

# THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

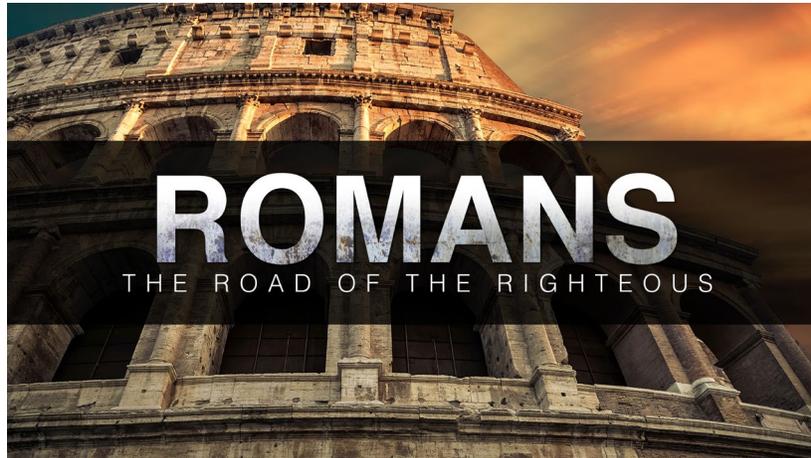
## Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 8:31-39

Written By

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Can you commit a sin so off the grid that it will wind up costing you your salvation? If your flesh so overpowers you, as a believer, that you cave and wind up doing a despicable thing, does God, at that point, look down from heaven and kick you out of His family? Perhaps you as a police officer, or a soldier, or a federal agent have seen and done things which nobody else knows about but you and God, and your action or inaction now haunts you in the middle of the night. Perhaps you've had this monkey on your back thinking that this decision of yours was the last straw between God and you. Perhaps you have a personal sin which ensnares you more often than not and makes it difficult for you to run the spiritual race with any degree of endurance. Perhaps the way you behaved in your last marriage was so wrong, so inappropriate, so ungodly and utterly selfish you now wonder, "Surely, my sins as a husband/wife have caused God to cut me loose from His heavenly family."

So, I stop and pose our opening question one more time: Can your sinful activity completely destroy your spiritual standing as a child of God? From Romans 1, verse 1 to chapter 8, verse 30, Paul has clearly taught us three major concepts in relation to this question of all questions: one, we, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, are all born sinners who stand condemned in God's heavenly courtroom (Rom. 1-3); two, Jesus's sacrificial death on our behalf, coupled with our faith in His ability to forgive our sinful status, instantly causes us to be justified by faith in His courtroom (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:1-5:21; and three, He has, and is, providentially working in our lives to guide us home in light of the fact He predestined and chosen us to be His children (Rom. 8:28-30).

These rich and timeless spiritual truths lead to only one inexorable, unchangeable conclusion:

## A Believer's Salvation Is Safe And Secure (Rom. 8:31-39)

Granted, we can, and will, struggle with sin for we live in weak fleshly bodies until we see Christ. As Paul has effectively demonstrated, we are, as believers, no longer chained to and dominated by the pull and relentless power of the flesh (Rom. 6:1-15); however, we are under divine command to willfully and freely choose to live like victors (Rom. 6:15-23). At times, we, like Paul, won't fare very well, unfortunately, in our bid to live like spiritual freemen (Rom. 7); however, we do possess the resident power of the Holy Spirit, which became ours at the moment of salvation (Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:13). His powerful presence, then, awaits to be unleashed each day as we yield to Him (Eph. 5:18ff). But, as I've said, along with Paul, there are times when you will trip and fall, sometimes miserably. Does that mean its spiritual over with you because God is disgusted with you? No. How can I be so confident this is the proper conclusion? Because I've read, studied, and meditated up on the import of Paul's wise, comforting words at the close of Romans 8:

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." <sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From these memorable, instructive words, Paul gives us war-weary saints, three distinct evidences that our salvation is wrapped up tight in God's mind. First . . .

