

God For Us In Jesus

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Date: 03 April 2016

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[0 : 00] So it's just a real joy to be here this morning. And if you have your Bible, if you want to turn to Romans chapter 8, Romans is in the back third of the Bible, right after Acts and all the Gospels.

And we're going to be looking at chapter 8. And this morning, I really hope that the Word this morning will encourage you. You know, it doesn't take much to just look around our lives and our community and our state and our nation, the world, and to see that there's a lot of things that could make you discouraged.

There's a lot of things you could be thinking about that would leave you discouraged and discontent and sad and wondering whether there's hope for the future. And I just so appreciate some of the songs we sang this morning that pointed us away from that to what we're going to be focusing on this morning.

Because I want to encourage you with this one key truth that Paul has for us in Romans 8, which is God is for us in Jesus. And I know that if you've been to church for any amount of time, if you've read your Bible at all, that sounds familiar and you know it.

But when I was in seminary, there was a counseling professor who pulled a hundred students aside. These are students who want to go on and do counseling and be pastors and be missionaries. And she asked them one simple question.

[1 : 18] Do you believe that on your best day or your worst day that God is a hundred percent for you only because of Jesus? Do you believe that with a hundred percent certainty?

And only three out of a hundred said yes. What about you this morning? If I asked you, do you believe that on your good day or even on the bad days that God is a hundred percent for you because of Jesus?

And so I hope this morning that maybe if it's the truth that you just know up here, that God will work it into our hearts this morning so that we will leave encouraged and strengthened because there's many trials around us and yet we have a God who is for us in Jesus.

And so this morning I just want to remind us of this truth and remind us that the picture that Paul is going to paint for us is that we are not spiritual orphans trying to earn the love of someone, but we are adopted children beloved by God the Father.

And so let me pray and then we'll read Romans 8. Father, I'm so grateful this morning that that even though what our sins deserve is to be cast out into the darkness, that because of Jesus, that you actually call us children and welcome us into a home and you say that you will be our God and we will dwell with you one day face to face.

[2 : 56] So I pray this morning that as you speak through your word that we would hear, that we would have our eyes opened and that we would be encouraged that you are for us in Christ so we might then live for you.

Amen. Let me read Romans 8, starting in verse 28. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn amongst many brothers and sisters. And those whom He predestined, He also called.

And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

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? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

[4 : 10] It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Again, 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.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or persecution? Or famine? Or nakedness?

Or danger? Or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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.

Amen. Well, this morning I just want to look at the three things that Paul's going to talk to us about. The reason God is for us, the reality of Him being for us, and the results of God being for us.

[5 : 24] And so first, the reason why He's for us. Verse 31 is this key verse in the passage, right? He says, if God is for us, who can be against us?

But let's not just slide past that, because maybe this morning you're thinking, well, of course God is for us. I mean, that's who God is. He's a loving God. He just loves us. Or maybe you're thinking, well, of course God's for me.

I'm a good person. Why would He be against me? But if you're reading the whole Bible, and if you read the first seven and a half chapters of Romans, you would see there's actually a lot of good reasons for God to be against us.

Mostly because we have all set ourselves up against Him. He made us to live for Him, and we rejected that and went our own way. We're rebels.

We're traitors. We deserve eternal darkness and judgment and death. Because God is holy. He's perfect. And the only people who are allowed to be in relationship with Him are perfect people.

[6 : 22] Not good people. Perfect people. And I don't know about you, but I don't fall in that category. And so there's no reason for me to hope that God would be for me or God would be for you.

And yet, God is for many, many sinners. How? Well, Paul gives us two answers here. First, he says in verse 29, For those whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Do you know what it's saying? He's saying, Do you know why God's for you? Because He chose to be. He just chose to be for you. He looked at you, a spiritual orphan, lost and alone, and said, I'm going to adopt you.

Just because of who I am. Just because I'm a God that loves to adopt orphans and to save sinners. Before you were thinking of me, before you were thinking about being adopted, I just came and adopted you. And I adopted you to be in my family, right? Because that's the last half of verse 29.

[7 : 30] In order that He, that's Jesus, might be the firstborn amongst many brothers and sisters. He's adopted us into a family. He just said, I'm going to adopt you.

I'm just going to love you. Just because of me. Not you. Because of me. And even that word foreknow in verse 29 is this beautiful relational word.

It's not foreknowing like, I know what you're going to do, what you're going to think about. It's the kind of knowing we talk about when I ask you a question. Do you know Mike Salvati? I don't mean, do you know about him?

I mean, do you know him? Do you have a relationship with him? And God's saying, I foreknew you. I knew you relationally before you ever knew me. And I chose you before you ever knew me.

Just because I'm for you. Because I love you. And what's beautiful about this is, if God being for us was primarily dependent on us, then we'd be in trouble.

