

God will bring us home

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 May 2021

Preacher: David Calderwood

- [0 : 00] Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 28. Romans chapter 9, starting at verse 28.
- And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things?
- If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?
- Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
- [1 : 25] 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. No, in all these things we were 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.
- Well, this morning I'm going to start with an old saying that everybody knows. Diamonds are forever. Forever. Diamonds are forever. Well, of course, even as I say that to you, we all know that that's not really true.
- It's a saying. We all sort of trot it out. But we know that diamonds can be destroyed. They certainly can be lost accidentally. But here's the focus for this morning.
- Can we say that Christians are forever? Diamonds aren't forever. Even though we say so. There's not very much I can think of in this world that is forever. What about Christians?
- [2 : 57] Can we say that Christians are forever? Well, we're four weeks into this teaching series exploring how we experience God's sovereign power and salvation.
- And this morning we asked that particular question. Am I, are you as a Christian, absolutely certain that from this point you will make it home to heaven?
- It's a big question, isn't it? It's a big question, isn't it? And a lot hangs on it. But it gets worse because, you see, if you're going to answer that question, you should bear in mind that diamonds aren't forever, even though we say they are.
- And then make it more personal. I want you to answer that question thinking about your daily failures and sin, even as you sit here and say, I'm a believer, I'm a Christian.
- I want you to answer that question.
- [4 : 24] And then we've got to add into that that knowing that God knows all these things about us, we ask the question, can we be certain, can you be certain that as a Christian you will last the distance?
- That ultimately you will get to be home in heaven with Jesus forever. Can you be sure that God will not give up on you?

Because every one of us, even as Christians, would have to say, man, there's a lot, well, I'm not sure how to put it, but there's a lot to give up on. There's a lot of reasons to give up on us. Now add into the mix something else.

Add into the mix all those memories of people, and we all know people, who once presented as keen Christians, but who now totally reject the gospel.

From the high profile Christians that we all know of, to the people that we've sat shoulder to shoulder with in churches over the years. People we've prayed with.

[5 : 42] People we read the Bible with. Perhaps even people who've taught you in the past. Is it possible that I could be safe in the kingdom of Jesus today, and yet be lost or rejected tomorrow?

Every one of those questions is just confronting, aren't they? Put it positively, could it really be true that I could say this morning, encourage you to hear this morning and believe this morning, that once a Christian, always a Christian?

Well, I want to say, and if you need to sleep for the rest of the time, that's fine, but just hear this next two sentences. The answer is really simple, and it's beautiful, and it's yes.

We considered this last Sunday, John chapter 10, that Jesus died for his sheep. He died for his sheep individually, and he died for his sheep particularly to restore each of his sheep to relationship to God.

And in John chapter 10, verse 30, Jesus promises that not one of his died for sheep will be lost. Not one will be snatched out of my hand.

[7 : 15] And I presume that also means that not one will be accidentally dropped out of his hand. Or that one will be accidentally lost out of his hand.

Or that one will accidentally jump out of his hand quite willfully. The point from John chapter 10, and we want to reinforce it today from Romans 8, the point is that God actually intends us, actually intends us to feel and be safe and secure in Christ, knowing that nothing and nobody will stop us from enjoying the eternal life he died to secure for us.

In other words, God's salvation comes with an absolute guarantee.

Well, hang on a minute, you say. I'm very wary of guarantees these days. We all know, we've all been caught with guarantees that seem to offer one thing, but then when you most need it, you find in the small print that it's not actually guaranteed at all.

Even though that's been your thought, this product is guaranteed. Fail safe.

[8 : 44] But the guarantee that Christians will make it to heaven is God's guarantee.

Altogether a different category of guarantee. No hidden fine print. We can take it at face value. God says, having died for you, I will make sure you make it all the way home to heaven.

That is my intent. Not just to die for you and then sort of leave you to your own devices. No, I'm going to die for you and then I will follow through on that. Make sure you get home to heaven to enjoy that eternal life in all its fullness for which I died for you.

So God guarantees that Christians will, and there's twin words here, matching words, paired words. God guarantees that Christians will, and there's twin words.

God guarantees that Christians will persevere all the way to heaven, finally being with Jesus, finally being like Jesus. Why will we persevere? Because God promises he will preserve us.

[9 : 57] There's the paired words. We persevere because God preserves. Two sides of one coin. God on his side preserves.

Which guarantees that I, on my side as a Christian, will persevere. Persevere in faith and trust in Jesus until I'm home and secure in heaven itself, enjoying all its blessings.

And let's explore that in Romans chapter 8. That's our purpose this morning. And the first heading, and the biggest heading, I think, is that God always finishes what he starts.

