

**SECURITY AND INSECURITY  
Romans 8:28-39**

**I. INTRO**

- A. There is a feeling that most of us have felt at one point in our lives. It's a scary feeling. It's the feeling of being unsure. Of not knowing what's going to happen to you, whether people like you or hate you, think you're cool—or an idiot. It's the feeling of ***insecurity***. It's not just something you feel when you're 13 and get over—it keeps showing up through life. And we live in a world that actually ***promotes*** it. Anyone know why? It ***sells***.

-See, if you feel insecure about whether or not you have bad breath, or body odor, or flabby thighs, or whether or not people see you as important or successful—well, you are a pushover for someone who's selling breath mints, or deodorant or exercise equipment or expensive cars.

-Feeling insecure, especially about your future, or about your safety, or about the love and respect of others is an awful feeling. And one of the best feelings in the world is feeling ***secure***. Feeling safe, loved, and valued is one of the most sought-after feelings in the world.

- B. One of the most incredible things the Bible teaches us is that, because of Jesus Christ, we are secure in how God loves us and values us. God reached out to us while we were quite uninterested in Him—showed up on this planet and gave his life in place of ours to pay for our sin and rebellion. His forgiveness and His life and His protection comes to us as a gift. All we have to do is receive Him—and his gift of life. That is one incredible reason to feel confident!

-And most of us, when we gather like this in Jesus' name, do feel pretty confident when we're here. But sometimes when you and I leave, life gets tough and scary. We screw up—and feel really bad. Sometimes we have awful thoughts. And sometimes our confidence in the fact that God loves us and values us doesn't just waver—it crashes and burns.

1. Want to know what that means? I don't have a clue! Actually—it means that our confidence in our relationship to God has to be based on more than warm fuzzies! It has to be based on fact--the facts of what God has done for us, and the fact of our response to His kindness and grace.
2. You may have heard people talk about being "saved" or about "salvation." What that refers to is simply being saved from spiritual death—an eternity of separation from God—because Jesus suffered death in our place. This morning, I'm going to deal very simply and plainly with what salvation—this restored and renewed relationship with God--is, and what it isn't. My prayer is that whatever happens, the fog will lift and you will be clear on where you stand. And that you will move from insecurity to security.

**II. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON IS "SAVED?"**

- A. I talked pretty clearly a few weeks ago about the fact that Jesus is the only way to God. We couldn't get to God on our own, so God came here, lived a perfect life—and laid down his life for us to pay for our sin and failure. We are ***saved*** from our sin when we

turn away from it, receive the gift of life from God and then depend totally on what Jesus Christ has done to pay for our sin and reunite us with God.

Because salvation is so huge, so counter-intuitive, the Bible uses an number of terms to describe it.

1. We start out spiritually dead—completely unresponsive to God. Jesus said we can't and won't respond to God unless the Holy Spirit **draws** us—which is why I have this **magnet**..
    - Most of you have either seen or felt this sense of being **drawn**—sometimes in a service just like this. It's an inner tugging; a restlessness; a dissatisfaction with life as you've known it. Well, that's the Spirit of God attracting you to Himself.
  2. Another word that describes this process is something called **conviction**. All of us find ourselves doing things that are destructive to ourselves and others. God begins to convince us that we need to let go of those things.
    - Conviction is what causes us to look at our relationships, our thought lives, our honesty, how we talk about and treat others and think, "I need to **change!**" God speaks quietly to our hearts. He says, "Come on. You **know** you need me! Let me in your life. Let me help you. Let me love you. Just bow your knee to me. Why don't you come **home?**"
  3. Conviction has completed its work when it leads to **repentance**. The word **repent** means to change your mind about something--specifically, sin. When you repent, you understand the destructiveness of what you've been doing to others, to yourself, and to God. You don't just shrug it off, or blame others--you **own up to it!** This is what John Deacon was talking about 2 weeks ago.
    - There's a phrase we use often in our house that I think reflects repentance. Whenever there's a disagreement between Lori and I, or us and one of the kids, we do a little sleuthing to find out what the truth is. When the truth is known by all, it is customary in the Davis household for someone to say, "Go ahead. Say the words. **I WAS WRONG AND YOU WERE RIGHT.**" No one is excluded. The children have been known to say, "Come on, Dad, **SAY THE WORDS!**" So, I say, "You were wrong and I was right."
    - Repentance means saying to God, "God, you were right--you were **so** right, and I was wrong--**so** wrong. I didn't know that--but I know it now."
- B. When we are drawn to God, when conviction does it's work and we do a 180 away from our sin--and choose God as our leader and traveling companion, that is what the Bible calls **salvation**. We are **made alive!**

