

If God is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

Romans 8:31-34

June 10, 2018

Introduction:

Do you know what's the most popular television show currently in my home among my three teenage daughters? If you're thinking of anything made recently, such as during this century, you'd be off by a mile! Believe it or not, my girls are huge fans of *Perry Mason*, the old black & white TV show. My oldest daughter Savannah stumbled across it a few years ago, got hooked, and ended up buying for herself the massive 72 DVD set of all nine seasons. She and her sisters have been studiously watching it for months now.

For those of you who aren't fans of television shows from the 1950 & 60's, let me explain what the show was about. Perry Mason was a fictitious defense lawyer who helped clear falsely accused clients of the crimes they were on trial for. Perry Mason was legendary because he rarely lost; I read that of the 271 episodes aired, he only lost three cases. Of course, with a record like that, if you were ever accused on a crime, Perry Mason is the lawyer you'd want handling your case!

But when it comes to the heavenly courtroom, in which we will all have to stand, we have someone far better than Perry Mason at our side. When it comes to the crimes of our sins, God stands ready to defend us. And while Perry Mason was successful most of the time, nothing can withstand the defense of God for those he has chosen. God never loses. He is the ultimate defense lawyer for those of us who've committed sins and stand under the verdict of condemnation for what we've done.

This morning's passage has a "courtroom" feel to it. The language used harkens back to a court of law, dealing with charges brought against us. In it, Paul wants to encourage us to see that in spite of our sin, God stands by our side. He has dealt with the guilt of our sin through his Son, Christ Jesus, and therefore we are no longer under any condemnation and thus there's nothing left to accuse us for. God has seen to it that we're completely free of guilt and that no charge can ever stand against us.

So let's read about that wonderful truth by opening our Bibles to Romans 8, which can be found on pg. 944 of the hardcover pew Bibles, should you be using one of those this morning. We're going to giving our attention to four verses today, v. 31-34, of Romans 8, which I'll be reading from the ESV. The apostle Paul writes this, **"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? It is God who justifies. 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."**

There are in essence three main questions Paul is answering here that we're going to take a look at in a moment, but before we do that we need to look at his preliminary question he asks at the beginning of v. 31 which is sort of a lead-in question when he asks, **"What**

then shall we say to these things?” What exactly are **“these things”** to which Paul is referring to here?

I think Paul is further elaborating on the things he’s been talking about since chapter 5, which are the implications of the gospel. After laying out the gospel for us, Paul told us that as a result of Christ’s work of redemption, we now have peace with God (Romans 5) and that we’re no longer under any condemnation (Romans 8). And then right before this he reminded us that all things work together for our good in Christ and there’s an unbreakable chain that guarantees all those whom God foreknew, he also predestined, called, justified, and will eventually glorify. You might think that alone would be enough to drive his point home that those who are in Christ Jesus are eternally secure in God’s favor and have nothing to fear about any future guilt or condemnation. But he isn’t done yet.

“What then shall we say to these things?” Quite a bit more, that’s what! The gospel is such incredible, astounding news that Paul can’t stop himself from talking about it. He needs to emphasize for us yet again the jaw-dropping assurance given to us in the gospel. It’s as if Paul is highlighting and underlining over and over again for us what it means that we have been justified by faith in Christ. So this time, Paul wants to state how absolutely certain our salvation is by using courtroom terminology to help us grasp the unshakable grace of God given to us in Christ. So to speak further of these things pertaining to our salvation, Paul poses a number of questions he answers in order to demonstrate the rock-solid assurance we have as a result of the gospel. So let’s delve into it by considering the first question he raises, which is...

