Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Securing Our Final Glory
Scripture: Romans 8:26-39
Code: SC12-4

2012 Shepherds' Conference (Session 09)

I need, because this is our final session for those of you will not be with us on the Lord's Day, say thank you, thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart to all of those who have taught and preached and we have just been so (applause) greatly blessed. Just a rich, rich feast of the Word of God and a wonderful time of fellowship and thank you all for coming. I'm just curious, if you came from another country other than the United States, would you stand up right now? Just stand up if you're from another country. Yeah, thank you all for coming. Thank you.

The sessions are being translated into multiple languages all of which I don't know, Chinese, Russian and more. People have come from many places. We've had a whole contingent of those speaking Spanish. I've met people from Brazil. We have 48 countries that are here and we welcome all of you and there's always a place for you at Grace Community Church. We have a conference three days a year, Shepherds Conference, but we're here every week. I'm like the poor, they always have me with them. And every week we're here and these folks are singing and playing and we're preaching, and we're serving the Lord.

We have, as I said, 700 volunteers serving you. And it was kind of a curiosity today, our youngest volunteer has been Ansell. Ansell is five and Ansell's mother went to be with the Lord a few months ago and his dad has brought him down to serve alongside his dad as a volunteer, he's our youngest, Ansell, and our oldest is 95. He served you some hot dogs tonight. Then all those folks in between 5 and 95, it's just been a joy. It's a delight and a privilege for our church to serve you in this way. You have to know that they are so energized, it is a stampede for volunteers. They sign up, they want to be a part of it. Once they get a taste of it, they don't want to miss out. So I hope you have felt their love and affection and their help and interest in all that you're doing (applause) good. Yes…yeah…thank you.

This wonderful church and these people that you meet are living testimony to the power of the Word of God over a long period of time, doing its work in the hearts of people. And they reflect the work of the Word in their hearts and it's just a wonderful joy and privilege.

Steve Lawson, a few weeks ago, whispered a little secret in my ear. He said…he said, "John, I have a special request." I said, "Really, Steve, what is it?" He said, "R.C. Sproul would like to be invited to

the Shepherds Conference because he wants to stand together with these men. Could you please send him an invitation?" So…so, next year R.C.'s going to come and we're going to have him here to (applause)…to minister to you. He has been a stalwart for the faith, hasn't he? And many of you have been tremendously blessed and we like to stand together. He calls me Boris because of Boris who stood on a tank in Moscow at one point in time and wouldn't move. So he thinks I don't move easily, so…but, I think the best kept secret about Grace Church is that biblical preaching, strong, convicting, straight-forward, honest, deep biblical preaching, hard preaching produces soft people…soft preaching produces hard people. They melt under the Word of God and they're reshaped into the image of Christ. So we're just delighted to have you here. I wish I could have gotten to all of you individually, and many of you I met and many of you will take me home on your I-phone camera, or whatever. I wish I could have gotten to all of you, but that's just one of the things that I have to deal with. Every once in a while here at Grace Church I meet a man and I say, "Welcome, is this your first time?" He says, "No, I've been a deacon for 30 years." So if you feel a little slighted, you're not alone. But if I can't minister to everybody on a personal level, there are certainly folks in this church who do, and I think you got a little bit of a taste of that.

If you would, please, open the Word of God to the eighth chapter of Romans and let's go back to the eighth chapter of Romans. And I feel that this conference wouldn't be complete if we didn't take a look at a great doctrine…a great doctrine in the Word of God. Taking a look at a great doctrine, under the heading of restoring the worship of the Holy Spirit, I'm still on that wavelength, I know a lot has intervened, and your bucket is way overflowing with what's happened since I talked to you in the opening session about restoring a true and an appropriate worship of the Holy Spirit. But if somehow you can make the leap back and pick up some of the pieces of what I said on Wednesday, I want to go back to that emphasis. I do really want to start a Holy Spirit Movement and a Movement to worship Him in all His glory for His divine nature and His divine work. And as we said on Wednesday, the Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead most involved in our lives. And at the same time, least honored. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead most involved in our lives on a constant non-stop basis and least honored.