1. Salvation describes past, present and future Listen to how Jesus talked about it:

***I tell you the truth, whoever HEARS my word (conviction) and BELIEVES him who sent me (repentance and faith) HAS eternal life and WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED; he HAS CROSSED OVER from DEATH to LIFE (John 5:24 NIV).***

- a. We **have** eternal life—the moment we hear the truth and truly believe it; trust it. This life gives us power over sin—power to stop destroying ourselves and others.
- b. It addresses the future--that when we stand before God we will not be condemned.
- c. And it addresses the past by saying that the moment we cross the bridge --we put our weight fully on the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf, we cross from **death to life**.  
You can't explain salvation any better than that. That's why Christianity is not spelled **D-O**, but **D-O-N-E**. The death Jesus died was powerful enough to cancel every sin that has been committed or ever will be committed-- because He was God.

2. The Bible actually uses some **legal** terms to describe what happens when we respond to God. This is actually a **mallet** for doing leather carving—but let's pretend it's a **judge's gavel**. One of the words used most it uses is **justification**. It's a legal term. Remember the phrase used in O.J. Simpson's trial? "If the glove does not fit you must...**acquit**. Acquittal or justification means that someone is declared **not guilty**. It means that all the charges are dropped.

-When it comes to our sin, it's **not** that there's not enough evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that we did wrong stuff; it's that Jesus' perfect life is applied to our account.

3. Another word used to describe what happens is the word **redeemed** or **ransomed**. In this case, the gavel becomes an auctioneer's gavel. In that culture, when a slave was being auctioned off like property, someone would make the highest bid—then give that person their freedom. Jesus said that he didn't come to be served but to serve and **give his life as a RANSOM for many**.  
-When we put our faith in Jesus Christ--we are twice his: He made us, and He bought us back--paid for our freedom with His blood.

- C. The Bible also uses what you could call **transformational terms** to describe what happens when we're saved. This lump of clay represents the fact that when we offer our heart to God, He softens it and reshapes it—and through that, shapes us.

-Anyone ever heard the phrase, **born again**? Well, Jesus coined it—not the church. It's a radical phrase when you think about it.

-We all know what birth is. It's the traumatic, painful process where a human being, a living soul, comes into existence. Most of us have been born. We get 15, 20, 30, 40 years down the line and sometimes think, "Wow. I wish I could start again and do it right this time."

-Well, that's exactly what Jesus was saying. When the Spirit of God comes to live in us, we get a fresh start in learning how to love God and others and not just ourselves. We get a fresh start where we've been arrogant and need to learn humility, where we've been apathetic and callused to the suffering in our world and never lifted a finger to help. It's a fresh shot at living with generosity and compassion and purity.

-Know how that happens? Well, another transformation word in the Bible describes it as regeneration. To **regenerate** means to give new life to people who are **dead** in the spiritual arena of their lives. The Bible says...

**"If anyone is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV).**

D. The terms I love most that describe salvation, though, are relational terms. **Adoption and reconciliation.**

1. The word closest to my own heart is the word **adoption.**

- a. We have experienced this twice—with our daughters Kelly and Selina—and it is **profound.** I will never forget the day when we went to see our daughter Kelly for the first time and bring her into our home. And I will never forget the moment we saw Selina for the first time. We've done kids both ways--the adoption way and the hospital way--and they are equally exhilarating. We saw them both--and our hearts locked with theirs forever!
- b. I will never forget the day we formalized our adoption of Kelly. There was sat before the judge in his stuffy paneled office—me in my suit, Lori in her dress, Kelly in her little purple and white dress. The judge said, "Do you swear that you will take Kelly as your daughter, that she will take your name, and become full heir of all you possess, all you are." And we said, "You'd better believe it!" What a day that was. This little pen holder Kelly made says, ***I love you Dad. Kelly.*** This Father's Day card from Selina says, ***I love you, Dad!***
- c. Ephesians says,  
***In love he predestined us to be ADOPTED as his sons through Christ Jesus, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Eph. 1:5 NIV).***

