

Blessed Assurance

Romans 8:33-34

Fanny Crosby wrote the confident hymn, Blessed Assurance,

*Blessed assurance; Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.*

From the very day she wrote them, Crosby's words have provided comfort for millions of Christians in the face of fear, persecution, sorrow, and doubt. Life's twists and turns present believers with constant opportunities to develop and grow in assurance. When life pounds away at us, when trials bruise us from every side, when our spiritual disciplines sag, when all our plans come unraveled, when Satan's fiery darts hurl our way, when we come face to face with the gravity of our sins, when disappointment after disappointment jerks us around, it is only the assurance that we are Christ's and Christ is ours that keeps us pressing on.

Assurance is not simply an antidote for bitter days but the steady calm of sins forgiven, right standing with God, and consciousness of God's love and grace. Romans 8 has been a treatise on assurance. It began with the assurance of no condemnation, Romans 8:1, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.**" And Romans 8 ends with the assurance of no separation, that nothing "**shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"

Romans 8:31-39 may be one of the most comforting and encouraging passages in the entire Bible. These verses are packed with assurance for the child of God. Paul uses a series of rhetorical questions to summarize the great truths of the gospel that he has presented so far in the book of Romans.

Listen as I read the whole passage, **Romans 8:31-39:**

- 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**
- 32 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?**
- 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.**
- 34 Who is he who condemns? 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.**
- 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**
- 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." [xr]**

37 Yet 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 principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here Paul offers three hopeful assurances: (1) There is no opposition (8:31-32)—we looked at those verses last time; (2) there is no condemnation (8:33-34)—we will focus on these verses today; and (3) there is no separation (8:35-39)—we will conclude Romans 8 with those verses next time.

So today we come to the question of verse 33: **“Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?”** To “bring a charge” is literally the idea of “to speak out to.” It was a judicial term in the ancient world used to imply a legal accusation. So what Paul has in mind is to ask who can bring substantial legal charge against us as lawbreakers deserving God’s judgment.

These verses take us into a court of law so that we may be shown that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1. Who will accuse us?

Paul asks, **“Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?”** Who can successfully accuse us? The answer is that there are many who will bring charges against us, but the idea is that the charges cannot stick.

The World – For one, the world of unbelievers accuses God’s people all the time. Jesus told his disciples, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”** (John 15:18-19).

The world frequently accuses us of intolerance and self-righteousness. We’re accused of being close-minded and judgmental. Unbelievers often complain that the church is full of hypocrites. And certainly there have been times when professing Christians have been all of those things. Often, of course, these charges of unbelievers are merely a smokescreen used as a diversion so they will not have to face a holy God with their own sin. But, sometimes the charges are true and we may wonder if God holds it against us too.

The Devil – “Devil” literally means “one who throws things against you.” “Satan” means adversary. In Rev. 12:10 he is called, **“accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night.”** We see Satan doing this in Job 1 & 2, where he accuses Job before the Lord being self-serving, of being righteous only so that he will enjoy God’s blessing and protection. Satan accused saying, **“Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”** (Job 1:9-11)

There is another example in Zechariah 3, **"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?' 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. 4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And to him He said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.'"**

Satan accused the high priest Joshua of being full of sin and guilt. How can he function as high priest? But God removed his sin and clothed Joshua in new garments, standing for righteousness.

The devil slings the fiery darts of accusation at us, pointing to a thought here, an attitude there, a deed done in anger, a word spoken in bitterness, a habit recurring, and doubts about God's word. These come from outside of us but assault us through the mind. If we do not walk in the armor of God, having girded ourselves with the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, then the adversary will pummel us with accusations (Eph. 6:10-20). Before we know it, we begin to believe his lies and we despair in our spiritual walk.

The Conscience – Someone has called the conscience a faults alarm: It goes off to let us know our faults. Our consciences can accuse us—sometimes correctly, but other times falsely. What do we do when we are falsely accused by our own consciences? 1 John 3 tells us, **"And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."** (1 John 3:19-20). We must argue to our consciences that, having known everything about us, God still justified us.

The point Paul is making here is not that we have no accusers or that none will bring charges against us. The world, the devil, and even our own consciences will accuse us. The point is that none of these charges can stick because God has chosen us and justified us.

Why do the charges not stick?

