

If God is for Us....

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[0 : 00] What then are we to say about these things? What then are we to say about these things? Paul is full of joy and he exalts in the greatness of God in this sort of conclusion of this part of Romans.

We really do hit a pinnacle tonight, friends. One preacher has called this little bit of Romans 8 like a grand staircase that we just climb and climb up as we ascend together to just celebrate what God has done for us in the gospel.

What then are we to say about these things? Paul is saying, how do you go on when you have such great truths as Romans 8, as we have looked at in the last couple of weeks?

How do you go on when you've talked about God has foreknown us and predestined us and called us and justified us and will glorify us?

How do you respond to such a great plan of salvation? How do you respond to the fact that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus?

[1 : 15] No condemnation. How do you respond to the fact that the spirit of Christ dwells in us? We are God's adopted children. The whole universe awaits the revealing of us, of God's children.

All things work together for the good of those who love him. How do you respond to such great truths? What do you say when you've got such a great gospel, such a great book, Romans 1 to 8?

I mean, there's more to come and we'll get there as a church. But at this point tonight, we celebrate. Paul's way to celebrate this grand staircase is five questions.

Five unanswerable questions. You can't answer the questions that Paul's going to ask tonight. You just can't. But they're great to ask.

And it's not just that it's mere rhetoric. The five unanswerable questions are worship. Not rhetoric, but worship. Paul wants to exalt and celebrate the safety and the security and the confidence and the assurance of a Christian believer.

[2 : 28] So we've got five questions tonight. Five questions that will evoke a sense of how undefeatable God is.

How unstoppable the gospel of Jesus is. You could say that the five questions we'll look at tonight are in response to the five truths of last week.

The five truths were that these five affirmations of verses 28, 29 and 30, that we are on this unstoppable train to glory together.

We who love and trust Jesus. We are the ones who are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified. They're five great truths.

And now we have five unanswerable questions to just enjoy and celebrate our security. Question one is, so I don't count the first question where it says, what then are we to say about these things?

[3 : 30] That's just Paul going, wow, you know. Now here's the first question. If God is for us, who is against us? If God is for us, who is against us?

If you're anything like me, I'm by nature a very kind of cynical or maybe pessimistic person. So I'm constantly thinking about or confronted with the obstacles in my life that are stopping me from growing as a Christian.

Or I'm thinking about the obstacles in our church that are blocking the gospel growth or the evangelistic witness. I'm so aware of the things that are against us.

You know, I really long to see many people in this place come to know the Lord Jesus and come to know this great gospel. And yet I'm aware of just countless things that are against us.

But it's so great because Paul is not a pessimist. He doesn't say who is against us. He says, if God is for us, who is against us? Very different question.

[4 : 36] I wonder if sometimes we actually practice a sort of a sense of practical atheism or unbelief that we're always thinking about the earthly obstacles and not thinking about the God who is for us.

The child of God has great faith and says, if God is for me, who can stop me? In fact, I think the whole point of the book of Romans or Romans 1 to 8 is to make this point that God is for us.

That's Romans 1 to 8. God is for us. Paul said one of the reasons he wrote the book of Romans was, in chapter 1, I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

And yet he couldn't get to see them. So I think he's basically written down his spiritual gift to make them strong. This gospel that God is for us, this can make us strong.

The gospel was, in chapter 1 of Romans, the power of God for salvation. If God has given us this great power of God for salvation, then who can be against us?

[5 : 53] Chapter 2, God is a just judge, but his patience and his kindness are there to lead us to repentance. And if God has done that, who can be against us?

If God, as it says in chapter 3, has presented our righteousness through faith in Christ for all who believe, who can be against us?

If God has put forward Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement to propitiate God's wrath so that we can be declared righteous through his blood, if that is true, who can be against us?

If God has blessed us with forgiveness while we were ungodly, according to chapter 4, then who can be against us? If God has given us peace with God, peace with himself through his Son, and poured his love into our hearts via the Holy Spirit, who can be against us?

Or chapter 6, if God has united us with Christ in such a way that we're dead to sin and can walk alive to him, who could be against us if God has done that in us?

[7 : 02] If God has rescued us to do what the law couldn't do, chapter 7, if God has done that, who could be against us? If God has set us free from the law of sin of death, if he has adopted us as his children, chapter 8, who can be against us?

If God has set up the whole universe so that it awaits the redemption of the children of God, the whole universe is set up that way, who can be against us right now, today?

If God did not withhold his only Son, but gave him up for us all, who can be against us? To quote that great man, Han Solo, never tell me the odds.

