

Safe in His Hands

By Don Green

Bible Verse: Romans 8:31-39
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Well, as we come to our time in God's word proper, for lack of a better statement, our message for this morning, we have a wonderful bridge, that song was a wonderful bridge from the celebration of Communion to our consideration of what we have in God's word here this morning. The Apostle Paul reflecting on the death of Christ said this, he said, "If God is for us, who is against us? What shall we say in response to the fact that our Lord offered His body and blood on the cross for us? What shall we say in response to that?" Beloved friends, isn't it obvious that if Christ has done this for you, that he is on your side? That he is for you and not against you? That his intentions toward you are good and not evil? Isn't it obvious that he intends to bless you if he laid down his life and blood on your behalf? That all that he has for you must be good because this is the supreme sacrifice for your greatest need? Isn't it obvious then that his disposition toward you is favorable? Whatever the present circumstances of life may be for you, you cannot argue against the love and the goodness and the grace of Christ displayed at the cross. You can't and so we might as well stop trying and let this catapult us into the proper realm of faith.

Paul goes on to say in verse 32, "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?" He says and this is a greater to the lesser argument, "If Christ has done the greater thing for you, won't He include all of the lesser things as well? If He has secured the eternal well-being of your eternal soul, isn't it obvious that He has the lesser matters of earth and life in hand as well?" He says, "If He's done the greater thing, won't He also with Him freely give us all things?"

Who is it that would bring a charge against God's elect, against true Christians? Who would successfully prosecute us in any remaining sin when God is the one who justifies? Verse 33. If God justifies us, who can condemn us, then? Satan himself cannot rise up and overturn the verdict of God delivered in the believer's justification. Nothing can overturn the righteousness and blood of Christ. Those are, in one manner of speaking, the highest elements of the universe.

And Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, verse 34, Romans 8:34, "He who died, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." Do you realize, Christian friends, do you realize the magnitude of the saving work and the saving

intentions of Christ for your soul? It's not simply that he came from heaven to earth to show the way, as one song puts it; it's not simply that he went to the cross; it's not simply that he was raised from the dead. Paul says that that Christ who was raised is now ascended at the right hand of God and is now interceding for us. There is this comprehensive care of Christ for your soul that nothing could begin to overturn, that nothing could begin to contradict, that no earthly circumstance could possibly undermine.

That is the great privilege and position that is ours in Christ. You see, I'm afraid that sometimes we stop at the resurrection and we glory in the resurrection and it is our proof that God has accepted Christ's sacrifice and it is our proof and indication that God has accepted that sacrifice and therefore those who trust in Christ are eternally secure and it would be, you know, and if there was a wellspring of a hallelujah in response to that, that would be alright. But what I want you to see is that it doesn't stop there. There is just layer upon layer upon layer of the greatness and the goodness and the grace and the care of Christ for our souls that there is no possibility of any contravening fact interfering with his ultimate purpose for us.

It says there in verse 34 that he intercedes for us; that Christ is at the right hand of the Father even now, having completed his work of redemption on our behalf, he now represents us before the Father there. In the holy throne room of the universe, in that place inaccessible to man in his present condition, Christ represents us there before the God who is holy, holy, holy, and he intercedes for us. He cares for us. He seeks our well-being even there so that there is an ongoing aspect of the work of Christ that secures you in heaven forever. These things just start to overwhelm us with the magnitude of it all, don't they?

He was in heaven, he came down for us. In the language of Philippians 2, he went down even further to death, not just death but down even further to the crucifixion for you, for me, and he raised up, he came out of that tomb in Israel alive, death having been conquered, came out of the tomb alive, resurrected, 40 days later ascended into heaven and as it were, carried all of us by name up into heaven and represent us now there by name. We have a brother in heaven who loves us and who represents us there. Having carried out the eternal plan of God in redemption, now continuing his representative work for us before God in heaven, one day coming back again to receive us, to raise our bodies in resurrection life to be with him, to be set with him forever and ever.

In light of that, Paul's question is poignant and conclusive, is it not? Look at verse 35 with me when he says, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" Who could possibly interfere with the work, the intention, the accomplishment of Christ in our redemption? Who is strong enough to overcome omnipotence? Who is evil enough to overcome the conquering of death that Christ has done? What created being can overcome the will of the uncreated one? You just go on and on and on. If Christ, as it were, has raised us up in the language of Ephesians 2, and he's raised us up into heaven and we are raised and we are seated in the heavenly places with him, who can go there and overturn the verdict of God? Who can go there and push Christ from his throne and overturn all that he has done for us?

