

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

(LESSON THIRTY-TWO)

THE SECURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN

(PART FIVE)

The doctrine of the Christian's security in Jesus Christ teaches that God, by His own power, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, keeps or preserves those who have been born again until the day of Jesus Christ. The understanding of this doctrine really comes from an appreciation of the unique and special love that God has for His elect. Perhaps there is no other passage in the Bible that speaks so directly, so graphically and so eloquently of the unique and special love that God has for His elect as does **Romans 8:28-39**. In that passage, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the truth of the Christian's security being bound up with God's sovereignty, the unchangeableness of His purposes and the constancy of His good pleasure.

In **Lesson 29**, we commenced a detailed examination of **Romans 8:28-39**. We began by considering verse **28** where Paul writes, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* We stated that this verse is one of the most remarkable in the entire Bible, because Paul gives us in the verse, an absolute guarantee that for those who love God because they have been called to fulfill His designed purpose, every detail of their lives is continually woven together to fit into God's perfect plan of bringing good into their lives! We remarked that this verse, all by itself, should be enough to convince us that our position in Christ is very secure.

We made the point that this amazing guarantee is based upon what Paul explains in verses **29-30**: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."* In these verses, he uses the five words **foreknow**, **predestinate**, **called**, **justified** and **glorified** to explain his reason for being so confident that all things are working together resulting in good, for those who are loving God as a result of their being divinely summoned according to His purpose.

We noted that in these two verses, with these five words, Paul highlights the sequence known as **"the golden chain of salvation."** This "golden chain" reveals the order in which God saves His people, indicating very clearly that salvation is a work of the Lord from start to finish. We examined the five links in the chain and concluded that the position of the Christian in Jesus Christ is very secure because he or she is foreknown of God, predestinated by Him to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, divinely summoned or called by God, justified by God and glorified by Him.

We observed that every step in the salvation of a person, every link in the golden chain of salvation, represents divine action. It is God Himself who does the foreknowing, the predestinating, the calling, the justifying and the glorifying! Paul makes no mention here of God depending on human beings to do their part. He does not say that if human beings do not cooperate with God the process of salvation will be aborted. Paul knows that God will bring to completion every project that He begins and that He is never dependent on human beings to finish what He initiates.

Because salvation is from start to finish a sovereign work of God, we can be assured that the position of a saved person in Jesus Christ is extremely secure.

In this Lesson, we will continue our examination of **Romans 8:28-39**.

In verse **31** Paul writes, *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* The *“these things”* probably refer not only to what he had written in verses **28-30**, or even earlier in chapter **8**, but to everything he had written so far in his letter. What he wrote in the three verses we have considered - verses **28-30**, are so mind-blowing, however, that we need not look any further than there to appreciate his question.

Because God foreknew us, because He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world; because He set His love upon us in eternity past and predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son; because He called us - He summoned us with a divine summons, which in light of our being foreknown and predestinated, we had to obey; because He justified us with a forensic justification, declaring us legally righteous in His sight; because in His sovereign plan we are already glorified, all things work together for our good. Our position is very secure because God has made it abundantly clear that He is *“for us!”* What then shall we say in response to all of this? We are compelled to reply, *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

The thought of Paul is not in the form of a hypothetical condition, as if it were a question whether God was for us or not. His thought is, “In view of the fact that God is for us, who is or could be against us, so as to do us harm? That is, since God has manifestly demonstrated that He is for the saints, since He is absolutely and continually looking out for them, who can harm them?” The strength of any possible adversary is utter weakness compared with the omnipotence of Almighty God.

The moment that this truth that God is for us, is received and applied personally, the fears and frustrations in our minds, and hearts, and lives will be greatly eased. God is for **me!** It is not merely that God loved the world but that God loved **me!** Any man or woman who lays hold of that truth is well on their way to being what the psychologists call an integrated personality. An Integrated personality is one in whom the various aspects of the personality are working harmoniously and effectively. Such a personality is flexible, strong, and organized as well as balanced. The grasping of the truth that God is really for **me**, yes **me**, will cause a wonderful work of transformation to be wrought in our minds, in our hearts and in our lives! Who or what can effectively be against us? The answer is “no one or nothing!”

My brothers and sisters, let me ask you a question. “Can anyone or anything ever effectively be against God?” The answer is a big fat **“NO!”** Well then, if no one or nothing can ever effectively be against God, then, no one or nothing can ever effectively be against us, because God is for us! Our lives are *“hid with Christ in God!”* (**Colossians 3:3**)

Perhaps when Paul wrote the words recorded in verse **31**, he had in mind **Isaiah 41:8-16**. Surely, these verses tell us that God is for us.

