

Hyper-Victorious . . . Divinely Secured

Blessed Assurance – Part IV

Romans 8:35-39

Introduction – Jesus Loves Me, This I Know

That little chorus, *Jesus Loves Me*, has no doubt, influenced more children for Jesus Christ than any other chorus or hymn. The lyrics were written by Anna Warner and published in 1869 in her best selling novel entitled, *Say and Seal*.

It was just a poem, in this novel, spoken by one of the main characters as he comforted a little boy who was dying. They were simple lyrics, but to the point.

*Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so,
Little ones to Him belong,
They are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
For the Bible tells me so.ⁱ*

This little chorus has not only affected children, but adults of all ages as well. There is something soothing and powerful about this incredible reminder of God's unfailing love through Jesus Christ.

Donald Grey Barnhouse told the story of an American/Korean who was enlisted during the Korean War, fifty years ago, as a chaplain. The man was a committed believer, and since he knew the Korean language, he was assigned to try to bring a

sense of order to the compounds where North Korean soldiers were imprisoned, having been captured by allied forces.

This chaplain did not know what to do or even how to begin. Then, the Lord prompted him to do something unusual.

As he entered the first holding pen, where several hundred soldiers were interred, he spoke to them in their own language. They immediately crowded around to hear what this American Korean had to say.

He began to teach them how to sing a rough translation of this chorus, *Jesus Loves Me*. Then he taught them what the words meant. He went from section to section of those vast compounds and repeated the same method – teaching them to sing the song, then teaching them what it meant.

I read that over the course of the next months, several thousand communist soldiers placed their faith in Jesus Christ. And, after the war, they refused to re-join the Communist party.

Their ministries throughout Korea will take eternity to calculate all the fruit.ⁱⁱ

It does not get any simpler, or richer than that – Jesus loves me!

That is the closing song of Romans, chapter 8. *Jesus Loves Me* is the pinnacle of divine truth for the believer. That is the song of the believer's security.

The Believer's Security

In this final paragraph of Romans, chapter 8, Paul questions the tenacity of Christ's love. In verse

35 and throughout this passage, he answers, emphasizes, underscores, accentuates, and illustrates not only the tenacity, but the permanency of Christ's love for the believer. You just cannot stop it!

Paul anticipates his audience asking, "But Paul, there are things that happen in my life that might cause me to stop loving Jesus. Are they evidences that He has stopped loving me?"

What kind of things? Paul lists them in verse 35; things such as,

. . . tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"I mean, listen Paul, it is it even written somewhere that,"

For Your [God's] sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

"What kind of love is that?!"

Paul quotes, in this verse 36, from David's Psalm, chapter 44, verse 22, which gives prophetic description to the martyrdom of believers during the tribulation period. This is the time when the new believers, saved after the rapture of the church has taken place, who follow Christ and refuse to follow the Anti-Christ, will die in such a number that they are given special commendation in the book of Revelation.

This blood bath, in some measure, has occurred and is occurring in the world-wide church of Jesus Christ in every generation. Even today, some 600,000 believers will give up their lives every single year.

The Roman believer would encounter horrific persecution. They were being crucified, beheaded, burned, drowned, and even impaled on stakes, covered with pitch and then, lit on fire as Nero celebrated another garden party.

Surely this means that Christ no longer loves the church! Surely it means that the believer is experiencing the loss of the love of Christ!

Paul answers by refocusing our perspective on eternity. Notice verse 37.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Now, when you think of an animal that is victorious, you do not tend to think of sheep. When you think of victory in battle, you do not picture

little lambs. Instead, you think of lions or elephants or eagles – not sheep. Sheep do not stand a chance!

Notice in verse 37b that the victory is not by the strength of the sheep, but the strength of the Shepherd.

. . . we . . . conquer through Him who loved us.

It does not matter how weak you are – what matters is how strong your Shepherd is!

David said in Psalm, chapter 23, "Hey everyone, look at who my Shepherd is – it is the Lord! And, because the Lord is my Shepherd, I don't lack anything of true importance."

And everything David lists in that Psalm –

- green grass,
- still water,
- protection from enemies,
- correction,
- comfort,
- eternal safety through death

– is a direct result of the divine power, strength, character, comfort, love, and dedication of the Shepherd . . . not the sheep.

