

God Is For Us

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

- [0 : 0 0] You guys take a seat for just a moment and open up your Bibles, if you have them with you, to Romans chapter 8.
- ! Romans chapter 8. We're going to begin in verse 31 and read down to verse 34 this morning. If you're using one of the Bibles that are scattered around in the chairs out there, you can just open up to pages 944 and 945.
- That's where we'll be in Romans chapter 8. Here the Apostle Paul continues. He continues what he's been saying before, as we've seen in the last few weeks in verses 28 through 30.
- But now he not only continues, but he explodes in praise in verse 31. So I want to ask you guys to stand and begin reading with me. Paul says, What then shall we say to these things?
- If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
- [1 : 1 2] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised.
- Who is at the right hand of God. Who indeed is interceding for us. Father, we thank you for these great truths. That we have an intercessor.
- That we have a mediator. And we thank you for his great work on the cross for us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.
- You guys take a seat. If you've been walking through Romans chapter 8 with us, then you understand and you can see how Paul can arrive at the place that he arrives in, in verse 31, where he simply says, What then shall we say to these things?
- What should we say in light of all these great and glorious and wonderful truths that Paul's been talking about? Of course, there are some people who say that these things in verse 31 refer not just to chapter 8, but to everything in the first eight chapters of the book of Romans.
- [2 : 2 3] Because as we have seen over the last year and a half, Romans is packed full of glorious, beautiful, life-changing truths. So these things could be Paul's way of saying, Everything that I've said to you so far, Romans, everything that I've said to you so far, readers, what do we say in light of all of these great and grand truths?
- Or he might simply be reflecting upon what he said for the last 30 verses. I'm not sure in the end that it matters what choice we choose between the whole book for these things and chapter 8 for these things, because in a lot of ways chapter 8 really summarizes or chapter 8 restates and builds upon what Paul has been saying for the first seven chapters.
- So maybe what Paul has in mind are his words in verse 1, that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, which we know is based upon the truth that in Christ God has made a way for those who are not righteous to be declared righteous through the death of Christ, which Paul teaches us in chapters 3 and 4 of Romans.

It could be that Paul has primarily in mind chapter 8, but chapter 8 built upon the foundation of chapters 1 through 7. Whatever the reference of all these things, we have to pause and look at the rest of Paul's statement.

What shall we say to these things? If we're not affected by what we've been studying in the book of Romans, then something is off, something is amiss, because Paul has been opening our eyes to see glorious truths.

[4 : 05] We should be amazed by the things that we've been seeing. Just the things that we've seen in the last month in this previous paragraph should really blow our minds in terms of understanding who God is, is what God is like and what God has done to secure our redemption for now and for eternity.

You remember the last few weeks we've been looking at verses 28, 29, and 30 where Paul begins all the way back in eternity past with God's foreknowing or loving us and choosing us and then His predestining us, His calling us and justifying us and then making our future glory certain through Christ.

All of those things. What do we say to those kinds of things? How do we respond? What shall we say to these things? And Paul's answer is a series of more questions.

It's as if Paul wants to say, what we need to do in response to these truths is we need to meditate on these truths some more. The way that we respond to these great and wonderful truths is to think about them more, is to be amazed by them even more.

Notice a series of questions that follows. He says in the rest of verse 31, if God is for us, who can be against us? He asks the question in verse 32, in verse 32, how will God not also with Christ graciously give us all things?

[5 : 31] He asks in verse 33, who shall bring any charge against God's elect? And in verse 34, who is to condemn? And then finally we're going to see next week, we're going to look at the question, what can separate us from the love of Christ?

This series of questions is Paul's response to the first question, what do we say to all these things? What we say is we think about them more, we meditate on them more, we treasure them more.

So that's what we're going to do this week and next week. We're going to finish out chapter 8 and we're going to spend our time looking at these questions that Paul asks and marveling at the gospel.

Not just looking at the gospel, not just trying to understand the gospel, but I hope marveling, being amazed by the gospel.

There are really, in this morning's passage, there are really three key questions. And the answer to all of these questions, because they're rhetorical questions, the answer to all of these questions are, no one, nobody.

[6 : 32] I want you to look again, but I want to focus on the three key questions in this morning's passage. The questions are, in verse 31, if God is for us, who can be against us?

And then that question is almost rephrased when you go down to verse 33. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? So first we have, who can be against us?

