**Since God is For Us**

**Romans 8:31-32 (ESV)**

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

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Well, we’re so grateful that we have a hope and a future. We’re going to talk about that more today as we consider Romans 8. And I’m going to begin with verse 28, that great promise, because everything that flows I think, flows from that sort of hinge. It’s a promise from which all the rest of Romans 8 then flows to prove the truthfulness of that promise that God gives to us in Romans 8:28.

***28*** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* ***29*** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* ***31*** *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ***32*** *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

May God encourage us through His Word today!

What a great passage! This is sort of a pinnacle of a book that stands out like a shining diamond in the midst of this mountain of diamonds that is the Bible. And this chapter stands as sort of the shining point of this letter to the church at Rome. And then these verses stand at the most brilliant, bright, amazing truths that I think are shared in all Scripture. So it’s our blessing this week and the next two weeks just to think about these verses in Romans 8:31-39 together. God gives us these five questions that really secure us and encourage us in our life with Him. We know that we are standing in front of truths that are too wonderful for us to comprehend, and yet God would have us comprehend a bit more than we do.

I love my dad for many reasons. He’s in heaven now, but I still love him and I look forward to that future day of seeing him again. One of the reasons that I greatly appreciated my dad while he walked this earth was his happy and sometimes effusive sense of humor. His humble joy allowed him to frequently tell stories about himself that didn’t paint himself as the hero. So one story my dad would tell had him as a young married man sitting and chatting about life with his new brothers-in-law and his new father-in-law. And my dad, by this time, had learned to be on guard with my mom’s brothers because they loved to play practical jokes. They loved to poke fun in some teasing way toward him. And in the course of this conversation, my uncle started talking about some guy they were calling “Fermi.” Now my dad had not kept current on the nuclear science news of the day, so he didn’t recognize that they were talking about Italian physicist Enrico Fermi who created the world’s first nuclear reactor in the 1940’s.

As they continued talking about this guy named Fermi, my dad thought for certain that they were setting him up for some sort of trap. And finally he interrupted them laughing. And he said, “Guys, guys! I’m not going to fall for it this time. I know what you guys are all about. You want me to ask the question, ‘Who’s Fermi?’ and then you’re going to respond, ‘Well, Bob, we’re all ‘fer ya.’” Well, my uncles didn’t let my dad forget that story. And my dad, up to his dying day, remembered who Enrico Fermi was.

Today, as we open up our Bible’s to Romans chapter 8, our attention is particularly on verses 31-32. God wants us to ask the question, “Who’s Fermi?” God wants us to ask that question so that He can answer it to our souls. Beloved, if you are a child of God through faith in Jesus, God grabs hold of our shoulders, looks at us in the eye and He says, “I am fer ya.” No truth could more powerfully secure us in His love today, tomorrow and forever, than the truth that God is for us when we are in Jesus. Because God chose to set His love upon His children in eternity past, we who are His children know for certain that our future is one of unending joy and glory in God. That’s the message of these two verses, and really, of this whole paragraph. In short, God is saying to us, “Rest securely, children. I will love you forever and ever, Amen!”

Last week we set our attention upon Romans 8:28-30. And there, God revealed to us five saving actions that He takes to rescue us from the sentence of condemnation and from the state of joylessness. So in Romans 8:31-39, God now is going to ask five securing questions that help us to live in the confidence of God’s love on our behalf. You see, the truth is, if our eternal salvation depended in the smallest part upon our efforts, we could never rest safe. Our efforts are always feeble and failing. We would always have reason to fear whether we would make it to heaven.

Imagine for a moment that Peoria decided to build a new bridge across the Illinois River. They employed the best architects and the best construction firm to build this bridge. And they contracted to build 3305 feet of bridge. However the bridge needed 3310 feet of bridge. They didn’t have the money to build that extra five feet. And so, they asked a classroom of Kindergartners to volunteer their services to design five feet of bridge and then to come out and construct it. Let me ask you: Would you be confident in a bridge like that? Would you be the first one to be willing to drive your car across it? No, you would not. Because while 99.8% of that bridge is absolutely firm, that less than .2% that is weak, is the point at which that bridge will collapse. And so it is with anyone who says, “God saved me for the most part. But here’s my part. Here’s what I contribute to my salvation.” One could never be secure standing on a bridge built like that. We are the Kindergartners. We are unable, unknowledgeable, lacking the strength, lacking the understanding to be able to secure salvation in any part. Salvation is God’s work and God’s alone.

So let’s review these saving actions because that’s the base upon which these five securing questions are rooted. So let’s review. In verses 29-30 of Romans 8 we see these five saving actions of God that we discussed last week.

