



THE CITY GATES CHURCH

Love God. Love Others.

Romans 8:31-39 **Confidence in the Plan**

Summary: You don't need to escape everything if Christ is with you.

I want to begin this morning with a question – how would your life change if you had more confidence? We all have things we're worried about. Things we wonder about, things we're not sure will turn out, or things that could go wrong.

How much of your life is spent running through what-if scenarios or wondering when or if this or that thing is going to happen? So, how would your life change if you had more confidence?

God wants you to have it. Rugged, durable, steadfast, tenacious, unbreakable, resilient confidence. That's what we see here in Romans. God wants your life to be built on a rock, a firm foundation that is unshakeable, immovable, and enduring. God wants you to live a life free of fear of anything but Him.

And He wants you to have all of this, not because you trust in yourself, but because you trust in Him.

This is what we have spent so much time meticulously dissecting chapter 8. The stuff here impacts how you see the world and your place in it. The stuff here affects the way you respond to difficulty and uncertainty. The more you understand the message of Romans 8, the more mature you become in your faith, and the more enjoyable you are to be around, especially in hard times.

Read the passage with me one last time. Notice the Christ-centered confidence and ask yourself – is this the kind of person I want to be like for myself and for others when life gets hard?

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

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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."*

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.

Can you see Paul's chest swelling as he asks the question in vs 31 - [What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?](#) Can you hear his confidence? If I could put this in street slang for you, this is "come at me, bro!" and that's just the beginning. He keeps going and every time you read the passage you can feel the conviction rising to a crescendo. By the time you get to Romans 8:38-39 it's as if Paul is standing on top of the highest peak of the highest mountain with the sun rising in the background, arms held high in confident victory.



And remember, all of this is happening when life is at its hardest. Paul has experienced [charges](#) being brought against him. He has faced [condemnation](#) from political and cultural leaders. He has experienced [tribulation](#), [distress](#), [persecution](#), [famine](#), [nakedness](#), [peril](#), and faced the [sword](#). Yet he is still able to say [37 in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us](#).

Friends, you have to know this confidence isn't theoretical. It's not therapeutic. It's not squishy or untested. Scripture tells us what HAS happened to other people and what IS available to us. If you read this passage and then reflect on your own life, I can almost guarantee you will find yourself saying "yeah, but" and then making an excuse for why your situation is different. You have no legitimate reason to do so. Whatever your objection, you're wrong.

This is real. And it's really available to you. You can have confidence in hard times, if your confidence is anchored in Christ.

Now, that's an important condition. This confidence belongs to those who have come alive spiritually. To those who have experienced a new birth. To those who now see themselves and the world differently – they see another dimension to life – they see it spiritually, not just physically, and they prioritize spiritual things.

If you want to develop this kind of confidence, go back with me and look at

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

Right away, we see there are two ways to walk through life – according to the flesh or according to the Spirit.

My friends, what are you worried about right now? What are you worked up over? Where do your thoughts keep drifting back to? If you want to have confidence the first question you need to ask is: do I need to focus on that? Sometimes things we cannot fix, repair, control, or affect dominate our thinking. This is often amplified by media in all its forms.

You know things that you can't change. Why do you worry about them? They're out of your control and they're probably not on your prayer list. Often, these are the things that steal our confidence and joy.

But there may be things you do need to consider. OK, are you evaluating them according to the flesh or the Spirit? Skip down and read with me:

Romans 8:5 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Where are you setting your mind? Where does it rest? Where does it live? Do you see your situation first and foremost through the eyes of the flesh or the eyes of the Spirit? Do you view every situation in your life – whether at work, home, school, in your career, or in your relationships—*first and foremost* as a physical issue or a spiritual issue?

Let me put this in practical terms for you. We're in a season where I pray fervently, multiple times a day, for each of my children in various ways.