And then, who can bring a charge against God's elect? And then the same question asked from another perspective in verse 34. Who is to condemn?

In a lot of ways, these three questions are the same question, rephrased and reworded. Who can be against us? Who can bring a charge against us?

And who can condemn us? But you can see that the question, although it's stated in three different ways, each way of stating it really just sort of raises the level of expectation each time.

[7 : 30] It's as if Paul is saying the same thing, but saying it with more pointedness each time. First, just simply, who can be against us? It's literally what the text says is, if God for us, who against us?

There's no verb in that phrase, so we just have to add the to be verbs. If God is for us, who can be against us? Think about that question for a moment.

What does Paul mean specifically by that? If God is for us, who can be against us? Some translations say, who can stand against us? We have lots of different ways of translating this because we don't have the verb there.

But the basic point of the question is, if God is in fact for us, and we'll talk about what that means in just a moment, if that is the case, then who can successfully stand against us?

It's not a matter of that nothing and no one will ever try to be against us, because we know, just from reading Romans chapter 8, that there are all sorts of forces in the world marshaled against us.

[8 : 37] Paul refers to our sufferings over and over. Verse 18, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed in us. He's aware that we're going to suffer in this life.

In fact, at the end of Romans chapter 8, we see some of these sufferings spelled out for us. Take a look at verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Or move down to verse 38. I'm sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ.

Paul is aware that all these things will attempt to stand against us, will try to stand against us. So Paul's point that he's making here when he asks this rhetorical question is to say that none of these things, nothing in this world, no spiritual power, can successfully be against us in the end.

If God is for us, who can be against us? No one successfully. But then he helps us to understand specifically in what sense he has in mind something coming against us when he rephrases the question the first time.

[10 : 00] He says, if you look down just a couple of verses, he says in verse 33, Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? So he doesn't, it's not merely in a general sense that Paul conceives of someone or something trying to stand against us, but now it's much more specific.

Now it's, who or what could possibly bring any charge against us? So he's using legal courtroom type language here. Who could possibly, or again, who could successfully level a charge against those who belong to God?

Those who have trusted in Christ, the elect. Who could successfully bring any charge against them that might stick? And the answer is, of course, no one and nobody.

And now finally, the most specific form of the question, because it's not just a matter of somebody accusing us of something. It's a matter of that accusation coming to fruition with a guilty charge.

Who is, verse 34, who is to condemn? And the answer again is nobody. But the question is, really, why?

[11 : 12] Why, in light of all that God has done, all these things, in verse 31, why can no one and nothing successfully stand against us?

Why can no one successfully bring a charge against us? Why can no one or nothing successfully condemn us? Well, Paul answers that in his other questions that he asks in this passage.

He answers that in the rest of the language that he sprinkles in the midst of these questions. Now, once he gives the short answer, and twice he gives more of an extended explanation.

So first he gives more of an extended explanation, and then he gives a short answer to the second question, who shall bring any charge? And his short answer is, it's God who justifies.

And then in verse 34, in response to the question, who is to condemn, he gives a longer explanation. So we have three questions, and to the first question we have slightly detailed answers, somewhat detailed answers.

[12 : 18] To the second question we have really short, quick, summary answers. And to the third question we have kind of another more extended, somewhat extended answer or explanation of why the answer is no, no one, nothing can condemn us.

So long, short, then long. I want to dive in with the short answer quickly because it's the one that we can most easily, we should already have the language to understand.

Verse 33, let's just look quickly. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? He just simply answers, nobody can because it is God who justifies.

He doesn't elaborate on that. I'm assuming because he spent the first few chapters of the book of Romans helping us to understand what it means for God to justify guilty sinners.

He's already explained that in detail. He's already shown us that God justifies us when he declares us to be righteous by faith in Jesus.

[13 : 19] God says, even though you are guilty, I will declare you, I will consider you to be righteous because you have trusted in my Son.

So there's no need here to elaborate on that. We've had elaboration on that throughout the book of Romans, especially in the first five chapters of Romans. So he's adequately explained that for us.

He means when he says God is the one who justifies, that God is the judge, God is the one on the basis of our faith in Jesus who has said, you in my sight are now righteous.

So if God the judge has said, you are righteous, who can bring any other verdict? Who can come in and then hoist condemnation on top of us?

