

- A. God alone grants and sustains our salvation.
- B. No **person** can nullify your salvation.
- C. No **sin** can cost you your salvation. Romans 8:28
- D. **Satan** cannot rob you of your salvation.
- E. God will never **revoke** your salvation.

Jesus, in John 6:37 said, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me *I will never cast out*.” In John 10:28, Jesus is talking about His sheep and to them He says, “I give them *eternal life*, and they will never perish.” The writer of Hebrews quotes God’s promise to Joshua in Hebrews 13:5 when he says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

In verse 31 Paul is answering the question: Is there any conceivable power that can prevent us from ultimately arriving at glorification? No – God is for us!

2. YOU HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD, HAVING GIVEN YOU HIS GREATEST TREASURE, WILL PROVIDE EVERY NECESSARY SPIRITUAL BLESSING FOR YOU. (v. 32)

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

The first place that Paul points us to assure us that God is for us, that He loves us, and that His purposes cannot be thwarted is the cross. We need not gloss over this lightly. The cross is the first place we need to look when we are tempted to think that God's love for us has in some way weakened. The cross is the first place we need to look when the enemy turns up the accusations and heaps condemnation on us. When we are tempted to think that God is not for us, we need to remember that God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us. God's eternal **plan** was to demonstrate His love by crushing His Son for sinners. Paul reminds us in Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Notice who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas for money; not Pilate for fear; not the Jews, for envy; - but the Father, for love!¹ God crushed His Son. Isaiah writes, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and [by] his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Just a few verses later Isaiah says, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief" Isaiah 53:5-6, 9-10. Martyn Lloyd Jones says, "[The Father] did not hold back from [Christ] anything that was a part of the process by which He could save us. Everything that was essential to our salvation came upon the Son of God."²

Paul tells us that God did not spare His own Son. It is interesting to note that this same word "spared" appears in the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Isaac was an Old Testament picture of Christ - a foreshadow of God offering His Son on Calvary's hill. Abraham's willingness to offer up his son is a beautiful picture of the Father's willingness to offer up Christ. Likewise, Isaac's willingness to be the sacrifice is a picture of Jesus' willingness to go to the cross. The wonder of Calvary is not only the love of the heavenly Father that it displays; [but also] the love of the Son in His compliance with the Father's will despite the unimaginable horror of what it would cost Him.

We know that in the case of Abraham, God stepped in and provided a ram in Isaac's place. This is the point, however, where the analogy [of Abraham and Isaac and the Father and the Son] changes from a comparison to a contrast; God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.³ The hymn "How Great Thou Art" captures this truth when it says: *And when I think*

¹ Octavius Winslow, *No Condemnation in Christ Jesus*. (London, 1857), 358.

² Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:17-39*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 390.

³ John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 505.

that God, His Son not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away My Sin. Not only did God not spare His Son, but He actively and willingly delivered Him up for us. We see this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 when Paul says, “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Paul says, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, *how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* Just like in Romans 5, Paul again argues from the greater to the lesser. In other words, if when we were sinners, God gave His best for us, now that we are His children, will He not provide for us all of the blessings that are required to finish the work that he started.

Now, it’s important that we are clear about what “all things” means. There is a lot of bad theology out there when we start talking about God giving us all things. This in no way means that we can start naming and claiming – This promise isn’t a blank check. John Murray offers us wise insight when he says, “All things is an obvious example of an expression in universal terms used in a restrictive sense.”⁴ All things means everything necessary to bring us home to the complete fruition of our redemption in glory.

God withholds nothing that we need in the process of our sanctification. Every grace necessary to get us from where we are today safely home to glory is provided in abundance! Paul reminds us in Ephesians 1:3 that, “God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual **blessing** in the heavenly places.” Likewise Peter, in 2 Peter 2:3 reminds us that, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and **godliness**.” God isn’t going to deliver up His Son for you and then not provide every other spiritual blessing that you need to be conformed into the image of His Son. Again John Murray encourages us greatly at this point when he says:

*[As believers, we have] the incontestable assurance that “all things” requisite to, yea all things securing and furthering, the glorification of the people of God will be freely and unfailingly bestowed. If the Father did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up to the agony and shame of Calvary, how could He possibly fail to bring to fruition the end contemplated in such a sacrifice? So great is that gift, so marvelous are its implications, so far-reaching its consequences that all graces of lesser proportion are certain of free bestowment.*⁵

When you are tempted in any way to think that God is not for you or that his acceptance of you is waning, look to the cross. God can never show His love in a greater manner or measure than He did on Calvary’s hill when He crushed His Son for us. What more could He do that He hasn’t already done to convince you of the surety of your salvation if you are in Christ? He says, “I have

⁴ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 326.

⁵ Ibid.

delivered up my Son for you. Child be assured that if I have not spared my greatest treasure in saving you, you can be confident in the fact that I will provide everything else you need in terms of your sanctification to get you safely home - glorified according to my certain, definite, inflexible, unshakeable, immovable, eternal plan."

In verse 32 Paul is answering the question: Is there any danger that God's love towards us might change or be diminished? That can never happen. He has given us His greatest treasure.