Let's take Chris, our middle child. Next year is his senior year of high school. He's got a lot of options and a lot of opportunities and he's trying to figure out – what should he do after graduating high school? I don't know if you remember, but that feels like a lot when you're going through it. You're trying to figure out- everything in my life is about to change – I'm becoming an adult. I have to figure out college or getting a job and moving out.

Maybe you were excited about, maybe you were terrified, but either way it involved some big decisions about things you had never done before. You were stepping blindly into the dark.

Well, that's where Chris is. And I'm praying for him all the time, not just for the physical stuff - what college or career should he pursue? Where is he supposed to go?

That's good stuff to pray about. But you know what's even better? Praying for spiritual eyes – God, would You help Chris know where You want him to be and what You want him to do? God, would You help Chris hear Your voice and teach him how to be led by You? So that when things get hard, he knows You're guiding him and You're with him. God, please use the pressures of this moment to teach him things about seeking You and hearing You that will give him confidence for the rest of his life.

I pray for his tests when he takes them, I pray for his applications when he submits them, I pray for his recruiting opportunities when he's scouted, I pray for all the physical aspects, but I also try to remember to see the spiritual component underneath it all – that at the end of the day we're not looking for whatever you may call 'success' we're looking for a young man who loves Jesus and walks with Him.

I'm praying for all of you parents and families getting ready to send kids off to college, the work force, or the military. 'God, carry them through these difficult transitions, but also, minister to their souls – give them a holy confidence in what You're doing God – a confidence greater than their fears, doubts, and worries. Give them a bold, defiant, confident faith and trust that You see and know everything that is happening, and You care.'

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Friends, I want to live! I want my family to live! I want our church family to live! That happens when we look at our lives with the eyes of Spirit and not merely the eyes of the flesh. Do you see the spiritual side of things happening in your

life? Do you see life through the lens of eternity? Does the light of Christ shine, and does it make a difference?

That's how you get to the point where you can say things like

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Something we have often said as we study this chapter is that your life can be both hard and blessed at the same time. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. I've said before, and I'll say again – sometimes I wish I could turn down or turn off the hard stuff. I know it helps us grow. I know it shapes and molds us and perfects us – but often I'd prefer a little less pain, fewer things to worry, wonder, or think about. Those things aren't going away, though.

But, there is a way for us to navigate them with confidence, Christ-centered hope, contagious joy and enthusiasm. I'm not there yet. I wish for my own sake and for all of you that I were further along – but I'm trying to get there. That's the direction I hope to keep heading.

I hope you'll all come along; that we would be a people who radiate joy and peace even in hard times. That we would know what the Scriptures mean when they speak of a peace that passes all understanding or being 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.

I pray, and I'm doing all I can pastorally, to help us become a community of people who can say, with confidence, **we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.** Whatever those things may be.

Key to it all is reaching the point where we see things not just for what they are physically, on the surface, but for what they are spiritually underneath it all. When you look at life that way, and you understand who you are in Christ, you can have the kind of bold confidence that we see here with Paul.

Romans 8:31 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?

And then Paul makes a specific application of his confidence in two areas. First, problems you experience with people, and then problems you experience in

life. Let's take the first one – problems you experience with people. He asks **Who shall bring a charge against** you or **condemn** you?

The answer is, all kinds of people, including myself. Let's start there. What kind of accusations or **condemnation**, do you tell yourself about yourself? What's your inner self-talk like? 'I'm just not as good as. I'm not as pretty, strong, or fast as. I'm not as thin as. I'm not as rich as. I'm not smart as.' No one knows your faults and failures as well as you do, and if you're like most people, you remind yourself of them daily.

Christian, you have to determine: will you live in the flesh, by what you tell yourself, what others say or think about you, or will you live in the Spirit and prioritize what God says? Let me remind you of the way God looks at you:

Zeph 3:17 The LORD your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us,
that we should be called children of God!

God knows *everything about you* – even the stuff that you can't see, and He still moves toward you, reaches out to you, and shows you more grace than anyone else you know, *including yourself*. If you would listen to Him more than you listen to yourself, it would change your life. It would give a holy confidence. It would take the teeth out of whatever anyone else says or you say about yourself.