1. Who can be against us if God is for us?

He asks in the second half of v. 31, **“if God is for us, who can be against us?”** This is yet another way of saying what Paul has been saying throughout Romans: whereas God was once against us because of our sins, Jesus Christ took the punishment we deserve so that by faith in him we’re justified in his sight, that is, we’re considered to be righteous, and therefore God is now **“for us.”**

A little over a year ago, when I preached on Romans 1:18, where it says that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, I talked about how that was the worse news imaginable. Nothing can be more terrifying than to hear that God stands against you in his holy wrath. To be told that God is against you is beyond horrible. The book of Romans starts with the worst possible news anyone could ever hear: God is against you because you’ve sinned against him, by loving the creation rather than the Creator, by giving him neither the thanks nor praise he deserves.

But the gospel gives us the good news that God sent his Son to be an atonement for our sins, to suffer the wrath of God in our place so that we can now hear the most magnificent news imaginable: **“God is for us.”** Because of Christ, God isn’t against you any longer. The condemnation that once awaited you because of sin has been taken up by Christ. Your debt has been canceled. Full pardon has been given. There isn’t anything left to punish. Because Christ’s righteousness is now your righteousness God no longer views you through the lens of his wrath but instead views you as an

adopted son or daughter of God. The almighty, sovereign, omnipotent God is for you and if so, then how could anyone stand against you?

Well, Paul answers that question with a question in v. 32. He says, **“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?”** There’s a logic here I don’t want you to miss. Paul is making an argument here from the greater to the lesser, which means that if someone would do the greater or harder thing, then how much more so should you expect them to do a lesser, far easier thing. So what’s the harder thing God has done? Well, Paul says God, **“did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...”**

So think about this for a moment: God gave up his one and only Son to be beaten and killed by crucifixion, not for anything he had done, but on behalf of sinners. Now I don’t have any sons, but I do have three daughters and so I have at least some insight into what it must have meant for God to send his Son to be rejected and murdered. Could I willingly do that with my girls? Could you? Would you to do that with your children? How difficult must it have been to send Jesus into the world knowing full well what was going to happen to him. How easy it would have been to simply call the whole thing off, to say, “You know what, those ungrateful sinners don’t deserve such a gift of grace. I’m not going to send them my Son just so they can mock him and torture him and crucify him.” I wouldn’t want to give up one of my daughters to save someone who hated me and rejected me, and yet that’s what God did for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So that was the unspeakably difficult thing God did for us. He didn’t spare his own Son when he could have. Instead, he gave him up to rejection and suffering and crucifixion for us all. So if he was willing to do that for us, then consider what Paul goes on to say in the second half of v. 32, **“...how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”** The hardest thing for God to give to us was his only Son, and so, if he was willing to do that for us, how could we possibly imagine that he would withhold from us anything else? Is God going to hold something back from us that is far easier for him to give than was his Son?

Think about the example of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son in obedience to God. If Abraham was willing to do that in obedience to God, would there be any lesser thing Abraham wouldn’t give up? So also here: if God so loved us that he gave up his Son to die for us, why wouldn’t God give us all things? Why would God hold back any lesser thing which would be easy for him to give when he has already given us his Son in order to redeem us?

So the point here for us is we need not fear that God is going to hold back anything we might need for our salvation. Since he already gave us his Son, we can rest assured that he will also give us everything we need. In fact, consider how this is exactly what Scripture says God will do, that he withholds nothing from us. So for example, in Psalm 84:11 it says, “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” Then in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 it says, “all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future - all are yours, and you are

Christ's..." And in Ephesians 1:3 Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

Since God has given us his only Son, he will spare nothing for our good. If I might quote from the Puritan writer John Flavel, he said this 350 years ago,

"How is it imaginable that God should withhold, after this, [anything] spiritual or temporal, from his people? How shall he not call them effectually, justify them freely, sanctify them thoroughly, and glorify them eternally? How shall he not clothe them, feed them, protect and deliver them? Surely if he would not spare his own Son one stroke, one tear, one groan, one sigh, one circumstance of misery, it can never be imagined that ever he should, after this, deny or withhold from his people, for whose sakes all this was suffered, any mercies, any comforts, any privilege, spiritual or temporal, which is good for them."