When our first two children were young and I was in Sydney, I, I suppose like lots of dads, had this idea of building this wonderful doll's house for my children. And I drew up the plans as I am a bit OCD, had it all drawn up to scale, and went to my workshop, as it was called then.

A bit of an overstatement for what I had, a shed. And I stepped to work to build this doll's house. I ended up with a doll's house for the kids, but it looked nothing like the drawing.

[11 : 09] At every step of the way, I had to cut corners, because I didn't have the skills or the ability to do the drawing that I drew. True.

Sort out the English for yourselves. I'm Irish. That's my, my, my, get out of jail and take it every week. Yeah, I just couldn't do it. The kids end up with a doll's house, but nothing like what I'd hoped they'd have.

Or what I'd led them to believe they would have. So there was other disappointment all around. God always finishes what he starts.

Concept plan of salvation. Delivered. In full. We find that in Romans chapter 8 very clearly.

The context of these verses is the whole of Romans chapter 8. I don't have time to work through the first 27 verses. I'm just going to summarize them really quickly. But I'd encourage you to go and read them for yourself as a whole unit.

[12 : 15] The whole of Romans chapter 8. Because Romans chapter 8 is all, God begins with, with objective and subject of assurance for us as Christians. Chapter 1, verse 1 of chapter 8.

There is therefore now, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's a big comprehensive statement, isn't it?

In Christ Jesus, no condemnation. Verses 2 through to 8. Then Paul spells out that the evidence of that being in Christ is changed attitudes, changed desires that make us want to do the things of God where previously, before we were converted, we had no interest in the things of God.

And verses 9 through to 17. We're told then that God actually puts his spirit into us. And the spirit's job particularly, and remember, father, son, and spirit are together in this work of salvation.

The father intends. Jesus accomplished that in redemption. Now the spirit's making it work in our hearts, as he calls us, and reassures us that we are children.

[13 : 33] And gives us a confidence to come before God, addressing him in the most intimate ways. Abba, father, daddy. Convincing us that we're heirs together with Christ.

So that objectively and subjectively we feel secure. We feel safe. But then we might say, well that's all very fine.

I'm right there with you in as much as we become Christians. And that's true. We have God's grace and this reassurance when we become Christians. But between here and now and heaven, there's so many things can go wrong.

Life is such a struggle. Daily I see my failure in that struggle. My inconsistency in that struggle. Well what about that? Will I get tripped up?

Get lost along the way? Well verses 18 to 27 starts answering that question. And again I don't have time to get into all the details of it. Verse 18 to 27 is really saying this.

[14 : 44] Look. God's intent is not just that you be redeemed or saved. But his intent ultimately for you is glory. Freedom and glory are the two words that dominate in those verses.

18 to 27. In the midst of our daily struggle. In the midst of our daily groaning. That's the language of those verses.

As a consequence of sin. There is certainty. There is certainty we will make it to the end. Make it to heaven. Because God's end point for us.

Is the salvation of his world. And the end point he intends for his people is glory. That is to be home with him. In heaven. To be with him and to be like him.

To be the image bearers he always intended us to be. Freedom from sin. Freedom to be the image bearers as I say.

[15 : 47] He intended us to be. Which is glory. And Paul then gives us the details of the basis for his confidence in verses 28, 29, 30.

Which was read to us this morning by Simon. We'll just pick it up again. And I want you to think of it as God's salvation purpose.

As a five stage building plan. Building project. As I read through these verses again. So verse 28. We know that for those who love God.

All things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose. For those 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 he predestined. He also called. And those he called. He also justified. And those whom he justified.

[16 : 47] He also glorified. Our salvation. Is a step through process.

A five stage building project. Planned. And carefully managed. By God. To completion. See again.

The last word is glorified. First word is God set his love. Set his determined. That there would be people to be saved. So here's another really important sentence this morning.

If you're still with me. Romans 8. 20-30 says. It is not the strength. Of my commitment. Or your commitment to God. Which is critical in this question.

Of will we get home to heaven. It's the strength of God's commitment to you. And to me. That's critical. That's critical. That's what gives us confidence.

[17 : 51] If it resided in myself. In my commitment to God. Then I'm done for. Because that comes and goes. It's never what I wanted to be.

But it comes and goes. Even within that. That's about God's commitment to me. It's about God's commitment to you. In salvation.

That gives you. Your place of safety and security. And enjoyment. Now their problem is.

That we can't see God's plan. We can't see. The building site. Which is our lives. In the way that God can see it. Our engagement in our lives.

Is momentary. And it feels chaotic. It feels pointless. It feels confused at times. Doesn't it? That's generally how we feel. I think. But in truth.

