

## **The Precious Love of the Lord**

**Sermon Text:** Psalm 36

**Study Texts:** Romans 8:31-39

**Sermon Recap:** The main idea of this week's sermon is this: The precious, steadfast love of the LORD protects and provides for His children. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from this week's sermon.

**Sermon Connection:** In Psalm 36, we are confronted with two great realities: 1) The presence and reality of the wicked, and 2) The steadfast protection of God for His people. These themes stretch throughout the whole of the Bible, and this is exactly the point of Romans 8. Paul, in one of his great Christ-centered passages, holds up Christ as our great hope. Jesus is our hope for salvation from sin, and He is our hope of deliverance from the wickedness of the world. Just as with the Psalmist, we see that the precious, steadfast love of the LORD protects and provides for His children.

### **Lesson Plan**

**Lesson Goal:** To see that our salvation—being from God, and kept by God—protects and keeps the Church from all danger.

#### **Lesson Points:**

**Point 1: God Protects His Children Through *Giving*.** (vv. 31-32)

**Point 2: God Protects His Children Through *Forgiving*.** (vv. 33-39)

**The Context:** Romans 8 falls in the middle of the letter to the Romans. Paul is making the transition from explaining how the gospel is necessary for the salvation of sinful humanity to how the gospel radically transforms and reorders our lives. If we are to rightly understand the latter portion of the letter, which is consumed with gospel-centered commands for living, we must first understand that we are saved in Christ and guarded in Him forever.

**Opening Question:** What do you think of when you think "safety"? Is all safety equal?

**Point 1 - God Protects His Children Through Giving.** (vv. 31-32)

Paul's words in v. 31, "*What then shall we say to these things?...*" can also be translated, "*To what conclusion do these things lead us?*" To what "things" is Paul referring here? See vv. 26-30.

Throughout this passage of Scripture, Paul uses a teaching tool called rhetoric. He's making a point by asking questions. Verse 31 is a capstone of sorts for what he's just stated, which is that God is everything for His people; He cannot and will not fail. In vv. 26-30, Paul outlines how God (the Trinity, more appropriately) accomplished salvation for His people and preserves their faith, therefore keeping them held secure in that salvation. In other words, man cannot lose his salvation because salvation is from God and maintained by God. This is Paul's point in v. 30 where he writes, "...*those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.*" Thus, in v. 31, Paul is saying that such glorious truths lead us to a crystal clear conclusion.

What is the purpose/answer to Paul's rhetorical question in the second part of v. 31, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*"

Simply stated, no one can stand against the purposes of God. This is a substantial truth for us to wrestle with, for it is not merely for our mental understanding. We often settle for "knowing" such truths with our mind without internalizing them in our hearts. God gives us such sweet promises for our good and for our benefit. While we may employ such a truth when times are good and suffering is at bay, we desperately need them when the walls come crashing down. Sickness, loss of a job, loss of a loved one, etc, these are the moments when we must recall and meditate on these sweet promises. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is helping us when we are weak (v. 26); that He is praying for us in a divine, heavenly language (v. 26); that the Father is working all things for our good, even when they seem most dark (v. 28); that God is moving and working with perfect wisdom, and He does no wrong (v. 28); that He is keeping us perfectly (vv. 29-30). What sweet promises for frail and weak people. As Paul says elsewhere, "*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with my weaknesses...For when I am weak, then I am strong.*" (2 Cor. 12:10)

Why is it that no one can "*be against*" the children of God? What has God given to ensure their salvation and safety? (v. 32)

Two things are in view here. First, we note that no one can be against the children of God because God Himself is sovereign. He possesses all power and might, and He perfectly orders all that is. Because He possesses control, nothing happens outside of His control, thus nothing can come against His children. Second, v. 32 is clear that in His sovereign control, He is also entirely good. We are reminded that we have nothing to fear from God because of His great love for us demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us.