We could praise Him for every work of God because He is fully involved in every work of God. We could praise Him for creation, we could praise Him for the role that He plays in sustaining the creation. We could praise Him for every aspect of providence. We could praise Him for redemption in all its fullness and richness. We could praise Him for the role that He will play as laid out in Scripture in the final consummation. We could praise Him for all of that.

I want us particularly to focus down, if we can, on our own lives as believers, and remember it was the Holy Spirit who convicted us of righteousness of sin and judgment. It was the Holy Spirit who regenerated us, who gave us life in the middle of our deadness. It was the Holy Spirit who was engaged in our justification. It is the Holy Spirit who has taken up permanent residence in us. It is the Holy Spirit who places us into the body of Christ in that baptizing work. It is the Holy Spirit who gifts

us, enabling us to minister to the body for its edification. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us.

And then last time we focused on the work that the Spirit does that we call sanctification by which the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the moral character of Christ. We talked about the fact that Jesus Christ is the model of what a perfect Spirit-controlled man is. He therefore is a model to which we look and in looking to Him, the Holy Spirit conforms us into His own likeness, moving us from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next. This is the work of the Holy Spirit that we call sanctification. And in Romans 8 we noted in particular that in verse 29 it says that we are being conformed to the *aikon* of His Son, the moral character of His Son so that His Son would be the preeminent one among a redeemed humanity, all of whom both reflect His glory and at the same time give Him all the glory. We talked about the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

There is a more wondrous work than that. If those things can even be spoken of in comparative terms. There is a work of the Holy Spirit for which I am especially thankful. Maybe there can be some argument on this point but there is a work of the Holy Spirit that is the most precious work, that is the most wonderful work, that is the most comforting work, that is the most assuring work, that is the most heart-settling work, that is the most joyous work, that is the source of my greatest hope in life, it is that work of the Holy Spirit by which He secures us to our final and eternal glory. I say that is the greatest work because if He doesn't do that, then He has to constantly go back and repeat all the rest.

The work of the Holy Spirit that is that greatest and most wondrous and most gracious and most joyous is that He secures us to eternal glory. I want to read about it in Romans 8 starting at verse 26. "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness for we don't know to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts know what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. And these whom He predestined, He also called. And these whom He called He also justified. And these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 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? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died. Yes, rather, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? 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. But in all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, no 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." Case closed!

In the Holy Spirit Movement, the Holiness Movement as it's called, Pentecostal Charismatic Movement, one of the doctrines that they overtly and aggressively deny is the doctrine of the security of the believer. And thus they rob the Holy Spirit of this most majestic aspect, most wondrous facet of His glorious work.

In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3, there is a benediction. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you…listen to this…who are protected by the power of God." And the power of God is the Holy Spirit. He is the blast of God, the energy of God, the *Ruach*. We are protected to our eternal inheritance by the Spirit of God.

In John 6 Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and whoever comes to Me, I will not turn away. And whoever comes to Me, I will receive and I have lost none of them, but raised him up at the last day." Nobody falls through the cracks. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13, "In Him you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance."

The Holy Spirit came into your life at the time of your salvation, as a down payment, as an engagement ring, the *arrabon*, the pledge, the guarantee, the seal of your inheritance. In Paul's language to the Philippians, "He who began a good work in you will…what?...perfect it."

As Paul wraps up his first letter to the Thessalonians, he says a lot of things rather rapid fire. But listen to what he says at the very last part of chapter 5, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's prayer is that you would be preserved complete to the coming of Christ. And then he says this, "Faithful is He who calls you and He also will bring it to pass."

And the wonderful little epistle of Jude concludes with this hopeful and glorious benediction, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever, Amen." He is able to make you stand.

This is the best news ever from heaven to us, that our salvation is forever. Let me tell you something, if you could lose your salvation, you would. You would. If there was any way you could lose your salvation, you would lose it. If I could lose my salvation, I would lose it. I couldn't get it on my own to start with, I can't keep it on my own, I would lose it and I couldn't get it back. If it depends on us, we're all damned because I'm still in a corrupt and fallen condition. And guess what? I don't do the things I

want to do and I do the things I don't want to do and I have attached to me a wretchedness that I can't get rid of. I'm under the weight of sin. The curse of God and corruption and decay and death is in me. And if I'm going to make it to final glory, I'm going to have to make it on a power that's outside of me. We are secured to final glory by the wonderful working of the Holy Spirit.