But here's the thing, I can stand up here and preach the truth to you. All. Day. Long. And if you keep putting the things of this earth in front of the things of the Lord, it won't land right. It won't have an effect.

Because people do **condemn** you, people do throw **charges** at you – that's not going away until the heavens and earth fade away and are made new. The promise is not that *God will make you the kind of person that everyone loves and no one talks about or against*. The offer is that you could have *all kinds of things said about you* and not have it control you, shape you, or nudge you.

You kick those thoughts and people who are living rent-free in your head out because you *only have one tenant there*, and it's the Lord. You let His voice speak loudest and with the most weight. You come to the place where you really, truly, actually believe, (Vs 31) *If God is for me, who can be against me?* Comparatively, what does anyone else matter? Everyone talks. Who do you listen to?

OK, we said there are two categories: problems you experience with people and problems you experience in life. Let's take the second one now. *35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Now you may have noticed the awkward interrogative there – *who shall separate us*, it seems like it should be – *what* shall separate us? But the idea is that people or spiritual forces are often behind the bad things that come our way. Yet, the answer is even if we experience *tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword...* 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.*

So, let me ask again – what is driving your internal news cycle? What do you keep coming back to? What are you worried about? What are the headlines in your life right now? Can they separate you from the love of Christ? Of course not.

But, Is that the way you look at your life? Do you look at life with the eyes of the flesh or the eyes of the Spirit? Now, you might tell yourself there's no spiritual perspective here – the things I'm worried about are all work-related. OK. But there's still a spiritual perspective on what happens at work. Why does Scripture say:

Colossians 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. *23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,* *24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

And then it goes right on to say to bosses:

Colossians 4:1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

And that's just one example related to work. We could say the same thing about every other part of life. Your faith is meant to be the foundation of your life and *everything* that happens in it, *which is why* there is [nothing that can separate you from the love of God](#).

Last week, I came across a great article by the theologian Andrew Wilson. He pointed out that durable happiness in our lives comes not from absence, but presence. Focus on that – durable happiness, or we might say, confidence, comes not from absence, but presence.

People often think the key to happiness is removing things from your life. Shut out that toxic person. Block that person from your feed. Quit your job to escape that person or boss. Move to a new city. Take a break from work or school. Get away.

Removing things can help; it's OK to try to avoid [tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword](#) – Paul tried to avoid them at times. Wilson's point was that happiness is more about presence, specifically, the presence of God in our lives.

This is how the world began, in Eden. The word Eden can be translated as “pleasure.” Remember, God made all things good. And we were meant to enjoy them and enjoy having the presence of God in our lives. Sin got in the way of that and separated us from a holy God. But God continually challenged people to put Him back at the center.

When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, God gave them the tabernacle, a house of worship at the center of their camp.

Later, the temple was built and all of Israel was to come to it regularly and celebrate the central role of God in their lives individually and nationally. There was to be joy in being in the house of the Lord. The Psalms, the hymnbook of the nation, were filled with declarations of the goodness that came from being in the presence of the Lord.

But God was working toward something even better – He would send His Son, Jesus, to walk among us again and to deal with the sin that separates us from God. Now, after His sacrificial, atoning death and resurrection, we can experience the presence of God within us, with us, all the time.

Romans 8:8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Friends, God is going for a relationship - this is what we're trying to get back to, *and it's this relationship that will give you confidence in the face of whatever life brings.*

Joy is about the presence of God, not the absence of all my problems. *You don't need to get away from it all if you can invite Jesus into it.*

So let me ask again—how would your life change if you had more confidence?

Not in yourself, but in God.

Not in what you can control, but in who holds control.

That's the kind of confidence Paul had. That's the kind of confidence Romans 8 offers.

And that's the kind of confidence you can have, too—if your life is centered in Christ and you focus on the spiritual, not just the physical, aspect of all things.

Is that where you are this morning? And if not, what kind of help do you need from God today to get there?

