

Romans 8:28-39

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[0 : 00] How can you survive as a Christian? How can you survive as a Christian?! Temptation is so strong, isn't it?

and we are so weak uncertainty, I think is alien to the New Testament mind just look at what the Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter 8 and verse 38 he says, for I am sure I am certain I'm convinced, I'm sure that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus and the end of Romans chapter 8 is a celebration of certainty and if we are God's people we can be and we should be certain that we are going to make it to heaven it's not a lottery where you've got to wait and see if your number comes up all against the odds the Bible very clearly teaches that if we put our trust in Christ our future, our eternal future is secure and guaranteed it is not something we should be fretting about it is not something that you today if you have trusted in the Lord Jesus should be uncertain about it should be something that you are rejoicing in and liberated in Romans chapter 1-4 is really about the heart of the Gospel taught through those chapters and it's the message that we are justified by faith it explained, didn't it, that we are sinners under God's judgement but that through trusting in the death of Jesus we are made right, we are justified and right with God chapter 5-8 is really about the assurance of the Gospel it unpacks the certainties that flow from our being right with God our justification and the section ends with a wonderful celebration of Christian certainty verse 28 and we know verse 38 verse 38 for I am sure three things of which we can be certain of this lunch time number one nothing can stop God's purpose to glorify his people look at verse 28 and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good or you can translate it we know that God works in all things for the good of those who are called according to his purpose and if we are God's people this afternoon in all things

God is working for our good in all the circumstances of our lives in everything that happens to us but what is the good for which God is working towards what's the purpose that 28 speaks about so can you see for those who are called according to his purpose and you need to read on to verse 29 for those who before knew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn of our many brothers that tells us that God's good purpose in your life and my life is that we should be like his son his purpose is that God's new world should be populated by countless brothers and sisters like Jesus well like Jesus that we would be like him in our resurrection bodies we would be like him in sinless character another way of putting it is that his purpose is that his people would be glorified and that's the word that's used at the end of verse 30 so God is at work in the lives of his people to make sure that they get to that destination and they fulfil that destiny that they will be glorified like his son

Jesus Christ we've got a church weekend for those who are in their 20s and 30s this weekend out in Cheshire and when you organise a church event like that you begin by hoping that people are going to sign up to it and you begin hoping that people will come you kind of plead with people to come and send pleading emails but there's no guarantees there there's no guarantee it's going to happen so it's quite possible isn't it on events like that to get no takers and to pull the plug at the last minute to pull the plug on the whole event and God's plan for his new world is not like that God has not just booked the venue and organised the programme and he's hoping that there'll be just about enough people to turn up to make it work so that he won't have to pull the plug on it no it says that in all things God is at work to bring about his good purpose which is that Jesus will share the new world with many brothers and sisters and so if you are one of God's people

[5 : 07] God is at work in your life to ensure that you will get there and verse 28 tells you doesn't it that God is intimately involved in the details of our lives to make sure that his purpose for us is realised nothing is left to chance and that is why we can be sure that we will be glorified like Jesus do you notice what it says can you see in that first line in verse 28 it says all things God is at work to

bring about his purpose and all things precisely means that all things in our lives even the difficult things when things go wrong when we are tempted to feel that God has gone away that God has just left us to fend for ourselves and how on earth am I going to make it through this but this is saying isn't it that God is actually at work in that situation to bring about his own purpose he not only knows this lunchtime what you are going through but he is at work in that situation as well to see you through it in all things

God is working for the good and that means that you can substitute can't you your own situation into verse 28 that God is working through that boring job that God is working through your redundancy that God is working in the struggles of old age in the struggle of being single the struggle of being married in my depression in my battle with temptation in my sickness in my difficult home life in all things God is working for the good and he will bring us through it to glory but this purpose of being conformed to the image of his son is not only something that will happen at the last day on that final day when he comes again but it is something in the present as God works in you and I to conform us to his son to grow us in godly character in anticipation of that ultimate transformation and that means that God is not just at work to bring us through our difficulties he is also at work to make you and I more like Jesus right now right in the middle of our difficulties and it is often isn't it through the difficult times in your life and in my life that we grow to be more like Christ and that has all sorts of implications many of us will have agonised what is God's will for my life am I to live in London or am I to go back home am I to stick in this job that I don't enjoy or am I to kind of change path and go to another career am I to marry this person or that person but let me tell you what this verse gives you the answer what is God's will for you

God's purpose from verse 29 is that you might become like the Lord Jesus Christ and that is what ultimately God is doing and he'll be doing that whether you live in healing or whether you don't whether you take this job or that job whether you get married or you stay single whether you live in healing or whether you live in Egypt it doesn't matter God's purpose is to make you more like Christ if my purpose is to be happy and to be as comfortable as possible then sooner or later my purpose and God's purpose will clash when things don't work out as I'd hoped we can feel puzzled can't we we can feel frustrated and we can say why has God allowed this or that to happen what is he up to I thought he loved me why doesn't God give me a better job why doesn't God give me a job in the first place why doesn't God heal me why doesn't God get me out of this mess but I want to say seeing