We ultimately conquer, as verse 37 of Romans, chapter 8, tells us,

. . . through Him . . .

Now, just how victorious are we through Him?

I love the phrase Paul uses. A. T. Robertson translates it, "We gain a surpassing victory". The King James Version translates it, "We are more than conquerors". And, as the New American Standard translates it, "we overwhelmingly conquer".

All these translations with all these words are simply trying to translate one Greek compound verb – "hypernikomen" – and what a word it is! This is the only time it ever appears in the Bible.ⁱⁱⁱ

The first part of the word is the Greek word, "hyper/hyper". When we hear the prefix "hyper," we tend to think of a three year old driving everyone crazy with all their nonstop activity and noise. For us, this has a negative connotation.

However, in the Latin this is translated "super," which gives us a little different perspective. It means, "above; greater; spectacular".

You could say, “super-terrific; super-fantastic; super-wonderful”. All those things a mother feels when her three year old finally goes to sleep! She finally has super-quiet!

The second half of this word is the Greek verb “nikao” (νικᾶω), which means “victory”. We pronounce it “nike”.

“Nike” is the most universally known symbol and title in the sports world. It is on tennis shoes, rackets, jackets, golf clubs, caps, and a thousand other things.

It means “victory”!

Last night around 7:30, I was in my study and my ten year old daughter called from the road. She and her mother were on their way back from the AWANA Olympic games. Our church AWANA ministry sent teams to compete in a state-wide competition.

My little daughter was so excited as she said to me on the mobile phone, “Daddy, we won second place out of everybody!”

I said, “That’s fantastic, I’m so glad to hear how well you guys did.”

Then she said, “Will you put this in your sermon?”

I said, “Sweetheart, I can’t just put in my sermon something you’ve accomplished . . . we have a lot of things happening around here that I never mention.”

“Oh please, Daddy, we talked about it and the whole team wants you to say that we won.”

I said, “Charity, I can’t do that just because you and the whole team wants me to . . .”

She said, “Okay.”

We hung up.

That is how I feel about it and that is why I decided not to say anything about it in my sermon! Now, let me see, where was I?!

The truth is, there are few things more exciting than victory. That is why we want to tell everyone!

That is what Paul is doing in these verses!

In I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 54, Paul speaks of Christ’s victory over death – and uses the Greek verb “nikaw”.

It is used by the apostle John as he writes, in I John, chapter 5, verses 4 and 5,

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

One author suggested that when Paul wrote of the victory that is secured for the believer by the loving work of Christ, he seemed to imply that the usual [stand alone] “nike” was too weak a term. So, for the first and only time in scripture, he put the prefix “hyper” in front of it.^{iv}

The security of the believer is super-victorious! Our security in Christ is above and beyond whatever the enemy may attempt to do. In and through Jesus Christ, we stand on victory’s side already!

You might say, “Surely not, Paul, victor’s in everything?”

“Yes, everything – even those things that seem to cause the greatest doubt and fear!”

What Will Separate Us From the Love of Christ?

Now Paul begins to list ten different things that we might think would separate us from the love of Christ.

Death

1. Paul announces first in his list, the great separator called death!

He says, in verses 38 and 39,

For I am convinced [I am persuaded] that . . . death . . . will not be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

Isn’t death the grand separator? Isn’t it the most feared of all?

Francis Bacon wrote, “Men fear death as children fear the dark.”^v

Even Woody Allen, the comedian film director, once said tongue-in-cheek, “I’m not afraid of death . . . I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”

Paul says, “I am persuaded . . . I am convinced.”

When we talk about the things of God and His word, we often say, “Well, I think this is true . . . I suppose this is the way it is . . .”

Paul said, “I am convinced . . . I am absolutely persuaded that death is not a separator between the believer and Christ; in fact, it is the grand uniter.”

Death only draws us closer to the presence of God’s glory and everlasting love.

Alexander MacLaren put it this way, “Death rends us apart from the world that it may bring us to God.”^{vi}

Donald Grey Barnhouse is a man I often quote. That is because he wrote an excellent, extensive commentary based on his preaching through Romans to his Philadelphia congregation in the mid-1900’s.

