

He is for you

- Romans 8:18-30
- Before we get to the primary verses for today's message, let's consider briefly what Brent just read to us. At the end of this passage, you get the sense that Paul is exhausted with wonder at the majesty of what he has just written, the almost incomprehensible truth that our God loved us before anything else came to be, that he has chosen us to be conformed to the image of his Son. And that from eternity, we were called, from eternity we were justified, and from eternity we were glorified. Paul may have put his pen down and look up toward heaven as if to say, *how can I even go on, this is so glorious*. Then Paul writes with a sense of terrific wonder two verses that, I believe, are two of the most powerful and life-changing truths in all of Scripture. **Read Romans 8:31-32**
- My prayer is that these two verses today will enter our minds and hearts and change our lives from this day forward. Let's look at them one at a time, under three main points: the pertinent question, the perfect gift, and the powerful promise.
- **The Pertinent Question (verse 31)**
- **"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"**
- JB Phillips translates the first sentence, the first question, "In the face of all this, what is there left to say?"
- "If God is for us, who can be against us?" We might say, "What do you mean, God? Sometimes it feels like the whole world is against us! There are people at work who are against us, relatives that are against us, enemies of the cross set themselves against us." We know that is true, and Paul mentions tribulation, distress, persecution, danger, and the sword in verse 35. He even writes, quoting from Psalm 44, that "we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." So, what can he possibly mean when he asks, who can be against us? Think of this as a courtroom scene Paul is setting up here, where God is our advocate. He steps up to the witness stand and says that he is for us. He calls us by name, and says, "I am for you." And so, who, Paul asks, would even dare to approach the witness stand to testify against us? God is for us. This is why he said in verse 28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good." He is for us, so everything in our lives He uses for our good. For our eternal good. Yes, we have distresses, and trials, and heartbreaking losses, but those are momentary and temporal and when they are put on the scales against the other side, the eternal weight of God's glory, the eternal joy of God's advocacy for us, the eternal gift of adoption as sons and daughters, no, there is nothing that can be against us. Because God is for us.
- God is for us. This is a solid place to stand when everything else around you is giving way. This is eternal truth, solid rock, unchangeable, undeniable. God is for us. Though the mountains fall into the sea in your life or mine, God is for us. Though our hearts are broken or our finances are uncertain or our health is failing or our hope is almost gone...God is for us. If you have trouble believing that, then you have to look at the proof of the perfect gift. Next verse, first phrase.
- **The Perfect Gift (verse 32a)**
- **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...**
- Who is He in this statement? God! What did he not do? God did not spare his own Son. What did he do? He gave him up for us all. God sent Jesus to the cross, what Martyn Lloyd-Jones called, "The most amazing spectacle the world has ever seen." The cross was where "the immortal dies," as Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn, "And Can it Be?" Isaac Watts wrote in his hymn the cross is where "Sorrow and love flow mingled down." The writer of Hebrews wrote that Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2) John Stott wrote, "What dominated His mind was not the living, but the giving of His life."
- Jesus' death on the cross changed the world. In his book, *The Cross of Christ*, F. J. Huegel writes about the days of rebellion in China in 1900, when a group arose in the country with the sole purpose of

driving all the foreigners out of China, particularly missionaries from the west. This group captured a mission school, blocked all the gates but one, placed a cross on the ground at that gate, and sent in word that anyone who trampled on that cross could go free, but that anyone who stepped around it would be killed. The first seven children trampled on the cross and were allowed to go free. The eighth, a girl, knelt before the cross and was shot. All the rest in a line of a hundred students followed her example." Jesus' death on the cross changed the world.

