

EFC

March 31, 2024 - Easter Sunday

“Let Me Ask You a Question”

Romans 8:31-39

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I’m one of the Pastors here. Happy Easter! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! This morning, we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, God’s Son. My aim this morning is to raise our affections for Christ and our confidence in Him as high as I possibly can, as we reflect on what God has done for us in Christ.

Pray.

Story of why certainty/confidence makes the difference in life.

This morning, we consider the climax of what is perhaps the greatest letter ever written – Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome. This climax is intended to give us certainty and confidence as we trust in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. The resurrection is an integral part of our confidence in Christ, and I think you’ll find this a fitting focus for our celebration of Easter.

We already read Romans 8:31-39 this morning, and now I am going to walk us back through it, one step at a time, so we can know deeply all God has done for us in Christ.

“What then shall we say to these things?” (Romans 8:31a)

We must always read each part of the Bible in context: what are the “these things” Paul is referring to here? Everything in Romans so far: the gospel!

- God is holy, and deserves all worship and obedience.
- All people are guilty of sin against God, deservingly under His wrath, unable to save ourselves.
- God sent His Son Jesus to rescue us when we had no other hope; he paid the penalty for our sins, suffering and dying in our place on the cross, but He rose again on the third day.
- God freely offers forgiveness and new life to all who repent of their sin and put their faith in Jesus. This is a free gift of grace that God gives, which we do not earn.
- God gives everyone who puts their faith in Jesus new life. The Holy Spirit comes to live within, and He gives us victory over sin and gives us fullness of life as we grow to be like Jesus. This is a process that happens over the course of the Christian’s life.
- And someday, God will take us to heaven, forever to be with Him, where we will live perfectly sinless lives of worship to God, exactly as we were created for.
- This is the inevitable destiny of everyone who belongs to Christ, for God will accomplish His purposes and fulfill His promises in our lives.

These are the “these things” Paul is referring to. What then shall we say to all God has done, is doing, and will do for us in Christ?

Paul continues asking another question: “If God is for us...” That’s how Paul sums up the Gospel: God is for us! Did you notice as we were reviewing the gospel that God is the initiator and accomplisher of our salvation? And all that “while we were still sinners”? God indeed is for us!

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31b)

- God has no equal; though enemies come (the devil, temptations, our own sin, human enemies), they have no hope of succeeding against God!
  - o Like throwing a feather in an attempt to knock down this building
- He even uses all things for your good – even the enemies that would come against you; in the end, He turns it all for your good. So who indeed can be against you?

You may say, “But this sounds too good to be true! God totally and unreservedly for me? Will He really be so good to even me? Can I really believe this?”

Paul says, “Consider what God has already done for you, if you want to know how certain His enduring goodness to you is.”

“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?” (Romans 8:32)

Illustration: If I give you my car, of course I’ll give you the gas that’s in the tank as well.

You may say, “You don’t know my life, Jeremy! I fall so short, I still sin, I’m still condemned by my own actions. Doesn’t that mean God will hold back His goodness and love from me?”

To which Paul answers, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” (Romans 8:33)

Paul is using legal language here to assure us of our right standing with God. To bring a charge is to go to court and legally accuse someone of breaking the law. And in truth, we are all guilty of breaking God’s law. But all who are in Christ have been declared righteous by God. It is not that we have not sinned; it is that Christ took our sin upon Himself on the cross, and graciously gave us His perfect righteousness. And based on Christ’s righteousness, all who are saved by grace through faith in Christ are declared righteous by God, the perfect judge. Earlier in Romans, Paul put it this way:

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:22b-25a)

God graciously justifies all who call upon Christ in faith. And if God, who is Ruler and Judge over all, has declared you right before Him, who could possibly succeed in condemning you?

That is Paul’s next question: “Who is to condemn?” I think Paul knows human nature well; we may know something in our heads, but our emotions can be slow to follow at times. I also think Paul knows the lies of the devil well; he is called “the accuser of the brothers,” and one of his most destructive lies in the life of Christians is to try to undermine our confidence that God is for us, and we are forever His.

“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, who indeed is interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34)

We may be tempted to believe our ongoing struggle with sin can condemn us, but “Jesus is the one who died” – He paid the penalty of our sin in full, forever removing our guilt.

We may be tempted to believe that death will end God’s commitment to us, but Jesus is the one “who was raised” – death no longer has power over Christ, and it no longer has power over us!

We may be tempted to fear the powers of the devil and this world, afraid that they will ultimately overcome us and destroy us, but Jesus is the one “who is at the right hand of God” – Our living Savior sits in the place of ultimate power, and no one and no thing can overcome Him.

We may be tempted to doubt God’s ongoing care for us tomorrow, in the things we will face – sickness, sorrow, persecution, financial difficulties, family struggles, etc., but Jesus “indeed is interceding for us” – Our living Savior has promised that nothing will take us out of His hand nor prevent us from reaching our heavenly home. We can face tomorrow with confidence, for Jesus lives and Jesus reigns.

Oh, we have so much to give us confidence and certainty that God is indeed for us! But oh, we are so slow to believe sometimes. Oh, our faith can be so small. In light of all this, we may still wonder if God could indeed love us like this – not only today, but on and on unto eternity.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’” (Romans 8:35-36)

We do indeed walk through difficult times in this life, and being a Christian does not shield us from those things. These difficulties may indeed bring in doubts and fears and discouragements, and the devil is waiting to pounce like a roaring lion and destroy our confidence.

But Paul, in light of all he has just reminded us of, goes on to say: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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. (Romans 8:37-39)

How can Paul be so sure of this? First look back at all God has already done for us in Christ! He didn’t do it out of obligation, or deception; He did it out of love.

And second, take a look again at the resurrection, for it proves that Christ has indeed won the victory for us, and that God is now fully for us in Christ.

There is a story from the life of Jesus (Matthew 9:1-8) that illustrates what I mean. A paralytic was brought to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, “Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven.” People in the crowd complained, saying that only God can forgive sins – in other words, saying Jesus had no right to say such a thing. Jesus responds by asking them, “which is easier to say, ‘Your

sins are forgiven' or 'Rise and walk'?" Think about that for a minute. Anyone can say "your sins are forgiven", whether or not it is true, because there isn't immediate physical proof; words are cheap. But it is not so easy to say, "Rise and walk" because the proof will be right before your eyes. So when the man rose and walked at Jesus' command, it was proof that Jesus did indeed have the right and power to forgive his sins as well!

So, it is with the resurrection. Words are easy to say when the proof is not immediately obvious. Jesus had prophesied His death for the forgiveness of our sins multiple times leading up to His crucifixion. In one sense, it would have been easy to say such things, but where would have been the proof? But He had also prophesied His resurrection. So when He rose, it was a stamp of approval from the Father, declaring to us that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and that He has indeed won complete salvation for us! When Jesus rose and walked out of that grave, He gave us all the proof we needed. We can rest secure in all God has done for us!

I want to close by once more asking these same questions, as you think about them in your own life. The answers are vastly different for those who have put their faith in Christ and have been saved by Him, and those who have not.

If God is for you, who could possibly succeed against you?

How will God not also with Christ graciously give you all things for true life and godliness?

Who shall bring any charge against you?

Who is to condemn you?

Who shall separate you from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 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." (Romans 8:37-39)