8 *“But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from Abraham my friend,*

9 *I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, ‘You are my servant.’ For I have chosen you and will not throw you away.*

10 *Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*

11 *"See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and humiliated. Anyone who opposes you will die and come to nothing.*

12 *You will look in vain for those who tried to conquer you. Those who attack you will come to nothing.*

13 *For I hold you by your right hand — I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, 'Don't be afraid. I am here to help you.*

14 *Though you are a lowly worm, O Jacob, Don't be afraid, people of Israel, for I will help you. I am the Lord, your Redeemer. I am the Holy One of Israel.'*

15 *You will be a new threshing instrument with many sharp teeth. You will tear your enemies apart, making chaff of mountains.*

16 *You will toss them into the air, and the wind will blow them all away; a whirlwind will scatter them. Then you will rejoice in the Lord. You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

(New Living Translation)

Verse **14** clearly reveals the nothingness of man and the wonderful power of God on behalf of His people. *"Though you are a lowly worm, O Jacob, don't be afraid, people of Israel, for I will help you. I am the Lord, your Redeemer. I am the Holy One of Israel."* What a partnership! God and worms! How much we lose because we do not recognize what we really are. When human beings form a partnership, one person may contribute their finances and another may contribute their experience, expertise or some similar division of various assets. But when we form a partnership with God, He demands that we do it on His terms. We contribute our weakness and He contributes His strength; we contribute our sin and He contributes His pardoning grace; we contribute our nothingness and He contributes His everythingness. God and worms! This partnership can never be successfully attacked. How foolish we are not to accept our own bankruptcy in order to have His riches.

The fact that God is for us brings us into the center of our relationship to Him. He is not a distant Creator of the universe, hiding Himself in eternity, far removed from our being in time. He has come down to us in order to be our God - a God to us and for us.

Brothers and sisters, our salvation is a divine work, absolutely perfect and absolutely complete. It began in the heart of God when we were foreknown and chosen in Christ. It was issued in His eternal decree when we were predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Our salvation was brought to us by Christ. In Him we were effectually called, justified, and glorified. Because we are His elect, God causes everything to work together for our good.

What shall we then say to these things? Our first answer is "Since God is for us, nothing can be against us." Our second answer is set before us in verse **32**: *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* This verse gives us a sure guarantee of the blessings that accompany the gift of Jesus Christ. In Christ we have all things!

The **Message** translates the verse as follows: *“If God didn’t hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us?”*

The **Passion Translation** provides this rendering: *“For God has proved his love by giving us his greatest treasure, the gift of his Son. And since God freely offered him up as the sacrifice for us all, he certainly won’t withhold from us anything else he has to give.”*

Our hope of glory is based on the fact that God is for us and has given His Son for us. The fact that God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to die for us, demonstrates the evil of sin and the necessity of salvation through the atonement. While Paul did not introduce this verse at this point to supply a theory of the atonement, it nevertheless does highlight the atonement in a powerful way. There was a crisis that demanded a solution and a price that had to be paid. There was no way to meet this need except through the death of the Son of God. The Father did not hesitate. He did not spare His Son; He delivered Him over to death.

God, the Judge, had a Son, an only Son, who was very precious to Him. That Son never once committed sin. In **John 8:29**, our Lord said, *“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do **always** those things that please him.”* That was not our testimony, however. Our testimony is recorded in **Isaiah 53:6**: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”* And, yet, on His precious, sinless Son, God pronounced the sentence that we deserved!

In the reference to God as the One who did not spare His own Son, it is likely that Paul is alluding to Abraham’s “sacrifice” of Isaac. When Abraham was tested by God, he demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice his own son, but in the final analysis, Isaac was spared. However, when God acted for the salvation of sinful human beings He did not spare His own Son. He delivered Him up for us. Nothing could show us more clearly that the atonement is an act of God that proceeded forth from the heart of God through the will of God. Everything in salvation is derived from the grace of God.

The argument that Paul now sets forth for the comfort of our souls and the calming of our fears, is that the greater is more than the less. The whole is greater than any of its parts. God gave Christ for us and to us. This is the greatest blessing that God could ever bestow. If He has already willingly given us the very best that He could give, why would He withhold any lesser blessing? Along with Christ, He gives us everything else. If He has given the best, then, He will surely give the rest!

With Christ, God freely gives us all things. He gives us His all *“freely.”* What are the things He gives us? The text says *“All things.”* In **2 Peter 1:3** we read, *“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.”*

I do not believe that Paul limited the expression *“all things”* to spiritual things. Paul was a very practical man and he knew that the persons to whom he was writing were human beings, men and women of flesh and blood who were often in need of material blessings in order to survive. Paul knew that God is interested in every area of the lives of His saints and He must have meant for the saints in Rome to understand the expression *“all things”* to be interpreted in an unqualified sense: material as well as spiritual.