Romans chapter 8 verses 28 to 30 it's not a complete answer but it does help you to know what God is up to in our lives and it helps you to pray in difficult times Heavenly Father through this dot dot dot please be at work to make me more like your son and so you and I will know if you've been in church any length of time that some of the godliest people are those who've been through the hardest times I read a story recently of a man who used a household power drill to bore a hole in the head of a 13 year old boy that's not a very nice thing to do except that in this case it was emergency surgery by a doctor to remove a blood clot after this young boy had fallen off his bike and hit his head when painful things are happening in our lives we need to trust that God is a loving doctor who is ultimately working for our eternal good but I can be certain of future glory not only because God is at work in all things in my life now but because this present work is part of an unbreakable train that stretches back into eternity and forwards into eternity so look at verses 29 it says 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 and those whom he predestined he also called and those whom he called he also justified and those whom he justified he also glorified there's five stages there and these five stages in a person's life they are inextricably linked and once God has begun that process there is nothing in the universe that can stop it so let's just trace that through in verse 29 it says that he foreknew it begins with foreknowing in Hebrew thought that didn't just mean knowing as in you know about something or you know about someone it means that you are in a relationship with someone so Amos chapter 3 verse 2

God says to his people you only have I known of all the families of the earth and of course he knew about all the families of the earth didn't he but he's saying he only knew Israel in the sense of having a personal relationship with them he set his love on them he had chosen them or the meaning of the foreknowledge in the New Testament is similar the sense foreloved those on whom God set his love on before in Romans chapter 11 verse 2 says God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew the second stage is those he foreknew he predestined verse 30 and the word

translated predestined means to decide upon beforehand so Acts chapter 4 and verse 28 says at the death of Jesus that various rulers and the people gathered together to do whatever God's hand and plan had predestined to take place what God had decided beforehand should happen and that's not just true of the events it's true of our salvation in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 and 5 [12:25] Paul says of Christians that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world he predestined us the next stage is calling verse 30 those of whom he predestined he also called now we know don't we Jesus in the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 Jesus says many are called but few are chosen and in that case he is speaking in a different sense he is using that sense of a general invitation and it goes out to the lost and lots of people and many people reject it but in the rest of the New Testament the word call is used refers to something different it is an effective summons used by God it is when God brings a person into a relationship with them so for example 1 Corinthians 1.23 Paul writes we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God so to be called doesn't just mean that you hear the gospel it means if you are called by God that you respond to the gospel with repentance and faith and so call is a powerful in this sense summons by God which results in a person turning to him those he called in verse 30 also justified that's the next stage they are justified by him they are declared right in God's sight because of

Christ's death for them and then in verse 30 those whom he justified he also glorified and glorified refers to that state of the believer on the final day in eternity like Christ we will be glorified but although it's future do you see how it's spoken about in verse 30 it's past tense isn't it it's a done deal well that's the golden chain now I want you to see that when you became a Christian that was part of a chain that went back all the way into eternity and it will go on into eternity and it isn't just that a person has chosen God and has decided for Christ but before they were born before the world even began God set his love upon you and predestinated you and then at that moment in time through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit he powerfully called you so that you repented and believed and were justified and one day you will be glorified with a resurrection body and a purified spirit you see this is why

Paul is so sure and if this is you this lunchtime it's certainly something to savour and rejoice in God does not want you to go through life fretting and worrying about whether you'll make it to glory if your trust is in Christ and his death for you today if you've been given new life like the apostle Paul you can be confident I do think this changes the way that we view people I had a discussion with a street sweeper one of Ealing's street sweepers last week but the street sweeper amazingly spoke to me about how they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it was a bit of a language barrier but I am sure that was what he was saying isn't that amazing he can be a street sweeper in some ways the lowest of the low in our society but God has set his love upon him before the creation of the world and one day that humble street sweeper will be glorified like the son of God what a destiny some people object to this saying well if this is true if there's this kind of golden chain it will only promote ungodly living people will just live as they want if you know that you're heading for future glory and you're certain about it well it doesn't matter how you live does it chapter 6 of Romans answered that objection we won't go back on it but one mark of enjoying God's grace is that we've turned from slavery to sin so that now we're slaves to God and when and not and to think I can live in any way I want is to completely misunderstand what God has done another objection is maybe you're thinking is what about those who've fallen away from the faith we all seem to know them don't they we were sure they believed but now they're way away what about them how does that work with this hasn't the golden chain been broken according to the Bible there's only two options there first option is that they were never God's people to begin with we have to face that although they seem to be you know like Judas like those in Luke 13 that say to Jesus on the last day Lord please I did this I did that Lord open the door and Jesus says I never knew you so they're either that or alternatively they really are God's people and like Peter who sinned by denying the Lord Jesus and like David who backslid for all that time after Bathsheba they will come back because if they are Christ they will come back because nothing can stop God's purpose to glorify his people now let's go to the second point we will try we've got nine minutes we'll keep going verse 31 to 34 no one can condemn God's people for whom he's for that's the second assurance verse 31 what shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us the basic issue in these verses is how can I how can I be sure that I will not be

condemned on the day of judgment can I really know that well just notice three times for us in these verses what he says verse 31 what then shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us some of the most chilling words in the Bible are found in the Old Testament when God declares to someone I'm against you God saying to a human being I am against you in Ezekiel 13 verse 8 God says

