

Romans 8:31-39 Answers **If God Is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?**

Structure: 8:28-30 made a wonderful ending to chapter 8 (*reread*). Yet Paul added 8:31-39, a super ending not only to chapter 8 but the whole of Romans up to this point. The key verse in all of 8:18-39 is **8:18** (*reread*). Everything in 8:19-30 was written to explain 8:18 (Cranfield, p. 410).

ESV Romans 8:18 . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Truth: We will suffer in this life, sometimes specifically because we are God's people, yet here is a wonderful promise:

ESV Romans 8:28 . . . we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Introduction: Job is probably the oldest book of the Bible. Job lived about the time Abraham lived (2000 B.C.). He was a righteous man who lost everything he owned and had no idea why. Most of his friends concluded he had sinned and God had turned against him. His wife advised him to curse God and die. Yet God had not turned against Job. Just because terrible things happened to him did not mean Job had lost God's love. Similarly, the point of Romans 8:31-39 is that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Bad things happening to us do not signal God's rejection.

******According to 8:31-39, what is the application of the things we've studied in chapter 8? Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, 8:38-39.**

1. When Paul asked, "What then shall we say to these things" (8:31), what things did he have in mind? The question, "What then shall we say to these things" (8:31) seems to refer back not simply to 8:28-30, but indeed to the whole course of theological exposition up to this point (from 1:16b to 8:30). Thus 8:31 is the theme not just of chapter 8 but the whole epistle thus far: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (8:31) (Cranfield, p. 434-435).

What is the answer to Paul's second question in 8:31? If God is for us, who can be against us? In the Greek this is known as a first class conditional sentence, meaning there is no doubt about it. The "if" really means "since". God is for us.

The believer needs to enter into each new day realizing God is for him (Wiersbe, p. 95).

ESV Jeremiah 29:11 . . . I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Dramatic Impact: Read “If God is for us, who can be against us?” over and over, emphasizing a different word in the question each time. For example: If God is for us, who can be against us? If God is for us, who can be against us? If God is for us, who can be against us? Etc.

2. In what sense can no one be against us (8:31)? Although there are most certainly those who are against the church (atheists, communists, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, secularists, unbelievers) no one can ultimately prevail against us since God is for us.

What is the answer to the question of 3:32? God will give us all things, as evidenced in His already having given up His own Son.

ESV **Romans 5:8** . . . God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

3. In context, what category of things are included in all things (8:32)? In context, he meant all things necessary for salvation, holiness and ultimate glorification. It obviously does not refer to immunity from physical or social difficulties.

What is the answer to the question in 8:33? The implied answer is no one will be able to successfully bring charges against them in the court that really matters.

4. How is the truth that it is God who justifies part of the answer to the question of 8:33? God constitutes the Supreme Court. We only have to be concerned about pleasing Him. There will be human accusations, but God is not fazed by them; he is the final judge. It does not matter what others may think or say.

Insight: The original readers of this letter were likely being accused and condemned by others (unbelieving Jews, their former pagan associates, the Roman government). This was a part of the suffering they were enduring (8:18).

What is the answer to the question in 8:34? Who is to condemn? There is no one who can condemn us.

5. Why can no one condemn us (8:34)? No one can condemn us since Jesus died and was raised for our sins and sits at the Father’s right hand.

ESV **Matthew 10:28** . . . do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

6. Why is Jesus interceding for us (8:34)? He is interceding for us, as is the Holy Spirit (8:26). He is our defense attorney with God against those who would bring charges against us and condemn us. He is also praying for us to be able to withstand the withering attacks of God’s enemies.

ESV **Luke 22:31-32** Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

Optional: Read Job 1:6-11, 12, 2:9-10, 42:10-11b.

7. What is the answer to the last two questions (8:35-39)? Obviously, no one and no thing can separate us from the love of Christ.

8. Reading back into 8:35, even though nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, what might we experience in this life? We might experience tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and the sword. If we were not still liable to these terrible things this text would be meaningless. Look at the example of what Paul went through:

ESV 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Word Study: “Tribulation” (8:35) is from *thlipsis* and means pressure (Rienecker, p. 367), as the crushing together of grapes.

A poplar Gospel tract states “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”. Based on 8:35, might God’s wonderful plan include tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness or sword? Of course God’s plan for us might include these things. The best part of God’s wonderful plan concerns the next life.

Perspective: The suffering of this life is all the hell a Christian will ever know. Conversely, the joys of this life are all the heaven a lost man will ever know.

Based on 8:36, what will sometimes happen to those who follow Jesus (Ps 44:22)? God’s people will sometimes be killed “for your sake” (8:36), as happened in Syria and Iran when radical Islamists took over in 2014. Thus:

ESV Romans 8:16-17 . . . we are . . . fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

9. Why might Paul have quoted a Hebrew Scripture (Ps 44:22) at this point (8:36)? Paul no doubt quoted this Hebrew scripture (Ps 44:22) to show that persecution has long been experienced by God’s people (Cranfield, p. 440). Experiencing martyrdom is not inconsistent with being loved by God.