## The Proof Of God's Love Verifies Its Permanence (Rom. 8:31-32)

Paul employs Socratic questions to both sum up and advance the argument he has presented and discussed since chapter 1.

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

"What then shall we say" (Τί οὖν ἐποῦμεν) is language an attorney would use to sum up his argument(s). Paul loves this technique and employs it exclusively throughout this letter (Rom. 1:4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14, 30). If you drop the verb of this clause, *what shall we say*, and wed other verbs to this familiar interrogative formula (Τί οὖν), you will quickly learn Paul has a penchant, as a gifted

teacher, to pose questions to drive his teaching home (Rom. 3:1, 9; 6:15; 7:7; 11:7). As I said in the introduction, this phraseology looks back to everything Paul has said about our inherited sinful status, which is completely removed when we are justified by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Since we are justified by faith and are providentially chosen by God to be His children, this reality leads to a logical question:

If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

First, notice the verb “*is*” is italicized. This is because it is not present in the Greek text. Why did Paul exclude the verb from the sentence? He did this to employ figure of speech called ellipsis. According to Bullinger, “The omission arises not from want of thought, or lack of care, or from accident, but from design, in order that we may not stop to think of, or lay stress on, the word omitted, but may dwell on the other words which are thus emphasized by the omission.”<sup>2</sup> Ellipsis forces us to come to terms with the fact God’s providential presence in our lives guarantees us ultimate victory.

Second, note that the clause is not conditional as Cranfield and Emerton remark in *the International Critical Commentary on Romans*,<sup>3</sup> but, on the contrary, assumes the statement is true and factual. Therefore, it is as if Paul says emphatically, “Since God *is* for us, who *is* against us?” The answer to the rhetorical question is a resounding, fist-on-the-table, “No one!”

Logically does this mean that Christians will never be opposed by non-Christians? We know from Christ teaching in the New Testament this is not, nor will it ever be, the case. Consider the following texts:

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when *men* cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matt. 5).

Jesus was forthright in telling us we would face opposition for following hard after Him. His first sermon tells us this much. In his upper room discourse with the disciples prior to His arrest and crucifixion, He gave this sobering warning:

<sup>18</sup> If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Jn. 15).

Any Christian living in a Muslim controlled land, or one who courageously seeks to stand up for biblical truth and morality in our land (viz., Aaron Haviland, cf. persecution on the campus of Yale University: <https://thefederalist.com/2019/03/04/thought-christian-constitutionalist-yale-law-school-wrong/>) certainly understands our Lord’s words. Persecution comes with the turf of

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<sup>2</sup>E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 1.

<sup>3</sup>J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary: Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 435.

belonging to Jesus, the Light, for the world lies in spiritual, philosophical, and theological darkness of the first order.

So, what is Paul getting at in this statement? The answer is articulated well by the late R. C. Sproul in his commentary on Romans:

Paul is not saying that if God is for a person, nobody in the world will ever rise up against that person. The meaning of this idiom is, who can *prevail* against us? All kinds of people will be against us, but who can overcome the sovereignty and the power of God? We have the old cliché that one person with God is a majority.<sup>4</sup>

How utterly true. The God who loves us, who providentially is in our corner at all times, is always working to bring about His sovereign will in all life situations. Ostensibly, this means no ACLU lawsuit, no ISIS torture, no hate speech laws designed to silence the voice of Christians will ever frustrate God's work in and through His chosen people. As Paul says, it's highly illogical to think you can thwart the work of God.

The proof that nothing shall ultimately prevail against God's people, is developed by Paul in two supportive concepts.

*God Did Not Spare His Son (Rom. 8:32a)*. First, let's read Paul's words and then analyze them.

