

## **Safe and secure!** (Romans 8:28-39)

David Yeh, 30 Jul 2017

In 1937 the great Golden Gate Bridge was completed. It cost over \$35 million to build and was completed in two phases: the first slowly and the second rapidly. In the first stage, no safety devices were used. As a result, twenty-three men fell to their deaths. However, for the final part of the project, a large safety net was used as a precaution. At least ten men fell into the net and were saved from certain death. Once the net was installed production increased by 25%. Why? Because the men were assured of their security and they were free to wholeheartedly serve the project.

Security is a critical element in life. Unfortunately, it does not happen all the time. Recent world events in North Korea and Syria demonstrate how unsafe our world is. On a personal level, perhaps you live in insecurity because you have been the victim of a crime such as robbery or rape. Maybe your spouse has threatened divorce and you lack marital security. Your children may be struggling with physical or emotional issues. Perhaps you've lost your job or something unexpected happened to your life, and you ask why Lord?! Fortunately, in the single area that truly matters most, your relationship with God, whatever happens to you, you can have ultimate security.

The Bible says that God is in control of our lives and He loves us and accepts us unconditionally. Yet, you may find it hard to believe this. Maybe you have never experienced unconditional love and approval from your parents. Perhaps you have experienced rejection and betrayal from a spouse, from relatives, or from friends. This may cause you to doubt people because you have been hurt so many times. I hurt for you and that's why I want you to know that God's love for you is perfect and He will never let you go. He desires you to have complete assurance and security in Him. This peace and confidence is very important if you are to experience the Christian life in the way God intended.

Romans 8:26-39 may be the most comforting and encouraging passage in the entire Bible. Paul offers three hope-filled assurances: (1) All is well (8:28-30); (2) No one can condemn us (8:31-34); and (3) No one can separate us from God's love (8:35-39).

### **1. All is well (8:28-30)**

Whatever you are going through, even if you feel like all hell has broken loose in your life, God can make the negative things that are happening in your life and turn into something positive. In most ancient Greek texts, the word "God" is implied, though it is not present specifically. But from the context, the translation "God works" or "God causes ... to work together" seems to me to be the best translation. Please note that the verse here does not mean "it will work out right", but "work out for good". He can turn something bad to your benefit.

But this will happen only to those who love him, to those who obey him and live in his will. As Jesus said, those who love him will obey his commands. So, there is that right relationship between us and God. It is not that we deliberately go and sin against God and then when we face bad consequences, we hope God will turn it to something good. No, this Scripture is not offering comfort to us when we deliberately do wrong

and disobey the Lord. What it is saying however is that when other people try to harm us or circumstances seem to go against us, or even when we ourselves are negligent, then we can come to God full of hope and confidence knowing that he is in control and is able to make everything turn out # for our good.

E.g. Joseph: He was mistreated by his brothers, sold into slavery in Egypt, and falsely accused of sexual abuse by his master's wife, and then put in prison. When in prison another prisoner promised him that when he got out he would explain Joseph's situation to the Pharaoh so that Joseph could be let out, but he was forgotten for two more years. But when the time was right he became the Prime Minister of Egypt.

You might be going through hardship right now, mistreated by other people or facing an unfair situation. Remember, God is in control. He can turn all this into something positive in your life because he loves you.

## **2. No one can condemn us (8:31-34)**

### **i) God is on our side (v31-v32)**

No matter who or what comes against you, God is for you. Paul here asks the question V 31 "If God is for us, who is against us?" The Greek word "if" (ei) is not a term of uncertainty, but of certainty. Paul is saying, "If God is working on our behalf (and He is), then who could succeed in opposing us?" Whether the enemy is of a physical, emotional or spiritual nature. If physical it may be because someone is attacking you. You may feel defeated, but Paul encourages us with the truth that evil will never ultimately prevail. You will always be led to victory in Christ because God is for you. Today personalize the verse by adding your name: "If God is for \_\_\_\_\_, who is against \_\_\_\_\_?"

