

Romans 8:31 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?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

We will focus this morning on verse 31.

Let's start by putting this passage in the context of the book of Romans. In Romans 1:16,17 we see the main theme of the book of Romans.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Romans main theme is the Gospel. It is a book about how God makes a man right with Himself and what God has in mind for every one of those people.

The best outline I have seen for the book of Romans is the one Martyn Lloyd Jones used. He said that from 1:16 to 8:39 the whole theme of the book is completed. We are nearing the end of the doctrinal presentation of the Gospel by Paul.

Paul's method in the book of Romans is a combination of **stating** a truth, then considering the **objections** to that truth, then **answering** the objections in such a way that the listeners had a very solid understanding of the truth stated. This allowed the listeners to have a very solid foundation. The truths they learned could then be defended against the logical objections they may encounter from their own minds or from those outside themselves.

Chapters 1-3 presents the teaching of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Chapter 4 raises the question of how Abraham was saved. It answers any objection that someone might raise that Abraham was not saved through faith.

Chapter 5 makes another point of doctrine- How Christ justifies us and that we are saved solely through what He did apart from our own works.

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the objections that come to our minds as a result of the truth of Chapter 5. Then chapter 8 makes more powerful positive assertions of the assurance of security for the believer. Our passage this morning and in the

next several Sundays answers any objections or questions a person might have regarding the certainty of salvation.

Paul's method provides believers a very solid and defensible foundation for us to stand on.

If you consider some sermons you might hear from any source as being dry, compare it to what Paul actually said. I don't think that if you were to hear the book of Romans read you would think it a very listenable sermon. But it is a book that is directly from the Holy Spirit to believers everywhere and it contains the most profound explanation of God's work of salvation in all history.

Once we complete chapter 8 we move on to Chapters 9-11 where the question is answered, "How do the Jews fit into this picture." Then in Chapters 12-16 Paul **applies** the **truths learned** to the **lives lived**. We need to keep in mind that along with being an apostle and evangelist, Paul had a **pastor's** heart. He was not presenting a cold, hard doctrinal statement. He was laying out the truth that his sheep needed to hear in order to fully live for Christ. The truths he was laying out were not **simple** truth. They required thought and analysis. But they were **necessary truths** for living the Christian life. Those people who resist solid theology on the grounds that it is anti- Holy Spirit filled living are resisting the teaching of one of the greatest teachers and examples of **Spirit led living**. If we want to grow as Christians, we must think like Christians. And that is not simplistic. Paul said we were to be workmen with the word of God. We cannot be workmen without work. While I would never argue with someone who says that we must **follow** the Holy Spirit, we must also show ourselves capable of **testing** the spirits. And we don't do that with intuition. We do that with solid understanding of what scripture says.

So with this outline of Romans we come to our verse this morning.

We start with 2 questions. This is followed by 5 more questions in the NKJV version. Some versions have less, depending upon how they are translated.

These questions are intended to ward off objections.

The first question is, **What then shall we say to these things?** Now, what things is Paul speaking of? He is definitely speaking, **at least**, of the preceding three verses. Paul said, in a very positive way, that all things work for the good for those that God has Foreknown, Predestined, Called, Justified and Glorified- all things that God does to His child. Now his questions seek to answer any objections a person might throw at that claim.

But given the light of this passage I think it is more than an answer to just the last three verses. “These things” is also the whole chapter 8 regarding the assurance of salvation. But it is even more than that. I believe “these things” includes the whole doctrine of the salvation of God. What shall we say to the whole salvation of God? What can we say of its certainty? What objection can we make to take away the certainty of glorification to the child of God?

There is something interesting in the progression of Paul’s thinking. As Paul gets to His crescendo, Paul speaks less and less of man’s part in this salvation. He speaks less and less of man’s response or involvement. And He speaks more and more of what only God **could do** and **DOES do** in salvation. I think this is another very strong evidence that we are to understand salvation as something that is totally of **God’s** initiative and **God’s** causing. Even in his ending question, he does not directly deal with the idea that a person’s decision is an objection to the certainty of God’s salvation. The things he said can be applied to our decisions, but our decisions aren’t singled out as an objection. Why is that? Shouldn’t that be the most dangerous objection, the most lethal threat to our salvation? It **would be** if our decision is what placed us in Christ. If Paul had presented that view of salvation this would have been a very substantial consideration. But consider this. If our salvation is not caused by **OUR** deciding but is caused by **God’s** deciding, and that is how Paul presented it, our **deciding** is not a **threat** to our salvation. We cannot decide our way **out** any more than we could decide our way **in**. If God has accomplished the things that Paul says God accomplishes in a person’s salvation, God’s child has experienced such a change of heart, such a newness of life that he could not decide to not be a believer any more than a bird could quit being a bird or a dog could quit being a dog. To think that they would even **want** to be different than they are is absurd. If God makes that profound of a change in our nature, we would not think to be otherwise. The point is, our salvation is of God. And as such, we can rest confidently in God to complete it. So what do we say to these truths that we have learned at the hand of Paul? What objections can we raise that would undo such a solid salvation? What could happen that could threaten our assurance in Christ?