Yes He frees us from sin and death in regenerating us. Yes He enables us to obey God's law, we saw that earlier in Romans 8. Yes He changes our nature. Yes He empowers us to mortify sin and overcome temptation. Yes He confirms our adoption. But the most glorious of all things is He guarantees our eternal glory.

One of the leaders of the Charismatic Movement wrote this, "The greatest deception which has been devised by Satan…quote…is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved. Nothing could be further from the truth." That is the greatest deception from Satan? That dishonors the purpose of God, the provision of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't come from Scripture and severely…severely injures any capacity to truly worship God for the work of redemption.

So let's look at Romans 8:26 to 39, and this is an exposition. Now in honor of Steve Lawson, cause I was listening to him today, and Phil Johnson, I dedicate this sermon to Steve Lawson and Phil Johnson. I dedicate it to Phil Johnson because I spent ten minutes figuring out an outline. I dedicate it to Steve Lawson because I came up with a Trinitarian outline after listening to you today. So am I in the group?

ALL: You're in.

JOHN: Okay. Do I get a membership card? I want to talk about the means of our security, the motive of our security and the measure of our security…does that work? Okay, Amen. You're Amen and I haven't even made the point. You just like the homiletics. How about this? The means is the Spirit's intercession. The motive is the Father's intention. And the measure is the Son's…are you ready for this one?...innovation. You know what innovation is? Something brand new. It's not bad. Think I can do it again? Okay.

All right, let's talk about the means of our security, the Spirit's intercession. This is one of the most gripping portions of the book of Romans in my mind. There's so much hope here and so much joy here, this thing just absolutely thrills me.

Verses 26 and 27, "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness for we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Sometimes I think verse 26 must bleed because it's absorbed so many wounds from Charismatics who think this is advocating speaking in tongues. Look at this verse. It starts out, "In the same way…" In the same way…the same way as what? What has gone before. What's come before is groaning…groaning. What is this groaning? Verse 19, "It is the anxious longing of the creation waiting eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." The creation is subjected to futility. It exists in hope of something better than its current cursed condition. Verse 22, "The whole creation groans." Creation itself is personified as if it is a person in agony, wanting to be what it was originally intended to be and falling far short. It's a painful experience for the creation itself. It's like the…like the pain of childbirth. It's that agony. It's that terrible agony of trying to bring something forth that never ever comes. The whole creation groans and agonizes.

Not only this, verse 23, "We ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, we've tasted the Spirit." As Peter says, "We've tasted the Lord that He's good. We want more, don't we? We want more. We groan, we groan like Romans 7, we groan with this body of sin attached. We groan within ourselves. And what are we waiting for? The adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. We've had the internal work of God on us, we are new creations. But we're incarcerated in unredeemed human corruption and it's debilitating and discouraging.

I don't know about you, when I think about heaven…and I can…I'm happy for transparent gold streets, I'm happy for jeweled gates, and pearls, and all that. But what appeals to me most about heaven is the absence of sin, not in the world around me but in me. And the longer you live, the more weary of it you get. We all groan. Creation groans for something that we haven't yet realized. And it's painful, it's an agonizing thing. Sometimes our hearts are broken and we repent with tears and we're sick of our sin and weary of our corruption and tired of the besetting sins that come back and come back and come back and come back. We want something better and we long for heaven. And you heard John sing it tonight and our hearts were lifted, weren't they? The New Jerusalem. In the same way the Spirit groans, with groanings too deep for words.

Wow! The Holy Spirit possesses a kind of agony, pain, suffering. We know God can weep, cause Jesus wept. We know God can weep because Jeremiah wept the tears of God. But do you ever think of the agony of the Holy Spirit as He lives in you and groans over the condition that He has to deal with as He waits for the perfection that has not yet come? If you groan, it matters to you. If you groan, it matters to you. The Holy Spirit is seen in an agonizing struggle to overcome the debilitating weakness that is in every believer in whom He lives. He helps our weakness. We don't know how to pray as we should. What does that supposed to mean? That doesn't mean you don't know how to put a prayer list together. That doesn't mean you don't know how to tell the Lord what's on your heart, of course you do. It doesn't mean that you don't know to pray against temptation, you've been taught, "Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil."

