

REFLECT ON GOD'S PROMISES

Romans 8:31-39

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Life is difficult.
2. How does God want you to respond to difficulties? He wants you to endure hardship (2 Tim 4:5).
3. And God gives us the resources to endure.
4. One of those resources is to reflect on His promises. There are over 8,000 promises in the Bible. When you go through a hard time, one of the most encouraging things you can do is to remind yourself of God's wonderful promises.
5. In Romans 8:31-39 we will see six great promises.

II. TEXT

1. **Romans 8:31-39** 31 What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? 33 Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. 35 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: Because of you we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. SIX GREAT PROMISES

1. Providence.

- i. **Romans 8:31** What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?
- ii. The first promise in this passage is that God is for us.

- iii. What does it mean that God is for us?
- iv. Let's begin with what it doesn't mean:
 - v. First, it doesn't mean that God is merely cheering for you. I am for the New Orleans Saints football team, but all that really means is that I cheer for them on Sundays. I hope they win. But I'm not personally committed to their success. I am not actively working for their success. I am not helping them to succeed. That's not what means it means when it says that God is for you. God is not merely cheering for you, He is actively involved in your life to help you. I'm reminded of Psalm 23. He gives you what you need, lets you lie down in green pastures, leads you beside still waters, leads you along right paths, prepares a table before you, etc. This is not a God who is merely cheering for you, but leaving you to fend for yourself. He is highly active in your life to help you.
 - vi. Second, it doesn't mean that God is going to help you succeed at all your goals. Some people think "God is for us" means that God is on their team, ready to help them with whatever goal they out to achieve. God is not on your team. God is on God's team, and when He saved you He drafted you onto His team, and He will help you to accomplish His goals for Your life. He will help you achieve His definition of success. He will help you become who He wants you to become.
 - vii. So, what does it mean that God is for us? I'll explain it with **four statements**:
 - viii. First, it means that God is not against you. He does not want you to be miserable. He doesn't want you to fail. God is for you. God wants to give you abundant life (Jn 10:10). He wants to give you rest for your soul (Mt 11:28-29). He wants to give you peace and joy (Gal 5:22-23). God has plans for your well-being, not your disaster; He wants to give you a future and a hope (Jer 29:11).
 - ix. Second, it means that God is aware of you. God knows who you are and what you are facing. He knows the number of hairs on your head (Lk 12:7). He knows when you sit down and stand up; He knows your thoughts; He watches you when you travel, and

when you stay home; He knows what you are going to say before you say it (Ps 139:1-4).

- x. Third, it means that God cares about you (1 Pt 5:7). He is not careless and uninterested in you. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to save you (Jn 3:16).
- xi. Fourth, it means that God will work all things together for your good. "God is for us" is another way of stating the truth of Romans 8:28, that God is working all things together for your good. This is called providence. Providence is the care and superintendence [guidance] which God exercises over His creation (Webster's 1828 Dictionary). Providence is made up of two truths:
 - 1. Nothing can happen to you unless God allows it. Isn't that true? Think about it in the form of a syllogism:
 - a. God knows everything that happens to you.
 - b. God is strong enough to prevent anything from happening to you.
 - c. Therefore, if something happens to you, it is because God allowed it.
 - 2. If God allows it, then He will use it for your good.
- xii. So, this verse, Rm 8:31, is essentially the promise of God's providence in your life, to work all things together for your good, but with an added emphasis. "If God is for us, who is against us?" This isn't to say that no one is against us. Satan is against us. Persecutors are against us. The world is against us. What this means is that God is so great that it doesn't matter who is against us, because they cannot prevent Him from working all things together for our good.
- xiii. It reminds me of the Chicago Bulls when Michael Jordan was at his peak. They won three championships in a row, and then he retired. When he came back, they won three more championships in a row. They were unstoppable. Nobody could get in their way. That's the way it is with the Lord. Nobody can prevent Him from working all things together for our good.
- xiv. This is what the Bible means when it says that "no weapon formed against you will succeed (Is 54:17)."

2. Provision.

- i. **Romans 8:32** He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?
- ii. This is the promise of provision. That God will provide for our needs.
- iii. Paul is making an argument from the greater to the lesser. The greater is that God has already given us the best thing possible – His Son for our salvation. And if God did that, then God will give us everything else that we need.
- iv. This promise is found throughout the Bible. One of God’s names is Yahweh-Yireh, or Jehovah-Jireh, which means The Lord will Provide (Gen 22:14). David said, “The Lord is my shepherd; I have what I need.” Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you (Mt 6:33).” Paul said, “And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19).”
- v. Notice that the text that God will “grant us everything.” To avoid confusion, let me make **four clarifications about God’s promise of provision.**
- vi. First, God promises to meet all your needs, not your “greeds”. God doesn’t promise to give you everything you want; He promises to give you everything you need. God doesn’t promise to give you riches, and fame, and luxury, and comfort.
- vii. Second, what you think you need and what God knows you need are often very different. If God doesn’t give you what you think you need, don’t assume He has broken His word. Assume that you don’t know what you need.
- viii. Third, God’s promise to give you “everything” doesn’t literally mean everything. It’s like this. Let’s say I go to your house to cook some gumbo, and as I’m walking to the door you ask, “Where are all your supplies?” I am carrying a large basket and reply, “Everything is right here.” I didn’t mean that the entire universe was in my basket. I meant that everything I need to cook the gumbo is in my basket. When God promises to give you everything, He isn’t promising to give you everything you need to

never get sick, to never die, to never suffer. He is promising to give you everything you need to do His will and fulfill His plan for your life.