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Read through the New Testament and you quickly understand that God, like Abraham of old, loved you so much he was willing to sacrifice His only begotten son so you might be freed from the chains of sin and death. Mark well that uses the word "own" in relation to God and His Son, Jesus. This is by no means an adopted child, as we are according to what Paul states in Romans chapter 8. On the contrary, Jesus, the second member of the holy Trinity, is eternal and special son of the Father. Many biblical texts verify this truth:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

In First John 4:9 we read:

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him.

Please think about the magnitude of what God has done in sending His Son to earth. Since God was willing to send His only Son to be our sin sacrifice out of love for us, this demonstrates the lengths He went to in order to give us the opportunity to be His children. Logically, this leads to another question: Since God was willing to sacrifice His very best for us, why would we ever think we could lose the salvation the sacrifice secures? The point is clear: We couldn't, ever.

*God Did Deliver His Son (Rom. 8:32b)*.

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<sup>4</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 155.

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

The proof of God's love for us is that He spared not His own son to the point of death. The contrastive word here, *but* (ἀλλά), is most emphatic in the Greek text. Paul observes that God, out of love for us, didn't just give us His only Son to be our Savior, He purposefully and providentially delivered Him, of all people, to die a cruel death in order to be our perfect sin-bearer and sin-sacrifice. The genitive prepositional phrase "*over for us all*" (ὑπὲρ) can, and should be, translated, "*in behalf of us*," thereby giving us its substitutionary sacrificial emphasis. Friberg's lexicon validates this observation:

Fri] ὑπὲρ preposition; literally *over, above*; used only in a nonliteral sense in the NT; (1) with the genitive; (a) with a component of protection and concern *on behalf of, for the sake of, for* (PH 4.10; CO 1.7); (b) after expressions relating to prayer *for, in behalf of* (MT 5.44); (c) after expressions relating to sacrifice *for, to atone for* someone (MK 14.24); *to atone, pay the price for* something (HE 10.12); (d) with a component of representation or substitution *in the place of, for, in the name of, instead of* (RO 9.3; 1C 15.29; PM 13); (e) to mark cause or reason *on account of, for the sake of, in view of* (AC 5.41; 2TH 1.5); (f) to mark general content *with reference to, about, concerning* equivalent to περί (JN 1.30; RO 9.27); (2) with the accusative; (a) with a component of excelling or surpassing *exceeding, above, more than* (2C 1.8b; EP 1.22); (b) preceded by a comparative *than* (LU 16.8; HE 4.12); (3) adverbially *to an even greater degree, more* (2C 11.23; cf. ἐγὼ μᾶλλον [*I even) more*] in PH 3.4).<sup>5</sup>

In substitution, the person in question, viz., Jesus, steps in and does something no one else could do. This fact is borne out by

A "substitute" is primarily a person (or thing) performing a function instead of another, perhaps the plainest personal example being the substitute on a team who has to step in to replace the original player in case of injury, etc. In substitution there is much more pronounced than in representation the thought of exchange or replacement. While the representative acts for others, it is their action through him. The substitute, however, replaces the others, doing what they cannot do and must not even try to do. A person may be both a representative and a substitute with a clear differentiation of meaning, as when a speaker scheduled to give an address as the representative of a society is forced to withdraw through sickness, and therefore a substitute is arranged to perform this representative function. The element of replacement or exchange in the work of Christ makes it necessary to supplement representation by substitution.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Friberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*.

<sup>6</sup>G. W. Bromiley, "Substitution," ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 645–646.

Isaiah prophesied some eight hundred years before Christ, that the Christ would, in fact, die for the sins of mankind

<sup>5</sup>But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. <sup>6</sup>All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Isa. 53).

The New Testament validates that Jesus did, in fact, die for our sins.

<sup>25</sup> He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification (Rom. 4).

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15).

<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Gal. 1).