Who can do that? The question is its own answer: no one can do that. Demons can't do that. Satan can't do that. Christians themselves are not able to sin their way out of the redemptive love of Christ. Oh, you could pursue a path of sin and God will, in a sense, give you some hard providential spiritual spankings in the process. Oh yeah, that'll happen. There will be consequences and pain for your sin but the one truly redeemed cannot even separate himself from Christ.

Look over at the Gospel of John 10 with me. John 10, in fact, go back to John 6 and see the way in which Christ speaks in these absolute terms. John 6:35, "Jesus said to them," this is another one of those great "I am" statements. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'" Do you see the repetition of what we were saying during our Communion time, that this is not a matter of works? It's a man coming to Christ by faith, believing in him and Jesus says he will not hunger, he will never thirst. Another way of saying that, Nothing will ever separate him from Me again."

In verse 40, he expresses this, in verse 39, I should say, "This is the will of Him who sent Me," the Father sent Christ into the world on a mission to redeem the elect, to redeem a people for himself, a people that God had given to the Son. And in verse 39 it says, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." Verse 40, "this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

My friends, this wonderful flock at Truth Community Church, I want you to see that there is no space between the choice of the Father, the work of the Son, and the ultimate outcome of your redemption that's been applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit. There is a triune work of God that has secured you forever and the will of God, the will of the sovereign one of the universe, the will of the Creator, the will of the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, sovereign God is that those that Christ saved would never be lost; that not a one of them would be lost on that last day; that every one of them would have eternal life; that every one of them would be raised up by Christ on the day of the resurrection. These are statements in the indicative. These are promises from the God who cannot lie, from the Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us, the Christ who represents us at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And we realize as we start to pull these things together in our mind, we start to realize just how exponentially magnificent it is to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ; how magnificent and how wonderful it is that he has set this kind of comprehensive great love on us.

What's gonna change his mind? You say, "Well, you don't know. I've sinned since I became a Christian." Yeah, you think he didn't know that beforehand? There's nothing that could take place in the concourse of the time of your life to overturn the purpose for you that God established before the foundation of the world. We are secure, we are safe in him. We are eternally secure in Christ.

Now go to John 10 with me, if you will. Oh, the incomprehensible, incalculable, infinite glory of these things of which we speak. In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me." Look, any other savior, so-called, anyone else acting, moving to try to save you would have shrunk back from the cross, would have shrunk back from the eternal punishment that was about to be inflicted upon him. Anyone who was not a good shepherd would not have loved the sheep enough to go through that. Jesus says, "I'm the good shepherd and when the cross comes, I will not back away. I will not flinch away. I won't flee. I'll do the work. I'll finish it." Verse 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." That's the purpose of Christ. That's the work of Christ. That's how sure his work for you is. That's how sure his love for you is. That's how final it is. It cannot be reversed.

Then he goes on and, you know, I think in part Scripture and the God who inspired it recognizes that we were prone to stagger in doubt on this very point that we're prone to question that which we cannot see, our hearts are weak and it's difficult to sometimes for us who are creatures of our senses, we live in the world, we live in a realm of our sense experience, it's hard for us to keep hold of these things and so Jesus and the Scriptures just keep saying it over and over and over again to bring comfort and security to your trembling, easily confused heart.

So Jesus says in verse 27, he says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish." Do you see it, beloved? Did you just truly take Communion as a true born again believer in Christ and the Spirit bears witness with yours that you're a true child of God, you're a true child of the Father, you're a true sheep of the shepherd? Well, look at what Jesus says then in verse 28, look at what he says that would bring comfort and grace to your soul in response to that. He says, "I give eternal life to them," eternal life, it doesn't end. There is a quality to this life that is unending. He doesn't save us and give us temporary life, he doesn't give us contingent life when we believe, he gives us eternal life, indestructible reconciliation with God, and look at what he says, he just keeps repeating himself, "they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

Christ himself refutes Arminian theology that causes believers to doubt their security. He says, "I give eternal life to them. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father," verse 29, "who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." "My Father," Jesus says, "is over all and no one will take them out of His hand." There's no one stronger than him. There's no court above him. He is the final court in the universe and he says, "They belong to Me and no one can take them away." And Jesus says, "I'm like that too. That's My perspective on it also. No one can snatch them out of the Father's hand, no one can take them out of My hand." Jesus says in verse 30, "I and the Father are one." They are united in power, they are united in purpose and based on the testimony of

the Triune God, Father, Son and the Spirit who gave us his word and now testifies to its truth in our hearts as we share around this time together in God's word, Father, Son and Holy Spirit telling us, teaching us the security of the believer, "No one will snatch them out of My hand."

