

ON A HILL TOO FAR AWAY - Fifteen Protestant Truths About the Death of God the Son

Part Seven - Sunday, April 24th, 2016, 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #1882

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Jesus Christ Died On The Cross To Give Us Confidence That God Will Freely Grant Us All Things Ultimately Good And Blessed

Romans 8:31-32 - "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 gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

There are **three questions** I want to answer from our text today. And what I hope to show is that all three questions find their answer - in fact, can **only** find their answer - in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Here are the three questions. **What are the things that would cause people to doubt God's love and grace in their lives?** Then, secondly, **how are Christians to find hope and comfort and confidence in the face of doubt, anger and fear?** And finally, **what is the argument Paul makes in this text that assures us that God will freely grant us all things ultimately good and blessed?** These questions form the outline for today's teaching.

1) **WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT WOULD CAUSE CHRISTIANS TO DOUBT GOD'S GOODNESS AND GRACE IN THEIR LIVES?**

This is the easiest of the three questions and requires no detailed study on our part. We all **know** what causes us to doubt the love of God. No one doubts God's love until they confront **unexplainable** suffering and difficulty. **Pleasure** doesn't make you doubt God's love. **Suffering** does. **Health** doesn't make you doubt God's love. **Sickness** does. **Ripe old age** doesn't make you doubt God's love. The **sudden or premature death** of a loved one does. **Popularity** doesn't make you doubt God's love and care. **Persecution** and **rejection** does.

Paul writes to Christians he has never met in Rome. He is writing them from Corinth in winter, 55 or 56 A.D. He has plans of visiting them in Rome, not to stay with them there for long, but to use Rome as a base of operations to reach out into regions and peoples still untouched by the gospel.

But the Christians in Rome aren't having an easy time of it. Roman government didn't achieve world dominance by treating those who didn't worship the emperor with kindness. These Christians, who were probably reached with the gospel by those who returned from Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, were experiencing persecution in the jagged shape of imprisonment, the seizing of their property and possessions, and even torture and execution. That's when you start to doubt the love of God.

On to question number two:

2) **HOW ARE CHRISTIANS TO FIND HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF FEAR AND DOUBT?**

This question is an important one to ask for **two** reasons. First, we don't like to live with doubt and fear, and we don't want those close to us to have to either. And second, the question is important because our text shows us that the **answer** isn't found where most people today **think** it's found.

Look carefully at Paul's words:

Romans 8:31-32 - "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 gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

We aren't looking at the specifics of Paul's argument right now. We'll consider Paul's argument in the last point of this teaching. What I'm looking at here is the **method** of Paul in dealing with these doubts and discouragements. What is the **approach** Paul takes to comfort these people? What is his **starting point**? Where does he focus their attention to gain a strong footing?

And the reason this is important to notice, as I said earlier, is **his method isn't the method most commonly used today - not even in the church**. He **doesn't** soothe them by simply saying, "Don't worry, God loves you. Just remember that!" He doesn't just tell them to try to get away from the hustle and bustle of their difficult circumstances and calm their hearts before the

Lord. He doesn't even tell them to close their eyes and imagine Jesus coming up and embracing them. And, perhaps more surprisingly, he doesn't even tell them to repeat some specific promise from God's Word about God's love and care.

Paul doesn't take the positive confession approach. I was watching a brief slice of a show called *"Atmosphere For Miracles"* this afternoon. The speaker was working through the Lord's Prayer. He shouted out the phrase, *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

"Is there sickness in heaven?", he shouted. The crowd all shouted back, *"No!"* *"Is there poverty in heaven?"* *"No!"* screamed the huge audience. The people were lapping this nonsense up.

And the reason Paul doesn't take any of these approaches is when you're up against it - I mean *really* up against it - you don't feel like doing *any* of those things. When you're really under the heat and fire of the moment you can't easily control your inner emotional state and condition. You just can't turn your feelings on and off at will. You can't always silence all the voices that clamor and rage in your own head.

Then what shall we do? What approach shall we take? This is where Paul's approach differs from the modern therapeutic approaches to faith. Make sure you don't miss it. ***Take you finger and put it right under the words of verse 32 - "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"***

Do you see it? The title of this message (rather a long title, I know) is *"Jesus Christ died on the cross to give us confidence that God will grant us all things ultimately good and blessed."* Very good. That is a wonderful confidence to have, if you can muster it up. But Paul doesn't leave us with some locker room pep talk. He doesn't just say, "Cheer up! Try not to worry. God loves you! Just make a positive confession!" No. That is not the apostle's approach at all. He brings these people back to the *historic event of the cross*.

Why does Paul do this? Why is this his approach? Because these historic events *never change*. They can never be modified or undone. My impressions, my emotions, even my sense of God can come and go. My situation in this world can be a very slippery thing. It can all change so rapidly. But nothing can change the fact of God's love revealed through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

In other words, Paul does something very few teachers do anymore. He has the boldness to insist that *comfort is rooted in doctrine*. And *confidence is rooted in doctrine*. This is very unpopular today. I know of many churches in Newmarket that publicly take pride in the fact that they *don't* deal with *doctrines*. They deal with *relationships*. They *don't* deal with *doctrine*. They deal with *worship*. Their goal is to make church as *unchurchy* as possible. They give *talks*, not *theology*. They *share*, they don't *teach*.