Because of God's choice. Notice how Paul frames the question: **"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?"** Why does the Apostle take us back to the doctrine of election that he's already unpacked in verses 28-30? Paul calls us "God's elect" because it is a term of assurance. And how is it a term of assurance? Because it means that the root cause of your salvation is that God chose you. Yes, you chose to believe in Christ, but the reason you did so is that He first chose you. That's the kind of language that Jesus used of His disciples. "You did not choose Me but I chose you..." (John 15:16).

Knowing that you're saved because God first chose you in spite of your sin is essential in battling the accusations of the world, the devil and your conscience. It means that no one can produce a charge that will cause God to change His mind and disown you, because He chose you before the foundation of the world, knowing all about your sins that you would commit both before and after He saved you.

But, maybe you're wondering, "How can I know that I'm elect? Maybe my sin shows that I'm not one of the elect."

Ask yourself these questions: Has God changed my heart? Has He shown me my sin and guilt and my desperate need for the Savior, so that I have abandoned all trust in my own good works to save me? Has He given me faith to believe in Christ as my only hope for heaven? Has He given me a love for Him and His Word and a hatred of sin? Am I growing in conformity to Christ? While we all have room to grow in these things, this should be the direction of our lives if we are one of God's elect.

If you are God's elect—you can be sure that no accusation can stand against you.

Because God justifies. Paul very simply answers the accusations of conscience, Satan, and the world. "God is the one who justifies!" Or "God is the justifying one." In the face of such strong accusations against us, God alone justifies. It is not our works that justify us. It is not our church affiliation that justifies us. It is not our service and good deeds that justify us. God alone justifies.

What does that mean in light of the accusations against us? First, for the accusations to stand, they must trump the power and grace of God in justifying us. Their accusations must be greater than God's declaration of justification. Second, for the accusations to uproot us, the accusers be more righteousness than God because only then would they have the moral right to overturn God's justifying us. God Himself put forth the legal answer to the charges, so that He is **"just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"** (Rom. 3:26).

What do you do with the accusations of conscience, Satan, and the world? You return to the strong declaration of God as the one who chose you and who alone justifies you.

That brings us to the second question of our text today:

2. Who will condemn us?

The internal and external accusations against the believer have an aim: condemnation. It's not just to make a Christian feel badly about his sin. We don't need accusations for that! Rather it is to call for his rejection by God. The accusers attempt to confront the justice of God in failing to sentence us to eternal damnation. The answer to what appears to be just condemnation is the four-fold saving work of Jesus Christ.

Verse 34 asks, **"Who is he who condemns?"** The question is structured in such a way as to expect a negative answer. In other words, 'who is the one who condemns?' is met with silence in the face of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

"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."

Paul gives us a short course in Christology in just one verse:

Jesus died. Jesus rose again. Jesus ascended. Jesus intercedes for us in heaven.

When Christ died He paid the price for your sin completely and forever. It would be absurd for Jesus, who came to earth to be the sacrifice for the sins of God's elect, to condemn the very ones He died for! So when the enemy accuses you, point to the cross.

When Christ rose from the dead, He defeated death and Satan once and for all. Christ's death satisfied God's justice, providing the basis for our justification. But His resurrection was God's stamp of approval, showing that God accepted Christ's death as payment for our sins. Romans 4:25 says, "**who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.**"

When Christ ascended into heaven, He was seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty so that all things are under Him. This means that no one, not even Satan, can challenge Christ's rule or His decisions.

Now that Jesus is in heaven, He intercedes for us. When we sin, and when we are condemned and when our friends turn against us, and when we fail to meet up to our own standards, Jesus says, "Father, I plead my blood!" The blood of Jesus is more than enough. Who can condemn you before the throne of God? Nobody can. Jesus who lives in heaven makes intercession for us.

Not only is the judge of the universe on your side, you also have an advocate. You have a Man in heaven, Jesus Christ, who is pleading your case right now.

Who is it that condemns us? No one on earth can condemn us because Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, now making intercession for his people.

So, in light of Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession, who is there to condemn you? Satan tries, as does the world and even your own conscience at times, but Christ overrules them all. If you are in Christ Jesus, your status is eternally certain. Whether accusations in the conscience or condemnation by those who see your faults, your eternal certainty rests in the God who justifies and His Son who secured you and continues to intercede for you.

Can you sing it and mean it?

*Blessed assurance; Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.*

If you are outside of Christ, I urge you to come to him with all your burden of guilt, and he will give you rest. Do it now; do it today. Jesus said, "**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out,**" (John 6:37). Those who come to Him will eat of the living bread and will never go hungry. They will drink the living water of life and will never go thirsty.