[18:52] I'm against you I oppose you I condemn you those false prophets can you imagine that if you get to the heavenly courtroom and you stand before God and he says I'm against you it won't matter if the whole world is on your side but God is against you but God's people can say with certainty that God is for us verse 31 God is for us and if that is true then verse 33 is true who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies who is he to condemn so in that heavenly courtroom if God is the one who justifies me if God declares me not guilty and not condemned that's all that matters it doesn't matter who else comes in and brings accusations the devil himself can come in with all his accusations but he'll be dismissed how do I know that God is for me how do I know that he will continue to be for me and he won't change his mind we'll look at the next one verse 32 he who did not spare up his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things

God has given his only son to die for us what greater proof could God give of his commitment to me what more could God have done for you to be declared right with him if he's done that he won't abandon you but a third for us it says in verse 34 who is he to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who is now interceding for us the three for us what is Jesus up to now well he's our advocate he's pleading for you in heaven on the basis of his death for us but it's a very powerful legal team isn't it to have on your courtroom if the judge is God your father and he is on your side he's already declared for you and if the judge has given his only son to die for you to secure your acquittal well that is powerful but on top of that your defence lawyer is Jesus Christ who is pleading for you and says

I have died for all his sins you've got nothing to worry about you may have a very long list of accusers ready to step forward on that last day your guilty conscience will be there your past sins the people that you've wronged the devil himself but with God the father and Jesus Christ on your side the case will be over before it's started the accusers will be thrown out of court do you ever feel useless as a Christian do you know what it's like when you've messed up in that way the devil whispers in your ear call yourself a Christian God must be pretty disappointed with you that's another thing that I will bring up with God on the last day he says when the court case is called I'd be worried I've got a nice little case against you and it's easy to feel useless what do we say to him we say to him if God is for me who can be against me it is God who justifies who he's going to condemn and I think that God is for you is also a great thing when other people are giving you a hard time about your faith so perhaps at work or in your family you feel out on a limb or isolated perhaps you're a Christian you don't want to join in in the office phantom and at times like that it helps you to think that God is for me who can be against me and I think it can be very very helpful when we're against ourselves when we think

I'm worthless when we think who am I you think I'm beloved by God because God is for me and even if the whole world thinks I'm a loser so watch God is for me and Jesus is gunning for me the third assurance is nothing can separate God's people from his love look at verse 35 we'll go from verse 34 who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us and then on to verse 39 nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord God loves us and that God loves us we can be certain of because of the death of Jesus for us there's none of that he loves me he loves me not he loves me he loves me not in the Christians the Holy Spirit gives us an assurance of God's love in our heart God's love in our heart but that subjective feeling is based on an objective event the death of Jesus in history but what about the future ok God loves me now this afternoon I can take that but life has got an awful lot to throw at us in the next 10 15 20 years a lot can happen to threaten my relationship with God but God's relationship is not like a human relationship human relationships often break down they seem secure but then they're not secure there's weariness love evaporates and even those marriages and relationships that survive those threats one day are separated by death that's human relationships but if we are God's people we can be sure that nothing will separate us from God's love look at verse 35 who shall separate us from the love of Christ from tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword seven

threats things he's faced himself you can read about them in 2 Corinthians 11 and he goes on to quote doesn't he in verse 36 from the Old Testament and he basically says this is normal Christian experience for the believer tribulation distress persecution famine nakedness danger and sword well they faced it all before we're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered it's not that something's gone wrong it's just normal

[24 : 47] Christian experience and then in verse 37 he says knowing all these things we are more than conquerors by him who loved us so that is telling you this afternoon as we finish that if you are God's people that there is no difficulty that life can throw you throw at you which will separate you from the love of God God's love is so powerful that nothing can stand in the way when I cross the road with my children when I walk on the paper with my children I hold their hand but when I go across the road I change my grip I hold their wrist and I am stronger than they are so they cannot escape on the road and that is what God does there is nothing that can break God's grip upon us if it was up to me to keep going as a Christian I wouldn't trust myself to last next week let alone to the last day but God will keep me verse 38 ends with ten things for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord we had one of the most remarkable Sundays

I can remember we had a great preacher from the Isle of Lewis who should listen to the recordings but one of the things that really struck me is he kept saying I need you to know this I thought I don't think I'd ever said that in 16, 17 years as a preacher but I need you to know this it's lunch time and the Apostle Paul needs you to know this and the Lord God needs you to know this knowing all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us if you are in Christ you will survive