

Safe! For Good – Rom 8:31-39

Niles Summer '04; HBC-GE 6/27/04

Re-cap series so far – Safe! From a life of bondage; Safe! By grace

This morning step out of the book of Titus into Rom 8 to find that we are secure in God's love for us – Safe! For good

We've all had doubts/questions about that in our lives

Questions like — Can I be sure of God's love for me?

Will he ever change his mind about me? Or leave me and forsake me?

My intention this morning is that you will know, be assured of, and live confidently in the truth that as a genuine follower of Jesus Christ –

God loves you; He will never stop loving you

There's nothing that anyone or any thing can do to change that

Read Romans 8:31-39

Paul has been developing and explaining the gospel for 8 chapters

He's been talking about the sin that separates us, HS who helps us, God who justifies us,

Christ who died for us, Hope that fuels us

He indicates he's ready to draw some conclusions with the question – *What then shall we say to these things?* (31)

Then presents his conclusions in a unique format – rhetorical question/answer format, as if he's responding to or anticipating our doubts, concerns, questions

Think of it this way . . .

Imagine yourself having just walked into someone's home, and you over hear a conversation between a mom and her teenage son

And the first statement you hear from the mom is:

“If *you* don't clean your room, who will? (Rhetorical question)

Followed by:

“After all, it's *your* room!” (Answer)

What you didn't hear, but naturally assume, is that the son said something like:

“What if I *can't* clean my room?”

Paul uses that same approach in this passage — he asks a rhetorical question followed by an answer, as if he's responding to a silent concern we might have

The first question or doubt that he addresses concerning our salvation, is . . .

1. What if my enemies are too strong? (v31-32)

I've hurt a lot of people – influential people, angry people, bitter people

People too strong in number and too strong in strength

If they were to oppose me or persecute me, I wouldn't have a chance

Same is true of Satan and his demonic throng –

They're too strong in number/strength – and I'm sure would love to have a crack at me I mean, the Bible says that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, doesn't it?

What if he goes after *me*? What if he targets *me*?

Between Satan and the people I've wronged – they're too strong

I don't think I can live for Christ with that kind of pressure

Paul says, so what if your enemies are formidable . . .

• GOD is on your side

V31b — *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

If the God of the universe, the God who set the stars in place, the God who created everything you see

The God who designed the intricacies of your body in its delicate balance and amazing resilience; If the God who commands even the storms and all of nature

If the all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present God is for you, who can harm you?

Who has a chance of opposing you?

Not only will he *protect* you, but he will also *provide* for you

This same God will *continue* to give everything you need

32 – *He who did not . . . graciously give us all things?*

If he already gave you his best – the life of his Son . . .

What makes you think he's going stop there?

He will continue to give you everything you need for life and godliness (1 Pet 1:3)

He's not going to drop you

That would be like you sacrificing a large amount of money and time to adopt a child, and then finally bringing that child home to neglect them and leave them to fend for themselves

No way! You're going to lavish that child with everything you can possibly give them for their own good

How much more is that true of God — we are his children, adopted into his family

If he gave us Jesus, he's certainly not going to withhold anything lesser to meet our needs and further his glory

You may wonder if your enemies are too strong

But God says, “If I'm for you, who stands a chance of coming against you?”

Nobody can withstand his mighty power; Nobody can prevent his gracious provision

The second question or doubt that Paul seems to be responding to, is . . .

2. What if my sins are too many? (v33)

Not only do I have a lot of enemies, but I've done a lot of wrong things

What if my accusers have too much on me?

What if somebody brings up all my past sins?

You have *no* idea the terrible things I've done

I've stolen, cheated, lusted, envied, hated, lied, and coveted

I've been angry, divisive, drunk, and abusive

That's just this past *month*!

What if my *spiritual rap sheet* is just too long and I'm not good enough to be saved?

Not good enough to receive eternal life?