But Paul goes in the opposite direction. And his method itself teaches us something important. His approach teaches us that assurance and peace can't be sustained without the teaching of doctrine. His approach shows the foolishness of those who cry, *"Don't give me doctrine. Give me something practical. Give me something relevant. Give me something that will help me live today. I'm just a plain person. I'm not a theologian!"*

Consider this issue - *how can desperate people find confidence?* I think we would all agree there is nothing more practical and helpful than this. But, Paul says, there is only one approach that will ultimately work. Paul's road to confidence and comfort in troubled times is to take the *events* of Christianity and *explain their meaning*. You can't find lasting assurance drinking at any other well. There is no *mystical* short-cut. There is no *relational* short-cut. There is no *worship* short-cut. There is no *emotional* short-cut. Properly understood and worked through, *doctrine* brings assurance and *doctrine* brings peace.

All of this leads to the third question:

3) **WHAT IS THE ARGUMENT PAUL MAKES FROM THIS TEXT THAT GOD CAN BE TRUSTED TO GIVE US ALL THINGS ULTIMATELY GOOD AND BLESSED?**

Look at it just one more time with me:

Romans 8:31-32 - "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 gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

There's a **what** and a **how** in Paul's argument. **"What then shall we say to these things?"** That's the issue. You have to say **something**. One way or another, silently or spoken out loud, thought through or simply released in unbridled anger and emotion, your life will say **something** to these kinds of events because they **have** to be responded to. They can't be **avoided**. They will advance, sooner or later, on your life.

Paul answers **"these things"** with the reality of the cross, but not just that. He takes the time to work through, not only the **event** of the cross, but the **meaning** of the event. That's what we're doing in this whole Sunday night series. This is what the church is all about. This is what the church is here for. If she isn't doing this she should turn out the lights and lock up the doors.

Here's what Paul pulls out of the doctrine of the cross. Here's another majestic reason for the death of Christ Jesus on the cross - **Romans 8:32** - **"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"**

- a) **We're meant to see the logic of the two halves of this wonderful verse.** The **first** part of the verse is the proof of the **second** part. The **first** part of the verse is already an accomplished fact. There is nothing at all subjective about it. Nothing on earth can undo this event. It is an accomplished fact of history.

God gave up His Son, Jesus Christ, to death on the cross. And, says Paul, He gave Him up **for us all**. Jesus wasn't just killed by some angry mob. God **gave** Him up. **God** was the one who gave up Jesus Christ, God the Son. And He did this for us. There isn't a word in our text to infer the **"all"** is just **the elect**. Let's not be like Bill Clinton not knowing the meaning of the word **"is."** **"All"** simply means **"all."**

The **second** part of the verse isn't about the past. It's about the present and the future. But it is **tied** to the first part of the verse in a very special way. Taken together, the two parts of the verse are meant to drive home a point - a very practical, precious point - for you and me. That God will **"freely give us all things"** is as certain as His **"giving Him (Jesus) up for us all"** on the cross. And His giving Him up for us all is **absolutely certain** because it has **already happened!**

In other words, the first half of the verse is presented **to make the second half all the more certain**. It is **more** certain that God will always be committed to my ultimate good than it is certain that Christ died on the cross.

Let me try to say it again in still more striking words. The mystery is that God would send His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die for me while I was His enemy. That's the unbelievable part of the verse. But, that being done - the truly **hard** part of God's commitment being done - the second part isn't hard to believe in comparison at all.

So, as I said earlier, one of the many reasons Christ died on the cross is to **verify God's unalterable commitment to provide me with all things ultimately good and blessed**. And the proof of that commitment is beyond all doubt or argument. It's beyond all personal opinion or feeling. It's as certain as the cross.

- b) **This verse is not a promise that we will not experience loss, pain, or perplexity in this life.** This is not a blanket promise that we will know nothing but ease and comfort. That's why, in my title, I said God is committed to give us all things **ultimately good and blessed**.

What does that mean? What are the things we can now count on God to give, now that He has already given up His own Son for us? I think the reasoning of this verse is exactly the same as that of **Romans 8:28** - **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."**

This is a very similar promise. We are promised that God knows us so well and loves us so much and is so committed to us in Christ that everything that happens to us will work for our ultimate good. Only, in these verses we are clearly **told** what that ultimate good is - **Romans 8:28-29** - **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn**

among many brothers.”

God will use everything that comes into my life to finish conforming me to the image of Jesus. He will never allow anything to dissolve that work. No outside force - earthly or demonic - can undo that great work in Jesus Christ.

So what does Paul mean when he says God will freely **“give us all things” (8:32)**? He doesn’t mean there won’t be persecution, pain, and even death, because he tells us we will experience those things just four verses later - **Romans 8:35-37** - **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”**

Notice, we don’t conquer **apart** from all these things. We conquer **in** all these things. God’s commitment isn’t shaken by any of these things. None of these things **triumphs** since Christ came and died and rose again.

The greatest fear that gnaws at the human heart, from the least of us to the greatest, is that, somehow, things are all going to come unglued. Our futures will not be as secured as we like to sing about in church, or hope for in our spiritual moments. We fear this so much that, for most of mankind, life is a mad scramble to pile up as much pleasure and material goods as possible. Perhaps then life won’t sneak up on us and leave us with nothing.

This is the fear that is abolished in Christ. God has **already given** us Christ. **He won’t walk away from such a precious investment.** In Christ God has provided the proof of His commitment to give us everything needed for our **eternal joy.**

c) **All of these eternal blessings are only secured when they are received with faith in Jesus Christ.**

Romans 8:32 - **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”**

There is no blind hope here in the general goodness and niceness of God to carry us all together into eternal bliss. God only secures lives in Jesus Christ. All other eternal blessings are brought to us only **“with Him.”** God has no other plan to invest our lives with eternal grace and abiding joy.