

*God Gave His Son for Us: Romans 8:31-32*

Ben Reaoch, Three Rivers Grace Church

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We are moving now into the final paragraph of Romans 8. Paul is drawing to a conclusion this major section of the letter. These verses at the end of chapter 8, and the beginning several verses of chapter 5, serve as book ends on either side of this section. Chapter 5 opens with the proclamation that we have peace with God, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We even rejoice in our sufferings. We're told that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And we also rejoice that we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

Here at the end of Romans 8 there are similar themes. We are given assurance that God is for us, and therefore no enemy can succeed against us. God showed His love for us in giving up His own Son for us. And that means God has a great inheritance for us. And it means that nothing (no suffering or trial or persecution) can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Verse 31 begins with the rhetorical question, "What then shall we say to these things?" Paul signals to us here that he is reflecting back on what he has written, and he is about to draw out some implications. He certainly has in mind the verses right before this, when he says, "What then shall we say to these things"—he has in mind the promise of verse 28, the golden chain of verses 29-30. What shall we say to this promise? What shall we say to God's unshakable purposes beginning in eternity past? What does this mean for us? What else can we say about this? How else can we rejoice in this?

It could be that he has in mind the whole of this section, beginning in chapter 5. All of this Gospel truth about justification and our freedom from sin and our freedom from the law and our new life in the Spirit and our adoption and the redemption we look forward to. All of this has been building toward this climactic conclusion.

This last paragraph of chapter 8 is like the finale at the end of the fireworks. It makes me think of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, just a few weeks ago—enjoying the amazing display of color in the sky, and then a short lull before a spectacular finale. There have been many amazing things to behold in Romans 5-8. And now there's a brief pause as Paul takes a deep breath and reflects, "What then shall we

say to these things?” And now the finale begins, with rapid fire promises that are precious beyond our comprehension.

Just so you can feel the finale that is going on in this paragraph, I’m going to re-word Paul’s many rhetorical questions here and put them in the form of statements. These are the great promises that Paul records quickly and powerfully. He puts many of them in the form of rhetorical questions (a rhetorical question being a question that is not really looking for an answer, but is a powerful rhetorical way of making a statement). Here are the statements he is making.

God is for us. Therefore no enemy can succeed against us. God gave His Son for us. Therefore we know that God will also give us a great inheritance with Christ. Nobody can bring any charge against us. God justifies. Nobody can condemn us! Christ Jesus died and rose and is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Nobody can separate us from the love of Christ. No, in every affliction we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Nothing—no, nothing—can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the finale that we have in the last paragraph of Romans 8. Let’s look this morning at verses 31-32 and may we feel the hope that is being revealed to us here.

### **God Is for Us**

In saying, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Paul does not mean to cast any doubt on the fact that God is for us. This is just the nature of the rhetorical question. Verses 28-30 assure us that God is for us. He is working all things together for our good. He foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified. So the statement now is, “If God is for us (and we know He is), then who can be against us?” Implied answer: nobody can be against us. Or to summarize it more simply, we could say it like this: *Since* God is for us, nobody can be against us.

Now, if you’re thinking about this and also thinking about your experiences in life, then you’re probably scratching your head wondering what that actually means. Because we have all experienced opposition at one time or another. We’ve had people who are against us. Kids, maybe it’s a classmate who is mean to you. Maybe it’s a brother or sister who won’t play the game you want to play or won’t share a certain toy. Teenagers, maybe it’s a group of friends who make fun of you for your beliefs and pressure you to compromise your convictions. Adults, there may be times when it seems like your employer is against you, or your spouse is

against you, or the economy is against you, or the government is against you. We face plenty of opposition in life, so what can Paul mean here when he says that nobody is against us?

Paul certainly knows that there are many who come against us. He lists many of them later in this passage. In verse 35 he lists persecution and danger and sword. These clearly imply things that are against us. There's somebody carrying out the persecution. There's someone or something causing the danger. There's somebody on the other end of that sword.

And we should recognize that this list of afflictions—which Paul says, none of these things can separate us from the love of Christ—these are very personal to Paul. These are things he experienced in his own life.