About 6 years ago I was in one of the Illinois state penitentiaries (just visiting), to

interview a candidate for the post-prison ministry I was working with

Meeting with the case worker responsible for his release and probation

At one point in the conversation, he ask me to hand him this particular inmate's file

“It's right behind you on the filing cabinet”

Turned around and was looking for a few papers held together with a paper clip or something, but I didn't see it

I don't see it – It's right there – You mean this?!

I picked up one of those accordion-type file holders almost 2 inches thick (thicker than a ream of paper)

This is his rap sheet? – Pretty much; I was stunned

But I dare say even at 2 inches thick, that *criminal* rap sheet pales in comparison to any one of our *spiritual* rap sheets that would list our sins

What if they're too many?

Paul responds to our question by asking . . .

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? (33)

Who's going to step up and present your spiritual rap sheet before God?

The implied answer to the rhetorical question is nobody!

Nobody would dare bring a charge against one of God's own – one of his *elect*

One of his people; One of his children

That would be like tattling to the mafia boss about his favorite nephew Vinny

You just don't do that and live

Not only that, but . . .

• **GOD is your judge**

It is God who justifies – It is Almighty God who is your judge and declares you righteous

It's not up for a debate, argument, or appeal; He's not looking for anyone's input

There is no higher court; What he says is final

The judgment has been handed down and the verdict is in – you're innocent

It is God who justifies; He alone is your judge, and does so perfectly

He's never messed up a case; He never misjudged someone's heart

Not only that, but there's no sin list too long for his declaration of righteousness

No rap sheet that exceeds Christ's capacity to forgive you

You're one of his own, and you can be secure in the fact that nobody can bring a charge that trumps his verdict

Your sins are not too many and your enemies are not too strong

The third question that Paul seems to be responding to, is . . .

3. What if my guilt is too much? (v34)

Some of you may have thought at various times in your life that you deserve just the opposite of what God promises

That you don't deserve this wonderful salvation he gave you, because of your rebellion on and off during your life

You feel so unworthy and so much guilt sometimes – despite the fact that you've confessed your sin to the Lord

That's condemning guilt, and it will plague you, nag you, oppress you if miss this truth

I'm not talking about *conviction*— conviction comes from the Holy Spirit and is intended to bring you to godly sorrow and repentance for your sin; That's good

Talking about *condemnation* – about guilt that makes you feel like a worm, like you deserve to live/die in the gutter of life, even though already come clean before God

That's condemnation, condemning guilt

If describes you, God wants you to be free from that

That's why Paul responds with the rhetorical question – *Who is to condemn?* (34)

In light of the fact that . . .

Christ Jesus (God in the flesh) *is the one who died* for you . . .

Who's going to say that *his* death is not enough to cover your guilt?

Christ rose again, promising to do the same for you and obviously capable of doing so

Who's going to say his resurrection is not sufficient to ensure your life?

In light of the price already paid by Christ, and his resurrection on your behalf, *who's to say* that you deserve death, and not life?

The obvious and implied answer is nobody!

Not only that, but . . .

• **CHRIST is your advocate**

He has God's ear – he's *at the right hand of God* the Father; the place of prominence and dignity and power

Who's going to displace *him* in order to make a claim of condemnation and guilt against you?

He continues to look out for you – *interceding* for you

Who's going to argue against his counsel? Who's going to oppose his thoughts?

He ensures that an accusation of guilt/condemnation will *never* reach the Father's ears

Christ is your advocate; Through faith and repentance in him, your guilt is relieved; No condemnation remains

Rom 8:1 makes that clear – *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

There's nothing to fear – no guilt, no condemnation, nothing; Christ is your advocate

Your sins are not too many, your enemies are not too strong, and your guilt is not too much to receive God's awesome salvation

The fourth and final question that Paul seems to be responding to, is . . .

4. What if my suffering is too great? (v35-37)

We all go through pain and suffering in life – some more than others

Some is temporary, some is chronic – but we all suffer

Maybe your finances are strained and you wonder if God even knows

You lost a loved one to a premature death, and wonder where God is in all of that

Your marriage is a wreck and you feel everything *but* God's love

Your body is broken, ravaged by disease; and you wonder if God even cares any more

Often times in situations like these, the question on our minds is – Are you still there?

