

The Five Points of Security

Blessed Assurance – Part III

Romans 8:34-35

Introduction

I want to continue today, in our study of the eternal security of the believer from the last paragraph in Romans, chapter 8. This paragraph is indeed a wonderful song of assurance.

True biblical Christianity is the only religion – if you can call it that – that offers eternal security. Why? Because all other false religions base eternal security and hope on how well you live on earth. And since everyone knows they can live better than they do, all religion based on works ultimately fails to provide any thought or knowledge or sense of security.

Christianity places the security of the believer squarely on the shoulders of almighty God. It is not what we do *for Him*, but what He has done *for us*. Our good works are merely expressions of praise and worship toward the One who redeemed us. We do not do good things so that we can *get* into heaven, but because we are *going* to heaven. We do not do them so that God *will* accept us, but because God *has* accepted us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I was leafing through a new book that overviewed each book of the Bible. I was reading what it said about this letter to the Romans and it had a one sentence remark that intrigued me. It noted that by the time of Paul's letter to the Romans, Buddhism had reached the shores of Paul's world.

We tend to think of Paul's letters combating all sorts of philosophies and false religions, as it prepares the believer to stand for the gospel. However, I thought it interesting to consider that

Paul had, in the back of his mind, a religion called Buddhism. A religion that, like all the others, fails to give its followers any hope beyond the grave.

The hope in Buddhism is to achieve better and better life forms as you are reincarnated into better and better people – depending on how much good karma or bad karma you have earned. Eventually you achieve what the Buddha achieved – eternal happiness in Nirvana. That is not really a place, but a state of divine consciousness. Their only hope for Nirvana; for the end of the cycle of reincarnation; for arriving at some point of divine consciousness, is to follow the eight-fold path. The path of:

- right view;
- right thought;
- right speech;
- right action;
- right livelihood;
- right effort;
- right mindfulness;
- right contemplation.

So, the question this religion asks, as well as every man-made religion in the world, is, "How are you doing to make it to heaven?" For the religionist, "How are you doing to make it to heaven?" For the Jew, "How are you doing to earn paradise?" For the Mormon, "Are you faithful so that you can gain the third heaven?" For the Buddhist, "How are you doing so that you can reach Nirvana?"

How are *you* doing?!

Open your Bible to Romans, chapter 8, to discover the chapter begins, in verse 1, with,

... **no condemnation** ...

and ends, in verse 39, with,

... **[no separation]** ...

You discover that your eternal security is not in *how you did*, but in *what God did*; not in *how you are doing*, but in *what God has done and is doing and will do* for the one who has been born again by faith in Jesus Christ.

As I John, chapter 5, verse 13, says,

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Notice this verse says, “. . . that you may *know* . . .”! It does not say, “that you may hope so,” or “that you may think so,” or “maybe so” – but “. . . that you may *know* . . .”!

The apostle John speaks with absolute clarity, in verses 11 and 12 of this same chapter,

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Burn into the margin of your mind the words,
Absolute confidence in God!

Our confidence is not in ourselves – it is in God!

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, “But what do I do about my doubts?”

I have had people say to me, “I struggle with the religion of my past – it was works oriented. My confidence before God depended on what kind of week I had; how many sins I committed; how many times I prayed, so I doubt this truth of God’s word. I can’t speak like the apostle John. Would my doubting ever cause me to lose my salvation?”

That is a great question!

Allow me to have another preacher answer that for you. His name was Henry Drummond and in 1887, he preached a sermon entitled, *Dealing With Doubt*. He said,

Jesus Christ never failed to distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt says, “I can’t believe.” Unbelief says, “I won’t

believe.” Doubt is honesty; unbelief is obstinacy. Doubt is looking for light; unbelief is [love for] darkness. Loving darkness rather than the light – this is what Christ attacked and attacked unsparingly. But for the doubting questions of Thomas, and Philip, and Nicodemus, and many others who came to Him to have their great problems solved, He was generous [in His teaching them the truth]. When Thomas came to Him, having denied the resurrection, and stood before Him expecting scathing words and a tongue lashing for his unbelief, they never came. They never came. Instead, Jesus Christ showed him the facts – He gave Thomas the facts.ⁱ

The answer to:

- unbelief – is faith;
- doubting – are the facts.

We cannot produce faith in those who do not believe, but we can provide the facts for those who do, and faith will grow stronger. For those:

- who do not believe, I want you to be saved;
- who do believe, I want you to be strong!