***29*** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

In each of these actions, God acts independently of man. We have no part in any one of these five actions. And He acts sovereignly to rescue His own sons and daughters from a life of misery, a life where we would not be able to see Him or enjoy Him, or ever become like Him.

Action #1: God foreknew us.

God’s foreknowledge simply means that God set His personal, infinite love upon His children before we were born. Isn’t that an amazing action of God?

Action #2: God predestined us.

“Predestination” simply means that in eternity past, God secured for us the experience of being happy in God’s love forever. So the end has already been secured for us as God predestined us to that state.

Action #3: God called us.

God’s calling means that God opens the eyes and hearts of sinners in such a way that we see His goodness and we rejoice to come to Him in faith. So our will becomes engaged. God does not bring us kicking and screaming toward Him. Rather, He opens our eyes so we say, “Of course I’m going to be drawn to God when I understand that He is that good and that great and that wonderful.” God called us.

Action #4: God justified us.

Justified simply means that God legally declares us righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to our account. We don’t stand before God and not be condemned as a result of anything we have done, but it’s a result of everything that Jesus has done. And He has perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf. He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west through His sacrificial death upon the cross. God justified us in Jesus.

Action #5: God glorified us.

***30*** *…and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

I want to take a few moments because really, I think this last action of God is what is represented really all through these next five questions that are going to be asked in verses 31-39.

God’s glory is simply God’s beauty. It’s His splendor. It’s His joyful nature. It’s His goodness, His wonder, His holiness, His power and majesty. Through sin, we fell short of the glory of God. That’s what Romans 3:23 tells us. As a result of our transgressions, as a result of our rebellion against God, we fell short of experiencing God’s glory, of seeing Him for being the beautiful and wonderful and life-giving God that He is. But through Jesus Christ, the hope of finding our joy complete in God’s glory is now recovered. That’s the gospel. So the experience of being glorified is yet future for all believers who are living in this present age. We read about that already in this very chapter.

**Romans 8:16-18** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

This is future tense. He’s speaking about something that’s going to happen. The inheritance is ours now. It’s secured. But our enjoyment of the inheritance is not yet. This issue of our being glorified is a yet future experience for the believer. How strengthening it is to think of that future day when we will be glorified, and we ought to think of it often. God tells us to fix our hope in Him. Hope is an expectation and anticipation of that future day when we will be glorified, when we will be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We’ll see God perfectly and clearly as the fountain of every blessing.

The definition of being glorified is simply that we have no obstacles to enjoying God as God. Right now, we have all kinds of obstacles because we only see Him through a glass darkly. But then we will see His beauty clearly and we will know absolutely that we need nothing else and that we need no one else to be fully satisfied. All of our satisfaction is met in God alone. And when we experience God in such a joyful way, we then will communicate God’s goodness and greatness with clarity through our lives, through our behaviors, through our attitudes, through our heart.

We will no longer be drawn to find happiness in other gods when we’re glorified. But we’ll find our happiness complete in Him, the One true God. We’ll no longer be tempted to sin because we won’t see sin as offering us anything that is helpful or that is joy-inducing. We will see sin for what it really is. It is death-producing. We will find God to be the fountain of every true pleasure and the source of every happiness. So, to be glorified means that we will constantly enjoy all that God is, with all that we are. What a state that will be!

Now, none of here in this present world have attained or reached that blessed state. We still experience much of the brokenness of our own sin and the sin of this world. We still forget who God really is. We still at times believe that sin will bring us more happiness than God will. We are often blind to God’s goodness. False gods sometimes deceive us into thinking that they have something helpful and healthy to offer us. Glorification is yet a future experience for those who are in Christ Jesus, living in this present age.

But please note that in verse 30, God speaks of our future glory in the past tense. Those whom He justified, He also glorified. So if you say, “I’m justified,” there is another sense in which you can say rightly, “I am glorified.” Now how is that, if that’s not our present experience? It’s because God has already completed that work for us. From God’s perspective, it is already a completed effort, a completed work. This action, like every action of God, is invisible to our physical eyes. That’s why the whole of verses 29-30 must be grasped by faith. Really, all of Scripture must be grasped by faith.

So let me ask you Christian brother and sister: Do you believe this for yourself? Do you believe that God has already acted upon your life to have placed you in the state of being glorified? Do you believe that God set His love upon you in eternity past and secured for you a happiness in Him that will last forever and ever? Do you believe that He drew you to Himself when you were blind and dead in sins, so that you would see Him for the great and good God that He is and come to Him and enjoy Him fully for who He is? Do you believe that He has already acted to bring you to a state of eternal happiness in Him and that your future is secure?