One man and God are a majority, and God, friends, is for us. That's Romans. That's question 1. Question 2, verse 32.

He did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us. Will he not also give us everything else? Will God not give us with Jesus everything else?

[8 : 14] The answer, of course, is of course God will, for two reasons. One is to think about, not be fooled about who Jesus was. Jesus was not created.

Jesus was the eternally begotten second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. The Son has always been the delight of God the Father.

The Son was the most precious gift God could give. So if God gives his Son, then he's given us the greatest gift. Will he not give us everything else?

Of course he will. And the second reason he'll give us everything is that, from earlier in chapter 8, verse 17, we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

And we are in Christ, and what is going to be his is going to be ours. And in Jesus' victory, God's going to give Jesus the universe.

[9 : 14] God's going to put everything under Jesus' feet. God is going to... The Father says to the Son in Psalm 2, I love Psalm 2, he says, Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

Or elsewhere, Paul says, Jesus must reign until he's put all his enemies and everything under his feet. The goal of Jesus' reign is that he will rule over everything and have everything.

And so if we are co-heirs with him, we have everything. Will not God give us with him everything else? He will. Question 3, in verse 33, Who will bring any charge against God's elect?

Paul's going to get legal now, which means he wants us to have confidence. He's getting serious. Who can bring a charge against God's elect? No one, because it is God who justifies.

It is God who makes the declaration that you are righteous through Jesus' blood. No one can correct God. If God says that because of Jesus' death, your punishment is taken, and the righteousness of Christ covers you, then that's what goes.

[10 : 35] No one can bring a charge against that. There's no higher court of appeal. There's no one else, someone could go to to say, you know, you don't belong, you don't deserve to be saved.

If God has justified you in Christ, then you are. And notice here, friends, this is really challenging to me that Paul talks about this sense of who can bring a charge against God's elect?

That is, he's saying, he's talking about us in a corporate sense. He's not just saying you as a standalone Christian, but everything here is about us as the people who are justified, as the ones who are elect, as the ones who love God, or the ones who are the children of God, or the ones who cry, Abba, Father, together.

Everything in Romans 8 is about the people of God standing together to receive the promises of God given through Jesus. No one can bring any charge against God's elect, that is, us.

So don't just think about tonight in terms of me, think about in terms of the privileged place we have as a group of people who have been saved by Jesus' blood, the church.

[11 : 51] The more I kind of think about what it means to be a Christian and the more I try to encourage Christians, I just realise how important it is to not be individualistic, to actually stand up and be counted with the people of God, to be committed to the other people who Jesus died for.

If God is for us, who can be against, not me, but who can be against us. God did not withhold his son but gave him up for us all. The son was given up for the people of God, that is, us.

I just wonder that maybe some of us are converted to Christ and we read Romans 1-8 for us, but we're not actually converted to the people of God and we need to be converted to the people of God.

We stand together and tonight we celebrate together and we worship God together for what he's done. No one can bring a charge against God's elect.

Question 4 and verse 34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

[13 : 04] Who is to condemn? Basically the same question as before. No one can play prosecutor, no one can bring a charge and no one can play judge over God's justified people.

No one can condemn us because we have Jesus. And Paul says four great things about Jesus. He died, he was raised, he's seated at God's right hand and he intercedes.

And you need to know those four to have this sense of assurance that Paul wants to give us all. We are the people, we are the church, we are the elect for whom Christ died, we are the ones for whom he was raised, we are the ones for whom he is seated at God's right hand and we're the ones for whom he prays for, he intercedes for.

He died as a sacrifice of atonement for us. He was raised to be declared our Lord, in fact Lord of the universe but especially the Lord of his redeemed people.

He's at God's right hand. How does it help you today to know that Jesus is at God's right hand? Have you thought about that? How does it actually help you? Well, it's good to know that Jesus' work is finished.

[14 : 27] That is, really, the job is done. He's seated. The work is finished. It's good to know that your Lord reigns and he's in a place where he can send the Spirit.

It's good to know that your Lord has the place of supreme honour and supreme glory. Because I know that we go out in the world and we're kind of mocked as Christians and we're made to feel like you're kind of, it's a waste of time.

But actually, we can be mocked but our Lord has supreme honour and glory. You cannot get any higher authority than to be God's kind of co-region at his right hand, ruler, our king over the universe.

And Jesus prays for us. He's kind of a high priest. He's an advocate. No one can condemn us because the Lord of heaven and earth is on your side and he's defending you.

He's standing up for you, praying for you. He continues to secure the benefits of his death at God's right hand. So friends, no one can condemn us.