With a tone of awe, John says,

***How great is the love the Father has LAVISHED on us, that we should be called children of God! And THAT IS WHAT WE ARE (1 John 3:1 NIV)!***

3. In Heaven, this adoption and reconciliation takes place instantly. Like the prodigal son coming home to his Dad, we come home to **our** Father—and He receives us with open arms, throws a party Heaven, says, "We **must** rejoice, because my child has come home! What was lost is now **found!**"  
-And now, because God took off his judge's robes, stepped out of Heaven and took our punishment—and then transformed our hearts, we are his adopted kids. And we are His beloved children--loved, cherished, watched over carefully--and one day, **ONE DAY**, we will see him face to face--and we will be made perfect. We will become the people we've always longed to be. And we will be with Him forever! That, friends, is our **destiny!**

### III. QUESTIONS WE STILL STRUGGLE WITH

A. Now, there are a lot of questions around this issue of salvation.

1. One of the questions I've heard asked a lot is this: If all this has happened—and if I've been born again—changed from the inside out--why do I still sin? Most of you have heard about Mel Gibson's debacle this past week. A lot of people who know about ***The Passion of the Christ***, and about him going public as a Christ-follower point fingers at people like Mel who stumble and fall and say, "See, I told you it's not real!"

- a. Let me ask you to use your imaginations. Who's your hero? Anyone have one?  
Wayne Gretzky, Lance Armstrong, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Billy Graham, Nelson Mandela--whoever. Visualize them when they were one day old. Tell me, do you see greatness? How about one year old—any greatness? Five years old? Ten years old?
- b. Look into the lives of great people and you'll find that many didn't blossom til their later years. Thomas Edison, one of the most brilliant inventors of all time, was sent home from school with a note to his parents saying, "We think he's too stupid to educate."  
-Jesus Himself lived in obscurity as a construction worker and didn't do a single miracle or start teaching until he was over 30.
- Oak trees take years and years to grow. Mushrooms spring up overnight. Anyone here who would want furniture made out of mushrooms? Not me. We live in a microwave world—and we'd like to microwave our spiritual life, but it doesn't work like that. Good things take time. And, funny thing, God values the struggle we go through.
- By the way, did you notice that with Mel Gibson, he didn't send anyone out to put a spin on what he did? He owned it. He's going to get help for his drinking problem and he asked the forgiveness of the community he hurt with his words. Everyone falls; the question is whether or not they get back up.

2. There's another huge issue that comes up in this whole area of feeling secure in our salvation--and that's the question, "Can we **lose** it?" In the late thirties and early 40s, there was a well-known Canadian Christian who was associated with Billy Graham, and pastored a Church here in Toronto. He just recently died. You still hear his name: Charles Templeton.

-If you know anything about Charles Templeton now, you know that he was known as a self-proclaimed agnostic and one of the most vocal critics of Christianity in Canada. What's going on? Are we saved forever--or can we lose our faith?

- a. There's a pretty frightening warning in the Bible about this:

***It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, IF THEY FALL AWAY, to be brought back to repentance because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (Heb. 6:4-6 NIV).***

-Wow. **That** sends chills down your spine doesn't it? There's a second warning found in Hebrews 10:26ff that is just as severe--maybe more so.

- b. What you will find throughout the Bible are some **very** strong warnings--particularly here--saying, "Don't be lax on this--be careful to persevere."

-But before you make up your mind let's look at another passage and hear what Jesus says:

***My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH; NO ONE can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; NO ONE CAN SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY FATHER'S HAND. I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30 NIV).***

-Notice the imagery. Jesus, as the shepherd, is not saying, "Okay, sheep. We're out here in the wilderness; let's see who the super-sheep really are who can make it to the fold on their own! Ready, set, GO!" No, it's active, hands-on care.

-And notice the double protection. Who's got you in His hands? Well, Jesus does and the Father does! Remember back in the days of paper bags at the supermarket? If there was a really heavy load, the check-out person would say, "Do you want this double-bagged." Well, **we** are double-bagged.

