

# Can God's Love for His Elect Ever Be Severed?

Romans 8.31-39

## Introduction

Robert Mounce gives a great summary of Romans 8 when he says:

As children of God we have been adopted into his family (v. 15). We are co-heirs with Christ (v. 17). We have received the Spirit as the guarantee of final redemption (v. 23). Our prayers are taken up by the Spirit and laid before God (v. 26). Though sinners by nature, through faith we have been acquitted of all wrong (v. 30). Our future glorification is so certain that God speaks of it as already having taken place (v. 30).<sup>1</sup>

And then we read Paul's rhetorical questions in Romans 8:31.

Romans 8:31 (ESV) —<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Who indeed! Yet there are many a believer who, while going through the trials of life, have questioned whether God was on their side. They wonder if God no longer loves them. Some have imagined God is against them, resisting their every step. We must ask ourselves this question: Can God's Love for His Elect Ever Be Severed?

## I. The Security of God's Work for Us in Christ

Let us look at the security we have because of God's work for us in Christ Jesus.

### A. *Redemption's Cost Ensures God's Purpose will be Fulfilled*

Romans 8:<sup>32</sup> 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?

Truly redemption's cost ensures God's purpose will be fulfilled.

Paul's argument here is from the greater to the lesser.

Consider the magnitude of God's graciousness towards us in the state we were in before our justification.

Romans 5:6–10 (ESV) —<sup>6</sup> For while we were still **weak**, at the right time Christ died for the **ungodly**. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—<sup>8</sup> but **God shows his love for us** in that while we were still **sinners**, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

When God set forth to redeem His chosen ones, He was “all in”! It is ridiculous to think that God would somehow renege on His purpose to make us one of His children.

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 189–190.

We can stand assured that God will fulfill His purpose for us in Christ because of the great cost of our redemption!

### ***B. Protected in the Courtroom of God***

Romans 8:<sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.<sup>34a</sup>  
Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died

Judicial language abounds in this verse.

- **Charge** - bring charges against, *accuse*<sup>2</sup>
- **Justifies** – to declare righteous. To vindicate.
- **Condemn** – pronounce a sentence after determination of guilt<sup>3</sup>
- **Elect** - those whom God has chosen from the generality of mankind and drawn to himself<sup>4</sup>

We find in this verse that we are protected in the courtroom of God!

But “Who” accuses us? Satan accuses us before God. Our enemies may accuse us before God and others. Sometimes our own conscience accuses us as we struggle with our sin nature. But I like what the *ESV Study Bible* has to say on this: God’s elect who “have come to faith in Christ will never be found guilty, for God declares them to be right before all the world at the divine tribunal.”<sup>5</sup>

Paul asks: “**Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies**” – God the Judge heard the case, knows all the details, and pronounced us righteous in Christ. No other being has the right to hear a case and pass a judgment!

“**Who is to condemn?**” – Revelation 12:10 tells us that Satan accuses believers “day and night before our God”. Christ stood condemned in the elect’s place.

Colossians 2:13–14 (ESV) —<sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

No accusation against you can remove God’s loving commitment to renew you. We stand protected from condemnation in the courtroom of God!

### ***C. Protected in the Temple of God***

Romans 8:<sup>34b</sup> —more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Christ’s position – ‘at the right hand of God’ (Cf. Ps 110:1).

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 273.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 519.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>5</sup> Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2172.

The right hand of God is the symbolic place of power, honor, distinction, and prestige.<sup>6</sup>

We stand protected in the temple of God!

Intercede - to make an earnest request through contact with the person approached; *approach or appeal to someone*<sup>7</sup>

Hebrews 7:23–25 (ESV) —<sup>23</sup> The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup> but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Christ, from a position of honor and distinction, intercedes for us with God.

We stand protected in the dwelling place of God!

Can God’s Love for His Elect Ever Be Severed? No! Nothing that happens to you can remove God’s loving commitment to renew you. We can be secure because of God’s work for us in Christ.

## II. The Security of God’s Love for Us in Christ

Not only can we be secure because of God’s work for us in Christ, but we also know that God’s love for His elect can never be severed because of God’s love for us in Christ Jesus. Look at Paul’s next rhetorical question in verse 35.