He writes of “*imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 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.*” (2 Corinthians 11:23–27, ESV)

And a few verses later, after talking about the thorn in his flesh, he says, “*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” (2 Corinthians 12:10, ESV)

Paul certainly knew that, as believers, there are plenty of things that can come against us in this fallen world. But the point in saying, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”—the point is that nothing can ultimately be against us. Nothing can succeed in destroying us. Nothing can triumph in its attempt to bring us down. Nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Instead, God is using those very things for our good. God ordains these trials in our lives. He allows them to happen, in His mysterious purposes, so that we will be more than conquerors through Him who loved us (v. 37).

One of the church fathers, John Chrysostom, who lived in the 300s, wrote about this: “Yet those that be against us, so far are they from thwarting us at all, that even without their will they become to us the causes of crowns, and procurers of countless

blessings, in that God’s wisdom turneth their plots unto our salvation and glory. See how really no one is against us!”<sup>1</sup>

So it’s not that nobody is ever going to oppose us in any way. We know that we will face opposition. But even the opposition which comes against us is for our good. The opposition is part of God refining us and strengthening us and purifying us and to make us rely more and more on Him. With God on our side, everything (even the fiercest opposition) is working for our good.

### **Therefore Let Us Be People of Courage**

This is an application point I want to make from this truth. Since God is for us and nobody can succeed in destroying us—nobody can succeed in thwarting God’s good plans for us—then what do we have to fear? What do we have to lose? Why would we cower in the face of opposition? Why would we give in to peer pressure rather than standing up for what we believe? Why would we shrink back in silence because we don’t want to be ridiculed? [These are my rhetorical questions for the morning] The fact that God is for us should encourage and embolden us. We have nothing to fear.

Athanasius was a great defender of the faith in the 300s A.D. He was part of the controversy involving a man named Arius. Arius claimed that Jesus Christ could not be eternal. Since He is the Son of God, He must have had a beginning. Athanasius opposed that teaching and defended the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and the full deity of Christ—that Jesus is fully man and fully, eternally, God. But over the years of his ministry, Athanasius faced much opposition. There were many church leaders who did not like him, who did not like the firm stand he took for truth. Emperors, as well, did not like him. He was exiled 5 different times. He had to flee from his home in Egypt and from his ministry there. The phrase that is used to describe his life is “Athanasius contra mundum,” meaning “Athanasius against the world.”

That kind of boldness and courage and steadfastness comes from knowing that God is for you. Standing up against error, refusing to give in to immense pressure to compromise—that comes from a deep, inner confidence in God’s good purposes for you.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Moo, 539

That's one illustration from many centuries ago. I want to share one other illustration with you—something that happened just this past week. One of the young people in this congregation (Josh), and his mom (Johna), called me up on Tuesday to ask for some prayer and counsel. Josh's community soccer team had chosen to name their team "the devils." The coach had let the players propose names and vote on those names, and the majority voted for the name "the devils." Josh voted against that name, and felt very uncomfortable with that name. And he and his mom felt that their conscience wouldn't allow them to participate on a team with that name. [I don't think everyone would have to make exactly the same decision in that situation—that's not the point of me sharing this story—but as a matter of conscience, that was their conviction.] I told Josh that I respect him for his courage and I respect him for wanting to stand up for what he believes. This was certainly an opportunity to make a statement for God. And we prayed that somehow the team would agree to change the name to something else.

Later in the week I heard from Johna that God answered those prayers. They had gone to practice and spoken with the coach again about this matter, and how strongly they felt about it. And now the team is going to have the name "the Jaguars."

I was so encouraged by that this week. We should thank God that a young person among us would have that kind of courage to make a stand for his convictions. And we should thank God for answering prayer. Not that things are going to be easy. You take a stand like that, and you become a target for ridicule. But knowing that God is for us should give us the confidence to remain steadfast no matter what the outcome.

### **God Gave His Son**

Moving on to verse 32 we see the clear demonstration of God being for us. Here is how we know that God is for us. He gave His Son for us.

Lest we think of this abstractly, or simply as a point of fact—that God gave up His own Son—God has given us a picture of this in the Old Testament in Genesis 22, the account of Abraham delivering up his own son, Isaac, as a sacrifice.