What if my suffering is too great? What if he can't break through?

What if something's wrong?

Paul answers it once again with a rhetorical question –

35—*Who* [or what] *shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Will tribulations do it? (trying times in general)

What about distress (situations of desperation)

Persecution (suffering due to your loyalty to Christ)

Famine and nakedness (critical needs resulting from disaster or poverty)

Danger (the risk of injury), and Sword (the reality of death)

Will *any* of these things separate us from the love of Christ?

If they do, it's a problem because suffering like this has been going on among God's people for thousands of years

That's why he cites Ps 44:22 (36) – he's pointing out that suffering and hardship of the *worst* kind is nothing new for God's people

But Jesus says in Jn 16:33 – *In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

That's why Paul can so confidently say in v37 –

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Because *Christ* has overcome the world and all that it throws at us, we can overcome the world and everything it throws at us – every obstacle, every hardship, every suffering

Not because we're operating in our own strength, but because *his* love carries us – it's *through him who loved us* that we are more than conquerors

It's like the 747 that carries us through the storms of flight

Though we may experience turbulence along the way – with bumps, spills, and even sickness . . .

We overcome, we are more than conquerors – because the airplane, like the love of Christ, carries us safely home

I think we're experiencing some increased hardship/tribulation in our church these days

1. We're giving sacrificially – naturally creates hardship sometimes

2. We're encroaching on the gates of hell as God grows our church

Satan hates it and will try to tempt you to give up in any way he can

The more you resist him, the more he has to flee, and the more he hates it

3. We're confessing sin and cleaning up our lives

That often requires short-term pain for those involved

We're experiencing tribulation and distress because we're advancing the kingdom of God, not because God has forsaken us

Not because people are walking *away* from Christ, but because people are coming to Christ and drawing near to Christ, and their lives are being changed

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us because . . .

• **NOTHING can separate you from the love of God (v38-39)**

Read vs 38-39

There's no suffering too great; No trial too big; No obstacle too high – that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

I am sure — I have *become* sure and convinced, and *I remain* sure and convinced — that none of these things will separate us from God's love; That . . .

Neither death nor life — pretty all-inclusive; could have stopped right there, but continues on with a game of biblical pile-on

Nor angels nor rulers — neither the angelic powers of heaven nor the demonic powers of hell can separate you from the love of God

He's not saying that God's angels would ever do so, he's casting the widest net possible to say that not even the unseen world can infringe on God's love for you

Nor things present nor things to come — circumstances now or in the future

Nor powers — neither powers of darkness nor powers of man

Nor height nor depth — distance is inconsequential

Nor anything else in all creation — this one is for all you nitpickers out there who think that you've found something outside of his list; or that your situation is somehow beyond the scope of God's love

NOTHING will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The love of God as shown to us and given to us in Christ alone

No enemy, no sin, no guilt, no obstacle, no nothing – will ever be too strong, too many, too much, or too great, to keep you from the love of God

Summary

If you've given your life to Christ – repented of your sins and trusted him to save you

If your relationship with him is the most treasured thing in the whole world . . .

You're Safe! For Good

It doesn't matter . . .

Who your enemies are, or how strong you think they might be

God is more than capable of dealing with them

How much you've sinned or the things you've done

God's declaration of righteousness is more than sufficient to deal with it

How overwhelming your guilt is and the punishment you think you deserve

God's sacrifice of his Son is more than enough to satisfy the condemnation

What kind of hardship or suffering you're going through

God's love is more than able to hold you securely in his grip

Close

This isn't the whole story

Take a break from our Safe! series next week for Mother's Day and look at Jesus' view and treatment of women

Then on May 21st we'll address some of the issues surrounding the DiVinci Code with the release of the movie that weekend

Graduation Sunday – shorter service

3 weeks from now on the 28th we'll come back to this series with part 2 of this message

Safe! From losing my salvation – a study of Heb 6

Answer the questions – Can I lose my salvation? How can I be sure?