Dr. Barnhouse’s wife died somewhat unexpectedly, leaving him with several young children. He wondered how he could explain the perspective of their mother’s death from eternity’s point of view.

He and the children were actually in the car driving home from the funeral, when they stopped at a red light. At that moment, a large truck pulled up beside them, casting a shadow over the car. Immediately, the Lord provoked Dr. Barnhouse’s thinking with an illustration.

He asked the children, “Would you rather be run over by a truck or by the shadow of a truck?”

“That’s easy, Daddy,” they replied, “we would rather get run over by the shadow, because that wouldn’t hurt us.”

He then said to them, “Children, your mother just went through the valley of the shadow of death. Death doesn’t hurt – it’s only a shadow, as we travel on to heaven.”^{vii}

“Are you sure, Paul?”

“Oh, I am absolutely convinced.”

Death is only the hand that opens heaven’s door.

Life

2. Paul goes on to add the other side of the coin in these pairs of contrasting issues. He says, as we continue in verses 38 and 39,

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Death is frightening, but life is dangerous!

You might ask, “You mean there isn’t anything that can happen in life to separate us from the love of Christ?”

Paul would say, “I’m convinced of it. And God has inspired His truth through me as I write these words.”

Jesus Christ said Himself, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20b,

. . . and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age [the end of the world].

Literally, this is, in the Greek, “. . . even to the end of the ‘aion’”

How long is an “aion”? It is the same word that is used by Paul to describe God, in Romans, chapter 16, verse 26, as our eternal God.

So, this could be translated, “I am with you always, even to the end of eternity!”

Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20, was the life verse of David Livingstone, the missionary to and explorer of Africa. Again and again at the crisis points in his life, his biographer would later record, Livingstone would write Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20, into his diary with the words, “These are the words of God, who is a Gentleman of the highest and most sacred honor . . . so that’s the end of it.”

That, my friend, is living under the influence of conviction – Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!

Angels

3. Thirdly, Paul informs us that we will never be separated from Christ by angels.

. . . neither death, nor life, nor angels . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

You might think this goes without saying. And indeed, Paul is referring here to good angels, since the opposite issue in the contrasting pair in this verse is the next word, “principalities”. That is a word Paul used to refer to demonic or fallen angels.

Is Paul suggesting that some good angel can change his status as confirmed in holiness and somehow separate the believer from Christ?

No. However, I believe Paul, in this list, is bringing up issues that are mysterious, confusing, and surrounded with superstition – death, angels,

demons, the future, etc. And the world of Paul was filled with religious superstition.

The people of Paul's day had errantly developed extensive beliefs in angels that had nothing to do with scripture, but everything to do with their own imaginations. In fact, rabbis of Paul's day were actually teaching that everything had an angel.

The rabbis were teaching that there were angels of the winds; of the clouds; of the snow and hail; of the thunder and lightning; of the cold and heat. In fact, they led the people to believe that there was nothing in the world, not even a blade of grass that did not have an angel associated or attached to it.^{viii}

Furthermore, the common belief was that even the good angels were a little put out by the fact that God had created mankind, whom the angels were to serve.

It seems that Paul is addressing the superstition of his world when he says in these verses, "There isn't any angel who could ever do anything to harm the opinion of Christ for you."

Principalities

4. Fourthly, Paul moves on to refer to the demonic world of fallen angels ("arche").

. . . neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

Paul often used the Greek word "arche" to refer to the demonic world; such as in Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 12, and Colossians, chapter 2, verse 15.

Perhaps Paul was anticipating someone saying, "But couldn't the devil somehow separate us from the love of Christ?"

The very word, "devil," or "diabolos" in the Greek language, means "to separate from; to set in opposition".

Is it possible that the underworld could somehow cause us to be lost to Christ?

Paul writes, "I am convinced they cannot."

Why not? "Because," Paul wrote to the Colossians, in chapter 2, verses 13b through 15,

. . . He [God] made you alive together with Him [Christ], having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt . . . having nailed it to the

cross. When He had disarmed the rulers [principalities] . . .

(this is the same word as that in Romans 8:38),
. . . having triumphed over them through Him [the cross].

The cross work of Christ disabled any eternal threat of the "arche," the principalities, the demonic world – to ever be able to separate the believer from the love of Christ.

