

## Confidence For The New Year.

Text: Rom 8:31-39

Suggested Hymns:  
559, 347, 40, 426, 552

- 1) Confidence That God Will Hear Our Prayers
- 2) Confidence That Satan Cannot Successfully Accuse Us
- 3) Confidence That Our Faith Will Not Fail

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 8:31–39, <sup>31</sup> *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* <sup>32</sup> *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?* <sup>33</sup> *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*

<sup>34</sup> *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.* <sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* <sup>36</sup> *As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."*

<sup>37</sup> *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.* <sup>38</sup> *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> 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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Most people frequently worry about things which never come to pass. Now, when we sit along the side lines of life and see other people do this, we readily understand how foolish it is to worry in this way; but before we know it, we ourselves are doing that very thing. Then it is not always so easy to recognise the folly of such worry.

But why do people worry, especially about things which never come to pass? Various explanations might be offered, but eventually worry can be traced to a lack of faith and confidence in God's dealings with us. We Christians should know that such lack of confidence is an insult to the goodness and omnipotence of our God.

Yes, we should realise that lack of faith and confidence in God is a sin. Therefore, one of the great needs of the Christian at all times is to pray: *“Lord, increase our faith.”*<sup>1</sup> This is a need of which we think particularly on the first Sunday of the New Year.

Because of experiences in the past we think of things that may happen in the year which lies ahead. If our imagination is vivid enough, we can become quite uneasy and disturbed about things that can happen.

But we need the confident faith of the Apostle, who says in our text: *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Therefore let us consider this text under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit and fix our attention upon this thought, *Confidence for the New Year*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Confidence That God Will Hear Our Prayers**

Some people feel quite self-sufficient. Their life's savings are of considerable size. They feel that they will have food and clothing and shelter in sufficient quantities. They are well and strong and therefore do not fear sickness. They have employment and therefore feel secure.

And for these reasons they see no need of prayer. If they do pray, it is too often only a self-appraisal, like the prayer of the Pharisee in the Temple, who asked for nothing, but boasted about what he had and did.

Now, the Christian may have an abundance of these earthly blessings, too. But if he has, he realises, in the first place, from whom they come, and therefore he sees no excuse for pride.

On the other hand, the humble Christian realises how uncertain and indefinite all earthly advantages may be. Therefore he cannot feel so self-sufficient that he no longer looks up to God for all the needs of body and soul. He does not forget that there will be future need, too.

He will need food and clothing; he will need shelter against the elements; he will need strength and health and the protecting hand of God to spare him from sickness and disease.

He will also need the blessings of peace, of good discipline, not only in his home, but also in his social circles, as well as in the nation of which he is a citizen. He realises how important and necessary good government and faithful rulers are to him.

At the same time the intelligent Christian will also realise that God in His wisdom may withhold, at least for the time being, some of these blessings from him and others who are dear to him.

For example, God may see fit to let rain or sunshine become either scarce or overabundant, so that the food supplies of the country run low. God may permit sickness to assail the family and cause great concern. God may also let the angel of death pay a sad visit to the home.

When faced with these conditions, the Christian should know what to do about them and where to go for help. He has been taught time and again: “***Call upon Me in the day of trouble.***”<sup>2</sup>

He has also sung those well-known words:<sup>3</sup>

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

A Christian may know all of these things, and yet, when the actual need arises and he has to turn to prayer for help in his need, so often the child-like trust and confidence in the effectiveness of prayer is not what it should be. Because prayer has not always had the results which he expected and hoped for in the past, his confidence in its power has been shaken.

Now, do not think you are the only one whose confidence in prayer is not always what it should be. Most Christians have that very experience on more than one occasion in their lives.

It is for this reason that the Apostle directs our attention in our text to the fact: “<sup>32</sup> ***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?"* In other words, stop to consider what God has sacrificed for us!

Realise the investment which He has made in our salvation and in our happiness! If God was willing to give up His only-begotten Son for us, do you think we could be justified in doubting that God will grant us the lesser blessings necessary for our happiness and welfare of both body and soul?