What it means is even at your best, when you go before God and you pour out your heart, you don't have enough knowledge or enough power to protect yourself. There's a certain element of ignorance in this. You don't know what to pray against because you don't even know what's happening in the supernatural or the spiritual world. It's simply a broad way to say we don't know how to protect ourselves. Yes we can say, "Lead me not into temptation, deliver me from evil." But it's a pretty simple prayer and we need to pray it but it's not enough. We couldn't even tap into the powers of heaven to protect ourselves if we were left on our own. So if you believe some kind of theology that says you can keep yourself saved, you're going to have to reexamine that verse one more time cause the Holy Spirit is in your life in a condition of groaning and moaning and agonizing over the reality that He is keeping you to eternal glory and it is a continual struggle.

In Luke, Jesus came to Peter and He said, "Satan desires to have you to sift you like wheat." If I were Peter I'd have said, "Well You told Him no, right? You said go away and leave him alone." The guy is so weak, if you do anything to him he's going to collapse in a heap. No, Jesus said, "I told him to go for it." But then Jesus said to Peter, "But I've prayed for you that your faith fail not."

You have two intercessors. You have the Holy Spirit interceding for you inside of you, against your…against the impulses and the strength of your own corruption. And you have the Son of God at the right hand of the Father interceding for you against every accusation brought against you. It takes two full-time intercessors to secure you to glory. This doesn't just happen because God said it would happen, it happens because the Son is your defender before the Father, and the spirit is your internal defender against the enemy of your soul. It take two members of the Trinity to get us to glory. That's why I say, if I could lose my salvation, I would. The Spirit intercedes, *huperentunchano* means to rescue someone who has no hope, it means to rescue someone who has no resources. That's what the Holy Spirit does. We don't have the strength, we're too weak. We don't even know how to pray the way we would need to pray. We don't even know how to tap the divine resources at the best level. So the Spirit Himself, I love that *autou*, I love that Spirit Himself, Spirit Himself. He doesn't delegate this, this isn't a committee operation. He doesn't delegate it to somebody else, to angels, the Spirit Himself in you is constantly interceding for you with groanings too deep for words. Please…that is not people speaking tongues. That's the Holy Spirit groaning in a communication that is without words.

The Holy Spirit groans and agonizes over your weakness and the struggle with sin as you move toward your eternal glory. And He communicates with the Father in inter-Trinitarian language, inter-Trinitarian communication, inter-Trinitarian spot but it is thought full of love and compassion and emotion and longing.

If Jesus could say to the unconverted in Jerusalem, "How often I would have gathered you," and weep, how does the Holy Spirit feel about those who are His? So this is a precious insight. And verse 27 says, "He who searches the hearts…who's that?....1 Chronicles 28:9 says, 'The Lord searches

every heart.' Acts 2:4 says, 'Lord, You know everyone's heart.'" The omniscient Father knows what is the mind of the Spirit. So you have the Spirit constantly groaning over the pain, the actual divine pain of those whom He loves and in whom He dwells being not yet perfected. And the Father knows that because the Father is in perfect harmony with that. And the Spirit always intercedes according to the will of God.

This is the first thing that I want you to grasp and that's a feeble effort at explaining it. The means of our security is the Spirit's intercession. This will bring us to glory because it is the Father's will and the Spirit groans for the Father's will to be fulfilled.

I found a source in one of the Pentecostal websites that I read and it said this, "The Spirit is very strong but His seal can be broken. If a person with his own free will has chosen to live life on the darker side, sins can keep you out of heaven. If you can't stay loyal to your spouse, you certainly can't stay loyal to your Lord and you won't be able to stay loyal to Him even when you're in heaven. But like Satan and the angels, you're going to be thrown out. You may make it to heaven if you don't fall into some heavier sins," end quote. That's hopeless. That is hopeless. I couldn't live under that.

