

THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

ROMANS 8:1-31, CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. Justification: the position of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
 - a. Concerning Sin (6:1-23)
 - b. Concerning the Law (7:1-25)
 - c. Concerning the Holy Spirit (8:1-39)
 - 1) An abundant life in the Spirit (8:1-17)
 - 2) The hope of glory empowered by the Spirit (18-30)
 - 3) Security of the believer (31-39)

B. Notes on Romans 8:31-39

1. Warren Wiersbe, *The emphasis in this final section is on the security of the believer. We do not need to fear the past, present, or future because we are secure in the love of Christ.*
2. John Witmer, *It is astounding to realize that God's plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and answered (in vv. 31-39) seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer's eternal salvation is completely secure in God's hands.*
3. John Stott, *Paul introduces the last nine verses of this chapter with a concluding formula, which he has already used three times (6:1, 15; 7:7): What, then, shall we say in response to this? (31a). That is, in the light of his five convictions (28) and five affirmations (29-30), 'what is there left to say?', or 'what can we add?.' The apostle's answer to his own question is to ask five more questions, to which there is no answer. He hurls them into space, as it were, in a spirit of bold defiance. He challenges anybody and everybody, in heaven, earth or hell, to answer them and to deny the truth which they contain.*

ROMANS 8:31-39, SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

A. Christians are secure because of the person and work of God (31-32), *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?*

1. *What then shall we say to these things*
 - a. *These things* include God's working all things together for good for those called according to the purpose of God, Romans 8:28.
 - b. *These things* include God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification of believers, Romans 8:29-30.
 - c. Thomas Constable, *The apostle developed the fact that God will not lose one whom He has foreknown in this climactic section, and he gloried in this great truth.*
2. Question 1: *If God is for us, who can be against us?*
 - a. *If* is a first class conditional clause of fact where *if* may be translated as *since*.
 - b. Who can stand against God and win? Nobody!
 - c. 1 John 4:4, *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*
 - d. John Witmer, *God is the self-existent One and the sovereign Creator and, since He is for believers, no one can oppose believers successfully.*
 - e. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Enemies we certainly have, who are against us and seek our ruin; but with God on our side we need not fear them.*

3. Question 2: *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?*

a. God did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us.

- 1) John 3:16, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
- 2) Romans 4:25, *who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*
- 3) John Stott, *The God concerning whom we are asking our question whether or not he will give us all things is the God who has already given us his Son...The cross is the guarantee of the continuing, unending generosity of God.*
- 4) In light of God's great sacrifice of His own son, He most certainly will give us all things, as in justification and glorification.

b. God will complete what started at the cross.

- 1) Thomas Constable, *What He has done for us through His Son in the past and what He is doing for us through the Spirit in the present should give us confidence. He will certainly complete His work of salvation by glorifying us in the future (cf. Phil. 1:3). Nobody or nothing can stand in His way.*
- 2) S. Lewis Johnson, ... *if Jesus gave Himself for us in atonement, everything else must follow because, having done the most that He could do in dying as our substitute, the lesser things—such as conviction of sin, repentance, effectual grace, faith—must inevitably follow.*
- 3) Octavius Winslow quoted a in book by John Murray, *Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy;—but the Father, for love!*

B. Christians are secure because of the person and work of Jesus Christ (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.***

1. Question 3: *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?*

a. Satan is the accuser of Christians.

- 1) Revelation 12:10, *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.*
- 2) It is assumed that the time of accusation is the last judgment since the verb is in the future tense.

b. God is the One who justifies.

- 1) Imagine charges being brought to court against God's elect and God is the Judge Who declares the accused innocent because God already justified them (declared them righteous).
 - a) Romans 3:24, *and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*
 - b) Romans 5:1, *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 2) John Stott, *Paul's argument is that no prosecution can succeed, since God our judge has already justified us; and that we can never be condemned, since Jesus Christ our advocate has died for our sins, was raised from the dead, is seated at God's right hand, and is interceding for us.*
- 3) John Witmer, *His (Satan's) accusations are valid, because they are based on the believer's sinfulness and defilement. But Satan's accusations will be thrown out of court, because it is God who justifies. The Judge Himself declares the accused person righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ.*
- 4) Note the hope in Isaiah 50:8-9, *He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *When God declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ, that declaration never changes. Our Christian experience changes from day to day, but justification never changes. We may accuse ourselves, and men may accuse us; but God will never take us to court and accuse us. Jesus has already paid the penalty and we are secure in Him.*