Application: Persecution and martyrdom is not a sign that you have been separated from God’s love. Jesus was mistreated, condemned unjustly and killed, yet He was God’s beloved Son.

Insight: Jesus promised the gates of Hell would not prevail against the church (Mt 16:18). The Gates of Hell (literally, Hades) was a common metaphor for death (Jack Lewis, www.etsjets.org). Jesus was simply promising that those in the church would prevail over death.

10. What was Paul's purpose in raising all these questions (8:31-35)? How do they relate to the overall context of suffering and groaning (8:18-30)? The whole context of this chapter is that of suffering and groaning. We are not to be surprised when suffering comes our way. Experiencing these things is not a sign of the loss of God's love. When a man suffers, he often wonders if God is against him. A suffering man may question his salvation. These questions are to reassure believers. These are words of comfort and encouragement in the face of stiff opposition.

11. We are declared to be more than conquerors in 8:37. We are conquistadores! In what sense are we more than conquerors (8:37)? What have we conquered? We are conquerors because God turn everything, even suffering and persecution and death, into good (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2172). We have been foreknown, predestined and called to be justified and glorified (8:29-30).

Of what was Paul sure (8:38-39)? Paul was convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ.

Word Study: "Sure" (8:38) is from *peitho* and means to be persuaded or to have confidence (Thayer #3982).

Word Study: Height and depth (8:39) in the Greek are astrological terms referring to a star at its zenith and depth was used to refer to a star at its lowest, before it arose. We don't have to worry about the zodiac. Horoscopes cannot hurt you (Barclay, p. 124).

Persecution by Nero: Paul wrote this to the church in Rome (A.D. 57). These same readers were just a few years away from Nero's wrath. Nero blamed the church for a terrible fire that leveled Rome in July of A.D. 64. Though Nero did not start the fire, he was so unpopular he was widely accused of it. Thus he used the Christians as scapegoats. It has been postulated that the idea of blaming the Christians came from Nero's second wife, Poppea, a Gentile convert to Judaism but obviously not one of those who had accepted the Gospel. These same Christians faced the lions in the coliseum. Tradition teaches Paul himself was martyred by Nero in Rome.

Publius Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 56-117) was a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire. He was a small boy when the fire occurred and a fierce critic of Nero. Here is what he wrote about the persecution of the church in Rome under Nero:

"Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], he [Emperor Nero] falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were [generally] hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of

Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race" . . . In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights" (www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/christians.htm).

12. Based on 8:38-39, why is it impossible for a person to lose his salvation?

ESV John 10:28-29 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

If a person had eternal life for ten years and then lost his salvation, he did not have eternal life, he had ten year life. The point of eternal life is that it is eternal.

Promise or Performance? Eternal life is not based on our obedience to any laws (works), it is based on the obedience and work of Jesus. There is a big difference in God's promise verses man's performance.

He Got What He Paid For: Jesus died on the cross to pay for all sins, past present and future. Consider that He most certainly got what He paid for. Everyone who is orthodox limits the atonement in some way.

1. Some people believe Jesus died for everyone (universal atonement). If that were so, then logically everyone should go to heaven (since Jesus paid for everyone's sins). However, since it is clear from Scripture everyone will not be in heaven, they teach that although Jesus died for all people, he did not die for all sins. They say the one sin he did not die for is the sin of unbelief. Thus those who desire to be orthodox limit the atonement. They limit not who He died for but how many sins he died for. Thus they teach if a saved person ever loses his faith, he will also lose his salvation, since Jesus did not die for the sin of unbelief. They say Jesus made salvation possible but did not guarantee anyone's salvation.
2. An alternate view is that Jesus died for all sins, but not all people. Jesus died to save the elect, He laid down His life for the sheep, and his death guarantees the elect will be saved. Jesus got what he paid for (the salvation of the elect). One sign that you are elect is that you come to faith in Jesus and stay in faith. A person who claims to believe but then defects does not lose his salvation, but rather never had it in the first place. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. It is guaranteed to the elect (8:33).

ESV 1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

So What?

13. Putting all together, what is the point of 8:18-39? It is all about suffering, groaning, glory and security. The key verse is 8:18.

ESV **Romans 8:18** . . . the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

God is sovereign over all. You can't move away from your problems. God has you in the seminary of suffering and will keep you there until the pass the test. The circumstances of life are God's ministry to you. Thus Paul said that we should be:

ESV **Ephesians 5:20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

We are to thank God in it even if we can't thank God for it. We thank God by faith, not by feeling.

14. Next time we encounter suffering, what do we need to remember/realize?

1. Suffering and glory go together, 8:16-17.
2. There is no comparison between our present suffering and our future glory, 8:18.
3. All creation is presently groaning, waiting for glory, 8:19-23.
4. We can have true hope despite our suffering, 8:24-25.
5. The Holy Spirit is praying for us, 8:26-27.
6. God is sovereign, working all things together for our good, to make us like Jesus, 8:28-30.
7. God is for us, 8:31.
8. God will give us all things, 8:32.
9. God is the one who justifies — not men, 8:33.
10. Jesus is praying for us, 8:34.
11. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ; suffering is not a sign of rejection, 8:35-39.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF.

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