In the movie, The Lion King, the young cub Simba is being surrounded by hyenas, and he gets ready to defend himself, when his father jumps up behind Simba and roars. At that great roar, the hyenas scatter. Now the truth is, sometimes hyenas do gang up on and defeat adult male lions. But, if every created being in the universe were to gang up on God, they still would not be able to defeat Him. With that kind of God for you, who can possibly be against you? Who or what do you have to fear? No one. Nothing. In 8:32 Paul answers the question of 8:31 with a rhetorical question: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" If God has done the big thing, delivering up Jesus, will He not do the little thing? For God to give up Jesus to death and then abandon you on the highway to heaven would be like a rich man spending a vast sum on a car and then leaving it on the roadside because he couldn't afford the petrol to run it. How absurd! That is the idea behind Paul's argument here. Since God gave up His Son to buy your eternal life, He will certainly give you whatever you need to live for Him now

Although you may feel condemned from time to time, God's love for you is timeless and He will never condemn you.

### **ii) God himself will not go against us (v33-v34).**

Paul writes in 8:33, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies." This is a rhetorical question. So, the question is: Who would dare "bring a charge against God's elect?" The answer, of course, is no one. This question is from a courtroom setting. No one can charge you with sin crimes because God has justified you. God has acquitted you and declared you righteous before His perfect justice. If God pronounced this verdict, who can resurrect the charges of wrong doing that would bring you before Him again? As a believer, you can be sure you are eternally secure because there is no sin that has not already been dealt with by Christ. Therefore, if God the Father went to all this work to save you, it is senseless to consider the possibility that you could be lost. If "God is the one who justifies," who is able to "unjustify" you? Absolutely no one!

[Invite my son Joshua on stage.] "Joshua, will you please hold on to my pinkie finger? Do you have a good grip? Will you always be able to hold on to my finger? What happens if you get tired or weak?" Joshua responds, "I would lose my grip and fall down." "That's right! But since I'm your Dad I'm going to hold your hand and never let you go. Even if you let go of me, even if you stumble and attempt to fall, I'm going to keep you because I am strong and I have made a commitment to you." I wish I could keep this commitment perfectly, but it's not possible. However, God is able to hold on to Joshua and every other believer. He will hold your hand with an everlasting grasp. If your salvation depends upon your hanging onto God, you are in deep trouble. But you are not going to heaven because you are hanging onto God. You're going to go to heaven because God is holding onto you.

In 8:34 Paul asks, "Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

If there is someone who has the right to condemn us, he is Christ. Because of our sin, we are the one who caused his death, God had to send His son to bear our sin. But no! Jesus is alive and is praying for us. Christ Jesus (1) died, (2) was raised, (3) is sitting in power, and (4) is now at the right hand of God, interceding for us. The word "intercedes" (entugchano) is also from the courtroom. It refers to the word of a defence attorney or advocate. As your defence attorney, you can count on Jesus Christ to win your case. He now lives in the presence of God, at His right hand, pleading your case before the Father. His plea for you is based on the finished and sufficient work He did on the cross. You can be sure you are eternally saved because your sins—past, present, and future—remain paid for by Jesus Christ.

Have you been struggling with a secret sin and wondering if God will ever forgive you? Maybe there is a sin in your past that you consider to be so shameful that you wonder if God will ever love you. You feel you might have lost your salvation. Hold tightly to the understanding that if you've believed in Christ as your Saviour He will not condemn you nor abandon you. So, don't be engulfed by your guilt any longer. Allow God's Word, the truth to assure you that you're still His loving child.

Steve Winger (Juggler for Jesus) writes about his last college test, a final in a logic class known for its difficult exams. To help students complete the final, the professor told

them they could bring as much information to the exam as they could fit on a piece of notebook paper. Most students crammed as many facts as possible on their 8 ½ x 11 inch (21.59 x 27.94cm) sheet of paper. But one student walked into class, put a piece of notebook paper on the floor, and had an advanced logic student stand on the paper. The advanced logic student told him everything he needed to know. He was the only student to receive an "A." Like this advanced student, Jesus Christ is our intercessor. He preserves our salvation through His continual intercession. We do not rely upon our limited resources and strength but rather we rely upon His unlimited resources and strength.