Means of our security is the Holy Spirit's intercession. Secondly, the motive for our security, the motive of our security, for our security is the Father's intention. The Father's intention there at the end of verse 27, the Holy Spirit intercedes literally for the saints according to God…according to God. But it certainly means the will of God because that's what's spread out in the subsequent verses, verses 28, 29 and 30. Pick it up at that familiar verse 28.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good," we're talking here not about some kind of intermediate good, we're not talking about good here and now, good next week, good next month, we're talking about ultimate good, final good, eternal good. He causes all things to work together for good. All the way along the line they are good but the ultimate good is what is being emphasized here…to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." When He calls you, He calls you to a purpose. And therefore, when God works He works to fulfill His purpose. The Holy Spirit intercedes according to the will of God. He knows the will of God. He knows the purpose of God and the purpose of God is to bring all His children to glory. And that's what unfolds in verses 29 and 30, "Those whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. And these whom He predestined, He also called and these whom He called He also justified and these whom He justified He also glorified."

If you don't think Calvinism is in the Bible, you missed that verse. And there it is, all in one verse…or two. But the point that is being made here is because of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit in perfect harmony with the divine purpose of God, we are secured to eternal glory. That's the Father's intention. That's the Father's intention. That's His purpose. And we don't want to spend a lot of time

on this because I really want to spend some time on the latter point, but it starts with foreknowledge and foreknowledge is the act of electing. Foreknowledge is the act of choosing. It is predetermining a love relationship. This isn't information, this is establishing a relationship. "My sheep hear My voice and I know them." It doesn't mean He knows who they are, He knows who everybody is. It's talking about an intimate relationship. Cain knew his wife and she bore a son. He didn't know who she was, he had an intimate relationship with her. Mary was pregnant, Joseph had not known her. This is that kind of knowledge. And it's foreknowledge because it's before time, before creation in eternity past. God predetermines to establish a relationship, to have an intimate and eternal knowledge and communion and fellowship and shared life with certain souls. And whomever He chose for that relationship, He predestined to the end of it.

So foreknowledge looks at choosing and predestination looks at the goal of that choosing. It speaks of destiny, *proorizo*. *Orizo* is the word from which we get horizon, it's the line of demarcation. God establishes the line, the horizon, the end. He chooses and at the very moment of choosing, predetermines what He has chosen them to. It's to mark out before.

And then in time He calls them. And whomever He predestined to eternal glory, He called. Every time you see the calling in the epistles of the New Testament, it is an effectual call to salvation, not a broad gospel call. Whomever God establishes a relationship with, an intimate knowledge with, before time began, before the foundation of the world, He determines the horizon, the end. And then in time, He calls them. This cannot be simply a gospel call because whom He called He justified. There's no gap. If you were called, you were justified. This is the effectual call that results in justification. And please note, whomever He justified, He…what?...glorified. There it is…there it is.

By the way, glorified is in the past tense. And the Greeks love to do that when something was being referred to that was so certain that it could be spoken of as if it already happened. I don't see anybody falling through the cracks in there, do you? Means of our security is the Spirit's intercession which is in perfect accord with the motive for our security which is the Father's intention.

And that leads us to the point that I really want to make. All of that was kind of just…like Al said last night…introduction. I want to talk about the measure of our security, the height, and breadth and length and depth. And this is the Son's innovation. You said that today…you were just going to town on who could ever come up in the history of the world with the wisdom that is seen in the work of Christ at the cross, the innovation of God is staggering.

This comes into play here in a section from verse 31 to 39 that I know you love and I know you know and have preached on many times, but let's let our hearts be refreshed in it. It's a section in which Paul does what he likes to do, he creates imaginary objectors. He imagines what the objections are going to be to this. Okay?

Now, there are people who are going to say, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, you can lose your salvation.” In spite of the Spirit’s intercession and in spite of the Father’s intention, you can lose your salvation. In fact, this is said so often, this probably the longest running debate in theology since the Reformation. You can lose your salvation. And so, Paul says, “Okay, let’s take a look at it.” There’s only two possible avenues from which things could come to take away your salvation; persons or circumstances, persons or events. So let’s talk about persons.

Are there any persons who could cause you to lose your salvation? Are there any persons who could reverse verse 1? “There is therefore now no condemnation,” which triggers the whole chapter. Is there somebody who can undo the no condemnation status?

By the way, it brackets the chapter. No condemnation, verse 1, and no condemnation verse 34, and in between the work of the Holy Spirit. So…but, maybe there’s somebody who can undo this whole thing in spite of the Spirit’s agonizing, groaning intercession, in spite of the Father’s eternal intention, maybe somebody can undo this deal.