Declarations – the Eternal Security of the Christian

I believe that was what Paul had in mind in this great chapter in Romans, as he says, “Here are the facts . . . this is true Christianity . . . this is the gospel of God! Listen to the facts!”

Look at Romans, chapter 8, verses 31 and 32.

What then shall we say to these things? If [since] God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Declaration #1 – Because God has delivered you, there isn’t anyone who can destroy you!

1. The questions in these verses, in effect, state the first fact of our eternal security; which is: Because God has delivered you, there isn’t anyone who can destroy you!

We dealt with this in our last discussion.

Continue to verse 33.

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Declaration #2 – Because God has acquitted you, there isn't anyone who can indict you!

2. This verse gives the second fact that we noted regarding our eternal security; which is: Because God has acquitted you, there isn't anyone who can indict you!

In other words, there is no one who can bring up new evidence; no one who can bring some new charge against you, or literally, "arraign you before the court of God". Why? Because the court of God has already declared you justified.

Declaration #3 – Because Jesus Christ redeemed you, there isn't anyone who can condemn you!

3. Now, the third fact of our eternal security is: Because Jesus Christ redeemed you, there isn't anyone who can condemn you!

I love what Paul does in verse 34.

who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

This could be interpreted in one of two ways. Paul might mean:

- Who can condemn you, since Jesus Christ died for you, rose for you, and intercedes for you?
- Who can condemn you (Paul expects his reader to understand that the answer to that question is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has been given final judgment by the Father.)?

John wrote in chapter 5, verses 22 and 23a,

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. . . .

John informs us that at the final judgment of the nations – all the unredeemed from all human history – the judge will actually be ascended; the resplendent Son of God, and it will be judgment that will eternally vindicate His holy righteousness and perfect justice.

Paul might be saying that the only one who can eternally condemn is the Son of God – for He will indeed be the One who condemns all the unbelieving world.

However, for those who believe, He will not be the judge because He has become the Savior – He died for you, rose for you, and intercedes for you at the Father's right hand.

The beauty of interpreting it either way is that it is a "win/win" situation. No one, not even God Himself, will condemn you. In other words, the One with the authority to condemn you, died for you! The One with the right to eternally denounce you and dismiss you from His presence, has delivered you!

Five reasons that reveal the finality of the believer's deliverance

Paul gives five reasons in verse 34 that reveal the finality of the believer's deliverance.

Jesus Christ died

- The first reason is that Jesus Christ died.

This was not some mistake, it was part of God's eternal plan! Look at Philippians, chapter 2, verse 8b.

. . . He [became] obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Our security is bound up in and based upon that incredible blood-shedding, life-giving offering! Our security is built upon His sacrifice.

James Montgomery Boice made a great point in his study of this text. He wrote:

If Paul were one of our contemporary Bible teachers or modern theologians, he might answer our doubts by saying, "You do not need to worry about your eternal future, because God loves you and God is love."

But Paul was a pastor, and he knew well that we can all easily doubt such statements, particularly when life becomes difficult. We might say, "I grant that God is love, but does He really love me? How can I believe He loves me when I have lost my job, when my husband or wife has left me for someone else, when I have been diagnosed with an incurable disease? These are the times when

I just do not feel that God loves me or that He even cares about me at all."

Paul knew that mere assurances that God loves us are not effective. So, instead of dealing with our doubts on the emotional level – which is what "God loves you" does – he turns from emotional experience to sure facts. According to this verse, we can know that God is for us, not because we somehow sense that it is His nature to be loving, but because He gave us His Son to die for us.ⁱⁱ

What a great perspective.

A man in Dundee, Scotland, that I read about recently, has been confined to a bed for forty years, having broken his neck in a fall at age fifteen. His spirit has remained unbroken, and his cheer and courage so inspire people that he enjoys a constant stream of guests – many of them coming to him for encouragement.

One day a visitor asked him, "Doesn't Satan ever tempt you to doubt God?"

"Oh yes, he does try to tempt me. I lie here and see my old schoolmates driving along and Satan whispers, 'If God is so good, why does He keep you here all these years? Why did He permit your neck to be broken?'"

The guest asked him, "What do you do when you have those thoughts whispered in your head?"

"Ah," replied the invalid, "I take him to Calvary, show him Christ, and point to His wounds and say, 'You see, He does love me, indeed.'"

Satan never has had an answer to that.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ladies and gentlemen, we do not just believe that God loves us – we have proof! An event in history reveals His love!

Jesus Christ arose

- Secondly, Jesus Christ not only died, He arose.

Paul writes of our assurance by adding, in verse 34b,

... Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised ...