You remember how God tested Abraham by saying "*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.*" (Genesis 22:2, ESV) And then at the last moment the angel of the Lord 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.”*” (Genesis 22:12, ESV) And God provided a ram for the burnt offering instead of Isaac (which gives us a powerful picture of Christ’s substitutionary atonement for us; He stood in our place). And then the angel of the Lord spoke again, saying to Abraham, *“By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you . . .”* (Genesis 22:16, ESV)

God, through His Word there, gives us this tender and tangible glimpse into the Godhead. The love between Abraham and Isaac points to the deep love between God the Father and God the Son. And Abraham’s willingness to offer up his only beloved son points to God the Father who gave His only Son. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). And after Jesus was baptized God the Father spoke from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

As we read the story of Abraham and Isaac, and as we feel the inner turmoil and agony and broken-heartedness of that event, we should learn something of our great God. He did not spare His own Son. In this case, no one called out at the last moment and called it off. The Father drove that knife into His Son’s heart. God did not spare His own Son, His only Son, His beloved Son. But He gave him up for US! He crushed His beloved Son on that cross. He poured out His wrath against sin upon His very own Son, so that He can spare us from that wrath. Jesus was *not* spared so that we *can* be spared.

Isaiah 53 speaks of the fact that it was God’s will to crush His Son. “Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief” (verse 10). The Lord is God the Father, and the One put to grief is the Suffering Servant who is being talked about in this passage of Scripture, who is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. So this verse is saying very clearly that God the Father is the One who ordained the death of Jesus Christ. He crushed Him. He put Him to grief. And He did so because He and the Son had agreed to do this in order to magnify the grace of God in the salvation of sinners.

This is why we can celebrate the death of Jesus, because it was not a sign of failure, it was not a sign of defeat, it was not the end. It happened exactly according to plan, and through it Jesus accomplished our eternal salvation.

In the context of this paragraph at the end of Romans 8, we see this evidence that God is for us and that God loves us. The fact that He gave His own Son for us the proof that He loves us and is on our side. Verse 31 says it in terms of God being for us. Verse 35 puts it in terms of the love of Christ. Verse 39 speaks of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Consider God's Love**

The application point here is to consider the depth of God's love for us. The take away for us is to feel the sacrificial love of God, that He was heart-broken, in agony, giving up His beloved Son, in order to save us from His wrath and lavish us with good gifts.

Some of you know the story of Nicki Cruz, one of the men who led Teen Challenge. Nicki had a very rough childhood, growing up with parents who practiced witchcraft. When he was 15 he left Puerto Rico to live in New York City. All the hatred that had built up in him from his childhood led to him being the leader of a very destructive gang. He was a force for evil. Hate filled his heart. Until David Wilkerson showed up in Nicky's life, telling him about the love of Christ. Nicky thought that nobody loved him. At first Nicky resisted that message, even violently. He threatened to kill the skinny street preacher who was talking about Jesus. But Wilkerson was persistent. And eventually the powerful love of God invaded Nicky's life and overcame his hatred.

That is an awesome story and an awesome testimony of the life-changing love of God. And I can't help but wonder if there are any like Nicky Cruz here this morning. Maybe you've been deeply wounded throughout your life. Maybe the disappointments and the broken relationships and the abuses of life have left you angry and bitter. My prayer for you this morning is that the tidal wave of God's love will fall upon your life and wash away that hatred. I pray that you will be so in awe of God's sacrificial love that you will be changed, that you will love God for this amazing gift of His Son.

### **For Us All**

The next phrase we need to examine here is the phrase "for us all" in verse 32. This is such a tremendous statement that God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. The question is, "Who is the us?" From the context, we can see very clearly the group of people Paul has in mind. In verse 28 it's those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Then in verses 29-30 it's those whom God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and

glorified. In verse 33 it's God's elect. These are the ones who can say, "God is for us" (verse 31) and Christ is interceding for us (verse 34). And what we see in verse 32 is that these are ones for whom Christ died. God gave up His Son for this specific group of people, making atonement for their sin, purchasing their redemption.

The point I want you to see here is that Christ's death was specifically designed to accomplish the salvation of the elect. Christ did not die in a general sense for all of mankind, merely making it a possibility for individuals to be saved, if they would exercise their will and choose to believe. No, Christ did not die merely to make something possible, but to definitely accomplish the redemption of those who were predestined.

To elaborate on this point, I'll quote one of my favorite theologians, who also happens to be a hip-hop artist. His name is Shai Linne, and this is from a song entitled "Mission Accomplished," which is all about this very point: definite atonement. Here are a few portions of that song. [I expect that in heaven, I'll be able to rap this thing with perfect rhythm, but I won't attempt it now.]