If the God of glory's death for your sin does not convince of His unfailing love for you, I don't know what will arrest your attention. Since Jesus did die for your sin, don't you think His love will motivate Him to keep you in a saved status until He sees you face to face? The answer is, "Of course His love will work in this fashion." So, what are you worried about? The same love which sent Jesus to the cross to secure your salvation, is the same love which will make sure everything He promised you He would do for you, as His child, in the here and now and in the hereafter He will most certainly do because of that lasting love. You might need to read that one more time. This time do it slowly so you can really appreciate the tasty truth.

That old, blood-stained cross on Calvary is all the proof you need, really, that your salvation is secure. The Lord who loved you enough to die for you, is the same Lord who will love you until He calls you to your heavenly home.

Second, your faith is secure for all time because, as Paul notes, . . .

### The Performance Of God's Love Verifies Its Permanence (Rom. 8:33-34)

One more time, Paul peppers us with profound, penetrating questions to drive his inspired teaching into your heart and mind. Listen up and learn from him:

<sup>33</sup> Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup> 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.

Paul poses two interesting questions here. The first one merely asks, "Is it possible for someone in the future to bring a viable charge against a Christian which will stick and thereby destroy their faith?" This query, naturally, devolves into a secondary one, "Is it possible for someone to come along and offer evidence against a Christian which will so condemn them their faith will be forfeited?" The answer to both questions is an unequivocal and resounding "No!" Why? Let's dissect Paul's two reasons.

*One, God Is The Justifier* (Rom. 8:33). The reason you can't lose your salvation is because "God is the one who justifies." "Justifies" is a present active participle denoting an ongoing divine activity. Paul's point should be well-taken. Since the living God is the one who takes sinners at the moment of faith and makes them righteous in His courtroom by justifying them by faith, there is no way they could ever be convicted again. God's justification of the repentant, trusting sinner stands, as the grammar demonstrates, for all time. Period.

Sure, saints do sin. Don't you? Couldn't someone come along and say, "Hey, I thought you were a Christian, but I saw you doing something sinful the other day. Yeah, I saw you blow up with your son at the baseball game when he dropped the fly ball"? Yes, on any given day non-Christians could accuse Christians of doing things contrary to godly living. Funny how they are quick to do this. But, when they do this, this does not mean your status before God is terminated. That could never occur because God secures your justified status constantly.

*Two, God Is The Intercessor* (Rom. 8:34). Christ's work as your intercessor in the Father's courtroom is ample evidence that no one, not even the Devil himself, could amass data to destroy your faith standing as a child of God. This is exactly what Paul states:

Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Jesus is seated (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3), which denotes His redeeming work is *finished* because no High Priest ever sat down in the Temple of Solomon at the right hand of God Almighty (Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22), and He serves as our perpetual defense attorney, a concept which is denoted by the present tense verb, *to intercede* (ἐντυγχάνει). Hebrews 7, verse 25 also verifies this truth:

<sup>25</sup> 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 (Heb. 7).

Did you get that? Jesus, the perfect attorney, is always present to defend you against any and all accusations. Where do the accusations originate?

Slandorous accusations come from the world. Did they not call Jesus names? Indeed. They said He was born illegitimately (John 8:41), that He was a hated half-breed Samaritan (John 8:48), that He was mentally crazy (John 10:20), that He deceived people (John 7:13), that was demon possessed (John 7:20), and that He came from the godless, uneducated region of Galilee in northern Israel (John 7:40). Were the accusations true? No. Pejorative terms are just how godless, lawless people seek to denigrate godly, moral, lawful people.

Accusations also come Satan, the master accuser. We've seen him in diabolical action in the book of Job. When Job's godly life came under his sinister scrutiny, he gave God a proposition in God's heavenly courtroom,

<sup>6</sup> Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." <sup>9</sup> Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" <sup>10</sup> "Hast Thou not made a

hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> "But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face." <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD (Job 1).