Forget about any other experiences you may have had in the past. Look only to what God has done for us — look to the love which prompted Him to give us His Son — look at it intently and earnestly and sincerely, and God will give you the confidence that He hears and answers our prayers.

Perhaps He does not always follow the pattern which we have cut out for Him, but if not, then be sure that He has selected a far more beautiful design than we had even thought of, a design which is better for us.

My fellow Christians, if we can look forward to the eventualities of the New Year with this confidence, that, come what may, we can still take all of our trials and tribulations to God in prayer and be convinced that He who spared not His only-begotten Son will surely also freely give us all things, then we may proceed into the New Year in His name with joy.

## **2. Confidence That Satan Cannot Successfully Accuse Us**

So far we have spoken about our needs in general. Let us now become more specific and consider needs which are of such major importance that they deserve special attention.

The first of these is the full and complete forgiveness of all of our sins. The self-righteous person steps forward into the New Year with a spirit of self-confidence because he is not conscious of guilt which might cause a barrier between him and God. He feels that he is living and doing all right and that God, for this reason, owes him His goodness and favours.

The intelligent Christian, on the other hand, is deeply conscious of his many failings and shortcomings. He must look with deepest humiliation at his record of the past. And when he thinks of the record which he will make in the future, as far as obedience to God is concerned, it just isn't too promising or encouraging.

He is quite sure that there will be a repetition of many sins of weakness. And if he knows human nature, he will not be too sure about himself with regard to major sins.

He remembers that David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he became an adulterer and a murderer. He remembers that Peter was among the twelve Apostles and still denied his Lord.

What if he would fall into a similar sin or some other great sin in the year that lies ahead? Would he still be saved? Would God's mercy still reach out to him sufficiently far to blot out these transgressions?

What makes the matter worse is the realisation that Satan wants God to deal with us strictly according to justice — justice without mercy. That means that God should follow the Law, especially also in imposing the penalty upon the transgressors of the Law. Satan wants God relentlessly to carry out His Word ***"The soul who sins shall die."***<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the intelligent Christian is aware of the fact that if Satan would have his way and succeed in getting God to deal with us only according to justice, Satan would win his case and the Christian would be eternally lost. Satan has plenty of evidence to convict us of many crimes against God's Law. If now the penalty is to be imposed according to the demands of the Law, surely Satan is the victor.

But in the face of all these accusations the Christian may and should have complete confidence. He should be able to say with Paul, <sup>33</sup> ***Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*** In what does his confidence consist?

Surely not in his own ability to live a moral and God-pleasing life. Certainly not in the fact that he could possibly make satisfaction for his sins. His confidence lies in this alone: ***"It is God who justifies,"*** i.e., it is God who looks away from man's sins, and instead of condemning him, declares him just.

But how can God do this and still be just? Can an earthly father see one of his sons steal and justify this act, shielding the guilty? No, neither does God simply ignore sin when He justifies. The whole justification rests upon this fact stated in our text: ***"It is Christ who died."***

Sins were not ignored. They were all paid for, and that is how God can pronounce us just and still remain just Himself. Too wonderful to be true, you say? Well, we have the proof for it. “*It is Christ who ... furthermore is also risen.*” You can be sure of this, God never would have raised Christ from the dead if He had not been satisfied with the price He paid.

Do you desire still more proof that we are really justified in Christ? Then consider this: “*who is even at the right hand of God.*” Don’t think that God would for a moment grant to Christ this position of honour and majesty and glory if He was not satisfied with the work of redemption.

And finally, the Christian is confident against the accusations of the devil in the knowledge that Christ daily makes intercession for us. As often as we sin and our case is brought up for trial before the Judge of heaven, with Satan as the accuser, it is Christ who pleads our case, and we know that He is a successful attorney.

This is borne out not only by our text but also by the Evangelist John, who writes in 1 John 2:1, *And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Let Satan make as many accusations as he will, Christ will take care of our case for us.