Nobody can do that because God has already said, you are righteous in my sight. Not because of anything that you've done, but because of all that my Son has done, and your faith has united you to him and his righteousness.

[14 : 17] So it's a simple, clear answer there. But the explanations that we find to the first question, and the third question are a little bit more detailed. And in some ways, they show us why that verdict of righteous is good news, not just now, but for all of eternity.

Let's look then at verse 32. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God did not spare his Son, but Paul says he gave him up for us. So if we were to ask the question, in what sense is God for us in verse 31?

The answer from verse 32 is that God is for us because he has given his Son for us. It's the exact same language in Greek. God is for us in verse 31.

In verse 32, God has sent Christ, has handed him over for us or in our place. That's how God is for us. God is for us by means of his Son.

[15 : 26] But Paul here is really reflecting the language of a very familiar Old Testament passage to many of his original readers there in the city of Rome.

A passage that should be familiar to some of us. When he says God did not spare, that is, God didn't hold back. God didn't protect his own Son, but handed him over.

He handed him over, he delivered him over to judgment. It's the language that we see in Isaiah chapter 53. So I want you to hold your places in Romans chapter 8, and I want you to turn to Isaiah 53 because I think these are the concepts that Paul is drawing upon when he uses this language of God not sparing and God handing over the Son.

Isaiah 53 verse 6. He says, All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So God is doing something, and what he is doing here is God is laying upon someone else. In this context, he's called the servant of the Lord. God is laying upon this servant our iniquities.

[16:42] And then if you move down to verse 10, Yet, he says, it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He, that is God, He has put him to grief.

So Isaiah says that God lays upon the servant our iniquity, and he says it was God's will to crush the servant. Paul is drawing upon those concepts of vicarious suffering, someone who suffers in another's place, and he's applying it directly to Jesus when he says that God didn't hold him back.

He didn't spare him from any of the pain or any of the judgment that we deserve, but instead, he delivered him over to that judgment. He handed him over. He gave him up for us all, for all of the elect, for all those who belong to Christ.

God handed his own son over. And in light of that, he asks a question. If God is for us in such a way that he's willing to sacrifice his own son so that our sins might be forgiven, if that is true, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

This is an argument that says if God has done this huge, great, unimaginable thing, then how will he not also do this much smaller thing?

[18:11] Now, if you isolate the end of that question from the greater thing of God handing over his son, it seems huge. How will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

That seems like a huge promise. But in light of the fact that God has already handed over his son on our behalf, Paul treats it as if it's nothing.

God's already done this. How could he withhold this much smaller thing from us? And yet, I think we struggle with this concept.

I think we struggle to think of God being willing to graciously, some translations say, freely give us, in Paul's language, all things.

It seems almost too unrestricted. What do you mean God's going to give us all things? Surely we need to put some boundaries upon that. Surely we need to limit that down because all things?

[19:13] That seems a bit much. In fact, I feel like sometimes many of us are reluctant to even ask God for anything even though he's promised us all things because we think, ah, this is just something I want or this is not worth really bringing to the Lord.

And yet, Paul says he will graciously give us all things. This is not a promise that we will never have any suffering in our life, of course. There are some boundaries around this.

It's not a promise that we will never experience things or that we will never be disappointed because we've already seen this promise is made in the context of a life of suffering. We know that suffering will come our way.

We know that we will be disappointed at times. We will at times be beat down. So this is not a promise to say nothing bad will ever happen to you. God will give you everything you could ever, ever want.

That's not the point of the promise at all. But the promise is wide. This is a big promise. It's small in light of what God has already given for us.

[20 : 17] But this is a wide promise. He will graciously give us all things. I think in fact that Paul may be thinking of the words of Jesus toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

You may be familiar with the Sermon on the Mount. It's Matthew chapters 5 through 7. It is the longest recorded sermon that we have of Jesus in the Gospels.

It's the longest recorded sermon. He may have preached longer sermons but they're not recorded for us in the Gospels. But for three chapters we have, and those of you you have a red letter Bible you have almost nothing but red letters for three chapters in Matthew.

And in Matthew chapter 7 very close to the end of this sermon Jesus turns his attention to the issue of prayer. And he says in Matthew 7 verse 7 Ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

[21 : 22] Now, in verse 9 he begins to use some language that sounds like some of the language of Paul in chapter 8 of Romans. Because he begins to use the language of the father-son relationship between God and the followers of Jesus.