Let’s look at the first possible objection.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

1. If- since, because

The word for “if” is **not one** that is designed to create uncertainty. In the Greek it means a **fulfilled condition**- not a mere possibility. So it would be better translated Since or Because. So Because God is for us, who can be against us.

1. God is for us-

a. Greatest question in existence- is God for you?

Every person on earth would be wise to ask the question, "Is God **for** me?" It is clear from the context that this does not include everyone. While it is popular to say in evangelism, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life", it is really only true if the person we are speaking to is a believer. Otherwise we find a very different truth in scripture.

Psalm 7:11 (NKJV)

11 God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.

Nahum 1:2 (NKJV)

2 God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies;

Jeremiah 10:10 (NKJV)

10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 2:5-9 (NKJV)

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath,

9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

So we see that the plan God has for those who rebel against Him may be wonderful from **God's** perspective but it will not be **perceived as wonderful** by those who experience His **wrath**.

So this question needs to be answered- Is God For You? If you don't know, drop everything until you have an answer for this question. This is the most important question in life? Your whole eternity rests on the answer.

The world around us seems to be able to spend countless hours on meaningless questions. But this one important question they seem very successful in either avoiding or answering with their wishful idealism. Is God for you? If you are compelled by the desire to have God for you, there is good news. Call out to God. Confess your sin to Him. And receive what Christ has done for you as your salvation. Respond to His call on your life and you will find that God is for you.

We can see in scripture with absolute certainty that God **IS** for His children. I would like to read something from Mr Barnhouse's study that makes a profound point.

I Chronicles 17:22,24

For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God.

Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts [is] the God of Israel, [even] a God to Israel: and [let] the house of David thy servant [be] established before thee.

"The God **OF** Israel is a God **TO** Israel. We can readily understand the difference in the prepositions by an analogy. A man may beget a son, and he is always, in consequence of that act, the father of that son. But there have been men who have been fathers **OF** their sons who have never been fathers **TO** their sons. On the other hand here is a man who begets a child and **gives himself** to that child. He is with the mother in the training of the child. The boy is with him in his free moments. The father enters into the boy's studies. He participates in the boy's games. He makes the **boy's** hobbies his own hobbies. No question of the boy is beyond the patience of the father. He explains things to the child in great detail whenever the child shows interest in an answer. He trains the boy, leads him on, truly educates him. It can be said in the highest degree that he is not only the father **OF** the boy but that he is a father **TO** the boy. There's a wonderful passage in Jeremiah which says, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. Jer 3:4 How marvelous that we read. "The Lord of Hosts is the God **of** His people, even a God **TO** His people. This is the picture that our God wants us to have of Him. He is God to us. And this gives might force to our text, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" More than any earthly father could be a father **to** his son, so God is a God **to** us."

God is for us. This is true of every believer.

1 John 3:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Our God has foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified every one of His children. Paul has told us over and over how God is FOR us? Do we believe it? Do we act like it? If someone saw your responses last week to your life's circumstances, would they judge by your responses that you believe God is for you? Did we respond by faith and trust in God? Or did we react as if there is no God in heaven? As if we could not trust God to order our circumstances? As if the next circumstance might be the one that completely undoes us?

Brothers and sisters. God is for us. And we dishonor Him when we act like we have no God, or that our God is powerless. If we are a child of God- God is for us. Let's remember that when our flesh wants to control us and send us into a fit. God is for us. We have promise after promise after promise in God's word that God will take care of us. We **can** believe it and we **must** believe it. And the believing of it will change our lives.

Now, since God is **for** us, since God is looking **out for us**, since God is backing us and changing us and guiding us and controlling our past present and future, the question is **who can be against us?**

Now notice that the question is not simply- who can be against us?

That question has a long list. In fact, this is the kind of thing that the more we know, the more staggering the fact becomes. If we only look at the list of enemies we could easily wonder how any Christian ever gets to the finish line. First we have the fact that **we live in flesh**. Our fleshly selves, our old nature fights against everything we do in Christ. We have impulse after impulse that was trained when we were in Adam. Flesh will **NEVER HELP us** to become what we must become in Christ. It will never aid our spirituality. It will always be an obstacle, an enemy. Flesh is against us.

Second we live in a world system that stands against God. This is a realm where the devil has been given great influence. So all of its advertising, all of its influence, all of its priorities, all of its philosophies and its focusses, everything

about this world system stands against us to hinder us from achieving God's purposes. So the world system is against us.

