



Questions of Assurance from Romans 8

Spiritual maturity is impossible for believers who have come to doubt their eternal salvation. Yet the lack of assurance is a common problem among Christians and those who call themselves Christians.

Doubts can originate from many sources. Perhaps the person who doubts was never really saved by believing in Jesus Christ alone. Or they could have been confused about the gospel. Sometimes persistent sin or difficult trials may cause people to doubt whether they are really Christians. Some personality types are prone to doubt their salvation because they are oriented toward introspection or emotional feelings. In any case, the lack of assurance is a sad and unnecessary hindrance to growing in grace, since assurance is the birthright of every Christian. John was able to say to his readers, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13a).

In Romans 8 we find four questions that when asked and answered settle the assurance issue without a doubt. It is no surprise that these questions come in a book that mentions grace more than any other New Testament book. Up to this point, Paul has shown that grace has justified (3:21—5:21) and sanctified (6:1—8:17) the believer. Now he shows how it secures the believer (8:17-39). He explains that God has predestined all who are justified to be finally glorified, i.e. conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (8:29-30). That in itself is a strong argument for assurance. However, the end of Romans 8 represents the mountaintop of this grace logic.

The four questions are themselves introduced by a rhetorical question, “What then shall we say to these things?” (8:31a). The truth Paul has discussed is so forceful and magnificent it demands a worthy response and conclusion. Here are the four questions presenting his conclusion:

1. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31b) This introductory question throws down a challenge to all who would doubt or challenge the sufficiency of Jesus Christ’s saving work. Of course, no one exists who can stand against God’s final purpose and plan of glorification for those who are His (8:28-30). Paul’s answer to this first question includes a rhetorical question: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (8:32). In other words, if God gave us the ultimate gift, His Son, why would He not give us everything else necessary to guarantee our glorification? As believers, we can be sure we are eternally saved because no one can thwart God’s plan for us.

2. “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?” (8:33a) The second question echos from a courtroom setting. No one can charge us with sin crimes because God has justified us (8:33b). In the ultimate court, our Judge, the most honorable high and holy God, has acquitted us and declared us righteous before His perfect justice. If God has so pronounced this verdict, who can resurrect the charges of wrong doing that would bring us before Him again? There is no double jeopardy in God’s legal system! As believers, we can be sure we are eternally saved because there is no sin that has not already been dealt with by Jesus Christ our Lord.



3. “Who is he who condemns?” (8:34a) The third question asks if there is anyone who can cast a verdict of “Guilty” against us. But if we were declared “Not guilty” in our justification, who can reverse God’s verdict? “It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (8:34b). When Jesus said from the cross, “It is finished,” He was saying that our sin debt was paid in full by His death. He took the punishment for us. Then He arose from the dead proving that God accepted that payment, so we are safe from future punishment. The word “intercession” is also from the courtroom. It refers to the work of a defense attorney or advocate. As our defense advocate, we can count on Jesus Christ to win our case. He now lives in the presence of God, at His right hand, pleading our case before the Father (Heb. 7:25). His plea for us is based on the finished and sufficient work He did on the cross. As believers, we can be sure we are eternally saved because our sins, past, present, and future, remain paid for by Jesus Christ Himself.

4. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (8:35a) Who can come between us in our relationship to God? What can interrupt His purpose to love us from the beginning of our salvation to its final destination? Paul’s answer is inclusive. He searches the physical universe and the spiritual realms to find anything that has the power to come between us and our Heavenly Father.

Hardships like “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (8:35b) tempt us to think that since God allows these things, He must not love us. But there is no contradiction between God’s love for us and our suffering. Even forces as powerful and menacing as death, evil spirits, or the uncertainty of the future can not cancel God’s love for us. And the phrase “any other created thing” (8:39) even includes us! His conclusion is comprehensive: *Absolutely nothing* “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39b). With such an assurance, we who have believed should never doubt that we will be with God forever.

Conclusion

Can anything interrupt God’s love for His children which brings them to their final destiny of being glorified in the image of Christ? Paul answers, “No one, no thing, no where, no way!” Our eternal salvation rests in what Jesus has done for us and God’s ensuing faithfulness and power. What God has promised He will do. We can rest in the assurance of this salvation if we have received it as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. These four questions from Romans 8 keep us from looking subjectively at our feelings or our conduct. Instead, they keep us focused objectively on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Anchor of our souls.