First we can ask somebody human, maybe a person, a human being. Could a human being do this? So in verse 31 Paul poses his sort of broad question about possible objections, he says, “What then shall we say to these things?” Okay, what are we going to say to this? I know, I’m waiting for the argument. And somewhere between that statement and the next one, if God is for us, who is against us? He’s thinking about people because he uses the word Who. Who?

Can the Judaizers do it? Can the Judaizers go into the church and just get the people so messed up that they all abandon grace and run over to law and circumcision and they all lose their salvation. Can the Judaizers do it? Do they have that kind of power? A little more contemporary. How about the Roman Catholic Church? If you let somebody go to a Roman Catholic Church as a true child of God, can they get you so confused about works and grace that you abandon grace and wonder off and…what about? No, let’s get a little closer. What about people in your family, what about people in your family that you love who are so weary of your interest in Jesus Christ and would like to disconnect you from it? What about that?

What about secular education? What if you have a Christian kid who is truly in Christ and you send him off to the University of Blah-Blah-Blah? And he goes over there and some guy gets in the classroom and just absolutely dissects everything he believes, can he take away his faith? Could he steal it?

What about rock-and-roll culture? Can immoral pop stores of the culture, can they do it? Can they make sex and drugs so attractive? What about a peer group? What about cults? What happens if we get a Mormon President? Wow! Will people start leaving Christianity and turn in to Mormonism? Can

he un-save people? Can the Mormon Church come into the true church and start leading people away from salvation? What about all the false teachers? All the false religions?

What's the answer? "If God is for us…what?...who can be against us?" You'd have to be more powerful than whom? God…yeah, lots of luck. That, by the way, is the conditional particle A of a fulfilled condition and I wish it had been translated this way, "Since God is for us, who can successfully be against us?" And the answer to the question, of course, the rhetorical question is, "There isn't anybody more powerful than God." Don't you love…I…I've camped on this passage so many times in my life, don't you just love the statement in Isaiah 46, "Remember the former things long past, I am God, there is no other. I am God, there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, saying, 'My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'" If God is for us, who can be against us?

Listen to this. I love this Psalm, Psalm 27. "The Lord is my light and my salvation," what's the next line? "Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" God is for us, that's what Romans 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 is about. That's what Romans 8 is about. God is for us. He's for His people. Genesis 15:1, "Don't fear, I'm a shield to you." Numbers 14:9, "The Lord is with us, do not fear." And you remember in Joshua, or in 1 Samuel, rather, the battle is the Lord's. The Lord is for us because that's His intention. And that's His established eternal purpose.

"Well, okay, no people can do it but what about God? He might just get so sick of us that He changes His mind. What about God?

You know, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away? Any verse for any occasion. God gave it, God can take it away. He can change His mind. He…keeping us saved may just be too much trouble, and maybe at some point the Holy Spirit says, "Look, I give, I'm done groaning for this one." Verse 32 answers that. "He who didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" That is a classic rabbinic argument from the greater to the lesser. "If He gave His best gift, His own Son, when we were His enemies, will not He give the lesser gifts now that we are His children?" That's the argument from the greater to the lesser. "If He didn't spare His own Son when we hated Him and were enemies, but delivered Him…and that's a legal term, handing somebody over for execution, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also along with Him give us all things we need?" In other words, if we when we were His enemies He would give His best gift to save us, now that we're His children, will He give us lesser things to keep us?

Go back to Romans 5 and just remind yourself, verse…well, verse 6, "While we were still hopeless, Christ died for the…what?...ungodly, hardly would one die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than having now been justified by His blood,

we'll be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

In other words, if His death saved us when we were enemies, will not His life keep us now that we're children? Argument from the greater to the lesser. God so loved that He gave to His enemies, His own Son.

Well, somebody says, "Okay, okay, Satan…what about Satan? Can Satan move in on us?" We had an influx of people come to our church, a large group, I met them in the choir room, a group from another church. I said, "Why are you here?" Some of them were families of staff members in a Charismatic Church, I said, "Why are you here?" And the spokesman said, "Because we can no longer live under the sovereignty of Satan. We cannot live with heart palpitations, fear of the death of our children in their cribs and beds at night. Demons are going to come in and kill them. We can't lie with the fact that Satan may steal our salvation, our souls. We cannot live under the sovereignty of Satan."