You could render the word "rather" to mean, "but even more than that". In other words, Jesus Christ died, but even more than that, He resurrected from the dead. There would be no salvation had Christ only died.

... if Christ has not been raised,

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 14,

... your faith also is vain [null and void].

Thousands of men were crucified on Roman crosses, but none of them ever rose from the dead afterward!

Christ rose from the dead; Buddha did not! Buddha's tomb is full of dust; Christ's tomb is empty!

I would rather follow someone who claimed to have power over death and proved it by rising from the dead, than someone who did not!

Jesus Christ ascended

- There is even more to our security than this. Paul gives us the third statement – Christ not only died and rose again, Christ also ascended.

In verse 34b, Paul tells us, Christ ascended to,

... the right hand of God ...

This is the position of power and representative authority. This does not mean Christ is not God, it means Christ speaks as God!

Christ, who is the embodiment of deity, speaks, judges, and rules for and with the authority of our Triune God. (Colossians 1:15 & 19)

Jesus Christ is seated

- The fourth reason your case will never be reopened before the divine Judge is because Jesus Christ is seated.

Jesus Christ has risen, Paul tells us in verse 34, and He is,

... at the right hand of God [the Father] . .

Paul explains in other letters that Christ is seated at the Father's right hand.

To the Ephesians, in chapter 2, verse 6, Paul wrote,

and [God] raised us up with Him [Christ], and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Paul wrote to the Colossian believers, in chapter 3, verse 1,

Therefore if [since] you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

This is a significant concept which is missed by the twenty first century reader. The Jews immediately knew the significance of these words regarding Jesus' physical arrangement. This does not mean that Christ never stands up, but to say that Christ was "seated" was not some trivial detail either.

You need to understand what every Jewish reader understood. In the temple, there were no chairs; there were no seats in the Holy Place. Why? Because the work of the priest was never finished. They stood and moved and worked and labored, sacrificing over and over again before the presence of an unsatisfied, holy God.

However, Jesus Christ, our great *High Priest*, finished His redemptive work and satisfied the holiness of God the Father – and Christ has now (what?), sat down!

Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 11, announces this very fact,

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,

There were no seats in the temple, but there is a seat in the High Court of Heaven. And the great Priest who finished forever the work of redemption on our behalf, now rests – seated to signify His accomplishment.

Jesus Christ intercedes for us

- You would think that would be enough for Paul, but he continues to give us a fifth assurance of our salvation, as it relates to never being condemned before God; which is that Jesus Christ is presently interceding for us.

Paul informs us of this in the last part of verse 34, that Jesus Christ,

... also intercedes for us.

What rich truth! What amazing truth about our comprehensive, complete, incorruptible, irrefutable, unstoppable, deliverance! Jesus Christ is interceding for us!

One old preacher asked, "If you knew Jesus was in the next room praying for you, would it make a difference?"

Would it? If you knew that Jesus Christ was in the next room right now, on His knees, praying for you, would it make a difference?

Wouldn't it give you hope?

Wouldn't it give you courage?

Wouldn't it give you sorrow over sin?

Wouldn't it, at the same time, fill your heart with joy?

Would the Father ever deny the intercessory prayers of His Son, who now defends and intercedes on our behalf? Is it conceivable that the Father would ever refuse to hear His Son pray on our behalf?

Didn't Jesus begin to pray on one occasion, as recorded in John, chapter 11, verse 42a, by saying to His Father,

I [know] that You always hear Me . . .

John writes in I John, chapter 2, verse 1 (NIV), that,

... we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ . . .

By the way, remember we were told in Romans, chapter 8, verse 26, that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. Now we are told that Christ Himself intercedes on our behalf.

This is like two branches of a law office. One office is on earth, and the other is in heaven – the Spirit within and the Son above. On earth, the Spirit pleads our case, and in heaven, the Son defends our cause.

For you to somehow be lost again would mean the Spirit and the Son would have to fail in their prayer on your behalf! For someone to condemn you now would mean that Christ's defense of you was ineffective. It would mean that the Spirit's safeguard over you was unsuccessful.

So, Paul has delivered the facts to us. That is:

- Because God has delivered you, there isn't anyone who can destroy you!
- Because God has acquitted you, there isn't anyone who can indict you!
- Because Jesus Christ redeemed you, there isn't anyone who can condemn you!

The five proofs of this are:

- Christ died;
- Christ rose again;
- Christ ascended;
- Christ sat down;
- Christ intercedes for the believer.