Now again, this is not to say, “Do you believe that’s your experience?” But do you believe that’s already been settled in heaven? I know we don’t see these actions of God, but do we believe them to be true? Do we believe that God has so acted so as to secure that future experience so that it is just as certain as a past experience is certain? Right now, we’re in process. God tells us that this is true regarding our pursuit of God’s glory.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We are seeing God, though through a glass darkly. We are seeing God and beholding His glory. That’s why we come to Jesus It’s because we recognize that God is a treasure. He is something that we need. He is the source of Life. He is the source of our happiness. And so, we see that when God opens our eyes and we behold the glory of the Lord. And as we behold the glory of the Lord through faith, we are transformed into the same image, the image of Jesus Christ, from one degree of glory to another. So we’re all in a process of entering into that glorious state.

So the application we draw from this is, let us turn our eyes upon Jesus moment by moment. Let us look full in His wonderful face. Let’s see Him for who He is. God has a future where we’ll see Him absolutely with 100% clarity, but now we’re at a percentage of that. We can move from whatever percentage we are to a greater percentage. If we’re seeing Him at 10%, we can see Him at 11% by the end of the morning if the Lord is gracious to us, and if we seek Him. If we’re at 20%, we can see Him at 22%. If we’re at 50%, we can see Him at 51%. Now in this world, we’re not ever going to see His glory 100%, but that’s the pursuit. It is that we can always grow. As long as we are alive in this world, we can grow to behold more of the glory of the Lord. And as we see more of the glory of the Lord, guess what? We’re transformed. Sin has less power over us. So let us not content ourselves with a little bit of happiness in seeing God through faith in Jesus. Let’s press deeper in our life in the Holy Spirit so that we will behold more and more of the glory of the Lord.

So these are the five saving actions of God that we discussed last week. Now, let’s concern ourselves with five securing question from God. And we’re going to take these over the next three weeks. We’re only going to look at two this morning. These five questions cause us to think of anything that would be able to defeat God’s resolve to bring us, His people, to glory, to this glorious state. So the apostle presents these questions one after another triumphantly. He is challenging any thought that would make us insecure.

**Question #1: Who could possibly keep us from unending future joy?**

Notice how the Apostle Paul underneath the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this.

***31*** *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

He first says, “What shall we say regarding these things?” In other words, these things are so wonderful, these invisible actions of God are so wonderful that I’m nearly speechless. But I have to say something about them. And so I want to ask some questions that would cause our minds to dwell over these five saving actions of God, and hold them close to our hearts. And here’s the first question. “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

A**s** we think about this question, the context teaches us that the opposition in view is the kind of opposition that would keep us from being conformed to the image of Jesus. So when he talks about who can be against us, he’s talking about who can be against us in our pursuit of God’s glory and our pursuit of this ultimate happy end of being glorified. Who could defeat us so badly that we would be excluded from the family of God and excluded from that future of joy in God? Who could be against us in that way?

I say that because oftentimes, Bible verses are taken out of context and used to apply for secular vainglorious purposes. And that’s really sad. This verse for instance (If God is for us who can be against us?), should not be worn on a sports jersey that we claim as we play a championship basketball game. This verse should not be invoked as we long for a promotion at work. “If God’s for me, who can be against me?” It shouldn’t be invoked as we labor for A’s on a report card or as we find ourselves in a conflict with a neighbor. “I want to win in this conflict against my neighbor.” This verse does not promise that God will fight for us to win victories in the conflicts we experience in our daily pursuits for self-glory. This verse is not to be invoked in order for us to grab hold of creature comforts.God may have us win those conflicts or He may have us lose them. It’s not a guarantee. The guarantee is that God works all things together toward Hisultimate, chief end. And what is that? It is that we would be conformed to the image of Jesus. That’s God’s purpose. That is God’s focus. That is God’s chief intention. It is that we would find eternal joy in Him. God will be faithful to us in all things, by fashioning all things for this work of conforming us into the image of His Son. That’s God’s target. That is the goal that He’s aiming at. And God always hits His target! So the opposition here has to do with spiritual enemies that might keep us from being conformed into the likeness of Jesus or keep us from heaven, keep us from eternal joy.