- ix. Fourth, God provides through prayer. James wrote, “You do not have because you do not ask (James 4:2).” God promises to provide for your needs, but you have to ask. I realize that you don’t have perfect knowledge of your needs, and sometimes you don’t need what you think you need, but if you want God to provide for you, ask. Ask for what you think you need. Don’t worry, He loves you enough to not answer a bad request. But you better ask. Jesus commanded us to pray, “Give us today our daily bread (Mt 6:11).”

3. Pardon.

- i. **Romans 8:33** Who can bring an accusation against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies.
- ii. The third promise is pardon, or forgiveness. It is justification. The book of Romans is all about justification. Justification is a legal, forensic term. It means that God declares you legally righteous in His sight. It is similar to God saying about you, “Not guilty.”
- iii. Justification has both a present and a future application. In the present, the promise of justification means that God treats you like His beloved child rather than as His enemy. He accepts you. You have peace with God. He gives you right standing and right status with Himself.
- iv. In the future tense, justification means that when you die and stand before the judgment seat of Christ, He will let you into heaven rather than send you to hell. It means that on judgment day you will not be condemned (Rm 8:1).
- v. Let me answer **two questions about justification**.
 - 1. First, how is it possible for God to overlook your sins? If He is the just judge of the universe, shouldn’t He punish wrongdoers? The Bible says it is detestable to the Lord to acquit the guilty (Pr 17:15). This is where the cross comes in to play. This is why Jesus came to earth. You sinned and deserved God’s eternal wrath. But God loved you and

wanted to save you, so He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to take your punishment. In this way God could be both just and justifier (Rm 3:24-26). He is just because your sins were punished. And He is justifier because He could declare you righteous in His sight.

2. Second, how is justification received? While God wants to justify everyone (1 Tim 2:4), and Christ died to justify everyone (1 Tim 2:6), God only justifies those who put their faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 3:28). To get right with God and receive eternal life, you must admit you are a sinner, believe in the death and resurrection of Christ, and call on Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. The promise of justification is that anyone who believes in Jesus is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe in Him will be condemned (Jn 3:18).

4. Prayer.

- i. **Romans 8:34** Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.
- ii. Notice the last part of this verse about Jesus: “he is also at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.”
- iii. To intercede is to pray for someone else.
- iv. In Rm 8:26-27 we learned that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our groanings. When we don’t know what to pray for and can only groan in pain and sorrow, the Holy Spirit takes those groans and translates them into requests that are perfectly in line with God’s will.
- v. While the Holy Spirit is interceding for us in our hearts, Rm 8:34 says that Jesus is interceding for us in heaven.
- vi. The intercessory ministry of Christ goes back to the ascension. After Jesus rose from the grave He spent forty days with His disciples, and then He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The right hand of God is the place of authority. God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).
- vii. What is Jesus doing in heaven? He is praying for us.

- viii. What is Jesus praying for? I think we can find the answer in John 17. John 17 is called the high priestly prayer. It was the night before Christ's crucifixion, just before His arrest, and Jesus prayed for us. He prayed for His followers who were alive at the time, and for all the Christians who would come.
 - 1. He prayed for your safety (Jn 17:11).
 - 2. He prayed for your protection from Satan; to overcome temptation so that you will not ruin your usefulness to God (Jn 17:15).
 - 3. He prayed for your joy (Jn 17:13).
 - 4. He prayed for your spiritual growth (Jn 17:17).
 - 5. He prayed for your fruitfulness in ministry (Jn 17:18).
 - 6. He prayed for our unity in the church (Jn 17:20-21).
 - 7. And He prayed for your eternal security (Jn 17:24).
- ix. And I believe that these are the types of things that Jesus is still praying for on our behalf today.

5. Progress.

- i. **Romans 8:35-37** 35 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: Because of you we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
- ii. The next promise is progress.
- iii. Don't miss the truth in verse 35. Christ loves you. Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13)." And that's what He did for you. His love for you couldn't be greater.
- iv. But in this passage Paul asks a question. What can separate us from the love of Christ? Then He mentions **seven trials** that you might assume can separate you from Christ's love:
 - 1. Affliction: This means strong pressure.
 - 2. Distress: The NIV translates it as hardship. These two words – affliction and hardship – cover any type of problem you might have in life.

