

Pastor Steven J. Cole
Flagstaff Christian Fellowship
123 S. Beaver Street
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001
www.fcfonline.org

SAVED FOR SURE!

Romans 5:9-11

By

Steven J. Cole

March 6, 2011

© Steven J. Cole, 2011

For access to previous sermons or to subscribe to weekly sermons via email go to: www.fcfonline.org/sermons

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
Quotations are from the New American
Standard Bible, Updated Edition
© The Lockman Foundation

March 6, 2011
Romans, Lesson 28

Saved for Sure!
Romans 5:9-11

“Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you can say you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?” That is one of two questions that those who are trained in “Evangelism Explosion” ask as a prelude to presenting the gospel. The second question seeks to find out the basis for the person’s answer to the first question: “Suppose that you were to die today and stand before God and He were to say to you, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ what would you say?” (D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* [Tyndale House], p. 22.)

You can easily see the importance of answering those questions correctly. Some have complete assurance that they are going to heaven when they die, but they wrongly base that assurance on their belief that they are good enough to qualify for heaven. How horrible to die and find out that you were not good enough to make it into heaven! There won’t be any make-up exams or second chances! It’s crucial to know that your hope for heaven is sure.

But Christians are divided with regard to assurance of salvation. The Roman Catholic Church declared, “No one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God” (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* [Baker], 2:99, The Council of Trent, Session 6, Chapter 9). Among Protestants, those from the Arminian wing (Wesleyan, Holiness churches, the Nazarene Church, Pentecostal churches, etc.) argue that true believers through sin can lose their salvation and fall from grace. Some Arminians, inconsistent with their view of saving grace, hold that believers are eternally secure. Those who hold the Reformed view believe that those whom Christ has genuinely saved, He will keep unto eternity.

We cannot survey the many verses of Scripture that the various camps use to defend their views. While there are difficult texts, such as the warning passages in Hebrews (you can read my sermons on Hebrews on the church web site), I believe that the Reformed view makes the most sense of all of Scripture: Those whom

Christ saves, He keeps for all eternity. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Our text is one of the strongest arguments for assurance of salvation in the Bible. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote (*Romans: Assurance* [Zondervan], p. 128), "The argument of these two verses [9 & 10] is, I suggest, the most powerful argument with respect to assurance of salvation, or the finality of our salvation, that can be found anywhere in the whole of the Scripture." He goes on to say that the only thing that goes beyond it is the immediate witness of the Holy Spirit, which Paul mentions in Romans 8:16. Since being assured of your salvation is an important part of the foundation for spiritual growth, it is vital that you understand and apply the verses that we are studying here.

Before we examine Paul's argument, let me give you a brief overview of my understanding of the basis for assurance of salvation. There are three aspects to it: First and foremost, have you trusted in Jesus Christ alone and His death in your place to forgive all your sins and clothe you with His righteousness?

If you answer "yes," then there is a secondary basis for assurance: What evidence of the new birth do you see in your life? While we never will be perfectly sanctified in this life, there should be some definite signs of the new birth: a growing love for God, a desire to know Him through His Word, a desire to please Him by keeping His commandments, a growing love for others, a growing hatred of sin, etc. The "tests" of First John fit into this category, along with the qualities of 2 Peter 1:5-11.

Third, there is the witness of the Spirit, who "testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). While this aspect of assurance is partly subjective and therefore subject to error, I understand it to be based on the objective promises of God. This inner witness of the Spirit is when He takes the promises of salvation in the Bible and testifies to your spirit, "Yes, these are true and by God's grace I rest on them!" Or, the Holy Spirit assures you by reminding you of how He has worked the signs of new life in you.

Our text falls under the first basis for assurance, as Paul enumerates the blessings of being justified by faith (5:1). He takes these blessings a logical step farther by arguing from the greater to

the lesser, as we can see by the twice repeated, "much more" (5:9, 10). He reasons, "If we were justified by Christ's blood when we were yet sinners and if we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son while we were His enemies, then we can expect to be saved from God's wrath by the risen Savior." It is also an argument from the past to the future: If in the past God loved us and Christ died for us when we were sinners, then we can expect that in the future He will keep us from judgment as those who have been reconciled to Him. This, in turn, causes us to "exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation" (5:11). Thus,

If as God's enemies we were saved through the death of His Son then, praise God, as His friends the risen Savior will save us from future judgment.

I added "praise God" to that summary sentence to reflect Paul's response in verse 11 to his arguments in verses 9 & 10. In other words, these aren't just rational arguments that we hear and calmly conclude, "Yes, I agree." The force of the arguments should cause us to *exult* in God! Verses 9 & 10 are essentially the same argument looked at from two slightly different perspectives.

1. If while we were sinners we were justified by Christ's blood, then much more we shall be saved from God's wrath through Him (5:9).

There are two parts to this:

- A. While we were sinners, we were justified by Christ's blood.