“If God is for us” is how the question begins. It carries the meaning “Since God is for us.” There’s not a question, because it falls on the heels of these five sovereign, gracious actions of God. There’s no doubt that is implied by the word “if.”God has already shown us that He is for us in the way that He foreknew us, in the way that He predestined us, in the way He called us, in the way He justified us, in the way He glorified us. Child of God, if you are in Jesus Christ, rest assured that God is for you! He’s on your side. Now that we are in Jesus Christ, we will never have God oppose us. What an awful, horrible state to say, “God is against me!” There is no one that we should be more horrified and terrified about than thinking of God as being against us. And yet, in Romans chapter 5, we’re told that that is the state in which we all began. We began as sinners or enemies of God, opposing God. That’s a horrible condition! But God, in His grace, has rescued us from that condition. So we don’t need to fret anymore about whether God is for us or not. God tells His children that He is for us because we are prone to fear that He might not be. That’s the issue! And if we are fearing that God might not be for us at some point in our life, it’s going to shake our strength to continue to pursue His glory.

Our fears particularly grow when God is disciplining us for our sins, when we fail God and God strikes at us like a father strikes in discipline against His own children whom He loves. Such was the case in Isaiah 49. God’s own people had pursued idolatry and numerous sins against the Lord. God sent Assyria against them to punish them, to discipline them. And so here’s what Israel said:

**Isaiah 49:14** But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.”

And here’s God’s reply to that:

**Isaiah 49:15-16** “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

Is it even possible for a woman to forget her own child? His answer is yes. It’s possible for a woman to forget her own child. But God says, “Every time I look at my hands, they are stamped, imprinted and engraved with your name.” Since God is for us, who can be against us?The answer of course is “No one!”

Imagine for a moment that those first five words were not part of the question. Imagine that we were simply asked to ponder, “Who can be against us?” For those of you who study your Bibles closely, you would be able to name at least three key spiritual enemies who stand against us to hinder us from enjoying God and from moving toward future glory. The New Testament names these three as the world, the flesh or indwelling sin, and the devil.

The world represents the collective of mankind that stands against God and His glory. Romans 12 is going to talk about the world when it says

**Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

In other words, the world in which we live wants to squeeze us so that the world’s values become our values, the world’s priorities, the world’s joys, the world’s purposes, the world’s behaviors become our behaviors. The world is squeezing us so that we’ll be like the world. And it is squeezing us away from being like Jesus. So that’s one enemy we would be able to name.

The flesh also represents an inner appetite for sin, an inner affection for other gods. Paul, in Romans 7 has discussed this indwelling sin at great length. He says

**Romans 7:15-18a** For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh . . .

And later he’s going to say

**Romans 7:24** Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Our flesh is an enemy that is working and warring against us from within to push us away from Christlikeness, to push us away from God’s glory.

And then we have the devil himself. The devil and his minions hate the thought of us, God’s children, arriving at the state of seeing God truly, enjoying Him fully, and then being conformed into His image. They hate that thought because they hate God’s glory more than ever. Peter calls Satan, therefore, a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8) Do you think we have an enemy who wants to keep us from that future joy? Absolutely, we do! In fact, the Apostle Paul is going to talk about this enemy as well in this very letter.

**Romans 16:20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The idea is that Satan is still active. But one day, he’s going to be finished once and for all. So you see, if we ask the question “Who can be against us?” we have some very clear answers of who can be against us and we have some really, really powerful opponents who desire to move us away from joy on that future day and to move us into condemnation, to move us into judgment. Left to ourselves we would wilt in the face of such destructive, strong foes. But thankfully, we are not left to ourselves. I love Psalm 3!

**Psalm 3:1-3** O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, “There is no salvation for him in God.” *Selah* But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

I remember when I was about 12 years old, I was playing basketball with a boy that was about a year older. He was 8 about inches taller and was about 60 pounds heavier. He was well-muscled. In the course of the basketball game, he became very, very angry with me. And he reared back his clenched fist. He was about ready to punch me right in the nose, and he stopped. He said, “Ritch, if you didn’t have an older brother, I’d punch you right in the face!” And at that moment, I whispered a prayer. “Thank you God, for my older brother.” You see, God says, “If I am for you, what are these enemies, really? They’re nothing. They can’t harm you.” It’s not that they won’t actually try to throw the punch, it is that God Himself deflects that punch so as never to truly harm us.

Of course the world, the flesh and the devil will swing punches our way. And they will often inflict pain. So, I am not saying we’ll never be pained by these enemies. The devil and this wicked world can bring sickness to our body. They can break into our houses and steal our possessions. They can strike our children with death. They can tempt our spouses to divorce us. They can cause our bosses to turn on us. They can lure us into the sins of self-pity and self-glory. They cantake our job away from us. They can tempt us to love the pleasure of this world. They can alienate us from people who were once close friends. These are things that these enemies do in the lives of believers. But can they really accomplish their design, which is to keep us from enjoying God forever and ever? The answer is, no they cannot! And that is why we can say

***28*** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

And this is His purpose. It is that we would be conformed to the image of His Son. Nothing will keep God from accomplishing that purpose in the lives of His children. God takes those things that our enemies design to destroy us and He turns them into our eternal advantage. The injuries that our enemies inflict upon us will only increase the joy we will experience when we are glorified by God.