[8 : 29] Because if God said, well, I'm only for you if you have enough faith, well, then what if tomorrow you don't have enough faith? Then that foundation gets shaky. Or what if God was just for you because you were good enough?

You did enough good things. Well, maybe today you feel confident, but next week, I don't know if I've done enough good this week, maybe God's not for me. But if God is for you because He chose to be, and He doesn't change, then you've got a stable foundation.

You've got a bed you can lay your head on. And that's God's choice to love you. God's choice to love those who are in Christ.

And not only that, but I think it's really important to see this because not only does it give you a stable foundation, but if you think about this human relationship that we always have, if you were

the only one doing all of the pursuing of a relationship, you know, hey, let's hang out, and the other person never returned your calls, never initiated anything with you, you might wonder if they liked you back, if you're doing all the pursuing.

But since God did the pursuing of us, just like in a human relationship, we know that person must love me if they did all the pursuing of me even before I had any thought of loving them.

[9 : 49] That's God loving us. And not only did He choose to adopt us, but maybe some of you know this, adoption has a cost, right? If you've adopted, you know there's a cost to adopting.

And so Paul tells us in verse 32, let me tell you what the cost was of your adoption. He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.

And saying, do you want to know why I'm for you? Because not only did I choose to adopt you, but I sent my only Son to die to make you family.

That's how much I loved. And it really hit me when I was talking to a non-Christian friend recently about why Jesus had to die.

And it just hit me. And I told him, I said, do you think that if I could save you any other way than sacrificing my child, that I would sacrifice my child? He was like, well, probably not.

[10 : 48] I said, yet God sent His Son for us. How can you doubt that He is for you when He sent His Son to die?

That's the proof to go back to when you're wondering, is God for me? He sent His Son. And this really struck me several years ago, back in 2010.

I'm a big hockey fan being from Canada. And Roberto Luongo is a goaltender who always got the rap of being a good goalie but never able to win the big games.

But in 2010, he helped Canada win the gold medal. And right after the game, he was being interviewed. And he held up his gold medal and said, from now on, no matter what anyone says, I can point to this gold medal and tell them, I am a winner.

And he's right. He's got the evidence right there. He can point back to it. He can hang it up on his wall and when people come over and say, you see that medal right there? That proves I'm a winner.

[11 : 50] And Paul's saying, that's how the cross works. When you're wondering, is God for me? He says, look back there on that wood where you see God's Son crucified for you and then ask again, does God love me?

Is God for me? And guess what the answer's gonna be? Yes. That's the proof to go back to. So when you're doubting, which we all have doubts at points, when you're wrestling with questions, don't look inward to see if there's anything inward that God would love.

Look outward to the cross and see there that God is for sinners. That God loves people who don't deserve to be loved.

And if you've trusted in Christ, he's for you because of Jesus. He chose in eternity past to adopt you and he paid the price at Calvary to make you family.

That's why God is for you. Because of him, not you. But what is the reality of living in his family then look like? Well, Paul doesn't leave us hanging.

[12 : 59] He says, I'm not just gonna tell you that God's for you. I'm gonna tell you what that means to encourage you. So he says in verse 31, what shall we say to these things? Well, first he says, if God is for us, who can be against us?

So that's the first reality of God being for us is no one can ultimately be against you. Now that doesn't mean you're never gonna face opposition. That doesn't mean you're never gonna face trials or difficulty.

But what it does mean is that you have the all-powerful creator God behind you. And anything he wants to do in your life, no one and nothing will stop him from doing that for good in your life.

Man, that's the guy I want on my team. And Paul's saying, if you are in Christ, you have this all-powerful God behind you, strengthening you. No one can stand against him.

But the second reality he says in verse 32, God will provide what you need. 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.

[14 : 08] You see what Paul's doing? He's arguing from the greater to the lesser. He's saying, if God provided for your greatest need, you were on your way to eternal judgment and Jesus paid that amazing price, then don't you think he'll take care of the little things you need?

It would be like if, say, a billionaire found a homeless person, built in this amazing mansion, and then one day the light bulb over the front door burns out and the person that's now living in the

house is like, man, I don't know if the billionaire is going to want to pay to replace this light bulb. It's like, Paul's like, what are you talking about? He built you a huge house, of course he'll replace the light bulb and that's what Paul's saying. He's saying, it's so easy to think of God as this miser that he doesn't really want to give us all that we need and Paul's saying, what are you talking about?

He gave you more than you needed in Jesus. Of course he'll give you what you need. Of course he's eager to be there and graciously, that is, undeservedly give it to you.

You don't need to keep earning anything from him. He just wants to give it to you. Now it's good to remember that he'll provide for your needs, not your wants.