Can Satan do it? Can we fall out of God's power? Out of God's hands? Out of God's care? Well, verse 33 answers that because Satan is the accuser of the brethren, is he not? "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Who does that all the time? Who stands before the throne of God at all times, accusing the brethren? Satan. The book of revelation says that's what he does. He did it with Job, right? When he went before the throne of God and he just went after Job, you know, you see the same kind of thing, as Satan accuses the high priest. That's his…that's what he does. He comes after Peter. Can Satan dislodge us? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? Can Satan go before the throne of God as the accuser of the brethren and rattle off a litany of charges against us like the one in Zachariah 3 or like Job chapter 1. This is what he does, Revelation 12:10 says. Can he do it successfully? Can he damn us? *Katakrino?*

No, because God is the one who…what?...who justifies. Literally, the one justifying, God is the one justifying. God alone condemns and in our behalf, God has justified us. He has declared us righteous in Christ. He can't, at the same time, make us guilty. And there is no higher judge. And that's His point. Where's Satan going to lay the accusation? God wrote the Law, God enforced the Law, God upholds the Law and God legally justified us by imputing to us the righteousness of Christ and our sins to Christ in His death. That is why John Wesley said, whose hymns have a better theology than he did, "Bold shall I stand in that great day, for who ought to my charge shall lay? Fully through Thee absolved I am, from sin and fear, from guilt and harm." Please notice, who will bring a charge against God's elect…God's elect. There it is again, election…election. It takes us all the way back to verse 29 for knowledge, predestination.

As Marcus Lone(??) said, "Those who stand at the bar accused are not outlaws, but God's elect." Will you say okay? There's only one other possibility, if it's not persons and if it's not God, and if it's not Satan, maybe Christ…maybe Christ. Maybe we disappoint Him. He brought us in, He could throw us

out. Really? Verse 34, “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, is He who died, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Christ, He’s not going to condemn us, a four-fold protection. He died for us. What is more, He rose for us. What is more, He is at the right hand of God in our defense. And there He intercedes for us. There’s no possibility that Christ would ever turn against us. That’s kind of the high point of this section about Christ and that’s why I called it the measure of our security is that no matter what comes against us, it is the innovation of Christ as our Redeemer, the one who dies, the one who pays the penalty for our sin, all that the gospel contains and then this incredibly wonderful work of intercession at the right hand of God. We know from the book of Hebrews that He ever lives to make intercession for us. He keeps on interceding for us. So again you have the Holy Spirit in you and you have the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, all interceding for you.

You say, “Well wait a minute. There’s one other possibility. It’s not going to be other people, it’s not going to be God, it’s not going to be Satan, it’s not going to be Christ. And Paul knows it has to be answered. What about me? What if I just turn away? What if I defect? What if I sin the big sins? What if I decide not to believe? Lose my faith?

Well there would have to be some circumstance to make that happen, wouldn’t there be? What would make that happen? And so you start in verse 35 with a litany of questions that drive down that pathway. Would it be…what would it be that would separate us from the love of Christ? What would it be that would literally disconnect us from His love for us and our love for Him? Both could be in that same phrase. What would it be? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, or how about death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing? What? Here you’re not talking about persons, you’re talking about events and circumstances that come in to the believer’s life. What if we fail? What if it gets too tough? What if it’s just hard? What if the constraints and issues and vicissitudes of life literally overwhelm us?

So Paul, to make his point, starts out there in verse 35 asking, “Who will separate us,” or in this case, “What will separate us from the love of Christ?” And he poses seven sort of personified realities. Let’s try Tribulation, *thlipsis,* pressure, affliction. This has to do with outward difficulty. Could be accusation, could be rejection, it could be physical harm. In fact, the English word Tribulation comes from a Latin word which means a flailing…a wooden leather instrument for beating chaff out of wheat. What if life just starts flailing us? Could that do it?