"Being justified" goes back to the entire argument of 3:24-4:25, summarized in 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith ..." As we have seen, to be justified is to be declared righteous by God. It is a legal or forensic term, where God acquits the guilty sinner because Christ has paid his penalty. In Romans 3:24, Paul said that we are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." This shows us that justification is not something that we deserve, merit, or qualify for by our good deeds. Rather, it is the undeserved gift of God.

In 5:1 Paul shows that the means by which we receive God's gracious gift of justification is faith. We saw this especially in 4:5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifi-

fies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." This does not mean that God counts faith itself as some sort of righteousness that qualifies the sinner to stand before Him as not guilty. If that were so, faith would be a work, which would undermine the very point of Romans 4:5! Rather, faith lays hold of the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the just payment for our sins, so that God credits the righteousness of Christ to the guilty sinner who has faith in Him. So faith is the means of receiving the gift of justification.

But in 5:9, Paul says that we have been justified "by His blood." This looks at the ground or basis of our justification. The blood of Christ atones for our sin. As Paul stated (3:25), "God displayed [Christ] publicly as a propitiation in His blood ... to demonstrate His righteousness." Christ's blood satisfied the righteousness of God, which declares (6:23), "the wages of sin is death."

Also, our text makes it clear that justification is a completed action, a "done deal." Paul uses the same verb form as in 5:1, "having been justified by faith." Here (5:9), "having now been justified by His blood." It's a past completed action that the believer knows has taken place. When we trusted in Christ and His shed blood to save us, God banged the gavel and declared, "Not guilty! The penalty has been paid by My Son!" From this sure fact, Paul argues:

- B. Much more we shall be saved from God's wrath through Christ.

To *wrath* the translators have added for clarity "of God." Literally, the text reads, "we shall be saved from the wrath through Him." *The wrath* refers to the coming day of judgment, which Paul referred to (2:5), "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." There is a present manifestation of God's wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men in which God gives them over to the consequences of their sins (1:18). But that is nothing compared to the coming eternal wrath of God, where all who have not been justified by faith will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

It is important to grasp Paul's "much more" line of reasoning here. To send Christ to shed His blood was the big thing. It was the only way that God could maintain His righteousness and at the

same time forgive sinners. Through the propitiation in Christ's blood, God can now be both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (3:26). If God loved us enough to send Christ to die for our sins (the big thing), then how much more will He save us from the wrath to come?

I should point out that the Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses. Sometimes it looks at salvation in the *past* (Eph. 2:8), "For by grace you have been saved through faith" This happened the moment we truly trusted in Christ as our Savior. He delivered us from the penalty of our sins. At other times, the Bible looks at the *present* process of salvation (1 Cor. 1:18), "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." And, sometimes (as in 5:9), it looks at the *future* and final deliverance that will be ours on the day of judgment (also, 10:9, 13; 13:11). The verb "to be saved" is in the future tense in seven of its eight uses in Romans (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Apollos/Eerdmans], p. 225). Here Paul wants us to know how we can be sure that on that awful day, "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

Then Paul repeats the same idea, but with a different slant:

2. If while we were God's enemies we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, then much more we shall be saved by His life (5:10).

Again, there are two parts to consider:

- A. While we were God's enemies we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.

Justification looks at salvation from the *legal* standpoint, whereas *reconciliation* looks at it from the *relational* point of view. Bishop Moule looks at verses 9 & 10 as a progression from the law-aspect of salvation to the love-aspect and then (at the end of verse 10) to the life-aspect (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 138). So verse 10 picks up on the theme of God's love for us, demonstrated by sending Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners (5:8).

But here the focus is, "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." Referring to Jesus as "His Son" especially brings out the love of the Father, both for

Jesus and for us. Jesus was God's beloved Son in whom He was well-pleased (Matt. 3:17). The Father loved the Son with a perfect, unbroken love from all eternity (John 17:24-26), and yet He sent Him to die on the cross so that we, His enemies, could be reconciled to Him! "Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou my God, shouldst die for me!"

"Enemies" is the strongest of the string of synonyms that Paul has used to describe our condition before Christ saved us. We were *helpless* (5:6), which means that we were totally unable to do anything to save ourselves or to help out in the process. We were *ungodly* (5:6) because of our many sins. We were *sinner*s (5:8), having violated God's holy commandments. But worst of all, we were God's *enemies*.

The word implies active hostility, both from our side toward God and from God's side toward us. From our side, we did not want to submit to God's rightful lordship over our lives. We wanted to block Him out of our lives so that we could do what we want to do. We viewed Him as the spoiler of all our fun. Paul describes our enmity toward God (8:7), "The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so." True, many might protest and say, "I'm not hostile toward God; I don't have anything against Him." But they show their hostility by their indifference toward His love. They're happy if He just stays out of their lives and lets them live as they please. In this sense, they are enemies of God.