Paul now anticipates the next question. Since it is obvious that Christ has the believer securely wrapped up – He died, rose, ascended, sat down, and intercedes for the believer – it is obvious that the Father is satisfied. But what happens if Jesus Christ decides He does not want to intercede for us anymore? Suppose He stopped loving us?

Declaration #4 – Because Jesus Christ loves you, there isn't anything that can separate you!

4. This is Paul's fourth fact: Because Jesus Christ loves you, there isn't anything that can separate you!

Notice Paul's very next statement in verse 35a.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? . . .

In other words, is there anything or anyone that could ever get Jesus Christ to stop loving us?

Paul just begins to list possibilities in verse 35b – 17 of them in all.

Will tribulation separate us? Paul expects the answer, "No!"

. . . ***or distress?*** "No!"

. . . ***or persecution?*** "No!"

. . . ***or famine?*** "No!"

. . . ***or nakedness?*** "No!"

. . . ***or peril?*** "No!"

. . . ***or sword?*** "No!"

By the way, you cannot help but notice that all of these are things that might cause the believer to

stop loving the Lord, right? But they will never cause the Lord to stop loving the believer – no matter what your response is to these things.

Paul is no armchair theologian; he is not some best selling author trying to make all the Christians feel better. If you look at this list, Paul has experienced all of them, but one.

Tribulation

- The first word in Paul's list is tribulation. It is a word that refers to a heavy sled that was dragged over stalks of wheat to separate the heads of grain from the chaff.

In Latin, it was called a "tribulum," which gives us our word "tribulation".

It is a word that refers to life crushing you. You might say things such as, "I feel like a truck has run over me," or "My spirit has just been crushed by the blows of life."

Paul felt like that. He used this word often.

Distress

- The next word in Paul's list is distress. If you knock off the first two letters, you have a great word that describes this Greek word – stress!

Distress is a compound word that means, "narrow space; confined; pressured; boxed in".

You have obligations, responsibilities, duties, many details, right?! Perhaps you are in a dead end job or you are squeezed because you do not have a job. Perhaps you are surrounded by small children and feel boxed in by the daily grind. Your space is narrow and you feel distress.

It is a condition felt by both unbeliever and believer. Do you ever wonder why advertisements pander to our need for freedom and wide open spaces? Laundry detergent is featured with a woman hanging sheets on a line in a field. Who hangs sheets on a line? Who has a field? Automobile advertisements never feature their car in a traffic jam. It is out on the Blue Ridge Parkway and everything is beautiful . . . and the driver is free! No narrow space! Freedom!

Persecution

- The next word is persecution, which means, “to be rejected, ridiculed, mocked, abandoned, or mistreated because of your faith”.

Famine and Nakedness

- The next two words are virtually unheard of in the American church – famine and nakedness. This is literally not having any food to eat or any clothing to wear.

Believers around the world, however, suffer with both of these.

I imagine Paul shivering in his damp, cold cell, writing Timothy and asking him to bring his cloak.

Peril

- Does peril separate us from Christ’s love? This word means danger! We may not fear physical persecution or danger because of our faith, but our danger is real enough.

Are we alert to the enemy who, as I Peter, chapter 5, verse 8b, tells us,

. . . prowls about . . . seeking someone to devour [literally, discredit].

Sword

- Finally, the word sword appears in Paul’s list.

Paul has already experienced every one of these seven things, except this last one – the sword. But he will experience that too, as he, in just a matter of months after this, will be beheaded by the Emperor Nero.

Every year, throughout out world, some 60,000 to 70,000 people join Paul in experiencing death – the sword – because they name themselves Christians.

So, Paul’s comprehensive statement is that nothing and no one, not difficulty in life or even the loss of life, can separate the believer from the undying, unfaltering, unchanging love of Jesus Christ for His redeemed.

You do not need to hope for reincarnation; you do not work your way into the third heaven; you do not earn your way into paradise; you do not suffer your way out of purgatory; you do not strive to become free of desire and one with divine consciousness.

No. You come to Jesus Christ and find He is already seated!

He is not being sacrificed over and over again, He is finished!

He is not on the cross, He has already ascended.

He is not in the grave, He is already interceding, having risen triumphantly to the right hand of God the Father where He has taken a seat!

If you have received Him, you need never fear – for nothing and no one can ever separate you from the love of this risen, ascended, interceding, sovereign Savior.

And we paid Him nothing for His love! But we owe Him everything because of His unbelievable, unstoppable love.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/21/2004 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), p. 245.

ⁱⁱ James Montgomery Boice, Romans: Volume One (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1991), p. 960.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations and Quotes (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), p. 170.