### **3. No one can separate us from God's love (8:35-39)**

Since from the beginning God set His love upon you, He will continue to love you for all eternity. Paul makes this point very clear by emphasizing the love of God or Christ three times in this section (8:35, 37, 39;), and there is no separation in your relationship with God. Paul begins with the question that is probably one of the most important and most asked questions by Christians: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (8:35a) Of course, the answer is: No one can separate us from the love of Christ. However, you may say, "But I don't feel like I love Christ all the time." No, you misread 8:35a. It's not who is going to separate us from our love for Christ, but who is going to separate us from Christ's love for us. So, it doesn't matter how you feel, whether you feel love for Christ or not, but how Christ loves you. I don't know about you, but my love for Christ can fluctuate between hot and cold. If my salvation depends upon the degree of my love for Christ, I would have already lost my salvation. Thankfully, my salvation does not depend upon my love for Christ; rather, it depends upon Christ's love for me. His life, death, resurrection, and intercession have secured my eternal destiny. The only reason that I will spend eternity with God is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Some of us might be facing all kinds of hardship, perhaps a bit like the Roman recipients of this letter had been suffering. They were suffering for their faith and Paul brings up a list of things that some might think would separate them from God: "Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" (8:35b) Even though these outside situations cause us pain and suffering they will not be able to take God's love away from us. Even when you are having financial difficulties, even if your relationship is breaking apart, even if you are suffering from serious health problems, even if you doubt God still loves you, God's love for you has not changed.

Romans 8:37: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Through Christ, we are not just victorious, we "overwhelmingly conquer!" In Greek, this phrase is in the present tense, which means right now this is true. Once again, the reason that you can have such confidence in your present and future experience is because of God's sovereign choice and actions, that is, His love will never leave you.

In 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord." "I am convinced . . ." Here Paul chooses a Greek perfect tense verb that conveys an existing condition brought about in the past with present realities. This means something like, "I was convinced in the past and I am fully convinced in the present." When Paul says he is convinced, he speaks as a man who has staked his life upon certain unchanging realities.

There are three pairs in 8:38-39: (1) Death/life: Nothing in this life and nothing in death can separate a believer from God's love. The two things we fear most, living and dying, are not threats to our eternal life. Whether we live or die, we are in God's love. (2) Things present/things to come: Nothing in our present experience, nor anything to come, can separate us from God's love in Christ. (3) Height/depth: If we were to travel to the "highest" or "lowest" points in the universe, or anywhere in between, we would never arrive at a place where we could escape Christ's love. There is nowhere we can go where anyone or anything can stop God's love towards us and separate our relationship with Him. Eternal life is eternal: Nothing in life or in death, nothing in our present or in our future, nothing in the entire universe, no matter how "high" or "low" we might go—nothing can separate us from His love.

Paul also used two non-pairs of expressions. One is a triplet and one is a single image: (1) Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers. This triplet refers to angelic and demonic powers. Paul here make his point more specifically, which the reader could have been concerned about. Angels and demons are more powerful than we are. They are unseen. Yet, there is nothing that can separate us from God's love—including angels and demons. While the Devil and demons can make believers' present lives miserable they are no match to God's deliverance. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

(2) Nor any other created thing. That includes any kind of people: friend, parents, government official; situations or circumstances: accident, natural disaster; none of these can separate us from God's love. Let me ask you a question: Are you a created being? Well, of course you are. There are only two classes of beings in existence: The Creator and the created. If you are not God, the Creator, then you are one of His created beings, a part of His creation. Therefore, this phrase includes you. Every conceivable chasm has been filled. Nothing can separate us from His love. That includes anything that we as believers might do, think, or say, that is, nowhere, no way, at no time can we be removed from His love.

Knowing this and having this assurance of God's love, it should make us respond to God with our love. Suppose a young woman becomes engaged to a man. She knows that he is trustworthy. He will keep his word to marry her. Does she then use this promise as an excuse to sleep with other men, knowing that her fiancé will marry her no matter what? Of course not! She loves her fiancé. His commitment to marry her makes her love him more. Secure in his love, she wants to please him in everything. Similarly, as Christians, knowing how much the Lord loves us should lead to gratitude and obedience. Knowing His love should make us never want to go astray. And we can have confidence that, because the loving God is in control, whatever we go through in life, it will be for our good. So, we can face the challenges of life with confidence,

and this is why we are more than conquerors. We can go through all the hardship and come out stronger and better.

So how can we apply this great doctrine? First, claim the promises of God's Word. Memorize Scriptures such as Romans 8:38-39; John 5:24; and 1 John 5:11-13. Stand on them!

Second, love others with God's unconditional love. If you are secure, you will be able to love others. If you are insecure you will be introspectively concerned about yourself. Yet, God's love for you should compel you to have His love for others.