

God is For You!

Romans 8:31-39

7/11/21

God loves you!

God is for you!

How do those words affect you?

Do they stir within you confidence and peace and renewed devotion and joy?

Or do they simply roll off your back with little or no effect upon your soul?

Sentimental Nonsense...That is a phrase that I remember Pastor Sandy using often. He used it to refer to words that sounded good and inspired within you nice feelings, at least for the moment. But in the end, they did not amount to any lasting benefit.

How often do you wake up pondering afresh the love of God for you? How often throughout the day do you recall to your mind that the Sovereign God of the Universe is bending all of life for you, for your benefit? And what difference does this truth alter how you live out each day?

Liberal Christianity often lauds the Love of God! But, they do so at the expense of talking about sin, and the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and the need for repentance and faith and new obedience. They wrongly think that unconditional love means letting the objects of love live any way they please. They universalize the love of God in a way that twists it into sentimental nonsense.

But as I studied the passage before us today, I began to wonder, "Has our rightful aversion to this watered down version of the Love of God, somehow robbed us of the ability to fully appreciate the wonder of the real thing.

Mike Kruger believes that in Romans 8:31-39 we may have the greatest passage in all of Scripture. In it we have the theological conclusion of arguably the greatest book in all of Scripture. These verses cannot rightly be understood apart from the first 8 chapters.

They cannot be understood rightly apart from God's condemnation upon all men under the law. Or from the glorious freedom that only comes by faith alone in Christ alone bringing justification. The wonders of our being united to Jesus Christ, also through faith alone, and its effects of freeing us from the Law of sin and death, and joining of us with the Spirit's sanctifying power, enabling gospel obedience are vital to us.

Wrestling with the doctrines of Predestination, of conformity to the Son, and of our future eternal glory challenge our hearts in ways that are inconceivable to the world –

yet a fragrant aroma to those who belong to Him. Without all that comes before them, these verses do become sentimental nonsense. But, as the conclusion to all that has been said up to this point, they are truly glorious.

But... if you understand all of the doctrines throughout Romans, and yet do not embrace Paul's conclusions here in Romans 8, then all of the knowledge will only puff you up. It would be like taking the time to prepare a four course meal, setting the table, pouring the wine, and then never taking one bite.

God wants you to feast upon His Son. And in feasting upon His Son, He wants you to feast upon his love. May he give us grace today to feast, to actually partake of his divine love!

Read Romans 8:31-39.

Romans 8:31 ³¹ What then shall we say to these things?

"These things" refer to all that Paul has said up to this point. "These things" refer to the particulars of the Gospel.

In the end, when all is said in done, what is the final conclusion that everyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ ought to make? Paul's answer is simple: God is for us. Christian, God is for you! What a thought to dwell upon. God is not wavering in his love for you.

God is not teetering back and forth as to whether he wants to be on your side. God's promises to you are not "yes" and "no". All of his promises are "yes" and "amen" in Christ Jesus.

"The conclusion of the chapter is a recapitulation of all his former arguments, or rather a reduction of them to one, which comprehends them all in their fullest force; God is for us." Hodge

Do you hear in your heart already, "but what about..."? I hear these voices too. But can you, even for a few moments push these other thoughts aside and dwell upon this one thought: God is for you? What does it mean that God is for you? It cannot possibly mean that he is for your sin. God is holy. For God to be for you means that he must be for your holiness and against your sin. Sin is always destructive, and so, for God to be for you means that he must be working to destroy that which is destructive in you.

He is not working for your destruction – only the sin that would surely consume you. He is not working to unravel you as a person. God is working to restore you. He is working to remake you in his image. God is working to take you to eternal glory.

Why do we struggle to believe that God is for us? The answer is really simple: Life in this world, even when it is good, is filled with pain.

God allows... ordains... does not rid our lives of... pain and suffering. We may admire Job's faith, but we do not want to experience his life.

^{ESV} **Job 17:11** My days are past; my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart.

It requires faith to continue believing in the midst of groaning the words of hope that God gave to Jeremiah: the weeping prophet.