[15:21] He's not going to provide everything you want and even what you think you need, you might not actually need. But even in those moments when you're feeling like God's not providing what you need, don't think of him as a miser holding back.

No. Because of Jesus, he is for you, eager, gracious to give you what you need. He proved that on the cross. And I love this quote from Hudson Taylor.

He was a missionary that went to Africa and he went without asking anyone to give him money. He just said, God will take care of my money. And he had a couple of kids. And people are saying, don't do that. That's foolish.

Don't do it. And Hudson Taylor looked at them and said, I am a father and I know my kids need three meals a day. Don't you think my heavenly father will care more for me than I do for my children?

And he was pulling back this idea that we can trust our father who loves us to care for us. Not always in the ways we'd expect, but he really does care for us.

[16:24] And the third reality he mentions is in verse 33. He says, who shall bring any charge against God's elect? So he's saying, look, the scene he's painting is imagine it's God's courtroom at the end of time.

And he's saying, who can stand before God and say, see that person right over there, God? Did you know the terrible things they did? Let me pull out their file. They don't deserve to be here. And God says, it is God who justifies. That's what Paul says. It's God who justifies. And what Paul's saying is, look, if that were to happen, if someone was to come into God's courtroom and say, you don't deserve to be there, God would say, I know that.

But I also know that Jesus died for them and they've trusted in Him. And their file is now Jesus' file. And I am the judge and I have declared them innocent and guiltless, worthy to be here.

Who are you to challenge my ruling? Isn't that beautiful? It reminds me of the scene in A Knight's Tale.

[17:31] It's in a little older movie, but if you've seen it, Heath Ledger's character plays this peasant who pretends to be a noble so he can joust and make money so he can eat. And he gets caught and so he gets put in the stocks and people are mocking him and throwing tomatoes at him.

But Prince Edward of England comes up from the crowd and he says, my royal historians have discovered that actually he is from an ancient royal line.

And this is my word and as such it is beyond contestation. No one's going to challenge the word of Prince Edward on that.

How much more when the King of Kings declares you are not guilty. That is my word and it is beyond contestation.

And then fourth, just he keeps piling up the goodness here. It says in verse 34, who is to condemn? Who can come and again in this courtroom bring more accusations and bring condemnation?

[18:42] And what does Paul say? He says, Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who is raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

See what Paul's saying? Is he saying, look, Jesus already took the condemnation. He already took the condemnation so you don't have to bear it. And more than that, he was raised, showing that the check to save you cleared.

And even now, he stands as your great defense attorney. See, if anyone had the right to charge you in court, it would be Jesus. He's God.

You've sinned against him. And not only that, but your sin put him up on the cross. If anyone has the right to bring a condemnation against you, it's Jesus. And yet, instead, he acts as your defense attorney.

the only one who has a right to charge you instead defends you, though you don't deserve it. And these two truths together, I think, really touch on one of these deep things in our hearts.

[19 : 51] As human beings, we want to be loved by others and to be deeply known. And yet, we're afraid that if people really knew us all the way down, they would condemn us.

they would judge us instead of loving us. And yet, here, Paul says, look, the only person that knows you all the way down to the bottom that could condemn you, that could judge you, instead, has chosen to love you in Jesus.

You don't need to be afraid. In Jesus, God is for you. And so, fifth, the last reality he talks about here is that nothing can separate us from God's love.

All right, verse 35, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And then Paul says, shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Because Paul wants to do something really careful here. He wants to say, I'm not just throwing out some slogan. I'm not just putting up some random Facebook meme to help you feel good. Nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus.

[21 : 02] Well, I don't know, Paul. There's a lot of hard things in my life. Paul says, okay, let's tackle that. We're not just going to throw this out as some random phrase to feel good. Let's talk about this. Can nothing actually separate you from the love of Jesus?

What about hard things? And everything Paul names in verse 35, he went through. Paul's the guy that got beaten several times for being a believer of Jesus. Stoned, nearly to death or maybe to death.

Shipwrecked several times, often in want of food. He said, I've been there. I've been there. I can testify. These things don't separate you from the love of Jesus.

And so then he says in verse 36, he says, okay, let me even remind you that this is not a question that's new. I'm going to quote from the Old Testament from Psalm 44. For your sake, we are being killed all the day long.

We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. And Paul's saying, look, God's people have often felt this way. You're not alone. If you're sitting there thinking, I know it sounds good that God's for me, but it sure doesn't feel that way right now.

[22 : 07] Paul's saying, it's okay. I've been there. God's people of Israel back in Psalm 44 were there. They were wondering, it sure, what it feels like, God, is that we're being killed for you.

That we're like sheep just being led out to be slaughtered. Where's our Father caring for us? Where's our Father protecting us? Where's your love, God? It just feels hard.

