

ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED

Does anyone remember what we said last week about the purpose of salvation? Why does God want to save you and me?

THE PURPOSE OF SALVATION is that we would be conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus. All of life is moving towards that goal. **GOD'S PLAN WAS TO SAVE PEOPLE IN ORDER TO MAKE THEM LIKE JESUS. THAT IS GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE.**

In the last nine verses of Romans 8, Paul ends the letter to the Romans with a series of questions and answers as he concludes his teaching on the doctrine of security in salvation. He really wants to nail down this truth. It is as if he anticipates this truth is going to be rejected by the majority of mankind. He believes people are going to come along and say, "*You know you could lose your salvation. The church could take it away from you, and there are circumstances that could cause you to say, 'I don't believe any longer'.*" Paul knows that is going to happen, so he reacts to that by asking a series of questions in Romans 8:31-39. Let's begin with Romans 8:31:

31 What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

Let's look at persons first. Are there any persons anywhere who could remove our salvation under any circumstances? If God is telling us that believers are secure, just who do you think would have the wherewithal to overpower God who is for us? Do you know anyone who can overcome God? Can the Roman Catholic Church or other churches, when they excommunicate someone for committing sin? Can they remove salvation if in fact the person possesses salvation? They have throughout history removed certain people from the Church, excommunicated them, and burned them at the stake because they believed in the doctrine of justification by faith. Does the Roman Catholic church have the right to take away the salvation of someone who is really saved, no matter what they do? Are those who are against us greater than God who is for us? Absolutely not. **No one and nothing can take away the salvation of anyone who is truly saved.**

Now sure enough someone is going to raise the argument that God will protect you as long as He is for you. But what if God stops being for you? Who is to say that God is not going to look at us and say, "*This person is more trouble than they are worth. If I had known they were going to be like this, I wouldn't have accepted him or her.*" So they argue that maybe God will remove our salvation for one reason or another. Perhaps for too much sin or disobedience. Not so.

Look at Romans 8:32:

32 Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?

God gave us His Son to save us when we were sinners. If He did that He would certainly do whatever was necessary to keep us once we were saved. If He did the greatest thing possible to redeem us, will He do less than that to keep us? If God loved us enough when we were wretched sinners to give His only Son on the cross to redeem us, won't He give us every other possible blessing?

Are you able to begin to see the enormity of love that God has for you and me? The Bible does not say that God gave His Son so that goody-good people could go to Heaven. It does say, however, that **He gave His Son so that all sinners could be saved.** It says that God loved everyone in the world, which includes the most wretched of sinners. He loved even them so much that He was willing to send His Son to die an excruciatingly painful death so that they could spend eternity in Heaven with Him. Then in Romans 8:33,34 Paul writes:

*33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us **right standing with himself.***

34 Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.

If we look at the first sentence in each of these verses, we certainly get the idea that someone is going to try and condemn believers whose future glory is already secured, don't we? Who might it be who would want to do something like this? Who is the accuser? Who has access to God's presence in order to do this? Satan does according to Job 1:9-12:

*6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and **Satan the Accuser** came with them.*

7 "Where have you come from?" the Lord asked Satan. And Satan answered the Lord, "I have been going back and forth across the earth, watching everything that's going on."

*8 Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant **Job**? He is the finest man in all the earth—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and will have nothing to do with evil."*

9 Satan replied to the Lord, "Yes, Job fears God, but not without good reason!

10 You have always protected him and his home and his property from harm. You have made him prosperous in everything he does. Look how rich he is!

*11 But **take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!**"*

12 "All right, you may test him," the Lord said to Satan. "Do whatever

“you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.”
So Satan left the Lord’s presence.