Jeremiah 29:11 ¹¹ For 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.

The conclusion to the Gospel is this: God is for you – unequivocally. You who are trusting in Jesus Christ: God is **for you**.

The only true God, the one and only Sovereign Being in the Universe, the source of all true life, the only completely pure and good Person... is for you. It is not an angel who is for you – as powerful as one such creature might be. It is not some wealthy benefactor who is for you – as nice as that might be. It is not even the leader of some nation who is for you – with all of the resources of the state at his disposal. It is GOD who is for you. He is not only able to intercede in your present situation. He is the One who has the power and authority to give you eternal bliss or send you to an eternal hell.

There is no more terrifying thought than to have God AGAINST you. And there is no more comforting thought than to have God FOR you. And that is why Paul then asks:

If God is for us, who can be¹ against us?

Of course, we all have enemies against us. Paul will list some of them in the coming verses. But no enemy can match the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Anyone, or anything, that is a threat to deprive you of the good plans that God has for you will ultimately fail.

These enemies may have some power to do you some harm in the present. But they cannot conquer the love of God. Paul is certain that whatever the pain, whatever the loss, whatever the frustration, that it is no match for God. Nothing, no matter how terrible, how painful, how evil, is able to thwart God's plans to do you good. Do you believe that? You can see why it is difficult to believe. It flies directly in the face of your present experience.

Let me tell briefly about a man in Church History. A man named Athanasius. Athanasius was a short, dark-skinned, bishop of Alexandria, Egypt. His enemies called him the “Black Dwarf”. And he had plenty of enemies. In the 45 years that he was bishop of Alexandria, he spent 17 of them living in Exile. He was exiled 5 times by four Roman emperors.

Why did Athanasius have so many enemies? He believed that Jesus was fully God. Arianism, now considered a heresy, was then the reigning view of the Church. Athanasius was rightly convinced by Scripture that Jesus was fully and completely God in the flesh. In fact, he wrote a book, “On the Incarnation” that would become the foundation of Nicean Orthodoxy.

Why do I take the time to tell you about Athanasius? Because it was said of him “Athanasius contra mundum.” Do you know what that means? Athanasius against the world! Well, let me tell you, you do not take on the world unless you know “Deus Pro Nobis”. God is for us!

Knowing God is for you will not only enable you to endure suffering, it will give you courage in the face of opposition. God is for you... Does it really matter who or what is against you? No, it does not.

Paul knows how difficult it is to really embrace that God is for you. He knows that we tend to think that God might be “somewhat” for us, but not really fully and completely for us.

Even when we experience some blessing, we fear that God is simply teasing us. The other foot is going to drop. We will be crushed in the end.

We all, to some extent, feel this way. That is why Paul takes the time to defend his statement.

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?

We often consider the cross through the eyes of Jesus. After all, he is the one who wore the crown of thorns and felt his skin being torn and heard the mocking.

But we cannot forget to ponder the cross through the eyes of the Father.

Put yourself in the place of the Father. What if it were your own beloved son that you were watching experience the horrors of Calvary? Try to understand how terrible this must have been for the Father. The Father was not angry with his son. He was not disappointed with him in any way. In his own words, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased."

God called Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac.

Genesis 22:2 ² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

And, amazingly enough, Abraham was willing to do it.

Genesis 22:10-13 ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Abraham proved the genuineness of his devotion to Yahweh through his willingness to NOT withhold the one who was most precious to him: Isaac.

Through this encounter, God was helping us to see the depth of His devotion to us. God provided a substitute so that Isaac would not have to die. Jesus is the true Substitute for each one of us who believes. But what we must see now is the tremendous love of the Father for us in that he "did not spare his only Son."

We are God's children through our union with Jesus Christ. But Jesus is the eternally begotten Son and most Beloved Son to the Father.