2. Question 4: *Who is to condemn?*

- a. Many want to condemn Christians, John Stott, *In answer to the opening question as to who will condemn us, there are without doubt many who are wanting to. Sometimes our own 'heart' condemns us. It certainly tries to. And so do our critics, our detractors, our enemies, yes, and all the demons of hell.*
- b. Jesus Christ is the reason condemnation of Christians will fail.
 - 1) He died for the sins of which we deserved to be condemned.
 - 2) He was raised to the right hand of God.
 - a) Jesus' payment for our sins was accepted by the Father since Jesus now sits next to the Father.
 - b) Mark 16:19, *So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*
 - c) Romans 8:3, *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,*
 - d) John Stott, *It is not just that he rose, although this is affirmed in the New Testament, but that he was raised by the Father, who thus demonstrated his acceptance of the sacrifice of his Son as the only satisfactory basis for our justification (4:25)...the crucified and resurrected Christ is at the right hand of God, resting from his finished work, occupying the place of supreme honour,187 exercising his authority to save, and waiting for his final triumph.*
 - 3) Jesus Christ intercedes for us from His position of authority.
 - a) Hebrews 7:25, *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*
 - b) 1 John 1:21, *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*
 - c) John Stott, *...he (Jesus) is our heavenly advocate and high priest...His very presence at the Father's right hand is evidence of his completed work of atonement, and his intercession means that he 'continues ... to secure for his people the benefits of his death'.*
 - 4) Affirmations of no condemnation.
 - a) Romans 8:1, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
 - b) Romans 5:9-10, *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

C. Christians are secure because nothing in creation can separate them from the love of God (35-39)

1. Question 5: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (35), ***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?***
 - a. The love of Christ is His love for us, not our love for Him, Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - b. Paul lists things that seemingly could separate us from the love of Christ.
 - 1) *tribulation, distress, persecution*
 - a) *Tribulation* means *distress brought on by outward circumstances.*
 - b) *Distress* literally means *narrowness, difficulties, being pressed in.*
 - c) *Persecution* is *mainly for religious reasons.*
 - d) John Stott notes, *...together (these first three words) seem to denote the pressures and distresses caused by an ungodly and hostile world.*
 - 2) *famine, nakedness*
 - a) *Famine* is *hunger.*
 - b) *Nakedness* is *disgraceful nakedness, lack of sufficient clothing.*
 - c) It appears that intensity increases with each word. even as is seen in the passion of Christ.
 - 3) *danger and sword*
 - a) *Danger* is *risk which tied to sword could refer to death or martyrdom.*
 - b) *Sword* stands for *violent death.*
 - c) John Stott, *Paul concludes his list with danger or sword, meaning perhaps the risk of death on the one hand and the experience of it on the other, whether 'the sword' be 'the final sword thrust of bandit or enemy soldier or executioner.'*