So, some applications:

1. Because God is for us, let us not worry about our lives. Instead, let us in confidence seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that God will add all these things to us!

So let’s not fret. We should be at peace when we understand that we have God who is for us.

By the way Beloved, as I look out upon this precious group, I would have you ask your own soul, “Is God truly for me?” God is not for everyone. He is only for those who are in Christ Jesus, who have been joined to Jesus through faith. And so, if you have not yet been joined to God through Jesus Christ, through faith in Him, then you cannot say, “God is for me.” This is a promise only for those who love God! It is only for those who are called according to His purpose. And so the first issue at hand is one of your salvation. And I tell you God is expressing and revealing Himself to you through His Word, through His Gospel, by way of the Holy Spirit, to reveal Himself as a God that if you’d see Him for who He is, you would run to Him in joy. And so, won’t you open your heart? He says, if you seek after Him with all your heart, you will find Him. But if you are so allured by the gods of this world, the god of self and the god of pleasure, and the god of power and possessions, if you’re so allured that you are grabbing onto those gods saying, “I won’t let go!” you’ll never see the goodness of God. And those gods will rob you of your joy. They can’t give you happiness. I think most people already know that, and yet they continue to cling to those gods.

2. The battle is hard, but God is for you. Glory is your future. Therefore, stand firm in His strength and His grace. Fight like you are going to win, because through Christ, you *are* going to win!

So don’t give up. Don’t despair. Don’t get discouraged.

We’re going to look just briefly at this second question. We’ll take it up next week. I just want to observe the impact of it upon our lives.

**Question #2**: Is it possible that God would not be savingly generous to us in the future?

Someone looks at Question #1 and says, “Well, God might be for me now, but perhaps He will tire of me when I sin or perhaps He will turn against me when I fail Him.” Verse 32 is the answer to that concern.

***32*** *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

Do you catch the logic? If God gave up, didn’t spare that which was most precious to Him, that which was the greatest treasure to Him, that which produced the greatest joy in His heart, and God did not spare His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us so that we would arrive at that future day, won’t He then give you everything else you need? He’s already locked in the greatest gift, the greatest treasure. Won’t He also with Jesus Christ then freely give us everything we need to arrive at that future day? We’re going to explore that question more next week. For now, let’s consider some applications. I want to close with a poem.

1. Let us rejoice in God’s enduring love for us.

I don’t think we take time to really just say, “You know what? It is a holy thing just to pursue joy in God. I want to be happy today.” And it’s a good and glorious thing to say, “I am going to pursue my happiness. I’m going to rejoice in God’s enduring love for me. That’s how I’m going to pursue happiness.

2. Let us hope for the future day when we will enjoy His love completely.

Let’s not live as though that future day is not exciting, not wonderful, not expected, or not certain. Let’s every day think, “This is where one day I’ll be.” Let us be like the child awaiting that summer picnic or that trip to Disney Land. They know it’s going to happen because their parents promised it, and they’re looking forward to it for weeks, perhaps even months ahead of time. God has promised us this amazing experience when we stand before Him on the future day. Let us hope for it. Let us wait for it with eager expectation.

3. Let us believe that God will continue His work in us.

Let us be confident of that. If He’s for us, who can be against us? If He’s given us His Son, how will He not also with His Son freely give us all things?

4. Let us yield our life to the working of God’s Spirit every day.

Let us submit our lives to Him knowing that in submission, that’s where we find our happiness. It is in our resistance against God that we lose everything that would be pleasant, everything that would be a true treasure, everything that would bring a great joy.

George Matheson lost his sight in his youth. He also suffered some extreme mental distress which caused him great pain. And in the midst of this great pain of this emotional distress, and we’re not sure what it is. Some think it’s that he had a fiancée who broke off an engagement. We’re not sure exactly what was happening in George Matheson’s life, but in the midst of his anguish, he was considering these thoughts, the thoughts that we’ve been dwelling upon in Romans 8 and will continue to dwell upon the next two weeks. And this is the song that he penned:

*O love that wilt not let me go,*

*I rest my weary soul in thee;*

*I give thee back the life I owe,*

*That in thine ocean depths its flow*

*May richer, fuller be.*