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Romans 8:31-39

God is for Us...

Intro...

The letter to the churches of Rome stands unique among most of Paul's writing. Unlike his other letters which are often written to address situations in the church and most often to churches that Paul has personal experience with; Romans is written to people who are largely unfamiliar with Paul.

Now we need not think that the churches in Rome had never heard of Paul, but Paul had no physical connection with the believers in Rome. He did not plant a church there, nor was he the first to take the gospel to the city. Yet Paul is writing to these believers at least in part because he desires their help for further ministry.

Therefore, the letter becomes a way for Paul to introduce himself as well as the gospel he has been proclaiming throughout the churches. So, as we read Romans there is a very good possibility that are reading a manuscript of sorts of Paul's gospel proclamation.

And in fact, looking through the letter, Romans clearly declares the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's sermon begins with a proclamation of the power of the gospel (1:16-17)

Then from 1:18-3:20, Paul outlines the sinfulness of all mankind as well as their inability to save themselves. (3:20): "For by works of the Law, no flesh will be justified"

Paul then states the wonderful truth of justification through faith in Christ (3:21-4)

And then from chapters 5-8 Paul describes the tremendous outcomes of being justified through faith in Christ, and it truly hits a crescendo in chapter 8 which opens with the magisterial declaration,

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

Chapters 9-11 address God's sovereign purposes and plans in salvation, whereas chapters 12-16 focus completely on gospel application.

A Fitting Conclusion...

In our text today, Paul brings us to a point of conclusion. He does so in a familiar way, using a question to cause us to consider truth. (vs 31)

If we are to fully understand Paul's purpose here though, there are some points we must first address. The primary one is what does Paul mean by 'these things'?

In verse 31 Paul asks, "What shall we then say *to these things?*"

The phrase 'to these things' might be better understood as 'in response to these things', and even though the question posed here is rhetorical, understanding what 'these things' are better informs us of the expected response.

When Paul speaks of 'these things' there is no doubt that our minds should quickly go back to the preceding verses. We *should* think of the great blessings and promises Paul declared in verses 26-30. Even more so our thoughts should move to the whole of chapter 8.

The question really is, 'Should we go back further still?'

Thinking along the context of the whole letter, I believe that it is right to understand 'these things' as a reference to the comprehensive blessings that come from justification through faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 8 brings to an end the second major section of Paul's letter; a section that began back in Romans 5:1.

Throughout this second section Paul has been outlining the great benefits that come because of justification through faith in Jesus Christ. (The main subject of the first section of Romans)

And now in 8:31 Paul is bringing this whole section to a grand conclusion.

Therefore, when we read 'these things' our minds are to go beyond chapter 8, back to the beginning of this section in Romans 5:1.

Going back to Romans 5:1 and working from there through 8:30, gives us an overwhelming list of things to take into consideration.

Things such as;

1. Justification and peace with God (Romans 5:1),
2. Entrance into grace (5),
3. Death toward sin and new life toward God (Romans 6),
4. Freedom from sins tyrannical reign in our life (Romans 6),
5. Freedom from the Law's curse (Romans 7),
6. Freedom from condemnation (Romans 8),
7. Living in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit as we are filled with the Spirit (Romans 8),
8. Being children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8),
9. Promise of future glory that far outweighs present sufferings (Romans 8),
10. Having the intercessory aid of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8),

11. Having the assurance of God's sovereign purposes being worked in our life (Romans 8).

These are the things that Paul is calling into consideration here. It is these things that are moving him to write what amounts to such a strong, emotional, and persuasive conclusion.

And it is because of this great list of things that Paul is moved to ask the question "What shall we say then?"

Essentially the question is 'What does all of this mean?'

God is for Us...

The answer to that question is given to us in the form of another question in the second half of verse 31. (READ VS)

The conclusion which 'these things' brings us to is that **God is for us.**

The great declaration of Romans 5:1-8:30 is that the God of the universe is on the side of His people.

To say that God is for us is to say that the sovereign God of the universe is working for the benefit and good of His people. Thinking along the lines of the OT, it is to be favored by God, to have His face shine upon you.

But there is more to understanding what it means to have God on our side.

We would be misreading verse 31 if we concluded that for God to be on our side implies none can be against us.

This is not what Paul is saying in verse 31. In fact, there are numerous places in the Bible where we clearly see that to be on God's side is to invite opposition into your life.

What Paul does say is that God being on our side means that all opposition we will encounter ultimately fails to overcome us.

This the point that Paul fleshes out in the remaining verses.

Proof Beyond Necessary Proof...

Paul begins in verse 32 by giving definitive proof that God is truly on the side of His people. Working with a greater to lesser argument Paul writes;

"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*?"

The indisputable proof that God is on the side His people is evidenced in the giving up of His Son.

To rightly understand this verse, and the subsequent ones as well, there are two points that we need to be clear on.

First, as Paul is writing this verse he very clearly has in mind the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

This is clear as we consider the phrase 'gave him up for us all' especially in connection with the phrase 'did not spare'.