If God has given us “*all things*” together with Jesus Christ, what is it then that can weaken the security of our position in Christ?

Brothers and sisters, Paul’s purpose for writing this section of the Roman epistle is to strengthen the saints of God in their assurance of salvation and to let them know that, being in Christ, they are safe forever. In verses **28-30**, He exposed us to the inner councils of God and showed us our eternal position in Christ. Then, in verse **32**, he takes us to the cross and points out that the greater gift of Christ for us includes all the lesser gifts which the Father possesses.

In verse **33**, Paul asks and answers his second question, “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*”

The **New Living Translation** renders the verse as follows: “*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one — for God himself has given us right standing with himself.*”

The **Passion Translation** provides this rendering: “*Who then would dare to accuse those whom God has chosen in love to be his? God himself is the judge who has issued his final verdict over them — ‘Not guilty’*”

In this verse and the one that follows, Paul picks up the theme of God as judge and humanity appearing before Him in His Court of Law. In this scenario, it is the elect who stands before Him. The charges that Paul refers to are accusations that could be brought against the saints by Satan, the accuser of the brethren. Paul’s argument is that there is no possibility of any charge being brought against God’s elect.

There is an incident in **Zechariah 3** that illustrates this truth dramatically. There, we see Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. We are not told what Satan’s accusation was but the context seems to imply that his accusation against Joshua was not a false one, for Joshua’s very garments seemed to testify against him. The Bible says, “*Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel*” (verse **4**). Satan is without doubt a liar and a deceiver, but the truth is that he does not always have to rely on lies to accuse us. Our own filthiness and vileness testify against us on many occasions.

Joshua had no word to use in his own defense. He was guilty and he knew it. But Joshua did not have to speak. It was the Judge Himself who took up the case and stood as his attorney! “*And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by*” (**Zechariah 3:4-5**).

God did not address Satan at all. He was totally disregarded by God. God behaved as if Satan was not present in court! “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*” We are God’s elect. We have been foreknown, predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, called, justified, glorified. In all things, God is working for our good.

Paul answers this question by assuring us that God has declared us justified! God put our sins on Christ and He suffered and died for our sins on the Cross. God punished Christ so that He might justify us. Let us remind ourselves once again that justification is the act of God whereby He declares ungodly persons to be perfect while they are still ungodly. This is the reason why no one can lay anything to our charge. In **Revelation 12:10**, the devil is called “the accuser of the brethren.” But though he may cry out his anger and hatred against the saints, he will never be heard. He speaks the truth when he announces that we are sinners by nature and sinners by choice. But God knows that our sins have been laid upon the Saviour and that they are gone forever.

God knows that His righteousness was satisfied in the death of Jesus Christ so that He, Himself, will never think of bringing a charge against us. Who, then, shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? God has justified us, and the question answers itself. There can never be an accusation brought against the soul who has been touched with life by the Holy Spirit because of the work of Christ on the cross. We are saved, and we are safe.

Paul’s third question is asked and answered in verse **34**: *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

The **New Living Translation** renders the verse as follows: *“Who then will condemn us? No one — for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.”*

The **Passion Translation** furnishes this rendering: *“Who then is left to condemn us? Certainly not Jesus, the Anointed One! For he gave his life for us, and even more than that, he has conquered death and is now risen, exalted, and enthroned by God at his right hand. So how could he possibly condemn us since he is continually praying for our triumph?”*

The verb “to condemn” in the Greek means to pronounce a sentence upon a person after the person is found to be guilty. But who is it that can pronounce a sentence upon God’s elect when they have legally been declared innocent before the Supreme Court of Heaven by God Himself? Even if it were possible to bring a charge against God’s elect, who will pronounce sentence? Their defense attorney is the Lord Jesus Christ, the very One who makes condemnation impossible. He died; He was raised from the dead; He ascended into heaven; He is at this very moment at the right hand of God interceding - and all of this for us! Let our adversary bring any accusation that he will; let him produce all the evidence he is able to; the perfect answer will always be the nail pierced hands and feet and the riven side of our Saviour and intercessor! That is all that is required.

Jesus Christ, the One who died for us and rose again, is our advocate with God, at whose right hand He pleads the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice so that there is no condemnation for those who are His.

Brothers and sisters, God is satisfied with the death of His Son instead of our death. God Himself will never look upon the sin of His elect and will never open a hearing in any case involving us in a cause that might bring us into eternal jeopardy. Our position is very secure.

In our next Lesson we will conclude our study of **Romans 8:28-39**.