- c. Paul experienced all on that list (except for the last) as noted in the following passage.
- 1) 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, *Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.*
 - 2) Grant Osborne, *The last of these, the “sword,” or death by execution, he would not experience for about eight years (he died at the hands of Nero after his second imprisonment in Rome about ad 64–65).*
2. Paul’s answer is a declaration that nothing in creation can separate Christians from the love of God (36-39)
- a. He quotes a verse from Scripture that declares suffering to be normative for the righteous (36), ***“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”***
 - 1) Psalm 44:22 is true for all who pursue the righteousness of God.
 - 2) *for your sake*
 - a) For Christians, persecution is part of one’s identification with Christ.
 - b) Philippians 1:29, *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,*
 - c) 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, *Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*
 - d) John Witmer, *In the early days of the church one or more Christians were martyred every day, or faced the possibility of it. Their persecutors valued Christians’ lives as nothing more than animals to be butchered.*
 - e) John Calvin, *...it is no new thing for the Lord to permit his saints to be undeservedly exposed to the cruelty of the ungodly.*
 - b. Paul declares that Christians are victorious in every situation (37), ***No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***
 - 1) *No* is a contrastive conjunction in the Greek and may be translated, *But*.
 - a) The contrast is between defeat and victory with Christians being victorious.
 - b) C. E. B. Cranfield, Its force may be brought out by the paraphrase, *So far from its being possible for any of these things to separate us from Christ’s love.*
 - 2) *in all these things* refers to Paul’s list in Romans 8:35.
 - 3) *more than conquerors*
 - a) It means *hyper-conquerors, keep on being conquerors to a greater degree.*
 - b) 2 Corinthians 2:14, *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Our victory is sure! The Cross is the great proof of God’s love for us, and it is the basis for our victory. It proves that God is for us (v. 31).*
 - d) C. E. B. Cranfield, *...it is not through any courage, endurance or determination of our own, but through Christ, and not even by our hold on Him but by His hold on us, that we are more than conquerors.*
 - c. Paul adds to the list of things that can’t separate Christians from God’s love (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.***
 - 1) *For I am sure*
 - a) It may be translated, *I stand convinced, a firm and settled conviction.*
 - b) Note Romans 15:14, ***I myself am satisfied*** about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.
 - c) John Stott, *He deliberately uses the perfect tense ..., meaning, I have become and I remain convinced, for the conviction he expresses is rational, settled and unalterable.*

- 2) Paul adds a second list of difficulties which might be considered powerful enough to separate Christians from God's love but are not. There are four pairs of difficulties and two that stand alone.
- a) *neither death nor life*
 - 1] In the extremes of existence, whether death or life, Christians are in God's presence.
 - 2] 2 Corinthians 5:8-9, *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *He loves us on both sides of the grave. Helpful or hostile angelic beings cannot change God's commitment to us.*
 - b) *nor angels nor rulers*
 - 1] Since Paul tied these together, angels may refer to spiritual forces of good and rulers as spiritual forces of evil.
 - a] Colossians 2:15, *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*
 - b] Ephesians 1:20-21, *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*
 - 2] C. E. B. Cranfield, *What Paul is here concerned to say is simply that there is no spiritual cosmic power, whether benevolent or malevolent, which will be able to separate us from God's love in Christ.*
 - c) *nor things present nor things to come*
 - 1] The timing of events can't separate Christians from God's love.
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *...the believer need have no fear that either present or future circumstances and events will call into question his relationship to God in Christ.*
 - 3] Romans 8:32, *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?*
 - d) *nor powers*
 - 1] It may refer to spiritual powers as in Satan and his demons and/or human government.
 - 2] Ephesians 6:12, *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *No force of any kind can remove us from His loving care.*
 - e) *nor height nor depth*
 - 1] The issue of space, that which is above or below can't separate us from God's love.
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *...the terms are intended to embrace the entire universe: either those things above the heavens and beneath the earth, heaven and earth itself,⁶⁸ or, perhaps most likely, heaven and hell.*
 - 3] Psalm 139:8, *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*
 - f) *nor anything else in all creation*
 - 1] Paul wants us to know that he left nothing out.
 - 2] Grant Osborne, *...absolutely nothing in God's created world can threaten the relationship between God and his children.*
 - 3] John Stott, *Everything in creation is under the control of God the Creator and of Jesus Christ the Lord.*
 - 4] This statement by Paul rejects the thought that a person may separate himself from God.
 - a] Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
 - b] Thomas Constable, *Not even the redeemed can remove themselves from God's love in Christ Jesus!*
 - 5] John Witmer, *Absolutely nothing in His Creation can thwart His purpose for believers in Christ. What a climactic way to affirm the certainty of believers' salvation!*

CONCLUSION

- A. The victory in this passage is eternal security. Nothing can separate a Christian from God's love in Christ.
- B. It is based on the work of God through His Son. It is not cheap grace but God's grace secured at the Cross.
- C. Richard Lenski, *The results of justification are thus fully presented (chapters 5 to 8). No one has ever set them forth so compactly and so profoundly, in a way that is so stimulating, effective, and uplifting.*
- D. John Stott, *Let me no more my comfort draw - From my frail hold of thee; In this alone rejoice with awe - Thy mighty grasp of me.*