Jesus Christ said, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 16, verse 18b,

. . . I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Things present; Things to come

Now, Paul adds two more things that will not separate us:

5. things present,
6. things to come.

. . . neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

In other words, there is nothing in the present or in the future for you that will erase your secure position as God's beloved child.

Powers

7. Then Paul adds a singular thought at the end of verse 38 – nor powers.

. . . neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

"Powers" or "dunamis," in the Greek, is the same word used in Acts, chapter 8, verse 10, concerning Simon the Magician. This magician was said to have supernatural power, or "dunamis".

Not only does the demonic world not have power to separate the believer from Christ, so also, demonically motivated and energized men and women, as well as doctrines of demons do not. They cannot somehow curse the believer, cast a spell on the believer, cause the believer to suffer some bewitchment, some sorcery, some evil eye, so that they fall from the love of God in Christ.

There is no need to fear Friday the thirteenth, or seeing a black cat walk across your path, or breaking a mirror, or walking under a ladder. You can spill salt at the table, put up an umbrella indoors, plan your wedding for the thirteenth, and buy a black cat that crosses your path all day long. Go ahead – these things have no power over or in the life of the child of God.

A recent issue of *World Magazine* included a brief article from the *China Daily*. The article reports that officials in South China have stopped issuing license plates with the number four on them. They apparently believe that the number, which sounds like the word for death, may be associated with a rise in traffic accidents.

Many buildings in the region no longer have a fourth floor, and new cell-phone users can obtain compensation for having a number that ends with a four.^{ix}

The number four, they believe, has some kind of power; some negative energy that causes bad things to happen. I could not help but think about my own home phone number – which ends with 444. I am in triple trouble!

Now, before you think, “Oh those superstitious Chinese . . .,” think of the last time you went to the thirteenth floor of a building. They do not have a thirteenth floor. That is an unlucky number, right?

Superstition cannot separate us from the love of God.

I think it is interesting that you can translate this word, “powers” or “dunamis,” with the word, “energy”. The superstitions of Paul’s world, and of our world, believed in the mystical, supernatural power of energy.

One of the fastest growing applications of this is Feng Shui. This is the Chinese belief that parallels the Yin/Yang superstition that positive and negative energy flows through your body, your home, your business, your world. And, this energy has power over the human and must be directed or cleansed or manipulated.

If you go to their web sites, as I did, you can redesign your home to keep out the negative energy and bring in the positive energy. One site suggested:

Energy should be allowed to flow in a meandering, unbroken path through the front of your home to the back.

A wind chime hung in the area of the front door will discourage negative energy from entering your home.

A pair of male and female Foo dogs placed outside the entrance will serve as protectors of the home and will repel negativity.^x

The apostle Paul says there is no power in energy over the believer. God is creator, sustainer, protector, planner, overseer, designer, sovereign over all there is.

These beliefs are simply examples of more ways Romans, chapter 1, can be applied in the lives of those who refuse the truth about God in Christ. Instead of worshipping the Creator, they elevate and worship nature and created things. Their lives are governed by energy, not the Savior.

Now, Paul goes further and delves even deeper into the frightening, unknowable issues that are beyond our grasp and therefore, develop fearful superstition at best and false worship at worst.

Height; Depth

Paul adds two more things to the list:

8. height;
9. depth.

He writes in verse 39a,

nor height, nor depth . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .

At first glance, this may seem to say that if you imagine a vertical line – as far as you can go up and as far as you can travel down – you will never go beyond the reach of God’s love. However, Paul uses two words that brought doubt, uncertainty, confusion, and even terror to the heart of the unbeliever, and probably, many uninformed believers.

The Greek words “hupsoma” (“height”) and “bathos” (“depth”) were astrological terms. “Height” was a word that referred to the time when a star was at its zenith and its influence considered to be at its greatest point. “Depth” was a word that referred to the time when the star was at its lowest, waiting as it were, to rise and cast its influence on those born under it.

In casting a horoscope, the zenith or height of a person’s star and the depth of a person’s star – or

that configuration of planets and stars when they were born – somehow casts power or influence over the things they will encounter and determines the way they should live and decide.

Solomon wrote, in Proverbs, chapter 3, verses 5 and 6,

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him [affirm God; surrender to His leading, power, and wisdom], and He will make your paths straight.