In order for the cross to make any sense, there must be two converging truths. The cross must be absolutely necessary to make atonement for our sin, or it is a terrible act of cruelty. What sort of father would send their son to endure such horrendous pain if it were not absolutely necessary. And the cross must be an act of true love or the purpose of redemption makes no sense. To be saved from sin, but not brought into a

relationship of love would be meaningless. The cross enables the Father to pour out the fullness of his love upon us.

Learn to see the cross through the eyes of the Father. Nothing means so much to the Father as His Son. And he did not spare his son... Why? Because he loved us so much.

I can think of no other situation in which the Father said “no” to his Son. The Son asked for the cup to be removed. And the Father said “no.” Why did he say no? Because he was intent on giving to us all of the blessings of our salvation. And only through the cross could they ever become ours.

Now, if he did not hold back his own Son, how could he now hold back on the rest. God has given you Jesus. Everything else related to your redemption is not nearly as important to God as His Son. After giving you Jesus, will he really fail to give you these lesser things?

“That ground of confidence and security which includes all others, is the love of God; and that exhibition of divine love which surpasses and secures all others, is the gift of his own Son.” Hodge

God is going to give us “all things”. We know this, not because we presently have “all things”, but because we have Jesus. If you have Jesus, you have all things.

What is included in the all things?

“the salvation itself”

- Heavenly bliss
- Resurrection to glory

God is preparing for you a home, a home in which you truly belong.

God is preparing a family for you in which you truly belong.

God is giving us true purpose.

God is giving to us the ability to experience enduring joy in his presence.

How do we know these things?

Because he has not spared his only Son.

“all things necessary for our salvation”

- Anything that God requires for our resurrection to glory.
- Our justification and sanctification.

Justification: Declaring us righteous only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

And Sanctification: the ongoing work of God whereby we are more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

Godly character = being made like God

God, out of his love towards us and because he is unequivocally for us will give us these things “graciously” = freely, without cost

God is in the process of graciously giving to you the character of his beloved Son.

You are not passive in the process. Godliness is the ability to make choices that are godly. But, God is the one who is graciously giving of himself to make you godly.

If you want to be godly, then you must look, and keep on looking, to Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven by whom you will be made godly. Give me every other blessing and they would all be empty without the blessing of godliness.

I sometimes despair whether I will ever truly be godly. I do not believe I am alone in my despair. Remember Paul’s cry at the end of Romans 7 – “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

What brings me out of the despair is the thought that the Father has not spared his own Son. God has freely given me Jesus Christ. And if he has not spared his own Son, then He will also graciously give me godly character.

Paul knows that the believer’s ongoing struggle with sin will produce anxiety and doubt as to whether he or she will reach the goal of eternal bliss.

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

When someone brings a charge against someone it is usually because the person has committed some crime – done some act of evil.

All accusations are not true. It is possible to be falsely accused. Surely, Jesus will defend the reputation of his people when they are falsely accused. But it is not false accusations that concern Paul here. These charges are true. Wrongs have been committed. Even terrible wrongs. And those who are of the Elect have committed these evils. And the accusations can come from several sources. They surely come from Satan.

“Satan works to bring every conceivable slanderous charge against God’s elect. Satan never ceases accusing the brethren. He never stops harassing us and getting at our consciences, telling us how wicked we are and that we do not deserve to be in fellowship with Christ. The principle work of Satan in the life of the believer is not temptation, though he is engaged in that; his chief work is accusation. He accuses in order to take away our assurance and joy and the consolation that is ours in Christ. He keeps reminding us of our sin. He keeps telling us of our shortcomings. He lays against God’s elect every conceivable charge that he can bring; yet, there is no work more futile, which is why Paul mocks Satan with this question.” Sproul

Accusations also come from other people.

They come from the unbelieving world. Of course the enemies of God want to point out the hypocrisy of when Christians sin. But they can also come from other believers. Accusations are not simply calling sin for what it is: sin. These accusations are then making the further conclusion that the accused is not fit for salvation.

Even well-meaning Christians can lay these charges against other Christians. Paul answers these accusations with the truth that the only opinion that matters is that of the Judge. If God declares you just then the accusations of others, no matter how true, will not have the effect of preventing you from reaching glory.

