

God is For Us

Romans 8:31-32

One of the spoof advertisements Garrison Keillor used to do on his “A Prairie Home Companion” radio show was, “Worst Case Scenario.” It’s a telephone service where you can call a pessimist named Ralph and he will tell you the worst that can happen to your proposed plans.

In one segment, a guy calls Ralph to ask what could happen if he takes his wife to the movies that night. Ralph replies, “You want the worst case scenario? Your wife will ask you to go out to the snack bar and get her something to drink. On the way back to your seat, you’ll trip over someone’s feet and spill your drinks on the people in the row in front of you. They’ll sue you for all you’re worth. You’ll lose your house and car and job. Your wife will divorce you and take the kids with her. You’ll start drinking and end up on skid row.” The caller says, “Hey, thanks! I’d never thought about it that way. I guess I’ll stay home tonight.”

“Worst Case Scenario” is a practical service designed to help you apply Murphy’s Law in specific situations. The general law is, “If anything can go wrong, it will.” We laugh at Murphy’s Law because we’ve all had times when it seems like everything is against us.

Maybe today you feel like everything in the world is against you. Life is hard. In the midst of the difficulties and afflictions of this life, how can we know that God is for us? How can we know that Romans 8:28 is true, that God works all things together for good for those who love God?

Today, as come to Romans 8:31, we come to the culmination of Paul's teaching in the first eight chapters of the book. In the next five verses, from Romans 8:31-35 Paul will asked a series of four rhetorical questions. These questions are meant to summarize the main points of the book of Romans so far.

First Paul ask verse 31, **“What then shall we say to these things?”** What things? I believe Paul is not simply referring to the truth of verses 28 through 30 as glorious as they are; he's not simply referring to the rest Romans 8, as wonderful as it is; he's referring back to the whole of the book.

You can see this as you look at the question of verse 31, where we find **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** How does Paul summarize the truths in Romans 1-8? He does it in four words: **“God is for us.”** The word “if” is not intended to raise doubt. It really means “since God is for us.” Since God is for you, who could possibly be against you? What is that question answering? It's a rhetorical question. It's meant to be self-answering. He is saying there is no opposition worth counting compared to God being for you. What does it matter if the whole world is against you if God is for you?

Think about what we have learned in Romans so far. This is what Paul wants us to respond to when he writes, **“What then shall we say to these things?”**

In Romans we have learned that as unrighteous sinners, we were under God’s wrath. We were not lovers of God or keepers of His law. We were ungodly, helpless sinners, enemies of God, dead in trespasses and sins. Yet God from all eternity loved us and chose us. He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, that Jesus might be the firstborn among the many brethren in God’s family. In time, He called us by the gospel granting us true repentance and saving faith to trust in Jesus Christ alone for our eternal salvation.

God justified us, declaring that we are no longer condemned because of Christ's atoning death for us. God is sanctifying us and He will glorify us. Forgiven of all sins, we are clothed in divine righteousness. We are united with Christ and live His resurrection life by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. As adopted children of God, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We are freed from the dominion of sin, law, and death. So all things, even our sufferings, work together for good because we love God and are the called according to His purpose.

So Paul asks, what is our response to all of this? What difference does it make when we feel like everything is against us?

In those moments of suffering and pain, when we question the love and goodness of God, and we wonder if we can even face another minute of this life, God assures us of His love in these great verses. This is how you can know that God is for you.

Romans 8:31-32

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?

Today after the sermon and the invitation, we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper. Before we do, I want us to consider from Romans 8, how we know that God is for us. We see how God is for us in the magnitude of what God has done for us in Christ. As we take the bread and the cup, those simple elements portray for us the ultimate love of God in the sacrifice of His precious Son. The cross is the irrefutable proof that God is for us.

We can know that God is for us because...

1. Our salvation is brought about by God the Father.

"HE EVEN" (the Father's involvement)

Here Paul tells us that we see how much that God is for us, in the Father's involvement in our salvation. In the Greek text, Paul uses a two-letter intensive particle (ge), which is not translated into most English versions. It means "indeed," "surely," or "undoubtedly." So this verse begins, "He who indeed did not spare his own Son." This intensive particle is intended to magnify the great generosity of God's love for us in His saving act of handing over his Son to be crucified.

So Paul begins with looking at God's part in the sacrifice of Christ. When we look at the cross, we think about the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing about it. And we're moved by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. But have you ever thought about how the Father was moved by what was happening at the cross?

Paul probably has in mind another situation where a father did not spare his own son. God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. They made the long journey to the mountain of God where Isaac carried the wood and Abraham the knife and fire. He bound his son on the altar and raised the knife to strike the fatal blow when the angel of the Lord called for him to stop. "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld [or you have not spared] your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen. 22:12). Do you see the similarities? Yes, to a point the stories run parallel; but only to a point. Abraham did not spare his son but God intervened so that Isaac lived. Like Abraham, God "did not spare His own Son" but this time, He did not stop the fatal blow from falling upon His only Son.

I cannot imagine the heartache and anguish that Abraham went through on Mt. Moriah that day. But God knows that heartache and even more. How could we think that the Father is looking at Calvary, is not sparing His own Son, and picture the Father being unmoved by what He is seeing?