Mission Accomplished  
written by shai linne

Portion of Verse 1

The question concerns those for whom Christ died  
Was He trying to save everybody worldwide?  
Was He trying to make the entire world His Bride?  
Does man's unbelief keep the Savior's hands tied?  
Biblically, each of these must be denied  
It's true, Jesus gave up His life for His Bride  
But His Bride is the elect, to whom His death is applied

Portion of Verse 2

Father, Son and Spirit: three and yet one  
Working as a unit to get things done  
Our salvation began in eternity past  
God certainly has to bring all His purpose to pass  
A triune, eternal bond no one could ever sever  
When it comes to the church, peep how they work together  
The Father foreknew first, the Son came to earth  
To die- the Holy Spirit gives the new birth

The Father elects them, the Son pays their debt and protects them  
 The Spirit is the One who resurrects them  
 The Father chooses them, the Son gets bruised for them  
 The Spirit renews them and produces fruit in them  
 Everybody's not elect, the Father decides  
 And it's only the elect in whom the Spirit resides  
 The Father and the Spirit- completely unified

### Portion of Verse 3

If saving everybody was why Christ came in history  
 With so many in hell, we'd have to say He failed miserably  
 So many think He only came to make it possible

But worst of all, you're saying the cross by itself doesn't save  
 That we must do something to give the cross its power  
 That means, at the end of the day, the glory's ours  
 That man-centered thinking is not recommended  
 The cross will save all for whom it was intended  
 Because for the elect, God's wrath was satisfied

Those lyrics summarize a lot of what we're learning, not only in these verses, but throughout Romans 8. And they summarize much of what is central to a God-centered understanding of salvation. This is what we were seeing last week as well in the Golden Chain of verses 29-30. God chooses a people for Himself, predestines them to be conformed to Christ, calls them effectually unto salvation, justifies them, and causes them to persevere all the way to glory. And what we're seeing now in verse 32 is the definite focus of Christ's death. He died . . . for whom? For us! For the elect. Not that His death was limited in power and was therefore only sufficient to atone for a certain number of individuals. His death was infinitely powerful and sufficient to save whomever it was designed to save. The point here is about intention. Christ died to save His own. Like Jesus said in John 10: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 14-15).

If you ask me at this point, How do I know if I'm one of the "us"? How do I know if Jesus died for me? Because you might be thinking, If Jesus just died for the elect, and I doubt I'm in that

category, then there's no hope for me. Then I would say to you, believe, come to Him, rest in Him, cry out to Him for grace, confess your sins to Him and ask His forgiveness. John 3:16 says *whoever* believes in [Christ] will not perish but have eternal life. So believe in Christ, and all these promises are yours.

Please don't stumble over this teaching such that it makes you back away from the Gospel or hinders you from proclaiming the Gospel freely to all people. The call of the Gospel goes forth, and all who respond in repentance and faith will be saved. What we're affirming here is not at odds with that. We're simply seeing another glorious piece of the picture—that those who do respond in repentance and faith are able to do so because Christ died for them in a particular way, an effective way. Christ's death atoned for their sin in a way that assured they would be saved.

Chapter 8 Paragraph 5 (1689 Second London Confession):  
The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God, has fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him.

That is the definite design of Christ's death. And the everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven is part of the "all things" mentioned at the end of verse 32.

### **He Will Graciously Give Us All Things**

As we close, think of the magnitude of this promise. And think of how closely connected it is with the teaching of the first half of the verse: that God gave His Son for us. Maybe you don't like the idea of the definite atonement. But see here in this verse how Christ's atonement for "us," "the elect," is the reason why we can have absolute confidence that God is going to graciously give us all things. This is very similar to verse 28 saying that "all things" work together for our good. And it's very similar to the promise that those whom God foreknew and predestined and called and justified, He will also most certainly bring to glory.

The argument here in verse 32 is from the greater to the lesser. God did the greatest thing imaginable in giving His own Son. He did the most sacrificial thing possible. And if He did that, for us, then He will certainly work all things for our good and bring us into the blessings of heaven for all eternity. That is a small thing compared to the sacrifice of giving up His own Son. So as sure as Christ died on that cross for His sheep, we can be sure that God is going to do good to us all of our days on this earth, and for an eternity of days in heaven.