So that's the first thing Paul has to say to us: if God didn't spare his Son for us, how also then can we expect he will give us all things! But Paul then goes on to consider whether something could come up that would nullify our salvation. Could someone find a charge to bring against us that perhaps would cause God to reconsider his saving grace towards us? Could something happen like in a Perry Mason episode when something unexpected is discovered that changes the verdict of the trial? So then second question Paul raises is this...

2. Who can bring any charge against us?

Now look back at your Bibles at v. 33 of Romans 8. "**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.**" Now we know that of course people can bring charges against us. In fact, Scripture tells us that the devil will accuse us, our conscience will accuse us and even Jesus said that people will speak falsely against us. So we know plenty of people will accuse us of all kinds of things, but that's not what's behind this question. The real concern here is this, "Could anybody bring a charge against God's elect that would stick? Could there ever be an accusation made that would cause God to overturn his verdict upon us?"

Now Paul has already answered this question implicitly in what he said right before this in Romans 8:29-30. Do you remember how Paul said those God foreknew he also predestined? Well, that's just another way of talking about election, which Paul is speaking of here. "**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?**" that is, who will bring a charge against those God has foreknown and predestined to salvation? Well, he went on to say that God's elect were all called, justified, and glorified. There were no weak links in the chain, or as I said in my sermon last month, nobody gets off the salvation train. At no point does it derail. So right there we have assurance that there can be no charges made against God's elect because everyone whom God has elected to salvation will be saved.

But Paul approaches it from an alternative angle here and provides a different answer than he did in v. 29. Rather than resting our assurance on God's unfailing purposes for us, this time around Paul focuses on God himself. So in answer to the question, "**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?**" Paul invites us then to consider this answer, "**It is God who justifies.**"

By focusing on God, Paul means to assure us there is no charge that anyone could bring against us that would alter God's decision to save us because God himself, he who is all-knowing, has declared us to be righteous in his sight. No one is going to present any evidence to him that would cause him to change his mind. Our salvation isn't at all like a Perry Mason episode where it might look like the person is innocent until some new evidence is presented that radically changes the results of the trial. If it's God who justifies, then what evidence can anyone produce that would be cause for him to change his mind? You can't surprise God with information he didn't already know. You can't make an accusation that would cause God to reconsider.

So not only then has God decided to save his elect in eternity past, but he will never change his mind about it. God knows everything you have done and will do and still he has chosen to justify you anyhow. There's nothing you or anyone else can bring to the table that would cause God to say, "Oh, I wasn't aware of *that*. Well, that changes everything. I'm not going to save that person after all. I take it back." If God has justified you, if he has declared that you're forgiven, if Christ died the death you should have died and lived the life you should have lived, then the matter is settled. Nothing will change that. No new evidence will overturn his verdict.

But there is yet another question Paul wants to answer: could we still be condemned? Maybe there can't be any new, unexpected charges brought against us, but perhaps God would change his mind and condemn us anyway? Or maybe someone else could condemn us, overturning God's verdict perhaps? So let's consider this last possibility...

3. Who can possibly condemn us?

Look now back in your Bibles at v. 34. Paul asks, "**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.**" So the question now moves from the possibility of an accusation that could stick to the sentencing of the courtroom such that the accused is condemned. Is there anyone who could condemn us?

Now obviously there isn't any one else who could send us to hell other than God, so perhaps the thought that lies behind this question is whether God could change his mind on the matter of our salvation. Could he perhaps at first say, "You are not guilty" but then later on alter his view and say, "On second thought, I'm going to condemn you to hell after all"? What assurance do we have that God won't change his mind?

To answer that objection, Paul makes a bee-line to Christ where he says four things about Christ that should put to rest any fear we might have. First, he says "**Jesus is**

the one who died” reminding us that Jesus suffered the full wrath of God for us on the cross, and therefore, as he said in Romans 8:1, there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because there is no sin left to suffer for. If Jesus really did pay for it all, then what could God possibly condemn us for? There’s no sin left for God to judge if Christ really did die for all our sins, so he can’t condemn us again for something Jesus already paid for.