3. Persecution: Being mistreated for being a Christian.
 4. Famine: this word just means hunger.
 5. Nakedness: This word doesn't necessarily mean "buck naked," but could simply mean have a lack of clothing; you are in need of clothing. It refers to someone who is so poor that they don't have shoes, or good shoes, or they don't have any warm clothing.
 6. Danger.
 7. Sword: This refers to execution.
- v. Two things are interesting about this list. First, this list is not just hypothetical for Paul. If you go back and read Paul's story as a missionary, by the time he wrote this letter he had already experienced the first six (2 Cor 11:23-29), and according to tradition, he died by the sword (beheading).
 - vi. Second, you would think that if Jesus allows someone to experience all of these trials, He doesn't love Him. If that's how Christ treats His friends, I'd hate to be His enemy.
 - vii. But Paul says, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." What does it mean that we are more than conquerors? A conqueror does more than survive; he defeats the enemy. Paul we are more than conquerors through Christ. To be more than a conqueror is to not only defeat the enemy, but to cause the enemy to help you (Hendriksen). In other words, Paul is saying that through Christ, even though He allows His people to experience hardship, He uses the worst that life throws at us to actually help us.
 - viii. How does God use the worst things in life to help us? I'll mention **four ways**.
 1. To grow us. God uses trials to help us become more like Jesus. Paul said, "We boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope (Rm 5:3-4)." It's been said that suffering is the best sermon, pain is the best preacher, and trials are the best teachers.

2. To draw us closer to Him. In the book of Judges, every time the Israelites would prosper and get comfortable, they would drift from the Lord and fall into idolatry. So God would allow the surrounding nations to afflict them, and this would motivate Israel to return to Him.
 3. To make us more useful. Paul wrote, “He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God (2 Cor 1:4).” Suffering equips us to minister sufferers.
 4. To move us where God wants us. The Bible says that as you trust in the Lord with all your heart, He will direct your path (Pr 3:5-6). How does He direct your path? It is rarely through an audible voice. Often it is through trials. He forces you to move out of your comfort zone. Joseph’s story is an example. God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery, to be falsely accused of sexual assault, and to go to prison, all so that He could elevate him to the position of Prime Minister of Egypt. That’s the way God usually guides us. He uses problems at work to move you to the right job. He uses relational problems to move us to the right people. He uses church problems to move you to the right church. For some of you, God used a pandemic to move you to Church Acadiana.
- ix. “In all these things we are more than conquerors.” God promises that not only will He enable us to survive our problems, and not only will we defeat our problems, but He will use our problems to help us!

6. Perseverance.

- i. **Romans 8:38-39** 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ii. I believe that this is the promise of eternal security, also known as perseverance. The doctrine of perseverance means that you can't lose your salvation because God will ensure that you persevere in the faith until the end. "What if you stop believing?" The doctrine of perseverance is that God will not allow you stop believing. He will hold you firmly in His hand. "What if you sin?" Jesus has already paid for your sins. I think that is the promise here.
- iii. I don't think this passage is merely saying that nothing can stop God from loving you. That is a huge encouragement in itself. Nothing can stop God from loving you – no matter how bad you sin, no matter what you do, He will always love you. His love is unconditional and unceasing.
- iv. I think this passage is saying more than that. I think the "love of God" here refers to the loving actions of God already mentioned in this passage – His providence, provision, pardon, prayer, and progress. I think this passage is saying that nothing can stop God from carrying out these loving actions in your life.
- v. Paul mentions **ten threats** that can't separate you from God's loving embrace:
 - 1. Death and life cannot separate you from God's love. When you die, you immediately enter God's presence. In life, He is constantly with you, working all things together for your good.
 - 2. Angels and rulers cannot separate you from God's love. These are two terms for angelic beings. Some versions translate "rulers" as principalities. The NIV translates it as "angels and demons." The Jewish rabbis taught that there were different types and ranks of angels. Angels and principalities are two types of angels. The rabbis also taught that the angels were hostile and antagonistic to people. Paul is not affirming this teaching, but he could be assuring the people that even angels are not powerful enough to separate you from God's love.

3. Things present and things to come cannot separate you from God's love. Not the trials of this life or the uncertainty of the future.
4. No power can separate you from God's love. This might refer to another type of angelic being.
5. No height or depth can separate you from God's love. These are astrological terms. Many people back then were terrified of the stars. They believed that the stars determined your destiny. Paul could be assuring the believers that the stars cannot separate you from God's love.
6. Nor any created thing. Nothing in all of creation, and that includes you, can separate you from the love of God. Nothing can prevent God from fulfilling His promises in your life. You cannot lose your salvation. You can't forfeit it. You can't abandon it. You can't ruin it. And no one can steal it from you.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Is life difficult? Yes. Even for Christians? Yes. But God has given us resources to help us endure. One of those are His promises. What do you do when you are going through hard times? Reflect on God's promises. He promises providence, provision, pardon, prayer, progress, and perseverance. And what makes these promises encouraging is the Promiser – God Himself. This is the God who cannot lie. This is the God who is always faithful.