Third we have those humans whose father is the devil. That is how scripture describes everyone who walks according to the nature they were born into. That is what the children in Adam are. These people will not help you become spiritual. In fact they are some of the greatest temptations we will have to abandon Christ. If I were the devil, I would develop a plan to romantically entice and entangle every believer with a non believer in marriage. While it cannot undo a believer's status before God, it would take away assurance and confidence. And even if the assurance is restored, their usefulness for the kingdom will be significantly decreased. So young people... and older people as well, we all do well to guard our hearts. Recognize that this strategy of the devil has been successful over the ages.

And fourth, we have the devil and all his cronies. You can rest assured that the devil wants to defeat Christ's ultimate purpose for you. And if he cannot tear you from Christ's grasp, which he cannot, he would very much like to put an obstacle in your way to ministering to others. You could say the devil also has a plan for your life. The wonderful thing is- the devil is not God. There is no power struggle between God and Satan. God allows it to appear that way because it serves his purposes. But when God speaks the word, the devil is undone. So the devil and his cronies are against us.

So there are lots of forces and influences and powers and people that stand against us. But that is not the question.

The question is, if God is for us who can be against us?

Another way of saying this is if the Sovereign God of heaven is carrying out His purposes in our lives, and his purpose is His Son's glorification and our glorification, who can undo that end result? Or who can overcome God's purpose being carried out in God's children.

The real question is the question of **power**. The question is not who **WANTS** to undo God's purpose for His children. The question is really who is **ABLE TO** undo God's purpose for His children.

And the answer is **NOBODY**.

Let's look at Psalms 46 to gain some perspective.

Psalm 46:1-11 (NKJV)

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(Here we see that the **God OF us is a God TO us**. He is VERY present and is a constant help to His children in this world.)

2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

(There is a lot that can go wrong. There is a lot of capacity for tumult and turmoil. But we do not need to fear. Our God is bigger than anything that can happen to us.)

3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. (This is the kind of absolute power that God has. All the forces that can move against us are stopped in their tracks when God speaks. There is no struggle. There is only the question of when God wants it to stop.)

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.

(All the things that we think are happening by chance, that are happening by the will of man, that are out of God's control, are not. When God wants a war to stop it does. Nuclear weapons are no threat. Nothing man can do is really in man's **control**. It is not **man** that is in control. It is only God.)

10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

This is similar to Paul's message. If God is for us, who can be against us? We can relax, no matter what the threat. We can be still when faced with the greatest threats. Because ultimately our destinies are not in our control. They are not in our enemy's control. They are only in God's control.

And ultimately **God will be exalted**. Ultimately **Christ will be glorified**. And ultimately **His children will be glorified with Him**. In the end God's purposes will be carried out. The nations that are putting Christians to death, the nations that make evil a national past time, the nations that foster everything that God hates, every one of them will exalt God.

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

In the New Testament we have the Holy Spirit with us. Our God is with us. And God is still our refuge.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Consider this passage this week. What are you **afraid of**? Really, in all of our lives we feel fear and some of it is a good built-in response. It often keeps us from getting killed. I am afraid to pull out on the highway without looking both ways. That is a good kind of fear.

But what things do we fear that God has told us that we should **trust Him** instead? **Those** are things we must do business with. And we often need help because often it is **our own flawed thinking** that has created the problem in our minds. We need the word of God replacing wrong thinking. And we often need that word delivered by a fellow believer that has experienced and overcome the same type of fears, to come along side us. But they won't know we need the help if we don't say so.

Who or **what** do you fear is against you? What do you think will undo you? What causes you to retreat into the world of "I can't face this?" or "I can't handle this?" We can't just use the words in our text this morning as a **slogan**. We need to incorporate them into those places that are most difficult for us to face. We must cement them in the seat of our fears. We must do battle at those parts of our lives that portray just the opposite. If we simply **spiritualize** these words, we might as well not say them at all. If they are not allowed to have their effect in taking away our dwelling in unwarranted panic and anxiety and fear, if we repeat these words but don't allow them to change us, we will do harm to those who hear us. We will cause others to think that these words are not really to be believed. These words are stating just another **ideal**, not a **reality**.

And if you are hearing this and begin in your heart saying "Yes, but..." give it up. Paul has said it clearly. Since God is for you, who has the power to undo any of His purposes for your life. And without doubt, walking in Faith is His purpose. Trusting in Christ is His purpose. If God is for you, you CAN overcome. The question is how difficult are you going to make the process?

What will we believe this week?

What will we portray this week?

Will we glorify God as we faithfully walk in confidence that God truly is in control?

Will we trust that our God is FOR us, and at the end of the day that is the thing that matters most. Will we trust Him to be our ever present help in trouble?

That is what most glorifies Christ. And that is, after all, what we are here for.