Do you know what you're supposed to do in response to that, beloved? You're supposed to rest. You're supposed to believe that and rest on it in a way that gives you a supernatural sense of comfort and assurance that what you were just singing a few short minutes ago, "It is well with my soul," is actually true and is actually that which controls your entire perspective on God, sin, salvation and the life to come. It's well with my soul. It could be no other way.

And there comes a time, some of you I say this to you gently, there comes a time where you need to stop questioning and start believing. You need to stop with all of the "what ifs" and "what about this and what about that" and just look at the pure word of Christ and take him at his word, and in the language of the invitational hymn that we don't really use here, but to simply come to Christ and say, "Because Your promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come. I come." And do you know what Jesus says to that? He says, "The one who comes to Me, I'll never cast out." There comes a time where we have to realize not only is our unbelief not justified, in light of all of these things that Christ says, our unbelief is sinful. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."

Now with that said, go back to Romans 8 with me. In light of this great comprehensive work of Christ where all of our sins were imputed to him, they were punished in Christ so that Scripture says, "Their sins and their lawless I will remember no more," God said that, he said, "I'll remember your sins and lawless deeds no more because I punished them in Christ," that that righteous life of Christ has been imputed to us and now serves as the legal basis upon which we approach God with confidence, all of God's law perfectly fulfilled in Christ and shared and attributed to you as an act of grace when you put your faith in Christ.

Verse 35 of Romans 8 remembering this great truth of justification that was discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of the book of Romans, remembering the promise of Christ, "No one will snatch them out of My hand," remembering all of these things, beloved, now we come to verse 35 and Paul asks a rhetorical question, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" Look, beloved, Scripture at this point is not asking for information for you to supply and give a roster of those who have the ability to do that. He's not suggesting that there's actually someone who can do it, he's saying in light of everything that is true about salvation, how then could anyone possibly remove us from the security that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord? And the answer is no one.

Paul goes on and makes the rhetorical question detailed, verse 35, "Will tribulation separate us from the love of Christ? Will distress separate us from the love of Christ? Will persecution separate us from the love of Christ? Will famine separate us from the love of Christ? Will nakedness separate us from the love of Christ? Will peril separate us from the love of Christ? Will the sword separate us from the love of Christ?" No. No. No.

No. No. No. No. A sevenfold no in response to those seven hypotheticals. Nothing in life, no tribulation, no change in your life is sufficient, is able to take you out of Christ. Can't happen.

Beloved, I say this gently and with a heart full of compassion knowing some of the sorrows that some of you have been through recently or in the more distant past, the way that people have sinned against you, the sorrows that have burst out of the sky on your life like a thundercloud, those tribulations, those trials cannot separate you from Christ. They are lesser than the love of Christ that has been set on your soul and while it may seem like you're being swept away in the hurricane of it all, you're not. You're kept safe on the shores of God's love by the sure powerful hand of Christ. It could be no other way.

Verse 36, look at it with me, "Just as it is written, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'" This is often the experience of the people of God: vulnerable in earthly terms; subject to death as our martyred brothers who went before us, our martyred sisters who went before us over the centuries, slaughtered for the name of Christ, not separated from him in the end. The earthly sword, the earthly guillotine, the earthly straps could fall upon them but they could only deal with the flesh, they could only inflict temporary pain. The eternal love that saved them was unchanged and, therefore, verse 37 can say, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." We conquer.

Look at 1 John 5 with me. We've been in 1 John the last two weeks so those pages ought to start to crinkle easily toward you. Again and again and again you just see this testimony from the word of God to the people of God redeemed by the Christ of God. You are safe. You are secure. 1 John 5:4, "whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith." Through faith in Christ the world has been conquered. Through faith in Christ the world is dead to you and you are dead to the world. Verse 5, "Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Back to Romans 8:37, "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." And Paul brings a capstone to his argument in verse 38, he says, "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."