How does v. 32 teach us to trust God's goodness toward His children? What does God give? There is a particular phrase in v. 32 that should speak a sweet word to our hearts. Paul writes, "...*how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?*" Paul's point is clear: Because God has highly exalted Jesus, bestowing on Him heavenly blessings and honor, we too, being found in Christ, receive the fullness of God's love and blessing. He is entirely goodness—His goodness is such that it is not tainted by sin. And out of His perfect goodness, He bestows on us all good things. How blessed are the children of God! For God has given us Christ Jesus, our Lord.

**Transition Statement:** God's giving of Christ is for our protection, for in giving Jesus, He forgives our sins.

**Point 2 - God Protects His Children Through *Forgiving*. (vv. 33-39)**

Paul's questions in vv. 33-34 teach us about our sin and the nature of gospel forgiveness. What do these verses teach us about how Christ deals with our sin, and thus, how we should think about and deal with our own sin?

Paul's point highlights several things concerning sin. First, we must note that Satan, the accuser, never stops his accusing of the brethren. He will never stop his harassment, and he does so to take away our assurance of faith and joy of salvation. Paul's point is to highlight the foolishness of such accusations; Satan is not the Judge. Because our sin was taken to the cross in Christ, our sin is dead. It died with Him on that cross. Therefore, being in Christ means that God, the Judge, has declared us innocent of sin; we stand justified before Him. Therefore, we must have such a mind concerning our own sin. We need not be robbed of our assurance of faith and joy of salvation, for our sin has been completely and totally dealt with.

How should such a theological truth apply to our life within gospel community with one another?

Many Christians struggle with sin. Not only besetting sins (those sins we continually struggle with and against), but with sin in our past. We have a hard time of truly letting it go and allowing Christ to remove our shame; shame that He bore for us. As we learn to live in the true forgiveness of the gospel, we must learn to see our brothers and sisters in same light. Our sins are not simply covered in Christ, they have been dealt with and destroyed. Jesus does not need to us to help in the bearing of sin. He has completed this task for us.

Consider the 7 circumstances Paul notes in v. 35, and ask how the gospel applies and speaks to such circumstances in life.

R.C. Sproul notes, "In these very things, we have assurance of Jesus' presence with us. If anything seals His love for us, it is His promise to be with us in the midst of persecution

and peril and sword and famine and everything that the world, the flesh, and the Devil can throw against us.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22 in v. 36. What is his point in doing so?

Psalm 44:22 highlights the reality of suffering for the people of God. We live in a world plagued by sin. Sin ruins and destroys, and so it should come as no surprise that God's people face hardship and suffering. But, as Paul has just noted, these things do not separate us from God, nor do they mean God is not with us. On the contrary, by quoting the Psalm, Paul shows that hardship is a natural part of the Christian life. Jesus became a slaughtered sheep for us (Isa. 53:7; Acts 8:32). Just as He suffered for us with great hope in God, so we endure our hardship and suffering with great hope in God.

How do vv. 37-39 sum up the truth that God protects and provides for His children?

It can sometimes feel that the weight of our sin and the weight of the world's hardship are on the verge of crushing and conquering us. The Holy Spirit is not unaware of such temptations, which is why He inspired Paul to pen such truths for us. We have Christ, and we have the promise that nothing can overcome us. Nothing can come against us and undo our standing with God.

### **The Big Picture - God protects His children in Jesus Christ.**

The Psalms are rich with deep reminders of God's goodness and His faithful loving-kindness toward His people. He cares for us, protect us, and sustains us, keeping us for Himself. It truly is a comforting truth to know that the precious, steadfast love of the LORD protects and provides for His children. And as we have seen, these truths run throughout the whole of the Bible. Paul goes to great lengths to show how God's protection of His people is clearly seen in the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. God cares for us in that He *gave* Jesus Christ for the *forgiveness* of our sin. That is the only sure and lasting protection from sin for the people of God.

### **Application Questions**

- Am I trusting in Christ alone for the forgiveness of my sin?
- How am I believing that God protects and provides for me? Do my actions reflect my belief?
- How am I teaching my family to trust in God alone?
- How does my life reflect a trust in God's giving of Jesus?
- How can our growth group proclaim this message in our community? Have someone in the group make a list.

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul, *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary on Romans*, 299.