But the greater hostility here, as seen by the word "wrath" (5:9), is God's hostility toward unrepentant sinners (Morris, *Romans*, p. 225; his *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* [Eerdmans], third rev. ed., pp. 214-250, deals with this more extensively). From God's side, He is opposed to all that is evil and to everyone who is in rebellion against Him. They are His enemies (Phil 3:18; Col. 1:21; James 4:4). He will eventually judge all who do not willingly bow before His Son (Ps. 2). When Jesus comes again, He is pictured as a powerful warrior, whose robe is dipped in blood, who strikes down all rebels with His sharp sword as He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (Rev. 19:11-15). This is God's hostility toward all who do not submit to Jesus Christ. He cannot have fellowship with those who walk in darkness (1 John 1:5-6).

But our text says, "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." Reconciliation is a wonderful word! One of the all-too-rare, but great joys of being a pastor is when I can have some part in seeing a couple who are hostile toward one another be reconciled. But it's an even greater joy to see sinners reconciled to God through the death of Jesus, which removed the barrier of our sin. As Morris states (*Romans*, p. 225, note 33), "The death of Christ puts away our sin, which had aroused not our opposition but God's."

So the main idea here is not that we first ceased to be hostile toward God, but that through the death of His Son, He could cease to be hostile towards us whom He purposed to save. It was through the cross that God put to death the enmity, contained in the Law of commandments that we had violated, so that we now can be reconciled to Him (Eph. 2:15-16). So, while we were God's enemies we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.

B. Much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Charles Hodge captures the logic (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], p. 138): "If Christ has died for his enemies, he will surely save his friends." If God did the really hard thing by reconciling us to Himself through the death of His Son, it only follows that we shall be saved at the future judgment by (or, better, *in*) His life. "Shall be saved" points ahead to the day of judgment. Paul will develop the idea that we share "in His life" in 6:8-11. We are now completely identified with Christ in His death and resurrection life. Paul also explains this in Colossians 3:3-4, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Because we are now united with Christ, as members of His body, sharing His life, we shall be saved from the final judgment.

When God raised Jesus from the dead, He gave to Him all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He exercises this authority for the salvation of His people (Eph. 1:22; see Hodge, p. 140). Furthermore, as Paul says (Rom. 8:33b-34), "God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." Hebrews 7:25 says, "Therefore

He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." We can know that our salvation is secure because if God did the greater thing by reconciling us to Himself through the death of His Son, He will do the relatively easier thing by saving us from judgment because we are now partakers of His resurrection life. As Jesus promised (John 14:19), "because I live, you will live also."

But Paul never set forth biblical truth as a dry, boring lecture and then said, "Class dismissed!" These glorious truths about our sure salvation evoked an emotional response:

3. The result of knowing that you are saved for sure because of God's love and grace is to exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:11).

"And not only this" means, "don't stop there! Class isn't dismissed yet!" If you understand this truth, you've *got* to exult in God! As we've seen, Paul exulted in hope of the glory of God (5:2). He exulted in his tribulations (5:3). But now he exults in God Himself. To exult means to glory in or boast in. It's an emotional word. A young man who is in love exults in his fiancée: "She's the most beautiful creature on earth!" An artist exults in a beautiful sunset: "Isn't it spectacular! Look at those gorgeous colors!" A football fan exults in a touchdown run: "Did you see how he dodged all those tacklers?" And those who have been justified by Christ's blood and reconciled to God through the death of His Son exult in God through the Lord Jesus Christ: "Isn't God wonderful! There's nothing to compare to His love, His grace, and His tender mercies! There is no love like the love of Christ for sinners! Praise God!"

The last phrase of verse 11, "through whom we have now received the reconciliation," shows that reconciliation is a finished work that we receive as God's gift. It is an objective, accomplished fact because of the cross. It also shows that all God's blessings come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. But you must receive this reconciliation by trusting in Jesus and His shed blood to cover all your sins.

Conclusion

Paul states it as a given that those who have received this reconciliation now exult in God. But do we? Have you spent any time

this past week exulting in God because of all that He has freely given to you through the Lord Jesus Christ? I encourage you to make time each day to open God's Word and pray, "Lord, show me today some of the unfathomable riches of Christ so that I may exult in You. Thank You that I have been justified by Christ's blood! Thank You that while I was Your enemy, You reconciled me to You through the death of Your Son!" The fact that you are saved for sure—justified by Christ's blood, saved from God's wrath, reconciled to God although you once were His enemy—ought to cause your heart to exult in God.

The early church father, Chrysostom, wrote (cited by Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Eerdmans], p. 314), "And so the fact of his saving us, and saving us too when we were in such plight, and doing it by means of his only-begotten, and not merely by his only-begotten, but by his blood, weaves for us endless crowns to glory in."

Application Questions

1. Why is it important that believers feel assured of their salvation? What practical benefits come from this assurance?
2. Since false assurance is a real possibility, how can we guard ourselves from it? What is the basis for true assurance?
3. Should we try to give assurance to a person who professes to know Christ, but who is living in disobedience? What are the biblical guidelines here?
4. Since glorifying God (or, exulting in Him) is the chief end of man, how would you counsel a Christian who rarely does this?

Copyright, Steven J. Cole, 2011, All Rights Reserved.