Beloved, I want to say two things as I close here to you this morning. One is that it is speaking to believers in Christ now, it is your responsibility to believe this and to base your life on it and to view all of life henceforth and forevermore from this perspective of the great security that belongs to you because of the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart, because of the blood of Christ shed abroad for the sins of your soul. It is your responsibility to believe this, to meditate upon it, and to let your heart evermore become under the power of this great truth, "I have been loved by the Son of God. He loved me. He gave Himself up for me. I am secure forevermore no matter what lies in my immediate future."

And for some of you, I know you've got big changes this week. I get that. All the more crucial for you to lay hold of these things. It's your responsibility to do that and to yield over your doubt, your questions, and to let the motions of your mind and the remnants of your sinful flesh, as it were, come and bow down before this truth of the greatness of Christ and his love for your soul. That's your responsibility to do that because this is what Christians do in response to God's word, we believe it, we act upon it, and we shape our worldview based on it. We trust his word over everything else and his word says he loves us, he keeps us, he intercedes for us, he is coming back for us again.

Jesus said, John 14, "I go and prepare a place for you and if I did that, I'm going to come back." He's not going to waste his time, he's going to fulfill the mission, his purpose of preparing the place for us means certainly that we're going to enter into our possession of it. We have an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. Your name on the plate sitting at the banquet, "Reserved for Bill. Reserved for Tim. Reserved for Sarah. Reserved. Reserved for Chris." And it's your responsibility to believe that and to shape your heart in response to it.

When I say it's your responsibility, beloved, the other side of that coin is it's your privilege. This is our privilege. It's our privilege to enjoy this gift of security that Christ has given to us. He gives this to us and it is our privilege to say, "He will remember my sins and lawless deeds no more. My sins are not a barrier to my entrance into heaven. My sins I can confess them and come and have communion with God afresh again. This is wonderful. This means that in the past, the regrets that I have of the past, this means that my sins of the past are not a barrier. I can rest in this. My sins are washed away. I bear them no more. They've been nailed to the cross. This is a privilege for me to be able to relate to the one true God on that kind of security."

So a past regret is drowned in the ocean of the love of Christ for us and this also, beloved, it's your privilege to look to the future without fear, without a sense of what's going to happen next? What's going to happen with this next doctor report? What if this loved one doesn't come to Christ? And all the "what ifs, what ifs, what ifs," all of those are meant to be buried in the bottom of the sea of the ocean of Christ's love for you as well because, beloved, if Christ has given himself and done the greatest act for the most important aspect of your existence, your eternal soul, don't you think that the one who has your eternal soul in hand has also the things that happen in the realm of time in his hand as well, and that he will use all of them to accomplish his purposes to one day conform you to the image of Christ to be with him safe in heaven forever?

So we go through with this, we go through all of life, we look back into the past and see the regret and say, "It's done. Christ has that taken care of. What's happening in the present is that I'm secure in His hand and as I look into the future, nothing's going to change, so that even when I come to that day of my dying breath, even in that day when perhaps it comes suddenly and all of a sudden you realize there's just a few minutes for us left to live, rather than hearts filled with fear, we can look even at that most distressing moment, humanly speaking, and say, 'Oh, I'm at rest. Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I

commit my spirit." And as I've said, I like to say, you exhale your last on earth and you breathe your next one in the presence of Christ, home forever, and all of these promises reaching their fulfillment.

Beloved, this is what Christ has done for us. This is why we praise him. This is why we proclaim him as well, to build ourselves up in this most holy faith, to call those outside of Christ, "Come, please come into this realm of love and security and blessedness! I don't want to keep it to myself, I'd have you come too." The arms of Christ extended wide at the cross, now extended wide to his people, now extended to others, "Come to Christ and be saved."

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Jesus, we love Thee. We know that You are ours. For these all the follies of sin we resign. For these all the fears of earth we lay down. We turn our backs on this world which beckons us to return. We will not go back to Egypt. We want that Promised Land to be our inheritance. We won't listen, O God, when people beckon us back to our sinful way of life. We'll leave family and friends if we must, if only to be faithful to this love which has been so faithful to us. O God, we love You. We worship You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the eternal Spirit who indwells us and has sealed us for that great final day of redemption. We long for that day, O God, when we are made perfect in Your sight and we are like Christ when we see Him as He is. But while we're waiting for that final fulfillment, Father, we sing, "It's well with my soul." We love You, our Jesus. We love You, our Father. We love You, gracious Spirit who dwells within us and we ask You only to be faithful and to keep that which You have already determined to do. Come what may, O God, we rest in You, we love You, and we offer You our deepest and most sincere praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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