Second, Paul adds, **“More than that, who was raised”** reminding us that Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the undeniable mark of God’s approval of the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. The resurrection proves that God was pleased with his Son. It’s God’s validation of Christ’s redemptive work, so why would we think God would then change his mind and overturn what he has already approved of? No, the resurrection assures us that God was satisfied with Christ’s atoning death for our sin.

Third, he says that Christ is **“at the right hand of God”** which means Christ is sharing in the Father’s power and authority. God isn’t going to overturn what Jesus has done; they are going to share equally in the decision to save the elect. They won’t be at odds with one another.

Fourth, Paul says Jesus is **“indeed interceding for us.”** If Jesus is interceding for us, is God the Father going to reject his Son’s prayers? We have the greatest prayer warrior on our side - Jesus is praying for us - so how can we possibly imagine God rejecting his Son’s prayer for those whom he came to save?

So taken together, is there any possibility whatsoever that God the Father is going to reject the work of his Son on the cross, is going to go back on his validation of Christ’s work of redemption by raising him from the dead, is going to be at odds with his Son who sits at his right hand, pleading our case for us before his heavenly throne? None whatsoever! There is none to condemn because the only one who could condemn us would have to completely reject his Son and deny his word in order to do so. God the Father would never do that and therefore there’s no one left to condemn us.

So then, in light of this, we need to circle back around and answer one last question that we began with but really serves as a way to tying all of this together and that’s the question Paul asked at the start of v. 31...

4. What then shall we say to these things?

All of these questions and answers Paul gives demonstrate to us the logic of the truth of the certainty of our redemption, but this passage really isn’t about the logic of it. Paul doesn’t write this in order to simply satisfy our intellectual reason; he does it to comfort and assure our hearts. He’s unpacking everything he’s got to help us rest in the peace and security of God’s unchanging gift of salvation to us.

See, Paul knows we can be unsettled. The circumstances of life have a way of pulling the rug out from under us. Our sins and failures can cause us to doubt our salvation. We can second-guess ourselves and doubt the promises of God to us when life isn’t

going how we planned. Paul knows that to be a Christian is to live in a world where people won't like you, will mock you, curse you, persecute you, and falsely accuse you. He no doubt personally knows how bewildering and discouraging that can be.

So then, he knows what we need, not just intellectually but emotionally. He knows we need to sense deep in our hearts that even though the world might reject us, even though our families might hate us and cast us out, even though we might be accused of all kinds of terrible things, nevertheless, God is still for us.

So for my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ here at Grace Fellowship, take the greatest joy and comfort in this: God will never leave you or forsake you. Never. He will never revoke your salvation. Nobody can bring a change against you that will cause God to change his mind about you. Your salvation is secure, now and forever. When God promises there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, he means it. Because of Christ, all of your sins - past, present, and future - are atoned for, fully and completely. Because of Christ, the righteousness God requires of you has been met. Because of Christ, you stand secure because he constantly stands at the right hand of God interceding for you. So don't fear the future: whatever may come will never change God's love and purpose for you.

Your salvation can never be lost. There is nothing that can change God's mind about you. He will complete the good work of salvation begun in you, without fail, without any fear on your part that someone or something will mess it up or cause God to alter the deal. There is no condemnation for you nor will there ever be. Rest in that. Rejoice in that. Delight in your innermost being in that glorious truth.

Conclusion

As we close, I want to encourage us all to not run off too quickly and allow a few moments to let this wonderful promise of assurance seep deep into our hearts. I'm going to close us in a moment in prayer, and part of that is for us to reflect upon what certainly we have in God's promises to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We need not fear. We need not be anxious. We need not worry and fret. God loves us in Christ, with an everlasting love that has chosen us in eternity past and promises never to let us go in eternity future. We are forever secure in Christ. Our salvation is certain. God's love and acceptance of us will never change. With the hope of those promises still ringing in our ears, let's go to him now in prayer. Please bow your heads with me.