Satan is always accusing the elect of God. He spends a lot of His time in Heaven trying to convince God that we not deserve the salvation that God has already guaranteed for all believers. There is a good example of this in Zechariah 3:1,2:

*1 Then the angel showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. **Satan was there** at the angel’s right hand, **accusing Joshua of many things.***

*2 And the Lord said to Satan, **“I, the Lord, reject your accusations, Satan. Yes, the Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you. This man is like a burning stick that has been snatched from a fire.”***

Isn’t that great? Satan is really laying it on Joshua and God says in effect, *“Nothing doing, Satan. Joshua is one of my own that I rescued from the fire.”* **The truly wondrous thing about all this is that although Joshua is guilty, he is under the protection of God and will not be condemned.** God is not going to condemn someone that He has already pronounced to be righteous. If God has declared us righteous even though we were still sinners, then sin is never going to keep us from inheriting the eternal promise that comes with righteousness. **Believers did not get into the Kingdom of God because of their goodness. And they are not going to be thrown out because of a lack of goodness.** Listen to what John wrote in John 10:24-29:

24 The Jewish leaders surrounded him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

25 Jesus replied, “I have already told you, and you don’t believe me. The proof is what I do in the name of my Father.

26 But you don’t believe me because you are not part of my flock.

27 My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me,

29 for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. So no one can take them from me.

There is no way that a believer will ever lose their salvation. Christ will certainly never condemn the believer. He died for them. Do you think after doing that, He would turn around and undo the meaning of His redemptive work? Of course He wouldn’t. What are we told in John 3:16-18?

*16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that **everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.***

17 God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

18 “There is no judgment awaiting those who trust him. But those who do not trust him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of

God.

Now there are those who think that they have sinned so many times and failed God so many times, that chances are God is going to throw them out and not let them back. Don't you believe it. There is not a chance that will happen if they're true believers. John writes in 1 John 2:1:

I My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely.

Then in Hebrews 7:24,25 we read:

*24 But Jesus remains a priest forever; his priesthood will never end.
25 Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to God through him. He lives forever to plead with God on their behalf.*

Christ will keep believers saved all the way into Heaven. How? He ever lives to make intercession for believers. Whenever we sin, He pleads our case before the throne of God. He intercedes on the believer's behalf and comes to their defense. So on the one hand you have Satan and all His accusations, and on the other hand you have the lawyer for the defense, Jesus, who speaks to His Father in defense of the believer. I don't know about you but if I ever have to go on trial before a judge and I can get the judge's son to be my attorney, I won't sweat what the decision will be. God the Father always responds positively to the intercession of His Son.

God has provided those who love Him with all the security imaginable. If you believe in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and if you love God, you're going to Heaven where you'll be like Jesus, and that promise is cast in stone. We hope we'll see all of you there.

Now let's look at the conclusion of this chapter, Romans 8:35,37-39:

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death?

37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.

39 Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is

revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God said to the people of Israel in Jeremiah 31:3:

3 “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.

This is how God’s love is expressed in Romans 8. It is an everlasting love, a love from which there is no separation. Once you have been saved, you are saved forever. What might you do though that could cause God to stop loving you after you’ve been saved? Nothing! **We have an everlasting love as believers, and that everlasting love provides everlasting hope.** This hope tells us that even when we sin, and we will, that God will give us grace and forgiveness, which gives us a great sense of security. These verses ask the question: “*What could possibly change this kind of love that God provides us?*” So let’s take a look at each of the things mentioned in verse 35.

1) Trouble

Trouble occurs when you’re cornered and out of options. It has to do with being under tremendous pressure. When the real pressure comes and there is a price to pay for being a believer, does that separate us from the love of Christ? **No way!**

2) Calamity

Basically we define calamity as being caught in a circumstance where there doesn’t seem to be any way out. But a believer doesn’t have to be concerned about calamity because we’re told in 1 Corinthians 10:13:

*13 Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. **When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.***

Can that strong temptation that one might be wrestling with cause a believer to be separated from the love of Christ? **No it can’t.**

3) Persecution

Persecution is abuse that a believer feels when rejected by others because of his/her faith in Jesus. This could involve both physical and emotional suffering. Is this something that could separate us from the love of Christ? **No, it couldn’t.**

4) Hunger

What about hunger? Going without food; being utterly deprived and perhaps thrown in jail and left to die because of one’s faith in Jesus Christ.