- Remember when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection and they were terrified? They thought he was a ghost. He said, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." (Luke 24:36-39) Why did he show them his hands and his feet? Because that's where the wounds of the cross are. I love what Charles Spurgeon wrote about this that someone sent me this week. He said there are three reasons why Jesus showed his hands and feet to his disciples. First, to establish his identity. "That he was the same Jesus they had followed, whom at last they had deserted." Spurgeon went on, "Also, he never seems as lovely as when we see him tortured by men for our sakes...bearing our iniquities and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauty in his wounds that he will not renounce them. He will wear the attire in which he wooed our souls...throughout eternity." Second, Jesus wears his wounds...when he intercedes. "When he rises to pray for his people, he need not speak a word. He may simply lift his hands before his Father's face. He makes bare his side and points to his feet. These are the orators with which he pleads with God—his wounds." Third, Spurgeon said there is... "A terrible reason Christ still wears his wounds...(He) is coming to judge the world. Every time Christ lifts his hands to heaven, the men that hate or despise him are accused...And when Christ comes a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, those hands will be the terror of the universe. "They will look on him whom they have pierced" (John 19:37), and they will mourn for their sins."
- But not the people of God. Look with me at...
- **The Powerful Promise (verse 32b)**
- Listen to Paul's argument. **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?** In logical terms, this is an argument from the greater to the lesser. From the harder to the easier. He gave up his Son. For us. How will God not give us much more that requires much less?
- Several months ago, a number of us gathered outside at 8am for a first work day on the landscaping around the church building. Remember? We worked for 8 hours breaking up the soil around the flower beds, digging up roots, loading up the debris and dirt in wheelbarrows and hauling it to the woods. It was back breaking work. I remember watching John Cobb take a pickaxe to a crape myrtle root, hitting it with blow after blow, cutting through it finally. What if at church the next day, one of you who had labored with John Cobb asked him to get you a cup of water from the kitchen? Would he do it? Oh, I have no doubt. John is a man who serves. But also, getting a cup of water from the kitchen is a whole lot easier than swinging a pickaxe, hauling a wheelbarrow, or riding a two-man auger on rock-hard soil, as some of you did all day. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser.
- Joni Eareckson Tada, paralyzed in a diving accident more than 50 years ago, recently said: "Don't assume that all I ever do is dream about springing out of this wheelchair, jumping up, dancing, kicking, doing aerobics. No I'm looking forward to heaven because of a new heart, a heart free of sin, sorrow, selfishness. That beats having a new body any day." Do you hear that? It's an argument from the greater to the lesser! Her body will be healed but only because of the greater miracle: her heart will be made perfect, free from sin forever. Because of what God did.
- What did God do? **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all.** That's the hard thing. The greater thing. The greatest and hardest work ever done in all the universe. To understand this work, this sacrifice, we have to give human terms to it. I know God is God and nothing is impossible with God, but that doesn't mean that not sparing his own Son was easy. No! It was infinitely hard for an infinite God to sacrifice his only Son. Why did God do it? Because of your sin and

mine. Because of his wrath against your sin and mine. Because of his desire to have your sin and mine, and his wrath against your sin and mine satisfied, so that you and I could be saved, so that you and I could be forever in his presence, happy and holy and without sin. Because there is nothing you or I can do to satisfy God's wrath against our sin. He had to do it for us.

- For that reason, God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. The KJV says he "delivered" his son to the executioner. When Judas asked the chief priests, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" it is the same word. When the Bible says that Pilate delivered Jesus over to be crucified, it is the same word. We think of Judas and Pilate as the ones who delivered Jesus to the cross, but ultimately they were not. It was God. For us.
- The agony of Christ on the cross was only matched by the agony of the Father who had to watch as his son suffered and died for our sin. To watch him being spit on and mocked and beaten. To watch the Roman soldiers driving nails into his hands and feet. To watch his only Son thirst and struggle to breathe and suffer and die.
- He did not spare his own Son. He delivered him up for us all. He did the hardest thing. The unimaginable thing. Therefore, what do we know to be true? What is God calling us to lean into and stand on and believe with every cell in our body? Because God did the hardest thing, he will do the easier thing.
- **How will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**
- Paul asks the question, and he does so perhaps because he knows this is almost too good and too glorious to be true. But Paul knew and we must know that it is too TRUE to be anything but good and glorious! What is the promise? God will give us ALL things with Christ. What does this mean for you and for me?
- Since God didn't spare his own Son, the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Since God didn't spare his own Son, he will work all things together for eternal good in your life and mine. Since God didn't spare his own Son, you and I will be justified. Since God didn't spare his own Son, you and I will be glorified. Since God didn't spare his own Son, there is therefore now no condemnation for you and me. Since God didn't spare his own Son, you and I have peace with God through Jesus.
- Because God has done the greatest thing of all, removing the sin and shame and judgment that stood against me and you, there is nothing that stands between God and his people now. There is no greater work to be done by God. It has all been done. "It is finished!" Jesus cried from the cross. And it was. It is.
- God is for us. Do you believe that? God gave up his Son for us. Do you believe that? God will give us, with Christ, all things. Do you believe that?
- Prayer
- Communion
- Greeting