But even worse than Satan’s accusations, or the accusations of others, are the accusations that we place upon ourselves. We do not need the voices of others to condemn us. We do a pretty good job of it ourselves. It is our own shame that plagues us the most. We know how unworthy are we of ever attaining God’s blessing. We want to live a life worthy of the gospel. But we know that we have fallen short.

And so, even when God gives us some temporal blessing, some token of his goodness towards us, we somehow tell ourselves that it is only a matter of time before the hammer of God’s wrath will strike. We struggle to really enjoy God’s love for us.

Your doubts and fears and accusations towards yourself are of no consequence to God. Paul tells us that it is God who justifies, who is the one who condemns? Neither Satan, nor the world, nor other Christians, nor your own heart are of any lasting consequence. It is only God’s declaration that matters.

These assurances are given to the Elect. But how do we know if we are of the elect?

First, we need to understand that when Paul says the “Elect”, they are those foreknown by God. Those “foreloved” by God.

By the elect, we should not hear: those who are good. God chooses to pour out his love on sinners, those who are not good. And he does this freely, unconditionally. Nothing in you moved God to choose you.

But, when God determines to save the elect, he begins to work to bring them to repentance and faith. And only through faith are we made aware of who are the ones who are eternally elect.

If you are believing in Jesus Christ, then you are of the elect. As I have said before, there is a place for questioning whether or not your faith is real. When we fall into sin, doubts and fears do arise. We should all want to see the ongoing fruit of the Spirit being produced in our hearts.

Soul searching is good and necessary at times in our lives. Many who have been in the church for years, will be convicted by the Holy Spirit that they do not truly know Jesus Christ, and are then brought to a living faith in Jesus.

But that is not Paul’s concern here! It is the person who is believing in Jesus Christ, but who continues to bring accusations against his own soul. Paul points this person to the eternal electing love of God.

I find it exhilarating that God gives the one who first comes to faith the incredible pronouncement – You are declared righteous. He could have said something far different. He could have said, “You are forgiven on the condition that you get your life cleaned up.” Or, “You are on probation until we prove that this was a one-time incident.” When your life is over, “I will see if I want to declare you just.”

God takes the person who casts themselves upon Jesus Christ and at that very moment declares over them, “You are justified.” And then, only after this pronouncement, is the process of sanctification begun.

Sometimes, when my conscience condemns me, God reminds me of when I first entrusted myself to Jesus to save me. I did not have any idea how life-long and difficult would be the struggle for sanctification at that time. But I remember believing that Jesus was able to save me.

I prayed, “Jesus, save me, from the guilt and the power of sin.” And through the Word of God, I believed God’s declaration: Michael Thompson – you are justified!

And I think to myself. Did God lie to me back then? Has he somehow failed because I am not yet fully sanctified? Or, is God's statement just as true for me today as it was then?

It most certainly is the same.

My justification is just as true now as it was then.

And God's love towards me and his commitment to be for me is not dependent upon my sanctification. They are only dependent upon the work of Jesus Christ. And so, my heart is calmed. And I find strength to press on.

I know you hear the voices of accusation. Do you hear the voice of God: I have declared you righteous!

"Even conscience, though it upbraids, does not terrify. It produces the ingenuous (meaning: innocent) sorrow of children, and not the despairing anguish of the convict, because it sees that all the ends of punishment are fully answered in the death of Christ, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Hodge

Paul knows that accusations lead to condemnation. And condemnation has no place in the heart of the one who rests in Jesus Christ.

ESV **Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Power to condemn rests in God alone.

Christian, if you are ever to have peace in God's presence, it will only be found in the electing and justifying love of God for you!

34 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.

Brothers and sisters, as you go through life and understand increasingly the destructive nature of sin, no true believer will be flippant about sin. We do not hate sin simply because it has the power to drag us to hell. We hate sin because it is contrary to God's good nature.