So in verse 9 Which one of you if his son asks him for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a serpent? If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

So here's the language of God as father and Paul reflects that language in Romans 8 when he talks about God adopting us into his family. We even have the father-son relationship between God the father and Jesus in the passage that we're looking at this morning in Romans chapter 8.

So it's entirely plausible that Paul is reflecting some of the teachings of Jesus about God's willingness to give to his children when they ask of him.

You know my kids a lot of you still have young kids my kids ask me for stuff all the time I mean all the time constantly all day long you know can I have this game can I go do this will you take me here will you take me there will you buy me this will you buy me that if I bought them everything that they asked me to buy them I would not only be bankrupt I would have a thousand credit cards maxed out there's no way in the world I could get everything that they asked me to get for them it's just always kids are always asking for things and they'll ask for things that they know there's no way in the world that you're going to give them hey can I have your car no you can't have my car you're six why would I give you my car no you can't have my car they will ask for all sorts of ridiculous things and so I do find myself a lot of times saying no you can't have that no I won't get that for you no I won't take you there no I don't have time to do those sorts of things and it's not because I'm some sort of killjoy who doesn't want to give things to my kids it's that I have limited resources and a limited amount of time

[23 : 31] I can't give them everything that they want and then some of the things that they want honestly would just kill them my kids would have stacks of swords and guns and rifles and every kind of deadly weapon imaginable if I gave them everything that they ever asked me for so there are some things that I just think no you're going to kill yourself or one of your siblings if I get you that so I don't say yes all of the time because I have limited resources and they ask for things that would be harmful to them sometimes we ask God for things that would be harmful to us and he says no because if you'll recall God's goal in all that he's doing in our lives when verse 28 of Romans says he's working all things for our good the good that God is aiming at is that we would be conformed to the image of Christ and there are times when we ask for things that would push us away from God's goals that would not only not conform us to the image of Christ but take us further away from that and so because we ask for things that are harmful to us sometimes God does indeed say no I won't give you that no I won't let you have that promotion no I won't let you have that job no I won't give you those relationships

I won't do those things because they would be harmful to us ultimately but God does not have limited resources in the way that we do he may say no at times in order to protect us from ourselves but he never says no because he lacks he does not lack and he is a God who is willing to give to his children and he says Paul says if he's done this great thing of giving his son why would he not graciously give us all these other things not things harmful to you not things that are going to lead you away from him but things things that we desire things that we long for things that we many times fail to bring before him because we think I'm not going to bother with that and yet what parent doesn't delight to answer their children's requests what parent would as

Jesus say give somebody a stone give their son a stone when they ask for bread who's going to give them something that would hurt them a serpent when they ask for a fish no no father in his right mind would do those sorts of things and yet we Jesus says are evil and God is infinitely good God is certainly willing to hear and answer our requests but for whatever reason we many times don't actually believe that and so we don't pray we don't ask it is true he may say no because it's ultimately harmful to you but there's nothing that prevents you from saying you are my father and you delight to give me good things and you've said you would give all things graciously give all things to your children so why do we not ask for things yes he may say no yes we will experience things that we wish we didn't have to experience but that doesn't negate the reality that he is a

God who delights to give to his children and he delights so much to give to his children that he's willing to sacrifice his son in order to make us his children that's the greatness of God's love what it means for God to be for us is that he's willing to give his son for us and in addition to that he's willing to give us all that is necessary to make us holy and all that is necessary and helpful to us to help us to delight in Christ and all of Christ's gifts that he gives he's for us he's not against us he's not miserly he's not grumpy he's a father who delights in his children he's for us and because he's for us no one can stand successfully against us and no one can successfully ultimately bring any charge against us and the third question though is the strongest form of the question who is to condemn no one can condemn those that

God has declared to be righteous and then explanation Christ Jesus is the one who died why can no one condemn us or why ultimately can the accuser Satan himself not successfully bring any accusation against us who belong to Christ why is that because Christ is the one who has died this is the righteous one we're talking about he is the one who was handed over he is the one who gave his life willingly he's the one who bore our iniquities and if he does the work he does it to completion there is nothing lacking in the sacrifice of Jesus on behalf of those who belong to Jesus so no one can condemn us because his sacrifice is enough and his righteousness is enough before God nothing can successfully condemn us and then just like with the first question elaboration because Jesus not only died in our behalf but now more than that he was raised and he is at the right hand of God he is the one who intercedes for us