Romans 8:35a Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

### A. *No Physical Hardship Can Separate Us from Christ*

First we see that no physical hardship can separate us from Christ.

Romans 8:35b Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Don’t judge God’s love for you based on your circumstances. God displayed His love for you on the cross. Your circumstances are working for good. We then are “more than conquerors”. We not only merely ‘win’ the battle, we enjoy the spoils that are for our good. Your circumstances are working for good, even when you cannot discern God’s plan.

Don’t judge God’s love for you based on your perception of your circumstances. Your circumstances can be very dire, but that is not uncommon to God’s people. Paul quotes Psalm 44.22 so that we can see that God’s people have always suffered persecution. Persecution for God’s people is not an unusual thing. Nothing that happens to you can remove God’s loving commitment to renew you. So don’t judge God’s love for you based on your perception of your circumstances.

<sup>6</sup> Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2526.

<sup>7</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 341.

## ***B. A Sampling of Things that Cannot Separate Us from Christ***

Paul now speaks in a very personal way. He is convinced about some things that he wants to share with the Roman believers.

Romans 8:<sup>38</sup> For I am sure [*convinced*] that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> 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.

Paul lists a sampling of things that cannot separate us from Christ.

**Death nor life** – It doesn't matter if we live or die, we won't be separated from Christ' Love. When you become sick with a terminal disease, know that Christ still loves you. Imminent death does not mean that God doesn't love you.

What about life? When you are ready to die but God won't take you, know that Christ still loves you! Even your manner of death doesn't change God's love for you!

Luke 13:1–5 (ESV) —<sup>1</sup> There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

It doesn't matter if we live or die, we won't be separated from Christ' Love.

**Angels, (evil spiritual) rulers, & Powers** – Rulers and powers are evil demons with different levels of authority in Satan's army.

Daniel 10:5-6, 12–14 (ESV) —<sup>5</sup> I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. <sup>6</sup> His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.... <sup>12</sup> Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. <sup>13</sup> The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, <sup>14</sup> and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.”

In our day we tend to either ignore the existence of evil spiritual beings, or give them too much credit as some charismatic ministers attribute demons to every type of sin under the sun. Satan and his demons are real. But these spiritual powers are incapable of separating us from the love of Christ.

Colossians 2:15 (ESV) —<sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

But why would Paul include angels in this list? How could good angels be a perceived threat? False teachers in Colosse apparently were promoting the worship of angels that turned their worship away from Christ.

Colossians 2:18–19 (ESV) —<sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Again, there are some that overemphasize the role of angels in our day. Yet no angel can separate us from the love of Christ!

Nothing in the spiritual realm can separate us from the love of Christ.

**Things present nor to come** – Nothing presently in this world, nor in the future will be able to separate us from the love of Christ. As it has been said, “I don’t know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future!”

**Height nor depth** – There is no spatial distance that you can place between yourself and Christ which will make Him forget about, or stop loving you. You may hear someone describe a place as “godforsaken”.

Psalm 139:7–9 (ESV) —<sup>7</sup> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even if God brings you what you think is a “godforsaken” place, know that you yourself are not forsaken by God. There is no place you can go where Christ will stop loving you.

**All creation** – Nothing in the spiritual or physical realm can separate us from the love of Christ! Nothing in all of creation can remove God’s loving commitment to renew you.

As the chapter began with “no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1), so it ends with the bookends of “no separation” (8:35, 39).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 284.

## Conclusion

God is working all circumstances in life for the good of His elect. Remember that God is making you more like Christ. Nothing that happens to you should cause you to doubt God's love for you.

Who, or what, can separate *you* from the love of Christ?

If your sins were condemned in the death of Christ, then who can condemn you?

If by being joined to Christ, His righteousness is yours, then who can accuse you?

If God is for us, *does it matter* **who** is against us?

Can God's love for His elect ever be severed? No! God's love for His elect can never be severed because it is grounded in the work of God through Christ and secured by God's love for us in Christ. There is no condemnation nor separation for the believer!

The Gospel is good news because those who believe it are forever saved and cannot be separated from God's enduring love.

Take heart child of God! Your justification is settled. Your future glorification is certain. In the mean time you can rest secure in God's love for you, knowing that *nothing* can sever you from His loving commitment to renew you into the image of His Son.