3. YOU HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT YOUR ACCUSER HAS BEEN FOREVER DEFEATED AND THAT GOD OVERRULES ANY CONDEMNATION. (v. 33-34)

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Paul is making a challenge here. He is essentially saying, "Who is there that can step forward and bring any accusation against those whom God has declared righteous"? Our consciences accuse us, the world accuses us, and Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is always looking for an opportunity to prosecute us. Speaking of the accuser - John in Revelation 12:10 says, "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." What does Satan accuse us of? He accuses us of being unfaithful, breaking our promises, sins too many to number, failures, waning zeal, prayerlessness, hypocrisy. He asks, "How can you be such a failure in light of the gospel that you believe?" John MacArthur says:

It's not that the accusations made against believers by Satan and the unbelieving world are always false. The fact that we are not yet sinless is obvious. But even when a charge against us is true, it is never sufficient grounds for our damnation, because all of our sins – past, present, and future – have been covered by the blood of Christ and we [stand] clothed in His righteousness.⁶

Even though our consciences, the world, and Satan may accuse us, they have no legal ability to condemn us of our sin. How is this? How is it that Satan's accusations against us have no legal weight? It is because God doesn't relate to you or I on the basis of our own merit, but on the merit of Another. Aren't you glad that your salvation is not dependent on you? If the surety of our salvation depended in the slightest on our own ability to love, worship, and honor God as we ought, we would be ruined, condemned, and left without any hope or assurance of final glory.

⁶ John MacArthur, 508.

But praise be to God that He saves us and relates to us on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness.

Because this is true, God will never again bring you into the courtroom for prosecution. Jesus in John 5:24 said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." When Satan accuses us of failing to meet God's perfect standard, Jesus looks at the Father and says, "I paid for that." You see, our security is grounded in the objectivity of the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf – and that never changes! Let Satan hurl all the charges he dare – the basis of our salvation stands firm and secure. Here is the reality: You are just as justified on the basis of the finished work of Christ today as much as any day to come.

Many of you have probably read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* at some point in your Christian life – If not, I would highly recommend that you add it to your short list of books to read. Bunyan had an incredible ability to take spiritual truths and write them allegorically into a story that clearly portrays the gospel, true conversion, and the Christian life. In chapter 4 of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian, the main character of the story, is traveling through the Valley of Humility when he encounters Apollyon (Satan). After a brief exchange Apollyon immediately begins to accuse Christian of being unfaithful to his Master (God).

Apollyon: You have been unfaithful to [your Master].

Christian: [How] have I been unfaithful to Him?

Apollyon: You stumbled and fell into the Slough of Despond; you turned aside out of the way to go to Legality's house for help at the advice of one Worldly Wiseman; you slept and lost your book on the way; you were ready to turn back at the sight of the chained lions; and when you talk of what you have seen and heard in the way, and all your lord has done for you, it is with a certain inward desire for vain glory.

Christian: All of this is true, and much more, which you have left out. But the prince I serve is merciful, and ready to forgive. [Besides, these sins possessed me in your own country; I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, but now I have obtained pardon from my Prince.]

Apollyon: I am an enemy to this prince. I hate His laws, His person, and His people. I have come for the purpose of arresting you.

Christian: Be careful, Apollyon, what you do. I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness, and I am in His service. Therefore, take heed that you do not overstep your bounds.

Apollyon: I am without fear in this matter. Prepare yourself to die, for I swear by the infernal powers that you shall go no farther.

Then he hurled a flaming dart at Christian's heart. But Christian held out his shield and blocked it. Christian drew his sword and braced himself for battle, Apollyon came at him in fury, throwing darts as thick as hail. Apollyon perceived that that Christian was gradually growing weaker. Taking advantage of this he took hold of Christian and threw him to the ground. Then Christian's sword flew out of His hand. "Now," said Apollyon, "I am sure I have you," and he almost beat him to death. But, as God would have it, as Apollyon gave his final blows to finish him off, Christian's hand touched his sword, which gave him fresh spirit. He gripped the sword with all his might and said, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall rise again," giving Apollyon a deadly thrust which caused him to fall back as if mortally wounded. Summoning all his strength, Christian rose to his feet and advanced towards him, crying, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."⁷

SATAN'S FIERY DARTS OF ACCUSATION:

- A. How can you believe that God **loves** you and is for you when you survey all the difficult circumstances in your life?
- B. Your sins are **vast**, and you have no good defense – What do you have to say for yourself?
- C. You say you are forgiven, but how long will God **put up** with your failure?
- D. Given your track record, what hope is there that you will **persevere** to the end?

JESUS' FOUR-FOLD MINISTRY IN OUR DEFENSE:

Paul reminds us of Christ's redemptive work as the guarantee that no charge against us will stand. Look at verse 34:

- A. Christ **died** for us – He bore the wrath and condemnation that we deserved.
- B. He was **raised** – He proved His victory over sin and death. His death would have been of no avail in fulfilling its intended purpose apart from the resurrection. The resurrection also demonstrates the Father's approval of the Son's accomplishment. The resurrection was the Father saying, "Well done good and faithful servant"⁸

⁷ John Bunyan, retold by James Thomas, *Pilgrim's Progress in Today's English*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 57-60.