[18 : 50] What we're told here. Is that. Every single event in our lives. That happens. From our perspective. It might be chaotic. And all bits and pieces. But every single event in our lives.

Is one more step. Closer to that final. Renovation being completed. Which is called here. Glorification. Or being in heaven.

With Christ. Being like him. One step. Closer to renovation. One step closer to glory. And that's the picture here.

God is with us in the mess of life. At every point. At every step of the way. Surely. But slowly. But surely. Renovating us. Into a beautiful structure.

And that beautiful structure has. Designed. And built. And kept. By God. Stamped on it. And. Verses.

[19 : 56] 31 and 32. We just keep piling. These assurances. On top of assurances. If God. Is for us. Look at verses.

31 and 32. What then shall we say to these things? So Paul's taking a pause here. In the argument. And he's just reflecting. On what he's. He's just listed. In this piling up.

Of assurances. And he said. Well. Well. Okay. So. What are we going to say now? How does the rubber meet the road. In all this? And he says. Well. If God is for us.

Then who can be against us? That's his conclusion. If God is for us. Then the deal's done.

Given that God has guaranteed. His people freedom and glory. Verses. 17 through to 27 again. Who could possibly. Countermand that.

[20 : 55] Is Paul dragging them here. Who's going to. Take God on. And say. Well actually. God. No. You're wrong. See.

God's faithfulness. To his people. Is beyond question. He's done the hard work. He's put in the hard yards. Of loving those. Who are so unlovely. His family.

Romans 20. 20. 20. 30 again. He's put in the. Even huge cost. Of having sacrificed. His son. To redeem us. To save us. To bring us back. Into relationship.

With himself. He's done the. Impossibly. Human task. He's done it. Miraculously. Of calling us to life. When we were dead.

Towards him. Dead in sin. He's put a spirit. Within us. To renew us. On a day by day basis. And Paul's. Are piling all that up.

[21 : 53] On one side. And said. Well. I mean. Given that God's done all that. And given his commitment. To see his. Home to glory. Then. It's inconceivable. That having done all the hard work.

Back here. That God would. Hold back anything. We need. To get home to heaven. I've used the illustration before.

I'll use it again. It's. It's a picture here. Of a father. Not my father. But a father. Who's. Bought him. His child. An eight hundred thousand dollar Ferrari. And it's inconceivable.

A father who's done that. Would say. Now listen. Buddy. There's no petrol in the tank. And I'm not going to give you. Another eighty dollars. For a tank of petrol. It just doesn't sit together.

Does it? Having done the hard work. Then the tank of petrol. Is nothing. Neither will our heavenly father.

[22 : 58] Having outlaid so much. To make us his children. Hold back anything. Required. To bring us home to heaven.

Keep going. Verses 33. Three to thirty nine. God's love for his people. Will never be spoiled. Paul's anticipating all our arguments.

Humanly speaking. And this is one. I think we resonate. Very easily with. See. When you think of marriage. Most marriages.

Come to grief. Sorry. Most marriages. That come to grief. Sorry. I should. Should. Well. Most marriages. That come to grief. Do so. Over a long period of time.

Commitment. gets eroded. Over a long period of time. And it happens. One hurt. One disappointment. One upset at a time.

[24 : 06] Until in the end. Abandonment. Is the outcome. Now the question. In each of our minds. I think. When we talk about God's love.

Is. Could God's love. Be spoiled like that. After all. We think. Well. You know. Every day. Hundred times a day.

God's absorbing. Hurts. And disappointments. And inconsistencies. From me. Sometimes. Just plain awfulness. From me. Could his love.

Be worn down. To the point. That he says. Right. That's it. I've had enough. And just. Cut me loose. Well.

No. Says Paul. Here it is. In these verses. God's love. Is total. And unconditional. And again. He digs into it. In what sense. Is God's love.

[25 : 05] Total and unconditional. Well. Look at verses. Three. In verse. Thirty. Three. And thirty. Four. Who shall bring. Any charge. Against God's elect.

It is God. Who justifies. And that's. Legal courtroom. Language. We fear.

That. In all the sins. That we've committed. We fear. That somewhere. That somewhere. Other. God's missed one. And that. It can be brought back.

And used against us. That God might be caught out. And embarrassed. Because. He himself. Didn't quite figure. Or. Or. Didn't quite deal with something justly. No.

Says Paul. It's inconceivable. God. Is just. God has justified his people. That is. Every sin. Past. Present. And future.

[26 : 06] In each of his died for sheep. Has been dealt with. And dealt with fully. And completely. So. It's impossible. Inconceivable. That there could be any charge.