[15 : 35] We have assurance. Now the last question, this has got the most time and space in the end of Romans 8. It's in verse 35 and I'll read to the end.

The question is, who will separate us from the love of Christ? And remember I said the questions were unanswerable so you already know the answer in a way.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all day long. We are accounted as sleep to be slaughtered. Many people think the church of God in Australia at least is on its last legs.

That secularism is about to finally win the day and you know, the graphs, you know, and the church is going to be gone. It's going to just be for a few elderly people in a couple of decades' time.

[16 : 38] But we know that's not true. We know that the Christian gospel is unstoppable. We know that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

I just, I don't think we have a confidence that we should have. It's not like when someone says on Monday at work and they say, what did you do on the weekend?

And you might kind of say, I went to church. You know, you know, you're kind of embarrassed about you went to church. We don't emanate this confidence that we're part of an unstoppable movement of God to transform the universe through the love of Christ.

We don't emanate that kind of confidence naturally. And some of us may be feeling individually that we've got so many burdens facing us, we're not even confident we're going to make it as an individual to heaven, to the end.

But Paul's not negative. Paul's not down. He is seriously upbeat. Hardship won't separate us from the love of Christ. Persecution won't. Peril won't.

[17 : 44] And I believe, and I get confidence from this, that the history of the Christian church bears out that fact. Because the history of the Christian church is a history of the church persevering in persecution and thriving in it.

It's a history of strength in suffering. God's people have always faced the sword and hardship for the name of Christ.

because we declare the love of Christ. And Paul knows what happens in Rome. He knows he's writing to the church in the hot spot.

It's like writing to Christians in Iraq or Saudi Arabia. He knows he's writing to Christians in the hottest hot spot. Romans hated Christians.

And the first three centuries of the Christian movement, it wasn't some kind of parochial institution. It was a radically kind of subversive underground force that was heavily, heavily, violently attacked.

[18 : 54] And people worked so hard. Christians were imprisoned, tortured, starved. You know, the Romans loved their spectacles at arenas and bloodthirsty crowds would boo and call for the death of Christians.

I read this story of this guy in the second century. His name was Attalus. And he was sort of pretty high up in society, but they found out he was a Christian. And they made him march around the arena.

And either he carried this sign or someone behind him carried a sign saying, this is Attalus the Christian. And as he walked around, people just spat on him and booed him and threw stuff at him.

You know, imagine your name on that sign. And imagine all your co-workers and everyone you know in Melbourne at that arena booing you and cursing you.

In the second century, I read this story of this woman. They tied people up in baskets and bulls. kind of gored them to death. They had this iron chair called the frying pan.

[20 : 07] So rather than burn someone to death, they would sit on this iron chair on the fire and they would be cooked on this chair. They would cover people in animal skins and set wild dogs on them.

This is for entertainment, for crowds. And the wild dogs would obviously kind of maul the people to death. death. And yet in all these stories you read of Christian martyrs, whenever there's a Christian martyr, tens, hundreds are fired up to stand up and become Christians and be public Christians.

And so there's stories that when these things happened in Rome, Christians who had previously denied their faith put their hand up again and said, no, I'm a Christian. And whenever this happened, the church was fired up.

The deaths of martyrs always brought fruit to the gospel and always brought glory to Jesus. So I think this is how Paul can say, no, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Because people rely and depend on the love of Christ to get them through to the point of death. I read of this woman who was, her main worry, she was in the jail and she knew she would be killed the next day.

[21 : 29] This is in the second century. And her main fear was that she wouldn't have the physical energy to name Christ at the point of her death. That was her worry.

So she wasn't praying for rescue. She was worried that she wanted at the point of death to be able to name Christ and then die. She didn't want to go out half-heartedly.

this concept of the unstoppable people of God, these things all happen today. People are still being killed for the Christian faith today.

It's been true of God's people forever, really. Paul can quote Psalm 44 as it is written, For your sake we're being killed all day long. We are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

Israel were a suffering people for God's name. They were kicked around and killed and attacked and persecuted for believing in the one and true and living God.

[22 : 32] In all these things though, Paul says we're more than conquerors. In all these things Christ is glorified. In all these things the gospel spreads even faster. In all these things something almost supernatural is shown in the witness of Christians who are willing to lose their house and wealth and prestige for the name of Jesus.

Something great happens that we have this connection with our suffering Lord as we suffer for the name of Christ. And so nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

Nothing can. In all these things we're more than conquerors. So when you suffer for the name of Jesus friends, don't see it as a failure of the love of Christ.