5) Cold

What about being out in the cold without proper clothing? This means to be without clothes, to be so poor and destitute that you can't even clothe your own body.

6) Danger

Danger has to do with being exposed to the treachery and plotting of others.

7) The Threat of Death

What about when you're looking at certain death, such as Christians have experienced from hostile forces over the centuries and which is a worse threat today around the world than it has ever been?

All seven of these things are very heavy matters. They involve the worst possible stress situations. Could such circumstances drive a believer to reject their faith in Jesus? Could such things drive us away from His love and affection? Could such circumstances cause us to doubt Him? Under such circumstances could we get weary and fall into sin, and consequently have the Lord shut us off and boot us out? Well, as Paul writes these verses, he's not just theorizing, he experienced every one of these things as we're told in 1 Corinthians 11:23-33 (Message):

I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. And that's not the half of it, when you throw in the daily pressures and anxieties of all the churches. When someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel the desperation in my bones. When someone is duped into sin, an angry fire burns in my gut. If I have to "brag" about myself, I'll brag about the humiliations that make me like Jesus. The eternal and blessed God and Father of our Master Jesus knows I'm not lying. Remember the time I was in Damascus and the governor of King Aretas posted guards at the city gates to arrest me? I crawled through a window in the wall, was let down in a basket, and had to run for my life.

So Paul isn't dealing with only theory here. This is Paul's personal experience in his walk with Christ. Did **trouble, calamity, persecution, hunger, cold, danger, or the threat of death** sever Paul's relationship with Christ? Did it cause Paul in moments of trouble to say Christ wasn't worth it, and thereby abandon Him? On the contrary, this is a typical day for Paul. **Such things don't take us out of the love of God. Such things show us that we're in the love of God.** This is the history of those who love God. All the saints (believers) throughout the ages have endured this. It goes with the territory. We find this

confirmed in Matthew 10:37-39:

37 If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.

38 If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine.

39 If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it.

Some people think such an attitude on the part of God is selfish and self-serving and that God shouldn't need to demand such loyalty. Well, they're mistaken. God wants a person's heart completely because it is only then that the person allows God to work in him/her for their own good. Without that kind of submission the person's own self-will gets in the way of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit. So if you haven't already done so, why don't you get out of the way and allow God to bless you?

Also Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:11,12:

11 You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord delivered me from all of it.

12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

What if such things happen and it does drive them away from Christ? If that happens, the truth of the matter is that those people were never truly saved in the first place according to 1 John 2:19:

19 These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left us, it proved that they do not belong with us.

When someone leaves the faith, leaves the church, it doesn't mean they've lost their salvation. Doing that is simply proof that they never had it. Now let's look at Romans 8:36 which begins with "For your sake," This expresses a willingness on the part of God's redeemed people to bear the cross. They are willing to suffer and pay a price for obedience. This is exactly what Jesus was referring to in Luke 9:56-62:

56 So they went on to another village.

57 As they were walking along someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you no matter where you go."

58 But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have no home of my own, not even a place to lay my head."

59 He said to another person, "Come, be my disciple." The man agreed,

but he said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father."

60 Jesus replied, "Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead. Your duty is to go and preach the coming of the Kingdom of God."

61 Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family."

62 But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

Jesus is saying that if you put your hand on the plow but then look back, not only are you not in the Kingdom of God, neither are you fit to be in the kingdom. The point was that proclaiming **the kingdom of God** was so important that it could not wait. The message and the Messiah cannot wait. Jesus' message demanded total allegiance. Jesus' servants should not have divided interests, like a farmer who begins plowing **and looks back**. Since Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, the man had to make up his mind right then as to what he was going to do. Such hesitancy to become a disciple of Jesus is what prevents many people from the gift of eternal salvation. You come into the kingdom with a commitment to follow Christ, whatever the price or whatever the cost. The true believer perseveres through all things. Look at Hebrews 3:14:

14 For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.

And Romans 8:37 tells us that it's not by our own strength that we persevere, but through God's strength. The reason we stay saved is not because we hold on. It is because God holds on and gives the necessary strength needed to get through any situation. Verse 37 also says that "*we overwhelmingly conquer.*" So we don't just squeak through these situations, we come roaring through. "*Overwhelming*" means "*extreme*" or "*great.*" We have a great victory. Why?