Who gave the Son? God did. He alone "did not spare His own Son" so that He might display Him publicly "as a propitiation in His blood through faith...to demonstrate...His righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25-26).

Are you going through a time of adversity that causes you to wonder if God has abandoned you? Then think upon God's sacrifice of His Son for you, and no longer question His love and faithfulness.

Do you want to know how God is for you? Do you want to know how much God is for you? Look at the Father's involvement in salvation. The Father didn't have to be coaxed into this work of redemption. It was His plan, and He effected it at every point and was involved at every point along the way. He didn't have to be dragged into it; He produced it. There's the first great word of encouragement that Paul has for us. We know that God is for us because of the Father's involvement in salvation.

2. Our salvation cost the death of the precious Son of God.

"DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON" (the glory of the Son and His total sacrifice)

Paul is telling us that we see how much God is for us when we contemplate the exceeding preciousness of the Son. It is His own Son, whom the Father has given up. You know the Father's love for the Son is absolutely unique, and the Son's mutual love for the Father is absolutely unique. The Son was loved as no human Son has ever been loved. And He was loving as no human son has ever loved.

At Jesus' baptism the Father spoke from heaven saying, "**This is my Son whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.**" He spoke similar words at the transfiguration, "**This is My Son, the Son of My love. Listen to Him.**"

But on the cross, the Son is exceeding Himself. Greater love had never been seen. Surely there was never a greater point in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the heavenly Father more wanted to say, "This is My beloved Son. Look what He's doing for you." But when the Son cries out from the cross, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" there is no answer.

I want you to pause, and I want you to reflect that at the moment that the Lord God of Heaven and earth is pouring out His wrath on the Son, the Son is exceedingly precious to Him. He had always been an obedient Son. He had always caused His heavenly Father delight. You'll really appreciate the cross until you understand how intense the love of the Heavenly Father was for His Son on the cross; or how glorious was the obedience of the Son for His heavenly Father on the cross.

Paul says that He, the Father, delivered Him up for us all. He was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, Peter says in Acts 2:23. Or as Isaiah puts it, it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief.

In your darkest hours and in your blackest nights, and in those times when sorrow and tribulation overwhelm your very souls, and you feel as if the Lord is not hearing your cries and prayers, Jesus experienced all of that for you and more. He took the wrath of God that was yours. He bore your sins on the cross. He sacrificed Himself in obedience and love to the Father. God is for you.

3. Our salvation proves God is for us.

“DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL” (the greatness of God’s love to us)

“But gave him up for us all.” The adversative “but” (alla) is a strong contrast. Negatively, the Father did not spare his own Son; positively, he gave him up to the death of the cross.

Jesus did not die on the cross to change the Father’s mind. It was always the Father’s plan to save us this way. His love for us spared not His Son. The Father loved us and therefore gave his Son up to the death of the cross. Isaiah prophesied this: **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush Him and cause him to suffer”** (Isa. 53:6, 10). Paul says, **“God presented [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement. . . . But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Rom. 3:25; 5:8). In his commentary, Professor John Murray quotes Octavius Winslow: “Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy;-but the Father, for love!”

Now Paul is ready to make his main point. Remember that he is responding to the question, “If God is for us, who is against us?” He answers this question with more of an exclamatory question. He calls upon us to think about it, to reason through the magnificence of God sending His Son for us. We know that God is for us when we see how He did not spare His Son but delivered Him over “for us”—i.e. on our behalf [Gk. *huper*]. But the struggle that we commonly have is whether or not God will come through in the particular circumstance we are encountering. Is God for us even when everything else is against us? Yes, I know that God has provided my salvation through Christ but how will I handle the trials of life? How do I know that God will give grace when I need it to persevere in the faith?

Paul answers by moving from the greater to the lesser. If He did not spare His Son but delivered Him over for us all, “How will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” If God does the greater, the costlier in delivering over His Son to face His own wrath, then we can be assured that He will supply the grace necessary in every situation and circumstance that we encounter.

Did you notice that everything goes back to the cross of Calvary? Here is God’s means of redemption. Here is the measure of His love. Here is the assurance and confidence that God’s purposes and promises will never fail. No wonder we must continually go back to the cross. We should never grow weary of going back to the cross. Here is where our salvation began. Here is where it was finished. That God sent Jesus to the cross is the measure of His love for us. That God would raise Jesus from the dead is the measure of His power. When such love and power meet, we, as sons of God, have every reason to be confident.

That is what we celebrate as we come to the Lord’s Table. Do you want to know how much God is for you? Look at His involvement in your salvation. Look at the preciousness of His Son. Look at the severity of His punishment for your sin. Look at this divine transaction, this substitution which God has done on your behalf. And then you ask yourself a question. Is God for me? Paul says, how can you answer that question any other way. But yes, He’s for me. Who can be against me? Since He is for me, who can be against me? With that great encouragement, my friends, we can face anything.

I wonder; do you feel abandoned today? Do you feel the sting of accusation? Are you so overwhelmed by your own failure that you not only feel that others condemn you, but you feel God condemns you as well?

My friend, Jesus died for those very things that haunt you. He paid for the crimes you committed. If you will turn to Him, receive Him, and trust Him for salvation and new life, you can know that God is for you. Then no matter what else happens in your life, it need not discourage you. God is for you. You have been set free, declared innocent, and made new. I encourage you to come to Him today.