See it as a display of the love of Christ in your life as you stand up for his name and be counted for him as you bear his name. And then Paul comes to the great conclusion, our 38 and 39.

For I am convinced, here's where I stand, says Paul. Here's where, here's why I wake up each morning. Here's why I get up, go and preach the gospel and get kicked out of towns and get thrown in jail and lose all my money and lose all my clothes and get beaten up.

[23 : 56] Here's what happens, here's why I do it. I am convinced 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.

When you have that kind of confidence, you can make a stand for Jesus in your workplace and in your street and wherever God calls you to go.

I wondered as I was reading 38 and 39, how does that list compare to the list a bit earlier in 35? So in 35 has this list about hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and then there's this bigger list in 38 and 39, death, life, angels, rulers, present, things to come, powers.

How does this list add to that other list? I think what Paul's trying to do is to say, well it's obvious really, that nothing can separate you.

So not just all these persecutions but nothing in heaven on earth, nothing supernatural, no cosmic agency, no angel, no demon, no ruler can stop you from making it to your glorification.

[25 : 25] Nothing can stop you from the love of Christ controlling you and transforming you. It's an exhaustive list. And I think even Paul has in mind there are negative things that can stop us and positive things.

So death can't stop you but also life can't stop you. I mean it's very clear in the New Testament there are positive things of life that if left kind of uncontrolled might actually prevent you from entering the kingdom.

There are things that will distract you, good things, your comforts, maybe even your family that if left unbridled in your life that could actually take over and suffocate out your faith.

And so not even those things though Paul says will separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. And I wonder if in the end Paul even wants us to count our very selves in that list.

Not even my own mistakes as a Christian are going to prevent me, are going to block me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That my perseverance is going to happen because I'm in the arms of Christ and he's foreknown me and he's predestined me and he's called me and he's justified me and he will glorify me.

[26 : 45] So not even my own stuff-ups as it were. Nothing, nothing at all can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. One danger I feel, I see Christians misuse this verse is that they isolate 38, 39.

Nothing can stop us from the rest of Romans. And so what happens is you can't paste out 38, 39. You paste it onto say a bright yellow sticker with a big smiley face.

face and it's kind of like maybe you've got kind of like a pink frilly stuff around a sticker and you whack that on your mirror and you're supposed to sort of say in the morning, nothing can separate me from the big blazing ball of a feminine warm hug of love of God that is just there for me and it's all kind of gooey and great.

That's not what Paul's saying. Paul is saying nothing can separate you from the love of God in your election, in your predestination.

Nothing can stop you from the love of God in the sacrifice of atonement, in the propitiation of God's wrath through the blood of Christ. Nothing can separate you from the one who rose and reigns at God's right hand side.

[28 : 09] It's not just that God's love is this big tacky glue that we can't unstick from. It's that God has made specific gracious actions in the gospel and that gospel is what gives us the anchor to know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so we need to keep meditating on Romans 8 and Romans 1 to 8. We need to keep talking about it and meditating on it and singing about it and reading about it and reflecting on it and encouraging each other with the truths of Romans.

The gospel in the end, the gospel is the reason that nothing can separate us from the love of God because the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

So friends, five questions. If God is for us, who can be against us? Will he not give us with Christ all things? Who can bring any charge against God's elect?

Who can condemn? What can separate us from the love of Christ? John Stott says of these five questions, this great ascending staircase, John Stott says that the apostle hurls the questions into space with a spirit of bold defiance.

[29 : 33] The apostle challenges anybody and everybody in heaven and in hell and on earth to try and answer them, to try and deny the truth which they contain.

But friends, there is no answer. There is no one and nothing that can harm the people that God has foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified.

No one can ultimately do what they may in this life. nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's praise God now together. Dear Father, we thank you for these wonderful, beautiful truths and pray that you might, by your spirit, weld them to our hearts and minds, that we might live by them with assurance confidence and confidence to love the name of Jesus and to serve him publicly and unashamed.

Father, we thank you for the triumph of the gospel in the suffering of your son and the suffering of your people. Father, we pray that you would make us strong through the spiritual gift of the book of Romans.

[30 : 54] Lord Jesus, we worship you that nothing can threaten you from where you are right now, at God's right hand, and therefore, ultimately nothing will threaten us. And we pray that you would give us a confidence to stand with all our brothers and sisters in you, all the elect around the world today, who bear persecution and hardship for your name.

Father, make us more than conquerors through all these things. Father, embolden us by the Spirit of Christ, fire us up to stand for your name and your powerful gospel, and may its power be evident and at work in our lives.

Amen.