Let's pray.



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Love God. Love Others.

Sermon Outline

Romans 8:31-39 Confidence in the Plan

22 June 2025

- **Summary:** You don't need to escape everything if Christ is with you.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF CONFIDENCE

- This confidence is tested and proven through real hardship
- Belongs only to those "who love God" and "are called according to His purpose" (v. 28)
- **Romans 8:1** - No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus

II. SEEING WITH SPIRITUAL EYES

The Key Question: Flesh or Spirit?

- Do you see situations as primarily physical or spiritual issues?
- **Romans 8:5-6** - Carnally minded vs. spiritually minded
- Seeing life through the lens of eternity
- **Romans 8:13** - Living by the Spirit brings life
- Life can be both hard and blessed simultaneously

III. TWO CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMS

A. Problems with People (Accusations and Condemnation)

Self-Condemnation

- What is your inner talk like?
- **Romans 8:1** - No condemnation in Christ
- Listen to God's voice over your own

God's Voice About You

- **Zephaniah 3:17** - God rejoices over you
- **Jeremiah 31:3** - Everlasting love
- **1 John 3:1** - Called children of God

The Promise

- God won't make everyone love you
- But you can be free from others' control over you
- "If God is for me, who can be against me?"

B. Problems in Life (Tribulation and Hardship)

Four Sources of Pain: Our own sin; Living in a fallen world; Others' sins affecting us; Demonic spiritual forces

The Ultimate Question: What is driving your internal news cycle? Are you looking at life from an earthly or a spiritual perspective?

- **Colossians 3:22-24; 4:1** - Work as unto the Lord

IV. PRESENCE, NOT ABSENCE

The Key to Lasting Joy

- Happiness comes from God's presence, not the absence of problems
- From Eden to Tabernacle to Temple to Christ in us
- **Romans 8:8-9** - The Spirit of God dwells in you

The Relationship Goal

- God desires a relationship with us
- Joy comes from inviting Jesus into our problems
- You don't need to escape everything if Christ is with you

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Group Application & Discussion Guide

1. The Confidence Question

- How would you honestly answer the opening question: "How would your life change if you had more confidence?" What specific areas of your life would be different?
- What percentage of your mental energy would you estimate goes toward "what-if" scenarios or worrying about uncertain outcomes? How might God want to redirect that energy?

Scripture to explore: Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 6:25-34

2. Flesh vs. Spirit Perspective

- Think of a current concern or challenge you're facing. How would you typically view this situation "according to the flesh" versus "according to the Spirit"?
- The pastor shared about praying for his son Chris both physically and spiritually. How can you begin to see and pray about your situations with more spiritual depth?

Scripture to explore: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Ephesians 1:18-19, Colossians 3:1-4

3. Conquering Condemnation

- What kinds of accusations or condemnation do you typically tell yourself? How do these compare with what God says about you in Romans 8:1?
- The sermon mentioned that "everyone is speaking" - whose voice tends to speak loudest in your head? How can you amplify God's voice above the others?

Scripture to explore: Zephaniah 3:17, Jeremiah 31:3, 1 John 3:1, Ephesians 2:4-5

4. Silencing the Inner Critic

- When you compare yourself to others or rehearse your failures, how can you practically redirect those thoughts toward God's truth about you?
- How might your relationships change if you truly believed you are someone over whom God "rejoices with singing"?

Scripture to explore: Psalm 139:13-16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10

5. Presence Over Absence

- The sermon emphasized that joy comes from God's presence, not the absence of problems. How might this change your approach to current difficulties?
- Instead of trying to escape or avoid your challenges, how can you invite Jesus more deeply into them?

Scripture to explore: Psalm 23:4, Isaiah 43:2, Matthew 28:18-20

6. Legacy of Faith

- How might growing in this kind of confidence affect the people around you - your family, friends, coworkers, or neighbors?
- What would it look like for you to become the kind of person others want to be around "when things get hard in life"?

Scripture to explore: 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Titus 2:7-8