Therefore, when we think not only of our past sins, but also of the possibility and the probability of sins which we may commit in the year that lies ahead, we need not tremble or fear as long as our confidence is placed in God and in the work of His Son, who still pleads for us today.

Let come what may in 2026, of this we are sure, Satan will not be successful in his accusations, nor keep us from our inheritance.

### **3. Confidence That Our Faith Will Not Fail**

The confidence of which we have been speaking narrows down to a still more specific need. First we saw that we may have confidence that God will provide for our needs in general. Secondly we saw that we may be confident that God will specifically forgive us our sins, which alone can keep us out of heaven.

Now let us also see the confidence that we may and should have that we shall not lose that faith by which we receive God’s forgiveness and thus finally the gift of heaven.

Paul asks, “<sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” that is, the love which Christ has for us? If we know our God at all, we know His love will not fail. But how about our faith, through which His love becomes effective in our lives?

We know that as long as the world stands, the sun will not fail — but how about our eyesight by which we appreciate the light of the sun? Well, there is an assurance for us that our faith will not fail if we look for the assurance in the right place.

The intelligent Christian is very conscious of the danger of falling from faith. He will never forget what happened to King Saul, who had originally been chosen by God to be king of God’s chosen people but finally made such a miserable end of his kingship.

Neither will the Christian forget Judas, who was one of the twelve men in all the world privileged to associate intimately with Jesus in the days of His flesh and yet in the end made such a miserable failure of his apostleship.

The Christian is, therefore, very well aware of the fact that he dare not become over-confident and self-sufficient in his own strength, for by ourselves we human beings certainly cannot retain our faith.

The Christian has all the more reason to recognise his own dangers when he thinks of the possible tribulations which may await him in the year to come. There may be tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or even the sword, as the Apostle mentions in our text.

Yes, before this year is up, the Christian may feel like saying with the Psalmist of old, “*Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*”<sup>5</sup> The Christian should know that principalities and the powers of darkness will certainly try their devilish best to win him away from that confidence in the everlasting love of his God.

Yes, we should be conscious of the fact that these things may come to us before this year reaches its close. But even if they would come, as they certainly did come in the life of Paul, who wrote our text, we should have the same confidence which enabled Paul to say, “<sup>37</sup> *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*”

We should have the same confidence which prompted him to say with such fervour and childlike trust: ***“I am persuaded.”*** We should have that confidence which will enable us to challenge the powers of darkness as did Paul, and ask them defiantly: ***“<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”***

But, where shall we get such confidence? Let me remind you that if our confidence is based on ourselves and our own strength, we are doomed to meet a dismal failure and to have a sad and rude awakening.

The Apostle warns us against such self-confidence. In 1 Corinthians 10:12 we read, ***“<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.***

In Philippians 2:12 we read ***work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*** In our own strength we dare not put our confidence. If we do, we are sure to make a shipwreck of our faith.

On the other hand, the Christian may and should have confidence that his faith will not fail, provided he puts his confidence in God and the eternal Word of God.

Of this the Christian can be sure: ***God will never leave you nor forsake you.***<sup>6</sup> Of this the Christian can be convinced: ***Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s Word shall never pass away.***<sup>7</sup>

The Christian will, therefore, put his confidence in such promises in which the Lord says: ***“The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”***

And again in Ezekiel 33:11, ***‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*** And again: ***“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”***<sup>8</sup>

Thus his confidence rests upon a foundation that will stand and not be moved by the opposition of enemies either seen or unseen. The Christian can look forward to the New Year, knowing that Jesus Christ is ***“the same yesterday, today and forever”***<sup>9</sup> and that therefore His sustaining strength will not let our faith fail.

May God in His mercy and grace give us the confidence that since God is for us, nobody can successfully be against us, and then, though evil days do come

and we be greatly tried and tempted, the same Lord who gave Himself into death for us will hold us firmly so that no enemies can pluck us out of His hand. God grant us such confidence! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 17:5

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 50:15

<sup>3</sup> Hymn 426

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 18:20

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 44:22

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 13:5

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24:35

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 1:6

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 13:8