-God is saying, "I will never let you go! I love you enough to protect you from the evil that would steal your heart--the habits that would destroy your life--the things that would water down your love."

- c. Let's read the theme passage for today's message:

***For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:29-30 NIV).***

-See what he's saying? He's saying, "God knows who will respond to Him--and He has a plan for them to be just like Jesus--and He **will** bring that plan to completion. He goes on:

***-What, then, shall we say in response to this? 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, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring ANY charge against those whom God has chosen (Rom. 8:31-34 NIV)?***

-And then there's this amazing statement,

***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35 NIV)?*** And he lists a whole bunch of things and concludes by saying,

***No, in all these things WE are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor ANY powers, neither height nor depth, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:37-39 NIV).*** Amazing, isn't it?

3. Now, the question is--what's going on? On the one side you have these dire warnings about falling away--and the awful consequences. The other side portrays security--that God **will** complete what He starts in us.

-On the one side--who among us is going to slip up? Maybe me, maybe you. Do we live in eternal uncertainty--not really knowing if we're going to make it? That's an awful thought!

-Or, on the other side--if once you sign on the dotted line and you're in, no matter what you do--why even try? Why serve. Why strive to do your best if mediocre—D minus behavior is no big deal. How do we make sense of these competing statements? I don't know. Let's pray and go home. Actually, what you sometimes find in the Bible is a certain amount of unresolved tension.

-Let me just give you some pointers in how to handle this tension, okay?

- a. First, the Bible makes it clear that God's faithfulness is greater than our fickleness.

***If we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim.2:13 NIV).***

-There are some Christian traditions that teach that our salvation always hangs by a thread--that when we sin, we cut the thread. Friends, to be honest, that's nonsense. The overwhelming evidence in the Bible does not support that. It is **not** God's plan for us to live in ongoing anxiety. I mean, how many of you wives would want a husband so insecure in his relationship with you that he just kept proposing, writing notes, sending flowers, courting you **endlessly**—who would even **want** a love like that? Anyone?

-Remember what we talked about before? What salvation is? It's initiated by God. When we respond, **He** declares us "not guilty"--not because we **aren't** guilty, but because Jesus has paid for our sin.

- b. Remember what else happens when we are saved? We're adopted into God's family. We become God's child.

-Let me ask this: Anyone here have perfect children. Never did anything that made you want to strangle them as you raised them from sinnerlings to full-fledged sinners? Not in the real world. Sometimes kids break our hearts.

-So, what do you do when that happens; kick them out of the family? Say, "You only get 10 screw-ups in this family. You're on #9. One more strike and you're out!" How many mess-ups does it take before you kick them out; disown them? Why would we think we would be better parents than the Heavenly Father?

-See, are either saved by *faith* and by the *grace of God*--or by works. I believe our salvation is secure because it's based on *grace*.

- c. So, what about the Charles Templetons? To be honest, I'm not sure. I'm glad God has to sort those issues out—not me. Jesus did say that there will be people who will come up to him at the close of history and pretend to be his close friends and he'll say, "I never knew you."

-I do want to say this. Salvation is not about the minimal entry requirements for Heaven. I'm not going to dig into this, but let me simply read a passage talking about some people who had become anti-church and anti-Christ:

***They went out from us, but THEY DID NOT REALLY BELONG TO US. For IF THEY HAD BELONGED TO US, they would have REMAINED WITH US; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (1 John 2:19 NIV).***

-The Bible clearly says: Make sure your faith is genuine. Make sure your faith is based--not on a few tears you cried, or a time when you put your hand on a Bible or on the TV screen, or even a baptism--but on a clear decision to follow Jesus; to *listen* to His voice and a genuine transformation in your heart when the Spirit of God took up residence! ***Live your faith!***

4. Now, let me just say a word about what has been called the *unpardonable sin*. Sometimes people feel that they have done something so horrible, so unforgivable that there's no way back. They might as well get used to the feeling of being damned--and hope for the best.
- a. Let me tell you what the unpardonable sin—or, as Jesus called it, ***blaspheming*** or insulting or treating the Holy Spirit with contempt—as I understand it.
- The religious professionals that constantly hounded Jesus accused him of using Satanic power to do the miracles He was doing. It was in this context that Jesus accuses them of insulting the Holy Spirit—treating Him with contempt.
- b. How can you be drawn to Jesus, saved, transformed—when you reject the very One, the Holy Spirit, who makes that happen?
- The unpardonable sin is rejecting and holding in contempt the very One who can save them. And when people go that far, they don't worry about it—because they have absolutely no sense of need for God or for change. Believe me, people who have gone this far never even give salvation a single thought.
- c. Know this: there is ***no one*** beyond reclaiming; there is no one whose sin is so black, so horrible that it cannot be paid for with Christ's death on the cross.