So much of the exhortations in Scripture are designed to keep us from sinning. Not so that we can earn heaven by not sinning, but because sin is ugly and destructive and it is better to not sin. But even with all of the Bible's exhortations not to sin, the Bible is so realistic in that it recognizes that true believers still do sin. Listen to John:

ESV **1 John 2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The Bible provides many examples of God's elect ones falling in to sin: Abraham, David, and Peter to name a few. But what does Jesus tell Peter, even before he commits the sin.

Luke 22:31-32 ³¹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,¹ that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is your Advocate. He is praying for you.

That your faith will not fail. God is greater than our ongoing struggle with sin.

And God is greater than our present trials in this world.

God may have promised to us all things. But we must learn to wait for them.

If God truly loves me and it unequivocally for me, then how can I be still experiencing such grief and pain? Paul has already discussed this earlier in the chapter. Dealing with that section we saw that the Creation is groaning and we as believers are groaning, and the Spirit within us is groaning.

But here Paul asks the question, are the trials of life able to separate you from the love of Christ?

35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation,

or

distress,
or
persecution,
or
famine,
or
nakedness,
or
danger,
or
sword?

I find it wonderful that Paul does not say, "Can these things keep you from heavenly bliss? Instead, he asks, "Can they separate you from God's love for you?"

Paul emphatically answers "NO!" in verse 37.

But before he gets to the answer he quotes Psalm 44.

³⁶ As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

In this Psalm, God's people are languishing in exile, in many ways for their own sins. But as they are suffering, they turn their hearts to God's past redemption. They think about how God had rescued them from the Egyptians and drove out the Canaanites from the Promised Land.

They recalled how God had worked before and they yearned for him to do so again.

They chose to believe that their present suffering was not ultimate.

They instead set their hopes upon the steadfast love of God.

Psalm 44:26 ²⁶ Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

Paul knows that the imagery of the Lamb being led to the slaughter will turn his own readers to the suffering of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

And so, as Christians we do not suffer as a precursor to condemnation.
Now we suffer “for the sake” of Christ.
We are joined with Christ and so we follow the same path to glory as he traveled.
The path to glory leads through suffering.

Our present suffering is not able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

37 No,
 in all these things
 we are more than conquerors
 through him who loved us.

In verse 37, the “these things” refers to the full gamut of present trials and sufferings. God does not prevent his people from experiencing present sufferings, but his love enables them to overcome them.

The phrase “more than conquerors” translates one compound word in the Greek: hypernikao.

It means “super-conquerors”.

The conquering power that is ours is not like the world imagines.

This was made very clear to me in a story Robin read to me from the Voice of Martyrs. A persecutor of a Christian was mocking him. He declared the sovereign power that he possessed to kill the Christian. But the Christian said to his persecutor, “No, it is I who possess the true power to continue loving you even as you kill me.”

That stopped me in my tracks. That Christian was more than a conqueror. Even in death, he was not separated from the love of Christ. I know that the trials of this world work in many to hate God. But for those who are being loved by Jesus Christ, they overcome trials. They continue to know the love of God for them.

Notice that they do not conquer because of the greatness of their own devotion. They conquer through the love of Christ for them.

38 For I am 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 Jesus our Lord.

Paul is convinced of the love of God that is toward him.

This love is not sentimental nonsense. The love of God in Christ Jesus is a powerful force. It is driving Paul to eternal blessing. And nothing can stop this love from reaching its intended goal. Nothing whatsoever.

“The great difficulty with many Christians is that they cannot persuade themselves that Christ (or God) loves them; and the reason why they cannot feel confident of the love of God, is, that they know they do not deserve his love, on the contrary, that they are in the highest degree unlovely. How can the infinitely pure God love those who are defiled with sin, who are proud, selfish, discontented, ungrateful, disobedient? This, indeed, is hard to believe. But it is the very thing we are required to believe, not only as the condition of peace and hope, but as the condition of salvation.” Hodge

How often do you need to remember that God loves you... that He is FOR you?

As often as the fears of condemnation rise up within you...

And as often as the trials and anxieties of this world threaten to rob you of the certainty that God will graciously give you “all things”.

Amen!