We don't know why God permits Satan, the Accuser, into His heavenly courtroom, but I'm sure He has His divine, providential reasons, and they are logical. What we do know from the New Testament is that when the Devil shows up to bring accusations against you, as a saint of God, Jesus steps in and defends you as His child. With an intercessor like that there is no way you will ever be kicked out of God's family. Aren't you glad Jesus is your defense attorney?

Your salvation is secure because you obtained it by God's eternal love for you. This is some proof. Your salvation is secure because the Lord's constant performance in your behalf assures the longevity of said salvation. There is one more thing to consider, though.

### The Power Of God's Love Verifies Its Permanence (Rom. 8:35-39)

Starting with verse 35, Paul emotionally and triumphantly moves through every kind of life scenario you an image to underscore the truth that God's power keeps your salvation a firm, unchanging reality.

<sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

The answer to the rhetorical question is, "No one?" Can an ISIS terrorist separate you? No. Can a communistic dictator? A mean-spirited university professor who hates God and you? No. A caustic skeptic you encounter? No. A non-Christian mate who does not like your faith? No. It is impossible for anyone to break your love relationship with Christ because that relationship is based upon His love for you. Did you get that?

Not content with this scenario, Paul moves through others.

Will tribulation [No], or distress [No], or persecution[No], or famine[No], or nakedness [No], or peril [No], or sword [No]?

Scholars theorize Paul was beheaded by means of a sword during the tail-end of Nero's insane and blood-thirsty reign. Not even this vile and vicious activity could come between Paul and his Savior. But that didn't mean believers didn't, and wouldn't, experience trouble in this old wicked world. Paul, overcome with emotion, blurts out Psalm 44, verse 22, which says persecution is what saints can expect in this world:

<sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

It's true. Christians are slaughtered constantly for their faith all over the world, but it doesn't make prime time news because it would not jive with the current mindset of the carnal world (cf., <https://www.persecution.com/founders/>). It occurred in Paul's time and it continues today.

On February 12, 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), released a report and pictures of twenty-one Coptic Christian men they executed for their "vile" faith in Jesus. Who

can forget the image of the courageous young men dressed in orange jump suits, kneeling next to the Mediterranean Sea with executions standing behind each one of them. Paul's words are, unfortunately, true. Sinners to go to great lengths to oppose the saints of God.

But does this destroy their status as saints? No. In fact, it merely demonstrates the saints are ultimately the victors. That day on the soft sands of the beach, with beautiful waves washing the shoreline, twenty-one men awaited their fate; however, one of them was not a Christian. He was a young man from Chad. As the ISIS executioners challenged each Coptic Christian young man to renounce his faith in the Lord Jesus, none did. With their last words, each man said defiantly they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When it came time for the executioner to murder the man from Chad, the radicalized killer noted that the man from Chad could live because he wasn't a Christian. Having witnessed the brave saints die before him, the young man confidently said, "Their faith is my faith." With that he became a child of God, justified by his faith in Jesus, and he also walked like a victory into the waiting arms of Jesus, his defense attorney.

The power of this kind of divine love, even in the face of death itself, moved Paul to make this memorable statement:

<sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Just this week, the communist government in China ordered a thousand member house church in Beijing to cease meeting. Members were arrested and held for hours to put fear in everyone else. Will this pugnacious activity thwart the work of God? No. Will it cause the faith of these courageous saints to be terminated? No. They, on the other hand, will be the conquerors. God's powerful love is the determinative factor for victory.

Paul is so overcome with the power of God's love; he closes his teaching about eternal security with a series of things which cannot ever separate a believer from that love:

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Are you convinced? You should be no matter what has happened in your life as a saint. You should be more than convinced. You should break into song . . .

VERSE 1:

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

CHORUS:

Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within!  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

VERSE 2:

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide;  
What can avail to wash it away?  
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,  
Whiter than snow you may be today.

VERSE 3:

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
Freely bestowed on all who believe!  
You that are longing to see His face,  
Will you this moment His grace receive?

*Author: Julia H. Johnston*