⁸ Derek Thomas, *How the Gospel Brings Us All the Way Home*. (Sanford: Reformation Trust, 2011), 126.

- C. He is seated at the **right hand** of God – This is a picture of our triumphant King resting in victory. His work is finished! The Old Testament priests never sat down – their work was never complete. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:11-14 tells us, “And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Likewise, Hebrews 1:3 says, “After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”
- D. He **intercedes** for us – Not only does the Spirit intercede for us (Romans 8:26-27), but Christ also intercedes for us. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that, “He [Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” What does the glorified Christ pray for you? It is certain that every need of the believer and every grace required to complete redemption are brought within the scope of Christ’s intercession for you. His ministry to us continues daily. He is our Advocate before the Father. He represents us before the throne of God so that we don’t have to represent ourselves.

Nothing serves to verify the intimacy and constancy of the Redeemers preoccupation with the security of His people, nothing assures us of His unchanging love more than the tenderness which His heavenly priesthood bespeaks and particularly as it comes to expression in [His] intercession for us.⁹

In verses 33-34 Paul is answering the question: Is it possible that someone or something might finally convict us of sin and bring us to condemnation? No – Your surety rests on Christ’s righteousness for you. Don’t forget who you are... You have been **justified!**

4. YOU HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT NOTHING CAN CUT YOU LOOSE FROM CHRIST’S LOVE. (vs. 35-39)

God doesn’t shelter Christians from the difficulties of life. Rather, He assures us that the difficulties of life are working for us and not against us. That means that trials, far from being evidence that God has deserted us, are really evidence that He loves us and is committed to conforming us into the image of His Son. When we endure difficult circumstances by faith and draw near to God, He draws near to us! We need not fret about tomorrow, we need not live life crippled by fear. Christ has secured our victory – we are more than conquerors. The text is literally translated hyper or super-conquerors!

⁹ John Murray, 330.

A. **Expect** troubles in this fallen world. vs. 35-36

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Paul is writing autobiographically in verse 35 – he has experienced all of this! In Galatians 6:17 he said, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus". On April 20th 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, two Columbine High School seniors, came to school heavily armed and shot and killed 12 students and a teacher. Among those who lost their lives was Rachel Scott, a 17 year-old young believer with an incredible heart for God. She was eating lunch with a friend on the lawn outside of the school's library when she was confronted at gunpoint and asked, "Do you believe in God"? Her reply was, "You know I do." At that moment Rachel was shot point blank in the head. The last words Rachel heard on this earth were, "Do you believe in God"? But the first words she heard in glory were, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The Son of man was rejected, slandered, beaten, mocked, imprisoned, and crucified. Are you willing to share in His sufferings?

Let me briefly bring you back to Pilgrim's Progress. Not only does Satan delight in accusing us, but he also delights in lying to us about the nature of our trials and suffering. He would have us believe that our trials must be evidence that we have been cut off from God and that if He ever was for us, He certainly isn't now.

Apollyon: Consider gain in cold blood, what you are likely to encounter in the way you have chosen. You know that, for the most part, His followers suffer reproaches, perils, weariness, stripes, stoning, imprisonment, pain and death, all because they oppose me and my kingdom. Think about how many of them have been put to horrible death! And your Master never came from His mysterious, invisible, exalted dwelling place to deliver them. How can you count His service better than mine? Not many of my servants have ever been martyred. All the world knows very well that I deliver, wither by power or by fraud, those who have followed me, from your Master and His power. And be sure that I will deliver you.

Christian: When He, for a time, does not deliver His servants from trouble it is for their good; it strengthens their faith and their love for the right, and affords an opportunity for them to show the sincerity of their love and add to their rewards. And as for the death you speak of, it is only temporary. He delivers His servants out of death, and gives them perfect life beyond. His servants do not expect immediate deliverance from the petty dangers and discomforts of this present perishing world, but they are willing to wait on the Lord, knowing full well that they shall be more than rewarded for their sufferings, when He comes in His glory with all His holy angels.

B. Put your confidence in and rest in the One who has **overcome** the world.

Jesus said, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" John 16:33.

C. Rejoice in the fact that you are a **super-conqueror** in Christ. v. 37

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

D. In Christ there is no condemnation, but there is also no **separation!** vs. 38-39

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing in the created order is able to separate us from the love of God! Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "What matters is God's love to us, not our love to God. Our love is weak and frail and fallible; it wanes and waxes, comes and goes. Thank God my salvation does not depend on me, but on God's love to me; not upon my frail grasp of Him, but upon His strong grasp of Me!"¹⁰

In verses 35-39 Paul is answering the question: Is it possible that we may fail to attain glorification because of our own weaknesses when we face the trials of life? No - In all these things we are more than conquerors. We have the assurance that no power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand. Till He returns or calls me home, here in the Love of Christ I stand!

¹⁰ Martyn Lloyd Jones, 450.