What about stress? That’s inward difficulty. *Thlipsis* is outward, distress is inward, *stenochoria*, it has the idea of narrow, hemmed in, no way out. This is when everything goes wrong and it starts to affect the inside, inward difficulty, personal agonies, personal disappointments. Could that do it? And then what about persecution? What about abuse because of Christ? What about…now it starts to mount, first you have some external pressure, and these are sequential, and then that external pressure

begins to cramp the inside. And what we suffer on the outside eventually comes inside, doesn't it? And then it begins to become anxiety and fear and doubt and questioning. And then it gets ramped up because what was just trouble, and internal anxiety, becomes persecution, and now could it be that if we get into a situation where, you know, we begin to suffer at the hands of Christ rejecters and it gets even worse and then comes famine, *limos* in the Greek. We don't have any food, we're deprived. Now the scene is escalating. Not only do we not have any food, but we don't have any clothes, we're cold and we're destitute and then comes the word peril which means we are in imminent danger exposed to treachery and then the sword, *machaira*, that just cuts our head off. That's about as bad as it can get, the worst.

Along the way at some point, do we bail out? By the way, that wasn't theory to Paul. Those are all personal experiences, every single one of those. He experienced every one. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23 to 29. Not just Paul, but you read a lot about that at the end of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Can that do it?

The worst that life can possibly bring, and it can come, that's why he quotes in verse 36 from Psalm 44:22, an old plea for God to deliver Israel in the midst of its distress. I mean, it can get bad. It can get hard being a Christian. Does that do it?

One of the treasures I have among many is an original edition of Foxes Book of Martyrs. Do you remember the year that it was written? Fifteen something…yeah. There's three volumes and each is about this big and I have the original big, big volumes. This is a testimony from history that all of the stuff that I just read you cannot destroy saving faith. Those are the testimonies, hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of testimonies that those things do not separate us from the love of Christ, but rather that verse 37 is true, "In all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Why? Because we hold on? No, because He holds on. We are *hupernikao*, super conquerors.

In fact, get this, trials work for our good. They work for our good because we are perfected by them, James 1. They work for our good because our faith stands the test of trials. And then we have the assurance of faith that comes through that confidence.

Paul has nothing left to say except the two most magnificent verses of which he closes the chapter. "I am convinced." Are you? Are you convinced about this wondrous work of the Holy Spirit, securing you to eternal glory? I'm convinced, a confident declaration. And here again is the measure of the provision of Christ. He sweeps through all the extremities he can think of…death, life, angels, principalities, holy angels, demonic beings, things present, things to come, powers. I mean, that's it. Death, the greatest enemy; life with all its dangers and difficulties; angels, the good angels, principalities, the evil fallen angels, things present, something here and now, things to come, something in the future; powers which means supernatural miracle kind of powers, that's the use of

that word in its plural in the New Testament almost always means miracles; something miraculous; something supernatural; height which is a term which was used to describe a star at zenith, something way out on the outer edge of the universe and depth, *bathos*, that's the time…that identifies the star at its lowest point of orbit; from one end of the universe to the other and all the possible issues of life, can any of those, or all of those individually or collectively separate us from the love of Christ? No, "I am convinced that none of those things will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

You say, "Yeah, but I know a guy in our church….he…he came a lot and he taught a Sunday-school class and he left and he denies the faith." Listen to 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us but they were not really of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But they went so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

If you're a true believer, nothing can separate you because of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Is this not the THE most precious of all the ministries of the Holy Spirit, securing our eternal glory against everything in the entire universe, every person and every circumstance? I'm convinced and I give the Holy Spirit the worship that He is due for that. Jeremiah said it in Jeremiah 33, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Our Father, we thank You for the Word which is so profoundly rich and we have just touched the edges, feel like the little boy on the shore of a great vast ocean who scoops up a little bucket…that's all we can do in our little bucket brains is hold on to some frail and inadequate thoughts about the vastness and the greatness of these divine economies. We're so thankful that the salvation You gave us when we didn't deserve it will reach its final intended end and one day we will see Christ and be like Him.

Lord, Jesus Christ, we thank You together, we thank You, we thank You for Your work on our behalf, Your work on the cross and the resurrection, Your ongoing work of defending us against the accuser.

We thank You, blessed Holy Spirit, for continuing to groan within us, to agonize over our weakness, and to bring us safely to glory. And we know that Scripture says that it was the Spirit who raised Jesus, who will raise us also. This will be Your final work on our behalf, to raise us to glory. And all whom You have regenerated and are sanctifying and are securing You will raise. And we give You honor for that.

Father, for Your plan, Christ for Your provision, Holy Spirit for Your power, we praise You. We worship You. Amen.

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