B. Now, this morning, I want to close by talking to you real straight on the heart issues surrounding how you live out the amazing salvation Christ died to offer you and me.

1. God's promise that our salvation is secure is not the grounds for a presumptuous spirit on our part. Let me illustrate with this marriage certificate. Let's say I were to go to my wife, Lori, and say, "You know, Lori, I feel pretty secure about our relationship with each other. I know you're completely devoted to me. But I need some clarity. What is the minimal amount I can do and still be your husband?"

-I mean, I think it's good to get clarity, Honey, don't you? What is the least I have to spend on you, the least number of "I love you's" necessary, and the smallest amount of courting I can do? And how low can the faithfulness bar go--how many women can I kiss, and how far can I go sexually and still have you hang around and be my wife?

- a. What do you think she'd say? I can think of **lots** of things she'd say--but I can tell you one thing. She'd never give me a minimum standard--because **that's** not what a **love relationship** is all about.
- b. I get the feeling that, for some people who call themselves Christ-followers, their faith is kind of a game of **limbo**. Anyone remember the scene from **A BUG'S LIFE** where all these ants are using a blade of grass to play limbo and chanting, **HOW LOW CAN YOU GO! HOW LOW CAN YOU GO!**  
-For some people who attend church and like to think of themselves as Christ-followers, that's exactly the issue. What is the **least** I can do and stay out of hell?
- c. Friends, salvation is a relationship with a Savior who gave His life for us; it's being a part of a new Kingdom--not fire insurance. Once you start trying to define assurance of your salvation with a **how low can you go** mentality, you're headed down the wrong road.  
-If you're on that road the question for you really is, "How do I get to Heaven without making God and a lifestyle that pleases Him the top priority in my life?"

-You might as well know that Heaven is a community for those people for whom God and a lifestyle that pleases Him are the top priority. And if you really don't want that here in this life, then you really don't want Heaven.

- d. If that's the tack you're taking, then you need to really check your heart and figure out exactly **where** you're going and, as the Bible says, "better make your salvation **sure!**"
2. Let me make one final comment. Because salvation is a relationship with Jesus Christ--your faith will not be satisfying and fruitful without a full investment on your part.  
-When you see someone who has an **excellent** relationship with their spouse or their children or their friends, what do you assume? I hope you assume that they've invested a **lot** into it. Good relationships don't happen on leftovers from our Daytimers and Checkbooks.  
-The most important relationship in your life is your relationship with Jesus Christ. You will never find anyone more trustworthy, more loving, more honest, more

powerful, or more self-giving than Him. Are you investing your life in knowing and loving Him—and in loving those He gave His life for? Jesus said that it's possible for busyness and the cares of this world to choke the fruit out of your life like weeds in a garden. If you let that happen--it will leave you dry, unloving and unfulfilled. I guarantee you.

-Since this relationship is so critical, so important, so life giving—will you **keep the garden weeded?** Will you make this relationship the number one priority in your life? If you will, you will get power-launched on the adventure of a lifetime.

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. If I could do anything for you this morning, I would somehow convince you that Jesus Christ loves you more than you could possibly ever imagine--and that He deserves your unqualified trust. He offers to let you rest in his huge hands, and be secure--wherever you are.
- B. Let me re-read in closing what I believe are some of the most amazing words ever written. As I read--would you believe? Would you just receive the security God longs to give you?

***What, then, shall we say in response to this? 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, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring ANY charge against those whom God has chosen? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? No, in all these things WE are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through him who loved us.***

***For I am convinced that neither death nor life, angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor ANY powers, neither height nor depth, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39 NIV).***