Solomon wrote that in the face of thousands of years of astrology.

We will not take the time, but I must say that the Bible refers to the satanic origin of astrology. It goes all the way back to Babylon and the Tower of Babel.

Most of us have been taught in Sunday School that the Tower of Babel was a really tall tower that they planned to build all the way to the heavens. However, the Hebrew text includes italicized words that are supplied to give meaning to the text. The rendering from Genesis, chapter 11, verse 4, is,

... a tower whose top will reach into heaven
...

Instead, you could translate it,

... a tower whose top would be heaven ...

In other words, in this tower, there would be flat stone slabs representing the zodiac and its twelve signs of the sun.

At least a dozen similar towers have been uncovered during the past century. At the top were zodiac whereby they could plot their horoscopes.

Their priests went about, hundreds of years before Paul wrote Romans, with a circle shaved into the hair on the back of their heads. This represented their devotion to their Zodiac god – the god of the sun. Millions of people devoutly touched their forehead, and then their breast, and then their left shoulder and right, making the sign of the four points of the compass, and showing their devotion to the gods of the sun, moon, and stars.

The world lived in the shadow of astrology when Jesus Christ came to earth!^{xi}

Make no mistake, the world of the twenty-first century is as devoted to the stars as the world of the first century.

Paul writes in Romans, chapter 1, verse 21b, that having rejected the Creator, they became bound as servants to the creation and,

... they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

More than twelve million Americans changed their behavior or plans on the basis of an astrology report this past year. Former presidents and heads of state have determined their travel schedules and political maneuvers by the stars.

Paul is, in effect, saying to any believer who may be haunted by past experience or present doubts, “The stars cannot hurt you.”

The stars do not govern your lives; they do not determine your destiny. The power of the one true and living God, who created the stars, rules as sovereign in the universe.

For those who reject Him as their source of wisdom and direction, Proverbs, chapter 1, verses 24 through 31, quotes God in His horrifying warning,

Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;

and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof;

I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread come;

... Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will all seek me diligently but they will not find me,

because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.

They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.

So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices.

Any other created thing

10. Paul adds one more thing to his list in verse 39,

... nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God

...

It is as if Paul says, "Look, in case there's something I possibly overlooked in the prior sixteen things I've mentioned in this paragraph, this last one simply covers everything!"

Since God created everything there is, there is nothing that exists that could possibly separate you from the love of God.

Saints Are Secured By God's Promise

Now notice Paul ends this song of assurance, in verse 39b, with the phrase,

... the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"In Christ . . . in Christ . . .," that is a favorite theme of Paul's, ". . . in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ladies and gentlemen, the love of God is not just some principle, it is a person. It is not some

ethereal feeling from God, it is real fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.^{xii}

Bank on it; depend on this; be persuaded by this word from God!

You are eternally secure because God, the creator of *everything*, stooped to die for *everything* about you, so that *nothing* can now separate you from His everlasting, comprehensive, secure love.

Charles Spurgeon, on his deathbed, said to some of his final visitors, "As time has passed on, my theology has grown more and more simple. It is simply this,

Jesus loves me!

That is it!

Jesus loves me, this I know,

For the Bible tells me so,

Little ones to Him belong,

They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me . . .

the Bible tells me so!

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/28/2004 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Kregel Publications, 1982), p. 47.

ⁱⁱ Donald G. Barnhouse, *Romans: Volume Three* (Eerdmans, 1959), p. 189.

ⁱⁱⁱ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Volume 4* (Baker Book House, 1931), p. 379.

^{iv} Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), p. 635.

^v James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: Volume Two* (Baker Book House, 1992), p. 1000.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, p. 1001.

^{vii} John MacArthur, Jr., *Romans: Volume One* (Moody Press, 1991), p. 516.

^{viii} William Barclay, *The Letter To the Romans* (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 117.

^{ix} *World Magazine* (Mar. 20, 2004), p. 11.

^x http://www.planetbonsai.com/feng_shui/tips/advice, Mar. 27, 2004.

^{xi} Barnhouse, p. 231.

^{xii} Roy L. Laurin, *Romans: Where Life Begins* (Kregel, 1988), p. 352.