Ever brought against one of God's. Died for sheep. The Lord didn't cut any corners. He didn't engage in any cover up. He didn't engage in any cover up. Who will lay any charge.

To God's elect. Not even our own sin. Can spoil. God's love for us. Because each sin.

Even the ones we haven't committed yet. Have been paid for. By the Lord Jesus. In his death. And even more reassuring. We follow in one John.

Chapter 2. We looked at that verse. Last week. Jesus is in heaven. Constantly reminding the Father. Of that fact. Father.

[27 : 09] When you look at your sheep. And you see them failing. And. Inconsistent. Remember Father. I have died for every one of their sins. Past. Present. And future. They have a clean sheet.

They keep a clean sheet. They keep a clean sheet. Every one of them. Says Jesus to the Father. Has been made acceptable.

By his death. On our behalf. Verses 35 through to 39. Who shall separate us. From the love of Christ. We ask.

We say. Well. There's lots of things. To be fearful of. There's lots of things. That can happen to us in life. Who shall separate us. From the love of Christ.

Shall tribulation. Distress. Persecution. Famine. Nakedness. Danger. Sword. As it was written. For your sake. We have been killed. All day long.

[28 : 08] We are regarded. As sheep to be slaughtered. No. Not even in all of these things. Sorry. No. In all these things. We are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us.

And so on. No person. No circumstance. No circumstance. No thing.

No thing. In the entire universe. Could separate us from God's love. That's a huge. Huge promise to us. When we consider.

There's so many times in life. When we will. Or have. Face tough situations. When we will suffer. Sometimes it's our own making. Sometimes it's through.

No fault of our own. In that. Neither of those situations. Do we need to fear. Do we need to fear. Missing out in heaven. Because. We fail to persevere.

[29 : 07] It's as if. Paul said. Look. Think of the worst. Form of torture. That a person. A Christian. Has ever endured. Think of the most. Powerful. Spiritual forces.

Of evil. In the universe. Think of whatever. You can think of. Says Paul. And I can tell you. That none of those things. Will overpower. Or erode.

God's love for us. Or God's commitment to us. In fact. The quotation from the Old Testament.

In fact. These things. Will be part of the renovation. Project. Project. There will be the context. In which God's love for you. Will thrive. In the midst.

Of the awfulness of life. We will experience. And see a display. Of God's love. That in turn. Will lead us. To conquer. Over all of those circumstances. Of life. And my friends.

[30 : 07] The same promises. Made repeatedly. Across scripture. I urge you to read. The cover article. On the front of the bulletin. And check out. Some of the references. To that wonderful phrase.

That wonderful description. Of God. The keeper of Israel. The keeping power. Of God. It's right across scripture. It's a delightful term. The keeper.

Of his people. But I just want to zoom in. On one of many passages. And I want to. You turn with me now. To Philippians chapter 1. Just to touch down.

Very very briefly. Just to see how this works. In one passage. And it can be repeated. As I say. Over many many passages. Philippians chapter 1. Verse 3. Paul is so thankful.

For the. Christians at Philippi. So thankful. In his prayers. For them. Every day. Why? Verse 6.

[31 : 07] I am sure of this. That he who began. A good work in you. Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. Come full circle.

God finishes. What he starts. Always. The renovation. The renovation. The renovation.

Already in those verses. Already so evident. In changed attitudes and desires. Will be completed. In Christ. And then if you jump over to chapter 2.

Of Philippians. Verses 12 and 13. Paul then jumps. Very practically. From that. Point of assurance. To a point of challenge. And exhortation.

And encouragement. When he says. Therefore. My beloved. As you have already obeyed. So now. Not only as in my presence. But much more in my absence. Work out your salvation.

[32 : 09] With fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you. Both to will and to work. For his good pleasure. Amen. What's Paul's point there?

He's just saying. Look. Because you're secure. And safe in Christ. Then press ahead. Confidently. In the struggle. To live daily. To reflect.

And express. The mind of Christ. Philippians 2. 5. The mind of Christ. That you already have in you. In the Holy Spirit. Just be confident. To press on. In the struggle. Each day.

To express. The mind of Christ. To say no. To say no. Yes to righteousness. To use language of Romans again. Why does he urge them so confidently.

Press ahead. When we know the struggle of life. Is so hard on a daily basis. Well. Verse 12 and 13. Because he knows that our desires. And God's desires.

[33 : 09] Are actually working to the same end. They complement each other. As we struggle to be like Christ. To be faithful. To give expression to the mind of Christ.

That we have in us. That's exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing within us. The two dovetail. And we can be confident in that struggle.