And Paul says, verse 37, no. In all these things, not just the good times, in these things, in the days when you're being like a lamb being led out to slaughter, in those very things, the good things, the hard things, the day when you find out that someone you love has cancer, the day you lose your job, the day you have relational breaks, in those things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

See, we often think, well, we're going to be conquerors if we conquer over suffering. But Paul doesn't say that. Paul says, no, we are conquerors in these things.

You're not conquerors when Jesus takes you out of the suffering. You're conquerors in Jesus in the day of suffering. Just like Jesus was.

[23 : 33] What day did He win the victory for us? Was it not the day of suffering? The day when He was whipped and a crown of thorns was placed on His head and He carried a cross and He hung on Calvary and He experienced the wrath of God.

in that thing, on that day of suffering is when Jesus was the conqueror. And so, Paul says, yes, even in those things we're conquerors.

And it's through Him. Paul's saying, look, I know it's going to be hard. I know it's going to be hard things. Adoption to God's family does not fix everything. It doesn't just get rid of all the hard things. But, through Him, through Him, through Him walking with you and also through our older brother Jesus who on the cross actually was cut off from God's love so that anyone who trusts in Him would never have to be cut off.

That's how you can be conquerors in suffering because there was one man, the God-man Jesus, who really did suffer and who really did get cut off from God's love.

[24 : 48] Father, why have you forsaken me? So that I would never have to forsake your other brothers and sisters. That's why.

Yes, He's for us. And that's why Paul can go on to say, death can't separate you from God's love. Jesus already died and He defeated death. So death can't separate you from God's love anymore. Nothing in this life can separate you. Not angels or powers or principalities because Jesus conquered all of them at the cross. He showed His power over all the political powers in Rome, the spiritual forces.

He showed Himself to be the victor. And if your connection to God is through Jesus, then you have a firm, stable connection. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus.

If you're not in Jesus, you don't have that connection. But if you're in Jesus, you will never be separated from God's love. So what's then the result of God being for us?

[25 : 55] Well, it's verse 28. We skipped it earlier, but let's come back to it. We know, this is the results of God being for us, we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to His purpose. All things. All the hard things we just talked about. All those things work together for good.

That's the end result. And this isn't some general promise. You know, sometimes I hang out with people at work, and you're like, yeah, don't worry, life will work out for good. No, it doesn't always work out for good.

If you just look at this life, things do not always work out for good. This is not a general proverb that applies to all people all over the world. This is a promise from God the Father to His children.

For those, what does He say? For those who love God. For those who love God, all things work together for good. If you're His child, you can claim this promise that all things will work together for good.

[26 : 59] And it's a good defined by God. It's not the good you want. It's the good defined by God, which in verse 29 He explains. It's to be conformed to the image of His Son.

That's what God wants. God wants you to become more like Jesus. And He will work everything else out for that purpose. Now do you see why God can actually love us in the midst of suffering? Because what if suffering is His chisel on you, the block of marble? What if suffering is the chisel He is using to sharpen away and create in you the likeness of Jesus?

Suddenly suffering isn't the evidence of a lack of God's love. But what if suffering might be the very evidence He does love you? That He loves you enough to chisel away at all the junk in your life and make you more like Jesus.

To keep working on you. To keep refining you. So you will be more like Jesus. And that's why Paul can say that not only will you be conformed to His image, but verse 30, that those whom He predestined, He calls.

[28 : 17] And those He calls, He justifies. And those He justifies, He glorifies. What Paul's saying is He doesn't just call you on the phone and say, I'm adopting you. He doesn't just justify you, which is declaring that you're innocent and worthy to be in His family.

But He also says, I'm going to bring you home. That's glorified. And I'm going to bring you home in the perfect image of Jesus. And I'm not going to stop until that process is done.

I love you too much to leave you where you're at. And yes, I might even use all things and some of the things you don't want to do just that. Because if I've called you, I will justify you.

And if I justify you, I will glorify you. You see that chain? There's no break in the chains. If He calls you, He will lead you all the way to glorification. He's powerful enough to do that.

And He's good enough. He's good enough that the good thing He'll work in you is actually really good. And we can trust Him with that.

[29 : 19] And we know that because when we look at the pattern of Jesus' life, who we're supposed to be modeled after, His life was one of suffering first and glory later.

And that's the path of the Christian. Suffer first, glory later. And the suffering is often God's loving hand to make you more like Jesus.

It doesn't mean the suffering is good always, but He uses it for good. He uses it for good. And He will keep His promise that He will glorify you because a good Father keeps His promises.

And that's why Paul can say earlier in verse 18, I consider the sufferings of this present time not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

It's not because the sufferings aren't real. It's not because they're not hard. But the sufferings compared to the glory don't add up. And when He can keep His eyes on that, Paul says, I can rejoice even in those moments of suffering.