To say that God did not spare, but gave up His Son, is to say that God the Father gave the Son over for death and destruction on behalf of His people. It is as Isaiah wrote long before the incarnation,

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;" (Isaiah 53:10)

And

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

So, when we ask, 'How do the people of God know for sure that God is on their side?'

Because He freely gave up His own Son, Jesus Christ, to death and destruction for the healing of His people.

Secondly, we need to understand "all things." The argument of verse 32 is not difficult to follow.

If God was willing to give over to death and destruction the greatest gift, namely His Son, how will not also with Him give us all things?

The answer clearly being that He *will* give us all things. But just as 'good' from verse 28 (all things work for *good*) requires definition so does 'all things' here.

We should know enough already to avoid the temptation to say that 'all things' is a bank account brimming, a BMW shinning and a house full of all goods necessary to survive in the world.

It is best for us to understand 'all things' within its immediate context. The most recent use of this phrase comes from 8:28 where 'all things' work into God at the sovereign hand of God. That *good* is conformity to image of Jesus Christ. (look at verse 29)

In vs.32 'all things' come from the Father with Jesus, who was given over for salvation.

It seems best to understand that the 'all things' God gives is everything necessary to bring about in our lives what He has fully accomplished through Jesus Christ on the cross.

Namely, 'all things' are everything that makes us more like Christ.

So, the gracious goodness of God which is a direct result of His being on our side, is that He will provide all that is necessary both now and in the future to fully conform us to the image of Jesus Christ, and that *is our ultimate good!!!* (2 Peter 1:3)

Who can Stand Against...

In verses 33-39 Paul gives flesh and bones to the truth that God is for His people.

We must not maintain that with God on our side, our lives will be free from opposition, but we do have full assurance that all opposition will fail.

This is what Paul makes clear in the remaining verses.

In these verses each negative declaration is countered and overcome by gospel truth.

Verses 33-34 can be taken together given their similar focus and.

In verses 33-34 Paul makes clear that ultimately no accusation, charge or pronouncement of condemnation will stand against those whom God favors.

Looking at verse 33 the question of “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” is quickly answered with the reply “It is God who justifies.”

Paul’s focus here is on the future judgement that all mankind will face. Paul is not claiming that no charge will ever be brought or attempted, but rather that believers can be assured that they will stand justified before the Father, *because* it is God who has justified His elect. (vs. 30)

Likewise Verse 34 is focused on future judgement. Here the question of “Who is to condemn?” is answered by the words; “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.”

The point here is that since the condemnation that was due to believers is undone and overcome by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, any present or future charge of condemnation will ultimately fail.

How can there be condemnation when Jesus died for the sins of His people, was raised for their justification, and now sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for His people?

Remember where chapter 8 began, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

Who can Separate...

Verses 35-39 can be taken as a unit as well. Where the focus in 33-34 was clearly more on the judicial aspects of salvation, here the focus clearly falls on what we might call the foundation of redemption.

To see love as the foundation for redemption is a principal clearly taught in the Scriptures.

John 3:16 declares, ““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,”

In 1 John 4 we read; “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world,”

So, the question ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ is a question of extreme importance, for if one could be separated from the love of Christ, then truly all is lost.

This is also at its heart a relational question. It is a question about Christ’s love for His people and if there is anything that can separate the two.

The list of potential means of separation emphasizes the importance of this question.

The list is not tame by any means. Paul asks, “shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”

Each of these, let alone the combination of them all, can threaten life. The sword can sever one’s head from their body, but can it sever one from the love of Christ?

The quotation from Psalm 44:22 (vs.36) is used to emphasize the reality of these things in life.

Paul’s question is not whether these things will come but whether they can effectively separate us from the love of God; or maybe more pointedly are they signs that we are separated from the love of God?

Paul’s answer comes in verse 37, and it is maybe not what we expect. Rather than separate us from the love of Christ through these very hardships we are conquerors.

In fact, Paul writes that in all these things we are more than conquerors, we are above and beyond victorious in these things.

Contrary to being able to separate one from the love of God, all these things become a means for victory over them all through the One who loved us.

This radical position is defended in the most beautiful and powerful way in verses 38-39

Paul’s position in verse 37 is grounded in his conviction that nothing, no nothing can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The list in verses 38-39 is as encouraging as the list of verse 36 was difficult, and I think it is aptly summarized by Stuart Townend in the hymn *In Christ Alone*;

No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand.

There is nothing, no nothing on earth, or in heaven, or under the earth that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Application...

As we consider this text I want to bring out a few points of application for our life.

1. Opposition will come. In guaranteeing that God is on our side Paul is not removing the real and present threat of opposition. This is the same man who wrote to young Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”. The assurance of justification through faith in Jesus Christ is not the freedom from opposition but rather the eternal assurance that nothing, no nothing will overcome us.
2. Our circumstances don’t determine God’s love for us.
3. Everything comes with, in and through Jesus Christ. He is the one mediator between man and God. He is our righteousness, and apart from Him we do not conquer but stand already conquered.

4. This is a hope and a message that Pastors around the world must preach to their people.
 - a. Connect this to my work with TLI, and the churches part in that.