[29 : 37] Jesus not only died for us but he was raised for us he reigns now at the right hand of the father for us and because he is at the right hand of the father he intercedes for us all of this for us language is helping us to understand how is God for us he is for us because Jesus is for us he is for us because Jesus is in our place he is for us because Jesus is eternally interceding for us and on our behalf but just as Paul's earlier explanation of what it means for God to be for us was drawing on the Old Testament even here explaining how Christ being risen is for us Paul is again drawing upon the Old Testament I want you to hold your place because I want you to see this and I want you to turn all the way back to the book of Psalms Psalm 110 this is believe it or not

Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted verse of the Old Testament in the New Testament this verse is quoted and paraphrased and alluded to or this passage this Psalm more than any other passage in the Old Testament we find it sprinkled throughout the New Testament and Paul I think is drawing on it here in Romans chapter 8 where he speaks of Jesus being at the Father's right hand and Jesus interceding on behalf of us notice verse 1 of Psalm 110 the Lord says to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool now Jesus makes a point when he quotes this passage in the Psalms of saying to the religious leaders if David is the one speaking David is the one who says the Lord says to my Lord then it's not David who is to sit at God's right hand Jesus says no it's David's

Lord someone greater than David who is Jesus himself the Lord says to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool and Jesus consistently throughout the New Testament is declared to be the one sitting at the right hand of the father now move down to verse four the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind this is the father this is the Lord speaking to the Lord the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek so now we have this Lord of Psalm 110 who sits at the right hand of God and who is also in the order of Melchizedek we can't get into all the Melchizedek language go home read the book of Hebrews and then you'll be thoroughly confused and you'll need to read it four or five more times and you'll gain some better understanding of this mysterious

Melchizedek figure who actually arrives on the scene in the book of Genesis but what I want you to pay attention to here this morning for this morning purposes is the fact that that Jesus the one prophesied in Psalm 110 is called a priest now what is the fundamental job of a priest it is to intercede or to mediate between God and God's people that's what the priests of the Old Testament did they came in to the temple and they offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people they came representing the people they came to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people to God because the people could not enter those parts of the temple they could not come into those parts of the sanctuary instead the people would bring the animals to the priest the priest would go where the people could not go and the!

would become this go between priest and so when Paul says that he's interceding on our behalf what he means is that he's doing his job as a faithful high priest that's what Jesus is doing Jesus has not only died in our place but Jesus has ascended to the right hand of his father where he forever eternally intercedes on our behalf always pleading his blood in our place no one can ever bring a!

[34 : 14] charge against us no one can ever bring successfully bring condemnation upon us because there will never be a time throughout eternity when Jesus is not interceding and saying to the father here is the blood that I poured out on behalf of these my people nothing can ever successfully stand against us because Christ forever stands for us and in our place interceding on our behalf before the father if you wonder sometimes how to respond to the good news if you wonder sometimes how to respond to the message of the gospel sometimes the answer is don't move on stop pause meditate reflect upon all that Jesus has done and continues to do for you and in your place and think about the repercussions of that

Paul says because Christ stands in our place we have an eternal mediator an eternal intercessor Paul says because Christ stands in our place we stand righteous in the sight of his father Paul says because Christ stands in our sight he has paid the price for our sins and now along with the gift of forgiveness and righteousness God stands as our father ready to hear and receive our prayers through Jesus how we ought to respond to the gospel the gospel of the book of Romans proclaimed throughout these chapters made clear for us through these chapters how we respond to the gospel is to never move on from the gospel to never get over the gospel and when we hear the gospel again to say with the apostle Paul what do we say to these things what do we say to these things we rejoice in these things we proclaim them afresh as the apostle

Paul does here and we rest in these things remember that we've been saying for the last several weeks that the end of Romans chapter 8 and in some ways all of Romans 8 but especially the end of Romans chapter 8 aims to strengthen our assurance it aims to give us more confidence in God and all that he has done for us and now Paul says be assured because if God is for you and he is nothing can stand against you be assured because if God has justified you no one can bring a charge against you and be assured because if Christ has died for you no one can condemn you and he forever intercedes on your behalf rejoice in that let's pray