And that leads me then to just a final couple of sum up points. How do we respond to this twin truth of God's preservation and our perseverance?

Well two things I just want to touch on very carefully. Very, very briefly. Firstly, we need to be careful. As we think about this. Because perseverance does not mean.

That every person who says they're a Christian. Who goes to church. Who's been baptized. Will go to heaven no matter what they say. Or how they live.

[34 : 15] Perseverance isn't teaching that. The truth has to be applied in the context of Romans 8. And especially verses 20, 80, 30. And here it is.

If you're in Christ. Well you say, well what's the evidence of that? Well that's where Romans 8. I've already sort of covered that. The evidence of that is change desires and attitudes. That change the whole orientation or focus of your living.

So if you're a person who now longs to serve Jesus. Who longs to be in obedience to Jesus.

Then you can be sure. That this truth is for you. And that you will be. You will persevere. And again, perseverance does not mean you'll be free from sin.

It doesn't mean you'll be free from temptation. It doesn't mean you'll be free from a tough life. This is not a promise of roses and beer and Skittles. Far from it.

[35 : 28] Scripture is full of examples of God's people taking big falls. You know it in your own life. I know it in my life. There are times when we're really warm and excited in our service of Christ.

And there are times when we're decidedly cold. There are times when we just lose the plot altogether. For a period of time. But the promise of Scripture is that God will ensure we never fall absolutely.

We never fall completely. He will never abandon us. Yes, we will continue to sin and fail daily. As I've said before, we may even trip up seriously.

But the person who is truly in Christ will sooner or later be brought back, disciplined and renewed by the Lord's Spirit working against us, but never abandoned.

God's promise is that a believer will persevere in faith because God will preserve the faith, their faith, and shield them to salvation. My final comment then is that as well as being careful, we can also be confident.

[36 : 44] We can be confident knowing we are safe and secure. This is a very simple point and yet a very, very hard one to grasp. When we live with spiritual uncertainty, almost certainly will be debilitated, crippled, unable to press ahead in the service of the Lord Jesus.

Why? Because we're always consumed with worry about our position, our state before God. A proper understanding of this truth I've been speaking of this morning, that Christians are forever, will free us to be confident servants of the Lord.

And it works like this. If we're confident that the big business of life is already secure, that is our relationship with God and our eternal destiny, if those things are already secure, then we can get on with giving expression to that which we are in Christ.

We can get on with the task of persevering, struggling in the daily task of living for the Lord, of speaking the gospel, knowing that on a daily basis we will mess up and struggle and sin.

Many Christians have such black thoughts and live with paralyzing guilt and struggle against persistent and awful sins.

[38 : 16] Yet rarely do we come clean with each other and seek each other out to help one another in our struggles.

Why is that, do you think? Why do we so often pretend we're one thing when we're struggling at a different point? Why do we want to appear to be one thing when we're something different in practice?

Well, I think the answer is because we think these struggles reflect our state of salvation. And so we have to look good on the outside because we're finding our security, not in God's commitment to us, but in our performance toward God.

And that leaves us not much alternative but to pretend. I can't speak honestly about my struggles because it might appear to others that I'm not a Christian.

But friends, once we know we're safe and secure in Christ because of his commitment to us, then we can be honest with one another.

[39 : 34] We can be serious in helping one another in the struggle to be more like Christ, to be that which we want to be. We can honor sins. Friends, Christians are forever.

The life you have in Christ, by Christ's words, and this comes back to something really, really simple and you think, well, what has the last 30 minutes been about?

It comes back to something really, really simple. Christ says, I give you eternal life. The word eternal by definition means forever. Abundant life forever.

You will come into glory. You will come into the fullness of salvation because the Lord is keeping you for your salvation.

Keeping your salvation for you and you will persevere into it and you will know glory and you will know freedom. This truth, my friends, is a truth to live by.

[40 : 47] It's a truth to be joyful in. And it's a truth that ought to just cause us to overflow in such profound thanksgiving that my salvation from first to last is about God's commitment to me.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Lord, forgive us for not taking the time to understand the depth of this teaching so that, Lord, practically we live as though our eternal security is dependent on our performance.

Lord, we know the guilt that we harbor within ourselves. And we allow that guilt, Lord, to make us feel insecure and unsafe and to leave us full of anxiety and fear.

Lord, help us to see you, to see what you've done for us, to see what you continue to do in us, to see your love that is promised never to abandon us, never to be eroded, never to fade.

But your intention in your love is to bring us into perfect freedom and glory. Help us to rejoice in that even as we launch ourselves into the struggle of daily living to please you.

[42 : 22] In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.