

UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

Then and Now
in 30 Minutes



Episode 42 - Assured

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THE SETTING



We've come inside **the Colosseum in Rome**. This wasn't here in Paul's day, being built between AD 72–79 by Emperor Vespasian using wealth taken from the Jerusalem Temple when Rome destroyed it in AD 70. It was completed by Titus, his son, and was originally called the Flavian Amphitheatre, after their family name, Flavius. It wasn't called the Colosseum until the Middle Ages.

The amphitheatre is huge, measuring 620 x 513 feet (189 x 156 m), towering four storeys high, and with an oval-shaped arena measuring 280 x 170 ft (86 x 54m), under which were kept the stage props and wild beasts for the shows. It seated well over 50,000 spectators. The official opening in AD 80 was celebrated with games lasting 100 days - games that would continue to happen until AD 425.

While many Christians were killed in the final decades of the first century, scholars now believe this didn't happen here, and that for those who were killed, their faith was incidental. The amphitheatre fell into disuse in the Christian era, and by the 15th century had become a stone quarry.



Exterior of the Flavian Amphitheatre



Interior of the Flavian Amphitheatre showing the oval stage



BIBLE READING

[Romans 8:28-39](#)



KEY IDEAS

As in our previous episode, we're taking the opportunity of being in Rome to reflect again on a passage from Paul's letter to the church there, written some ten years before his martyrdom in the city.

As we have seen throughout Acts, Paul had lots of things thrown at him - sometimes literally, but frequently metaphorically. Yet despite all this, he simply kept going. Nothing could deter him. Why? Because he had an absolute assurance that God was always with him, no matter what, and was always working everything for good and for his plan, as we read in our Bible passage.

The context of his conviction

How did Paul come to this conviction? It's reflected in the argument he builds up throughout Romans.

In chapters 1-3 he presents evidence and builds up an argument to show that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" ([Rom 3:23](#)) - and absolutely no one is in a position to do anything about it. But it was then that God took the initiative: he put us right with himself through the death of his Son on the cross. In chapter 4 he shows that all of this had nothing to do with our own efforts or keeping the Law; it was all by grace, through faith - a faith that leads into the blessings of justification (chapters 5-7). And this is why he can write what he does in Romans 8:28-39 - this absolute conviction in God's sovereignty; because if God has already given us his best, his Son, how he will not now give us everything else we need in life and how will he not ensure that his purposes come to pass?

The sovereignty of God

The Bible's teaching about God's sovereignty does not mean that God has pre-determined absolutely everything that will happen. Such a view reflects Islam rather than Christianity. Rather, the Bible shows that God is far more involved and involving than that; far more

interactive with his people, using not only their successes but also their mistakes. The sovereignty of God means, quite simply, that God is the sovereign, the supreme ruler; and that nothing therefore slips by him, catches him unawares, thwarts his plans, or upsets his purposes. Even the worst that the devil can do, God can take and turn it around and work it into his good purpose. Wow! And to underline this, Paul ends this section by posing five statements that cannot be denied (v29-30) and asking five questions that cannot be answered (v31-39).

Christian assurance today

What a tremendous confidence in God and in his sovereignty we Christians can still have! An assurance that God himself is always at work in our life and in our circumstances, no matter what happens. An assurance that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” ([Rom 8:28](#)). And that is why we can leave everything in his hands.



1. Have you made your own spiritual journey reflected in the stages of Romans outlined above?
2. Is your view of how God works more Islamic (fatalistic) than Christian (faith-filled)?
3. How could a renewed understanding of the sovereignty of God empower the Church to become unstoppable once again?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

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