When we go through these things the whole experience makes us better than when we started. These experiences refine us and give us more wisdom. When we go through struggles and trials remaining faithful to God, we come out of those situations hating sin more, loving righteousness more, desiring more of God, understanding ourselves better, and able to help others because we have been through it.

When a true believer goes through such things, all of a sudden the Spirit of God rests on them and they see things they never saw before about what they ought to be. They first see their own weaknesses and then they see the strength of God. They want to abandon their own weaknesses and put on the strength that God is offering. They then have a greater sense of direction than ever before. Out of all that comes a greater devotion to Christ and a great eternal reward in Heaven. There is no circumstance that can sever the bond of love that binds together a believer and the Savior. He will not let go and He makes certain we won't let go either.

Now let's just take a moment as we wind down in chapter eight to look individually at those things in verses 38 and 39 that cannot separate us from the love of God.

Death cannot separate us. Most, if not all of you are familiar with the passage in Psalm 23:4 (NAS), but as I read it this time, I ask that you really think about what it's saying:

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

There was a man whose wife died while the children were very young. He was concerned for his children because the loss of a parent to very young children can be devastatingly life changing. He decided to read this verse to them and he then asked them whether they would rather be hit by a truck or the shadow of a truck. They said, "That's easy, daddy, by the shadow of a truck, that wouldn't hurt." "Yes," their father said, "and mommy went through the valley of the shadow of death. There is no pain there. Death can never separate us from God. All that happens when we die is that we enter into the presence of God."

The next item in verse 38 is **life**. Life with all its dangers, difficulties, troubles, trials, and temptations. Life and all it can throw at us; all the pain, sorrow, hurt, and anxiousness of life. That can't separate us from the love of God either.

Next we have **angels**. Even if they wanted to, which obviously they don't, not even holy angels could separate us from the love of God.

Then we have **demons**, a reference to evil angels. No evil, satanic force can separate us from the love of God.

What about **our fears for today and our worries about tomorrow?** That simply means nothing in the present nor anything in the future will separate us from the love of God.

The last item in verse 38 is the **powers of Hell**. This would refer to anything Satan might devise to try and get us to renounce our faith in Christ. Such things cannot separate us from the love of God.

Then finally in verse 39 we see "**Whether high above the sky or in the deepest ocean.**" Reference here is being made to the infinity of space, from one end of infinity to the other. Nothing in all of that expanse can separate us from the love of God. Listen to what David wrote in Psalm 139:1-10:

1 O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

*2 You know when I sit down or stand up. **You know my every thought** when far away.*

3 You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am.

4 You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.

5 You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know!

*7 I can never escape from your spirit! **I can never get away from your presence!***

8 If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there.

9 If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

10 even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

So the sum total of all this stuff is mind boggling. How is a believer possibly going to lose his/her salvation if it cannot happen in death, in life, and if holy angels can't do it, and Satan's demons can't do it, and nothing from the infinite edge of one side of space to the other can't do it? And if that doesn't cover every possible argument, Paul concludes with, "**nor any other created thing.**" I believe that should cover it all. If you believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, and that His death on the cross paid the price for your sins, you're going to have a wonderful time in Heaven, because nothing can happen today, tomorrow, or at any time in the future that could possibly take away your salvation.

This concludes our study in Romans chapter eight, and next week we'll jump right in to chapter nine. If you'd like to review any part of this study from chapter one right up until today, all of our messages are published on our website at www.villagechurchofwheaton.org. We welcome your questions via the website or right here in person. As a matter of fact we take great delight in being able to share God's Word with you and help you to develop a closer relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Feel free to contact us any time.